



# Learn Achieve Celebrate

## Information and guidance

for Designated Teachers of Looked After and  
Previously Looked After Children in Northumberland

29<sup>th</sup> May 2020

### EXTRAORDINARY CORONAVIRUS SCHOOL CLOSURE BRIEFING

#### Contact Us

Here are contact details for teams and services that you might need during this school closure period. Let us know if you need any others:

- OneCall 01670 536 400
- ESLAC 01670622779
- Email: [eslac.info@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:eslac.info@northumberland.gov.uk)
- CYPS 01670 502 700
- Family Placement 01670 626 262
- IROs 01670 624888

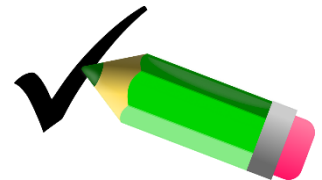
#### Returning to school



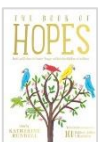
We want to work closely with you to make sure that our looked after children return to school safely and when it is the right time for each child to do so. Contact us for support whenever it is needed. ESLAC staff can support in school or work with carers to prepare children for another big change. We can also involve other professionals as needed.

#### Year 11 GCSE Grades

I contacted all Designated Teachers of Year 11 pupils earlier this month to share our progress monitoring information for GCSE English and maths, with any other additional evidence that I thought might be useful when preparing grades to send to examination boards. Since then the DfE and Ofqual have updated their guidance and are encouraging schools to share the grades submitted with key professionals when appropriate, such as Virtual School Headteachers. I have emailed Designated Teachers again this week requesting that information. Thank you for the positive response so far, and I look forward to receiving the grade information soon. It will of course be kept in strictest confidence and not shared with care teams or pupils.



#### Reading Campaign



Our Reading Campaign is still up and running and we have been encouraging children to read during lockdown. This free book which can be downloaded from the Literacy Trust website is highly recommended: [The Book of Hopes: Words and Pictures to Comfort, Inspire and Entertain Children in Lockdown](#)

#### Speech and Language Therapy



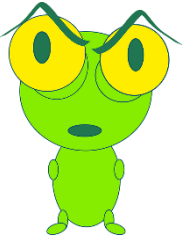
Ian Marks, a speech and language therapist currently working with Northumberland Adolescent Service, has been working with NCC's Learning and Development team to produce a new e-learning module on Speech, Language and Communication Needs in children and young people. This is now available on Learning Together [here](#).

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists has published a series of factsheets which are very informative and relevant to professionals working in schools with looked after children. Here is the link to all of the factsheets – [Factsheets on speech and language therapy](#)

I recommend them all, but did find the guides on language milestones at primary and secondary particularly helpful. They are on our Virtual School webpage or you can view and download them here:

- [SALT primary milestones: what's typical talk at primary](#)
- [SALT secondary milestones: what's typical talk at secondary](#)

## All about ePEPs



**BUGS:** Over the last few weeks there has been an increase in bugs within the ePEP system which is due to the recent upgrade. One issue which you raised with us was about submitting Spring term Progress Reviews. It looks like not all of them had been released, so if you haven't completed one for one of your looked after children for the Spring term please get in touch. Any other issues we hope have been resolved, if not please let us know.

**COMPLETION:** All of our schools are still completing PEPs which is brilliant and our completion figures show that we are only slightly behind. In April, there were 29 PEP reviews due and an impressive 25 meetings went ahead. In May 66 PEP reviews were due and 55 meetings went ahead. Considering the difficulties, this reflects the continued commitment to our looked after children. Thank you.



**YEAR 11:** Understandably this is a particularly difficult time for Year 11 pupils and schools are unsure if they need to continue with the PEP. The short answer is **YES**. The pupils' current circumstances need to be reflected in their PEP and outcomes may need to be amended. Now, more than ever, it's imperative that our Year 11 pupils are fully aware of any transition plans and are fully supported by the care team. Andrea or Jo, our careers advisers, will be in touch with all Year 11 pupils to support them with their chosen destination and any PEP meetings will be attended by a member of the Virtual School.



## Summer progress reviews



Just to let you know, we will not be requesting Progress Reviews for the Summer term. The data and information which you record and we collect should always be meaningful, and as children have not been following their usual curriculum at school or at home, then it would be unreasonable to request an update on their academic progress.

We do still need the data from the Spring term however, so please can you make sure you have submitted the Progress Review in the ePEP for all of your looked after children, even if you have told us the information already over the phone!

## Pupil Premium Plus Payments

I have made arrangements for all Pupil Premium Plus payments to be made to schools for the Summer term. Our looked after children are returning to school places in the targeted year groups, and an increasing number will be taking up their offer of a school place as 'vulnerable children'. I want the funding to be with those who need it, so will make sure it is with schools as soon as possible.

You are still asked to maintain the PEP and review the outcomes by the end of term in July, ready for the new academic year. This is particularly important of course for those pupils in transition and starting new schools in September. The distribution of Pupil Premium Plus is set out in our policy which you can find on our Virtual School webpage [here](#) in the *Support for Designated Teachers* section.



## Thrive



Please remember for those of you who are Thrive trained, there are some fantastic resources on the [Thrive website](#) and now is a perfect time to review any outstanding Thrive plans and get Thrive embedded within the whole school culture. Thrive plans and assessments can be shared with any staff members who come into contact with the pupil and shared with carers to ensure a consistent message is being given at both school and home. If you have a Thrive plan, can you please upload to the ePEP under the document section.

## Virtual School Webpage



If you haven't already done so, please take a look at the [Virtual School - Coronavirus \(Covid-19\)](#) section of our webpage. There is a heading with links for Designated Teachers where we are posting key information and resources for you relating to the lockdown/school closure period. As ever, if you have any ideas for items to include then just let me know.

## School Places

A number of our looked after children have had to temporarily attend other schools or provisions during lockdown to prevent placement breakdowns. Can we say a huge thank you to all of those involved. The response from Designated Teachers and Headteachers and the speed with which you have been able to put provision in place has been incredible and really has made a difference to these young people.



## What's happened to Ofsted

I joined a Virtual School Head's webinar last week and there was an HMI from Ofsted there as a guest. He shared some interesting thinking from Ofsted about inspection and returning to 'normality'. He said that:

- Ofsted is learning from this pause in normal schooling, which is emphasising that one size doesn't fit all
- relationships are key and where there is good multi-agency working which leads to sound decisions in the best interests of children then it should be recorded, with the rationale, so that when we come back to inspections that Ofsted can see why decisions were made
- Ofsted will be more active in the next few weeks, particularly in children's social care, to look at IFAs and children's homes, targeting those where there are concerns or less knowledge of the quality of provision
- Ofsted is working hard to understand the context we are all working in but want to know that a. children are safe and b. leaders have a firm grip on current arrangements and plans to return to greater normality
- Ofsted doesn't want inspection to be an unnecessary burden but the necessary reassurance needs to be provided to the wide group of stakeholders

- there isn't talk of firm timescales but at the moment there is a hope that September will look more normal for schools, and that Ofsted will return to work in a phased way but probably not fully until sometime in the new year.

## ESLAC Psychologists

The latest in our series of 10 things you should know.....leaflets is now available on our webpage. I have included the main points here to support your planning for the return to school of more of our looked after children. I think you will find it useful.



The Virtual School ESLAC team has three Psychologists who work with Northumberland looked after children. They have a specific role. Their focus is to ensure the emotional health and wellbeing of Northumberland looked after children is supported so that they can build their resilience and in turn their readiness to learn.

- 1 We carry out an initial bespoke assessment when a young person comes into care. This means it looks different for each young person depending on their key needs at that time.
- 2 We like to talk to a wide range of people to collect their views on situations, we call this a consultation.
- 3 We can offer a wide range of advice and support on a number of issues. For example; anxiety, friendships, management of emotions, bereavement and resilience.
- 4 The young person's voice and feelings are central to our work as is their psychological well being.
- 5 Our advice is based on psychological theory principles and models which we use to guide our support.
- 6 We can be involved in key meetings around a child, for example first Peps, care team meetings and LAC reviews. This can be very helpful, particularly when the situation is complex.
- 7 For some young people, where we feel it may be helpful, we can offer some therapeutic support, for example, around building and developing resilience. This can be delivered by ourselves or by one of our colleagues within the Virtual School.
- 8 We can offer advice and signposting for young people who have been adopted or are placed on a special guardianship order (PLAC).
- 9 We can offer training packages to schools to support with staff CPD around how to implement trauma informed approaches in schools. You can also contact us to discuss other areas where we may be able to deliver training.
- 10 When we have completed work with a young person we will sometimes summarise this work in a psychological report. This report will look different depending upon the needs of the young person and the work that has been completed, i.e. Initial assessment upon entering care or other referrals. Sometimes the report comes in a more formal format and other times this may be in the form of a review meeting or e-mail feedback. These reports should be used to inform PEP outcomes and will be added to the PEP for future reference.