



# Learn Achieve Celebrate

Information and guidance  
for Designated Teachers of Looked After and  
Previously Looked After Children in  
Northumberland  
December 2021

## Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report 2021



The annual report of our Virtual School Headteacher, Jane Walker, has now been published.

You can view and download a copy by following this link:  
[Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report 2021](#)

Thank you for contributing to the successes and achievements that make this report so positive.



## Big Ask Outcomes for Looked After Children



Thousands of children in care answered the Children's Commissioner's Big Ask survey and told us about their hopes and fears for the future. The Big Ask had an unprecedented response from children in care and those receiving support from social services. Almost 6,000 children in care and 13,000 children with a social worker took part, sharing thoughts on all aspects of their lives.

We heard that children in care share the same aspirations as their peers – for example to get a good job, having enough money and receive a good education. And for many children, care has provided the supportive foundation for them to achieve these goals.

The majority of children in care aged 9-17 (63%) said they are happy with their lives overall, yet sadly we found that children in care are significantly more likely to be unhappy with their lives than other children. We learnt that children in care worry more about personal relationships and material circumstances than other children, who are more likely to be concerned about the wider world. For example, children in care were notably less likely than other 9-17 year olds to say that having a healthy environment and planet was an important future priority for them (14% of children in care vs. 22% of other children).

The largest difference in the responses between children in care and others was in relation to having good mental health: 40% of children in care said this was one of their main future priorities, compared with 52% of other children.

Clearly these children do not have high demands; they simply want the security and stability in their everyday lives that other children take for granted. They tell stories of bureaucratic processes which disrupt their routines and mark them out as different. Many have lost confidence that they will get the support they need, either as children or when they turn 18.

It is encouraging that most children in care (63%) think that they will probably have a better life than their parents – higher than other 9 to 17 year olds (52%). Yet this finding hints at hardships their parents faced

too and therefore the need to break cycles of intergenerational adversity, so that children do not inherit disadvantages their parents faced.

Children in care told us that having a good education and a good career were top priorities for them. Let's continue to be aspirational for our looked after children and care leavers in Northumberland, get them back on track with their education, and celebrate their achievements loudly and widely.

The Big Ask: The Big Answer report is available to read [here](#).

## Getting our looked after children back on track at school

If you are working with any of our school aged looked after children then you have an important part to play in getting them back on track at school. To help reduce the impact of lost learning caused by the pandemic, we want to make the most of the recovery programme that is in place and use the additional funding to have maximum impact. In your daily work with your looked after child, at PEP, Looked After and EHCP reviews it might be helpful to know that:



- **Pupil Premium Plus** has not changed. Schools still receive £1450 for every eligible Northumberland looked after child and the Outcomes section of their Personal Education Plan (PEP) should show how that funding is being spent to get the child back on track and accelerate their academic progress;
- a new one-off **Recovery Premium** has been made available for primary and secondary schools, building on the Pupil Premium Plus. Schools will be able to use this funding as they see best to support disadvantaged pupils including their looked after children. In addition, the Virtual School has received Recovery Premium funding that schools will be able to access for children with the most complex and high levels of need, once they have used other funding such as Pupil Premium Plus, their own Recovery Premium and any SEND funding that might be available. How this funding is being spent should be recorded in the child's PEP;
- **the National Tutoring Programme (NTP)** has been introduced so that schools can work with highly trained tutors to run one-to-one, online or small group teaching with specialist tutors. Schools have discretion to identify the pupils most likely to benefit from support and this may include looked after children. In addition, the Virtual School has received funding for school led tutoring that will be given to the schools or alternative providers working with the looked after children we are targeting for additional intensive support.

Some children have found the return to school more difficult than others, and this is showing in the rising numbers of fixed term exclusions, persistent absence (school attendance below 90%) and mid-year school moves. We want you to work with us at the Virtual School to address these challenges. If you have concerns about a looked after child or want to enquire about support in school then please contact the ESLAC team – our Deputy Virtual School Headteacher (and ESLAC team manager) is **Tara Prescott**, [tara.prescott@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:tara.prescott@northumberland.gov.uk), **07767 22109**

## Child Trust Fund for Sixth Formers

[The Share Foundation](#) is actively trying to support all looked after children and care leavers aged 16-19 to locate their Child Trust Fund accounts.

If you have a looked after child or care leaver in your sixth form our Careers' Advisers – Andrea Johnson and Caitlin Calvert – can help you to find out if they have already found their Child Trust Fund or if not, how to apply.

Please help us in Children's Services to make sure our children and young people receive their entitlement to this fund to support their transition to adulthood.

## Lisa Cherry follow up

Thank you for your positive feedback about our Autumn Conference with keynote speaker Lisa Cherry. Lisa's resources are available on the [Designated Teacher padlet](#), and we will plan how to follow up our learning from her session with the Designated Teacher Working Group.



We would like to continue the discussion about School Belonging. Lisa told us that multiple studies show that having a sense of school belonging is:



“positively related to student functioning such as students' school motivation their social-emotional functioning such as their self-esteem and their academic achievement but negatively related to school dropout” (Korpershoek, 2019).

Let us know what you have been doing since the conference, and what you would like us to do as a Virtual School.

## Mental Health Support

While many children are excited, the festive season is not always an easy time for looked after children. Whether that's because it brings up bad memories of Christmases past or reinforces that they are not with their own family, for many children it's a bittersweet time of year. In school, you may see changes in behaviour, presentation, or how the pupil is able to manage situations. If they're struggling, please contact ESLAC for support.

Kooth is available to support Young People aged 11-25 across Northumberland and North Tyneside. Their website is available 24/7, 365 days of the year, giving Young People access to articles, discussion boards, peer to peer support and self-help activities, alongside the opportunity to contribute to all parts of the site. Young People can also speak, via text based chat, with one of their online counsellors or emotional wellbeing practitioners between 12 noon and 10pm Monday-Friday and between 6pm and 10pm on Saturday and Sunday, although service times are subject to change during the holiday period please see the graphic:

**kooth**

**Our team is still here to provide mental wellbeing support over the holiday period.**

**Chat Availability Dates and Times**

<b>Thursday 23/12/21</b> 12pm - 10:00pm	<b>Monday 27/12/21</b> 4pm - 8:00pm	<b>Friday 31/12/21</b> 12pm - 6:00pm
<b>Friday 24/12/21</b> 12pm - 8:00pm	<b>Tuesday 28/12/21</b> 4pm - 8:00pm	<b>Saturday 1/01/22</b> 4pm - 8:00pm
<b>Saturday 25/12/21</b> 4pm - 8:00pm	<b>Wednesday 29/12/21</b> 12pm - 10:00pm	<b>Sunday 2/01/22</b> 6pm - 10:00pm
<b>Sunday 26/12/21</b> 6pm - 10:00pm	<b>Thursday 30/12/21</b> 12pm - 10:00pm	<b>Monday 3/01/22</b> 4pm - 8:00pm

Find support today by visiting [kooth.com](https://www.kooth.com)

## Emotional wellbeing at Christmas

On a scale between 1 and 10,  
how are you doing?



IF YOU ARE BETWEEN  
1 AND 5:

What would move you  
up a number or two?

What is helping you to cope and  
get through these tougher times?


When things are going better,  
what will you notice is different?

IF YOU ARE BETWEEN  
6 AND 10:

What is helping you  
to be here?

What can you do more of  
to stay here or move up?

What does being at this  
number tell you that you need?

 WholeHearted School Counseling

## NERAP and Choices Together



[North East Raising Aspirations Partnership](#) is a collaboration of the five universities in the North East of England. Their vision is to improve higher education progression in the region and to ensure that young people in the North East are fully supported to make informed decisions about their future. Working alongside

key stakeholders, they focus on outreach activities where added value can be achieved collaboratively, creating targeted and progressive interventions for students currently under-represented in higher education.

The new Choices Together programme provides an intensive and progressive set of interventions supporting aspiration, attainment, and study skills for targeted young people from Year 7 to Year 13. The programme will be a blended model of face-to-face sessions, online sessions and campus-based events with no charge for any of the activities. Travel will be arranged for all in-person sessions and they welcome all care experienced Young People and Young Carers, even if they have never considered higher education.

This is a great opportunity for looked after children to experience HE in a relaxed and non-pressured environment and meet new people. Pupils can sign up at any point and take part in as much or as little of the programme as they wish.

The sessions are open to all care experienced students, including any young person who is:

- living with foster carers
- living in a residential children's home
- being looked after at home under a supervision order
- living with friends or relatives in kinship care – either through a formal arrangement (e.g. a Special Guardianship order) or an informal arrangement without local authority support.



## Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy

The service has relocated, new phone number and address:

Paediatric Speech & Language Therapy  
Shiremoor Resource Centre  
Earsdon Road,  
Shiremoor  
NE27 0HJ

North Tyneside Tel: 0191 297 9031  
Northumberland Tel: 0191 297 9019



### Before you go.....

Before you leave for your well-earned Christmas holiday, can you please make sure that you have **reviewed the Outcomes** section of each child's ePEP and submitted it so that Pupil Premium Plus can be sent to you for this term, and complete and submit each child's **Progress Review for the Autumn Term** by 31<sup>st</sup> December.

THANK YOU!!!!



**Have a very very merry Christmas,  
and we look forward to working with you in 2022**

### Contact Us

Here are contact details for teams and services that you might need when working with looked after children. Let us know if you need any others:

- OneCall 01670 536 400
- ESLAC 01670 622779
- Email: [eslac.info@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:eslac.info@northumberland.gov.uk)
- CYPS 01670 502 700
- Family Placement 01670 626 262
- IROs 01670 624888

Virtual School Headteacher: Jane Walker



Northumberland  
County Council