



Learn Achieve Celebrate

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

July 2021

Introducing the padlet for Designated Teachers

Here it is, the padlet for Designated Teachers where you can find information and resources to support you in your special role. We're putting everything you need on here instead of our webpage, so be sure to bookmark it for easy access.

Let us know if you have any ideas for extra content. Follow the link –

[DESIGNATED TEACHER PADLET](#)



New duty for Virtual School Headteachers to promote the education of children with a social worker

From September 2021, the role of the Virtual School Headteacher (VSH) will be extended to promote the education of children with a social worker.

This new duty aims to use the experience and expertise of VSHs, giving them strategic leadership responsibility. VSHs are not being asked to provide support to individual children and their families.

The new duty does not affect Designated Teachers, but you might be asked for your expertise or to share your training about barriers to learning for children with a social worker, such as attachment and ACES.



The government's [Children in Need review](#) in 2019 found that children with a social worker do worse than their peers at every stage of their education and poor outcomes persist, even after social worker involvement ends. Experiences of adversity and trauma can create barriers to education that affect attendance, learning, behaviour and wellbeing. However, with the right support in place, children can overcome these barriers to reach their potential.

Virtual School Heads, who have statutory responsibilities for looked-after and previously looked-after children, are well positioned to enhance partnerships between agencies and raise aspirations for this cohort of children. The impact should be the closing of the attainment gap so that children can achieve their potential.

In Northumberland we have a strong starting point, with support services for school attendance, children missing education and schools' safeguarding already working together in the Virtual School. Planning is underway so that we can begin implementation of the duty from September, and professionals will receive further information in due course. The planning will focus on the training and resources needed to:

- enhance partnerships between education settings and the local authority so agencies can work together
- identify the needs of the cohort and address barriers to poor educational outcomes and ensure pupils make educational progress
- offer advice and support to key professionals to help children make progress, including through

- increasing their confidence in using evidence-based interventions
- promote practice that supports children’s engagement in education, recognising that attending an education setting can be an important factor in helping to keep children safe from harm.

DfE research into improving educational outcomes for children with a social worker will continue, and all VSHs will contribute to this as they fulfil their new duty from September.

This new duty is explained in more detail in DfE guidance [Promoting the education of children with a social worker \(June 2021\)](#).

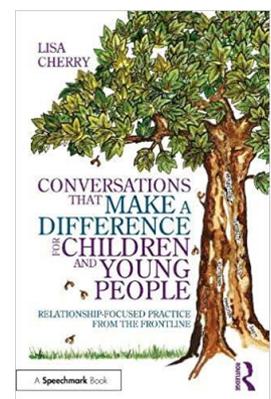
Designated Teacher Autumn Conference

Please put this date in your diary already – 10th November 2021. It’s the date of our Autumn Conference and we are thrilled to have Lisa Cherry as our keynote speaker. Lisa’s mission is *to provide accessible, scientifically grounded knowledge and information to all those working with and around trauma, resilience and recovery.*

She will be launching our approach to the new duty for Virtual School Headteachers to promote the education of children with a social worker, and will be supporting our ambition to have attachment aware and trauma informed schools in Northumberland.

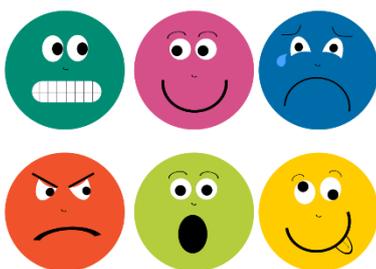
The conference will be a Zoom call, the link will be sent in the Autumn term, and bring as many colleagues as you like – your Designated Safeguarding Leads and Attendance Leads in particular.

In the meantime, some summer reading – check out Lisa’s [website](#) and her book *Conversations that Make a Difference for Children and Young People: Relationship-Focused Practice*



Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs)

From September 2021, in line with statutory requirements, all Designated Teachers will be asked to complete a strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) annually for all Northumberland looked after children on their school roll, not just when they enter care.



The score will be recorded on each pupil’s ePEP and can be used to assess the emotional wellbeing of each individual pupil aged 4 - 16 and help to identify where support is needed. The SDQ needs to be completed by someone who knows the child well and has regular contact with them, not necessarily the Designated Teacher as the response is over time rather than a specific day.

Further information and guidance can be found on our padlet. Look for SDQs!

A brief review of our year

Like everyone, we’ve had another incredibly busy academic year. We currently have 426 looked after children, 292 are statutory school age, and approximately 170 care leavers in Northumberland. The numbers of statutory school age children have remained consistent this year, averaging 295, but the cohort has been mobile with 110 new to care and 139 leaving care.



Of our 292 pupils, 87 have an EHCP, 60 have SEND and 64 attend out of county schools. In total we work across 143 different schools (excluding APs).

For all Northumberland children this year there has been a decrease in fixed-term exclusions, however for looked after children it's a worrying picture. There has been a significant increase since last year with 41 exclusions for 25 pupils from 18 schools. These children had a disrupted education before entering care, and this statistic puts them at a further disadvantage.

ESLAC has worked with schools and settings exploring how we can creatively support pupils with challenging and complex needs while offering advice and strategies for staff to help regulate the pupil, stabilise placements and reduce further disruption. Virtual School Educational Psychologists have delivered 16 training sessions in schools and offered drop-in clinics. Staff have supported, 1:1 with 98 pupils in relation to EMHWP, and/or behaviour, and our Intervention Workers have successfully delivered Drawing & Talking therapy to 33 pupils.

This year we have 40 phase change transitions. Combined PEP meetings between the current and receiving school have gone ahead and where possible visits have been arranged. There have been added difficulties this year due to the fluctuating cohort and increase in placement changes which has meant a subsequent change to the planned school, and this has been difficult for those children affected.

School placement stability remains a concern. Over the last two years we've seen a significant increase in mid-year school moves from 29 in 2019, 48 in 2020, to nearly double this academic year at 96, with a further 18 planned for September. 84% of this year's school moves are due to changes in residential placement.

We have a large Year 11 cohort of 47 pupils and all but three have destinations planned for September. The remaining three are being supported by our Lead Careers Adviser.

PEP completion rate is now 98%. This year 92% are Green or amber!

The implementation of the attendance document in the ePEP has been invaluable, not only from a safeguarding perspective throughout the pandemic but it allows us to quickly identify and issues and support appropriately. Our current attendance is 91%.

We have continued to work alongside the IRO and SEN teams to embed the process for aligning the EHCP and Looked After reviews. The number of joint meetings has increased to 51%, and we hope to see a further rise in September when schools share the annual review dates in advance.

20/21 has seen several changes to the team and we'd like to welcome Amy Slavin, SEN Lead Officer for Looked after Children, Amy will be based within the SEN team but work only with our looked after children population. Kate Hodgson, will be joining the team again as a permanent EP for one day per week alongside, Amelia Taylor who will work for two days a week. Caitlin Calvert will also be joining as a full time Careers Adviser.

Designated Teacher Working Group: DTWG



The Designated Teacher Working Group is a group of volunteers that meet with the Virtual School Headteacher and Deputy once every half term. We do lots of things together and plan the agendas for the Designated Teacher conferences. Some of the work we have done this year includes the pupil voice section of the ePEP and guidance for the SDQ process.

Would you like to join the group? If so, please contact us – email Jane or Tara.

Have you submitted it yet?

Our ePEP dashboard helps us to help you and to make sure that everything is in place for our looked after children. This week it is telling us that:

- 172 Summer Progress Reviews, due by 23rd July have not yet been submitted
- 169 termly reviews of outcomes, due by 23rd July have not yet been submitted (don't forget that PP+ is dependent on this being done)



- PEP quality assurance (red, amber and green) and PEP completion are still looking great. Well done!

So before you go on holiday this summer, please review your PEPs and click submit if you need to.

Thrive approach training

The Virtual School has invested heavily in the *Thrive approach* over the last several years. We have commissioned various Childhood Practitioner and Adolescent courses and the feedback has been very positive in relation to supporting children and the need to embed a whole school Thrive approach to support the pupils' emotional and mental health and wellbeing so that they are ready to learn.

Recently, Thrive has developed an Early Years course which we have commissioned to start in September. We have several settings signed up, including other teams within the local authority. Dates are below, and further information can be found at this

link: <https://www.thriveapproach.com/courses/practitioners/254/>

Watch this space for further info.....



Facebook



Designated Teachers in Northumberland, you now have your own Facebook page!

The purpose of the page is to keep connected, share good practice, ideas and resources. Please feel free to join and support each other, search for us at:

Northumberland VS Designated Teachers

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
- CYPS 01670 502 700
- Family Placement 01670 626 262
- IROs 01670 624888

Virtual School Headteacher: Jane Walker

