



Learn Achieve Celebrate

Information and guidance

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

March 2020

EXTRAORDINARY CORONAVIRUS SCHOOL CLOSURE BRIEFING

Should all looked after children be in school?

[DfE guidance](#) published on 19th March states that from 23rd March 2020 *if it is at all possible for children to be at home then they should be*. Decisions have been made for the 23rd March about the safest arrangement for each of Northumberland's looked after children based on individual assessments of each pupil involving you, the Virtual School, the foster carer or residential home and the social worker.

Some of our looked after children, including those who need specialist support or are in residential special schools and special provisions, will therefore be at school on Monday 23rd March.

For some children it will be safer for them to be at home with their foster carers and residential home staff where they can practice social distancing and continue to engage with their education.

The arrangements are fluid and may well change from day to day depending on the individual circumstances of each child. We will work closely with you and other professionals to make sure that our children are safe and that their arrangements are as stable as possible.

Useful DfE guidance on [vulnerable children and young people](#) was published on 22nd March 2020.

Monitoring school placements

We know that together we are trying to provide stability for looked after children during an evolving situation which is likely to be long term. How our children cope with that, their changing needs, changes which might be occurring at home and changes in staffing at school will all have an immediate impact.

From Monday 23rd March all school placements and home arrangements will therefore be monitored daily by the Virtual School in consultation with the Family Placement team. We want you to keep in touch with us so that we can make swift decisions about the best interests of each child.

Virtual School 360 google classroom

We're working hard to make sure that all of Northumberland's looked after children have a laptop and internet access so that they can use our Virtual School 360 google classroom. Looked after children without a school roll and those on a reduced timetable will be able to start straight away on Monday and most schools are setting it up for their pupils to use in school. Looked after children at home will be able to use Virtual School 360 in addition to the work set for them from school.

If you would like it set up for your looked after children please *contact Tara Prescott* and she will make the arrangements. The intention is to have all looked after children using it as the weeks progress.

The virtual classroom set up last week by our EOTAS health needs teachers and during the next few weeks will have many more resources added to it by our Virtual School teachers. Karen Jeff (Secondary) and Deborah Aubrook (Primary).

Supporting foster carers working with looked after children at home

Please keep in contact with the foster carers who are working with looked after children at home and supporting their education. You should keep in regular contact to find out what the child is doing, if they are occupied and how they are feeling. Praise and recognition for what they are achieving at home will be important to make sure that children still feel part of the school even though they can not attend at the moment.

If there is one, please share your pupils' Thrive plan with foster carers so that they can follow it at home and keep continuity. It will be particularly helpful in supporting those children who struggle with change or separation.

Foster carers and residential homes have already been given the following guidance by the Virtual School:

- Learning at home can be fun - baking, cookery, The Body Coach has some child friendly HITT workouts on youtube, play games, colour in and read together
- a list of [website links](#) aimed at various key stages
- the [myON login letter](#) so that hundreds of books can be accessed on line and the termly reading competition
- a [blank timetable](#) to try to keep a structured daily routine for children and minimise the worry and anxiety that disruption to familiar routines might cause
- some information on [managing conversations if children are worried](#) about the coronavirus
- [helping children to manage in unsettling times](#)

Members of the Virtual School team will be in touch with foster carers to support throughout this period of uncertainty.

Staying safe: remote teaching and learning

Advice to schools about staying safe when teaching and learning is remote was sent last week in the [Safe to Learn](#) bulletin. The advice that newsletter includes from the NCC IT team can also be found [here](#).

The impact of changes in routine

For the next couple of weeks at least it is likely that you may see a difference in behaviours from your looked after children which could potentially be more difficult to manage. Some children may be more introvert or some may be more challenging depending on their earlier childhood experiences. As their trusting adult who can't now provide certain answers, relationships might change slightly.

Factors which could potentially lead to outbursts include change to staffing and routine, not wearing a uniform, friends not being at school with them, contact being cancelled. It is possible that other children who they are now at school with didn't know previously who was looked after.

Wherever possible we all need to be thinking ahead. If possible, a meeting early in the week with individual looked after children would help – discuss with them their worries, give them a new timetable, show them the room their lessons will be in. And please ask the Virtual School if you need support or advice.

GCSE grades for Year 11 pupils and KS2 outcomes for Year 6 pupils

The government has now published information about [how GCSE grades will be calculated](#). More detail is needed and promised, but this is an early request from the Virtual School to involve us in any calculations for Year 6 and Year 11 pupils.

To support the final assessment process, requests for **PEP progress reviews** for the Spring Term will be sent out to you this week. Please could you, or your Designated Teacher substitute, complete the progress review and return it to us as soon as possible.

Keep in touch with us about what is happening in your school.

Online training for Designated Safeguarding Leads and school staff

Our Schools' Safeguarding Team Manager, Carol Leckie, has compiled a programme of online training for staff working from home or working on a rota to be in school. The courses will keep you in touch with key safeguarding matters and enhance your knowledge. Group 1 are courses available through [Learning Together](#) and Group 2 are external courses.

Group 1

- Safeguarding and Child Protection for Children's Workforce
- Domestic Abuse and Safeguarding Children
- Emotional Abuse
- Safeguarding Children with Disabilities
- FGM
- MAPP
- Signs of Safety
- Private Fostering
- Criminal Exploitation
- Early Help for Children and Families
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Child Protection Processes
- Honor Based Violence and Forced Marriage
- Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking
- Understanding SEN Support and EHCPs in Schools
- ROAR (mental health for primary schools)

Group 2

- ACEs ([Introduction to Adverse Childhood Experiences Early Trauma Online Learning](#)) produced by the Home Office Early Intervention Fund
- [Female Genital Mutilation](#) training
- [Honour Based Violence and Forced marriage](#)
- [Increasing Your Knowledge of Security and Counter Terrorism](#)

And other useful resources

1. Seven tips for headteachers coping with the coronavirus pandemic (Education Support Partnership)

Read more: <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/blogs/7-tips-headteachers-coping-coronavirus-pandemic>
Education Support Partnership Helpline 08000 562 561 (24 hours) Txt: 07909 341229

2. Coronavirus: safeguarding during school closure and self-isolation (The Key for School Leaders)

This article from The Key looks at ways to [keep in contact with vulnerable pupils](#).

3. Coronavirus: resources for Mental Health and Wellbeing (Heads Together)

[Heads Together](#) has published a free toolkit with resources and tips to help address anxiety arising from these challenging times.

The toolkit includes a booklet to support schools, videos to provide practical guidance and tips to schools, parents and carers about coronavirus (COVID-19) and mental health, activities to ease anxiety that can be done at school or at home and other helpful advice, helplines and resources for adults and children.

4. Podcast: Coronavirus and child mental health (The Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health)

Dr. Jon Goldin is a Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist who works at Great Ormond Street Hospital. In this podcast he discusses child mental health in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

Further information can be found [here](#).

5. Young Minds Helpline for parents and young people

- If there are concerns about a young person's mental health during this difficult time, you can contact the Young Minds Helplines.
- Parents Helpline: If you are a parent who needs advice about your child's mental health you can contact the Parents Helpline directly on 0808 802 between 9:30am-4pm
- YoungMinds Crisis Messenger: If you are a young person experiencing a mental health crisis you can text YM to 85258 for free 24/7 support
- The Young Minds website is [here](#).

What about Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and Pupil Premium Plus

As you know, PEPs are statutory documents and part of each child's care plan. So the PEP needs to stay in place to support the child's education whether or not they are learning in school or at home. Please can you try to keep the PEP up to date and use it to support the child's experience in school, and ask foster carers to work with you to review and record progress if the child is working at home.

Anticipating some of the questions you might ask us:

- Multi-agency PEP reviews will have to be postponed. Please record this on the PEP.
- Outstanding outcomes will automatically be closed off to alleviate unnecessary pressure for you and they'll be automatically removed from your inbox.
- If any of your PEPs are still 'red' then we would still ask you to review and resubmit as we still need to monitor progress and ensure that all support mechanisms are working effectively for the children.
- Pupil Premium Plus for the Spring Term has all been paid, even if you didn't manage to carry out and submit the termly review of outcomes before schools closed.
- Pupil Premium Plus will all be paid for the Summer Term even if the termly review or the multi-agency 6 month review doesn't take place and/or if the child is working at home.
- The quality of the PEP is still important and ESLAC staff will still be at work to support you with content and completion.
- Further information and guidance about continuing with PEP meetings and reviews will be in the next Learn, Achieve, Celebrate briefing.

Looked after children with SEND

Many of our looked after children with SEND will be in school on Monday 23rd March. Levels of staffing and support will be in place to make sure that their needs are met each day, including resources and additional staffing from the local authority when necessary. If you have any concerns about a looked after child with SEND then please contact the Virtual School straight away.

On Saturday 21st March the government published guidance for isolating in residential education settings which also includes advice for special schools and social workers making visits. The guidance can be viewed [here](#).

Sustaining the right level of support

We think that all looked after children will have the right level of support they need in school from Monday 23rd March. Please contact us immediately if you think that this is not the case and we will work with you to take action to support the best interests of that child. We are working with looked after children in over 70 of our schools, so are relying on you to let us know when we are needed. Call your Virtual School link worker directly or use our generic details and we will get the message straight away.

The role of the Designated Teacher

The Designated Teacher still has a crucial role to play when schools are closed for their usual business. It is vital that we keep in touch with you frequently and regularly. Can you let us know as of 23rd March if:

- You are the Designated Teacher and you are at school full time
- You are the Designated Teacher and you are self-isolating but still at work
- You are covering for the Designated Teacher who is not at work or working at school on a rota bases. If so, can you send us your name and contact details please.

Keeping in touch with the care team

If you are concerned about a child and can't contact the social worker or another agency then we can help. Just get in touch.

Keeping in touch with the Virtual School

All of the Virtual School teams – ESLAC, Education Welfare, EOTAS Health Needs, Schools' Safeguarding – are at work and trying to maintain business as usual. We want to keep in touch and will send Learn Achieve Celebrate briefings and Safe to Learn briefings at least once a fortnight.

If you need to contact us then please use the details below. We will try to respond by the end of the working day or within 24 hours of receiving your message.

The following generic mailboxes are monitored throughout the working day;

- If you have a query for the **Education Welfare** team please email educationwelfare@northumberland.gov.uk
- If you have a query for the **looked after children's** team please email eslac.info@northumberland.gov.uk
- If you have a query for the **Schools' Safeguarding team or children educated other than at school team** please email - eotashealth@northumberland.gov.uk

If you have a more urgent query or request please telephone 01670 622787. This number is being forwarded to a member of our team who will be able to contact other team members for you.

Virtual School newsletter for looked after children

The Virtual School is going to start sending a newsletter to our looked after children to make sure that they feel a sense of belonging and that we are all still part of their lives. We realise that many Year 6 and Year 11 pupils will have had their last day at school on Friday and if they are now staying at home might perhaps be feeling a little lost.

So we're going to contact them all this week and ask them to take ownership of our newsletter idea, give it a name and tell us what they would like included. The focus will be on education and learning, so might have advice on Lexia and myON for example. We'll use it as a way of continuing to find reasons to give out certificates and rewards. If you have any ideas for it then please let us know too!

The role of the ESLAC team

The ESLAC team is still available to provide a high level of support to schools and looked after children. Roles and responsibilities have been changed to respond to circumstances and we thought it would be useful if you know what our key workers will be doing (subject to further changes as things evolve each day).

- Toni McGuire and Julie Robson Grainger will be working with children and Designated Teachers to support **transition** to new schools in September. A Virtual School transition resource will be provided so that foster carers and residential staff can support at home, plus guidance for sending and receiving schools, and resources to promote good emotional and mental health and wellbeing to cope with change.

- Julie will also be focussing on children in **Early Years** who will no longer be in nursery settings during the closure period.
- Ali Hindhaugh will be doing **outreach work** into schools to visit children and Designated Teachers and when appropriate deliver **therapies** such as Thrive and Drawing and Talking. Ali will be a key link with social care.
- Sheila Kirkup will still have oversight of **special schools and children with EHCPs**, visiting schools and children placed in and out of county.
- Our Virtual School teachers, Deborah Aubrook (Primary) and Karen Jeff (Secondary) will be developing and adding resources to the **Virtual School 360 google classroom** and monitoring school placements
- Karen will also be making sure we have all the Year 6 and Year 11 progress and attainment data so that we can liaise with you about end of key stage outcomes and Year 11 grade calculations. Karen will continue to be the link worker for secondary schools.
- Andrea Johnson and Carol Barnfather will be making sure that children are supported appropriately for leaving school, keeping them calm and helping to put in place **EET (education, training and employment) pathways** for September. They will make sure that Northumberland Adolescent Services is fully involved and will continue when possible to hold EET Clinics.
- Carol will also support children who were in **alternative provision** or re-engaging with education before the school closures started.
- Andrea will also support those young people who are in **further and higher education** who are now experiencing disruption with those courses and their learning.
- Carol Barnfather will be supporting the education of looked after children living in residential homes and will arrange weekly phone calls or visits.
- Toni McGuire and our Educational Psychologists – Carol Booth, Jenny Shannon and Kate Hodgson – will be continuing **initial assessments on entry to care** and will try to do those in homes as well as schools. They plan to provide a fortnightly wellness resource for foster carers residential homes with guidance on themes such as coping and managing anxiety.

Key contacts

There will be teams and services that you need to support during this school closure period. Hopefully this initial list of contact details will help, let us know if you need any others:

- OneCall 01670 536 400
- CYPS 01670 502 700 (CYPS, prescriptions, crisis)
- Family Placement 01670 626 262
- IRO's (Independent Reviewing Officers) 01670 624888
- SEND 01670 623 555
- SEND Co-ordinators:
 - **Sarah Jeremiah** for Ashington, NCEA, Morpeth, Ponteland and Berwick schools:
Sarah.Jeremiah@northumberland.gov.uk, Tel 01670 622 760
 - **Dawn Glass** for Cramlington, Amble, Hexham, Prudhoe, Alnwick and Haydon Bridge schools:
Dawn.Glass@northumberland.gov.uk, Tel 01670 624 657
 - **Jannine Baxter** for Blyth, Bede, Bedlington and Astley schools:
Jannine.Baxter@northumberland.gov.uk, Tel 01670 622 752

Virtual School Headteacher: Jane Walker

