



Northumberland
County Council



Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report

2017-18



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FOREWORD

In Northumberland we are highly ambitious for all of our children, and our looked after children are a key priority. We take our role as corporate parents very seriously and want all looked after children to achieve the best they can and promote success into adulthood, whatever age they came into our care.

The role of the Virtual School is to promote the educational achievement of children in our care whether educated in Northumberland or placed out of the county. The Virtual School has high aspirations for and strives to close the attainment gap between our children and their peers.

Our Virtual School works tirelessly to provide effective support and make a difference to the education outcomes for our looked after children and young people throughout their journey through school and this report reflects the impact and the successes over the past year.



Cath McEvoy-Carr
Executive Director of Children's and Adult Services



Wayne Daley
Deputy Leader of the Council and
Portfolio holder for Children's Services

INTRODUCTION

The ethos of Northumberland's Virtual School is captured in our **LEARN, ACHIEVE, CELEBRATE** headline. Our mission is to provide support to our looked after children so that they can do the very best they can at school, and to plan with them clear academic and vocational pathways into education, employment and training. We want to enjoy that journey with them and minimise the disruptions along the way.

This report shows how increasingly effective the Virtual School is and how growth has been achieved through strong integrated working with partners, especially our schools and academies. Education outcomes are improving over time, and a further drive to accelerate progress at all key stages should ensure that this trend continues.

Northumberland has an aspirational but self-aware Virtual School so as well as being proud of our achievements we know that there is still work to be done and this is captured in the Virtual School Improvement Plan for 2018-20.

Please note that the names of looked after children and care leavers used in case studies, individual stories and quotations have been changed to respect privacy and to fulfil safeguarding requirements. The local and national data which informs the report are contained in a separate outcomes document.

Our looked after children are surrounded by professionals who care about their education. I am confident that we will see further improvements next year and look forward to working in partnership with you to make a difference to the lives of our looked after children.



Jane Walker

Northumberland's Virtual School Headteacher

STRENGTHS

The Virtual School continues to grow in strength and this year evidence of positive impact on education outcomes is much broader, as we delivered on the objectives of the Virtual School Improvement Plan:

- No **permanent exclusion** of a looked after child since 2008
- No referrals to Secretary of State to **direct the admission** of a looked after child to school
- 5 year trend well above the national average of increasing numbers of looked after children and care leavers progressing into **school sixth forms and further education**
- **Lower NEET rate for care leavers with EHCPs** than for all looked after children/care leavers
- The Children's Commissioner agrees that **school placement stability** for looked after children is very good and better than national averages
- **Education outcomes** have been consistent for the last two years and are mostly in line with national averages:
 - 75% of looked after children achieved the Phonics standard which is well above the national average
 - 71.4% of looked after children achieved age related expectations in the combined measure of reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 1 which out-performs all non-looked after Northumberland pupils
- **Trends** in achievement since 2016 are steadily improving in all measures (including combined) at Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Schools tell us that **progress** from the starting point of entering care is good at Key Stage 2 and improving at Key Stage 4
- Effective use of **Pupil Premium Plus funding**, with positive impact evident from the Virtual School's Educational Psychologist and in the application of Thrive attachment training
- An innovative process for integrating **ePEPs and Pathway Plans** to support transition
- **Clear and systematic procedures and processes** for supporting looked after children, including targeted support to help them achieve well in their schools
- **Positive and effective working relationships** between Virtual School staff and Designated Teachers in Northumberland and out of county schools
- A **detailed improvement plan** for the 2017-18 academic year, based on continuous self-evaluation
- Successful **integrated working** with partners, for example the VSH attends the Dynamic Risk Register and CETR which are managed through children's services

THE KEY THINGS WE NEED TO DO NEXT

There is still work to be done to ensure that improvement is continuous and in 2018-19 our plans will focus on:

- helping more pupils to make better than expected progress
- tackling under-achievement at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4
- improving the education experience of looked after children with SEND
- reviewing the impact of 1 to 1 tuition
- reducing fixed term exclusions
- reducing the number of persistent absentees to improve overall attendance
- improving attendance at training of Designated Teachers
- the emotional and mental health and wellbeing of pupils and embedding the use of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs)
- improving the quality and completion rate of the new ePEP

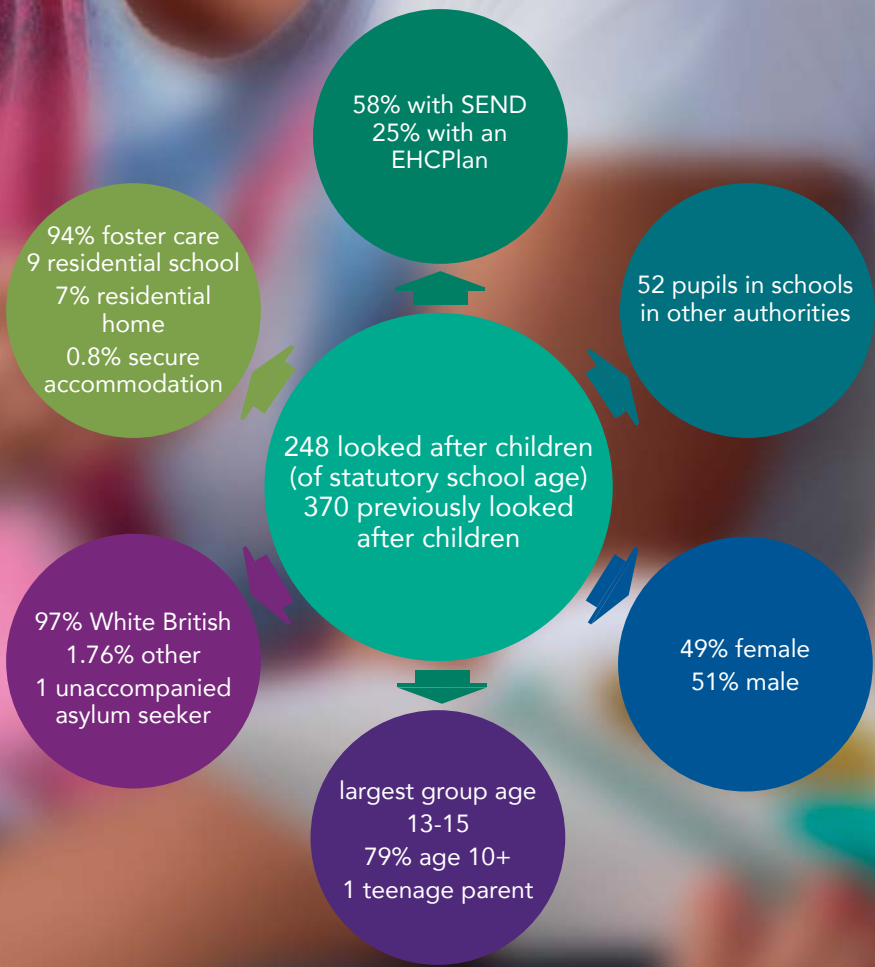


Figure 1: Profile of the learners in Northumberland's Virtual School (at 31.08.18)

AMBITION


Every Virtual School is unique but we are united in our commitment to improving the lives of looked after children through education. In Northumberland we are active corporate parents and settle for nothing less than we would for our own children, including the quality of the education they receive and the opportunities that are created for them as they transition into adulthood. The status of the Virtual School in Northumberland allows us to be ambitious and deliver on our promises to our children in care.

The Virtual School Headteacher (VSH) has a wider role as a senior manager with responsibilities for inclusion support and safeguarding standards in schools and is a sub-group chair for the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The MALAP, or multi-agency looked after partnership, has Terms of Reference as the governing body of the Virtual School and is accountable to the Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting Cabinet Advisory Group (SCPCAG). During 2017-18 MALAP was chaired by the Executive Director of Children's Services.

The VSH was supported by the Education Support for Looked After Children, or ESLAC, team comprising a team manager of three education support workers, an educational psychologist, education and careers advisers for 14+ and 18+ children and young people, and an inclusion support worker. The Virtual School was supported by a data and admin officer and clerical assistant. Apart from the VSH, teachers were not included in this staffing model.

What changed in 2017-18

- From 1st December 2017 there was new leadership in Northumberland with the promotion of Cath McEvoy-Carr to the role of Executive Director of Children's Services.
- After a review of membership and Terms of Reference, the VSH became a permanent member of the Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting Cabinet Advisory Group (SCPCAG) which monitors Northumberland's Corporate Parenting Strategy (2017-2020).
- Revised statutory guidance for Virtual Schools and for Designated Teachers was published in February 2018, to take effect from September 2018. The additional responsibilities were the consequence of The Children and Social Work Act 2017. The key changes are that:
 - we now have a role to promote the education achievement of previously looked after pupils ie those learners who achieve permanence from care through adoption, special guardianship or a child arrangements order
 - we are required to support children from the age of eligibility for early education at age 2 up to age 19+ for care leavers and 25 for care leavers with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)
 - there is an increased emphasis on the mental health of looked after children and creating the right conditions for learning
 - we are required to proactively build interagency relationships
 - we take a firm approach to maximising the impact of Pupil Premium Plus
 - we are proactive in building relationships with Designated Teachers to help ensure behavioural issues are resolved early.
- The DfE pledged to support local authorities with the additional cost of resourcing the expansion of Virtual Schools up to 2020.
- Northumberland published a strategy for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and new leadership arrangements are in place to support its effective implementation.



Every Virtual School is unique but we are united in our commitment to improving the lives of looked after children through education.



What we did

- A 3 day review of the Virtual School was commissioned in January 2018 and carried out by a former Ofsted inspector (HMI) and School Improvement Partner (SIP). Recommendations from the report were integrated into the Virtual School Improvement Plan.
- To support the implementation of the new requirements:
 - training was delivered to Designated Teachers and their Headteachers at 5 well-attended training sessions and 3 primary phase Headteachers' meetings
 - our SIPs focussed on the achievement of looked after children during their summer term school visits
 - Achievement for All (a national not-for-profit education organisation) was commissioned to deliver a diverse training programme for Designated Teachers, including emotion coaching and meeting the needs of previously looked after children
 - staffing changes were made including dedicated Educational Psychologists for looked after and previously looked after children and a Careers Guidance Officer for care leavers 18+.
- We continued our involvement with the PALAC project (Promoting the Achievement of Looked After Children) in partnership with our regional Virtual Schools and University College London.
- In February 2018 the VSH participated in Practice Week, an internal review and self-evaluation of children's social care conducted by senior managers in children's services. The VSH focussed on Northumberland Adolescent Services which informed the development of Priority 5 of the Quality Improvement Plan regarding pathways into education, training and employment for looked after children and care leavers.
- The Virtual School was invited to become a strategic partner of the Dales Teaching School Alliance. This is a network of 14 schools across the region led by The Dales Special School in Blyth and in conjunction with other services such as CYPS and the NHS.
- A young person joined us from Percy Hedley college in the summer term for work experience and then became part of the team in a newly created internship.
- Our General Business and Admin apprentice in the Virtual School, who is a Northumberland care leaver, progressed to the second year of her apprenticeship.

What will change in 2018-19

- Participation in a Northumberland peer challenge focussing on care leavers, postponed from February 2018.
- To further implement the new statutory requirements and deliver on our priorities we will:
 - commission teachers to research interventions which work and identifying under-achievement in looked after learners
 - invest in Educational Psychologist expertise to plan our offer of support for previously looked after children.
- Participation and scrutiny from the anticipated SEND local area inspection.
- Integrated working with the CCG and Health partners as *transforming children and young people's mental health trailblazers*.

STABILITY

The Education Support for Looked After Children (ESLAC) team's core contribution to improving education outcomes for children in care is by working with schools and other professionals to make sure that the conditions for learning are right. Achieving stability is key so that each pupil's journey through the education system and into education, employment or training is as smooth as it can be.

What we did

- Arrangements for mid-year school placement moves were reviewed and a draft protocol was introduced to trial in 2018-19.
- Created the substantive post of Virtual School Educational Psychologist who contributed to the training programme for Designated Teachers, introduced a holistic assessment on entry to care and worked with individual children in need of support.
- Schools were given advice and strategies (social stories, zones of regulation, lego therapy training) from our Educational Psychologist to support pupils who were in transition.
- The VSH is a member of the Local Transformation Plan Steering Group and participated at a strategic and operational level in multi-agency work to improve the emotional and mental health and wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers.
- Improved the Virtual School's use of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).
- Achievement for All was commissioned to deliver a CLA (Child Looked After) Programme in up to 10 volunteer schools, which focussed on the use of SDQs.
- A comprehensive training programme for Designated Teachers was offered including delivery from training partners Thrive (an approach to attachment), Achievement for All, the LSCB and our Virtual School Educational Psychologist.
- Specific training for foster carers was commissioned from Thrive and from Northumberland Psychological Services.
- A trainee Educational Psychologist was commissioned to evaluate the impact of our investment in the Thrive attachment approach.
- Education Welfare officers provided guidance to schools on completing registers to ensure accuracy when recording events relating to looked after children, such as engagement with alternative providers, health appointments and PEP meetings, or contact held during the school day.
- Ensured that looked after children who were at risk of missing out on their entitlement to suitable full time education were identified early and referred to the ESLAC KS4 Inclusion Support Worker (Northumberland's CME procedure for all children is the responsibility of the VSH).
- The ESLAC team manager monitored 13 looked after children through the Risk Management Group during the year and contributed regularly to effective integrated working on complex cases through the HLRP.
- The ESLAC Key Stage 4 Inclusion Support Worker continued to support the education of children in care who are young offenders and in custody. This year she supported 22 pupils in these circumstances, 1 from Year 7, 2 from Year 8, 3 from Year 9, 7 from Year 10 and 9 from Year 11.
- As part of The Promise to our looked after children the VSH pledged to reward every looked after pupil during 2017-18 for an education achievement.
- Funded the Family Placement team to deliver activities to support learning and positive outcomes for looked after children, with the aim of improving self-esteem, team work, self-confidence, communication, resilience and learning new skills. With the foster care service, children's homes and youth teams 3 residential events took place in Coquet, Brathay Cumbria and Dukeshouse Wood Tynedale which involved water sports, overnight stays and outward bound activities.
- Collaborated with the Family Placement Service to provide fostering households with laptop computers.
- Funded an integrated project with the Participation team to implement the Mind of My Own app so that the voice of every looked after child influences their PEP.

What we know

School placement stability

- School placement stability continues to be very good in all phases. The most recent Stability Index published by the Children's Commissioner shows that school placement stability for looked after children in Northumberland is very good compared to other local authorities:
 - 8% had a mid-year school move in 2016-17 compared to 10% nationally
 - 2% had at least one school move in both 2015-16 and 2016-17 compared to 4% nationally.
- 12 of our 285 school aged pupils experienced at least one school placement move during the year: 6 were pupils moving to long term carers and therefore needed to move to their new local school; 3 pupils moved to new schools for a fresh start and to avoid permanent exclusions; 1 pupil moved to a residential school and there were 2 managed moves.

School admissions

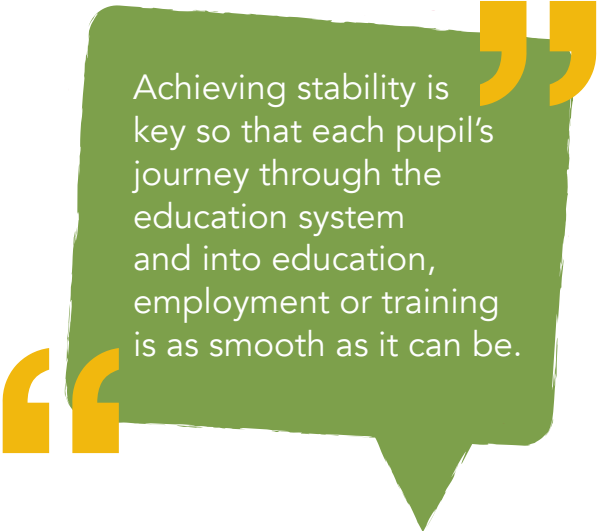
- There have been no referrals to the Secretary of State to force admission to school.
- No appeals were made relating to school places for looked after children.
- All children for whom a place in primary school was requested were allocated a place swiftly.
- There was evidence of some delay for pupils seeking admission to secondary schools.
- 2 pupils with SEND experienced a delay in admission to special school. Both pupils have complex needs and EHCPs and both were moved to specialist placements outside of Northumberland.

Engagement with full time education

- 2 term time holidays were taken this academic year, 1 of which was authorised.
- Since September 2017 we rewarded 350 looked after pupils for excellent attendance at school, and 16 pupils received our platinum award for 100% attendance all year.
- From September 2017 to July 2018, 3 of the 19 pupils referred directly to the Education Welfare team as missing from education were looked after children. All were located. 2 of the looked after children were adopted and had changed their surnames, 1 had moved to a Scottish authority.
- 20 looked after children, or 13.8%, were missing out on education and classed as persistent absentees in 2017-18, which is a significant increase since last year (8.8%).
- There was no clear correlation between school attendance and home placement, for example of the 20 persistent absentees 10 were in foster care, 5 in residential homes, 1 with a relative carer, 1 in hospital and 3 in a secure setting.
- Overall absence for looked after children has nearly doubled since last year to 6%.
- 21 pupils engaged in a programme involving alternative provision, ranging from Years 8 to 11. The majority were placed for reasons relating to behaviour, some were curriculum-related, others to meet their medical/mental health needs.

Exclusions

- Despite the county-wide and national picture of sharp increases in permanent exclusions during the last two years (and 123 in Northumberland), the Virtual School has maintained its record of no permanent exclusion of a looked after child since 2008.
- Local (and therefore provisional) data indicates that in 2017-18 for looked after children there were 128 fixed term exclusions resulting in 680 sessions being lost, relating to 43 children in 21 different schools. The rate has therefore tripled since 2016-17.
- Most recent DfE data is for 2016-17 and tells us that 13.82% of looked after children had at least one fixed term exclusion, which is higher than the regional and national averages.



Achieving stability is key so that each pupil's journey through the education system and into education, employment or training is as smooth as it can be.

Enrichment

- We commissioned another Thrive licensed practitioner course which 11 of the 12 Designated Teachers (primary) who participated successfully completed, bringing the total number of trained practitioners to 18.
- 4 sessions of Thrive training were delivered to 11 foster carers over a 4 month period. The carers were provided with knowledge and tools to support the children in their care to achieve positive outcomes.
- 7 pupils achieved the gold standard Expert Learner award.
- The VSH's Promise pledge to give every looked after pupil at least one reward for an academic achievement had been fulfilled by October 2017.
- 40 young people benefited from the residential camps arranged by Family Placement and 28 families learned new water sports together.

Impact assessment

Thrive feedback from foster carers

Gillian

Wow, is what I thought. It is the best training I've attended. I wish I had had this knowledge before I got a placement. It made so much sense and has made me look at X's behaviours in a completely different way. I feel enabled to make a difference in X.

Diane

The areas I have taken on board was the development of the brain and how that shuts down and holds our children back.

Margaret

Really enjoyed these training sessions. Although I've studied the theorists, this course concentrated on the neuroscience behind attachment and the types of behaviour displayed by children who haven't had the benefit of a nurturing start in life.

Carol

The info we were given and the practical activities has helped me feel I've stepped up a level of understanding and working with my children. I think this training should be for everyone who is a parent/carer, it seems so fundamental to emotional development.

- The vast majority of looked after children in Northumberland enjoy stable school placements, they attend well and through personalised provision are prevented from missing from or not receiving their entitlement to full time education.
- The significant increase in the number of fixed term exclusions is a real threat to school placement stability, learning and therefore achievement and is being urgently addressed.
- Wider inclusion issues facing our schools in all phases indicate that drift and reluctance to admit looked after children will be key challenges to overcome next year.
- Strategies for re-integrating pupils into school are effective, with 5 alternative programmes lasting for 6 months and 2 for only 3 months.
- The Northumberland context for overall absence (4.1%) and persistent absence (10.8%) for all pupils is very good. The local authority performs very well against regional local authorities and is consistently better than national averages. In that context at 6% overall absence for looked after children for the last academic year is comparable, but higher than regional and national averages for looked after children.
- The investment in Thrive attachment training is making a difference and 18 Designated Teachers as licensed practitioners are now able to screen whole classes and assess individual children to identify their underlying emotional needs and select practical activities to help them – see full Educational Psychologist research report.
- The Family Placement service has adopted the Thrive Secure Base Model in their recruitment, assessment, supervision and training of foster carers.
- Commissioning of educational psychology expertise in the Virtual School since September 2016 has improved emotional wellbeing and reduced disruptions to learning.



Pupil at Cambois First School

I'm a lot more talkative now than when I came to the school. I'm more helpful. I really like helping the younger pupils. I'm proud that I have 100% attendance. I was proud when I got 'pupil of the week' for concentrating hard. My progress file for behaviour is Green!

Pupil at Ellington First School

Since I came to Ellington, my behaviour and work is loads better. I am not as much trouble as I used to be. I still argue loads at home, but not so much at school - hardly ever really. The best thing is Mrs H helping me with my literacy and numeracy. Mrs A given me lots of help and support too - and she is funnier than you (directed at Mr Vardy!). Mrs A is trained in the use of THRIVE to support optimal social and emotional development.

What we are going to do next

- The Educational Psychologist will continue to develop ways of measuring emotional wellbeing.
- Roll out more Thrive training for Designated Teachers and foster carers and train all ESLAC staff so that they can support schools to embed the approach to improve outcomes.
- Continue to review the use of SDQs so that information can better inform support and programmes for learning for individual pupils and therefore have a positive impact on education achievement.
- Challenge delays in admission caused by SEND processes in other local authorities through our regional and national network of VSHs.
- Reduce the incidence of fixed term exclusions for looked after children.
- Reduce persistent absence and overall absence for looked after children.
- Have a key role in delivery of the looked after children section of Northumberland's Local Transformation Plan (2015-2020) which will see mental health champions trained in schools and integrated working with the Primary Mental Health Team.

QUALITY OF PROVISION

A Virtual School Headteacher is held to account for a child's outcomes but relies on another school to deliver the learning experience. So to achieve the very best outcomes for our looked after children we need to focus on what we have in common - high expectations and a good understanding of each pupil's capacity to learn. Evidence-based and focussed targets which are closely monitored and regularly reviewed by the school and Virtual School through the Personal Education Plan (PEP) are at the heart of what we do and we have a shared responsibility, as well as a statutory duty, to make sure that it is done well.

What we did

- To ensure that the Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) reached the right pupils at the right time, we distributed the funding through an agreement in the Outcomes section of the PEP.
- With the approval of MALAP, for the first year the Virtual School retained £400 of each grant to create a central fund of £129 200 to benefit all looked after children.
- Began implementation of a Northumberland ePEP.
- Through the VSH, we had senior management oversight of the quality assurance of alternative providers commissioned to work with looked after children in Northumberland.
- In the summer term, we asked our School Improvement Partners to make a judgement about the quality of provision for looked after children in our schools.
- Looked after children were nominated by their schools to participate in the Blyth/Red Row Summer Holiday Provision 2018, funded by the DfE's Holiday Activities and Food Research fund and in partnership with the Council and Children North East.
- We developed good inclusive practice in our support of 3 unaccompanied asylum seekers to Northumberland.

What we know

- £731 500 was allocated to Northumberland's Virtual School this year for looked after pupils eligible for the PP+ grant.
- 62% of the grant was dispersed to schools and academies to reach pupils directly.
- PP+ funding held centrally in the Virtual School was used for:
 - 61.5% interventions eg small group work, literacy/numeracy workshops
 - 7% training to Designated Teachers and the Thrive attachment approach
 - 7% Virtual School Educational Psychologist
 - 6% development of the ePEP
 - 5% 1 to 1 tuition (70% of which was for Year 11 pupils)
 - 5% flexible expenditure to respond to emerging needs
 - 3% resources eg laptops, Nimbl online licences, reading books, stationery
 - 3% incentive rewards for attendance and achievement, Expert Learner
 - 2% provision of careers information and guidance 14+
 - 0.5% Virtual School apprenticeship - care leaver
- The proportion of PP+ funding allocated to the primary and secondary age pupils was roughly similar, although significantly more was spent on teaching interventions for primary age pupils and one to one tuition for secondary age pupils.

- Almost two thirds of our looked after children are now in schools rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.
- No looked after children transitioned to schools judged to be Inadequate by Ofsted.
- 7 schools engaged with the Achievement for All CLA Programme which continues into 2018-19 when the full impact on each participating school will be evaluated.
- Training delivered by the Educational Psychologist was well attended by over 67% of Designated Teachers.
- At 83% the PEP completion rate for the year was disappointing and showed no improvement since 2017. (The ePEP implementation plan is on target to be complete by July 2019).

Impact assessment

- The new ePEP is already allowing a wider sharing of live information about learners between professionals and stakeholders, encouraging learners to contribute 'their voice' to the target setting and review process, and enabling the improved tracking of learners post 16 into all EET destinations.
- For the first time there is evidence that the Ofsted grading of a school correlates with good education outcomes for our looked after children at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4.
- The impact assessment of the Thrive attachment programme confirmed many strengths. Participants reported that through taking part in Thrive Practitioner training they:
 - o developed a greater understanding of the social and emotional needs of young people, the theory surrounding social and emotional development, attachment and behaviour, and of possible strategies to support children and young people within their own setting
 - o valued the screening tool as it allowed them to identify gaps in experience to target intervention and that by using this tool outcomes were measurable
 - o reported that young people within their setting 'valued' Thrive intervention time
 - o plan to embed Thrive Approach practice within their wider setting by delivering training themselves.
- The Thrive impact evaluation informs us that some Designated Teachers feel they lack the influence to embed a whole school approach, and there was concern reported about the Thrive approaches coherence with behaviour management policies and other professionals' practice within different school settings.
- Provision for looked after children in Northumberland schools is mainly Good and some is Outstanding, according to the 95 School Improvement Partner (SIP) reports reviewed after their summer visits to schools which focussed on provision for looked after children,
- Not all of the children attending the Blyth/Red Row Holiday Activities course were looked after and quantitative impact data from the DfE and Northumbria University is not yet available. However, more than 90% of the children attended 100% of the time and parents and carers are reporting positively about shifts in relationships with school, differences in previously challenging behaviour, confidence building the children to take part in and try new things.

What we need to do next

- Monitor progress differently so that pupils are supported to keep on track to achieve the very best they are capable of.
- Identify even earlier where there is evidence of under-achievement and work with schools and other professionals to get pupils back on track.
- As implementation continues, support Designated Teachers to improve the completion rate and quality of ePEPs.
- Continue to support Designated Teachers to become Thrive Practitioners and try to ensure that these individuals have the ability and resources to embed the Thrive approach over a sustained period at a whole school level.
- Review the current training programme for Designated Teachers.
- Review the arrangements for dispersing the PP+ grant in Northumberland.
- Support schools to demonstrate more effectively the impact of PP+ on progress and attainment.

ACHIEVEMENT 2018

Being in care has had a positive impact on education outcomes, especially our Year 2 pupils who performed very well in their Key Stage 1 tests. Overall, education outcomes for looked after children in each headline measure have been consistent for the last three years and generally in line with national averages. Further improvement is being driven by a focus on the quality of teaching in schools and the impact of interventions used with looked after children to ensure that better than expected progress is achieved for the majority from the starting point of entering care.

What we did

- Introduced a half termly Progress Report to improve monitoring so that we could intervene earlier when individual pupils needed help.
- The Educational Psychologist was available to individual pupils and provided training and support to Designated Teachers of Year 6 and Year 11 pupils on how to manage anxiety when preparing for tests and exams.
- We introduced targeted network meetings for Designated Teachers giving age specific guidance on maximising achievement.
- Designated Teachers were challenged to set SMART targets in PEPs which focussed on accelerating progress in reading/writing/English and maths.
- A specific focal point was identified for the Virtual School Improvement Partner (SIP) review - *the Virtual School's knowledge of the quality of teaching and learning for looked after children and how it influences these aspects to improve standards of attainment and progress.*



Being in care has had a positive impact on education outcomes, especially our Year 2 pupils who performed very well in their Key Stage 1 tests.

Figure 2: Outcomes for looked after children in all key measures, 2018

2018	Northumberland CLA* (all) %	Northumberland OC2** %	National CLA %	National All %
Early Years GLD	52.4	25 (2/8)	48	72
Phonics Year 1	85.7	75 (4/5)	63.8	84
KS1 R/W/M	50	71.4	37	65
KS1 Reading	57.1	71.4	51	76
KS1 Writing	52.4	71.4	42	68
KS1 Maths	71.4	71.4	49	75
KS2 R/W/M	45.5	30	35	64
KS2 Reading	54.5	40	51	75
KS2 Writing	50	40	49	76
KS2 GPS	50	40	49	78
KS2 Maths	45.5	30	47	79
KS2 Progress Reading	2.20	-4.11	0.21	0
KS2 Progress Writing	-3.27	-3.45	-0.90	0
KS2 Progress Maths	-1.73	-4.93	-0.87	0
KS4 Basics 4+	16.7 (4/24)	18.2	17	58.9
KS4 Basics 5+	8.3 (2/24)	9.1	8	43.4
KS4 English 4+	20.8 (5/24)	27	N/A	N/A
KS4 Maths 4+	25 (6/24)	27	N/A	N/A

* where CLA is child looked after

** OC2 is the official cohort which does not comprise all pupils in a year group at the time of the assessment, but all those of statutory school age who have been in care for 12 months or more from 31st March of any given year, and of those how many match to the school census of the same year

Where green/red indicates above/below the national average for looked after children

What we know

- The official cohorts for 2018 were very small, there was a high incidence of SEND, and over a quarter of pupils were placed in out of authority schools (Figure 3).
- The full cohort of looked after children in each key stage generally performed better than the official cohort (those who had been in care longer).
- Schools provided progress data half termly to the Virtual School, measuring from the starting point of entering care. By the end of the year:
 - at Key Stage 2, 75% of pupils made expected progress in reading and writing and mathematics, and 5 of those pupils made better than expected progress
 - at Key Stage 4 progress for both English and mathematics was 65%.

Figure 3: Characteristics of official cohorts 2018

2018	Early Years	Phonics	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2	Key Stage 4
No. in official cohort	8	4	7	10	22
No. with SEND	1	0	0	5	7
No. with EHCP	0	0	0	2	5
No. in special school	0	0	0	1	4
No. in out of authority school	1	1	0	4	8
Not entered for tests/exams	0	0	0	1	6

Early Years

- 25% of looked after children achieved a good level of development in the Early Years compared with 43% in 2017.

Phonics and Key Stage 1

- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the combined measure of reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 1 has risen dramatically compared with the previous year – from 20% to 71% - and is well above regional and national averages.
- Looked after children in Northumberland out-performed all non-looked after Northumberland pupils at Key Stage 1 (69.5%).
- There is an improving trend in performance since 2016 in all measures.
- Achievement in the phonics test in Year 1 for age 6 pupils has dipped slightly but is still well above the national average. 75% (3 of 4 pupils) of our looked after children who took the phonics test were assessed as working at the expected standard of 32/40, compared to 80% (4 of 5 pupils) in 2017.
- 25% of pupils taking the Phonics re-test in Year 2 achieved the expected standard.

Key Stage 2

- 30% (3 of 10 pupils) met age related expectations in the combined measure of reading, writing and mathematics which is below the national average for looked after children.
- 10% of pupils in mathematics and writing and 20% of pupils in reading and GPS (grammar, punctuation and spelling) achieved at a greater depth of learning which is much better than the expected standard.
- There is an improving trend in performance since 2016 in all measures.
- There were no 'just missed' scores.

Key Stage 4

- 18% (4 of 22 pupils) achieved the Basics which is slightly above the national average.
- 16 pupils were entered for GCSEs and 5 of them achieved 5 or more passes, with 2 pupils achieving 9 passes at the highest grades.
- At least 5 of our Year 11 pupils achieved very well in their GCSEs:
 - Pupil 1 achieved 5 passes - 4 at grade 4 and 1 at grade C
 - Pupil 2 achieved 6 passes - 5 at grade 7 and 1 at grade 5
 - Pupil 3 achieved 4 passes - 1 at grade 5, 2 at grade 4 and one at grade B
 - Pupil 4 achieved 6 passes - 3 at grade 5, 1 at grade B and 2 at grade 4
 - Pupil 5 achieved 8 passes - 2 at grade 7, 1 at grade C, 4 at grade 5 and 1 at grade 4.
- The number of pupils with SEND is high – of the 22 pupils in the cohort 5 attended non-mainstream schools for the duration of Key Stage 4 and 6 did not access GCSE courses, 2 pupils attended residential special schools and 9 had EHCPlans. 1 pupil was in secure accommodation.
- 2 of the pupils who achieved the Basics have SEND.
- The girls performed significantly better than the boys in English and in mathematics.
- Our looked after pupils have a Progress 8 score of -1.38 which means they achieved approximately 1.4 grades lower than pupils with the same starting point nationally.
- The average Attainment 8 score for looked after pupils in Northumberland is 17.8 compared with 18.8 for looked after children nationally.
- There is an improving trend in performance since 2016 in the Progress 8, Attainment 8 and eBacc measures

Impact assessment

- Pupils from **Early Years to the end of Key Stage 1** enjoyed stable school placements, engaged well and received a good quality education in Good or Outstanding schools and settings. They received additional support to help them to achieve the best that they possibly could. Their achievement for 2017-18 is outstanding.
- Attainment at **Key Stage 2** has improved slightly since last year. The cohort size of 10 pupils is not a viable statistical sample. In that context, the average progress scores in reading, writing and maths are well below the national average for looked after children and suggests there has been significant under-achievement in the journey from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2. Further diagnosis of this outcome will be a priority for 2018-19.
- In the official cohort of 10 pupils (Key Stage 2), 3 had a high SDQ score and failed to meet age related expectations, demonstrating the strong correlation between mental wellbeing and education outcomes.
- Factors which had a positive impact on achievement at Key Stage 2 include:
 - the needs of individual pupils being identified and met effectively. 1 of the pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading/writing/maths combined has SEND
 - of the cohort of 10, 3 pupils attended Outstanding schools, 6 attended Good schools
 - extra tuition put in place by the Virtual School helped 2 of the 5 pupils who received this support to achieve the expected standard in reading/writing/maths combined
 - 9 of the pupils had no fixed term exclusions
 - the average attendance of the cohort was good at 92.5%, with 3 pupils achieving 100%
 - all 10 pupils were in foster care placements.
- For the small Key Stage 2 cohort the length of time in care had a positive impact on achievement. The 3 pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading/writing/maths combined have been in care for 2, 5 and 7 years respectively.
- Placement stability had an adverse impact on achievement. 3 pupils experienced 1 school move and 1 home placement move during the 4 years of Key Stage 2 and none of those pupils achieved age-related expectations in the combined measure.
- Although **outcomes at GCSE** were slightly better than in 2017 and better than the national average, the overall picture is disappointing. According to their schools, 6 pupils were predicted to achieve the Basics but 2 of those pupils did not achieve as expected. Although additional support was put in place using PP+ and school resources where appropriate, expectations were not high enough for long enough for some pupils and progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 was too slow.
- A higher number of pupils achieved at the Grade 5+ 'stronger' level for the Basics which is very encouraging. If pupils with SEND who were not entered for GCSE exams are removed from the cohort then performance improves from 18.2% to 30.9% and equals the regional and national averages for looked after children.
- Factors which have influenced achievement at Key Stage 4 positively:
 - the 4 pupils who achieved the Basics have been in care for 2, 3, 6 and 12 years respectively, therefore indicating that being in care has had a positive impact on their achievement
 - only 2 pupils in the cohort experienced at least one fixed term exclusion during Year 11 (missing an average of 2 sessions each) which is much better than last year
 - the average attendance of the cohort was good enough at 90% overall (ranging from 41% to 100%, with 13 pupils achieving 100%) to have had a positive impact
 - the majority of pupils were supported well with their learning at home - 12 pupils were in foster care placements, 4 with relative carers and 6 in residential placements (3 of which are residential special schools)
 - home placement stability was good - during the 3 years from the beginning of Year 9 to the end of Year 11, 5 pupils experienced at least 1 home placement move and only 5 pupils experienced 1 school placement move. 17 of the 22 pupils in the cohort had no school move at all, other than at usual transition times, for those 3 years
 - there was no obvious correlation between SDQ scores and achievement.

- Factors which have influenced achievement at Key Stage 4 adversely:
 - o 5 pupils were classed as persistent absentees
 - o at the time of the exams 2 pupils were attending alternative provision
 - o not enough pupils were attending Good or Outstanding schools (only 8 pupils, or 36%)
- Pupils placed in out of authority schools achieved better than those in Northumberland schools:
 - o only 1 pupil at Key Stage 1 was placed in an out of authority school and achieved the expected standard in the separate measures of reading, writing and mathematics
 - o 4 pupils at Key Stage 2 were placed in out of authority schools and 2 of them achieved the expected standard in the combined measure of reading, writing and mathematics
 - o 8 pupils at Key Stage 4 were placed in out of authority schools and 3 of them achieved the Basics.

There are stories of great individual achievement in challenging circumstances and the impact that professionals have had on improving outcomes for these young people is evident.



JOSEPH'S STORY

Joseph has had a very challenging Year 6 involving both a sudden and therefore unplanned change of his long term placement and then a change of

school in January. Joseph struggled to understand the reasons behind the breakdown of his placement and his distress showed in aggressive and challenging behaviours, particularly towards those teachers with whom he previously had trusting relationships. This breakdown and the travelling distance to his new placement necessitated a change of school, even though he was in Year 6.

Joseph has issues around attachment and has always struggled with peer relationships. Moving school and joining a class group who already had well established friendships has been difficult for him. However, Joseph remained dual registered and staff from his previous school arranged for him to take the SATs. Joseph cooperated fully with the tests and attempted all tasks.

MARTHA'S STORY



Martha's involvement with ESLAC started in October 2016 when she was preparing for discharge from hospital. During that time she had been accessing

education through The Bridges and EOTAS. Martha was very stressed in the first meeting and had such a bad panic attack she had to be taken out of the room. She then moved to a care home in a town in another local authority in October 2016 and ESLAC explored various sources of education provision for her.

Unfortunately, the schools in other authorities were reluctant to admit her and tuition was put in place for English, maths and science while a more permanent placement was sought. During this time Martha had to cope with high levels of anxiety and her legs would visibly shake during the tuition sessions. Martha wants to be a Veterinary Nurse and so attended work experience for one day a week at a vet's practice near her home placement. In August 2017 Northumberland College agreed that Martha could attend there one day a week to study Triple Science and complete all of the practicals to achieve the GCSE qualifications. The ESLAC worker supporting Martha even collected her exam papers and invigilated exams to relieve her anxiety.

Martha achieved 5 Grade 7's (A) and a Grade 5 (B) and she is taking a Music exam in the Autumn which is the equivalent standard to GCSE.

There are stories of great individual achievement in challenging circumstances and the impact that professionals have had on improving outcomes for these young people is evidence.



What we need to do next

- Target resources so that more pupils make better than expected progress in reading/writing, English and maths.
- Work with Designated Teachers to accurately benchmark pupils when they enter care so that ambitious but realistic targets for achievement can be set for individual pupils.
- Review our monitoring arrangements so that we can intervene earlier when pupils are in need of additional support to be kept 'on track', especially between Key Stages 2 and 4.
- Review the impact of 1 to 1 tuition on achievement.
- Focus on interventions to improve writing between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- Monitor the progress of boys at Key Stage 4.
- Reduce persistent absence to improve engagement at Key Stage 4.
- As Ofsted judgements of Northumberland schools improve, seek to place more pupils in Good and Outstanding schools when appropriate.
- Audit the impact of PP+ funding on education achievement and increase the influence of the Virtual School if appropriate through an amended PP+ policy for 2019-20.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES

More than half of our school age looked after children have a special educational need or disability (SEND). We want those pupils to do the very best they can at school and work with teachers and professionals to ensure that support is well co-ordinated and meets their needs. Our support for looked after children with SEND is also reflected in a deeper understanding of their learning and the progress they make and is not just about academic achievement.

What we did

- ESLAC's Senior Education Support Worker worked closely with special schools and the Disabled Children's Team (DCT), and had a caseload comprising all looked after children with EHCPlans.
- Looked after children with SEND who were educated out of county received good support eg maintaining the PEP and attending reviews, frequent visits from the Education Support Worker, joint case working with the DCT.
- The Virtual School advised and supported schools to refer 6 looked after pupils for statutory assessment who then all received EHCPlans.
- Planning for an assessment on entry to care was put in place by our Educational Psychologist, one aim of which is to identify early special needs for looked after children.
- We worked with IROs, Designated Teachers and SENCOs to align reviews and streamline plans when appropriate.
- Planning for adulthood was improved as part of development work to integrate Pathway Plans and PEPs for post 16 young people, including those with EHCPlans.
- Integrated working practices were embedded, for example the VSH attended the Dynamic Risk Register and Care Education and Treatment Reviews (CETRs) which are managed through Children's Services.
- There were developments in practice in the SEND Assessment Team: a key contact was allocated within the team to support looked after children; the team was represented at annual reviews for looked after children when required; in cases where looked after children attend state funded provision and require additional support, requests for funding of places and or additional support were responded to promptly.

What we know

- At 58% the proportion of looked after children with SEND in Northumberland is rising but still consistently below the national average of 66%.
- 25% of our looked after children age 5-16 had an EHCPlan which is below the national average of 27%. The majority of those pupils with EHCPlans (49 of the 72 pupils) attended special schools -10 were in residential schools and 32 (or nearly half) were in school placements in other local authorities.
- Northumberland has 8 local authority special schools, 2 in the north, 1 in the west and 5 in the south east corner of the county. There were looked after children placed in all but 2 of these schools.
- Northumberland learners were also placed in independent day special schools - Parkside House, Trinity Oakfield, and Talbot House- and a number of looked after children are placed in independent specialist residential provision including Kirby Moor School, High Peak School, North East Autism Society Aycliffe School, Peartree, Underley Gardens, Wilsic Hall and Whinell School.
- By September 2018, 3 looked after children were waiting for special school places – 2 in the PRU, and 1 at a mainstream school.
- A small proportion of looked after children are placed with Alternative Providers (6%).
- The High Level Resource Panel (HLRP) was attended regularly by the SEND Senior Manager and ESLAC team manager to reduce delays in decision making about looked after children which require approval.
- The most prolific primary need is social, *emotional and mental health* (SEMH) followed by *behavioural, emotional and social difficulties* (BESD).
- Education outcomes for this group of pupils in Northumberland in 2018 is that:
 - 67% of looked after children with SEND achieved the expected standard in Phonics compared to 75% of all looked after children

- o Northumberland looked after children with SEND performed better than the national average at Key Stage 1 (25% compared to 0%) but lower than all looked after children in Northumberland
- o 7 pupils or 70% of the official Key Stage 2 cohort of 10 pupils had SEND
- o at Key Stage 2 Northumberland looked after children with EHCPlans achieved less well than all looked after children with EHCPlans nationally
- o 1 of the 3 pupils to achieve national age-related expectations in Year 6 has an EHCPlan
- o progress for looked after children with SEND from the starting point of entering care is slow with only 27% in reading, 30% in writing and 33% in maths making expected progress
- o progress for looked after children with EHCPlans is very slow with only 15% in reading, 17% in writing and 19% in maths making expected progress
- o schools tell us that only 18% of Key Stage 4 pupils with SEND have made progress in English or maths since entering care and progress is even poorer for pupils with EHCPlans at only 13%
- o 12 pupils, or 55% of the official Key Stage 4 cohort of 22 pupils. had SEND. 5 had EHCPlans and 4 were in special schools (3 of which are residential)
- o the number of looked after children with SEND being entered for and achieving GCSEs is low (only 2 out of 7 pupils were entered for at least 1 GCSE)
- o 1 of the 4 pupils who achieved the grade 4 or above in the combined measure of English and mathematics at GCSE had SEND.

Impact assessment

- There are stories of individual success for looked after children with SEND in all phases. However, the overall picture of achievement is mixed and clearly under-pinned by slow progress being made regardless of school placement type or length of time in care.
- The high incidence of pupils with SEND being placed in out of county settings and the low incidence of EHCPlans for looked after children compared to the national average indicate that more needs to be done to identify special needs early and ensure that appropriate local provision is developed as part of Northumberland's SEND strategy.
- Absence data of children with SEND indicates that in Northumberland more children with SEND regularly attend school than in most other parts of the country. In 2017-18 overall absence in special schools is 9.2% (national 10.2% and north east 9.7%) and persistent absence is much better than north east and national averages at 26.2%. Absence for Northumberland looked after children attending special school is 6.3% (Virtual School data).
- Young people in care with SEND are prepared well for adulthood through review processes and effective arrangements for supporting the transition to the next phase of education and into college.
- In the current context of a lack of special school places, delays in admissions for looked after children with SEND were kept as short as possible but are still too long.
- Education, training and employment outcomes are good for care leavers aged between 16 and 21 who had an EHCPlan or statement of SEN when they were in Year 11 at school.

What we need to do next

- Further consideration as to how we might best achieve placement stability for looked after children with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) by ensuring that there are clear pathways into different levels of intervention for individual pupils.
- Explore the low incidence of SEND in our looked after population compared to nationally to be assured that there is effective and early identification of special needs for looked after children.
- Improve integrated working with SEND support services so that looked after children are prioritised and gain swift access to services and school places when they need them.
- Improve involvement of ESLAC with the statutory assessment process.
- Develop a performance framework to gather evidence that looked after children with SEND are prioritised and gain swift access to services, including schools.
- All of our maintained special schools have been judged to be Good or Outstanding but we still need to improve outcomes for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream settings.

PATHWAYS AT 16

Success for pupils in Year 11 and the Virtual School is measured by the consistently high number accessing further education at 16 and the slowly reducing NEET figure. This is achieved by knowing the aspirations of our pupils well from their starting point in care and providing expert advice and guidance to plan realistic but ambitious pathways into education, training and employment.

What we did

- Collaborated with the 14+ leaving care team to re-design the Pathway Plan to include an EET section with an underpinning process so that from 1st September 2018 every looked after child in Year 11 transitions at the PEP review to a Pathway Plan which streamlines learning objectives and provides the equivalent support to individuals as a Key Stage 4 and Post-16 PEP.
- To implement the new EET section effectively the Virtual School Careers Advisers delivered training to social workers, worked from the NAS team base on a weekly basis, attended Stop the Clock days and held clinic sessions to discuss individuals who are NEET.
- A requirement was introduced for schools to facilitate a careers guidance interview for all looked after children in Year 10 and that the written report from that intervention is held with the PEP.
- Careers adviser capacity was increased from 0.6 to 1xFTE and we are now able to offer careers guidance to all care leavers aged up to 25.
- Integrated working was developed between the Careers' Advisors 14+ and 18+, KS4/5 Education Advisor and the KS4 Inclusion Support Worker to ensure clear vocational and/or academic pathways are developed for our most difficult to engage pupils.
- In cases where engagement in EET was not working despite the young person having the motivation to engage, the Educational Psychologist and Careers Advisers collaborated to identify barriers and generate solutions, providing much needed emotional and social support to individuals to access education, employment or training.
- A number of cognitive assessments were completed which helped to uncover previously unidentified needs and inform future EET planning. This information is also being used by social workers to inform decisions about accommodation and pathway planning.
- Took pre-release referrals to work with young people leaving custody.
- Worked with Welfare Rights and 14/18+ workers to address any financial issues threatening participation in EET.
- Provided a personalised service to individual young people referred by their social workers eg a series of guidance interviews, CV creation, jobsearch skills development, jobsearch support, supporting young people to interviews, support to source work placements.
- Worked with the Learning and Skills Service on funded apprenticeships for looked after children/ care leavers.

What we know

Figure 4: School leavers' destinations at 16, 2014 to 2018

Age 16 – 18	Sept -14	Sept-15	Sept-16	Sept-17	Sept-18
Number of LAC	57	23	22	48	27
Number in EET	48 (84%)	19 (83%)	21 (95%)	43 (90%)	21 (78%)
Number in FE	17 (30%)	14 (61%)	13 (59%)	25 (52%)	16 (60%)
Number in 6th form	19 (33%)	5 (22%)	5 (23%)	13 (27%)	3 (11%)

- The looked after cohort of school leavers in 2018 was small compared to last year but a higher proportion engaged in further education and a consistently high proportion were in EET.
- Of those progressing into further education, a greater proportion than last year are following level 2 courses, although fewer are working for level 3 qualifications.

- The overall proportion in EET dipped in comparison to the previous 4 years but is still much higher than the national average of 51%.
- In September 2018, 70% of Year 11 leavers were in further education, 4% in apprenticeships and 4% in employment.
- At the same time 6 school leavers were NEET. 3 chose not to take up their college places in September and 3 refused to apply for any EET opportunities.
- At the end of the academic year 57 care leavers aged 17-18 were eligible* to have their EET status recorded:
 - 34 were recorded as being EET (61%)
 - 19 were recorded as being in education (33.5%)
 - 15 were recorded as being in training/ employment (26.5%)
 - 21 were recorded as being NEET (37%)
 - 2 were recorded as NEET/not being in touch (3%)
- In the same period, there were 93 care leavers aged 19-21 who had their EET status recorded:
 - 54 were recorded as being EET (58%)
 - 28 were recorded as being in education (30%)
 - 23 were recorded as being in training/employment (25%)
 - 32 were recorded as being NEET (34%)
 - 7 were recorded as NEET/not being in touch (8%)

* The percentage of care leavers who are regarded as being in employment, education or training (EET) is a nationally reported indicator for every local authority. In order to qualify the young person's social worker or personal adviser must be in touch with them within a 4 month window – between 3 months before and 1 month after their birthday.

Impact assessment

- Offering dedicated careers guidance through the Virtual School has a positive impact, demonstrated by 2017-18 being the 5th consecutive year that the proportion of school leavers progressing into EET at 16 has been good and much better than the national average.
- Innovative and effective practice has ensured that a high proportion of school leavers engage in EET, and this trend above the national average continues to age 21.
- The increase in school leavers following level 2 courses is consistent with their achievement at GCSE.
- The NEET rate does increase with age, from 50% for school leavers age 16 in 2018 to 66.7% for school leavers age 21 in 2014 and this is a focus for the newly appointed 18+ Careers' Adviser.

Good Practice Case Study 1

We initiated a Careers/Education Psychology collaboration to support a 21 year old care leaver who was NEET and unsure of accommodation option. Mainstream options were not suitable and there was no identified need for specialist services. The careers adviser had met with the young person and carer and felt the young person's needs were more extensive than previously identified. A holistic assessment was completed to provide information and evidence about cognitive and functional skills. The assessment showed the significant level of the young person's difficulty and highlighted the need for specialist support. The carer felt that the young person had been understood for the first time and that her concerns had been validated. The young person had feedback on his strengths and difficulties and this helped him understand how he functions in a range of situations. A written report was provided to the social worker to support applications for specialist services.

Good Practice Case Study 2

One of the Virtual School Careers' Advisers worked with Learning and Skills and the 18+ team to support a care leaver who had been NEET for over a year and wanted to fulfil his ambition of a horticulture apprenticeship. He was encouraged to complete a Study Programme with NECC Training to give him the required functional and employability skills while simultaneously working with Northumberland Learning and Skills to find a funded apprenticeship for him. The Careers' Adviser identified an employer, Learning and Skills contacted him and he agreed to employ the young person and then we worked together with the young person's 18+ worker to prepare him for the apprenticeship and to support him to engage.

- EET outcomes are good for care leavers aged between 16 and 21 who had an EHCPlan or statement of SEN when they were in Year 11 at school:
 - overall NEET in this group is 52% compared to 56% of all LAC/care leavers;
 - we know the destination of every care leaver who had an EHCPlan in school;
 - all care leavers in this group continue to have access to a specialist Careers' Adviser as well as EET support from the 14+ team;
 - the majority of those who are NEET are unable to work due to health issues, disability, pregnancy or custody.

What we need to do next

- Embed the PEP to Pathway Plan transition process, including the implementation of a robust quality assurance process for the EET section involving the VSH.
- Build on success at recruiting into EET after leaving school to further improve retention up to age 21.
- Act on the views of young people.

There were three students taking A' levels this year

Sarah passed all 3 in Single Childcare, Single Media and Double Public Services. She has taken up a place at Sunderland University to study Child Development.

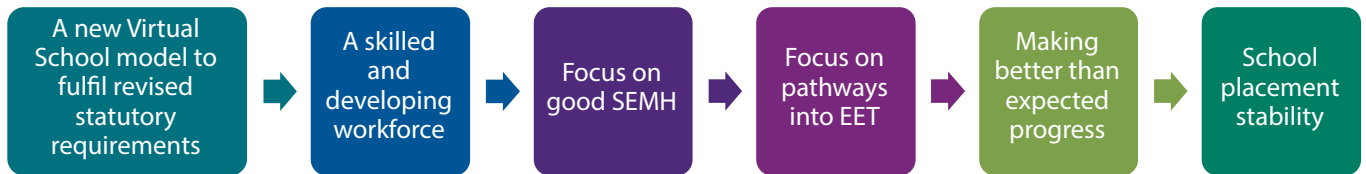
Natasha achieved well in all but one module and has taken up a place at Northumbria University to study Humanities.

Hussain is an unaccompanied asylum seeker who became looked after in February 2017. He now lives in Scotland and took the higher level 5 courses in his studies achieving Grade A in PE, Grade B in Maths, Grade C in English and a Grade D in Biology, even though he could speak very little English when he arrived in Northumberland.



OUR PRIORITY AREAS GOING FORWARD

Our priorities for 2017-18 are set out in the Virtual School Improvement Plan:



A NOTE ABOUT THE DATA

The official cohorts reviewed in this report are small and the individual pupils comprising the cohorts change during the course of each phase. In some of the DfE's validated tables therefore the Northumberland data is suppressed because the statistical samples are too small. Percentages can vary considerably so that comparisons with other groups of pupils or establishing trends in performance over time are not always meaningful.

The official cohort does not comprise all pupils in a year group at the time of the assessment, but all those of statutory school age who have been in care for 12 months or more from 31st March of 2017 (which is 231) and of those how many match to the school census (which is 161). The Virtual School captures data for whole cohorts, so where local data and not validated DfE data is quoted then it refers to all pupils in one year group at one time regardless of the length of time they have been in care or the school census.

The full data set used to write this report is available in a separate Virtual School Education Outcomes 2017-18 document.

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4. *Northumberland Corporate Parenting Strategy 2017-2020*
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