

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

VIRTUAL HEADTEACHER FOR CHILDREN IN CARE REPORT 2020

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To approve the Virtual Headteacher Report for Children in Care 2020

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 In North Lincolnshire we are highly ambitious for all of our children, and especially our looked after children. 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.
- 2.2 The role of the Virtual School is to promote the educational achievement of children in our care whether educated in North Lincolnshire 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.
- 2.3 The 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.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 To approve the Virtual Headteacher Report for Children in Care 2020

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 The annual Virtual Headteacher Report is published in line with statutory requirements for children in care and covers the work of the Virtual School in raising achievement for looked after children for the previous academic year

5. **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (e.g. LEGAL, HR, PROPERTY, IT, COMMUNICATIONS etc.)**

5.1 None.

6. **OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS (e.g. CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITIES, COUNCIL PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL, RISK etc.)**

6.1 N/A.

7. **OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)**

7.1 N/A.

8. **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED**

8.1 None.

9. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 To approve the Virtual Headteacher Report for Children in Care 2020.

DIRECTOR OF LEARNING, SKILLS AND CULTURE

Church Square House

SCUNTHORPE

North Lincolnshire

DN15 6NL

Author: Darren Chaplin Head of Access and Inclusion

Date: 4 November 2020

Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

1) The Annual Virtual Headteacher Report for Children in Care

Annual Report of the Virtual Headteacher
2020

**North
Lincolnshire
Council**

www.northlincs.gov.uk

Foreword

This has been a year in which we have further raised the profile across North Lincolnshire of the importance of improving education outcomes for looked after children. We started in the Autumn Term with our conference which allowed professionals to come together and reflect on best practice from across the country in all aspects of our work. The conference launched the new CPD programme and award for schools for their work in raising the aspirations and achievement of looked after children.

The highlight of my year was again the Awards at October half term. Students across the county have once again excelled at all aspects of school and wider life and the evening showcased the fantastic arts talents of our students. A huge well done to all participants and thank you goes out to everyone involved in the organisation. Plans are in place for how we may be able to continue these awards this year in a new virtual environment.

Other work this year has included:

- Reviewing the use of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) to ensure that they drive forward progress for young people.
- Introducing new monitoring systems to complete deep dives of PEP cases and tackle low aspirations at all key stages.
- Raising the target grades for all children and young people to be aspirational and to challenge schools and children to strive to achieve beyond the expected levels.
- Developing new programmes for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) to ensure a settled start to education in the area.
- Ensuring effective support is in place for designated teachers and foster carers so that plans make a greater impact on the lives of young people.

We have again raised standards for our young people this year though it remains the case that we continue to strive to ensure that all our looked after children will achieve outcomes at least in line with those of all students in North Lincolnshire.

This report includes the Virtual School response to the Covid-19 situation and the initiatives and resources created during this time to support our looked after children and colleagues in schools and social care.



Dave Flowitt

Virtual Headteacher

Headlines

- In July 2020, the very large majority of our looked after children were being educated in schools judged good or better by Ofsted. No looked after children were being educated in schools judged as inadequate. Validated outcomes for 2019 show that North Lincolnshire's looked after children achieved above their national peers in
 - the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - reading and mathematics at Key Stage 1
 - reading and writing at Key Stage 2
- We have 7 secondary, 6 primary, 1 independent and 1 college who have attended induction days and registered to become a 'Caring 2 Learn' school. The project aims to improve the learning outcomes for our children by ensuring learning communities in which our children and young people feel safe and believe they belong by upskilling and supporting our educators and carers, encouraging participation and improving attendance, promoting good practice to support the wellbeing, emotional and mental health of all vulnerable children at home or in their education setting, reducing the number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions and having fewer Post 16 Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) young people by promoting higher aspiration and self esteem.
- To raise aspirations, the expectation is for schools to use Fischer Family Trust (FFT) 20 estimates in the PEPs as their benchmark attainment target which provides consistency across settings.
- The authorised absence rate for the authority's looked after children is lower than the national and regional averages and it is lower than the previous year's rate (2.9%). The persistent absence rate is lower than the national and regional averages.
- School stability is a priority and is improving year-on-year.
- The Virtual School Children in Care Conference in October 2019 was a great success and hosted by Jaz Ampaw-Farr who is a care leaver herself, inspirational speaker and successful business woman. The 2020 conference has been postponed due to Covid-19 and will be re-scheduled for 2021, focusing on the impact of trauma.
- Training continues to be offered by the Virtual School for social workers, carers, adopters, special guardians and schools in order to improve learning outcomes for our children and ensure PEPs are of high quality, with SMART targets/outcomes; using pupil premium to support needs at an early stage.
- All of our looked after children up to the age of five years receive a monthly reading book through North Lincolnshire's Imagination Library.

Governance and Accountability

The Virtual School and the Virtual Headteacher are accountable to the **Corporate Parenting Board** through quarterly reporting to the **Multi Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP)** through to the Board.

The Virtual Headteacher is a member of the Corporate Parenting Board. The Children in Care Education and Employability Group (CICEEG), which meets monthly, feeds into this framework via progress reports to the MALAP group and the Education Inclusion Partnership.

The CICEEG meeting is chaired either by the **Lead Officer for Education Inclusion or the Virtual Headteacher**. Its membership includes representatives from social care, education, post 16, health and early years. The meeting is held monthly to monitor the progress, attendance and needs of looked after children and to celebrate areas of success for our children who are looked after. The meeting includes challenge and feedback on specific actions and quality assurance checks. Data is scrutinised and actions arising from this scrutiny are monitored. All potential school moves must have discussion at this meeting to ensure stability of placement and education is paramount. Our ambition is to ensure best outcomes for our looked after children, in order to ensure attainment is high and our children have the support they need to gain qualifications that will enable them into college and university. The Virtual School supports our children through to adulthood to ensure they have the opportunities for their chosen career paths and to become independent and successful adults.

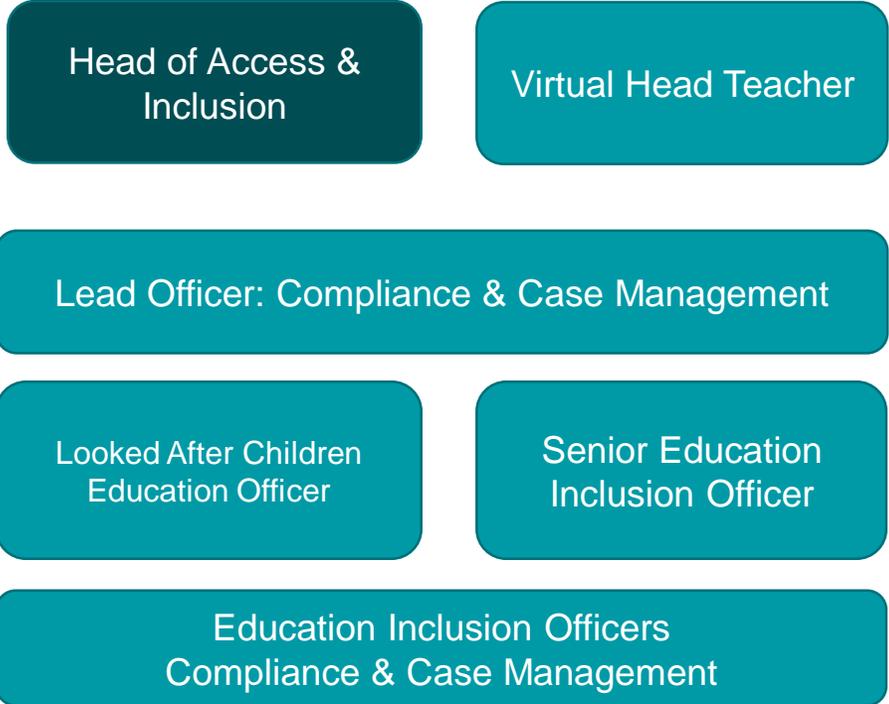
The Virtual School continues to champion the needs of looked after children on behalf of North Lincolnshire Council and works with schools and other education providers to ensure support and resources for looked after children are used effectively and efficiently in line with their Personal Education Plan.

Staffing of the Virtual School

The Virtual School continues to hold a staffing structure which includes a team of Education Inclusion Officers, Senior Education Inclusion Officer, Lead Officer and the Virtual Headteacher. Every looked after child has an allocated officer who oversees their education provision. Expertise and knowledge around the needs of looked after children continues to grow with an emphasis on ensuring that the emotional health and wellbeing of our children is best supported. Staff attend regular training to support their roles and are more confident in providing support and positive challenge to schools where benchmark attainment targets are not in line with FFT20.

The Education Inclusion Service’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.

A Looked After Children Education Officer was appointed and continues to develop the practice of the Virtual School by undertaking quality assurance to identify areas for development. The role has provided training and support to Designated Teachers to enable them to champion for the children in their setting, raise aspirations and support positive outcomes.



2018/19 Headline Validated Data

In July 2019 there were 206 children (reception to year 13) looked after by North Lincolnshire, 22 children of whom were being educated in out of area schools (NCY 0 to 11)

Less than half of looked after children in July 2019 (46%, 94 children) had assessed SEN. This is a decrease on the previous year's by 5.2 percentage points.

Validated outcomes for 2019 show that North Lincolnshire's looked after children achieved above their national peers in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Writing and Maths at Key Stage 1.

Within Key Stage 2 North Lincolnshire's looked after children performed higher than the national average in both Reading and Writing.

Thirteen children and young people had 1 or more school move during the 2018/19 academic year, compared with 17 children in the previous academic year. School stability for looked after children is a priority and is improving year on year.

- The overall absence rate for the authority's looked after children is lower than the national and regional averages. Since 2018 the overall absence rate for North Lincolnshire has decreased from 5.2% to 4% in 2018/19.

- North Lincolnshire's fixed term exclusion rate is lower than the national average and the regional average.
- The figures for the permanent exclusions have been suppressed due to small cohort figures.

Pupil Outcomes 2018/19

Eligibility and performance of children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months

Early Years Foundation Stage

	Number Eligible	% achieving GLD
National	1090	48%
Yorkshire & Humber	120	53%
North Lincolnshire	8	63%

Over 60% of looked after children achieved a Good Level of Development in their EYFS end of year assessments. North Lincolnshire's result was 15 percentage points above the national average, and 10 percentage points above the regional average.

Key Stage 1

	Number Eligible	% achieving Expected Standard		
		Reading	Writing	Maths
National	1730	52%	43%	49%
North Lincolnshire	5	60%	40%	60%

There were 5 children eligible for Key Stage 1 assessments. Within reading and maths North Lincolnshire was above the national average, however, in writing North Lincolnshire was 3 percentage points below the national average.

Key Stage 2

	Number Eligible	% achieving Expected Standard			
		Reading	Writing	Maths	RWM
National	3210	49%	50%	51%	37%
Yorkshire & Humber	360	46%	49%	51%	35%
North Lincolnshire	6	67%	83%	50%	33%

The Key Stage 2 cohort consisted of 6 children who had been continuously looked after for at least 12 months. Within North Lincolnshire the average for Reading (67%) and Writing (83%) were both above the national average. The maths result was 1 percentage point below the national average of 51%. A small minority of pupils (33%) achieved the expected level in reading, writing and maths (RWM) combined. The regional and national averages were 35% and 37% respectively.

Pupil Outcomes 2018/19

Eligibility and performance of children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months

Key Stage 4

	Number at the end of Key Stage 4	% Achieving Grade 5+ in both English & Maths GCSEs	% Achieving Grade 4+ in both English & Maths GCSEs	Average Attainment 8 Scores	Average Progress 8 Scores ²
National	5410	7.3%	18%	19.1	-1.3
Yorkshire & Humber	570	8.3%	18.3%	20	-1.11
North Lincolnshire	10	0%	10%	18.9	-1.66

The Key Stage 4 cohort consisted of 10 young people who had been continuously looked after for at least 12 months and educated in England. North Lincolnshire’s average progress 8 and attainment 8 scores were slightly lower than the national and regional scores. The outcome for pupils achieving grade 4 or above in both English and maths was 8 percentage points below the national average.

Of the 10 young people from the 2018/19 cohort, 8 young people continued to complete their further education courses. Two young people are identified as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and the Virtual School continue to work, support and engage them to secure positive destinations

Alternative Education Provision was provided and funded through the Virtual School to enable three Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) (new entrants in March 2020) to access education during the Covid-19 Pandemic. The students engaged well in the provision at ‘Pledge2Learn’ up until the end of the summer term and have applications in place to start at a local college in September 2020 to study English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

Three further UASC were permanently excluded from a local college during the Covid-19 pandemic. Two of these students’ permanent exclusions were rescinded on appeal and the students returned to college the following week. The other student was provided an alternative education placement funded by the Virtual School which he engaged with, preventing him from becoming NEET and reducing the risk of becoming vulnerable.

Absence and Exclusions 2018/19

	Number of looked after children matched to absence data ³	Percentage of sessions missed due to ⁴			Percentage of looked after children classed as persistent absentees ⁵
		Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence	
National	32,500	4.7%	3.2%	1.4%	10.9%
Yorkshire & Humber	3,730	4.8%	3.1%	1.7%	11.0%
North Lincolnshire	110	4%	2.4%	1.6%	8.2%

- The overall absence rate for the authority's looked after children is lower than the national and regional averages. The overall absence rate for North Lincolnshire has decreased from 5.2% in 2018 to 4% in 2019.
- The Virtual School works with individual young people and other services to support attendance in school. The Virtual School will continue to challenge and support schools to reduce the overall absence rates for our looked after children and ensure the right individual support is in place.

- The authorised absence rate for the authority's looked after children is lower than the national and regional averages and it is lower than the previous year's rate (2.9%).
- The unauthorised absence rate for the authority's looked after children is higher than the national and lower than the regional averages. Since the previous year the unauthorised absence rate for North Lincolnshire has decreased by 0.7 percentage points to 1.6%.
- The persistent absence rate is lower than the national and regional averages.

	Number matched to the school census ³	Percentage of children permanently excluded	Percentage of children fixed term exclusion rate
National	31,720	0.1	11.7
Yorkshire & Humber	3,580	x	12.2
North Lincolnshire	112	x	11.61

- North Lincolnshire's fixed term exclusion rate is lower than the national average and the regional average.
- The figures for the permanent exclusions have been suppressed due to small cohort figures.

Publication of official exclusions data runs to a much later timetable than other statistics (due to the appeals process). The latest official data (above) relates to the 2017/18 academic year.

2020 Provisional Data

In July 2020, 97% of our looked after children were being educated in schools judged good or better by Ofsted. This is an increase of 7 percentage points from the previous year.

COVID-19

Due to the outbreak of Covid-19 and subsequent school shutdown and cancellation of examinations in the summer term, this report does not contain the usual analysis concerning end of Key Stage attainment for 2020.

Key Stage 4 results were issued to our looked after children and, although we cannot publish them, indications are that there has been an improvement in the proportion of children achieving

- Grade 4 or above in both English and maths GCSEs
- Grade 5 or above in both English and maths GCSEs

All looked after children in Year 11 are offered careers advice, support and guidance.

Pupil Premium Spend

Through the PEP Review process, the Virtual School monitors how Pupil Premium is used to ensure that looked after children benefit from this additional resource in relation to making good progress in schools. The Virtual Headteacher is responsible for managing the allocation of the funding to schools and academies each term.

The annual pupil premium payment made to schools was £1,900 per pupil. The use of pupil premium is scrutinised within PEP meetings and during the quality assurance process where PEPs are RAG rated. We continue to work with schools to identify opportunities to support our children and young people within this spend to ensure best outcomes and to support their emotional health and wellbeing. Although the pupil premium funding to local authorities increased, North Lincolnshire headteachers agreed that the additional £400 should remain centrally held by the LA in order to support those young people who may need enhanced funding to support education stability, personalised intervention strategies and intensive support where necessary. This additional payment is made following a formal request from schools and in agreement with the Virtual Headteacher. There are a number of children who have benefitted from this additional funding following exceptional requests for support.

This collaborative approach between schools demonstrates commitment to ensuring all looked after children have the best opportunities to progress in learning.

Funding is distributed termly and quality assured via the PEP. Challenge remains in place with schools where PEP quality may require some improvement or pupil premium spend is not clarified to benefit that particular child or young person.

It remains that the full pupil premium grant is utilised each financial year and schools also have additional support opportunities through commissioned placements at therapeutic education settings such as Changing Lives (therapeutic intervention through equine therapy). Our children receive a 'Letter Box' three times a year with reading books and games that they enjoy and which enhances their reading skills (deliveries have been rescheduled due to Covid-19 until Autumn Term 2020). All of our looked after children up to the age of five years receive a monthly reading book through North Lincolnshire's Imagination Library.

Electronic PEPs (EPEP) and Welfare Call

The Virtual School works directly with young people, carers, designated teachers, and social workers to ensure that the electronic PEPs are consultative and responsive to the young person's needs as well as recording their educational journey from the point they become looked after.

The Virtual School ensures that the PEP review process is undertaken within appropriate timescales and has aspirational targets, whilst addressing social and emotional needs.

PEPs use SMART targets and provide a pathway to achieve successful outcomes and regularly reviews the PEP to ensure it is aspirational and demonstrates how the pupil premium enhances the child's attainment.

Welfare Call collects the daily attendance for all our looked after children. An analytics tool has been developed which provides us with statistical data that can be utilised during meetings and included in reports.

Additional quality assurance meetings are held termly and more recently to monthly to focus on Fischer Family Trust estimates. Senior leads and the Virtual Headteacher attend this meeting and key year groups are allocated a focus at specific meetings to support best outcomes, challenge to schools and transition arrangements for that group.

The Virtual School is directly responsible for:

- Quality assuring the documents and RAG rating accordingly
- Holding to account those with responsibility for ensuring that the agreed objectives, actions and support are delivered
- Monitoring the use of pupil premium spend and pupil progress
- Ensuring a termly quality assurance meeting is held and supported by social care, education and schools randomly selecting a number of EPEPs for QA.
- Monthly audits of looked after children also takes place which feeds into the Access and Inclusion Case Audit meeting
- Challenge to schools where there is evidence that an Education, Health and Care Plan application should be made

Supporting High Quality PEPs

Measuring Virtual School Impact

- A consistently high completion rate of Initial PEPs within 10 school days, and PEP reviews within the new termly timescales
- Clear evidence that PP+ is used effectively through monitoring of individual PEP targets.
- Targets have clearly identified outcome/improvements and are RAG rated before new targets are set
- PEPs are submitted for sign off at the meeting as a result of good preparation
- Pupil views are clearly considered and taken into account during the PEP meeting
- There is a clear progression pathway identified, taking account of the young person's ability, hopes and aspirations in all PEPs
- Agreed actions are clearly followed up and reviewed at subsequent PEP meetings
- All PEPs are quality assured and where necessary appropriate challenge is made and/or action is taken
- All PEPs have all appropriate sections completed before sign-off.

Training

Training continues to be provided by the Virtual School and a selection of courses are offered to Designated Teachers, Social Workers, Adopters and SGOs, Foster Carers and those registered to become a 'Caring2Learn' school.

On Line training:

These courses can be accessed and completed in own time: the role of the Designated Teacher, supporting children with unmet attachment needs, understanding trauma and the impact on young people, and raising attainment.

Facilitated/Virtual Training:

Prior to Covid-19 our facilitated training calendar included an introduction to Restorative Practice, Social Pedagogy Introduction, Kids Skills, supporting children with adverse childhood experiences (a trauma lens perspective), understanding secondary trauma in ourselves and those around us, PEP overview, the role of adopters, SGOs, foster carers in education and raising attainment. The Caring 2 Learn team from Lincolnshire has supported our efforts during Covid-19 and allowed us access to their virtual training courses which include those listed and additional courses such as mindfulness. This training will incorporate joint opportunities for schools, carers and professionals to learn together and share experiences.

Other Tools/Resources

Guidance leaflets have been issued to Designated Teachers around SMART target setting, how to complete the attainment section of the PEP at each key stage and self evaluation for Designated Teachers.

Creating Success for Children in Care Conference

The Virtual School held its first Children in Care Conference in October 2019. Our focus was creating success for our children in care and we invited a key speaker – Jaz Ampaw-Farr to host the majority of the day for us. Jaz is a care leaver herself, inspirational speaker and successful business woman. Key messages about underlying need, early life trauma, emotional wellbeing and inclusive approaches were the focus for the day which was well received by our audience of school staff and leaders, governors, social care and health and wellbeing colleagues and carers. The conference was opened by the ‘One Voice’ Children in Care Choir who did an amazing rendition of songs for our audience and set the scene for the whole day.

Feedback for the whole day was positive.

“Amazing speaker – the best I’ve seen by far”

“It was excellent, thought provoking and engaging”

“Great conference with fantastic speakers”

“This was the best training day I have been in”

“Absolutely amazing conference. Jaz Ampaw-Farr was inspirational”

“Jaz’s story could be viewed as a tragedy of abuse, neglect and poverty. Instead, she focuses on the life-altering impact a handful of everyday heroes had on her trajectory. Through celebration and provocation, she invites audiences into deep narratives that translate beyond her own powerful journey of overcoming obstacles, to the stories of those whose lives we seek to impact. Jaz speaks with humility, honesty and humour and has a disarming ability to persuade people to let their guard down. In a nutshell, Jaz is transformational.”

<https://www.jzampawfarr.com/>

Due to Covid-19 the November 2020 Children in Care Conference has been cancelled and will be rescheduled to the Autumn Term of 2021.

Partnership & Collaborative Work

In keeping with the One Family Approach, the Virtual School functions with services for children's social care and health. The collaboration and sharing of information, resources and service works best for our children and we continue to support each other to drive forward outcomes. We are proactive in building relationships with our Designated Teachers in order to improve outcomes for our looked after and previously looked after children and champion the Designated Teacher role as set out in the statutory guidance (Feb 2018).

The Virtual School has met with the Adoption Team and identified ways of further supporting our previously looked after children by developing a booklet for designated teachers outlining responsibilities. A Virtual School representative has attended events and drop in sessions for adopters and special guardians offering support. 'Caring2learn' training has been offered to adopters, special guardians, foster carers, designated teachers, support staff, social workers and education officers. This has created a collaborative learning environment enabling the sharing of good practice and promoting good networking and feedback opportunities.

S had an EHCP, a number of recent exclusions from primary school and a care plan to restore him to his birth mum during the Covid-19 pandemic. There were concerns from the birth parent and the FaSST Team that his educational needs were not fully being met during this time of uncertainty and the school struggled to manage his emotions/behaviour during the partial school closure resulting in exclusions and isolation. The case was discussed at the Covid-19 daily school support meeting where Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), Educational Psychology, Education Inclusion and FaSST staff identified a plan of support and clarity on the school situation. A professionals' meeting was held, additional support was provided by the behaviour team and SEND and additional Pupil Premium + was provided to the school to fund Creative Therapy for short term emotional support whilst the EHCP was reviewed. The collaborative working ensured S was being supported appropriately, challenge provided to the school around exclusions and additional support put in place in school to support S which prevented further exclusions.

Pupils educated outside North Lincolnshire

Our continued drive will always be to have our children educated in mainstream settings within North Lincolnshire. We have a small minority of children who require settings outside of our boundary, however, we endeavour to ensure they attend good or better schools. Attendance of these pupils is also tracked by Welfare Call on behalf of the local authority and progress and attainment data is collected termly.

Pupils with an EHCP will have additional monitoring visits undertaken by the SEND Provision Monitoring Officer and will be subject to reporting to Complex Care for such children. Wherever possible, an Education Inclusion Officer will attend out of county PEPs for those children where needs are greater and may require more input to support.

Pupil Voice

Education Inclusion Officers, alongside Designated Teachers and Social Workers endeavour to ensure that children and young people are consulted via the PEP process, regarding their views on their education.

The Virtual School has consulted with looked after children and previously looked after children through their foster carers, Adopters/SGOs via a Learning Conversations questionnaire to gain their and their child's experiences of education during the Covid-19 pandemic and how things could be improved if we experience a second wave of partial or full lockdowns.

This young person had a significant number of address moves and in the last term of year 5 primary education moved to an out of county school. School staff were extremely proactive in seeking the relevant emotional support whilst trying to maintain good levels of attainment. His benchmark FFT20 targets were above nationally expected but due to traumatic events, he was working below expected levels. The school and carer recognised the potential and an application was made for a local grammar school where he sat his 11+ entry exams. Sadly, he narrowly missed the pass mark, so the school, foster carer and other professionals worked together to appeal the decision, which was successful. This young person will now transition to a secondary grammar school where he will be supported to achieve his aspirations of being a “You-tuber or footballer” and encouraged to consider other options through appropriate careers advice.

Impact of Covid-19 since March 2020

Our work as corporate parents is essential in order to fulfil our collective responsibility of ensuring our looked after and previously looked after children achieve their potential and have the best possible educational outcomes.

This year has been a challenging one for all with the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact this has had on our children's education.

We have seen full and partial closures of some of our education, training and nursery providers but have worked together to provide and create positive learning experiences for our children

Vulnerable children not attending school during lockdown were provided with innovative ways to learn and ongoing support so that wherever possible they could continue with their learning.

Some feedback from our education colleagues on how they are working with our children:

- Weekly assemblies with top tips on virtual learning and preparation of mindset for lockdown
- Weekly emails to parents containing useful support information
- Differentiated work packs sent home
- Vulnerable Children contacted or visited at least once a week
- Teaching Assistants linked to virtual classes to support individual students with work as required
- Transition plans in place and transitioning schools working closely together to support our looked after children

Our Response to Covid-19

- Prior to the government scheme, but during Covid-19, 18 new laptops were provided to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). Following a government scheme this extended to Care Leavers and other looked after children. Significant feedback from the young people has been received indicating their gratitude for the laptops.
- All Personal Education Plans continued to take place virtually during the pandemic, and there has been an improvement in sign off time.
- Welfare Call developed a tab within the Personal Education Plan system for schools to complete which assisted in identifying which children were attending school, the communication between home and school and what education was being undertaken.
- The daily tasking group identified looked after children for whom it was felt that school attendance would be beneficial during this time. A multi-agency approach was taken to ensure looked after children in this category had the opportunity to attend school on a regular basis.
- Education Inclusion staff continued to make contact with looked after children during this period and offered additional support.
- The Children In Care Education and Employability Group continued to meet as a multi-agency on a monthly basis to seek assurance on all aspects of looked after children e.g. attendance, school moves, support in place.
- School moves were kept to a minimum. Changes in school places were discussed and agreed at the CICEEG to avoid unnecessary disruption for looked after children. This group has continued to meet throughout Covid-19.
- On line training and virtual workshops was offered to Designated Teachers, Foster Carers, Adopters and staff working with looked after children during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Innovative ways of teaching

- Advice given to parents/carers about other appropriate activities including wellbeing and mental health support
- School Inclusion team phoning vulnerable families regularly so that they can check that they have food, need support or advice etc.
- Different learning platforms used to teach
- A variety of on line resources used to support learning activities

Headteacher comments

“We have carried out home visits and increased these for families wanting more contact”

“Our children have coped with a huge amount of change in a short amount of time”

“We were ready, quickly bought in books we could send home and staff put together a PowerPoint of a week’s worth of lessons. This has continued and are now on week 10”

Examples of support during Covid-19

- Alternative Education Provision was provided and funded through the Virtual School to enable three UASC new entrants in March 2020 to access education during the Covid-19 pandemic. These students progressed on to a college course in September 2020.
- Three further looked after children who were attending a local college required an individualised program of learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. 2 of these students returned to college with support and the other student was provided an alternative education placement which best met his needs funded by the Virtual School. All three students continue to do well in their education placements.
- Additional funding has been provided for therapeutic and creative therapy to support some looked after children during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- A desk and chair has been purchased to enable a previously looked after student create a study area for his post-16 on-line learning.
- GCSE resit and tuition offered to enable looked after children who achieved a grade 3 in maths or English at GCSE to resit in November 2020 to give them the opportunity to boost achievement to a grade 4.

'Pledge2Learn' case study through Covid-19

- A is an Arabic speaking UASC who arrived in the UK during March 2020 and started at Pledge2Learn's Alternative Education Provision during the Covid-19 lockdown.
- A had good literacy skills in Arabic and had learned English as a modern foreign language. A stood looking at the ceiling, the walls, anything she could focus on to avoid eye contact or conversation with anyone else. A was not speaking or understanding the language, and so we allowed A to focus on her passion for art/craft.
- Initially A claimed that she did not like art, but she could not hide her passion and she was soon lost in the moment. A likes to listen to her own music whilst she is working, we allowed this as it really helped build relationships between us.
- Whilst at the provision A has completed Northern Association of Support Services for Equality and Achievement (NASSEA) assessment, Rosetta Stone, Phonics, Maths, English and Science - all helping to build the foundations of learning in preparation for her post-16 journey.
- A's key workers have also spent time completing career quizzes, helping to identify choices of career paths and routes she may need to take. They have also looked at backup options. This helped prepare A's mindset in readiness for starting post-16 education.
- A stated that she had enjoyed her time at the provision and has enjoyed the learning. A has also enjoyed the arts/crafts and sports.
- The work on careers and exploring post-16 options helped A prepare for college.

Learning Conversations

We consulted with Foster Carers/Adopters and special guardians about their experiences during Covid-19. Here are some examples....

- “Can I just first of all say a massive thank you to all the staff who are still available for the children. R and R are enjoying their days and it is hugely beneficial for their mental health... Please pass on our thanks to everyone – this has been a harder week with a lot of people starting to feel some stress from the situation that we haven’t really seen previously. I’m sure it is likely to be the same for your team but the children are certainly feeling safe and well which is great.”
- “We’ve had lots of support from Melior, uniforms, booklets etc. have been sent. Opportunities for online meetings with new teachers etc. Feel well supported for his move.”
- “My child has found it challenging with the isolation from her friends and the routine. As a result there has been an effect on her mental health. Therapy has been put in place via the adoption service which is greatly appreciated”
- “Feedback from any work sent has been fantastic”

On line learning provided

- Promoting the achievement of looked after children
- Positive Parenting
- Healing Environments
- The Role of the Designated Teacher
- Adoption, post permanence and the school role
- Understanding trauma and the impact on Young People
- ADHD
- Emotion Coaching
- Supporting pupils with unmet attachment needs
- Supporting young people leaving care

Caring 2 Learn

The project aims to improve the learning outcomes for our children by ensuring learning communities in which our children and young people feel safe and believe they belong by:

- upskilling and supporting our educators and carers
- encouraging participation and improve attendance
- promoting good practice to support the wellbeing, emotional and mental health of all vulnerable children at home or in their education setting
- reducing the number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions
- having fewer post-16 NEET young people by promoting higher aspiration and self esteem.
- hosting Caring Schools Awards
- providing on-line training

Our plans for the next 12 months

We will

- Continue to roll out 'Caring 2 Learn' to our schools
- Organise a follow-on conference for Creating Success for Children in Care (2021)
- Enhance the quality of the PEP with particular focus on the attainment and SMART target sections
- Continue to ensure that all schools are using the FFT20 as a benchmark target for attainment in the PEP
- Ensure that all transitions between key stages are successfully sustained
- Continue to focus on achievement at key stage 4 in English and Maths
- Continue the improvement of RWM combined at KS2
- Continue to improve attendance by further reducing persistent absenteeism
- Continue to challenge fixed and permanent exclusions
- Ensure PEP's are completed and signed off at least four weeks prior to the end of a term
- Continue to increase proportion of looked after children in mainstream education
- Ensure that all children in care's individual needs in education are reviewed following and during Covid-19, to ensure they remain on track to achieve their outcomes
- Continue to identify and assess SEND needs at the earliest point for looked after children and ensure all looked after children are engaged in and attending suitable education that meets their needs
- Develop further access to employers and bespoke apprenticeships and raise incentives and support to encourage young people to engage with and remain in education, employment or training

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