



Annual Report of the Virtual Headteacher
2020/21

**North
Lincolnshire
Council**

www.northlincs.gov.uk

Foreword

In North Lincolnshire we want our looked after children to achieve their full potential and to go on to live fulfilled lives. We set the highest expectations of schools and settings, and of our role as corporate parents, to ensure looked after children get the opportunities they are entitled to through their education and care, as well as the chances to discover their hidden strengths and talents through participating in a wide range of opportunities outside school and in the broader curriculum.

We are proud of the achievements of our young people, and this report captures some of the highlights of their successes, sets out some of the work that underpins our approaches and outlines the way forward next year.

The onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020 saw an unprecedented period of disruption in education for children. In North Lincolnshire we have continued to have a sharp focus on improving outcomes for looked after children. We have

- Improved the review of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) to ensure that they have high expectations and drive forward progress for young people.
- Improved monitoring systems at all key stages through 'deep dives' to ensure expectations and aspirations are high enough.
- Improved the use of national tracking tools to ensure target grades for all children and young people are aspirational and to challenge schools and children to strive to achieve beyond the expected levels.
- Developed new programmes for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) to ensure a settled start to education in the area.
- Ensured 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 this year for our young people and we will continue to strive to improve. We are committed to ensuring all our looked after children can achieve excellent educational and wider outcomes and onward positive journeys into adult life.



Dave Flowitt

Virtual Headteacher

Headlines

- School stability is a priority and is improving year-on-year. In December 2020, nearly all 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. Due to Covid-19, there are no validated education outcomes data for 2020, however in 2019 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 2and unvalidated 2021 outcomes indicate looked after children in North Lincolnshire continue to achieve better than their peers nationally.
- Bowmandale Primary School was the first school in North Lincolnshire to achieve a gold Caring 2 Learn award in December 2020, quickly followed by Coritani. A further 17 education establishments within North Lincolnshire have registered to become 'Caring 2 Learn' schools. The project aims to improve the learning outcomes for our children by upskilling and supporting 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.
- The overall absence rate of children looked after continuously for 12 months or more in North Lincolnshire in 2018-19 was 4%, which is better than the national and Yorkshire and Humber averages. The overall absence rate for looked after children was ranked =28th out of 150 local authorities. This places the authority in quartile A. Data for the autumn term 2021 is 3.4% which remains lower than the national and regional average. Full year data will be available May 2022.
- 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.

Creating Success for Children in Care Conference

The Virtual School held its first Children in Care Conference in October 2019. This was set to become an annual event. 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.jazampawfarr.com/>

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, in November 2020 the Children in Care Conference was suspended and rescheduled for Friday 19th November 2021.

Partnership and 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. 'Caring 2 Learn' 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 Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan, 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 (Families are Safe, Supported and Transformed) 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 EHC Plan 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/Pupil Voice

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 EHC Plan 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 (Special Guardianship Orders) 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 (Fischer Family Trust) 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 and encouraged to consider other options through appropriate careers advice.

Outcomes for Looked After Children 2020

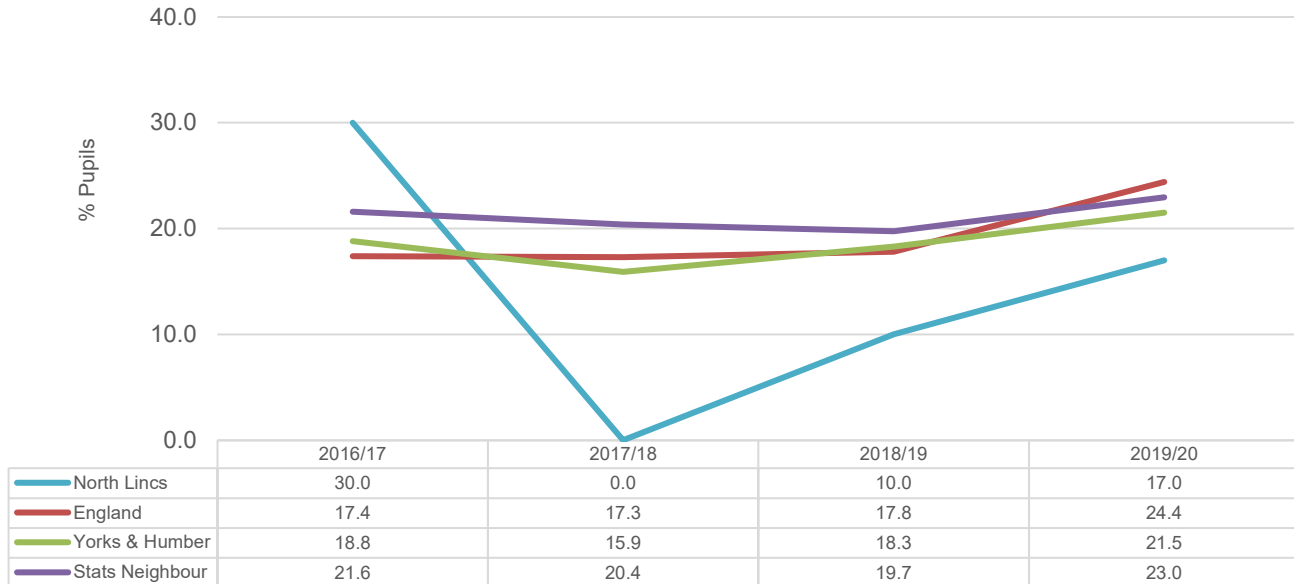
The 2020 & 2021 summer exam series, including A levels, GCSEs and other qualifications, and all primary assessments, were cancelled in the fight to stop the spread of coronavirus. The government took the decision not to publish any school or college level educational performance data based on tests, assessments or exams for 2020 or 2021.

In 2020, there were **20** children looked after in the Key Stage 4 cohort in North Lincolnshire.

KS4 attainment in both English and Maths GCSEs

- In 2020, 11% of the children looked after continuously for 12 months or more in North Lincolnshire achieved **grade 5 or above** in both English and Maths GCSEs. This is 11 percentage points above the outcome from the previous year.
- In 2020, 17% of the children looked after continuously for 12 months or more in North Lincolnshire achieved **grade 4 or above** in both English and Maths GCSEs.
- North Lincolnshire scored 7.4 percentage points below the national average of 24.4% for those children who are looked after continuously for 12 months that achieved **grade 4 or above** in both English and Maths GCSEs.

KS4 - % pupils achieving Grade 4+ in English and Maths GCSE - CLA 12 Months + as at 31st March



Outcomes for Looked After Children 2021 (provisional)

The 2020 & 2021 summer exam series, including A levels, GCSE's and other qualifications, and all primary assessments, were cancelled in the fight to stop the spread of coronavirus. The government took the decision not to publish any school or college level educational performance data based on tests, assessments or exams for 2020 or 2021.

Indicator	North Lincs 2020/21 (provisional)	North Lincs 2019/20	Latest Yorks & Humber average	Latest National Average	Comments
PROVISIONAL – KS4 outcomes					
Children in care, for 1 year or more, achieving Grade 4+ in English & Maths GCSEs (%)	33% (6/18)	17% (3/18)	21.5%	24.4%	<p>KS4 provisional 2020/21 data is sourced from the schools or social worker on GCSE results day.</p> <p>In 2020, 17% of the children looked after continuously for 12 months or more in North Lincolnshire achieved grade 4 or above in both English and Maths GCSEs.</p> <p>North Lincolnshire scored 7.4 percentage points below the national average of 24.4% for those children who are looked after continuously for 12 months that achieved grade 4 or above in both English and Maths GCSEs.</p>
Children in care, for 1 year or more, achieving Grade 5+ in English & Maths GCSEs (%)	11% (2/18)	11% (2/18)	10.7%	10.9%	<p>KS4 provisional 2020/21 data is sourced from the schools or social worker on GCSE results day.</p> <p>In 2020, 11% of the children looked after continuously for 12 months or more in North Lincolnshire achieved grade 5 or above in both English and Maths GCSEs. This is 11 percentage points above the outcome from the previous year.</p> <p>Nationally, 10.9% of children looked after continuously for 12 months or more achieved grade 5 or above in both English and Maths GCSEs. The outcome for North Lincolnshire is 0.1 percentage points above the National average.</p>

Outcomes for Looked After Children 2021 (provisional)

KS5: LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN IN YEAR 13

(Looked after for 1 year or more educated inside and outside of North Lincolnshire)

“Of the 11 looked after children in year 13, we received the provisional results of 5 students highlighting success in a variety of subjects despite the impact of Covid-19. These include a variety of qualifications including 3 A Levels awarded at grade A, BTEC Level 3 Qualifications including two children achieving a Distinction and a number of Entry Level qualifications achieved!”

Attendance and Exclusions 2020-21 (provisional)

Indicator	North Lincs - September 2021	North Lincs - 2020/21 (provisional)	North Lincs - 2019/20	Latest Yorks & Humber average figure	Latest National Average	Comments
Children in Care						
Overall absences from school for children looked after for 1 year or more (%)	6.2% <i>September 2021</i>	3.4% <i>Autumn term 2020</i>	4% <i>2018/19</i>	5.1% <i>2018/19</i>	5.1% <i>2018/19</i>	The overall absence rate of children looked after continuously for 12 months or more in North Lincolnshire in 2018-19 was 4%. North Lincolnshire's result was 1.1 percentage points better than the national, and also 1.1 percentage points better than the Yorkshire and Humber averages. North Lincolnshire's overall absence rate was ranked =28 th out of 150 local authorities, this places the authority in quartile A. September 21 data identifies higher absence rate due to number of school days available for calculation. This will reduce as the academic year progresses.
Children in care who are classed as persistent absentees (%)	15.1% <i>September 2021</i>	7.6% (10/131) <i>Autumn term 2020</i>	8.2% (9/110) <i>2018/19</i>	11.9% <i>2018/19</i>	12% <i>2018/19</i>	The overall percentage of children looked after continuously for 12 months or more in North Lincolnshire who were classed as persistent absentees in 2018-19 was 8.2%. North Lincolnshire's result was 3.8 percentage points better than the National average, and 3.7 percentage points better than the Yorkshire and Humber regional average. North Lincolnshire's persistent absence rate was ranked =18 th out of 143 local authorities, this places the authority in quartile A. September 21 data identifies higher PA rate due to number of schools days available for calculation. This will reduce as the academic year progresses.
Children in care, for 1 year or more with at least one or more fixed term exclusions (%)	4.4% <i>September 2021</i>	6.3% (7/111) <i>31 August 2021</i>	15% (18/120) <i>2018/19</i>	11.3% <i>2018/19</i>	11.4% <i>2018/19</i>	Provisional figures for 2020/21 indicate the suspension rate in North Lincolnshire for children looked after continuously for 12 months or more is 6.3%, as recorded at the end of August. The suspension rate in North Lincolnshire for children looked after continuously for 12 months or more was 15% in 2019. This was 3.6 percentage points above the national and 3.7 percentage points above the Yorkshire and Humber averages. Nationally, the suspension rate in 2018/19 for children looked after continuously for 12 months or more was 11.4%.

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, through the Schools Forum, North Lincolnshire headteachers agreed that the additional £400 should remain centrally held by the local authority 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 (EPEPs) 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 FFT 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 Quality Assurance.
- 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 Pupil Premium + 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.

Shared Priorities

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on children, North Lincolnshire Integrated Children's Trust and headteachers and principals across the education sector established the following shared priorities:

- Enabling the continued **safe operation** of schools, settings and services, and **supporting staff wellbeing**
- Supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing; **building resilience and confidence** through re-engagement and participation
- **Supporting families and communities** to recover from the experience and impact of Covid-19
- Addressing **complex safeguarding** and hidden harm
- Assessing **impact of differing learning and development experiences** – especially within the early years and for vulnerable children of all ages
- Creating opportunities **for learning and employment for older young people**, with a focus on those most at risk of becoming NEET

Mitigating the impact of Covid 19

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. 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.

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, 18 new laptops were provided to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. 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.
- Establishment of a daily tasking group which 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 (CICEEG) 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.
- Following the full return to school in September 2021, PEPs were organised and held in person where possible and as soon as possible into the early part of the term. Implementation of a revised system of tracking up coming PEPs meant that Education Inclusion Officers were available to support the majority of PEPs held. The system will be followed through for all future termly PEPs in order to support schools and social workers to identify relevant SMART targets to support our children and young people.

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. Two 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.
- Supported one UASC now based in London to access a higher Level 3 course in Electrical Installation (Buildings and Structures).

'Pledge 2 Learn' 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 and she continues to do well.

Case Study Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker

H arrived in the UK on 30/01/18 as a UASC aged 17 years.

He was accommodated and supported in a property provided by North Lincolnshire Council in Barton on Humber.

From the day he arrived in the country he longed for education and repeatedly asked to be registered in a college. His native tongue was Arabic and he aspired to learn English so that he could eventually go to university.

Colleges in Scunthorpe were not enrolling students on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses at the time and despite the fact he was no longer compulsory school age, he was enrolled at Changing Lives Alternative Education and Therapeutic Provision on their Coleby site for a number of days a week. H started learning English in April 2018. In June 2018 H enrolled and commenced attending Aspire College in Hull studying ESOL and Maths. He excelled in his learning and was soon requesting to enrol at Hull college so that he could progress this to a higher level. In October 2018 H had an assessment at Hull College and was accepted on the ESOL and Maths course.

He continued to attend Hull College until September 2020 where his attendance was excellent and his educational achievements were exceptional. At this point and despite Covid, H decided to relocate to London, as he said he wanted to improve his life chances. While living in London he travelled to several colleges to try and enrol however due to the time of year he was finding it difficult to find one that were taking students. He did, however get information from the City of London College that there was a Level 2 Diploma in Electrical Installation course starting very soon and contacted us to see if we would pay the fees.

It was agreed that the course would be funded and H started on 7th November 2020. He completed the first year and has recently commenced Level 3.

H has provided evidence of 19 certificates he has gained since starting his education in the UK.

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”

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 in 2020 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.

An additional Looked After Children Education Officer was appointed in January 2021 focusing on supporting previously looked after children and care leavers to ensure that this cohort has support in raising aspirations, access to education, employment and training and preventing NEET.

A temporary Deputy Virtual Headteacher will be introduced in the Autumn Term 2021 to support the additional duties on the Virtual School for those children in receipt of a social worker, alongside a temporary admin support, data officer and CIN/CP (Child in Need/Child Protection) Education Officer.

Head of Access &
Inclusion

Virtual Head Teacher

Lead Officer: Compliance & Case Management

Looked After Children
Education Officers

Senior Education
Inclusion Officer

Education Inclusion Officers
Compliance & Case Management

Care leaver Education Officer

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 'Caring 2 Learn' school. In addition to this, schools have been offered the opportunity to undertake whole school Trauma Informed Practice Training and a number of schools have completed or are in the process of completing.

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.

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
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (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 suspensions 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

Looked After Children Education Officer (Previously Looked After/Care Leavers)

Commencing in January 2021 the role was created to support care leaver NEETs into Education, Employment & Training (EET) and to support previously looked after students in school with education issues with the emphasis on supporting them into EET if post 16. Working in partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions, support is already underway with the current year 11 cohort of looked after children. This includes

- 'Moving on Group' – group work to discuss what's available re Education, Employment, Training and apprenticeships with a group of care leavers as part of their move into independent living
- Support given to Education Inclusion Officers to improve support for potential NEETs who remain in care
- Support given to current Y11 cohort looked after children. This forms the discussions around what is available post 16, support with applications and transitions into post 16 provision.

Wider support to care leavers NEETs was offered in a number of ways including:

- Intensive support face to face (home visits) or by phone if the young person preferred this
- Support to enable routes to employment including CVs, regular job searches, encouragement given to apply for suitable posts, applications, interview techniques/preparation training, registering to recruitment agencies, transport to and from interviews and support with meetings with other professionals
- Referral to other supporting agencies for example Ongo or the Action Station
- Support to enable access to college including applications and follow up, mediate on behalf of young people to enable them to access college places
- Referral to provision and training providers for example YMCA, National Apprenticeships

Support to previously looked after young people was offered in a number of ways including:

- The support that was offered to care leavers NEETs was also offered to previously looked after NEET young people to support them moving into EET
- The Looked After Children Education Officer attends an education drop in along with the adoption service manager every month to offer support to parents of previously looked after students
- Home visits are offered and carried out to speak to parents and students face to face
- If requested by parents the Looked After Children Education Officer can attend all meetings, for example Early Help Assessment (EHA) reviews that are held in school or virtually in regards of the issues the young person and parents are experiencing
- Point of contact to offer support to schools with queries re previously looked after issues/concerns
- Part of a team currently in the process of creating an 'Education Passport' for all previously looked after students. The Education Passport will support parents and staff within school in providing the best education experience for students

Outcomes since the role started:

Number of young people making applications for EET since January 2021- 46

Number of young people moved into EET since January 2021 – 32

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, 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.

Our plans for the next 12 months

We will

- Continue to roll out 'Caring 2 Learn' to our schools and to encourage all our schools to become Whole School Trauma Informed Practice trained and to follow this up with Whole School Emotion Coaching training
- 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
- Further improve the quality of children's education plans through
 - target setting through the use of SMART targets and national (FFT20) benchmarks to improve children's outcomes at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4
 - Ensuring PEPs are completed and signed off by the Designated Teacher and Social Worker at least 4 weeks prior to the end of term
 - Improving the consistency of access to high quality of education by ensuring positive transitions at all stages in a child's education journey, improving attendance and further reducing persistent absence; continuing to challenge fixed term suspensions and permanent exclusions
 - Continuing to increase proportion of looked after children in mainstream education
 - Continuing to identify and assess SEND needs at the earliest point so that all looked after children have a learning offer that meets their needs
 - Continue to offer schools additional tuition opportunities for our children in care in year 11 and year 6 to help support their GCSE exams in 2022 and end of Key Stage tests and assessments in May 2022, and roll out to year 10 and year 5 later in the year
 - Resume the termly Letter Box reading book scheme provided to our children.
- Continue to set high expectations and improve outcomes for children in care including through the Developing excellence for all children supported by a Social Worker Conference to take place on 19th November 2021
- Continue to work to develop our data analytics to ensure timely data, learning and planning
- 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
- Develop the additional duties placed on the Virtual Headteacher and Virtual School in respect of those children in receipt of a social worker

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