



# Learn Achieve Celebrate

## Information and guidance for Designated Teachers of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children in Northumberland February 2022

### Are we back on track yet?

We are half way through the academic year so it's a good time to see how well we are doing at getting our looked after children back on track.



Based on the termly Progress Reviews that you all submit through the ePEP system, progress has improved since the summer term. However the picture is mixed and there are some significant concerns, especially for our primary age children.

- **Years 10 and 11** are on track for success in the Basics at GCSE, with a forecast higher than last year's achievement of 33% (grade 4+)
- **Year 9** only half of pupils are working in their age related curriculum for English and maths, and only a third of those are currently meeting age related expectations
- **Year 8** 70% are working in their age related curriculum, but only 15% are already meeting age related expectations
- **Year 7** 71% are working in their age related curriculum, but only 10% are already meeting age related expectations
- **Year 6** 36% working in their age related curriculum for reading, writing and maths. Progress in reading is better than writing and maths
- Proportion of children working in their age related curriculum for reading, writing and maths in Years 1 to 5:
  - **Year 5** 32%
  - **Year 4** 28%
  - **Year 3** 38%
  - **Year 2** 43%
  - **Year 1** 100%!!

**Total absence** is high at 8.4%

67 pupils are **persistent absentees** which overall is 26% and is high for Northumberland

**Permanent exclusions** remain at 0

19 pupils have had a total of 39 **fixed term exclusions** from 15 schools, which is starting to decrease but is still too high

There have been 19 **mid-year school moves** affecting 18 pupils, 7 due to school placement breakdowns (others following home placement changes), which is slowing down but there are still too many

86% of school leavers in 2021 are still in **education, training and employment**

66% of Year 13 looked after children/care leavers are in **Further Education**

There are some encouraging signs here but there is still a lot of work to do. We need to make sure that the recovery funding is being used for maximum impact and that the social, emotional and mental health needs of our children are being met so that they can make much faster progress.

Please contact ESLAC about individual children that you are concerned about or who you think would benefit from a Rapid Improvement Plan.

We're making progress but we're not back on track yet.

## Attendance incentive



The Virtual School is offering an attendance incentive for all Northumberland looked after children.

From **Monday 28<sup>th</sup> Feb - Friday 8<sup>th</sup> April** (dates may vary for schools in other local authorities), each pupil will receive a **£50 voucher for 100% attendance!!** Any absences that are for health/medical reasons or COVID related (including missed sessions for PCR tests, schools needing to close, self-isolating periods or LAC medicals) will not affect the children's chances of being successful.

**SHARE** this with the pupils in your school, and let's get everyone into school and safe to learn!

## Attendance

**Huge thanks, we now have 100% completion rate for weekly attendance. This is outstanding given that we're currently working across 133 different schools, not including APs, in and out of Northumberland.**

As we know missed learning has a significant impact on looked after children, worsened by the already disrupted learning they have when they enter care. As we are all working together to get pupils back on track can we ask where possible that appointments for medicals/dentists etc are made out of school hours.

Last term there were 110 missed learning sessions - which is **55 days** - for appointments, contact, holidays in term time and transport issues. If your pupil has regular appointments, please speak to their Care Team.

Holidays in term time should not be agreed unless there are exceptional circumstances and you have consulted the Care Team. We have asked foster carers to speak to the child's social worker and ESLAC before requesting term-time leave from school.



## Designated Teacher Spring Conference: 10<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Our Spring Conference is in the diary for **Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> March from 1.00 to 3.30pm**. It will be virtual and you will be sent a link closer to the date (no need to sign up).

The agenda will include:

- Introduction and update from our new SEND colleague Mike Finlay, Senior Manager Northumberland Inclusive Education Service
- Conversations on entry to care
- Transitions and Transition Week

We know how busy you are, but it would be great if you could drop into the Conference. The agenda is relevant to the support we will all be providing to our looked after children during the spring and summer term and there are important developments about other services at the local authority that you will be pleased to hear about.



## Recovery Funding

Just a reminder, please make outcomes **SMART** and detail any additional support the pupil needs to make progress. We currently have **97% PEP completion** which is excellent, over half are green...let's get more green!!



There are various strands of additional recovery funding that looked after children can access to support their learning – Catch Up Premium, Recovery Premium, National Tutoring Programme (including Academic Mentor). Please make sure the use of funding is reflected in their PEP (Outcomes section) and termly progress reviews.

Get in touch with ESLAC for any ePEP training!

## Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs)



Since September 2021, in line with statutory requirements, all Designated Teachers are now required to complete an annual SDQ for all Northumberland looked after children on their school roll. The SDQ is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire. Guidance is available on the DT padlet [here](#).

The SDQ score will be recorded on each pupil's ePEP and available to use at the six monthly PEP review. It doesn't need to be you that completes the SDQ, it needs to be someone who knows the pupil well and has regular contact with them as their answers should not be based on a specific day, but over a period of time.

Please return SDQ forms to [Joanne.Lynch@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Joanne.Lynch@northumberland.gov.uk)

## FREE TRAINING SESSION FOR LEXIA

Whether your pupils already access Lexia or you have pupils who you think would benefit from this fabulous programme, the Virtual School is running a training session delivered by Lexia on **Tuesday 29th March at 3.30pm**. The session will last approximately 1 hour and give you an overview of how the program works, new updates and the chance to ask questions directly to Lexia. Please join us on the day, or contact Debbie Aubrook for additional information. You will have to download ZOOM prior to the meeting.

Follow the link to join the meeting - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87862188788>

**Lexia®**

## Initial Assessments on Entry to Care



The new format for Educational Psychology initial assessments on entry to care was rolled out in September following feedback from our Designated Teacher working group. The new process has streamlined the way we are able to complete initial assessments, meaning we can consult and problem solve at an earlier stage in the pupil's journey and make sure all involved have an understanding of their needs when they enter care.

If you want to know more about the initial assessment then please get in touch. We will be asking for feedback about the process later in the year so that we can evaluate the impact it has on progress, learning and other positive outcomes for looked after children.

## Welcome Amelia



We would like to welcome to the Virtual School our new **Educational Psychologist**, Amelia Taylor. Amelia joined us in November 2021 from North Tyneside's Virtual School and works with us two days per week during term time. You will all get to meet Amelia at our Spring Conference.

## Contact Us

Here are contact details for teams and services that you might need when working with looked after children. Let us know if you need any others:

- OneCall 01670 536 400
- ESLAC 01670 622779
- Email: [eslac.info@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:eslac.info@northumberland.gov.uk)
- CYPS 01670 502 700
- Family Placement 01670 626 262
- IROs 01670 624888

**Virtual School Headteacher: Jane Walker**



**Northumberland**  
County Council