



# Learn Achieve Celebrate

Information and guidance  
for Designated Teachers of Looked After and  
Previously Looked After Children in  
Northumberland  
October 2021

## Success at 16

GCSE results for our looked after children in 2021 are excellent, and for those who didn't take GCSEs there are many individual stories of success. All but 4 of the 45 pupils in the cohort are now engaged in education, training and employment, thanks to their positive experiences of education by the end of Year 11. Well done to the pupils, their schools and education providers, their carers and the ESLAC team.

The Virtual School Headteacher's annual report for 2021 will be published with full details by December, but here are some numbers to keep you going and to maybe use in your Designated Teacher annual report.



### The good news:

41 of the 45 pupils were entered for at least one GCSE  
15 pupils, or 33.3%, achieved the Basics at grade 4+, an improvement since last year  
7 pupils achieved the Basics at grade 5+  
41 of the 45 are in education, training and employment



### The challenging context:

20 pupils had at least one placement move  
11 pupils entered care after the beginning of Key Stage 4  
2 pupils had been permanently excluded before entering care  
5 had a school move during Key Stage 4

We have high hopes for our new Year 11 pupils and want to provide as much support as possible as they prepare for exams once again.

If you would like any support for their education please contact:

- **Karen Jeff**, Virtual School Lead Teacher (secondary) [Karen.Jeff@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Karen.Jeff@northumberland.gov.uk).

To discuss post-16 options and support please contact:

- **Andrea Johnson**, Lead Careers Adviser, [andrea.johnson@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:andrea.johnson@northumberland.gov.uk).  
Careers interviews for Year 11's with EHCP's are already underway!

## Success Post 16

Two care leavers have been offered NHS apprenticeships, getting hands-on experience working on hospital wards.

Two care leavers have recently completed degree courses and two more are awaiting results for their Masters' degrees.

## PEP update

Work continues to make the ePEP system more streamlined in response to your feedback. There have been several updates to the ePEP over the summer:

- we are now able to quickly add in whether there is Primary Mental Health or CYPS involvement with a child
- we now have the facility to tick the box if you are uploading a 'widget' document for Pupil Views and Preparation for Adulthood. This lets us know that there is an upload in the document section rather than the pages being left blank.
- SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) scoring box and actions have been added



Stay tuned for our instructional ePEP video guide, coming soon!!

## Designated Teacher Autumn Conference

Remember that 10<sup>th</sup> November 2021, 1.00 to 3.30pm is the date of our Autumn Conference Lisa Cherry is our keynote speaker.

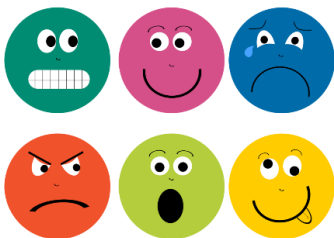
She will be launching our approach to the new duty for Virtual School Headteachers to promote the education of children with a social worker, and will be supporting our ambition to have attachment aware and trauma informed schools in Northumberland.

You can join here - [Click here to join the meeting](#) – and can invite other colleagues in school to join in too. All Designated Safeguarding Leads, Attendance Leads and the social care locality team managers have also been invited.



Lisa believes that creating relationships with children and young people once labelled 'hard to reach' is skilled work. It asks *us* to change, not them. It asks *us* to consider what we bring into the room. In this session, we ask and explore what *does* it mean to build relationships that make a difference? What are the different areas that we can focus on that support this? How can we create a sense of belonging in the school community for children and young people who have experienced 'belonging ruptures'?

## Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs)



From September 2021 in line with statutory requirements, all Designated Teachers will be asked to complete an SDQ annually for all Northumberland looked after children on their school roll.

The score will be recorded in each pupil's PEP and the teacher SDQ score will be available to use at the six monthly PEP reviews to support the planning around the child to meet any identified social, emotional, or mental health needs.

Reminders for the annual SDQs will be generated automatically by the ePEP system when you arrange the PEP meeting. Please complete the SDQ prior to the meeting, return it to Jo Lynch, [joanne.lynch@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:joanne.lynch@northumberland.gov.uk) who will score, populate the SDQ section in the ePEP and upload it to the document section in time for the pupil's multi-agency PEP review.

The SDQ and updated guidance is attached to your email with this newsletter.

## Night Zoo Keeper and Britannica

Join us on Thursday 16th November 2021, 4 - 5pm, for a twilight session with Paul Hutson from Night Zookeeper and Amy Woodhams from Britannica who will talk us through their programmes and explain how they can support our looked after children, and as Designated Teachers how you can use to the resources to enhance and support their learning. [Click here to join the meeting](#)

### Britannica



Is available for all looked after children and has a wealth of information that is differentiated to suit all ages and abilities. The website is of particular use to any of our pupils doing projects or finding out about a particular topic. It is a safe online encyclopaedia; it doesn't take children to unwanted or unsuitable sites.

### The Night Zookeeper



Helping pupils both at home and at school to reach their full potential in writing, NZK suits children aged 5 - 12 years by engaging them in a fun and interactive way. Using online responses from a team of qualified teachers this approach is a fun way to get pupils excited and motivated for their writing. Join us at our online training session to find out more. Many pupils have already signed up so don't delay as spaces are limited.

## Fixed Term Exclusions



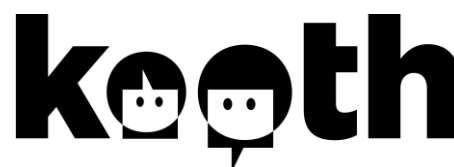
In 2020-21 there was an increase in the use of fixed term exclusions for looked after children.

**12% of looked after children received a fixed term exclusion compared to 2% of the pupil population**

We need to work with you to find alternatives to exclusion. Please contact the Virtual School urgently if you have a pupil that you are concerned about.

## Mental Health Support

[Kooth.com](https://www.kooth.com) is available to support Young People aged 11-25 in Northumberland and North Tyneside. **The Kooth website is available 24/7, 365 days of the year**, giving young people access to articles, discussion boards, peer to peer support and self-help activities alongside the opportunity to contribute by sharing personal experiences within the community. Young people can also speak, via a text based chat, with one of Kooth's online counsellors or emotional wellbeing practitioners between 12 noon and 10pm Monday-Friday and between 6pm and 10pm on Saturday and Sunday.



## Lexia

Last year the Virtual School increased pupil usage of Lexia by 60%, which meant that more children were able to access this excellent programme to improve their reading levels. Those that regularly used the programme saw reading improve by at least one level, some increased by two!! We will continue to offer Lexia, and monitor the progress of our pupils.



If anyone is interested in finding out more please contact Debbie Aubrook our Virtual School teacher (primary), [deborah.aubrook@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:deborah.aubrook@northumberland.gov.uk) or check out these "how to" videos [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNCrAY47jqOZWD3\\_AXXm4Qw/videos](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNCrAY47jqOZWD3_AXXm4Qw/videos)

## Widgit

The Virtual School has funded licences for all schools to be able to access Widgit resources to use with looked after children. It's a brilliant visual website that brings to life the words as they are written. This

will allow us to capture pupil voice in the PEP and Preparation to Adulthood section for those children who find it difficult to express how they feel, or are unable to communicate verbally. Each Designated Teacher will receive a login for the website, where you'll have access to a range of resources created by Widgit. If you already use Widgit and **do not** require a login, please email [eslac.info@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:eslac.info@northumberland.gov.uk). Versions of the pupil voice document are also available on the Virtual School [PADLET](#).



## Hello and Welcome to new members of staff



We would like to say a huge welcome to **Amy Slavin**, SEN Lead Officer for Looked After Children who joined us in the summer holidays. Based in the SEND team, Amy works closely with the Virtual School supporting looked after children with SEND.

We are also welcoming **Amelia Taylor** who is joining us as a Virtual School Educational Psychologist, and we are welcoming back **Kate Hodgson** to the ESLAC team too.

We are pleased to welcome **Caitlin Calvert** who is joining us as our new full time Virtual School Careers' Adviser.

## 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