



Durham Virtual School for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children

Information for Schools & Other Agencies

Children & Young People's Services



Statutory Duty

As a Local Authority we have a statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of looked after children under Section 52 of the Children Act 2004, further strengthened by the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017 which extends the duty to previously looked after children. Following the DfE documents provide additional guidance:

- Promoting Educational Achievement of looked after children and previously looked after children statutory guidance for Local Authorities 2018.
- The designated teacher for looked after children and previously looked after children 2018.

Durham Virtual School

The role of the Virtual School Head and the Durham team is to take the lead in promoting the educational achievement of children in the care of Durham Local Authority and from September 2018, that of previously looked after children. We set aspirational targets and work closely with schools, the wider authority and other partners to deliver the best experience possible so that looked after children and young people can achieve success, thereby improving their life chances.

We want our looked after children to attend, engage and enjoy school so that they can achieve. We are working hard to ensure their voice is heard and has impact.

Our priorities feed directly into, and support:

- Corporate Parenting Strategy and Key Lines of Enquiry.
- The Children and Young People's Strategy for Durham.
- Durham Promise to Looked After Children.

Durham Virtual School includes:

Looked after children in the care of Durham County Council who:

- require a school place;
- are on the roll of a County Durham maintained school or academy;
- are on the roll of a non-Durham maintained school or academy;
- are placed with independent educational providers within or beyond County Durham;
- are placed under a secure accommodation order by the Local Authority.

Previously looked after children who left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order and who attend a Durham school are also supported by the virtual school.

All looked after children remain the responsibility of the school in which they are enrolled. We also support other Local Authorities to identify the right provision for their own looked after children.

Our Aspirations

At Durham Virtual School, we champion looked after and previously looked after children and young people so that they:

- attend a school or setting which best meets their needs;
- attend regularly;
- make progress and achieve;
- have a voice that positively impacts on the services they receive;
- have stability in home, care and education placement;
- receive good advice and guidance to progress into further education, employment and training and, where appropriate, university;
- are well-prepared for adulthood;
- receive recognition for their achievement and have their success celebrated.

The Virtual School Head (VSH) is responsible for:

- maintaining an up-to-date roll of looked after children in the care of Durham Local Authority;
- having knowledge and information about the looked after children attending local authority and out of county schools and settings;
- informing head teachers and designated teachers in schools if they have a looked after child on roll;
- supporting the identification of, and access to, school places for looked after children and previously looked after children;
- knowing how looked after children are doing academically;
- monitoring progress and achievement, identifying underperformance and working with the school to address any issues;
- providing guidance to parents/carers, designated teachers and other professionals regarding the education of looked after and previously looked after children;
- working with schools to agree the use of Pupil Premium Plus;
- ensuring every looked after child has an up to date, effective and high quality PEP that focuses on educational outcomes;
- ensuring the educational achievement of looked after children is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibility for promoting their welfare;
- reporting regularly on the attainment of looked after children through the corporate parenting structures;
- providing support, guidance and advice to parents of previously looked after children to ensure their needs are being met in school.

In County Durham, the duties of the virtual school are carried out by the VSH, deputy VSH and a team of caseworkers. The wider team comprises inclusion support, educational psychologist, therapeutic practitioners and academic tutors.

Supporting the education of Looked After Children

When a child is looked after, the Local Authority has a duty to act as the corporate parent to safeguard and promote the child's welfare and to take action as any good parent would. This includes supporting education and ensuring children and young people have every opportunity to fulfil their potential and make a positive transition into adulthood.

Many looked after children and young people perform well academically. However, from a national perspective, the educational achievement of looked after children remains lower than their peers. This is reflected on a regional basis and also within County Durham.

Previous studies have identified key reasons why looked after children frequently underachieve in education:

- instability in home & school;
- too much time spent out of school;
- insufficient help with education if they fall behind;
- unmet emotional, physical and mental health needs;
- the impact of attachment disorder and early trauma.



The Durham Virtual School Team

At Durham Virtual School we provide advice and personalised support for looked after children and other vulnerable children and young people in County Durham schools.

Our dedicated team has specialist knowledge of the specific needs of our looked after children and has strong links with designated teachers in schools across Durham and neighbouring local authorities.

Every looked after child will be allocated a dedicated caseworker who will support their education.

Our caseworkers will :

- make sure that every looked after child has a quality Personal Education Plan (PEP) which gives young people the opportunity to have their voice heard and acted upon;
- monitor the academic progress of pupils in schools to raise achievement; targeting support to those children and young people most in need;
- Offer or facilitate flexible academic, therapeutic and pastoral support to schools that can be tailored to the needs of individual children and young people;
- provide advice, support and training for parents, carers, social workers, schools and other key partners.

Our Virtual School Education Inclusion Workers deliver flexible academic and pastoral support to schools that can be tailored to the needs of children and young people by:

- assessing specific needs;
- working with school staff to plan support in line with curriculum requirements;
- delivering study support to young people to help with completion of coursework, homework and revision for tests and exams;
- providing offsite support.

The support is provided during school term-time at no cost to maintained schools. Academies and independent or free schools can purchase this support.

Pupil Premium Plus for Looked After Children

Pupil Premium Plus funding is provided for looked after children and young people who are at risk of not achieving as well academically as their peers. The amount of funding available for each child in school is £1,700. Durham Virtual school retains £600 per child to allow a flexible approach to meet complex needs by:

- employing a looked after child specialist educational psychologist and school counsellor and buying additional Occupational Therapy and SALT provision;
- funding reading resources and programmes for Durham Looked after children aged three years to 11 years old;
- providing additional funding for individualised programmes of support;
- delivering professional development opportunities for schools.

For further information about the work of Durham Virtual School and to read our annual report, please visit our website:

<http://www.durham.gov.uk/durhamvirtuelschool>



Working together with schools

At Durham Virtual School we want to work together with schools to make a difference for our looked after children and young people. We know that there are times, when they will need additional support and help.

What can schools do to provide universal support for all looked after and previously looked after children and young people?

We want to encourage schools to pool pupil premium plus funding (where appropriate) to enable them to support the whole cohort of looked after and previously looked after young people through ensuring all staff are trauma and attachment aware. This includes schools:

- reviewing their school policies to ensure there are no hidden barriers which could impact negatively on looked after children and young people;
- reviewing their behaviour policies to include consistent messages but flexible approaches, behaviour regulation and an acknowledgement of behaviour as communication;
- becoming an attachment and trauma aware school through training staff to recognise the outward signs of insecure attachment and build capacity for self-regulation;
- developing an awareness of the protective factors that allow young people to develop resilience, feel a sense of belonging and learn to trust;
- ensuring the designated teacher has sufficient time to carry out their role effectively as an advocate for LAC&YP;
- listening to and responding to the views of C&YP;
- being aware at times of transition and providing additional support as needed;

- ensuring there is an appropriate curriculum to meet the needs of LAC&YP;
- working closely with carers and social workers;
- showing LAC&YP that they are wanted and will continue to be wanted as a valued member of the community;
- addressing any bullying or unkind comments.

What can schools do to support the educational achievement of individual looked children and young people?

Schools can promote progress and achievement by:

- providing tuition (internally or through the virtual school using PP+ funding) as needed to address gaps in knowledge caused by disrupted education;
- providing an identified mentor or keyworker who is attachment and trauma trained to meet LAC & YP on a morning, check in during the day and offer 1 to 1 sessions as needed;
- not excluding LAC & YP;
- developing a 'team pupil' approach with a team of identified staff who advocate for the YP;
- working closely with the virtual school to identify any issues early before they reach crisis point;
- producing high quality PEPS which show ambition for LAC & YP, have SMART outcomes and recognise and plan for needs;
- tracking progress from entry into care so that LAC & YP can experience success;
- being aware of the looked after status of the pupils when planning lessons and resources and anticipating possible triggers;
- celebrating success.

What should schools do when a looked after child or young person is showing signs of heading into crisis?

It is helpful within school to have a trusted adult for every looked after child who can recognise the signs of developing distress, stress and anxiety very early. This may be a form tutor, pastoral worker, teacher or any other appropriate adult. If the trusted adult is concerned he/she should inform the designated teacher who will inform the virtual school caseworker and social worker.

Our caseworkers will respond quickly and seek solutions through supporting the school and providing intervention as required.

Strategies to use at times of crisis:

- provide a safe space with access to a trusted adult for the child to retreat to as needed;
- request additional therapeutic input from the virtual school (see page 11 for offer);
- request additional EP or counselling support;
- speak to the social worker about a referral to Full Circle;
- request some intervention for the child / young person at our Inclusion base;
- inform the virtual school caseworker if you are going to issue a fixed term exclusion to see whether we can support by providing time at our base;
- work with the virtual school if there is a need for any alternative pathway packages to be developed;

Please do not consider a permanent exclusion without first speaking to the virtual school.

We expect all schools and academies to provide the same high quality of provision for looked after children. Durham Virtual School retains £600 PP+ funding from all schools which provides the universal offer on column one below. Maintained schools also de-delegate funding to the local authority. This provides the additional support for looked after children outlined in column two. Academies and free schools who do not de-delegate funding can purchase this support at the de-delegated rate for maintained schools or through costed individual provision. Every Durham looked after child has a dedicated caseworker.

Universal Offer for all schools for Durham LAC Cost to school £600 retained PP+ budget	Maintained Schools Offer for all LAC Cost to school – de-delegated funding	Academy Offer Full provision at maintained schools de-delegated rate or costed as below
Therapeutic Support and Advice		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional EP time Additional counselling time Additional OT time Additional SALT time 	EWEL team to provide a wide range of therapeutic intervention, advice and strategies.	Costed provision at usual EWEL rates
Academic Intervention and Progression		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Six 1 to 1 tutor sessions for years 2, 6 and 11 to support achievement. Holiday and twilight provision to support outcomes Reading resources reception to year 6 IAG delivered by Progression and Learning team. 	Six 1 to 1 tutor sessions for years 5, 7 and 10 as identified through PEP.	Hourly rate £55
Inclusion Support		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caseworker support for YP in crisis or in need of immediate input The Bridge KS3 places x 3 Beeches / Willows KS1/2 places x2 and outreach support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at the Inclusion Base for secondary pupils at times of real stress within school to relieve pressure or avoid FTE. 5 half days or up to 3 full days. Up to 3 days FTE provision to avoid pressure on care placement with enhanced transition to support child back to school KS4 engagement in learning programme / Personal and Social Development / NOCN Mon /Tues whole days, 6 week rolling programme 	£110 per day £60 per half day £75 per day
Advice, Support and Training		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designated Teacher training Governor training Ongoing and swift support and advice for schools from VSH / VSDH and team. Training for virtual school caseworkers, foster carers, social workers and other agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintained schools designated teacher development programme 1 hour whole school training on needs of looked after children e.g. attachment and trauma, impact of being in care, impact of ACES Train the trainer session on the above topics 	Costed

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