



Northumberland County Council

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 6th June 2019

Virtual School Headteacher Annual Report 2017-18

Report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care & Children's Services, Cath McEvoy-Carr

Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Councillor Wayne Daley

Purpose of Report

To present the education outcomes of Northumberland's looked after children for the academic year 2017-18.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- 1) Members note the positive education outcomes;
- 2) Members note the increasing strengths and improvement over time of Northumberland's Virtual School.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the Learning, Thriving and Success Measures priorities included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2018-2021

Key Issues

1. Achievement for our pupils at Key Stage 1 is outstanding and trends in achievement for pupils of most ages have been steadily improving since 2016.
2. However at Key Stage 2 achievement this year for our cohort of 10 pupils dipped below regional and national averages.

3. Outcomes continue to improve with a 5 year trend of increasing numbers of looked after children and care leavers progressing into school sixth forms and further education.
4. Although progress from the starting point of entering care is good, rates of progress between Key Stage 1 and 2 and Key Stage 2 and 4 are not good enough.
5. The Children's Commissioner and our own data demonstrate that school placement stability is very good and much better than elsewhere in England.
6. There have been no permanent exclusions of looked after children since 2008, however fixed term exclusions continued to rise.
7. Too many looked after children do not engage well with their school curriculum and the number classed as persistent absentees is therefore too high.

BACKGROUND

1. It is a statutory requirement for all local authorities to have a Virtual School Headteacher (VSH) to champion the education outcomes for looked after children. Care can make a positive difference to a child's life and this Annual Report of Northumberland's Virtual School Headteacher sets out how in 2017-18 we can evidence that assertion with good and improving education outcomes.
2. In Northumberland the VSH is supported by the Education Support for Looked After Children (ESLAC) team which provides a service to children and Designated Teachers in schools to ensure that the conditions for learning are right. This includes working in partnership to reduce fixed term exclusions, minimise school moves and ensuring that pupils feel safe to learn.
3. Apart from the VSH, there are no teachers on the Virtual School team. The planning, delivery and quality of teaching for our looked after children is therefore the responsibility of the schools.
4. The Virtual School has an improvement plan which sets out priorities for each academic year based on the self-evaluation captured in the annual report.

IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

Policy:	The report affirms the need for an integrated multi-agency approach to improving outcomes and life chances for our children in care, and the key role of the Virtual School for Looked After Children
Finance and value for money:	The Virtual School enables the Council to fully discharge its statutory and moral duties to prioritise meeting the diverse needs of our children in care. Improved education outcomes over time demonstrate the value the Council adds to LAC achievement through this funding.
Legal:	None
Procurement:	None
Human Resources:	Note that new legislation and revised statutory duties have broadened the remit and accountability of the Virtual School Headteacher. Responsibilities for previously looked after children will have an impact on resources.
Property:	None
Equalities: (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
Risk Assessment:	Sufficient improvement in education outcomes for Northumberland's children and young people is key to delivering sustained economic growth. Closing gaps in attainment for vulnerable learners will have a positive impact on overall attainment and promote social mobility.
Crime & Disorder:	None
Customer Considerations:	None
Carbon Reduction:	None
Wards:	All

CONSULTATION

The Executive Director of Adults' and Children's Services has been consulted on the content of this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

FACS:6th June 2019

- Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England, 11 April 2018 DfE.
- Promoting the education achievement of looked after children: statutory guidance (DfE Feb 2018).
- Education achievement data provided by the Virtual School and NCC Data Unit September 2018.

Report Sign Off

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	Full name of officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	N/A
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	N/A
Relevant Executive Director	CM
Chief Executive	DL
Portfolio Holder(s)	WD

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Appendices – number each appendix and avoid attaching superfluous material

1. Virtual School Headteacher Annual Report 2017-18
2. Education Outcomes 2017-18