



Northumberland

County Council

FAMILY & CHILDREN'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3RD FEBRUARY 2022

Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report 2021

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

Cabinet Member: Councillor Guy Renner Thompson

Purpose of report

This report is to publish to members the Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report for 2020-21.

Recommendations

1. Members note the education achievements of our looked after children.
2. Members note the ongoing challenges caused by the disruption to education during the pandemic.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the corporate objectives, and specifically the "Learning" and "Thriving" priorities of the Corporate Plan 2018 - 2021.

Key Issues

1. The Virtual School's priority from September 2020 was to recover from the disruption to learning caused by the pandemic by getting pupils back on track with their education. Despite the further disruption caused by partial school closure from January 2021 and a full term of remote learning, there were good education outcomes for our looked after children and care leavers. Achievement at GCSE improved again and a much higher proportion of pupils are progressing into further education to follow level 3 courses.
2. We know that pupils are able to achieve their best when they are in stable school placements. For the 13th consecutive year there has been no permanent exclusion of a looked after child from school. However, the emotional impact of the pandemic and the restrictions to 'normal' school life have affected stability and it remains a priority to reduce the number of fixed term exclusions and mid-year school moves.
3. The Education Support for Looked After Children (ESLAC) team was re-structured to introduce a Deputy Virtual School Headteacher who also fulfils the role of the Virtual School's SENDCO. Lead roles were created and additional capacity added so that we

could provide the support and interventions that our children need the most, for example educational psychology and careers' guidance.

4. The Virtual School made good progress with plans for improvement, despite the continued disruption caused by the global pandemic.

Background

1. Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report 2021 – see separate document.

Implications

Policy	The Virtual School fulfils the council's statutory duties in relation to the education of looked after children, previously looked after children and care leavers.
Finance and value for money	The current proposals seek to be delivered within existing service budgets. The impact of Covid 19 on expenditure is being monitored.
Legal	Discharge of local statutory duties regarding the education of looked after children, the Children Act 2004.
Procurement	None
Human Resources	The wellbeing of all staff is a priority as they cope with the additional pressures of Covid 19. Re-structuring of the ESLAC team created additional capacity in specialist areas eg educational psychology, careers' guidance.
Property	None
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None
Risk Assessment	None
Crime & Disorder	None
Customer Consideration	Personal risk assessments are in place for all staff; all education providers have risk assessments in place which are monitored by NCC
Carbon reduction	None
Health and Wellbeing	The emotional and mental health and wellbeing of looked after children is a priority
Wards	No implications have been identified at this stage

Background Papers

[Promoting the education of looked after and previously looked after children, DfE statutory guidance February 2018](#)

Report Sign Off

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Cath McEvoy-Carr
Chief Executive	Daljit Lally
Portfolio Holder(s)	Guy Renner-Thompson

Author and Contact Details

Report Author: Jane Walker, Virtual School Headteacher

Phone: (01670) 622734

Email: jane.walker@northumberland.gov.uk