

## SUPPORTIVE PARENTING PARTNERSHIP

### AGENDA

Meeting to be held on Monday 15 April 2024 at 5.00pm in the Conference Room, Sandhill Centre, Grindon Lane, Sunderland, SR3 4EN

#### Part I

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	Presentation from the Strategic Programme Manager.	

7. **Work Programme**

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Report attached.

ELAINE WAUGH  
Assistant Director of Law and Governance

City Hall  
SUNDERLAND

5 April 2024

## **SUPPORTIVE PARENTING PARTNERSHIP**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 15 January 2024 at 4.00pm in the  
Training Room, Sandhill Centre, Grindon Lane, Sunderland, SR3 4EN**

### **Present:**

#### **Members of the Board**

Councillor Iain Scott (in the Chair)	Deputy Cabinet Member, Children, Learning and Skills Sandhill Ward
Councillor Margaret Crosby	Washington East Ward
Councillor Logan Guy	Non-Executive Director, Together for Children
Catherine Hearne	

#### **All Supporting Officers**

Jill Colbert	Chief Executive, Together for Children
Tracy Jelfs	Head of Service for Cared for Children, TfC
Jo Morgan	Designated Nurse, Cared for Children
Sharon Willis	Head of Service, Residential and Care Experienced Services
Mark Christie	Registered Manager, Together for Children
Michael More	Registered Manager, Together for Children
Kaye Fox	Foster Carer
Gillian Kelly	Democratic Services

#### **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Williams, Smith and Tye together with Samantha Diston.

#### **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **Minutes**

18. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

## **Overview of Consistent Care for Children and Young People in TfC Children's Homes**

Mark Christie, Registered Manager at Revelstoke Road delivered a PowerPoint presentation on the trauma repair model of care which was undertaken at the home.

It was highlighted that repeated trauma shaped how the mind and brain of a young person grew and resulted in trauma driven behaviour. The model of care being practised trained carers to: -

- Understand why children do the things they do
- Treat trauma driven behaviour with trauma-based responses
- Plan, do, measure and review plans with the Consultant Clinical Psychologist

Members were shown the cycle of trauma repair and a case study of how this approach had made a real difference in the journey of a cared for child. Mark highlighted that often to fix something, you needed to see the break, and it was a case of encouraging children and young people to let trauma out and not squash it down.

Catherine Hearne asked where the child or young person's voice came in the process and Mark explained that a signs of safety page was used in a child friendly part of the plan to capture their views.

Jill Colbert noted that the young person in the case study had a very close relationship with their link worker and Mark commented that this was very different to what workers used to be told but the close relationship was very beneficial for the young person.

Kaye Fox asked if this kind of work could be done if a child was still involved with their birth family and Mark said that this was possible depending on how the child had been hurt.

Councillor Crosby queried if workers got involved with schools as part of this process and Mark advised that this would be on a need to know basis. Sharon Willis added that there was a current situation in one of the homes where workers were liaising with the school very closely to mirror the work that was taking place in the home.

Jill asked if Mark and his colleagues had any ask of the Supportive Parenting Partnership and he commented that he felt that the trajectory was towards a trauma-based service. He noted that joint working with schools really did have an impact on the model of care.

From the foster carer perspective, Kaye said that they were also receiving support and she was currently working with Louise Hamilton to help a young person in her care.

Councillor Scott was delighted to hear that the trauma informed response was being pursued by Together for Children.

Members then received a presentation from Michael More, Registered Manager at Colombo Road on working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children was a growing area of work in which Together for Children were developing their skills, working in collaboration with the National

Transfer Scheme. It was highlighted that this was a frightening time for these young people, many of whom had travelled for many months and had lost their homes, their families and the people they loved.

Developing a network for unaccompanied children had become very important and links have been established through the National Transfer Scheme, other local authorities and local religious groups. Communication methods had also been adapted and good use had been made of interpreters and translators along with digital applications. This has helped to develop positive relationships, engage with the young people and to be able to take their feelings and views into account. Michael commented that celebrating diversity and culture was also important.

It was noted that these young people were dealing with different kinds of trauma and referrals were made to CYPS where appropriate. Michael stated that the three young people currently at Colombo Road were accessing different health services and key partners were crucial in helping young people to feel comfortable in their new environment.

Ofsted had made very positive comments about the experience of children and young people in the home and this reflected the ethos that children should be valued and cared for, no matter where they came from.

Jill referred to the trauma repair environment in Revelstoke Road and asked if this was the same in Colombo Road. Michael said that there were different types of trauma being observed and Dr Christie had carried out consultations with the young people; what they were feeling was normal, it was natural for them to miss their family and friends and their parents wanted the same thing for their children as Together for Children.

Sharon explained that all children's homes were trauma informed and trained in PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy), however only Revelstoke Road was completely delivering trauma informed care with another two homes working up to that position.

Catherine Hearne commented that it was great to hear about the progress being made and she was interested in work with artists and musicians and links to shared culture and asked if there had been any connections made with Sunderland Culture.

Michael said that this had not yet been tapped into, workers were finding out what the young people were interested in as part of building up trust and initially sport had been a good starting point.

Jill highlighted that this was a topical issue as the recent residents' survey had flagged up social cohesion and culture and music were good ways of creating a shared experience.

Councillor Crosby asked what happened to the legal status of these young people when they reached the age of 18 and Sharon said that this would depend on whether they were granted the right to remain; there had been some young people who had been through the system and then were deported. It could be a challenge for services if a young person was over 18 and involved in an appeal process then accommodation had to be provided and this would come at a cost; in these circumstances an unaccompanied asylum seeker

would become a care experienced young person. Together for Children had good links with the Home Office but delayed decision making could have an impact.

Having thanked Mark, Michael and Sharon for their presentations, it was: -

19. RESOLVED that the information be noted.

### **Health of Cared for Children**

The Designated Nurse for Cared for Children submitted an update report on the health of cared for children.

Jo Morgan reported that the Health Partnership for Cared for Children had continued to meet as a multi-agency group which was improving relationships across services working with children in care in the city. It was felt that a clear strategic plan was needed and ideas were being developed for this. A Practitioner Forum was planned to focus on cared for and care experienced young people and this would also look at how the trauma informed response could be promoted.

Young people had asked for emotional wellbeing support with life story work and it was planned to meet with the Change Council to gain greater understanding of what was required.

Jo advised that 124 Initial Health Assessments had been carried out in Quarters 1 and 2 of 2023/2024 however only 17% were within timescale in Q1 and 42% in Q2. These concerning timescales were due to capacity and the Foundation Trust had put in place an advanced nurse practitioner to manage the shortage of doctors and there was assurance that health needs were being followed up at ICB level. The Designated Doctor post was currently vacant and Dr Mills was the Safeguarding Designate. As the ICB was undergoing a restructure it was possible that there might be a different approach in the future and it was envisaged that the position would be known by the end of March.

Jill asked if there was a risk register which would reference the absence of the Designated Doctor and Jo advised that this would be within the Foundation Trust and ICB register. Jill said that she would follow this up and Jo agreed that more voices were needed to highlight this issue.

Jill added that concerns had been raised via the Council's Chief Executive about the impact of the restructure. It was also highlighted that the current Service Level Agreement was out of date and that more could be offered if this was reviewed.

Having thanked Jo for the report, it was: -

20. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

## CNTW Children and Young People's Cared for Pathway

The Board received a report covering the period June to December 2023. Unfortunately, the representative from CNTW had not been able to attend but was happy to respond to any queries on the information contained within the report outside of the meeting.

The detail provided in the report was as follows: -

Month	Total rec'd	Not accepted	Reason for those not accepted	Other	Total accepted for CFC
June 2023	8	2 declined / discharged	1 x Adult 1x additional information required	0 seen outside of CFC pathway	6
July 2023	10	1 declined / discharged	Social care issues priority / clarity needed around legal status & living arrangements	2 seen outside of CFC pathway	7
August 2023	8	3 declined / discharged	2 x interim care orders. 1x lack of information about current concerns re mental health	0 seen outside of CFC pathway	5
Sept 2023	6	1 declined / discharged	1x about to be subject to open care proceedings	0 seen outside of CFC pathway	5
October 2023	10	3 declined / discharged	2 x additional information required. 1 x ongoing care proceedings	0 seen outside of CFC pathway	7
Nov 2023	14	6 declined / discharged	1 x current care proceedings 1 x input from Adoption Support Fund 1 x out of area 1 x requires response from f/carer in therapeutic way rather than individual therapy 2 x additional information required	0 seen outside of CFC pathway	8
Dec 2023	14	1 declined / discharged	1 x additional information required	2 seen outside of CFC pathway	9 (+2 pending decision)

21. RESOLVED that the information be noted.

## **Work Programme 2023/2024**

The Board were informed of the work programme for the municipal year 2023/2024 and forthcoming agenda items.

Jill Colbert advised Members that it was Tracy Jelfs last meeting of the Partnership prior to her leaving Together for Children for a new post.

Councillor Scott thanked Tracy on behalf of Members for all of her hard work during her time with Together for Children.

22. RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

(Signed) I SCOTT  
In the Chair





REPORT AUTHOR:	Alexandra Bowey, Participation and Engagement Officer
SUBJECT:	Together for Children’s Change Council Report for Supportive Parenting Partnership Board (Corporate Parenting Board) 15 April 2024
PURPOSE:	To report on the activity of both Change Council Mini, Change Council 12-15 group and Change Council 16+ group (November 2023-March 2024)

Change Council have continued to meet regularly face to face. Change Council are meeting in their designated space, we have also begun meeting with Change Council Mini.

Activity	What’s Working Well?	What’s Not Working So Well?	What needs to happen?
<p><b>Film - planning around education</b> Change Council 12-15 - short videos to be made, raising awareness and challenging the stigma in education.</p> <p>Change Council 16+ to feed in with suggestions on post 16 education and how this impacts them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alex has met with Jenny from Blue Cabin to try and move this project onwards with support from Blue Cabin.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have a price for the work with Blue Cabin which is an estimated £10,000.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To see if TFC can contribute to this in any way and then have a match with funding, Blue Cabin will support with this.</li> </ul>

### Training 16+

We have been working on our Change Game Workshop and delivering this to a range of staff.

We delivered this at a Sunderland University staff away day.



- We delivered this workshop with the Regional Children in Care Council at their Let's Talk Change event in November.
- There were a number of senior leaders in attendance from across the North East.
- Alex has spoken to Sunderland University and we have a meeting booked to plan in a date to pilot this with student teachers.

- We will plan further dates so that everyone can have the training.
- We would like to continue to expand this training to other organisations and are keen to have opportunities to do so.
- We are planning to hold sessions within TFC in April for National Care Experience History Month

<p><b>Regionals- Let's Talk Change Event</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 members took part in speaking, delivering workshops and working with professionals.</li> <li>• We worked well with other regional representatives.</li> <li>• Our Change Game was the main workshop and we trained other young people in the game so that they could also deliver it.</li> <li>• The game was very well received by the professionals.</li> <li>• All professionals made a 'Pinky Promise' of something that they were going to do between the event and our main conference event in April (we will be checking!)</li> <li>• All council leads have contributed funding to organise the main conference in April as we do not currently have a budget for regional activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is sometimes difficult to get meetings planned as there is so many of us and living very spread out.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To plan the conference.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Creation of easy guides to different aspects of being cared for/care experienced to support other young people with things we have been unsure of.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CC 12-15 We have had some ideas around this and started to consider designs.</li> <li>• We want this to be by young people, for young people.</li> <li>• We have spoken to fostering and connected carers and they are very supportive of this.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It has taken time to get this started but we are planning this now.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To begin designing and drafting this up.</li> <li>• To share with other young people for feedback- Alex to share with Children's Homes and VOKOL once we have a solid draft.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Toiletry allowance increase</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CC 12-15, We would like the toiletry allowance to be increased in line with the cost of living. £2.50 per week/£10 per month is not</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are still working on this and have had a few distractions such as Christmas and new</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We need to bring this to SLT when we have completed our presentation and hopefully be able to have this considered.</li> </ul>

	<p>enough to get decent quality toiletries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are working on this and have begun to cost up what the basic necessities are, how long these will last and need to be replaced.</li> <li>• We are going to bring this all together and share why we feel that this needs to be increased as we don't just want the bare minimum, we should be able to have good quality shampoos, conditioners etc not the cheapest we can find.</li> </ul>	<p>members joining so need to focus on this.</p>	
<p><b>Recruitment and Selection</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change Council 16+ have been involved in recruitment and selection for Social Workers, Next Steps Deputy HOS, Children's Home Management teams.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to these mostly being during the day it is usually only a few members who can make it due to college/school commitments.</li> <li>• The young people who can make it tend to be from the 16+ group so the younger groups rarely get the opportunity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To try and involve as many young people as possible in recruitment selection opportunities.</li> <li>• For all services which involve young people to involve a young person in their interview panel.</li> </ul>

### Key Fund- Children's Home Fortnight



- 3 of our 16+ group organised Children's home Fortnight. We went to the Key+ and were awarded £500 funding which was matched by TFC.

- We have relied on Key+ funding to do this event, because the Key funding is done in project stages- £250/£500/£1000 before we can reapply, there are also different criteria to hit for each amount. We worry that some years we won't be able to rely on this funding if we are not at the right stage or have enough people to apply. It would be upsetting if we could not always guarantee this as it is important to us to recognise the work the children's home staff do, in the same way that foster carers are recognised in Foster Care Fortnight.

- To plan the event yearly.



### Change the Language expansion

- Stars have decided to expand this as 'Change the View' so asking people to consider the way they view SEND young people.
- Cozmic are working on pronouns and how we can ensure a young person's chosen pronouns are respected.

- We are in the very early stages of this and need time to bring this together as one overarching project.

- To continue to link with the groups and work on how we can promote this.
- Alex to link with group leads in bimonthly engagement lead meetings and see what progress there has been.

### Change Council Mini



- Our Change Council Mini sessions are up and running for 7-11 year olds.
- We have been enjoying getting to know each other and making new friends.

- We only have 2 members at the moment and would like more.

- To continue meeting and promoting all CC groups to workers.



### Christmas Party



- We supported the planning for our Cared for Christmas Party.
- We had an amazing time and were pleased to have the event back at Bede Tower.

- There were a few last minute changes to the layout we originally planned as the bouncy castle wouldn't fit.

- To continue to support with the party for 2024 and involve other young people in the planning.
- The party is booked for Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December.

<p><b>Healthier Together</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 16+ members took part in the Healthier Together consultation for a new NHS app for young people.</li> <li>• We really enjoyed taking part in designing the website and sharing our thoughts on what it should include and look like.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not everyone was available to attend.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To continue to take these opportunities to be involved with wider consultations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Coram Voice Amplify Awards</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The North East Regional Children in Care Council were nominated for a Coram Voice Amplify Collaboration Award. 2 of our members represent Sunderland with regionals and attended this award ceremony in London.</li> <li>•The group came third and were also part of consultation with the Department of Education for improving advocacy services.</li> <li>•They also had the opportunity to take part in Q&amp;A with Children's Minister David Johnson OBE.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was quite last minute that we found out that we had placed which didn't give us long to organise it.</li> <li>• It was a very long day as we went there and back in one day.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To enter the awards again for 2024!</li> <li>• To be supported to attend events like this in future as it was expensive.</li> </ul>

**Youth Voice Party and Graffiti Art**



- We enjoyed a Christmas party for all of our Youth Voice groups.
- It was really fun to spend time together as a group but also to spend time with other youth voice members and make new friends.
- We also had The Cultural Spring there who held a graffiti art workshop that we all got involved in to create a collaborative piece of art for Sunderland Youth Voice.

- We aren't sure if this is something we will have funding for every year.

- We have more workshops planned in to complete this artwork later in the year.



**Care Day 24**





- We involved staff and young people in TFC with our social media takeover raising awareness of Care Day.

- We had also really wanted to create a group piece of artwork and linked with The Cultural Spring who had initially said they could fund this but it fell through.

- To continue to get involved with other awareness days across the year.





		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We did not have enough funding to complete this.</li> </ul> 	
<p><b>Regional Let's Talk Change Conference</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Representatives from all the region's CiCC groups met and presented to decision makers and senior leaders across the North East.</li> <li>All councils contributed to the cost which meant we did not have to worry about selling tickets.</li> <li>The key messages were well received and we feel that there will be change and conversations between senior leaders about this.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To continue to be supported to attend these meetings and residentials.</li> </ul>

**Coming up:**

- NatWest Workshops
- Children's Home Fortnight
- Regional CiCC Residential
- National Care Experience History Month

## **Planned work for Spring/Summer:**

- Change Market event for National Care Experience History Month April- Key Fund to apply for.
- Change Game sessions- welcome to attend.
- Invite SPP to attend some of our sessions and meet other YP.
- Regional Let's Talk Change Conference 2024- April
- Children's Home Fortnight May- Key find to apply for and hopefully TFC match.
- Continue to consult and involve more cared for and care experienced children and young people. Alex to drop into Children's Homes and Support 2 Independence.
- Graffiti artwork.
- Regional representatives to present at the Corporate Parenting Panel Chairs/ Vice Chairs conference.

<b>TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN SUPPORTIVE PARENTING PARTNERSHIP</b>	
DATE:	15 <sup>th</sup> April 2024
REPORT AUTHOR:	Anita Swales, Headteacher Virtual School
SUBJECT:	Virtual School Annual Report 2022 -2023
PURPOSE:	FOR INFORMATION

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this agenda item is to provide the supportive parenting partnership with the annual report of the outcomes for cared for children for the academic year 2022/23, including key characteristics of the cohort and the structure, function, and work of the Virtual School team.

The report provides an overview utilising, where available, both national and Northeast regional data sets (LAIT, NCER Jan 2023), alongside locally sourced data from our management information systems.

## 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

**The Board is requested to receive the report for information**

## 3. Virtual School

### 3.1 Role of the Virtual School, Together for Children

Local Authorities have a duty to 'Promote the education of Cared for Children' under Section 52 of the Children Act 2004. The Virtual School report on key performance indicators for cared for children to:

- ***Governing Board***
- ***Supportive Parenting Partnership***
- ***TfC SLT***
- ***Department for Education***
- ***Ofsted***

Each local authority area in England has the statutory role of Virtual School Head (VSH), who supports colleagues in the local authority to discharge their role as 'Corporate Parent' for all matters related to the education of cared for children and young people.

We do this by providing support, advice, training, awareness raising and constructive challenge to education/training providers, social care colleagues and other professionals through the personal education planning (PEP) process, a statutory component of the care plan.

The role of the VSH was expanded in 2018 to include 'Promoting the Education of Previously Cared for Children' (PCfC). In 2021, VSH's were given the additional strategic responsibility to 'Promote the Education of Children with a Social Worker' (CWSW).

For PCfC and CWSW we provide information, advice, guidance, and navigation to appropriate services to raise awareness of the educational needs of these children, however, we do not act in the capacity of corporate parent and therefore our role is not to monitor outcomes or to provide direct interventions as we do with CfC (Cared for Children). This extended responsibility is to expand further in September 2024 to incorporate those children and young people in kinship care.

### **3.2 Educational Barriers for CfC/PCfC and Children with a Social Worker (CWSW)**

There are approximately 1.6 million children in England and Wales who have or have ever had social care interventions, which equates to approximately three children in every classroom.

The vast majority of our young people have experienced significant barriers to education as a result of adverse childhood experiences, trauma, most commonly abuse and neglect, and often have attachment disorders. Whilst there is no single cause for poor educational outcomes for these children, they are more likely to have experienced complex family circumstances, domestic abuse, mental ill-health, or substance misuse and at risk of criminal or sexual exploitation.

Most have experienced some form of educational neglect, often spanning the duration of their time in early years or statutory school, before coming to the attention of services who can support. This neglect includes, poor attendance, lack of stimulation in the home, multiple school moves, gaps in learning, suspensions, and exclusion; and these are often as a result of negative parental educational experiences leading to low parental aspiration.

Outcomes for these children are poor in comparison to their peers as they are:

- 3 times more likely to be a persistent absentee (less than 90% school attendance)
- Children with >50% school attendance should now be identified as at a higher risk of safeguarding concerns, including criminal and sexual exploitation

*(Attendance Guidance, DfE 2022)*

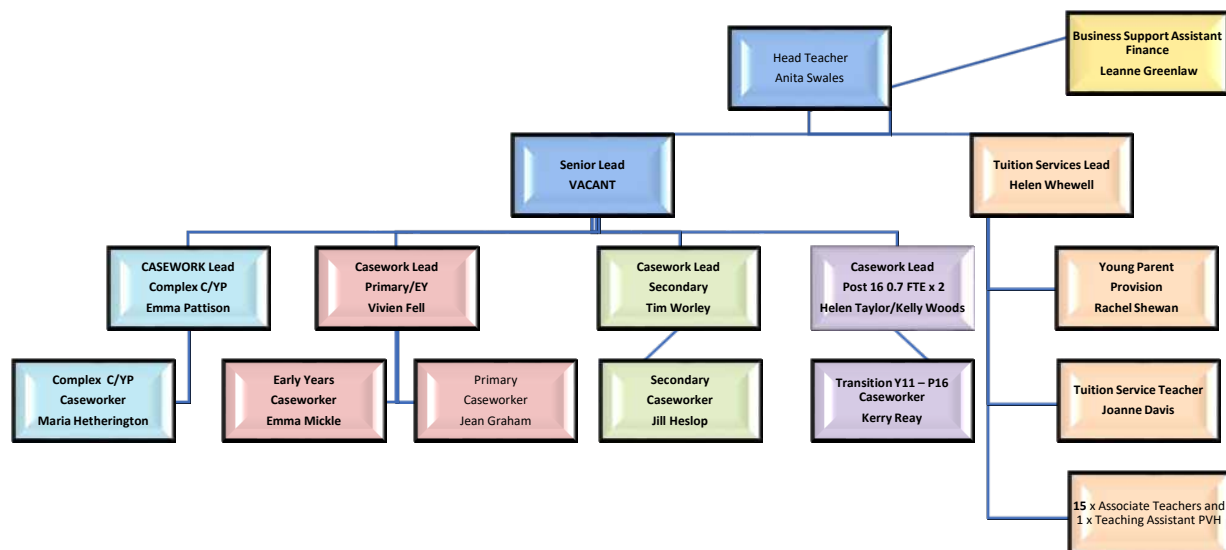
- 10 times more likely to attend alternative provision settings
- 4 times more likely to be permanently excluded from school
- The majority of children in pupil referral units or similar alternative education placements have, or previously have had, social care involvement.

- 50% less likely to achieve a good pass at GCSE's compared to peers
- 3 times less likely to study A Levels
- Only 6% go to university compared to 27% of peers

(DfE 2019: *Child in Need Review*)

### 3.3 Structure of the Virtual School

The Virtual school was restructured in May 2022 to provide the capacity to carry out the additional and extended duties outlined in the previous section. The new team was recruited and fully in post by September 2022 and composes five teams, each with a lead member of staff to provide further expertise in each phase of education.



The Virtual school provides a range of information, advice, guidance, and interventions to cared for children and young people, their carers, school and social care colleagues and external professionals on a range of education-based issues. This includes:

- Admissions
- Attendance
- Personal Education Planning
- Attainment and Progress
- Suspensions and Exclusions
- Emotional Health and Well-being
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- Alternative Education Provision
- Transitions and Post 16 pathways

Each of the caseworkers in the phase-based teams provide support and advocacy to approximately 60 children and young people and their carers, alongside advice and guidance for children with a social worker, previously cared for children and those in kinship care.

In addition, the VSH also has a team of eighteen teachers who staff the TFC Tuition Service, under the tuition services lead. This team are fully utilised in providing additional 1:1 support not only for our cared for children who have more complex needs, but also the children and young people in the wider school population who are unable to attend their home school due

to medical conditions. This includes anxiety and mental health conditions which lead to school-based avoidance. This team also provide education and support for young parents during their anti-natal period and following the birth of their child.

### 3.4. Governance of the Virtual School

- The board had representation this year from Headteachers /Principals from all sectors of education, as well as a care experienced young person, a foster carer, an LA councillor, and representatives from TfC strategic leads in social care and education.
- This broad representation allowed for a range of support and challenge to the headteacher and Virtual School staff not only during termly meetings but throughout the year.
- The full governing board held three termly meetings during the academic year and in addition individual governors linked with key members of the senior and middle leadership team to provide additional scrutiny, support, and challenge on areas of the school development plan.

#### STRUCTURE OF GOVERNING BOARD 2022/23

Co-opted	Special Schools Representative	Rachel Hargreaves Headteacher	4 Years
Co-opted	Nursery Schools Representative	Catherine Barnett Headteacher	4 years
Co-opted	Primary Schools Representative	<b>Vice Chair</b> Anna Young Head Teacher Wessington Primary School	4 Years
Co-opted	Secondary Schools Representative	Sue Hamilton Washington Academy	4 Years
Staff	Acting Head Teacher	Anita Swales	N/A
Staff	Senior Lead	Claire Goodwill	N/A
Co-opted	Sunderland University/HE Representative	<b>CHAIR</b> Wendy Price, Head of Widening Access, and Participation	4 Years
Co-opted	LA Councillor	CLlr Logan Guy	4 Years
Co-opted	Sunderland College/FE Representative	Mike Hall	4 Years
Co-opted	Social Care - Head of Service Cared for Children	Tracy Jelfs	4 Years
Carer	Carer	Julie Wyatt	4 Years
Young Person	Care Experienced Young Person	Chantelle Beaney	N/A
Associate Member – with voting rights	Strategic Service Lead Education	Kimberley Richardson	4 Years

## **4. Virtual School Support for Children and Young People, Colleagues, and Carers**

### **4.1 Virtual School Support for Children and Young People**

- Every child/young person has an assigned Virtual School caseworker, depending upon the school and phase of education they are in, who holds a caseload of up to sixty young people.
- The caseworker is responsible for all aspects of the child/young person's education planning from admission, attendance, readiness for learning, exclusions/suspensions, special educational Needs, and provision of alternative and bespoke education packages.
- The caseworker is assigned to a school, advises the school Designated Teacher, and attends all Personal Education Planning meetings, they also quality assure all PEP documentation, ensuring statutory timeframes are met.
- Caseworkers liaise closely with the carers and social worker for the children advising on issues which may arise in their education or training, particularly when a change of school is necessary.
- They attend the cared for reviews, strategy meetings and care team meetings for young people who face more complexities in their education.
- All staff recruited to the Virtual School have completed signs of safety training.
- Links have been established with all groups representing the voice of the child in TfC, which has led to the change council's input into the review of PEPs (Personal Education Planning) and the capture of the child voice.
- Adapted student voice has proved helpful in engaging young people in education. Examples include:

- Student not attending school- alternative education provision established to re-engage the child with learning, and support given to re-integrate back into mainstream school.
- Student struggling with emotional based school avoidance - VS (Virtual School) tutor provided support both in the home and when reintegrating back to school.
- Student identified through child voice in PEP wanting to engage in woodwork course, course sourced, funded through pupil premium grant, and implemented.
- Student struggling with morning lessons, alarm clock identified, and attendance improved.
- The care experienced governor who is a member of the Change Council, attends all governing body meetings of the Virtual School and meets with the VSH before each meeting to discuss the agenda and seek views.

### **4.2 Virtual School Support for Education Colleagues**

Virtual School raise awareness with school staff of the impact adverse childhood experiences have on a child's ability to learn, the barriers CfC, CWSW, PCFC and those in kinship care face in their education and strategies to minimise these barriers.

The VSH works closely with the School Improvement Officer for safeguarding when advice and guidance is requested, or concerns are raised. Collectively we provided the following support and network/training opportunities to staff in school:

- Regular network meetings for Designated Teachers and Designated Safeguarding Leads.
- VS training for Chairs of Governors and Headteachers on their role and responsibility for promoting the education of CfC/PCfC and CWSW.
- VS training programme for education colleagues, social care colleagues and carers in topics such as emotional school-based avoidance, trauma and attachment, foetal alcohol syndrome, behaviour as a communication, relational policies, effective home/school partnerships and Personal Education Plans.
- Safeguarding training programme for individual schools on safeguarding thresholds, improving the quality of referrals, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education,' roles and responsibilities of DSL and DT in care team meetings.
- Regular newsletters from both the Virtual School and SIO for safeguarding.
- Signposting to external training and awareness raising events, conferences, and meetings
- Annual safeguarding conference.
- The second annual Virtual School conference was held on 4<sup>th</sup> July to further explore the impact of adverse childhood experiences, relationship rather than behaviouralist policies in schools, and emotional school-based avoidance. This was well attended with extremely positive reviews.
- A grant of £1000 per school was disseminated, from Pupil Premium Plus and the DfE CWSW Grant, in April 2023, to raise whole school awareness of adverse childhood experiences and how they impact on learning, developing the skills and knowledge of pastoral staff and to encourage whole school training.

Feedback on how the grant was used by individual schools or pooled by groups of schools:

<b>Allocation of Spend</b>	<b>%</b>
Contribution to course fees/related supply costs for courses or conferences attended by the Designated Teacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead	<b>18%</b>
Contribution to the delivery of whole school awareness of adverse childhood experiences, attachment, or trauma for all staff	<b>33%</b>
Enable time for DT/DSL to review existing policies with a focus on strengthening inclusion for this cohort of children	<b>10%</b>
Purchase of specific learning resources to use in school	<b>6%</b>
Membership of online resource providers who support ACEs, Attachment, Trauma and Mental Health awareness	<b>2%</b>
Other activities – e.g., training for SENCO, TA's, support staff	<b>14%</b>
Not yet allocated, we intend to spend this funding in the academic year 2023-24	<b>18%</b>



### **4.3 Virtual School Support to Colleagues in Social Care and Health Services**

Section 31 grant funding has enabled the Virtual School to strengthen our relationships with all social care colleagues, this includes the co-location of two staff from the VS one day per week to provide an advice surgery within the social care base at Sandhill. Post 16 Team also provide support to the Next Steps Teams in the Stansfield Centre one day per week.

- Social care colleagues can seek advice and support around education issues for children and young people when they have concerns or need to understand next steps.
- When issues are brought to our attention and support is requested, caseworkers contact schools on behalf of the Social Worker or carer to ensure correct protocols are being followed and appropriate challenge is given. Likewise, we provide the same service to our schools in appropriate challenge to our social care colleagues.
- We also offer support to schools and social care colleagues in professionals' meetings to facilitate a resolution to issues for children and young people in their education.
- VSH provides briefings and offers opportunities for training for social care staff which has included the personal education planning process, impact of educational neglect and the importance of school attendance in keeping children safe.
- VSH has attended social care team meetings to promote the support we are able to offer to colleagues around educational issues and the personal education planning process.
- Strategic Leaders in education and social care, including the VSH, meet half termly to discuss children and young people facing barriers to education which have not been resolved through other means for those who face the most complex challenges, sharing information, practice and agreeing strategies to provide for multi-agency intervention.

### **4.4 Virtual School Support for Parent/Carers**

VS caseworkers offer advice and guidance to parents and carers of cared for children, children with a social worker, previously cared for children and those in kinship care around a range of educational issues and navigate to services which can meet need.

- Virtual school staff offer support and advice to carers and residential care staff on a range of educational issues such as admissions, attendance, exclusions, SEND (Special Educational Needs & Disability), alternative provision.
- They will advocate on behalf of cared for children with schools and with alternative educational provision.
- They support parent/carers in PEP meetings and all VS caseworkers make contact every term with foster carers to ensure they can identify and seek support for any emerging educational issues, this provides early intervention to avoid issues escalating.
- Senior staff in the VS regularly provide educational support and guidance for adoptive parents and connected/kinship carers in order to support previously cared for children who are struggling to access mainstream school or experiencing difficulties in their education through unmet SEND needs.
- Virtual School staff seek engagement with a range of parent/carers forums
  - Kinship and Connected Carers
  - More than Grandparents

- Adoptive Parent Forums and support groups
- Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Support Group
- Regular attendance and involvement with carer consultative forum meetings to discuss and share further support the Virtual School can offer carers, as the point of contact to strengthen relationships within education.
- VS facilitate workshops for parents/carers on a range of issues including the impact of trauma on children and their education, Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder, and how to access support to meet their child's needs.
- The first Foster Carer event was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, advising on strategies when working with schools and how to support with education, this was well attended with positive feedback.

#### **4.5 Virtual School Response to Extension of Duties (Children with CiN or CP plans)**

Following the extension to role of the Virtual School for children with a social worker (DfE Section 31 Grant), the team was restructured in May 2022 to add additional capacity to provide information, advice and guidance to professionals working with children on child in need and child protection plans, collectively known as children with a social worker. To raise awareness in the city of the disadvantages these children and young people experience, which impact long term on their education and life chances.

- Address educational neglect
- Improve access and inclusion
- Improve attendance and decrease persistent absence
- Reduce suspensions
- Keep our children safe in schools and their communities
- Caseworkers offer advice to education colleagues for this cohort of children and young people, alongside the work they do with cared for and previously cared for children.
- The casework team is now phase focused, providing greater age-appropriate advice and expertise.
- VS caseworkers have expanded their knowledge and expertise in the area of CiN and CP and a dedicated team have completed an extensive course in attachment and trauma awareness.
- In all interaction with schools, caseworkers advocate on behalf of this cohort of children and provide professional challenge to ensure they are not unintentionally disadvantaged by policy and procedures.
- The grant has also been ringfenced to explore the VS module in Liquid Logic which could provide for improved data and information sharing between VS and CSC colleagues. Discussions and investigation around aligning CSC and VS management information systems are ongoing.

#### **4.6 Representation**

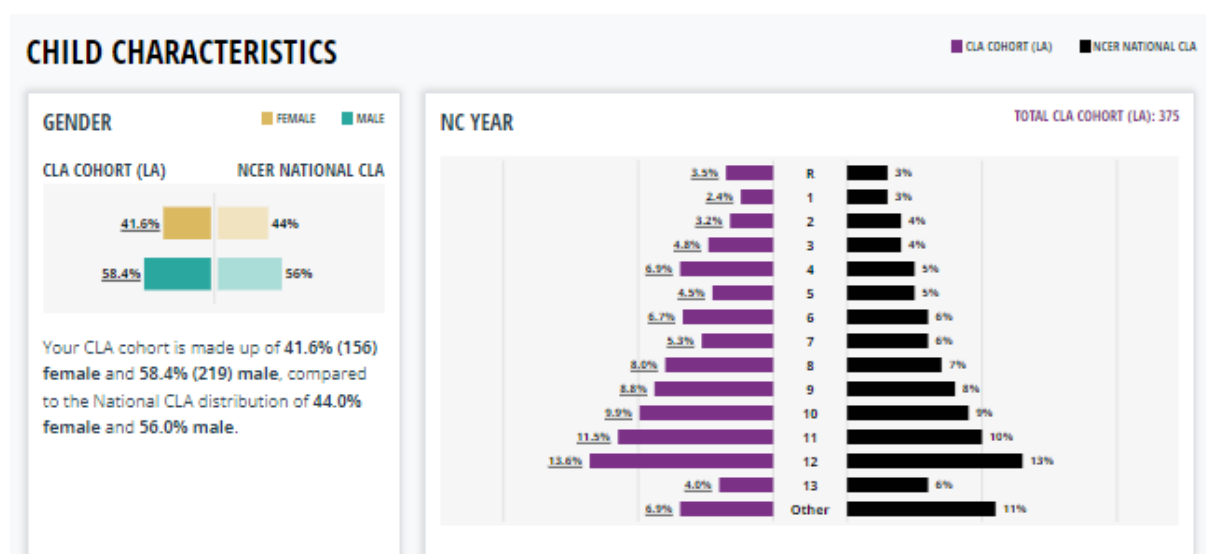
The Virtual School provides representation to a wide range of local authority, education, and health panels, such as:

- Vulnerable Pupils Panel
  - Dynamic Support Register
  - Children’s Partnership Commissioning Panel
  - In-year Fair Access
  - Health Partnership
  - Headteacher Forums.
- When attending panels/forums, we advocate on behalf of children in our care as well as those children with a social worker and provide additional advice and guidance around their educational needs.
  - The Virtual School Head attends NHS workstream groups to raise issues of health and well-being which impact on CfC/PCfC and CWSW.
  - The VSH works closely with the National Association of Virtual Schools and regional VS colleagues to share common challenges and explore good practice, raising the profile of the issues which affect our children and young people.

## 5. Cohort Characteristics

- Overall, there was a total of 577 children and young people in our care for some or all of the academic year 2022/23.
- Data provided in the tables in this report is the latest available validated version from NCER (for academic year ending in Summer 2023), for the reportable cohort of 375 children and young people who have been in our care for 12 months or more as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.
- In some data sets, the reportable cohort is small so one of two children/young people can make a significant difference to the outcomes.
- Locally sourced data has also been provided where possible to give an up-to-date context for some of our outcomes (i.e. Welfare Call), particularly in Section 5: Personal Education Planning of this report.

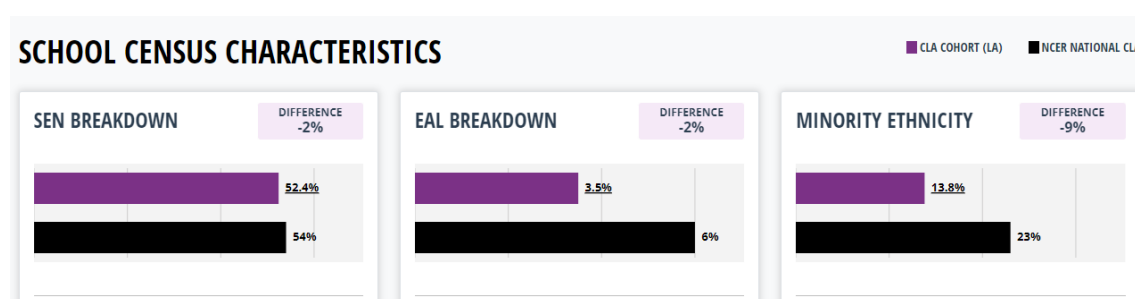
### 5.1 Age, Gender, Special Educational Needs and English as an Additional Language



\*NCER LA Census Data 2023 (CLA 12 month)

The salient points from the table above include:

- There were a total of 375 children and young people in the reportable cohort
- 41.6% of our cohort are male, slightly higher than the national picture and 58.9% were female.
- 35% of our young people were in years 10-12, similar to the national picture (32%) with a large number transitioning to post 16 in Year 12.
- The recorded numbers for year 13 are low due to young people leaving care during this year as they reach their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- The VS continue to support those Y13 young people who remain in full-time education to the end of the academic year toward the next steps in their education.



\*NCER LA Census Data 2023 (CLA 12 month)

The salient points from the table above include:

- 52.4% of our children and young people had an EHCP or were identified on the Special Educational Needs Register for additional support in school, 23.8% had EHCP's and a further 28.6% had SEN support in school/college, roughly similar to national levels for CfC.
- The number of children entering our care with previously unidentified needs can be much higher, due to educational neglect and often multiple school moves.
- We had a small but growing number of young people who were Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers. In 2022-23, there were thirty-six young people in total, 8 of statutory school age and 28 who were Post 16. This is smaller than the national average.
- We had significantly lower numbers of ethnic minority students in the cohort compared to national levels.

## 5.2 Admissions

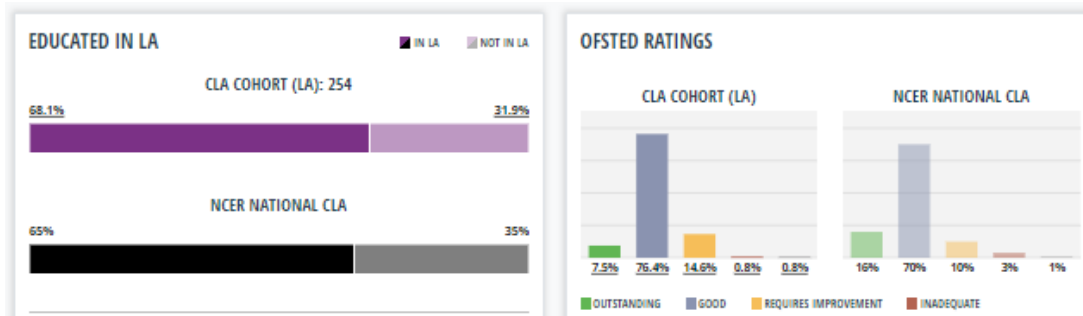
- Schools operate their own admissions policies and criteria for oversubscription; however, they must give the highest priority in their criteria to a cared for or previously cared for child. (School Admissions Code).
- A maintained school or academy cannot refuse to admit a child on the grounds of challenging behaviour, neither can they refer a cared for child to the local authority in

year fair access protocol. If a school or academy have a space in the year group, they must admit within 20 days.

- In the event that a change of school is considered essential, and the child/young person is not able to continue their education in their current school, VS caseworkers support social care colleagues and carers in identifying an alternative and suitable education provision and assist in the admission of any child.
- This involves liaison with personnel in local authorities, including the Virtual School in the area the child/young person has moved, to gather local intelligence on quality and accessibility of schools and the process, and procedures for admission to mainstream or specialist provision.
- The VS Lead for complex and special educational needs liaises with the SEND team in the receiving local authority to ensure any education health and care plan is transferred smoothly.
- The VS will only agree to a school move for a child, outside of the normal phased transfer, if there are significant reasons why staying in their home school is not in the child/young person's best interest and overrides the benefits that maintaining trusting relationships with adults and peers have on a child with attachment and trauma.
- For our children who are placed with prospective adoptive parents, predominantly out of area, the primary and early years lead will assist the adoption team and the new parent in ensuring an appropriate school is found and all information is passed securely and within the protocols for adoption to the new school.
- Normal phase transitions take place when our children are in nursery provision moving into reception, year 6 into secondary school and year 11 into post 16 provision.
- Planned transitions are critical for children who have attachment or have experienced trauma in their past, it can be a time of heightened anxiety as they leave trusted adults to move to another educational environment.
- The Virtual School ensures all cared for children are given a smooth transition, this includes everything from ensuring key information is passed between designated teachers in each school through the transition section of the PEP to increased visits to the new school environment.
- In addition, VS staff delivers a range of transition activities to assist with smooth transition in three transition phases, including a comprehensive summer programme across three phases: nursery to reception, primary to secondary and secondary to post 16.

### **5.3 School Ofsted Ratings for Sunderland Cared for Children**

We ensure wherever possible that all cared for children and young people are educated in a good or outstanding provision.



\*NCER LA Census Data 2023 (CLA 12 month)

From the table above we can see that: <sup>[08]</sup>

- 84% of our children were educated in Good or Outstanding schools, with 14.6% in schools which required improvement, these predominantly being in the secondary sector.
- Only 0.8% of children (2) were in schools categorised by Ofsted as Inadequate (this school was subsequently rated Good by Ofsted in its inspection in 2023).
- When children and young people are educated in schools which Require Improvement, attention is always given to ensure the safeguarding and the care, guidance and support offered by the school is of a good standard.
- 31.9% of our children are educated in schools outside of Sunderland, the majority of which were in our neighbouring Northeast authorities, however, our children were educated in 35 different local authority areas across England and Scotland last year.

## 6. Personal Education Planning (PEP)

*(Please note data in this section relates to all children and young people in our care, not just the reporting cohort and is taken directly from the ePEP tracker on Welfare Call)*

### 6.1 Personal Education Planning Process

- A personal education plan is a statutory requirement for every child or young person who enters the care of a local authority from the academic year of their third birthday up to their eighteenth birthday.
- A PEP is the process of assessing the appropriateness and quality of educational provision in accelerating the progress of a child/young person to close any gaps in their development or attainment, forming an integral part of their care planning cycle.
- The PEP is an evolving record of what needs to happen for cared for children to enable them to make at least expected progress and fulfil their potential.
- The PEP document reflects the importance of a personalised approach to learning that meets the child's identified educational and developmental needs, raises aspirations, and maximises life chances. It is also used to provide key performance indicators which monitor the attendance, attainment, curriculum offer, and the well-being needs of C/YP in our care, as they progress through their education.
- The PEP is reviewed once every school term for those in statutory and early years school or nursery settings, at regular termly intervals and every six months for those young

people in Post 16 provision, or within 10 days of a change of education or training provision.

- Welfare Call (WC) is the provider of a secure, electronic, G-Cloud system, commissioned by Sunderland Virtual School. It is the system we use to compile and analyse information before, during and after personal education planning (PEP) meetings.
- Together for Children have three versions of the ePEP on the welfare call system, all under regular review to provide continuous improvement to the process:
  - Early Years PEP - for children who are accessing an early year's settings on a part or full-time basis in the two years prior to entering statutory school
  - Statutory School Age PEP - for those C/YP in reception to year 11
  - Post 16 PEP – for young people in year 12 and 13 whether they are in education, employment, or training, or are currently seeking a place.

## **6.2 PEP Compliance**

It is a statutory requirement for a PEP to be initiated within 20 days of a C/YP entering care and 10 days after any significant change in provision: for example, a change of education setting.

- PEP compliance is now consistently above 97% (improvement from 86% in 2020).
- Performance team LCS reports are received on a weekly basis enabling early notification of those C/YP who are new into our care to ensure PEPs are held within 20 days.
- There was a total of 1447 PEPs completed in the academic year 2022/23, for 577 children and young people.
- Children and Young People attended 249 different education and/or training provisions across 35 local authority areas during the year.
- The Virtual School quality assures all PEPs and uses the information contained within to provide advice, support, and challenge to schools on behalf of the local authority as corporate parent.
- If there were concerns in relation to the quality of a PEP, the caseworker liaises with the school or the Social Worker to consider how to improve.
- 94% of all PEPS were quality assured as good, an improvement from 92% in 2021/22, with 6% rated as amber.
- The average number of days from PEP meetings to completion of the PEP document was 17.2 days, significant improvement from 21 days in 2020/21 and closer to the target of 10 days.

In the Spring of 2023, the VS reviewed the way in which it collates information through the PEP in order to measure not only hard outcomes such as attendance, exclusions, and attainment, but also softer targets which indicate when a student is experiencing challenges. This enabled an improved range of data requested from schools including:

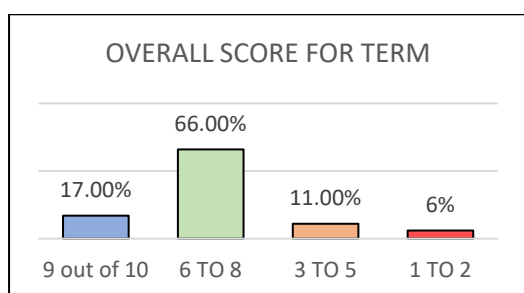
- Emotional health and well-being (EHWB)
- Progress seen since the last PEP
- Attitude to learning
- Conduct and engagement

A new system for tracking progress in the above areas on a termly basis was established to provide RAG ratings for all students. This assisted caseworkers to identify concerns as they arise and spot trends and patterns of concern, ensuring early intervention strategies were deployed by school and carers to minimise potential barriers to learning.

### 6.3 Overall engagement with Education and/or Training

Virtual School caseworkers now provide an overall scaling score for children and young people termly using the information obtained from the PEP, alongside external factors such as recent home move, time in our care, MSET, unidentified SEN, etc., similar to that employed in the signs of safety approach.

Casework leads and the VSH quality assure the overall score with the teams and ensure intervention plans are in place to address emerging or persistent concerns. Scores can still be positive if significant recent progress has been made in addressing the identified barrier to learning.

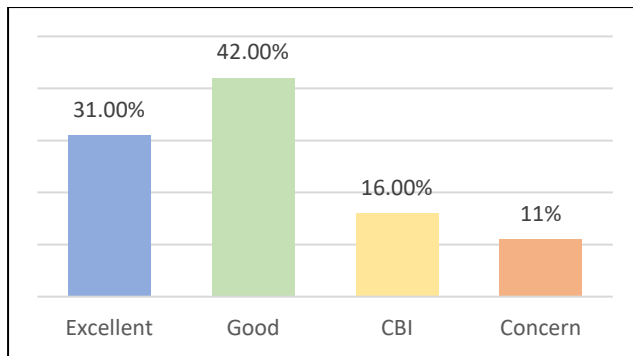


- 83% of our children and young people had scores which were good or better in relation to their overall engagement and progress in education.
- 11% had a score which was of concern and these C/YP were closely monitored by caseworkers.
- A further 6% were considered of serious concern and understandably feature in some, or all, of the yellow, amber, or red categories of the following measures. These young people are monitored by our Complex Team.

### 6.3 Conduct and Engagement in Learning

- 73% of students were presenting in school/nursery or college with positive conduct and engagement. A further 16% were assessed as conduct could be improved.
- Caseworkers work closely with schools and provisions, carers, and social care colleagues for those students where conduct was of concern or could be improved to identify triggers or to identify any unmet need.
- 11% of our children and young people were considered by schools and other professionals as of serious concern, these are identified and working with our complex team.

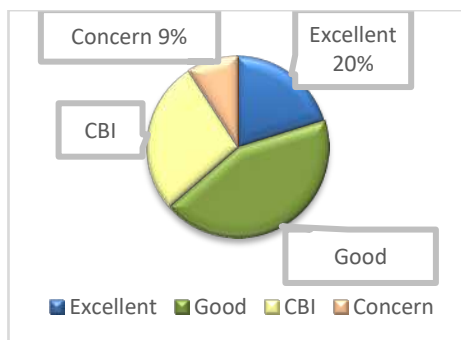




#### 6.4 Emotional Health and Well-being (EHWB)

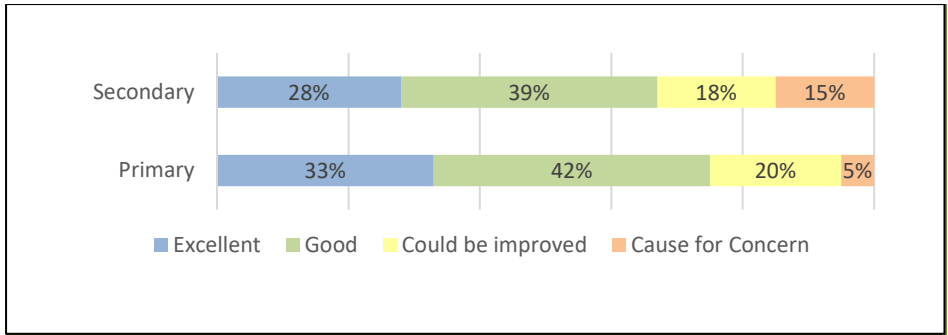
The graph below demonstrates the assessment of the school/nursery or college/training provider in relation to how the child/young person is presenting on a day-to-day basis.

- 65% were identified as presenting with positive EHWB.
- 27% of our young people were identified as EHWB could be improved; schools monitor this carefully, utilising in-school counselling, nurture provision and mentoring, and where necessary referred the young person for assessment to external agencies (CYPS/CAMHS).
- 7% of our young people were presenting with significant concerns around their EMHW, caseworkers ensured referrals for external support were in place for those of concern.
- There were a further 2% identified as of serious concern to schools and other professionals, all were actively engaged with support from multi-agency and mental health services.
- National research on the EHWB in school age children showed an increase in primary age children experiencing anxiety since the Covid pandemic of 40%.



#### 6.5 Attitude to Learning

The attitude to learning score on PEPs considers the overall approach to learning within the classroom, effort levels shown and also in relation to any home learning.

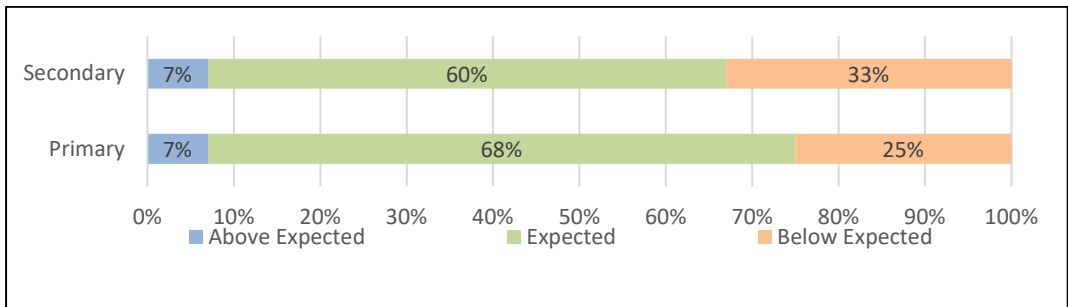


- 75% of primary students and 67% of secondary were identified as having a positive attitude to their learning.
- 18% of secondary and 20% of primary schools rated their students as needing to improve in this area.
- 15% of secondary students and 5% of primary were assessed as being of cause for concern, these are being monitored carefully by caseworkers with communication frequent with carers and schools.

**6.6 Overall Progress**

Overall progress is measured from one PEP to another based upon the starting point of each individual child/young person.

- 75% of primary children and 67% of secondary young people were assessed by their schools as making expected or above expected progress measured from their previous PEP data at the end of the academic year.
- 33% of secondary and 25% of primary were making below expected progress, children/young people had targets set in their PEP and interventions by school and Virtual School put in place to close gaps in learning.



## 7. Outcomes for Cared for Children

### 7.1 Attendance

Phase	Cohort	Overall Attendance	Unauthorised Absence	Persistent Absence (more than 10%)	Severe Absence (more than 50%)
<b>All CfC</b>	<b>Sunderland</b>	<b>93.4%</b>	<b>1.9%%</b>	<b>17.2%</b>	<b>3.8%</b>
	<i>Regional</i>	94%	3%	17%	4%
	<i>National</i>	92%	3%	19%	4%
<b>Primary CfC</b>	<b>Sunderland</b>	<b>96.7%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>8.9%</b>	<b>1%</b>
	<i>Regional</i>	97	1%	7%	1%
	<i>National</i>	96%	1%	10%	1%
<b>Secondary CfC</b>	<b>Sunderland</b>	<b>91.4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>23.4%</b>	<b>5.8%</b>
	<i>Regional</i>	90%	4%	24%	6%
	<i>National</i>	90%	4%	25%	7%

\*NCER LA Census Data 2023 (CLA 12 month)

From the table above the following salient points can be made:

- Overall attendance in 2022/23 for the reporting cohort was 93.6%, 1.4% higher than cared for children nationally (92%) and slightly below regional CfC (94%).
- Primary attendance was broadly in line with regional and local levels.
- Secondary attendance was above both national and regional levels in all measures.
- Whilst overall absence remains a concern, especially secondary school age, as the chart above demonstrates in most measures Sunderland cared for children's outcomes were similar and, in many cases, more favourable in comparison to regional and national CfC levels.

### 7.2 Suspensions and Exclusions

Phase	Cohort	Suspension rate
<b>All CfC</b>	<b>Sunderland</b>	<b>9.72</b>
	<i>Regional</i>	15.8
	<i>National</i>	12.8
<b>Primary CfC</b>	<b>Sunderland</b>	<b>3.6</b>
	<i>Regional</i>	1.8
	<i>National</i>	3.5
<b>Secondary CfC</b>	<b>Sunderland</b>	<b>14.6</b>
	<i>Regional</i>	27.7
	<i>National</i>	20.1

\*NCER LA Census Data 2023 (CLA 12 month)

From the table above the following salient points can be made:

- Overall, the suspension rate for Sunderland CfC was 9.72.
- Sunderland cared for children had a lower suspension rate than regional and national cohorts, with the exception of primary age children who had a higher rate than regional CfC.
- By far the largest number of suspensions, 62%, were as a result of persistent disruptive behaviour, followed by 21% physical assault on a pupil and 16.5% verbal abuse to an adult.
- Of the pupils excluded this year, only two were primary age pupils, both children with significant social emotional and mental health needs and have now been through formal statutory assessment and are now in appropriate specialist education provision.
- The vast majority 80% of suspensions were in year groups 9-11, there was a higher number of male to female split, but not significantly so.
- 60% of those young people suspended had an identified SEND need, 5% with an EHCP and 54% on the SEND support register.
- In 2022/23 there were no permanent exclusions of a cared for child.

### **7.3 VS Concerns around Attendance and Suspensions**

- The increase in secondary C/YP who were refusing to attend school or who were persistent absentees, predominantly key stage 4.
- There has been a national and local increase in secondary students refusing to attend school or who are persistent absentees, predominantly Key stage 4, and since the Covid pandemic we have seen a sharp increase in students with anxiety emotionally based school avoidance.
- Pressure for places is building within the special school sector and with alternative education providers, this is especially so when children are moving in or out of the Sunderland area needing specialist or alternative education provision, especially when they do not have an education, health, and care plan (EHCP).
- Pressure for places building within the specialist schools and alternative education providers.
- Lack of capacity for children moving in or out of the Sunderland area needing specialist education provision mid academic year.
- Behaviour policies within certain Academy Trusts and schools which disproportionately disadvantage cared for children and young people, i.e. those who follow zero tolerance policies.
- Pressure on school budgets leading to an increase in requests for funding from the VS for the provision of teaching assistants, alternative provisions and 1:1 support for individual students who refuse to attend, whose conduct is challenging, are awaiting assessment, or to avoid permanent exclusion.
- Increase in numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking young people (UASC), some with little prior engagement in education in their home country, arriving mid-year presenting challenges with access to English as a second or other language (ESOL) and capacity in local colleges.

#### **7.4 VS Support for attendance**

- Attendance was monitored daily by Welfare Call, a service which telephones the child's school to check they were present. If the child was absent, they seek the reason for absence and record this on the live system.
- Casework Leads monitored attendance daily for those children who are of concern and weekly with their team on a case-by-case basis, to ensure early intervention, advice and next steps are given to carers, schools, and social worker to improve attendance.
- Attendance issues were quickly flagged up on PEPs if they are of concern and targets set at the PEP meeting, where appropriate.
- VS caseworkers support schools in making referrals to the Vulnerable Pupil Panel for those pupils with emotional school-based avoidance, or those who have disengaged with mainstream provision, to ensure referrals for local authority commissioned alternative provision is detailed and appropriate provision is identified.
- Virtual school staff are working closely with social care colleagues and colleagues in SEN to provide for timely planning of any area move.
- Associate Teachers within the Virtual School provide 1:1 tutoring whilst children are awaiting access to alternative provisions, should they be unable to access their named school, or to support reintegration back to school following a long-term absence.
- Additional support the VS funds is through the retained funding from the Pupil Premium Grant and the Recovery Premium Grant from the DfE.

#### **7.5 VS Support to avoid Suspension and Exclusion**

- Support and professional challenge around the use of suspensions was given before and during reintegration meetings, which were attended by caseworkers to ensure school, carers and the young person are clear on the support needed to prevent further occurrences or escalation to exclusion.
- Targets around conduct and engagement were becoming more explicit in PEPs and swift referrals instigated by caseworkers for Formal Statutory Assessment to identify any unmet SEND, particularly related to Social, Emotional or Mental Health (SEMH) needs.
- Caseworkers worked with carers, schools, and alternative providers to find bespoke solutions which support the child to reengage with learning and the school to maintain and support the child to remain on their school roll.
- VS supported 16 young people in school this year through the provision of a teaching assistant whilst awaiting formal statutory assessment, to support the child to remain in school and reduce the risk of permanent exclusion.
- Support was provided for schools to identify and submit referrals to alternative education placements through the Vulnerable Pupils Panel, for those who require alternative commissioned education provision.
- Challenge and support are ongoing with new Multi-academy Trusts moving into the area, who may initially implement zero tolerance policies, which can lead to a lack of inclusion for our children in Sunderland.
- Support was given to social care colleagues, through the Sandhill Surgery, to upskill knowledge and the signposting they needed to effectively challenge in situations where unmet need led to a pattern of suspension.

- Virtual Schools in the Northeast area are reporting their first permanent exclusions (PEX) taking place this year, with a rise in challenging behaviours, a shortage of appropriate alternative education places, and special school provision which is full.
- In Sunderland there were eight serious incidents this year which may have resulted in a permanent exclusion and were avoided through the intervention of VS staff in supporting the child and the school through the construction of bespoke education packages.

## 7.6 Attainment

\* The following data tables have been taken from NCER LA Census Data (CLA 12 month) validated data for 2023

### 7.6.1 Early Years Outcomes

EYFSP Benchmark (CLA)		2023   Matched and un-matched pupils   CLA 1															
	Eligible	Matches	CLA	GLD <sup>1,2</sup>	Avg. No. Exp. ELGs <sup>2</sup>	ACHIEVED EXPECTED										Specific Goals	All Goals
						COM	PSE	PHY	Prime Goals	LIT	MAT	UTW	EXP				
NCER National (CLA)	1,580	72.0%	29.0%	8.0	43.0%	40.0%	48.0%	34.0%	32.0%	40.0%	46.0%	51.0%	30.0%	29.0%			
DfE Region - North East (CLA)	110	74.0%	36.0%	8.7	48.0%	42.0%	55.0%	39.0%	42.0%	44.0%	51.0%	53.0%	38.0%	35.0%			
Virtual School - Sunderland	14	57.1%	35.7%	8.1	50.0%	35.7%	50.0%	35.7%	42.9%	35.7%	50.0%	42.9%	35.7%	35.7%			

<sup>1</sup> Good level of development: pupil achieved at least expected in all Prime, LIT and MAT goals.

<sup>2</sup> Column unaffected by selected performance filter

From the above table the following salient points can be noted:

- There were 14 children in the cohort assessed using the early years foundation stage profile at the end of reception Year
- 35.7% of children in Sunderland achieved a good level of development (GDL)
- This is 6.7% higher than the national average (31%), and on par with regional (36%)
- Particular strengths are in Communication, Literacy, Understanding the World, and a Good Level of Development was achieved in All Goals (35.7%), above that of national and regional levels.

## 7.6.2 Phonics Year 1

Phonics Benchmark (CLA) (Keypas)											2023   Matched and u				
	Cohort	No Score	Mark					APS	Outcome						
			0-15	16-23	24-31	32-36	37-40		Q	A	D	WT	WA		
NCER National (CLA)	3,220	5.0%	31.0%	7.0%	7.0%	25.0%	25.0%	23.7	-	-	5.0%	44.0%	50.0%		
DfE Region - North East (CLA)	240	7.0%	30.0%	7.0%	6.0%	27.0%	23.0%	23.7	-	-	7.0%	42.0%	50.0%		
Virtual School - Sunderland	19	0.0%	31.6%	10.5%	0.0%	21.1%	36.8%	24.0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	42.1%	57.9%		

**Cohort:** Current Year 1 pupils entered for phonics  
The threshold mark to be working at or above the standard in phonics is 32

From the above tables the following salient points can be noted:

- 19 children were assessed in phonics, which is completed at the end of year 1.
- 57.9% of pupils in Sunderland achieved the threshold mark of 32, above that of national (50%) and regional cohorts (50%).
- By the end of the key stage (year 2) 83% of our children had met the threshold mark for phonics.
- The newly established early years and primary team, through their monitoring of termly data on attainment and progress and attendance at PEP meetings, provide greater support and challenge to ensure targets for inclusion within school interventions are specific within PEPs.

## 7.6.3 Key Stage 1

KS1 Benchmark (CLA) (Keypas)											2023   Keypas			
	Cohort **	CLA Matches	READING		WRITING		MATHS							
			<EXS	≥EXS	<EXS	≥EXS	<EXS	≥EXS						
NCER National (CLA)	1,890	88.0%	59.0%	40.0%	68.0%	31.0%	59.0%	40.0%						
DfE Region - North East (CLA)	120	92.0%	64.0%	36.0%	72.0%	28.0%	64.0%	36.0%						
Virtual School - Sunderland	13	100.0%	61.5%	38.5%	84.6%	15.4%	76.9%	23.1%						

From the above tables the following salient points can be noted:

- There were only 13 children in our cohort at the end of KS1 (year 2)
- 38.5% met the expected standard or above in reading, slightly below the national level of 40% and above the regional cohort 36%
- 15.4% of pupils achieved the expected standard in writing, significantly below the regional and national average for cared for children
- 27.1% of our children achieved the expected standard in maths, again below the national and regional levels.

## 7.6.4 Key Stage 2 Outcomes

Cohort		CLA Matches	RWM*		READING			WRITING TA		MATHS			GPS					
			●● ≥ Exp	● High	Avg. SS	●● < Exp	●● ≥ Exp	● High	●● ≥ Exp	GDS	Avg. SS	●● < Exp	●● ≥ Exp	● High	Avg. SS	●● < Exp	●● ≥ Exp	● High
NCER National (CLA)	3,040	89.0%	32.0%	1.0%	102.0	51.0%	48.0%	14.0%	42.0%	4.0%	100.1	55.0%	44.0%	7.0%	100.9	55.0%	44.0%	12.0%
DFE Region - North East (CLA)	190	95.0%	43.0%	-	103.0	44.0%	54.0%	16.0%	55.0%	6.0%	101.9	41.0%	58.0%	7.0%	101.7	49.0%	51.0%	13.0%
Virtual School - Sunderland	25	96.0%	32.0%	0.0%	103.5	48.0%	52.0%	16.0%	44.0%	12.0%	103.0	40.0%	60.0%	0.0%	102.2	50.0%	50.0%	12.5%

<Exp: Scaled score lower than 100 in tested subjects and performance category lower than EXS in Writing TA | Exp+: Scaled score of 100 or higher in tested subjects and performance category of EXS or GDS in Writing TA | High: Scaled score at or above higher threshold in tested subjects and performance category of GDS in Writing TA

From the above tables the following salient points can be noted:

There were 25 pupils in the reportable cohort at the end of KS2:

- 52% achieved the expected standard or above in reading, 4% higher than national and 2% lower than the regional average.
- In writing, 44% achieved the expected standard or above, 2% higher than national average and 9% below that of regional cohort
- In maths, 60% of our children achieved the expected standard or above, 16% higher than National at 44% and 2% higher than regional at 58%.
- The combined measure for KS2 of reading, writing and maths was 32%, equal to that of the national, although significantly below the regional average of 43%
- Grammar, punctuation, and spelling (50%) was broadly in line with regional (51%) and significantly above that of national levels (44%)

## 7.6.5 Key Stage 4 Outcomes

Cohort		CLA Matches	Attainment 8	Progress 8			9-5			EBacc		Any Qual.
				Cov.	Avg. Score	Conf. Int.	EBacc Int. Eng. LL	EBacc Mat.	E&M	Entry	APS	
NCER National (CLA pupils)	5250	100.0%	19.9	79.0%	-1.25	±0.04	18.0%	13.0%	10.0%	11.0%	1.62	73.0%
DFE Region - North East (CLA)	300	100.0%	21.2	81.0%	-1.28	±0.18	22.0%	15.0%	11.0%	13.0%	1.70	76.0%
Virtual School - Sunderland	46	100.0%	21.7	78.3%	-1.30	±0.46	19.6%	17.4%	15.2%	10.9%	1.67	79.2%

\* Source: NCER LA Census Data 2023 (CLA 12 month)

### Percentage of LAC pupils achieving 9-4 pass in English and Maths

Local Authority, Region and England

				2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
394	Sunderland	-	-	-	20.00	17.60	41.70	22.60	27.90
980	North East	-	-	15.50	20.80	16.90	24.90	29.90	22.40
	Statistical Neighbours	-	-	13.03	27.50	24.23	25.75	32.73	24.66
970	England	-	-	17.30	17.30	17.80	24.30	28.80	22.10

\*Source: LAIT data 2023

From the above tables the following salient points can be noted:

- There were 46 pupils in the reportable cohort (those who had been in our care for 12 months or more) at the end of KS4.



- Attainment 8 score of 21.7, was 1.8 points higher than the national cohort at 19.9, and 0.5% above the regional cohort, (attainment 8 score is across eight subjects including Eng & maths).
- The English Baccalaureate average point score was 1.67, marginally higher than the national (1.62) and slightly lower than the regional (1.7) point scores, (EBacc is a suite of subjects which includes English, maths, science, a humanities subject, and a modern foreign language).
- 27.9% achieved a grade 4 or more in English and Maths in Sunderland, 5.5% above that of regional cohorts, 3.3% above statistical neighbours and 5.8% above the national performance in this measure.
- 15.2% of our cared for children achieved a grade 5 or more in five GCSE subjects including English and maths, which is 5.2% higher than national and 4.2% higher than regional cohorts.
- 79.2% of our young people in Sunderland achieved any qualification at grade 4 or equivalent, higher than national (73%) and regional (76%).

### **7.6.6 Support from the Virtual School to Raise Attainment**

- The increased capacity of caseworkers in the summer of 2022 afforded greater support and challenge across all key stages through attendance at all PEP meetings.
- The VS recruited specialist Early Years and KS1 primary teachers to provide targeted 1:1 and small group interventions to close gaps in learning and improve outcomes at lower primary age.
- CPD (Continuing Professional Development) was delivered to both primary and secondary casework teams around national assessment requirements.
- Senior Lead in the VS attended the majority of Y11 PEPs and Y6 PEP meetings with the caseworker to ensure appropriate challenge is given to schools when academic intervention was required, and to offer targeted additional 1:1 teaching support by VS teachers.
- Quality assurance and moderation of PEP's took place with increased focus on attainment and progress data and the tracking of in school support for underachievement.
- A new tracking document was established to gather progress measures around engagement and conduct, attendance, emotional health and well-being and attitude to learning with data from extracted from PEPs, this was then analysed for targeted early intervention.
- VSH held termly meetings with casework leads to review pupil progress, supervision by casework leads with their team occurs every two weeks using the new tracker.
- An intervention programme has been developed to provide 1:1 tutoring through the national tutoring programme for children who require additional support from lost learning due to the pandemic and educational neglect.
- The intervention programme was introduced initially for year 11 and year 6 pupils underachieving in English and/or maths. This was extended to all year groups in Spring of 2023.
- Tuition 1:1 was delivered for the following groups of learners: primary, complex secondary, UASC pre and post 16, Year 11 and resit maths and English post 16.

- Intervention programme has ensured 91 students this year have received 1:1 tutoring to close gaps in knowledge in English and/or maths at KS4, reading, writing and/or maths at KS2, and phonics intervention at KS1.
- Weekly tuition meetings ensures efficiency and effectiveness of the many strands of tuition currently in operation.
- Sixteen teaching assistants were funded by the Virtual School to work in schools to reduce the risk of permanent exclusion for these children and to ensure individual students were able to access the curriculum whilst awaiting formal statutory assessment.
- The Virtual School commissioned seven alternative education provisions this year for young people who were unable to manage within their mainstream school, to ensure they were able to re-engage with appropriate learning– this included the provision of both English and maths.
- Funding for ten young people to attend specialist schools or provisions was made available by the Virtual School whilst they were awaiting an EHCP, or the availability of a specialist school place, through pupil premium plus grant and the recovery premium.
- A thrive target for the secondary caseworker to coordinate the Raising Aspirations Programme (NERAP) resulted in an initial twelve young people (Y7-Y11) participating in the Choices Together Programme, giving young people access to higher education experiences, including mentoring to encourage aspirations for higher education.

## **8. Post 16 Pathways**

### **8.1 Transition Support for Year 11 into Post 16 Pathways**

- VS transition mentor role focuses on Y11 Post 16 pathway plans, particularly for those at risk of not accessing education, employment, or training (NEET), to support their transition onto Post 16 provision and this mentoring continues as they settle in to the first term of Year 12.
- Transition mentor developed strong links with young people, schools, Tfc careers team, secondary caseworkers, and carers to support Year 11s with preparation for transition, including support to open days and making applications.
- The team developed a retention tracker which is regularly reviewed at Post 16 meetings, identifying patterns of engagement and barriers to learning.
- The vast majority of year 11s had clear post 16 plans in place by the end of the academic year and the transition mentor supported their enrolment at colleges and with training providers or with applications for apprenticeships or employment in year 12.
- Transition mentor meets regularly with young people in their college setting during Autumn term of year 12, and accompanied young people to interviews and visits to provisions when changing pathways.
- Due to the nature of the cohort this requires a personalised approach to ensure successful outcomes on an ongoing basis.
- The impact of transition work is demonstrated by the positive retention figures for year 12 (below).

## 8.2 NEET Reduction

All 16/17-year-old students have PEPs and are supported by the Post 16 Team in the Virtual School to maintain their engagement in education, employment, or training (EET).

The VS was successful in its application to be included in the DfE pupil premium post 16 pilot and received a small grant from the DfE to provide additional support to our Post 16 young people. This enabled procurement of bespoke approaches to meet individual needs to boost confidence and promote wider achievement including:

- Additional capacity in the Post 16 team to provide NEET support
  - 1-1 tuition for those students needing additional support with functional skills
  - Bespoke training and work experience opportunities
  - Engagement with local employers and training providers to develop tailored offer, including work experience.
  - EAL provision and training.
- A tracker of summer results and analysis was completed identifying which students still required maths and English intervention and support.
  - A cohort of students were identified to determine potential engagement and allocated with intervention, including 1:1 teaching, now running effectively and reviewed weekly.
  - Six out of eight of the Y12 young people continued to access tuition for maths and English, and incentives continue to be provided based on attendance and engagement.
  - Springboard training provision worked in partnership with the VS to establish an examination centre for functional skills, supporting young people in assessments in maths and English.

The year 12 pilot cohort for 2022/23 contained sixty young people.

Retention rates Year 12:	Nov 2022	July 2023
Further Education	34	31
Training	7	13
Employment	1	3
Apprenticeship	2	2
NEET	16	11

- Additional capacity through the restructure afforded for caseworkers to improve liaison and support to 35 colleges, training providers and employers to support our cared for young people.
- The expansion of the team and increased hours enabled more intensive support to our young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) and those who are at risk of leaving their education/training placement.
- NEET mentoring involves home visits to offer information, advice and guidance, multi-agency working to support, exploring options, accompanying on visits to local providers, interview preparation and in some case creating bespoke programmes to meet the needs of the individual that cannot be met by mainstream provision.

<b>Barriers to our young people not engaging in Education, Employment or Training (many experience more than one barrier)</b>	
Criminal Exploitation	7
Mental health	6
History of non-engagement in statutory education	11
UASC new into care	4
SEND	4
Substance misuse	5
Teenage Parent	2

***\*It is important to note that a significant number of cared for young people currently engaging in EET are also experiencing and overcoming multiple barriers to engagement***

- VS Post 16 leads also established a multi-agency NEET support panel “Solutions for post 16 cared for young people, care leavers, and care experienced panel” to review young people not in education, employment or training or complex cases at risk of becoming NEET, to ensure they have wrap around support, advice, and guidance to improve participation.
- The purpose of this panel is to find creative solutions for our Post16 hard to reach young people who are NEET, and to improve retention in EET using a multi-disciplinary approach.
- Joint working between the VS, next steps, careers, positive activities co-ordinator, and colleges has improved significantly as a result and the panel meets monthly.
- There have been 9 meetings this year and progress includes: bespoke support through positive activities, timely information sharing, lifts being provided by activity co-ordinator to get to training, which has increased attendance and improved retention.
- Post 16 leads have been working from Stanfield Centre one day per week since November 2022, this has enabled more joint working with social care colleagues.
- 23 young people have had positive outcomes as a result of NEET panel, including progressing into EET, supporting retention, engaging in positive activities.
- A colleague from next steps trained in Century Learning to enable initial informal educational offer for young people not ready for EET, with a view to progressing into more formal EET. This colleague also offered a programme of positive activities to engage hard to reach young people.
- Five complex young people have engaged in bespoke support/tuition/positive activities/mentoring, and it has been agreed that this be classed as re-engagement provision rather than NEET, in line with other regional Virtual Schools and the careers & NEET Team.
- At the end of the academic year 80% of 16/17-year-olds were in education, employment or training, participation rates were the highest since Post16 team came into post.

	Jun-20	Jun-21	Jun-22	Jun-23
EET	50%	66%	72%	80%
NEET	50%	33%	28%	20%

### 8.3 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

- We had 36 young people in our care in 2022/23 as a result of seeking asylum, sixteen left care as they turned 18, twelve are in Y12, seven in Y11 and one in Y10.
- 50% of the UASC cohort became cared for during this academic year.
- Many of our young people are living in areas outside of the Northeast which increases the challenges of obtaining appropriate ESOL provision.
- Recent experience with UASC young people accommodated out of area led to new process and guidance and tighter communication between Vs and CSC Colleagues on their admission.
- Staff work closely with social care colleagues on provision for this group of students through a personalised supported approach with their transition into schools/colleges.
- This involves a joint approach across local authorities, alongside targeted interventions, and multi-agency support.
- Staff have attended 4 regional USAC forums over the year to share best practice with other virtual schools.
- A core offer of education is in place from the VS for all UASC students, whether they live in or out of our area, the offer is instigated as soon as the young person enters care and is set up whilst awaiting provision to be identified.
- Core education offer includes:
  - Supply of a laptop and access to Wi-Fi
  - Flash Academy assessment of language and prior learning
  - ESOL online tuition sessions
  - 1:1/small group tutoring, where this can be facilitated
  - Support from the team to access school and/or college provision.
- During the year eighteen laptops were issued, fifteen young people engaged with Flash Academy, 5 engaged with TLC live online tuition, and two engaged with Targeted Provision one to one tuition.
- Flash Academy is now fully embedded, and a new member of the associate teaching staff is fully trained to deliver initial assessment process and to set and monitor progress.
- Flash/ESOL interventions ran throughout summer holidays for UASC to ensure knowledge gained was not lost over break, nine UASC young people engaged in tuition over the summer holidays with 100% attendance.
- VS associate teachers delivered in the young people's homes, in settings including Monument View, YMCAs in Sunderland and Chester le Street and Harbour View.
- Virtual school continue to provide one secondary school in Sunderland with a bespoke package of support to ensure 3 of our UASC students, and the staff who teach them, have the support they need around EAL. This includes all of the above, plus staff training from an ESOL specialist and small group in-school tutoring by the VS specialist ESOL teacher.
- Due to an increase in UASC students, with a wide variety of educational experiences and prior learning, the VS Post 16 Leads are in the process of exploring a new vocational study programme to meet the needs of this group of learners, and are in the initial

stages of setting up, in collaboration with Springboard Training, a vocational pathway for post 16 UASC young people.

- Three young people have visited Springboard provision to explore this as a vocational option and are awaiting taster sessions and a further two young people have offers to start a full-time study programme in September 2023 with ESOL support provided by the Virtual School.

#### **8.4 Raising Aspirations for Care Experienced 18-year-olds**

- The post 16 team introduced an education review meeting for year 13's who turned eighteen before the end of the academic year to support young people and their PAs with transition to Year 14.
- Work is ongoing with next steps and the personal advisors to share higher education opportunities and engage in joint working to support HE aspirations through the Choices Together Programme, through the regional Pilot to support care experienced students from further to higher education.
- Post 16 caseworkers attend the Northeast Raising Aspiration Partnership (NERAP) and the Care Experienced Student Steering Group.
- Regular meetings with NERAP and post 16 leads support cared for young people toward the Choices Together programme, to raise aspirations and promote higher education.
- Virtual School and next steps jointly fund travel university open days.

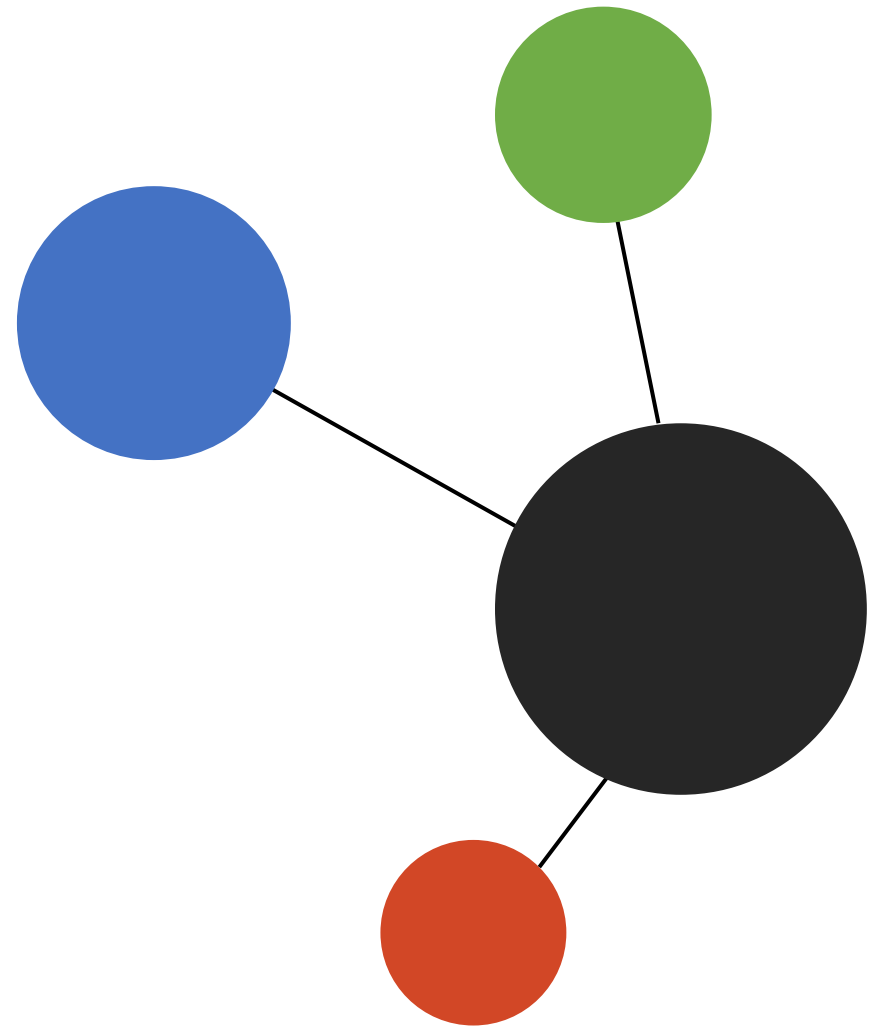
#### **8.5 Sharing Good Practice**

- Post 16 leads met with Durham and Northumberland colleagues who are also amongst the pilot authorities for the pupil premium post 16 grant, to discuss best practice and challenges in the post 16 landscape.
- Information on Northeast college and summer activities shared for young people throughout the region, good practice shared relating to transition and SEND.
- Post 16 lead also attends the national post 16 steering group and been asked to take on the role of Regional Lead for Northeast region.
- Leads have instigated and are supporting a regional post 16 UASC steering group which meets on a termly basis, with all fourteen North East Virtual Schools involved.
- Positive outcomes from the steering group include the sharing of practice for ESOL provision for our young people who live in neighbouring authorities; closer working links to support with complex young people across borders and initiatives in developing capacity and provision for ESOL.

# The DfE Reform Programme and current & future TfC transformative work.

March 2024

Kevin Brown – Strategic Programme Manager



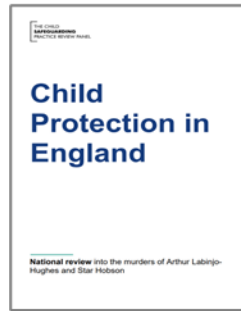
# Background

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Three reviews published last year provided a catalyst and vision to transform children's social care.



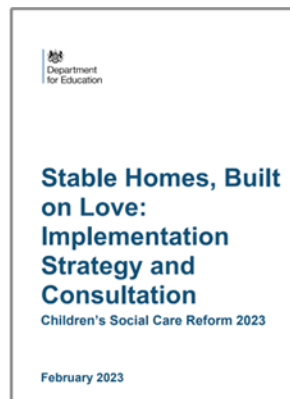
The Independent Review of Children's Social Care



National Review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson



The Competition and Markets Authority study into Children's Social Care Placements



**In February 2023, the DfE published Stable Homes, Built on Love** strategy and consultation, backed by £200m. The strategy sets out a vision to rebalance children's social care away from costly crisis intervention to more meaningful and effective early support.

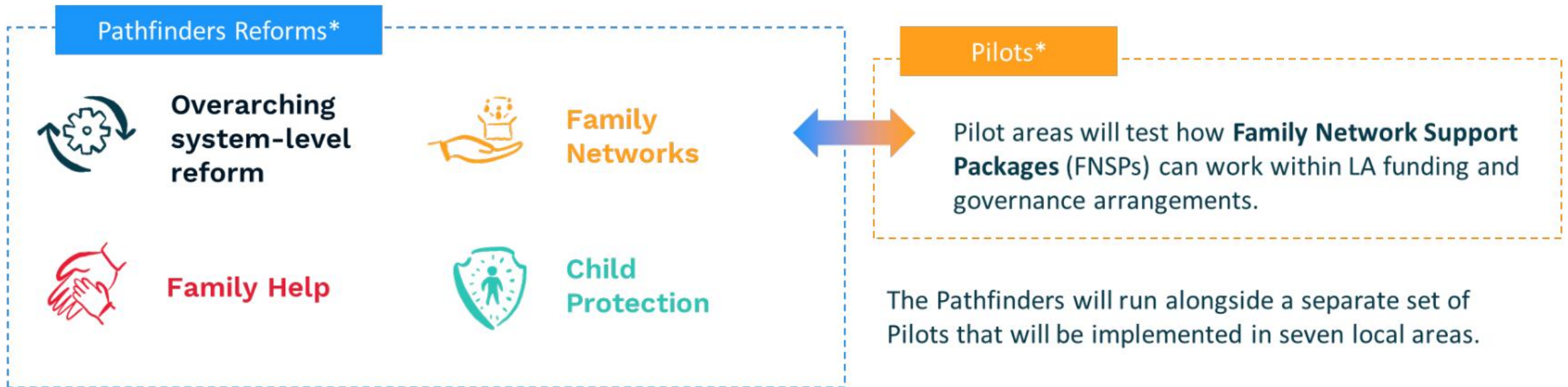
It included a **£45m commitment** for DfE to establish a pathfinder programme which will **design and test major reforms to children's services** from family help to the edge of care. Pathfinders will be used to work through key questions with multi-agency partners and establish how reforms could work best on the ground.

The DfE are concurrently running a **family network pilot** in 7 local authorities. This will test providing flexible funding for family networks to help keep families together and children out of care where appropriate.



# Families First for Children Pathfinder Programme

The FFCP Pathfinder programme will enable government to understand the impact that reforms to multi-agency response, family support and child protection have on the different sectors involved, at a smaller scale, before making decisions on further roll out.



*\*A Pathfinder differs from a Pilot: A Pathfinder is not seeking to prove that reform works, but to test how reform should be delivered most effectively on the frontline. This programme includes both a Pathfinder across all reforms and a Pilot focussing specifically on FNSPs.*

# Key reform strands

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There are four key reform strands to the FFCP Pathfinder that will be delivered as a whole system transformation.

## Overarching system reform and multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA)



Establishing a system-wide, 'families first' culture, underpinned by clear and shared MASA and effective information-sharing. Strengthening the role of education at strategic level.

## Family networks



Greater use of family networks, with earlier use of family group decision-making throughout family help and child protection, facilitated by targeted funding to enable more children to live safely at home or support a transition into kinship care.

## Family help



Ensuring families can access the right support at the right time. Locally based, multi-disciplinary family help services providing welcoming, seamless support tailored to the needs of children and families.

## Child protection



Dedicated and skilled multi-agency child protection teams, including: social workers with greater child protection expertise and experience, working closely with family help to protect children suffering or at risk of significant harm; and Parental representation and family network engagement in child protection processes.

# Policy Landscape



Programme	Description	2023	2024	2025
Foster Carer Recruitment & Retention	Putting in place end-to-end improvements in foster care through a recruitment and retention programme, on a regional footprint. North East pathfinder, 'Foster with North East' went live September 2023. 9 other programmes will go live summer 2024.		Pilot	Wider rollout
Regional Care Cooperatives Pathfinders	Co-designing and testing regional commissioning model, in partnership with the sector		Stage 2	
Families First for Children Pathfinder	Testing reform delivery across: Family Help, Child Protection and Family Networks, before considering wider roll out. Applications for wave 2 now closed.		Wave 1	Wave 2
Family Network Support Packages Pilot	Test the impact of introducing new Family Network Support Packages (FNSPs) that enable the network to step in and provide support where there is a financial barrier to them doing so, and allows children to live safely within their family networks, when it is in their best interests.		Wave 1	Wave 2
Kinship Carers Training & Support	Bespoke offer available to all kinship carers to be developed and rolled out. Training to be offered to all LAs, so there will not be an LA bidding process.			Delivery
Early Career Framework	To support and develop social workers in the first years in practice and then enable them to develop expert level skills and knowledge. Expert Writing Group led by Laura Eden developing the framework document which will form the basis for the programme.		Design with early adopters	
Data and Digital Solutions Fund	Funding to work in partnership with LAs to gain a thorough understanding of some of the data and digital problems they face and where LAs have developed good practice which can be shared with others.	Delivery		

# Snapshot of TfC Transformative Activity.



# Family Network Pilot (FNP)– Key achievements to date

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- We carried out a review of our current practice, to identify how we could meet the criteria of the pilot whilst minimising the impact of any changes to our current PLO and FGC processes.
- We went live with the FNP on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sept 2023.
- Involvement in Communities of Practice with DfE and other LAs in tranche 1 and 2.
- Work is currently being undertaken with the DfE's evaluation partners and interviews and focus groups are taking place.

## **Family network member:**

I appreciate greatly the support and financial assistance that I have received through these very difficult times

## **DfE:**

Sunderland are seen as the trailblazers of the pilot, and your willingness to share your experience is really helpful for other LAs.

# Family Hubs – Key achievements

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Three out of five of the hubs have formally launched – the remaining two are operating as hubs. Winnibell will launch this month, and Thorney Close is awaiting improvement work

We have grown and strengthened our partnerships across the city over the last two years and strive to continue this good work:

- We have community grant opportunities
- We are building a relationship with Sunderland College for work experience opportunities in the hubs
- Our relationships with maternity and the 0-19 services continue to develop

Overall, the programme delivery is compliant with all DfE requests, and we continue to meet our milestones.



# Family Hubs – what comes next

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The next steps for delivery of our Family Hubs are to

- Embed our Workforce Strategy
- Finalise our Year 3 commitments
- Work with colleagues across the partnership to develop an outcomes framework
- Implement the Groupwork Case Management system
- Begin to think about what additionality is needed aside from the core offer
- Launch the Winnibell and Thorney Close hubs
- Work with our partners to keep up to date with identified needs of the families in Sunderland and respond appropriately
- Further roll out our community engagement ideas



# My Best Life

## Progress so far



### My Best Life – Family Hubs

- Single **online** location for families to access high quality, **up to date information**, advice and guidance about services and support available to them launched on 18<sup>th</sup> December.
- **Digital front door** for Family Hubs. Average 1,173 visitors in February.
- **External providers** advertising events on the site
- **Co-production** with SEND STARS, PCF and Parent Panel

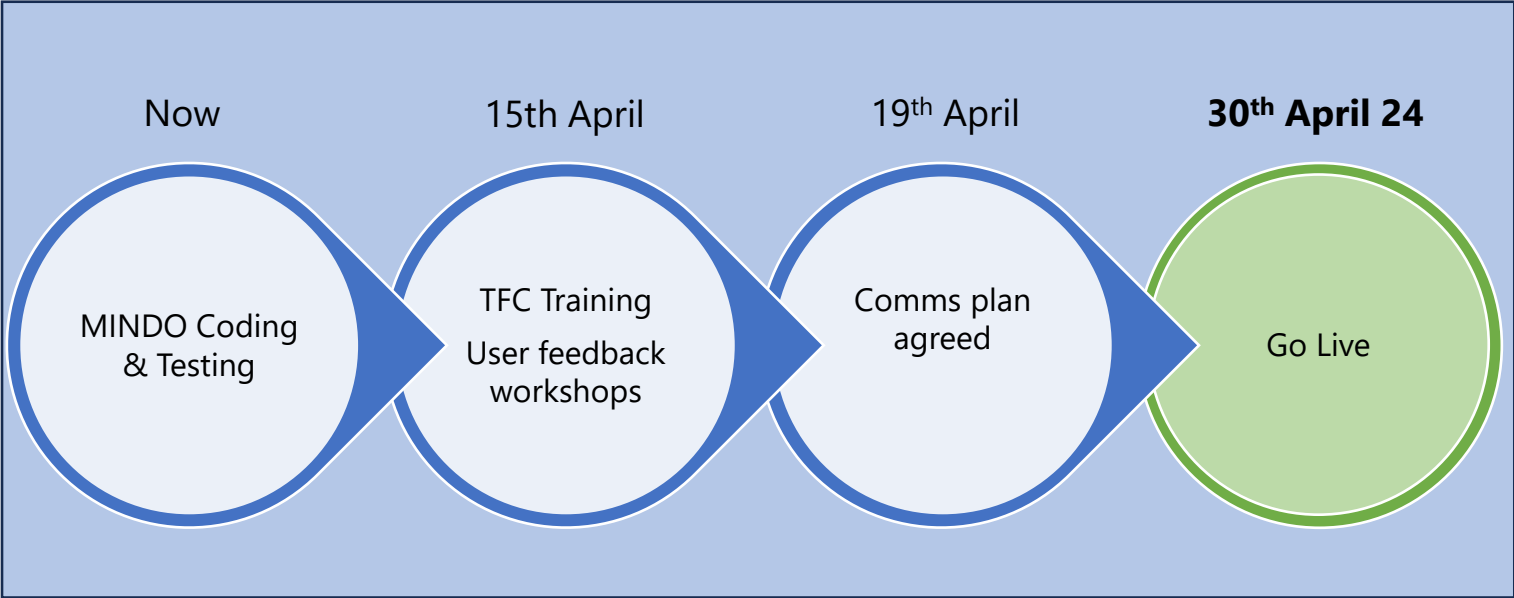
### My Best Life – SEND Local Offer/FIS

- **Scope agreed** for the updated SEND Local offer & FIS
- Improved experience** for parent carers



# My Best Life

## Next 6 months



The screenshot shows the Sunderland My Best Life website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the logo, 'Sunderland', and links for 'Key Services', 'Activities & Events', 'Information & Guidance', and 'Directory of Services'. Below the navigation is a search bar with the text 'Choose another City/Area/Organisation' and a 'Read Page' button. The main content area features a 'Welcome to Sunderland' section with a placeholder image of a city street. Below this are two featured activity cards: 'Dance workshops for kids - Spring Holiday Activity' and 'Toddlers play time and nursery rhymes - Family hub'. To the right of these is a 'Featured Activities & Events' section titled 'Sunderland Family Hubs'. At the bottom, there is a 'Featured Information & Guidance' section titled 'Start for Life offer' and two more activity cards: 'Supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities age 0-25' and 'Support for children and young people mental health'.

**My Best Life – Family Hubs**

- Continued changes following feedback (language, accessibility, attendance recording)

# Thoughts ... / Questions ? / Final Comments ...

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**SUPPORTIVE PARENTING PARTNERSHIP**

**15 April 2024**

**WORK PROGRAMME 2024/2025**

**Report of the Assistant Director of Law and Governance**

**1. Purpose of the Report**

To inform the Supportive Parenting Partnership of the draft work programme for the municipal year 2024/2025 and forthcoming agenda items.

**2. Work Programme**

<b>WORK PROGRAMME 2024/2025</b>		
<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Agenda Items</b>	<b>Officer Responsible</b>
<b>15 April 2024</b>	Change Council Update Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report DfE Reform Programme and Transformative Work	Alex Bowey Anita Swales  Kevin Brown
<b>15 July 2024</b>	Health of Cared for Children CNTW Children and Young People's Cared for Pathway Kinship Strategy Regulation 44 Visits Annual Adoption Report Annual Fostering Report	Jo Morgan Samantha Diston  Kathryn McCabe Gillian Hammell-Purvis Kathryn McCabe Kathryn McCabe
<b>14 October 2024</b>	Change Council Update  Update from the Virtual School IRO Annual Report	Alexandra Bowey  Anita Swales Gillian Hammell-Purvis
<b>20 January 2025</b>	Health of Cared for Children  CNTW Children and Young People's Cared for Pathway	Jo Morgan  Samantha Diston
<b>7 April 2025</b>	Change Council Update Virtual School Annual Report	Alexandra Bowey Anita Swales

### **3. Recommendations**

The Board is asked to note the work programme and suggest any additional topics which may be discussed at a future meeting.