

GATESHEAD VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Education Report to Corporate Parenting Board

December 2021



Gateshead Virtual School (VS) Priorities

- Personal Education Plans
- Pupil Premium Plus
- Narrowing the Gap
- Pupil progress and Attainment data
- Teaching and Learning
- Education enrichment
- Reducing Exclusions
- Extended VS Role

Children in Care (CIC) Context

As of 30/11/21 there were **445** Looked after Children in Gateshead between the ages of 0-18 years old.

Children in care School Population

The following tables provide an overview of the numbers of Gateshead LAC across a number of key stages, school and educational settings and also out of borough data where this has been available.

Children in care Population

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Children in care Numbers in and out of Borough per statutory age

Current Year Group	Oct-19	Nov-20	Nov-21
Year 11	25	34	39
Year 10	38	32	31
Year 9	32	29	38
Year 8	24	34	35
Year 7	30	33	31
Year 6	28	31	21
Year 5	26	23	17
Year 4	12	20	17
Year 3	14	18	26
Year 2	11	17	19
Year 1	12	15	14
Reception	12	18	16
Total	264	304	304

(Figures as of November 21)

This year we have a larger cohort of Year 11 pupils. Children in Care after at Key Stage 4 are challenging in terms of Social, Emotional and Mental health and access to education. They are often at risk of fixed term (FT) and/or permanent exclusion (PEX) The challenges and demands that this continues to place on service delivery is significant. The current Years 10 & 11 cohorts will dominate a substantial amount of service resource due to the complexity of need and corresponding support.

Children in care in Gateshead Secondary Schools

School	Gateshead LAC Nov 20	Gateshead LAC Nov 21
Cardinal Hume	4	8
Emmanuel College	13	11
Grace College	13	10
Heworth Grange	8	9
Kingsmeadow	9	9
Lord Lawson	11	14
St Thomas More	10	13
Thorp Academy	4	8
Whickham	7	4
Total	79	86

(Figures as of November 21)

The number of Gateshead CIC attending Gateshead secondary schools has increased from the previous academic year, there are currently 86 compared to the same time last year when there were 79.

Lord Lawson of Beamish currently has the highest number of CIC

Children in care Educated out of Borough

Out of Borough	Number of LAC
Primary	26
Secondary	36
Special	18
Total	80

(Figures as of November 21)

26% of the total CIC population in Gateshead are educated and reside out of borough. The VS as increased its attendance at out of borough PEP reviews to ensure Personal Education Plans are completed.

Children in care Educated out of Borough across all Key stages

Key Stage	Out of Borough LAC
Early Years (Rec)	2
Key Stage 1 (Year 1 & 2)	8
Key Stage 2 (Year 3, 4, 5 & 6)	21
Key Stage 3 (Year 7, 8 & 9)	36
Key Stage 4 (Year 10 & 11)	13
Total	80

(Figures as of November 21)

Children in care educated out of Borough according to setting

Number of out of borough Educational Settings	
Primary	21
Primary Special	3
Secondary (including middle)	24
Secondary Special	10
Total	58

(Figures as of November 21)

The 80 Gateshead CIC educated out of borough are spread across 58 educational settings.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) and CIC

The following tables provide data relating to CIC with SEN, across a number of key stages and year groups.

Year Group	EHCP	SEN Support
Year 11	13	11
Year10	13	5
Year 9	10	6
Year 8	13	8
Year 7	6	5
Year6	3	2
Year 5	6	4
Year 4	2	2
Year 3	3	1
Year 2	3	0
Year 1	3	3
Reception	0	0
Total	75	47

(Figures as of November 21 from Emis)

The table above gives a Breakdown of Children in care who have Special Educational Needs, there are 75 with Educational Health Care Plans and a further 47 who receive SEN Support in schools. The Virtual School supports all statutory processes

Looked after Children School Attendance

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, there are no school attendance figures for the period between September 20 – July 21.

Many CIC were educated at home via online learning or carer support. The VSH redirected £200 of Pupil premium plus to every carer to support them with educational resources.

Pupil Premium Plus Grant 2020-21

The Pupil Premium Grant for Children in care has been increased to £2345 from £2300. for Children in Care for financial year 2020-21 and the role of the VS is to ensure that payments are received by school for each individual CIC entitled to the funding.

In March/April 2021, each school (maintained and non-maintained but not private schools) received the following payments:

£400 per term.

£500 paid based on 2 completed Personal Education Plan review across the 20-21 academic year. (statutory requirement) and documentation received by the Virtual School
£45 per pupil additional money distributed to all schools.

£600 to be retained by The Virtual School which is used for additional service delivery to Children in care and schools

It is expected that schools will use this funding to:-

- directly support the achievement and attainment of CIC
- close the attainment and progress gap between CIC and their peers
- support underlying issues and interventions for CIC who are at risk of exclusion, non-attendance and other issues that may affect learning

All social workers and designated teachers must follow the Gateshead PEP processes in ensuring each CIC has an up to date quality PEP. The VS will monitor the compliance and quality assure every PEP creating an accurate list of qualifying schools for finance in accordance with the above expectations

Private Tuition

Within the period September 2020 - July 2021 a total of **21** Children in care received one to one Private Tuition or TA support totaling **880 hours**. These sessions were arranged through a national Tutoring company. We also arranged some sessions through other Virtual Schools for some of our children placed in different areas of the country. The numbers receiving support have increased this year.

The main requests for tutoring were for English, Maths and Science and was primarily targeted at Years 10 and 11 CIC to support those who were about to take their examinations, we also were able to offer tuition to Year's 12 & 13 for students who were due to re sit their examinations

The Coronavirus Pandemic has increased the need for support for all CIC so this year we have also been offering individual support to some Children in Care in younger age groups. We would envisage this continuing to be the case for the foreseeable future.

Virtual Schools are now able to access the National Tutoring Programme (NTP)

Personal Education Plans (PEPS)

Gateshead's PEP process runs across two periods during the year, April and May and October and November each year. Data is drawn from each period to analyse the number of returns, the quality and accuracy of documentation is rigorously checked in order to identify any specific actions for Children in Care between the ages of 3 and 16.

The below data shows the returns for the total number of CIC that required a PEP during **October/November 2020**.

Age range	Number
3-16	322
Post 16	56

Overall, there are 56 Post16 young people but 3 of those declined to agree to have a PEP.

3-16 years	
Number of CIC In Borough	Number of CIC Out of Borough
239	83

3 – 16 Completed PEPs	
% PEPs returned In Borough	% PEPs returned Out of Borough
82%	69%
% PEPs not returned In Borough	% PEPs not returned Out of Borough
18%	31%

Post 16 Completed PEPs	
% PEPs returned	% PEPs not returned
76%	26%

The below data shows the returns for the total number of CIC pupils that required a PEP during **March/April 2021**. The number of PEP returns during this period were the highest the service has ever received. Maintaining this will be a priority moving forward.

Age range	Number
3-16	338
Post 16	46

3-16	
Number of CIC In Borough	Number of CIC Out of Borough
248	90

3 – 16 Completed PEPs	
% PEPs returned In Borough	% PEPs returned Out of Borough
95%	80%
% PEPs not returned In Borough	% PEPs not returned Out of Borough
5	20%

Post 16 Completed PEPs	
% PEPs returned	% PEPs not returned
76%	24%

- Gateshead Virtual School have set windows of October/November and March/April in the school year when they expect PEP reviews to be held. Some PEPs may be received outside one of those windows because of changes to pupil circumstances e.g. move of care or school place or cancel of review due to other circumstances.
- Due to the unforeseen Covid 19 Pandemic, PEP's have taken place via several methods, for example Teams meetings and conference calls. A small number of schools held physical meetings strictly following government Covid guidelines. This has enabled the Virtual School team to have attended more meetings this year than in previous years.
- Throughout last year we have faced many unexpected challenges largely due to Covid-19 and it was necessary to adapt our approach to ensure we received a completed PEP for children looked after in Gateshead and beyond to enable us to continue to monitor their progress and attainment in education. The PEP team have been very successful in overcoming challenges and this is evidenced by the rise in the percentages of PEPs returned.
- We now have a fully digital PEP process. We will continue to review the changes and reflect on the successes and areas for improvement

Educational Attainment

Gateshead's Children in care Year 11 Cohort 2020=2021 was 37 Children, below is a table showing results for their GCSE/Equivalent Results.

37 Looked after Children	No of Children	Percentage
5 (9-4)	12	32%
5 (9-1)	19	51%
5 (9-4) inc M&E	9	24%
1 (9-1)	31	84%
SEN	16	43%

This has been another unprecedented year in terms of Education with schools being locked down again because of the coronavirus pandemic. The Government took the decision that this year's examination results would be based on teacher assessment gradings which were submitted by the schools, these were calculated using a series of tests that the children completed and also previous work they had undertaken during the course of the year.

Evaluation

19 Children in care achieved 5 x GCSE Passes at Grade 1 or above.

12 Looked after Children achieved 5 x GCSE Passes at Grade 4 or above.

9 Children in care achieved 5 x GCSE Passes at Grade 4 or above including English & Maths.

31 Children in care achieved 1 x GCSE Passes at Grade 1 or above.

16 (43%) of the Cohort were SEN

12 (32%) of the cohort attend Special Schools or Alternative provisions and were not expected to make 5 (9-4).

The table below gives a comparison with the results from 2019/20

	2019/20 Cohort (25)	Percentage	2020/21 Cohort (37)	Percentage
5 (9-4)	4	16	12	32
5 (9-1)	14	56	19	51
5 (9-4) inc M&E	2	8	9	24
1 (9-1)	21	84	31	84
SEN	14	56	16	43

The cohort for this year 2020/21 had a lower ratio of SEN children with 43% compared to 56% in 2019/20.

5 (9-4) including English & Maths – this is significantly higher with 24% achieving this in 2020/21 compared to 8% in 2019/20.

5 (9-1) – this has slightly decreased to 51% in 2020/21 compared to 56% in 2019/20

5 (9-4) – This is another area which has increased this year with 32% achieving this compared to 16% in 2019/20

1 (9-1) – this has stayed exactly the same as last year with 84%.

The comparison I have completed above shows that the results are higher or equivalent in 3 categories compared to the previous year. Only one category had a lower percentage. Over all, the results are positive especially particularly under the challenging circumstances.

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The comparison shows that the results are higher in 2 areas compared to the previous year, stayed the same in 1 area and were slightly lower in 1.

Overall the results are positive especially under the challenging circumstances they were achieved due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Children in care Key Stage 1 Results 2020

Gateshead Year 2 Children in care Cohort was 20 Students, below is a table showing results of their end of year assessments.

All LAC Including Out of Borough Schools				
Number Achieving Expected Level	11	12	10	10
Number in Cohort	20	20	20	20
% Achieving Expected Level				
Writing	55			
Reading		60		
Maths			50	
Reading, Writing & Maths				50

The Cohort for 2020-21 was 20.

4 Children were SEN – 20% of the cohort.

11 out of 20 children (55%) gained the expected level in writing

12 out of 20 children (60%) gained the expected level in reading

10 out of 20 children (50%) gained the expected level in maths

10 out of 20 children (50%) gained the expected level in Writing, Reading & Maths

Children in care Key Stage 2 (Results)

Gateshead Year 6 Looked after Children Cohort was 33 Students, below is a table showing results of their end of year assessments.

All LAC Including Out of Borough Schools				
Number Achieving Expected Level	18	20	21	17
Number in Cohort	33	33	33	33
% Achieving Expected Level				
Writing	55			
Reading		61		
Maths			64	
Writing, Reading and Maths				52

The Cohort for 2020-21 was 33, this is a larger than average group of students.

11 Children were SEN – 33% of the cohort.

18 out of 33 children (55%) gained the expected level in Writing

20 out of 33 children (61%) gained the expected level in Reading

21 out of 33 children (64%) gained the expected level in Maths

17 out of 33 children (52%) gained the expected level in Writing, Reading & Maths

KS 1 and 2 children did not sit SATS exams and so attainment has been based on Teacher assessment

The above results show end of year levels base on Teacher assessments.

It is not possible to do a comparison with the previous year as no results were reported last year

Educational Outcomes and Progress

Primary

A priority for The Virtual school 2010/20 is to progress and performance as well as outcomes for pupils. Below is an example of how progress and performance is monitored;

Key:

RED – Working at below age related expectations (ARE)

Amber – Emerging /working towards ARE

Green - Working below ARE

Pupils progress and performance can be closely monitored enabling the VS to provide early intervention for those e pupils working below ARE.

This is an example of how we use PEPs to monitor progress:

Name	School	End of Year 4			End of Year 5		
		Reading	Writing	Maths	Reading	Writing	Maths
MM	Colegate	Expected	Expected	Expected	ARE	ARE	ARE
ME	Riverside Academy	YR4 Secure	YR4 Secure	YR4 Secure	YR5 Developing	YR5 Developing	YR5 Secure
KJ	Bill Quay	YR4 Emerging	YR4 Emerging	YR4 Emerging	Working Towards	Working Towards	Working Towards
LR	Eslington	YR4 Exceeding	Yr4 Expected	YR4 Expected	Yr5 Expected	YR5 Emerging	Yr5 Expected
WG	High Spen	PAT 1	PAT 1	PAT 1	PAT 1	PAT 1	PAT 1
KJ	Lobley Hill	YR4 Emerging	YR4 Emerging	YR4 Emerging	Yr5 Emerging	Yr5 Emerging	Yr5 Emerging
FK	St Margarets c of E Primary	YR3 Expected	YR3 Expected	YR3 Expected	YR5 Expected	YR5 Expected	YR5 Expected
RC	Toy Top Farm, Darlington	Yr1 Developing	Yr 1 Emerging	Yr 1 Emerging	Yr1 Emerging	Yr1 Emerging	Yr1 Emerging
KW	Red Rose Primary, Durham	ARE	ARE	ARE	Greater Depth	ARE	ARE
OM	Stephenson Memorial Primary	4 Secure	4 Developing	4 Secure	Working Towards	ARE	ARE
CD	High Spen	YR3 Expected	YR3 Expected	YR3 Expected	PAT 3	PAT 2	PAT 2
CF	The Dales Primary	2c	3c	3d	YR2 Developing	YR2 Developing	Yr3 Developing
LB	Portobello Primary	YR3 Expected	YR4 Expected	YR3 Expected	Below ARE	Below ARE	Below ARE

DA	Bexhill Academy	3 Developing	3 Developing	3 Developing	ARE	ARE	ARE
CP	St Philip Neri	4 Developing	4 Developing	4 Developing	5 Secure	5 Secure	5 Developing
CH	Eslington	Yr4 Emerging	Yr3 Emerging	Yr3 Emerging	Yr5 Emerging	Yr4 Expected	Yr5 Emerging
CH	Eslington	Yr4 Emerging	Yr3 Emerging	Yr3 Emerging	Yr5 Emerging	Yr4 Emerging	YR3 Exceeding
OB	Riverside Academy	YR4 Secure	YR4 Secure	YR4 Secure	YR5 Developing	YR5 Developing	YR5 Emerging
AN	Hill View Juniors	YR3 Emerging	Yr3 Emerging	YR3 Emerging	4-	3+	5-
MS	St Aidans	YR3 Emerging	Yr3 Emerging	YR3 Emerging	ARE	ARE	ARE
EC	Parkhead Primary	ARE	ARE	ARE	ARE	ARE	ARE
NR	South Street	ARE	ARE	ARE	YR5 Emerging	YR5 Emerging	YR5 Emerging

Care Leavers and Higher Education

The National perspective

Access to higher education is much lower for young people who have been in care. In 2018 - 2019 only **13%** of pupils who were looked after continuously for 12 months or more entered higher education compared to 43% of all other pupils. The continuation rate is currently 5.6%

Gateshead statistics

2019	2020	2021
	Care leavers	
126	105	106
	University	
2019	2020	2021
10	19	15 currently
		5 graduated
		20 in total
12.6%	18%	21.2%

Gateshead Council Leaving care team have had an increasing number of care leavers in Higher education which has been rising steadily over the last 3 years from 10 to 20 in line with trends nationally over the last decade.

There has been a decrease in overall numbers of care leavers open to Gateshead Leaving care team with a total of 126 in 2019 , 105 in 2020 and 106 in 2021. Success rates are high and most young people graduate successfully though some do change courses after the first year.

The table above details an overall number of care leavers at university this year. Of those, 5 completed their courses and graduated in the summer. 15 have either returned to university to complete their course or started in their first year.

This shows that percentages of overall cases in 2019 were line with the National average. increasing to significantly higher than National average (13%) in 2020 and 2021 with 12.6% in 2019 , 18% in 2020 and 21.2% in 2021. This is currently 14.5% at 15 young people at university this term with 5 having graduated.

Gateshead Virtual School continue to financially support students in their first year at university when they receive an HE bursary of £2,000.

Exclusions - December 2021

To date there have been **0 Permanent Exclusions**. Fixed Term Exclusions are higher than we would like, however the Virtual School (VS) has implemented a more robust system and has improved the monitoring system, the VS wholly relies on schools providing Fixed term exclusion data. This is not consistent and relies on the team to remind schools to forward the information. There continues to be an agreed understanding across schools in Gateshead that no CIC should receive a permanent exclusion.

We monitor those children who may be at risk of being permanently excluded and this enables the VS to identify patterns of exclusions allowing the necessary support to be implemented and resources to be offered

Main reasons for Fixed term Exclusions:

1. Persistent refusal to follow instructions.
2. Consistent low-level disruption
3. Verbal abuse towards adults and pupils.
4. Non-compliance.
5. Truancy.
6. Swearing at staff and pupils.
7. Physical assault against members of staff and other pupils.
8. Damage of property.
9. Bullying.
10. Absconding

During the period, (Sep 2020 – Sep 2021) **20** children in care received fixed term exclusions, accumulating to a total of **31** fixed term exclusions. This equates to **83.5** days of missed education. This is an average of 2-3 exclusions per week. The children in care who received fixed term exclusions ranged from Year 4 to Year 12 across 12 different schools. The schools with the highest number of exclusions have been targeted by the Virtual School to provide the right support in order to prevent reoccurrences in the future.

Going forward, The Virtual School will continue to support and challenge schools to manage the needs of those complex children who continue to be at risk of exclusion.

Home Learning support – Treasure Chest

This is a new resource that the Virtual School has developed to replace the former Letter Box Programme. Treasure Chest aims to inspire a love of reading and engagement with numeracy. The packs include a variety of books, Math's games and fun activities that Carers and children can enjoy together at home. They are fun and engaging and the first Treasure Chest Pack delivery was made in July 2020. Pack Number 2 delivery is December 2021

Feedback is positive from both Foster Carers and pupils. This feedback shows how, in the early stages, the Treasure Chest packs are being well received and a full evaluation is to be carried out following the receipt of pack 2. We hope that it will have a positive impact on children's learning not only at school but in the home.

Education Support

The VS now has three Education support workers. The very recent third appointment has significantly added to the qualities and strength of the team. Their skills and qualifications include Counselling, Thrive, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Trauma and Attachment, Psychology and Theraplay. All have significant experience in supporting children both in secondary and primary schools. They continue to provide flexible support to our most complex young people to successfully access education

Education Enrichment Programme

The VS has developed an Education Enrichment Programme that aims to help to engage pupils in education and provide experiences beyond that of the classroom. We offer a comprehensive programme of outdoor activities ranging from water sports to Archery and rock climbing. The programme is offered to Key stage 3 and 4 children predominantly; however some upper key stage 2 children have accessed the activities.

The programme to date has been very successful in encouraging young people to engage more successfully in, and in some cases, re-engage with education.

Participation in these activities is meant to enrich and widen their life experiences, encourage them to learn to trust adults and build meaningful relationships through team building. The programme runs all year round including during the school holidays.

Education Employment and Training (EET)

The joint monthly EET meeting between Gateshead Virtual School and Social Care has continued to identify and plan work with young people who are NEET or who are at risk of becoming NEET. External partners are also part of this group to improve monitoring and target work to be done with the young people. These include Gateshead and Newcastle College, Learning & Skills and Early Help's Careers Advisers as well as a job coach from Economic Wellbeing.

Post 16 Destinations

2021 Data as of 23.11.21			
Year Groups (size of cohort)	Year 12 (39)	Year 13 (27)	Year 14 (39)
Progression routes			
6 th form	6	1	3
College	14	12	16
Study Programme/ Traineeship	3	8	1
Apprenticeship		1	4
NEET	11	5	7
University/HE level course			3
Work			4
Work (including part time)	4		
Combined care and education			
Not available to the work place/ Other			1
Volunteering	1		

Work Experience for Children in care

The Pathways2Work (P2W) project supports Looked After Young People in year 10 – year 13 to find work experience during their school/college holidays within a real working environment. The aim is to help to improve their chances in life by developing the skills needed for future careers. It can also improve their confidence and helps them to learn more about a particular career before finalising their plans.

A young person can work for a period of one day to several weeks. They are supported to help identify the correct type of placement suitable to their needs.

Pathways2Work Participation (Feb 2020 – October 2021)

Employees have not been willing to support placements for CIC during the Pandemic.

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Raising Aspirations

Gateshead Virtual School continues to work with the North East Raising Aspirations Partnership, to try to improve young people's knowledge and experience of university. This:

Previously Looked After and Adopted Children

For previously looked-after and Adopted children, the Virtual school head teacher (VSH) continues to be the source of advice and information to help their parents and advocate for them as effectively as possible. The VSH provides this advice and responds to parent and school queries as required. This has already resulted in visits to schools and phone queries from parents.

Further funding has been made available to develop the VSH role for previously Looked after and adopted children and the planned offer of a wider service to parents. E.g. network meetings, training sessions such as Attachment training, SEND and education information has not taken place due to Covid. However, plans are currently underway to resume this. The VS has provided tuition for several Adopted children to support their education. The VSH continues to liaise with Adopt North East.

Education Psychology

The Virtual School EP is involved in liaison with the Educational Psychologists in Gateshead around their work with looked after children in the schools that they cover. She has also been directly involved in casework and facilitating statutory processes with a number of looked after young people who have not been able to access an Educational Psychologist input through the usual school route linked to changes in care and education placements.

The Educational Psychologist is involved in consultation around case work with members of the Virtual School Team and has worked with the Virtual School Deputy Head to develop a proforma for planning and monitoring of individual pupil focused intervention carried out by case workers.

The Education Psychology role has involved delivering training to secondary school staff and foster carers. The training has focused on supporting young people who have experienced trauma and attachment difficulties with regard to their education. Advice and consultation support has also been offered to schools.

During the National Lockdown the EP developed an information resource to support carers linked to the specific needs of children in care and young people in relation to the pandemic.

During summer term 2021 the Virtual School Educational Psychologist co-ordinated and supervised transition work carried out by 3 Assistant Educational Psychologists to support some of the most vulnerable Year 6 pupils to make a positive transition to secondary school. The work involved completion of a transition document which we developed based on evidence from the resilience literature. This document provided schools with information about strengths, areas of development, strategies and targets. Some pupils also completed individual work with the assistant EPs which was tailored to their specific needs and concerns around transition.

The EP is involved in planning and delivering of training as part of the current DFE pilot for Children with a Social Worker. A secondary school focused training package regarding trauma informed practice has been developed and will be offered to all secondary schools in Gateshead to run in conjunction with Virtual Reality Training. Alongside this training package a resource pack is being developed for all Gateshead schools which contains information and advice about trauma informed practice as well as helpful practical resources.

Virtual School Head Extended Role

In June 2021, the DfE published non-statutory guidance outlining how Virtual School Heads should become strategic leads in promoting the education of children with a social worker. This was to be implemented in September 2021. Funding has been allocated and is confirmed until March 2022.

The main aims of this extended role are to help to:

- Make visible the disadvantages that children with a social or those who have had a social worker can experience, this includes children looked after and previously looked after.
- Promote practice that supports children's engagement and attendance in education
- Level up children's outcomes and narrow the gap in attainment so every child can reach their full potential.

The VS is beginning to roll out a robust training programme to all Teachers, practitioners and across a wide range of services in Gateshead in Trauma informed practice using Virtual reality technology. Kingsmeadow Secondary school are currently running a pilot programme.

The outcomes expected are:

- **Increased attendance not only in attending school but increased attendance in lessons when in school which in turn should improve attainment.**
- **Reduced Fixed Term Exclusions**
- **Reduction in managed moves and use of alternative provisions to avoid permanent exclusions.**

Education Support during COVID

What went well?

- The VS maintained full normal team working with weekly Case meetings (Microsoft Teams) throughout the Lockdown. Team members were provided with the resources required to work from home.
- The VSH and VS Manager monitored the team's health and wellbeing throughout.

- Every Foster Carer who has a Gateshead child in their care was allocated a member of the VS team to monitor and support the child and family during the lockdown period including those residing out of borough.
- Weekly calls were carried out by all team giving the carers the opportunity to discuss any concerns they had. Carers were encouraged positively to provide wider educational experiences for children rather than solely focusing on Academic subjects.
- Feedback from Carers has been very positive, and they valued the opportunity to share any concerns they may have had.
- For those high priority Looked After Children i.e., those with a high level of SEMH who continued to attend two of the Specialist provisions, i.e. Eslington school and River Tyne Academy, the Virtual School placed a VS Education Support Worker to offer additional and bespoke support within those settings.
- The VSH arranged to redirect £200 of Pupil Premium Plus to every Foster Carer in order to contribute to or reimburse any costs related to the wider home education of children and young people in their care. This included payment to Independent Agencies to be transferred to those carers of Gateshead Children both in and out of borough.
- Care homes in Gateshead received a £50 Amazon Voucher for every young person in their care.
- For those more complex pupils who were in crisis or were experiencing adverse difficulties, the VS provided close monitoring and more frequent contact with the young people and their carers.
- Intense support was offered to those more challenging pupils who continued to disengage with education and the rules of lockdown etc. and for pupils who were placed with carers who, either through self isolation, shielding or illness were unable to offer outdoor recreation / activities. Successful outcomes were achieved for several of the pupils.
- Examples:
 - a. A pupil who refused to attend school or engage with any form of education was encouraged and supported through a sensitive phased approach, to being to access some online learning. This progressed so well that this pupil is now attending school.
 - b. A young boy, living with carers who needed to shield was offered opportunities to go cycling regularly with a member of the team
- The VS team provided advice, guidance, support and online learning resources to support children and carers.
- In order to assist schools in complying with their statutory duty to complete a PEP. A revised COVID PEP was produced in order to reflect the current situation.
- For those pupils working below ARE, the VS monitored (and challenged where necessary) the levels of work and expectations for the pupils.
- A Trauma informed return to school leaflet was produced by the Assistant EP's. This was disseminated to schools and is available on the virtual school website.

What would we do differently next time?

Throughout the lockdown period there was a low percentage of Children in Care attending school. The decision was largely decided by the Foster Carers and the

Social Worker. In order to prevent gaps in learning widen further for these children the VS will focus on **raising the percentage of children attending school** through closer liaising with Social Workers and carers.

The VS received some concerns from carers that the work that schools were sending home was too challenging and in some cases causing behavioural issues. **The VS will endeavour to liaise more closely with the Designated teachers to encourage effective monitoring of online work and differentiation.**

As some Looked After Children found the transition back to school somewhat challenging, **the VS will endeavour to develop a more robust system of transitional support with the involvement of the VS Education Psychologist.**

Recommendations for The Virtual School 2021-2022

- 1 To maintain the high percentage of PEP reviews, and timely return of all PEPs both in and out of borough and to continue to promote the importance of full attendance of all professionals at PEP meetings.
- 2 Continue to provide appropriate intervention and provision for those Children in Care who have gaps in their education and also support those at risk of permanent exclusion to maintain their school place and to challenge where schools have not made appropriate provision.
- 3 To ensure that Pupil Premium Plus and the additional Pupil premium plus is allocated and used appropriately by schools and to challenge school to be more accountable for their use of the funding.
- 4 To change the culture in schools and colleges and services around responding to children with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and to make them the best they can be in managing and supporting this vulnerable group of children.