

# Public Document Pack

## Corporate Parenting Partnership

Monday, 25th March, 2024

6.00 pm

Kaleidoscope Youth Centre

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### AGENDA

- 1. Welcome and Apologies (5m)**  
Cllr Julie Gunn, Executive Member, Children's, Young People & Education (Chair)
  
- 2. Minutes of Previous Meeting (5m)**  
Cllr Julie Gunn, Executive Member, Children's, Young People & Education (Chair)  
  
**CPP Minutes 10 Jan 2024** **3 - 9**
  
- 3. Declarations of Interest**  
**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FORM** **10**
  
- 4. Young People's Led Session (1hr)**  
Young People's Voice Group supported by YPS
  
- 5. Terms of Reference and Agenda Discussion (10m)**  
Imran Akuji, Head of Partnerships, Intensive Support, Police & Performance  
  
**Terms of Reference - Corporate Parenting Partnership v0.06 240124** **11 - 15**
  
- 6. Service and Performance Update - Leaving Care, CIOC (25m)**  
Clare Bibby, Service Lead- Adolescent Services and Intensive Support Suzanne Kinder, Service Lead – Corporate Parenting & Permanence Andrew Bradbury, Service Lead - Permanence  
  
**ChAT February 2024 Extract** **16 - 25**
  
- 7. Corporate Parenting Strategy (10m)**  
Suzanne Kinder, Service Lead – Corporate Parenting & Permanence Andrew Bradbury, Service Lead - Permanence

**8. Any other Business (5m)**

Cllr Julie Gunn, Executive Member, Children's, Young People & Education (Chair)

**9. Additional Reports**

Regulation 44 Visitor Report: Apple Trees – February 2024

Contact officer: Clare Bibby: [Clare.Bibby@blackburn.gov.uk](mailto:Clare.Bibby@blackburn.gov.uk)

The SEEDS Reg 44 Visitor Report

Contact officer: Clare Bibby: [Clare.Bibby@blackburn.gov.uk](mailto:Clare.Bibby@blackburn.gov.uk)

Virtual School Head Annual Report

Contact officer: Charlotte Hesketh

[charlotte.hesketh@blackburn.gov.uk](mailto:charlotte.hesketh@blackburn.gov.uk)

**Apple Trees February 2024 SC372511 QA**

**26 - 84**

**The Seeds February 2024 SC040437 QA AMM3 (002)**

**BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN VIRTUAL SCHOOL  
HEADTEACHER ANNUAL REPORT 2022\_23 v2 DRAFT**

Date Published: 18 March 2024  
Denise Park, Chief Executive

## **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL**

**Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

**PRESENT** – **Councillors**, Sylvia Liddle, Jackie Floyd, Vicky McGurk, Julie Gunn, Brain Taylor, Elaine Whittingham, Matthew Jackson, Mustafa Desai, Julie Slater

### **OFFICERS –**

Joanne Siddle – Strategic Director, Children Services  
Imran Akuji – Head of Partnerships, Intensive Support, Policy & Performance  
Martin Kelly – Strategic Director, Growth & Development  
Mark Warren – Strategic Director, Adults & Health  
Dean Lanton – Strategic Director, Finance & Resources  
Andrea Sturgess – Head of Communications & Engagement  
Emma Ford – Deputy Director Social Care  
Corinne McMillan – Director, Chief Executive's  
Emma Ford – Deputy Director, Children's Social Care (Deputy DCS)  
Michelle Holt – Deputy Director, Education & Schools (Deputy DCS)  
Suzanne Kinder – Head of Corporate Parenting & Performance  
Charlotte Hesketh – LAC Virtual head & Assessment Officer  
Catherine Taylor – Consultant in Public Health  
Hannah Allen – Chief Executive Officer - Blackburn Youth Zone  
Louise Hartley – Specialist Nurse for CIC and Care Leavers – LSCFT  
Nicola Hulme – Assistant Headteacher - St Thomas' Centre (PRU)  
Sue Turner – Training facilitator LGA  
Shelly Sarwar – Governance Support Officer

### **1. Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair, Cllr Julie Gunn (Executive Member, Children's, Young People & Education) welcomed all present in the meeting and introduced herself.

All attendees introduced themselves to the group and apologies were received from Cllr Shaukat Hussain. Apologies were also received from Clair Richardson, Kirsty Cleary, and Elizabeth Clarkson

The Chair advised the members that this was the first inaugural meeting and the formal name for this panel had not been decided just yet and requested suggestion from all the members. Cllr Julie Gun informed the members that now we have merged two committee meetings, and we want to be inspirational and challenging. Members were informed that this Inaugural meeting was planned to be a training session, so that all members develop a good understanding of corporate parenting.

**RESOLVED** – The update be noted.

### **2. Declarations of interest:**

**RESOLVED** - There were no Declarations of interest received.

### **3. LGA Corporate Parenting Training Session:**

Su Turner (Founder and Director -Shaping Governance) introduced herself and delivered the training to the panel following a proactive and interactive approach throughout the session. The training slides were presented to all the members whilst Su explained the contents, gave examples, welcomed input and shared experiences from members.

#### **Programme structure**

##### **Module 1**

Overview of Corporate Parenting Roles, Responsibilities, and framework for effective corporate parenting

##### **Module 2**

Practical session Content to be decided from: Championing and Aspirations  
Embedding the voice of children Meetings and monitoring.

**Overview** – Legislation, Policy, and Guidance

#### **Key points**

##### **What is Corporate Parenting?**

All councillors and council employees have a unique responsibility to be 'corporate parents' to children they look after and their care leavers.

"All children need love and stability in order to thrive. A strong corporate parenting ethos means that everyone from the Chief Executive down to front line staff, as well as elected council members, are concerned about those children and care leavers as if they were their own."

Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers.

##### **What is a Corporate Parent?**

"A shared responsibility with all officers and members of the local authority to act as effective and caring corporate parents for looked-after children, with key roles in improving their educational attainment, providing stable and high-quality placements and proper planning for when they leave care".

##### **Children in Care and Care Leavers**

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 says that when a child or young person comes into the care of the local authority or is under 25 and was looked after

by the authority for at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday, the authority becomes their corporate parent.

- A child remains a looked-after child until:
  - The return home.
  - Are adopted.
  - Turn 18
- Councils are required to support care leavers until 25.
- Each child has a Care Plan, which is overseen by an Independent Reviewing Officer - who monitors the care plan and challenges the council.

### **Cared for Children (to March 2021)**

- 80,850 children are cared for in England.
- 56% males, 44% females
- Reasons for being looked after:
  - 66% abuse / neglect
  - 22% acute family distress (illness/death/dysfunction)
  - 3% child disability
  - 3% parental illness or disability
  - 5% absent parents
  - Only 1% are in care because of their own behaviour.

### **The Corporate Parent role**

- Is key to improving the outcomes for children in care.
- Must offer everything that a good parent would including stability.
- Responsible and accountable for the wellbeing and future prospects of children in care.
- Must address both the difficulties which children in care experience and the challenges of parenting.
- Should ensure that children have a chance to shape and influence the parenting they receive.

### **Key pieces of Legislation & guidance**

- Children Act 1989
- Care Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017 – defined 7 Corporate Parenting Principles
- Children and Family Act 2014
- Health and Social Care Act 2012
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Children and Adoption Act 2006
- Children Act 2004
- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

## **Key Policy and Guidance**

- Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers 2018
- Putting Children First: Delivering Our Vision For Excellent Children's Social Care 2016
- Keep on Caring: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence 2016
- Children and Young People Plan
- NICE Quality Standards
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- Safeguarding procedures
- Ofsted

## **Corporate Parenting Principles**

The Children and Social Work Act 2017...explains this further with 7 Corporate Parenting Principles

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living

## **Corporate Parenting, Framework, roles and responsibilities**

### **Corporate Parenting Framework**

- Councillors, Officers, and Partners
- Corporate Parenting Board
- Corporate Parenting strategic Group
- Overview and Scrutiny
- Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy
- The Priorities for CiC and CL
- Children in Care Council
- Regulation 44 visits Children's Home Regulations 2015
- Sufficiency duty
- Virtual Head Teacher
- Independent reviewing officer
- Carers

## **Who is a Corporate Parent?**

- Specialist: Lead Members and Directors of Children's Services
- Targeted: Corporate Parenting Panel and Scrutiny Committees have additional responsibilities
- Universal: Every councillor and officer of the local authority

## **The Corporate Parent – all of us**

- All should be aware and have a shared responsibility for ensuring needs of looked-after children are met
- Be aware of profile and needs of children in care in the authority
- Understand the impact of council decisions on children in care and care leavers
- Receive information about quality of care and services for children in care and care leavers
- Champion the needs of children in care and care leavers in their area, ensuring other councillors and officers act as corporate parents
- Focus on wellbeing and development
- Show same interest for looked-after children as if they were their own child
- Quality and effectiveness of the system

## **Leadership of children's services**

DCS and Lead Member together hold statutory responsibility for the effectiveness, availability, and value for money of the local authority children's services.

## **Targeted roles**

### **1: Cabinet and Executive Councillors**

Executive councillors' key decision makers for council and community

### **2: Corporate Parenting Panel**

Champion the corporate parenting role across the authority and partners

### **3: Scrutiny Councillors and Committees**

Champion the corporate parenting role across the authority and partners

### **4: Management Team and Senior Officers**

Sets the tone of how directorates view the importance of Corporate Parenting

### **5: Partners**

Children Act 2004, Councils have a duty to promote 'cooperation' between 'relevant partners', such as Police, the NHS and Education Providers

## **Summary**

- Being a Corporate Parent is the most important role of a councillor, officer, and partners
- It's not about knowing who the children are; but championing their needs in your work.

- Legal framework - but a moral duty too to 'care for' and 'care about' children in care and care leavers.
- Think of it as being like a corporate Grandparent caring, one step removed;
- Corporate Parenting is a role for all and importantly all of the time in all you do – constantly ask 'would it be good enough for your own child?'

### **Good Corporate Parents?**

The Children's Commissioner tells Children in Care that councils are a good Corporate Parent if they:

- Provide stability for children in care;
- Give children in care choice;
- Plan well for your care;
- Take an active role in their lives and care;
- Listen and that children feel listened to;
- Make children in care feel safe;
- Ensure that children in care know their rights;
- Ensure that children in care are treated the same;
- Show the same level of aspirations and hope for care leavers;
- Show that they are ambitious for children in care.

### **Signs of effective corporate parenting**

1. Demonstrated a strong cross-party commitment to children in care, by championing their rights, having high aspirations for their achievement, monitoring children's progress and challenging outcomes.
2. Clearly understood its role and the responsibilities of the council and partners towards children in care, and planned for and prioritised their needs, resulting in a greater focus on improving.
3. its role and the responsibilities of the council and partners towards children in care, and planned for and prioritised their needs, resulting in a greater focus on improving outcomes; Actively engaged with their young people, for example, through the children in care council, and have effective and regular links with senior management and councillors.

**RESOLVED – That Su Turner be thanked for delivering the training and the training be noted.**

#### **4. LGA Ratification of Terms of Reference Terms of Reference**

Imran Akuji (Head of Partnerships, Intensive Support, Policy & Performance) updated all the members that he would like to amend the terms of reference and will send a draft Terms of reference to full panel for their consideration and input.

**RESOLVED – The update be noted.**



**5. Any Other Business**

The Chair confirmed the date for the next meeting as 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024 and thanked everyone for attending.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Chair of the meeting  
at which the minutes were confirmed.

## DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

**Members attending a Council, Committee, Board or other meeting with a personal interest in a matter on the Agenda must disclose the existence and nature of the interest and, if it is a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or an Other Interest under paragraph 16.1 of the Code of Conduct, should leave the meeting during discussion and voting on the item.**

**Members declaring an interest(s) should complete this form and hand it to the Democratic Services Officer at the commencement of the meeting and declare such an interest at the appropriate point on the agenda.**

MEETING: **Corporate Parenting Panel**

DATE: **10<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2024**

AGENDA ITEM NO.:

DESCRIPTION (BRIEF):

NATURE OF INTEREST:

DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY/OTHER (delete as appropriate)

SIGNED :

PRINT NAME:

(Paragraphs 8 to 17 of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Council refer)



## Corporate Parenting Partnership Terms of Reference

**Vision:** Every child and young person to have opportunities to fulfil their potential

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1. The Corporate Parenting Partnership is responsible for providing the strategic direction and overarching strategic priorities for improving outcomes for children in the care of the borough, and young adults leaving the council's care. The partnership exercises effective oversight, scrutiny, and challenges to achieve these outcomes.
- 1.2. The Partnership acts in an advisory capacity to the Council, its partners, and committees on matters relating to the Council's children looked after and care leavers.
- 1.3. Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council has a strategic responsibility for children in care and care leavers, as mandated by legislation and national and local guidance:
  - The Children Act 1989 requires Health, Housing, Education, and Social Care, at a minimum, to collaborate in enhancing outcomes for children in care.
  - The Children Act 2004 imposes a statutory obligation on Local Authorities to actively promote the educational attainment of children in care.
  - The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduces corporate parenting principles, which the Council is duty-bound to consider and adhere to.

### 2. Responsibilities

- 2.1. To achieve this purpose, the Corporate Parenting Partnership will:
  - Continually seek the voice of children in care and care leavers.
  - Advocate for children in our care and care leavers to ensure that the support provided in the borough effectively meets their needs.
  - Assist in reviewing and monitoring of relevant policies and strategies

affecting children in care and care leavers, with the aim of ensuring their effectiveness and appropriateness.

- Develop, continuously monitor, and review the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Leaving Care Strategy, and associated action plans, ensuring alignment with and adherence to the seven corporate parenting principles.
- Promote a co-ordinated and partnership approach to the delivery of Council services as they affect children in care and care leavers and to challenge services where this is not evidenced or effective.
- Advise the Council and its Committees on issues relevant to children in care and care leavers.
- Conduct thorough assessments and monitoring of the well-being, progress, and achievements of children in care and care leavers, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data.
- Ensure that arrangements are made for the training and development of councillors and partners (and others as appropriate) on the Corporate Parenting role.
- Receive reports on the discharge of the Council's functions regarding the provision of accommodation for looked after children and care leavers, and to make recommendations to the appropriate body of the Council.
- Review the annual report of the Independent Reviewing Officer service.

2.2. The work of the Corporate Parenting Partnership will be informed by and aligned to the corporate parenting principles defined in the [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#) which state that local authorities must have regard to the need:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people.
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
- to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home

lives, relationships and education or work.

- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

### 3. The Chair and Vice-Chair

- 3.1. The Corporate Parenting Partnership will be convened and chaired by the Executive Member for Children's, Young People and Education.
- 3.2. The Vice-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Partnership will chair meetings in the event of the Chair's absence. The Vice-Chair will be alternated between partners on an annual basis.

### 4. Composition

- 4.1. The Corporate Parenting Partnership will comprise of:

Chair	Executive Member for Children's, Young People and Education
Vice Chair	Kirsty Cleary, Designated Nurse - Children in Care and Care Leavers
Members	<b>Elected Members</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Chair, Children &amp; Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee</li><li>2. Executive Member, Adult Social Care &amp; Health</li><li>3. Executive Member, Finance &amp; Governance</li><li>4. Shadow Executive Member, Digital and Customer Services &amp; Shadow Assistant Executive Member Children's, Young People and Education</li><li>5. Assistant Executive Member, Digital &amp; Customer Services</li><li>6. Assistant Executive Member, Public Health, Prevention &amp; Wellbeing</li><li>7. Assistant Executive Member, Growth &amp; Development</li><li>8. Assistant Executive Member, Environment &amp; Operations</li><li>9. Leader 4BwD</li></ol> <b>Council officers</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Strategic Director, Growth &amp; Development (Deputy Chief Executive)</li><li>2. Strategic Director, Children's Services &amp; Education (DCS)</li><li>3. Strategic Director, Adults &amp; Health (DASS)</li><li>4. Strategic Director, Finance &amp; Resources</li><li>5. Director of Health and Care Integration (ICB)</li><li>6. Director, Chief Executive's</li><li>7. Consultant in Public Health</li><li>8. <b>Environment?</b></li></ol> <b>Partner agencies</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Chief Inspector, Lancashire Constabulary</li><li>2. Designated Nurse Children in Care and Care Leavers, Lancashire &amp; South Cumbria ICB</li><li>3. Specialist Safeguarding Practitioner for Children in Care and Care</li></ol>

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- Leavers, Lancashire & South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust
4. Assistant Headteacher, St Thomas's Centre
  5. Chief Executive Officer, Blackburn Youth Zone
  6. Senior Manager Income and Tenancy Sustainability, Together Housing
  7. TBC, Foster Carers Association
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- 4.2. Although not members of the Corporate Parenting Partnership, the following officers will support the Partnership:
- Deputy Director, Children's Social Care (Deputy DCS)
  - Deputy Director, Education & Schools (Deputy DCS)
  - Head of Corporate Parenting & Permanence
  - Head of Partnerships, Intensive Support, Policy & Performance
  - Head of Communications & Engagement
  - Looked After Children Virtual Head & Assessment Officer
  - Corporate Strategy, Engagement & Partnership Manager
- 4.3. The Chair retains the authority to adjust the membership as needed. The Chair may also extend invitations to councillors, council officers or representatives from partner agencies for Partnership meetings as necessary.
- 4.4. Active participation of children and young people in the meeting is a priority for the Corporate Parenting Partnership. Their perspectives will be actively sought and included in discussions through a dedicated standing agenda item which will allow them to share their lived experiences, contribute valuable insights and provide appropriate challenge and scrutiny from a care-experienced perspective. Every child or young person present for this agenda item will be invited to observe the entire meeting if they choose to do so. This engagement will be facilitated through the council's Voice Groups, Care Leavers Forum, and other voice / participation mechanisms.

## 5. Meeting Arrangements

- 5.1. The Corporate Parenting Partnership will meet on a bi-monthly basis.
- 5.2. At all times, the Corporate Parenting Partnership will strive to prioritise the participation of children and young people in its meetings by choosing meeting times, methods (in person/remote/hybrid), and venues that accommodate their needs and preferences.
- 5.3. Task & Finish groups could be established for specific areas of the Partnership's work.
- 5.4. Children's Services & Education supporting officers are responsible for maintaining a Forward Plan, and for ensuring the Partnership maintains focused on the delivery of the strategy and driving improvements for care-experienced children and young

people.

- 5.5. The Forward Plan will be reviewed at every meeting. The Partnership may agree to request reports on particular matters of their preference or as advised by the Chair.
- 5.6. Agendas and reports will be published at least 5 working days in advance of each meeting via the Mod.gov system. Meeting agendas will be developed and agreed with the support of Children's Services & Education in consultation with the Chair.

## 6. Reporting and Review

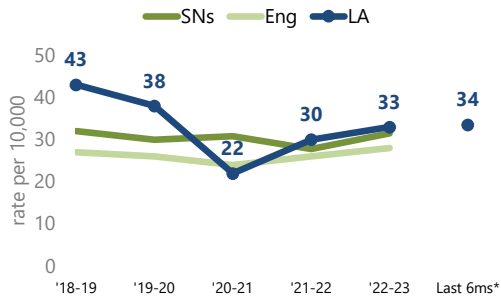
- 6.1. The Partnership will foster strong collaborative relationships with Council committees and engage with them to provide recommendations as needed.
- 6.2. The Partnership will compile and provide a quarterly highlight report to the Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This report will encapsulate key developments, achievements, and insights gathered during the specified period.
- 6.3. The Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and any amendments must be recommended to the Partnership for approval.
- 6.4. On an annual basis, the Partnership will evaluate its performance and effectiveness and present its findings in a report to the Full Council. If necessary, the report will include recommendations to improve the Partnership's ability to fulfil its responsibilities.

Children Looked After (CLA) started and ceased in the last 6 months

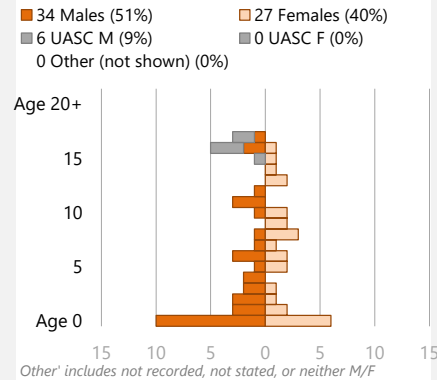
from 30/08/2023  
to 29/02/2024

### 67 CLA started in the last 6 months

Rate of CLA started per 10,000 children



Age and gender



\*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

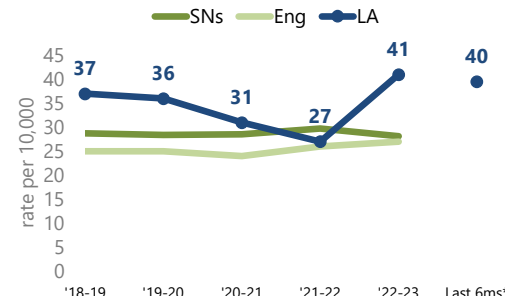
6 of the 67 CLA starters were unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)

4%

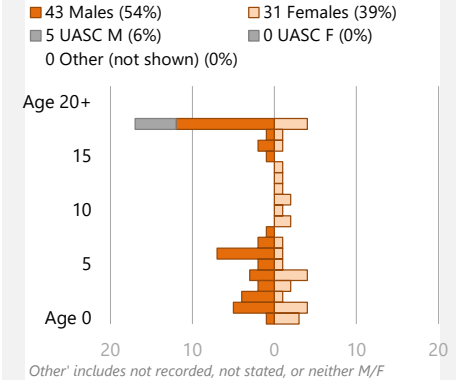
3 of the 67 CLA starters have previously been looked after

### 79 CLA ceased in the last 6 months

Rate of CLA ceased per 10,000 children



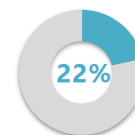
Age and gender



\*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

#### Reason episode of care ceased

##### Adopted

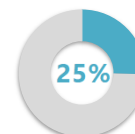


Last 6 months	2022-23 (published)		
	LA	SNs	Eng
22%	13%	15%	9%

##### Number of CLA ceased by reason in the period

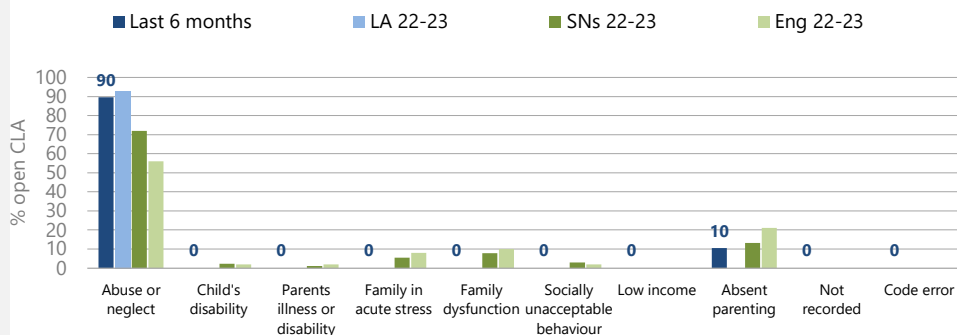
Adopted	17
Died	0
Care taken by another LA	1
Returned home to live with parents/ relatives	13
Live with parents/relatives (not PR)	13
Residence order granted	0
Special Guardianship Orders	20
Moved into independent living	1
Transferred to residential care funded by ASS	1
Sentenced to custody	1
Accommodation on remand ended	0
Age assessment determined child was 18+	0
Child moved abroad	0
Any other reason	12
Not recorded / Error	0

##### Special Guardianship Order



Last 6 months	2022-23 (published)		
	LA	SNs	Eng
25%	-	9%	12%

#### Comparing the primary need of CLA starters



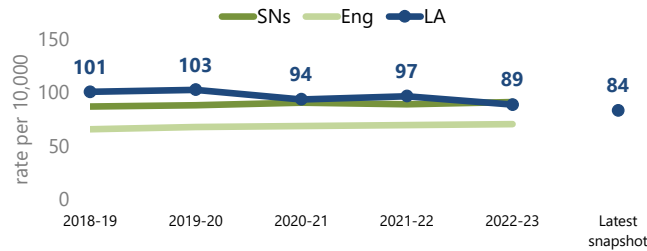


Children Looked After (CLA) with an open episode of care

Snapshot 29/02/2024

### 335 Children Looked After (CLA) with an open episode of care

Rate of CLA per 10,000 children (snapshot)



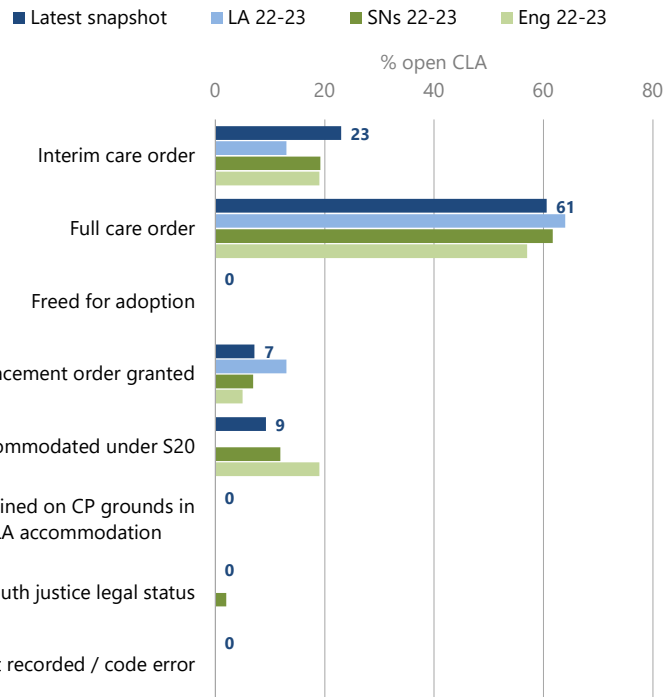
Ethnic background

	All CLA	Not UASC	UASC
White	76%	80%	0%
Mixed	7%	8%	6%
Asian or Asian British	11%	9%	41%
Black or black British	1%	0%	12%
Other ethnic group	4%	2%	41%
Not stated	1%	1%	0%
Not recorded	0%	0%	0%

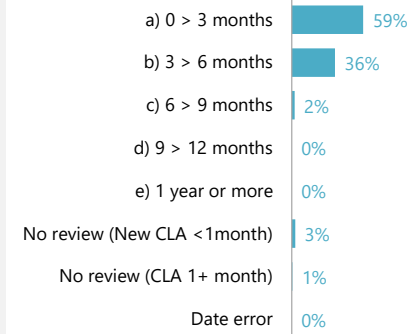
30 children (9%) with a disability

See page 25 for comparisons

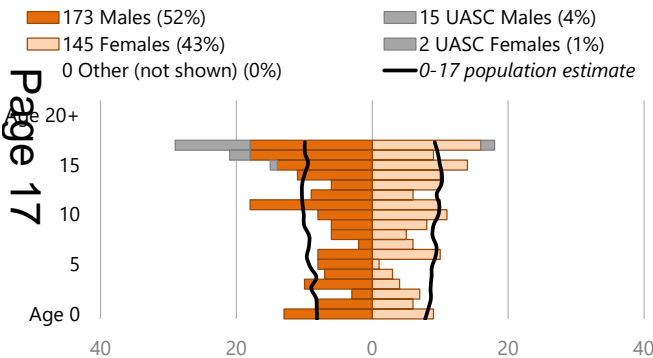
Comparing legal status of open CLA (snapshot)



Time since latest review



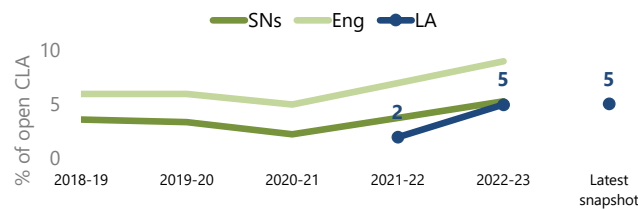
Age and gender



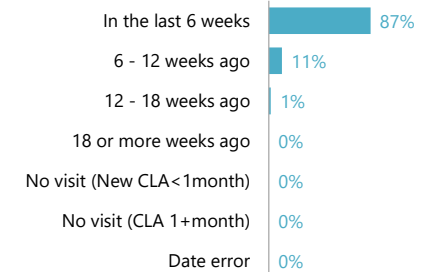
Other\* includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

17 open unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)

UASC as a percentage of CLA (snapshot)



Time since the child was last seen

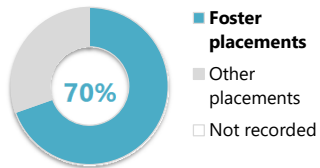


Children Looked After (CLA) placements

Snapshot 29/02/2024

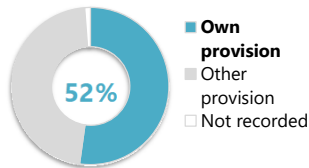
CLA placements by type and provision

Foster placements



LA 2022-23 64%  
SNs 2022-23 70%  
Eng 2022-23 68%

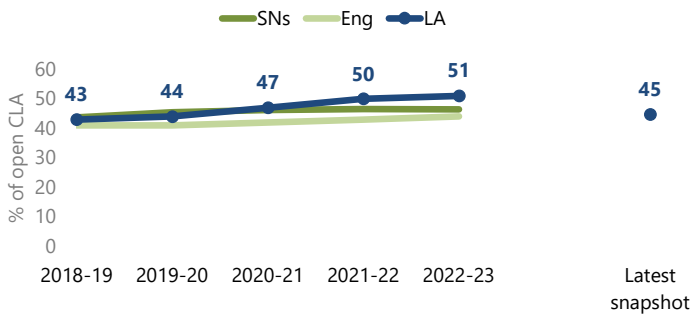
Own provision



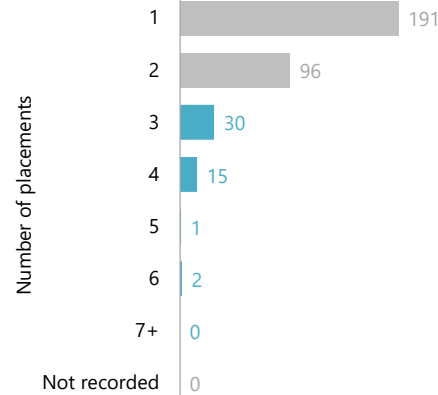
LA 2022-23 48%  
SNs 2022-23 49%  
Eng 2022-23 44%

Placement type (open CLA)	Own LA	Private	Other	Total
Foster placement	169	59	5	233
Placed for adoption	5	0	8	13
Placed with parents	0	0	25	25
Independent living	0	0	0	0
Residential employment	0	0	0	0
Residential accommodation	0	23	2	25
Secure Children's Homes	0	0	0	0
Children's Homes	0	28	0	28
Residential Care Home	0	0	0	0
NHS/Health Trust	0	0	0	0
Family Centre	0	4	0	4
Young Offender Institution	0	0	0	0
Residential school	0	0	0	0
Other placements	1	1	5	7
Temporary placement	0	0	0	0
Total placements	175	115	45	335

CLA placements out of borough

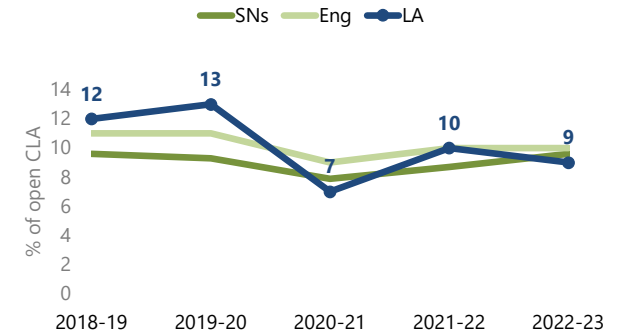


Number of placements in the last 12 months



May include "status" changes as well as placements

Comparing short term placement stability



Due to limited data in the Annex A dataset, ChAT does not present short-term stability alongside published statistics

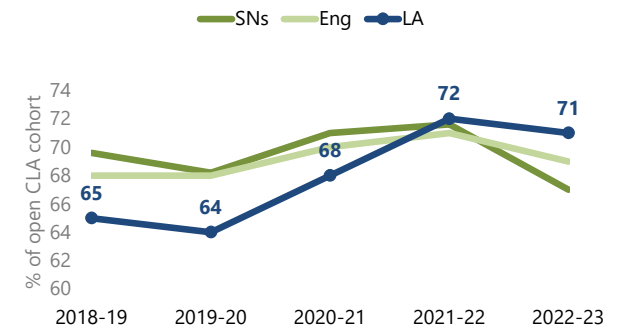
Duration of placements

Duration of latest placement for each current CLA aged under 16 who have been looked after for 2½ years or more



May include "status" changes as well as placements

Comparing long term placement stability



Due to limited data in the Annex A dataset, ChAT does not present long-term stability alongside published statistics

Children Looked After (CLA) health and missing/absent from placement

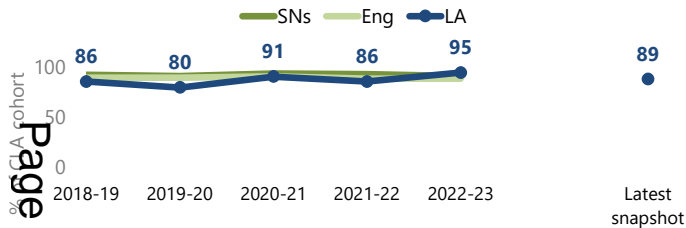
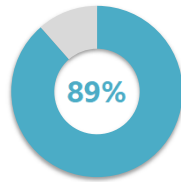
Snapshot 29/02/2024

### Health

227 current open CLA looked after for at least 12 months

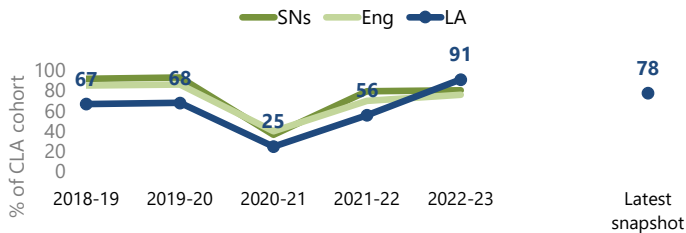
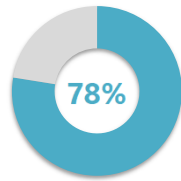
#### Health assessments

Current open CLA who have been looked after for at least 12 months with an up to date health assessment (in the last 6 months for CLA aged under 5, and in the last 12 months for CLA aged 5-plus)



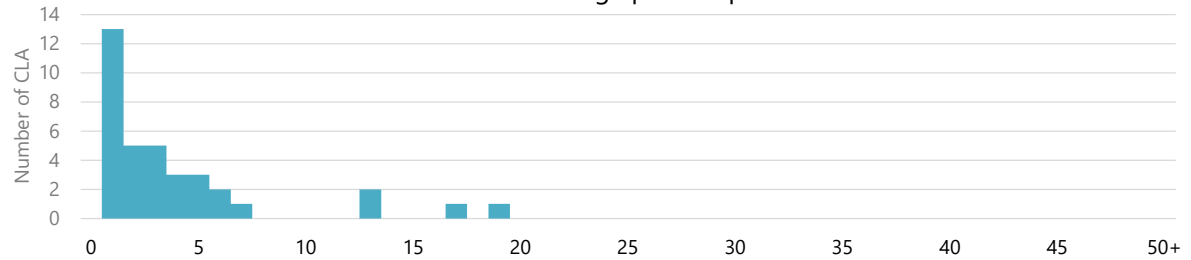
#### Dental checks

Current open CLA who have been looked after for at least 12 months who have had a dental check in the last 12 months.



### Missing from placement

Number of missing episodes per CLA

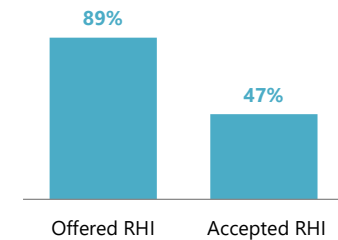


36 of 414 looked after children had a missing incident in the last 12 months

	Latest data	LA 22-23	SNs 22-23	Eng 22-23
Number of all CLA with a missing incident	36 of 414	39		
Percentage of all CLA with a missing incident	9%	8%	11%	11%
Total number of missing incidents for all CLA	146	212		
Average number of incidents per CLA who went missing	4.1	5.4	5.9	6.4

#### Missing incidents - return home interviews

	Latest data
Missing children offered return interview	32 of 36 89%
Missing children not offered return interview	0 of 36 0%
Missing children return interview offer not recorded	4 of 36 11%
Missing children where return interview was n/a	0 of 36 0%



	Latest data
Missing children accepted return interview	15 of 32 47%
Missing children not accepted return interview	17 of 32 53%
Missing children return interview acceptance not recorded	0 of 32 0%

### Absent from placement

0 of 414 looked after children had an absent incident in the last 12 months

	Latest data	LA 22-23	SNs 22-23	Eng 22-23
Number of all CLA with an absent incident	0 of 414	0		
Percentage of all CLA with an absent incident	0%	0%	1%	2%
Total number of absent incidents for all CLA	0	0		
Average number of incidents per CLA who were absent	-	0.0	1.4	4.0

Care leavers eligibility, PA allocation and pathway plans

Snapshot 29/02/2024

### 343 care leavers who have reached the threshold for receiving leaving care services

#### Care leavers by age and eligibility

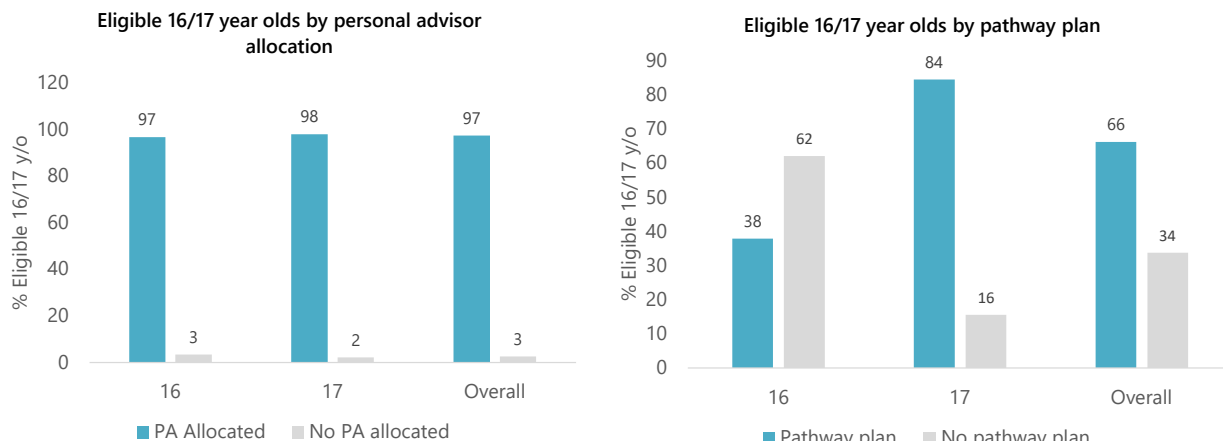
(where highlighted, please check eligibility/age criteria)

	Eligible	Relevant	Former Relevant	Qualifying	Other	Total
16	29	1	0	0	0	30
17	45	5	0	0	0	50
18	0	1	45	2	0	48
19	0	0	41	2	0	43
20	0	0	26	3	0	29
21	0	0	34	1	0	35
22	0	0	37	2	0	39
23	0	0	35	0	0	35
24	0	0	34	0	0	34
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	74	7	252	10	0	343

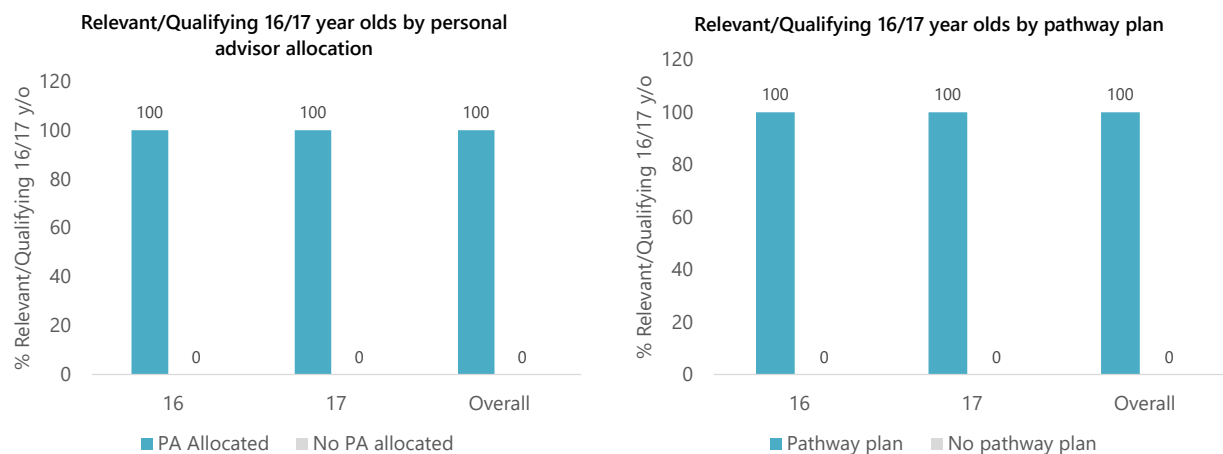
#### Care leaver eligibility summary (please refer to DfE guidance for full eligibility criteria)

Eligible	~ Age 16 or 17 ~ Has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since age 14 (can be multiple periods) ~ Currently looked after
	~ Age 16 or 17 ~ Has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since age 14 (can be multiple periods) ~ Looked after on or after their 16th birthday ~ No longer looked after
Former Relevant	~ Aged between 18 and 25 ~ Previously an eligible or relevant child (see above definitions)
Qualifying (Annex A requires only those requesting and receiving a service)	~ Aged between 16 and 21 (or 25 if in education) ~ Looked after on or after their 16th birthday ~ <b>Not</b> looked after for at least 13 weeks since age 14 or ~ privately fostered after the age of 16 but before the age of 18 or ~ were looked after prior to becoming subject to a SGO

#### Eligible Children (16/17 year olds) - comparing personal advisor allocation and pathway plans



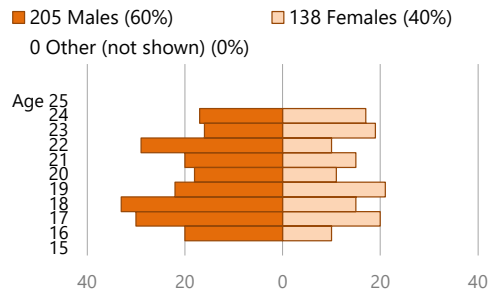
#### Relevant and Qualifying Children (16/17 year olds) - comparing personal advisor allocation and pathway plans



Care leavers demographics and UASC

Snapshot 29/02/2024

Age and gender



Ethnic background

White	66%
Mixed	6%
Asian or Asian British	17%
Black or black British	1%
Other ethnic group	10%
Not stated	0%
Not recorded	0%

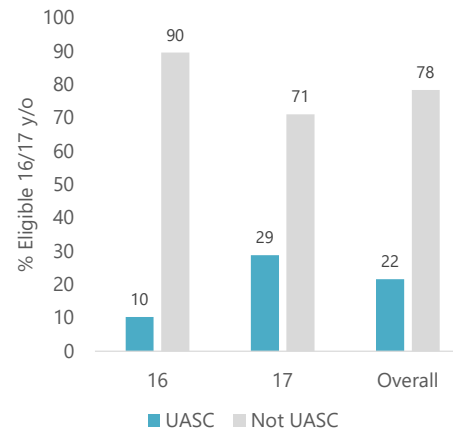
See page 25 for comparisons

42 (12%) care leavers with a disability

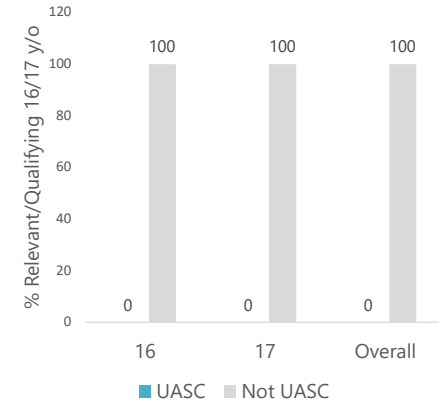
Other\* includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

Care leavers - UASC/Former UASC (16/17 year olds)

Eligible 16/17 year olds by UASC Status

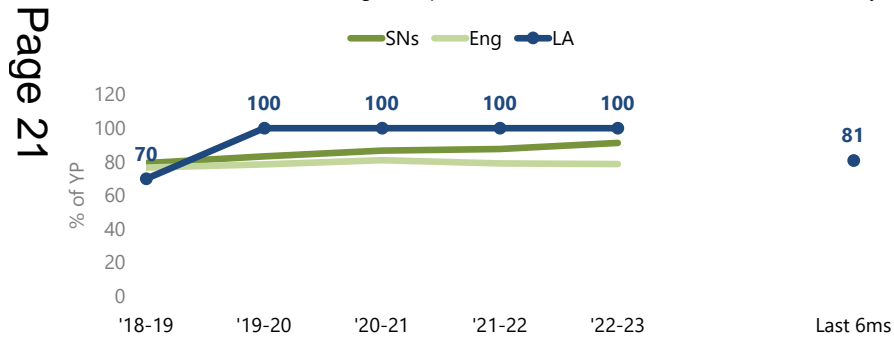


Relevant/qualifying 16/17 year olds by UASC Status



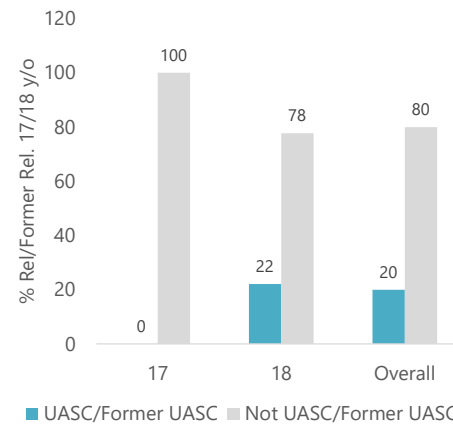
Remained in care until aged 18

YP who ceased to be looked after aged 16-plus who were looked after until their 18th birthday

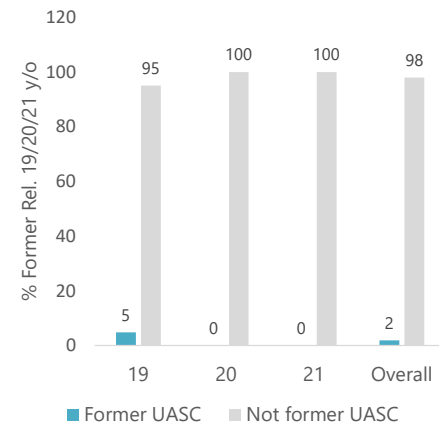


Care leavers - UASC/Former UASC (17/18 & 19/20/21 year olds)

Relevant/former relevant 17/18 year olds by UASC Status

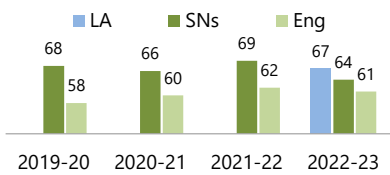


Former relevant 19/20/21 year olds by UASC Status

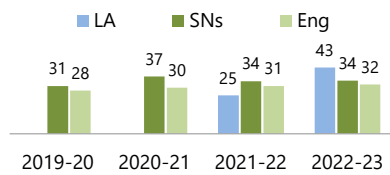


Remain with former foster carer

Aged 18



Aged 19-20

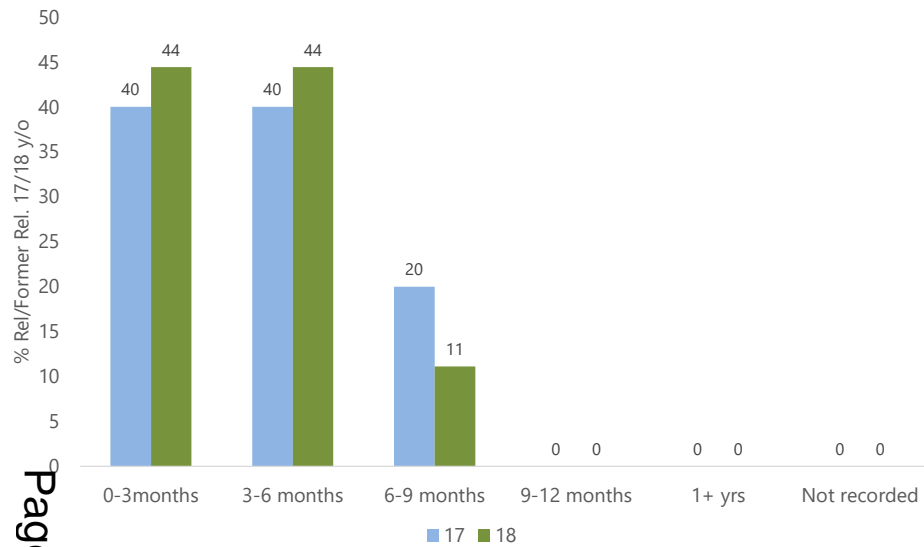


Care leavers pathway plan and contact timescales

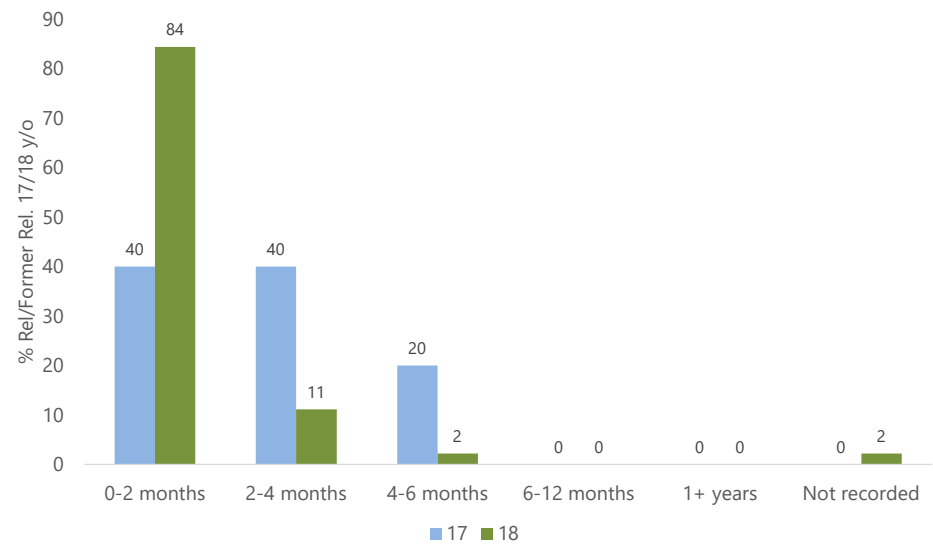
Snapshot 29/02/2024

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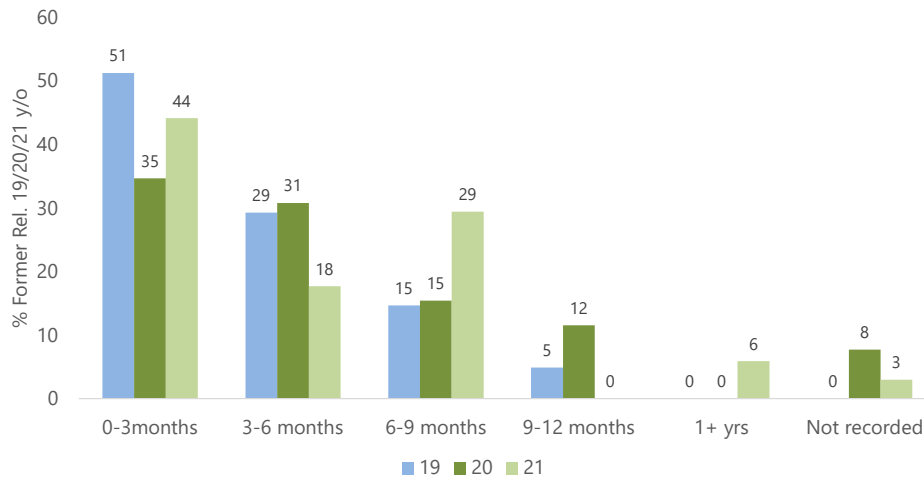
Pathway Plan last updated - 17/18 year olds (relevant/former relevant)



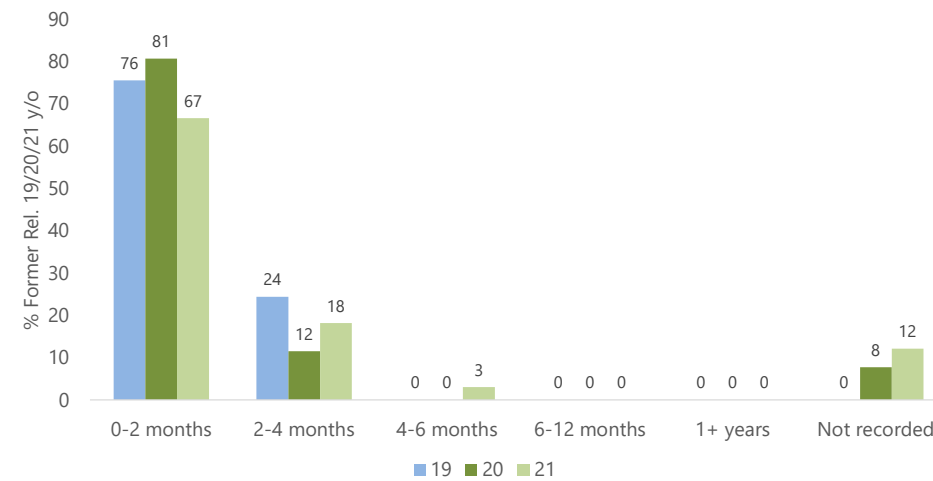
Time since last contact - 17/18 year olds (relevant/former relevant)



Pathway Plan last updated 19/20/21 year olds (former relevant)



Time since last contact - 19/20/21 year olds (former relevant)

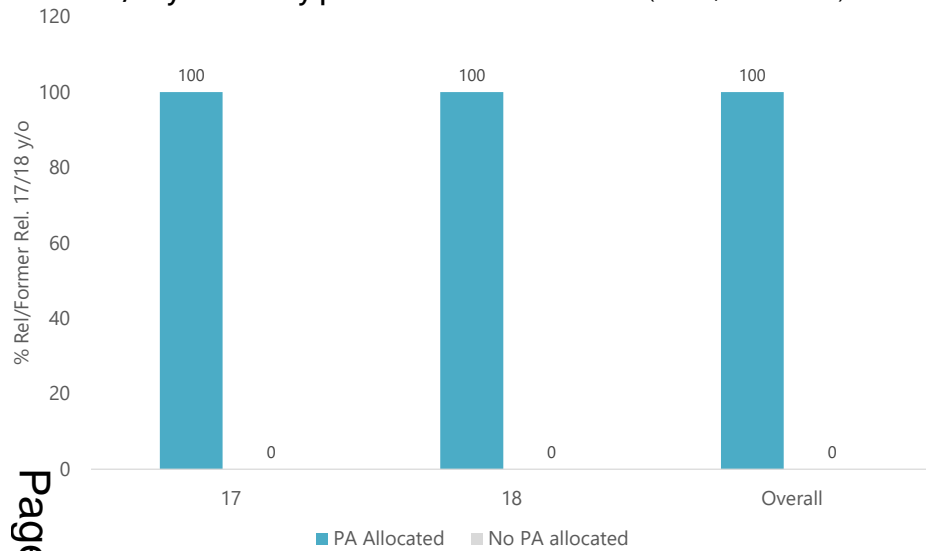


Care leavers PA allocation and in touch

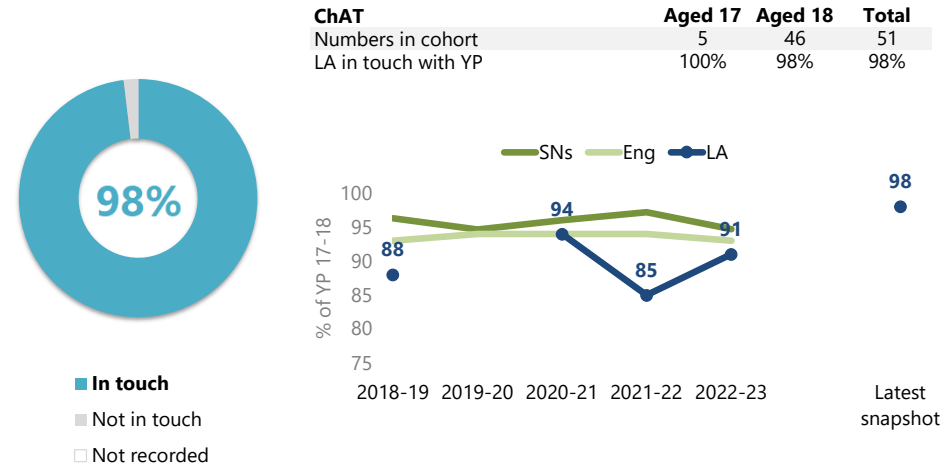
Snapshot 29/02/2024

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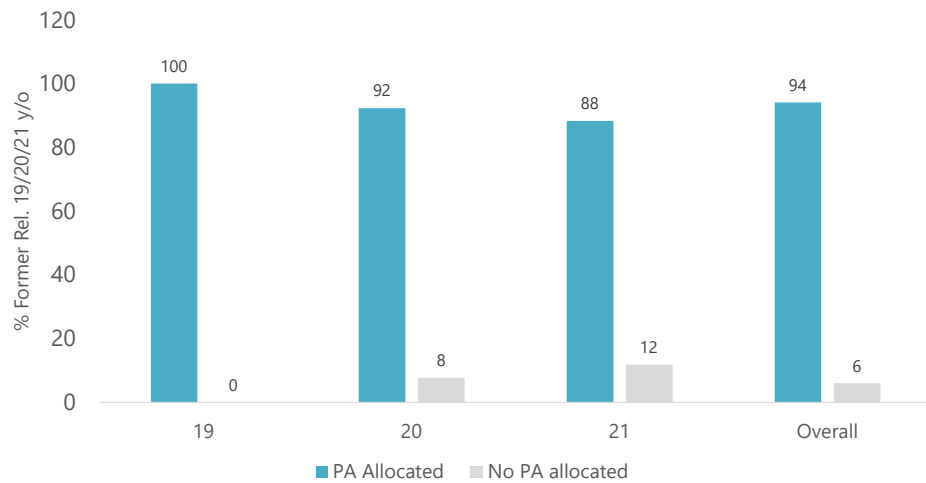
17/18 year olds by personal advisor allocation (relevant/former relevant)



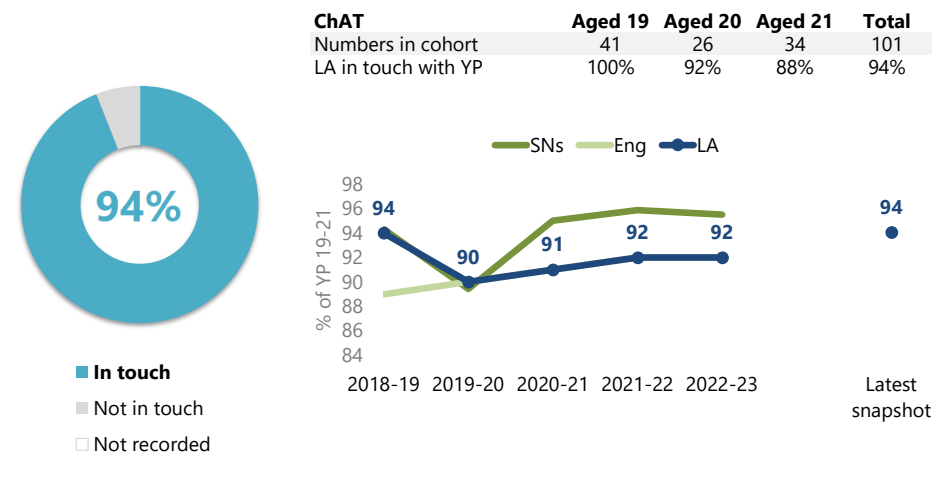
LA in touch with 17-18 year olds (relevant/former relevant)



19/20/21 year olds by personal advisor allocation (former relevant)



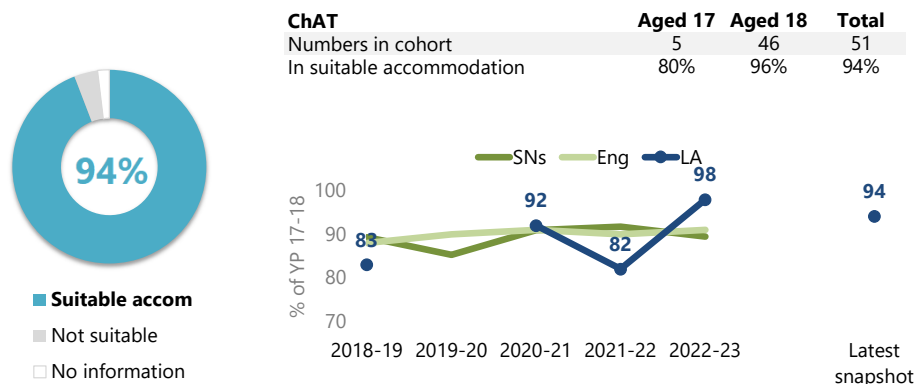
LA in touch with 19-21 year olds (former relevant)



Care leavers accommodation suitability and type

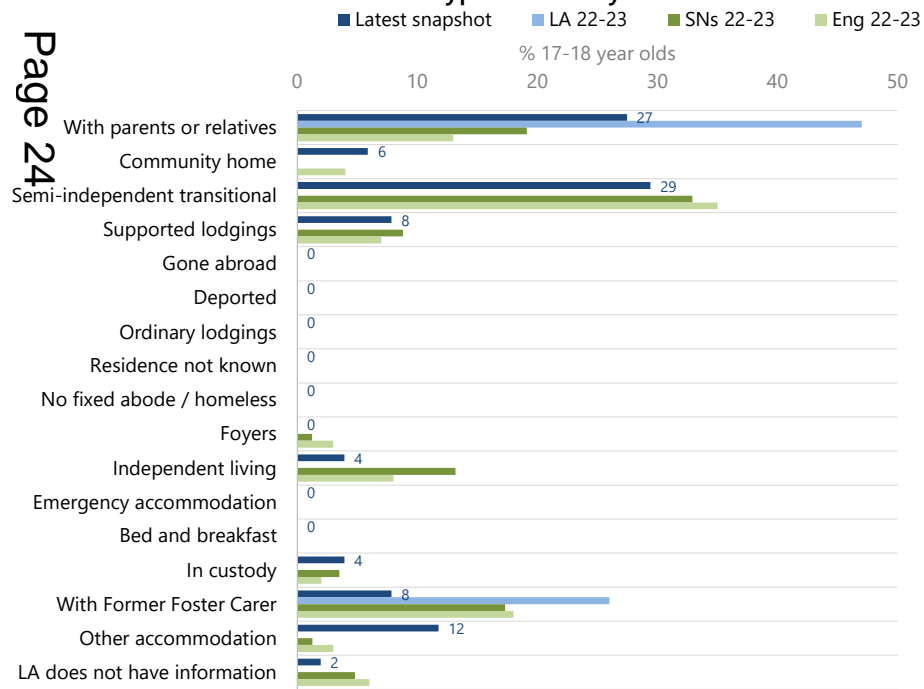
Snapshot 29/02/2024

Accommodation suitability of 17-18 year olds (relevant/former relevant)

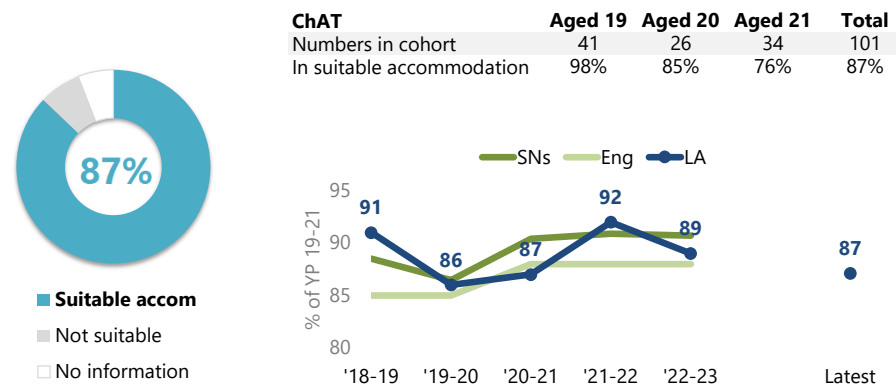


Accommodation types of 17-18 year olds

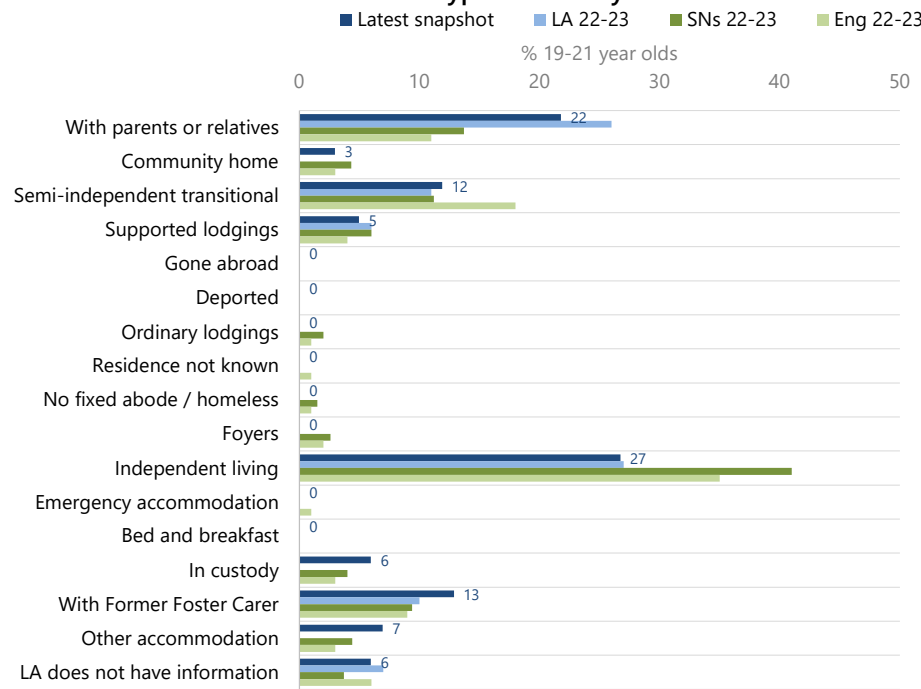
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Accommodation suitability of 19-21 year olds (former relevant)



Accommodation types of 19-21 year olds



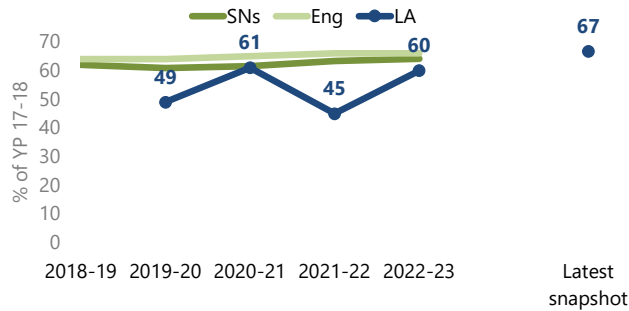
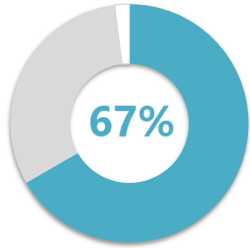


Care leavers activity (Education, Employment, or Training)

Snapshot 29/02/2024

Education, Employment, or Training (EET) of 17-18 year olds (relevant/former relevant)

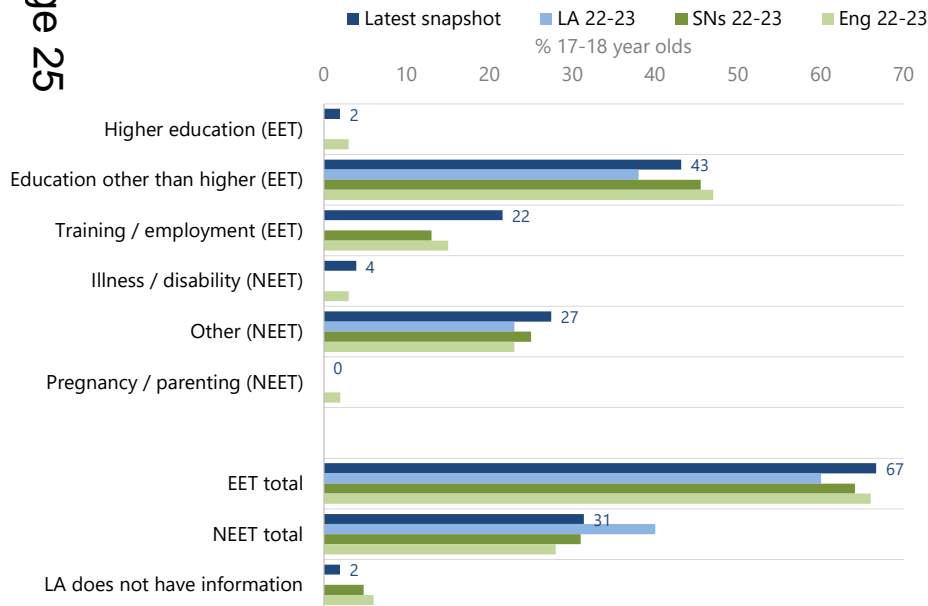
ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	5	46	51
In EET	80%	65%	67%



■ YP in EET ■ NEET  
□ No info

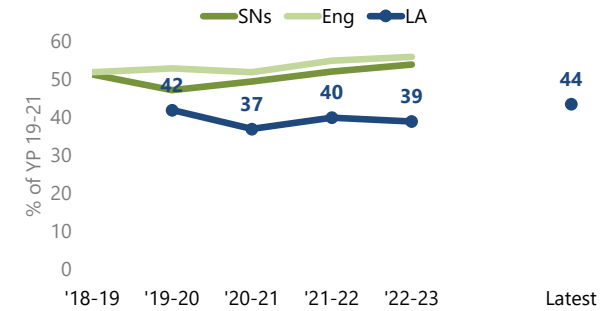
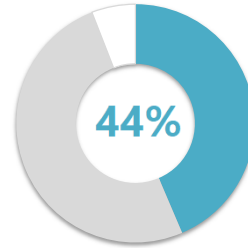
Activity types of 17-18 year olds (relevant/former relevant)

Page 25



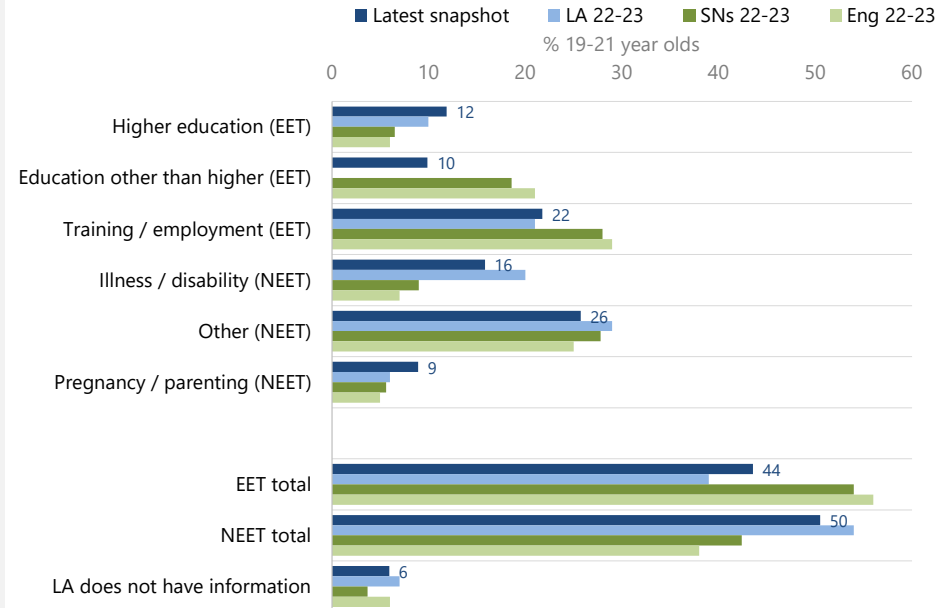
Education, Employment, or Training (EET) of 19-21 year olds (former relevant)

ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	41	26	34	101
In EET	39%	42%	50%	44%



■ YP in EET ■ NEET  
□ No info

Activity types of 19-21 year olds (former relevant)



## The Independent Person's Report

Report as per Regulation 44, Part 6, *The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015*: Visits by the Independent Person must form an opinion as to whether (i) children accommodated at the children's home are effectively safeguarded; and (ii) the conduct of the children's home promotes the well-being of the children accommodated there. NYAS is an independent children's rights charity.



<b>Visitor's name:</b>	Adam Cox	<b>Date of current visit:</b>	21/02/24 – Unannounced
		<b>Date of previous visit:</b>	23/01/24
<b>Time of arrival:</b>	12:40pm	<b>Time of departure:</b>	16:10pm
<b>Home:</b>	Apple Trees	<b>Ofsted URN:</b>	SC372511
<b>Total number of young people accessing short breaks at the home:</b>	Maximum occupancy of five young people at any one time.	<b>Initials of young people present:</b>	Y, K, A
<b>Admissions/discharges during the period:</b>	All short breaks are logged. There have been no admissions on a longer-term basis in this period.	<b>Initials of staff on duty and their position:</b>	AC – Deputy Manager CF, TM & NB – Residential Care Workers SB – Bank Worker
<b>Visitors' book:</b>	I was signed in as I entered the building, using the confidential visitors' book.		
<b>Permission to view young people's core files</b>	Yes.		

Recommendations from the previous regulation 44 visit:	Actions taken by the registered manager:
None made.	N/A
Judgement from the last Ofsted inspection and any subsequent requirements and/or recommendations:	Actions taken by the registered manager:
<p>The home was last inspected on 06-07/12/22. The home has received the following rating</p> <p>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people – outstanding; taking into account:</p> <p>How well children and young people are helped and protected – outstanding</p> <p>The effectiveness of leaders and management – good</p> <p>There was one requirement made, due by the 31/01/23:</p> <p>The registered person must keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it, and notify HCMI of any revisions and send HCMI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. The registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose.</p>	No further updates required.
Theme/s that have been identified for this month's visit.	
<p><u>Management oversight</u></p> <p>In the time that I have monitored this home I have seen excellent management oversight through different audits of systems and by supervising and monitoring the performance of the staff team.</p> <p>As well as regular supervisions and an annual appraisal, the managers do routine observations of staff on shift to observe general practice as well as specific observation of their medication competency. In-depth team meetings also show that managers keep up to date and have oversight of the staff team and their views and opinions. The training matrix is regularly audited to ensure all staff training is up to date and relevant which is also a useful tool for managers.</p> <p>The managers can often review and change staff and key worker responsibilities as well as management responsibilities for supervisions if they feel this needs a change to get better outcomes for the young people or to better support the team.</p>	

Although key workers have direct responsibilities for updating and reviewing placement plans and having regular contact with parents, audits of files and of documents such as risk assessments evidence that managers have regular oversight of all of this work at least every three months. Managers monthly checks include audits of daily and weekly records of the young people's stay such as the positive interaction book. Documents such as the handovers and information sharing books are also checked daily by managers. In this period, new groupings of the young people have been devised because of management oversight (see strengths and weaknesses section).

The managers also audit supervision files, medication administration records and undertake a bi-annual health and safety audit on top of the formal health and safety audit completed for them. Case notes and short breaks plans that the home contribute to on the authority's internal system are also audited by the managers. The home sends out regular surveys to staff in order to ensure they have oversight on what parents' views are of the home.

The manager and deputy manager complete most audits together. The deputy manager commented that this works well as you always have two sets of eyes over the one area and this allows different perspectives to have an input into the audit. I can also see how these audits change practice in the home as systems are adapted and updated.

## 1 The Quality of Care Standard (see regulation 6)

### Physical condition of the home, fixtures and fittings (internal and external) in this monitoring period. To include young people's bedrooms where possible / where permission has been given:

Page 28	<p><b>Internal/external condition</b></p> <p>Access to the home is restricted to authorised visitors only and the grounds remain well kept for the time of year. I was made aware that health and safety audits on the outside play equipment have been undertaken in this period.</p> <p>I was able to see all communal rooms throughout the home. Standards of décor and furniture have been maintained and the home and the rooms were clean throughout. It is a lovely well looked after home with lots of toys, games, and equipment for young people that feels bright, interesting, and inviting.</p> <p>The locality risk assessment has been reviewed in this period to reflect local crime statistics.</p>
<p><b>Have young people's bedrooms been seen?</b></p>	<p>Rooms were prepared for the young people's arrival and were individualised for their stay. There were no issues to note. Where necessary, appropriate equipment is in place.</p>

**Interviews with staff at the home:**

Job role	Comments
Deputy Manager (AC)	<p>AC discussed this month's theme with me as well as providing the relevant evidence for this. We also discussed general updates in the home as well as training and staffing matters. AC also made me aware that the home is putting on a parent's event where they will offer Makaton training and advice and guidance about transitions to adult services. This will take place on the 05/03/24.</p> <p>Ofsted surveys have been sent to staff, professionals and parents and the home is aware that an inspection is imminent. Through the local authority's participation group, the home will also be receiving a 'young person's inspection' of the service.</p> <p>The local school where most of the home's residents attend have been using the grounds for outdoor activities and this is reported to be going well.</p> <p>Some of team will also be attending a disability day event on the 27/02/24 to support the social work team with any new potential referrals or families that want advice and guidance.</p>
Residential Care Worker (CF) 29	<p>CF talked about two young people who are at the end of their transition periods and are about to start overnights. CF gave insight into how she felt they may do. CF felt that both will enjoy staying over based on how much they have enjoyed their visits so far. CF added that one young person does say she will not enjoy it but initially said that about her introductory visits and now she 'runs into the home' where she is excited to visit. CF was also aware of how parents felt their young people had progressed and if they were ready for overnights through the regular conversations that she has with them.</p>
Bank residential care worker (SB)	<p>SB was booking in one of the young person's possessions and setting up her bedroom when I spoke to her. SB explained the process to me and understood why it was important to be accountable for the young people's possessions.</p> <p>I asked about young person A and SB was able to talk about her interests, her needs, how she communicates and how she is best supported. This showed SB to have a good understanding of the systems in the home and the general knowledge of the young person.</p> <p>SB was later observed supporting A and added further comments about A's routine and her likes and dislikes.</p>

**Interview with parents / carers and professionals:**

Status	Role	Comments
--------	------	----------

Family	Various parents.	<p>The home seeks feedback by their own consultation forms. There have been three sets received in this monitoring period.</p> <p>All the feedback was positive and specifically, areas such as the handovers were praised as well as the fact that young people do lots of activities and progress by learning and taking part in new activities.</p> <p>Parents also made comments about the following,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “Cannot praise the home enough” and “cannot praise the staff enough” also said that “seeing how staff work has relieved any anxiety” about her son being in the home.</li> <li>▪ “Staff are always friendly and welcoming”</li> <li>▪ Young person “absolutely loves this home this is so reassuring as parents to be able to leave him with people we trust knowing he will be well looked after”</li> </ul> <p>There were no issues raised in this feedback.</p>
Parent.	Mother of G (G)	Attempts made to call on the 21/02/24 unable to make contact.
Parent.	Mother of L1 & L2 (Z)	<p>Feedback achieved by phone on the 21/02/24.</p> <p>Z reported no concerns with the home and said that she is very happy with the service provided and care given to her children. Z added she receives regular updates and that communication is very good.</p>
Parent.	Mother of J (N)	<p>Feedback achieved by phone on the 21/02/24.</p> <p>N was extremely enthusiastic about the service provided by this home. N described the home as “outstanding” and said that the staff team go “above and beyond”. N praised the professional and the overall approach of the manager and praised how approachable he is and that he listens to her. N also wanted to mention staff members CF, NB, and EM as those who have a particularly good relationship with J.</p> <p>N noted that as well as communication with the home about J’s actual stay, her key worker CF rings on a regular basis to check how J is. N said the calls are always “all about J” and that is a great that she does that. N added again that CF is ‘wonderful’. N also said that the peace of mind knowing her daughter is safe when she visits the home is just amazing.</p>

		N understood the demands on the home in terms of how many young people they can accommodate so said the only thing she would wish to improve is if J was able to stay more (but understands why this cannot be the case at this time). N kept reiterating and using the word 'amazing' to describe this home.
Parent	Father of S (T)	Attempts made to call on the 21/02/24 unable to make contact.
Professional.	Child support officer (SW)	Email sent on the 21/02/24. Attempts made to call on the 22/02/24 however unable to get through.
Professional.	Child support officer (JB)	Email sent on the 21/02/24. Phone calls attempted on the 22/02/24 and voicemail left. No further response prior to submission of this report.
Professional.	Student social worker (SM)	Email sent on the 21/02/24. No reply prior to submission of this report.
Professional.	Social worker (MG)	<p>Feedback received on the 23/02/24 by email.</p> <p>I feel it is a very valuable service to the young people and only wish there was more of this kind of provision or that more children could stay there as there are many children waiting to access it and more being referred through all the time.</p> <p>It gives children the chance to go out of their families' homes; something they do not usually otherwise have the chance to do, given their disability. It also gives children an opportunity to start to develop some independence from their parent/s and work on key areas of development with the staff.</p> <p>Apple Trees always attend relevant meetings for the young people and communicate any concerns or issues promptly to relevant agencies.</p>
Professional.	Social worker (AMC)	Email sent on the 21/02/24. Out of office reply received and no answer to calls. No further response prior to submission of this report.
Professional.	Social worker (AMH)	Email sent on the 21/02/24. Phone calls attempted on the 22/02/24 and voicemail left. No further response prior to submission of this report.

Professional.	Social worker (LN)	<p>Feedback received by phone on the 22/02/24.</p> <p>LN said she continues to be happy with the support that this home gives to families and how they work with her. LN added that she currently has one young person at the transition stage who is about to start introductory visits. LN said that the home has been very supportive with home visits and working with the family.</p>
Professional.	Advanced adults social work practitioner (MC)	<p>Email received on the 22/02/24.</p> <p>I am a social worker based in adult social care; therefore, I do not have any cases.</p> <p>I am however involved in transition and supporting children and their families though the process this is a new post and I have only been in post approx. six weeks.</p> <p>I have a good working relationship with the manager and the team at Apple Trees, they always keep me up to date with relevant information and events.</p> <p>The manager and the team are keen to support transitions and work as best they can with the adult short breaks service.</p> <p>My previous experience of working as a social worker for Children that attend Apple Trees has always been positive.</p> <p>Staff always go the extra mile in terms of support for the young people and are keen to promote independence and life skills. The children and young people have a good experience and they are supported to learn and develop in lots of ways. Staff are proactive, approachable, kind, caring and supportive.</p>
Professional.	School assistant head (JR)	Email sent on the 21/02/24. No reply prior to submission of this report.

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**Visitor's evaluation of the interviews conducted. Has the standard or quality of the accommodation changed since the last visit:**

No concerns to note with the condition and standard of the accommodation. No issues either with any of the interactions with the staff team as always, I am impressed by their insight and knowledge about the young people and their care plans.

The feedback received is excellent and there are no follow ups needed from this.

**2 The Children's Views, Wishes and Feelings Standard (see regulation 7)**



**Interview/s with young people present with their consent and in private (where possible) / or observations made. Use quotes from the young people where possible and if required use APPS, PECS or Makaton to aid communication.**

		Comments
Interviewed y/n	N	A was seen coming into the home and being greeted by staff warmly (as were the rest of her peers). A then spent some time in the lounge on a tablet device looking at a video for baking an 'Oreo cake'. A was competent in making choices on the tablet and seemed happy sat with staff and enjoying the support.
Observed y/n	Y	
Initial	A	
Interviewed y/n	N	Y was seen upon arrival and seemed to be happy and excited to be in the home. Later I observed him interacting with staff and he helped to make himself a cup of tea. Y had a snack and enjoying using a bouncy ball with staff NB. Y was asked about if he went bowling the other day with the home and if he enjoyed it. Y was visibly excited by this which showed how much he enjoyed the experience.
Observed y/n	Y	
Initial	Y	
Interviewed y/n	N	K was supported into the home by staff and spent some time having a snack and a drink. K looked to be comfortable being supported by staff and helped around the home.
Observed y/n	Y	
Initial	K	

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**How young people are consulted day-to-day? What communication methods are used? Are their views, wishes and feelings during this monitoring period taken into account in the running of the home as well as their individual plans of care?**

The home can evidence within their activities and positive interaction logs how young people make choices and choose activities or how they generally want to spend their time in the home. A round up of each month through a young people's meeting also shows what young people have enjoyed and how they have communicated.

### **3 The Education Standard (see regulation 8)**

(This section does not necessarily need to be assessed / completed at every visit. If education was assessed last time and there appears to be no significant change in circumstances, it can be left. However, this section must be completed at the next visit).

**Evaluate how the staff team ensure that young people make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and how are they helped to do so?**

Initial	Individual education, health and care plan (EHCP). Review dates	How are these plans being used to help young people?
-	No changes in this period.	N/A
<p><b>If a young person is a 'looked after child' there will be will a range of statutory plans and information available. Where young people are designated as not 'looked after' what access does the home have to this information, if any?</b></p>		
<p>There are no looked after young people accessing the home who the home have educational responsibility for.</p>		
<p><b>4 Enjoyment and Achievement Standard (see regulation 9)</b></p>		
<p><b>Describe in this monitoring period how young people choose, take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meet their needs and develop / reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interests and skills?</b></p>		
<p>The home has a 'themes' book for each month and February showed that the home is prepared with several relevant baking ideas, arts and crafts ideas based around seasonal themes or current topics. For example, Valentines Day cards were made with young people recently. There is also evidence in the young people's meetings how birthdays in the home are celebrated.</p>		
<p><b>What specific activities are available for young people with learning / physical disabilities and/or additional needs so they are able to fully participate? Do staff ratios support this engagement?</b></p>		
<p>One young person has been bowling for the first time in the last few days and reports are that he had an amazing time and really enjoyed this experience.</p> <p>Young people continue to attend swimming sessions at the hydro barn and photos as well as records of their experience show that they have a good time with this and enjoy going.</p> <p>Young people have also watched films, used the sensory rooms and outdoor play equipment, they have also played with sensory toys, engaging in singing activities and been on sensory drives. A teddy bears tea party also looked to be a huge success.</p> <p>One young person has done some exercise routines (as per parental requests) so made this a fun activity for them and staff joined in with them.</p>		
<p><b>Visitor's evaluation of how the home promotes young people's ability to enjoy and achieve in a way that meets their needs, personal development and choices during this monitoring period:</b></p>		
<p>The home very much meets this standard by offering a wide range of inclusive activities for all young people.</p>		

## 5 The Health and Well-being Standard (see regulation 10)

**Evaluate in this monitoring period, how young people’s health / well-being needs are met, including the assistance and support given that relates to: eating and drinking, personal care tasks / routines and the management and administration of medication.**

Not discussed on this occasion as no significant changes were identified.

## 6 The Positive Relationships Standard (see regulation 11)

**How in this monitoring period are young people helped to develop and benefit from relationships based on mutual respect and trust; and understanding of acceptable / unacceptable behaviour?**

There are daily entries in the home’s positive interactions book where young people have shown behaviours such as taking turns, supporting peers, saying please and thank you, being independent, sharing with others and being kind to peers. These are all behaviours that the home encourages and praise the young people for that.

A specific session has also been covered with some young people in relation to encouraging ‘kind hands and words’ to consider the feelings of others. Also, a session was completed about recognising emotions.

### Use of restrictions of movement and / or liberty during this monitoring period:

Since the last visit, reviews / implementation of any deprivation of liberty safeguard which are part of the home’s implementation of the Mental Capacity Act:

No changes or updates to note in this period.

Have there been any restrictions of movement?  
If so, how many and with which young people?  
Is this less or more than the last period?

There have been none. This is consistent with the last period.

How does the manager assess the appropriateness of these interventions? If there has been an increase / decrease does the manager understand how / why?	Not applicable on this visit.
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Are approaches to restorative practice used? If so, give examples:	No examples to discuss.
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**Complaints / compliments during this monitoring period:**

Date	Complaint or Compliment	Comments and response/action taken by the home:
None reported in this period.	N/A	N/A

N/A

**7 The Protection of Children Standard (see regulation 12)**

**Health and safety arrangements:**

What health and safety checks have been completed since the last visit?	<p>Building safety checklist last completed on 05/02/24.</p> <p>Electrical and equipment checklist completed on 18/02/24.</p> <p>Outings and evacuation bag check last completed on 19/02/24.</p> <p>Weekly water temperature checks completed 19/02/24.</p> <p>Sensory room equipment serviced this month, no issues raised other than some lightbulbs changed.</p>
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	<p>Inspection of outdoor equipment occurred also this month, no issues reported with h condition and safety of the equipment.</p> <p>Liability insurance valid until 31/03/24.</p> <p>Portable appliance testing valid until 17/11/24.</p> <p>Gas boiler certificate valid until 29/11/24.</p> <p>Electrical instillation certificate valid until 11/12/28.</p>		
How are fire prevention measures implemented? Evaluate arrangements and actions taken to keep everyone safe since the last visit	<p>Weekly fires safety checks are in place and up to date. Last completed 19/02/24.</p> <p>Quarterly fire review checks completed 08/12/23.</p> <p>Annual fire safety checks all up to date.</p>		
How often are personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) reviewed / updated?	<p>PEEPs are reviewed at least annually and are in place for each young person. They are updated sooner if needed. Not checked on this occasion.</p>		
Fire drill/evacuation, duration of drill, attendees since the last visit:	Date:	20/02/24 @ 17:02	Staff present: NB, CF, SG
	Time taken:	Two minutes	Young people present: E, Z
<b>Significant incidents and events that relate to young people's welfare and safety in this monitoring period, (including allegations against staff):</b>			
Young person	Date regulation 40 notification/s if made?	Who else was notified, i.e. Local authority designated officer (LADO)/placing authority (LA)/police/parents/carers/other agencies/professionals?	Comment on actions/outcome:
None reported.	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>How, in this monitoring period have incidents of young people being absent or missing from home been managed to ensure their safety and welfare is promoted:</b>			
There have been no missing from home or absent episodes in this period.			
<b>Risk management and assessment:</b>			

<b>Have there been any updates to risk assessments?</b>	<p>No significant changes to note to risk levels or risk assessments in this period.</p> <p>I was able to note some work has been completed with the 'independence group' which looked at educating young people of how to stay safe online and in the community.</p>
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**Evaluate how the home is keeping the young people safe and protecting them from harm.**

No significant incidents or issues to note and no changes to how young people are safeguarded.

**8 The Care Planning Standard (see regulation 14)**

**Evaluate whether the young person / people receive effectively planned care from the point of arrival or departure which is closely monitored / reviewed.**

Two young people have just finished their introductory visits to the home and will now start to progress to overnight stays. There are currently no young people transitioning to adult services currently however I am aware that the home is looking to offer support to parents about transitions by having an adult's worker attend the parents open event.

I was able to see the referral document that the home receives as one new referral has come through. It was explained that this is the starting point for new referrals and from there school and home visits will be made to determine the suitability of matching the young person to the home for short breaks.

**Since the last visit, evaluate the outcomes of any quality assurance, education, health care and looked after children / care reviews for young people.**

No significant issues to note. The home can still meet this standard very well.

**9 The Leadership and Management Standard (see regulation 13)**

**Evaluate whether the registered manager knows and understands the home's strengths and weaknesses, is able to prevent shortfalls, identifies and takes effective action when needed? Since the last visit, what changes have taken place as a result of this knowledge / understanding?**

The deputy manager described a recent process whereby the groupings of young people has changed based on feedback. The deputy manager had worked a weekend shift and said that although the young people's needs were met and they were always safe throughout, due to their specific care needs, staff were unable to do the extra activities with them that they usually do with all young people to achieve better outcomes. The deputy manager reported this to the manager and explained that why, in practice, the groupings anticipated and planned on paper were not working to the extent they had hoped. The manager sought further consultation with the staff team and this led to the

manager and deputy manager revamping the groupings to ensure a better dynamic and balance. This was a good example of the home recognising what they could be doing better (despite careful consideration and planning to groupings in the first place) and acting on this with the input of the staff team.

**What monitoring, quality assurance processes are in place to inform the development of the home? Since the last visit, what evidence is there for this?**

Recently there has been a medication file audit which has added new forms and folders to the medication administration process. The homes training log has also been updated and reviewed in this period. Supervisor responsibilities have been updated to ensure that supervisions have a fresh perspective from a different supervisor.

The work force development plan has been updated to reflect change in bank staff (one bank staff no longer working here). The statement of purpose has been updated to reflect the current referral process (which includes a new 'matching meeting' process). The home submits the regulation 45 report every three months and this is next due at the end of March 2024.

See this month's theme section in relation to all audits and management oversight.

Evaluate how the Registered Manager has managed the staff team during this period?

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Refresher for first aid training is booked for the 12/03/24. Face to face medication training held 31/01/24. Safer recruitment training is booked for the 13/03/24 for the manager and senior practitioner. The managers are also due to attend an ADHD Neuro diversity in children training/event on the 19/03/24.

Senior practitioner (SG) starts her level 4 course in March.

The home has planned rotas and enough staff to be able to meet the needs of the young people. No agency staff are used.

The most recent team meeting only occurred on the 20/02/24 therefore notes were not yet ready to be seen. I could however see notes from the meeting on the 23/10/24.

The meeting began with a team exercise about their understanding of the senior role as the managers want to encourage some staff to apply for it and were curious why they had not done so already. This was an excellent way to engage the team in this process as well as getting their feedback on recruitment. The previous meetings actions were reviewed and an update given about each young person, this was very comprehensive. Feedback relating to any safeguarding matters were given as well as covering the usual topics of health and safety, medication, training, staffing etc. The managers feedback form audits of the home were also given. Further actions were also set.

How are newly recruited staff or staff still on probation

Not applicable on this visit. There are no new staff in the home and none are still in probation periods.

supported with their training and development?	
<b>Visitor's overall evaluation of leadership, management and staffing in this period.</b>	
No concerns with staffing levels or the support and training that the team receives. The managers have excellent oversight of the home through the audits they do and involvement they have with the team.	
<b>10 Summary and Sign-off</b>	
<b>Young people's suggestions:</b>	
None made.	
<b>Visitor's summary:</b>	
<p>Some very good conversations with staff about young people and equally good observations of how they interact with young people. All three young people came confidently into the home and seemed very happy to be in the company of the staff team. External feedback received was also excellent.</p> <p>No significant concerns have occurred for young people in this period and plans and risk assessments therefore remain the same. Management oversight in this home is excellent and it shows how systems and processes are continually reviewed and improved where possible.</p>	
<b>Recommended actions to consider (including a date by which action/s must be taken).</b>	
None.	
<b>Sign off by the independent visitor:</b>	
I have discussed this report with the deputy manager at the time of my visit. Subject to quality assurance process this could be enhanced. I am satisfied that at the time of this visit the young people accessing this service are effectively safeguarded and their well-being promoted.	
Signed: <i>Adam Cox</i>	Date: 23/02/24
<b>Manager's comments with regard to any recommendations made by the independent visitor:</b>	



A really positive report that highlights the management teams continuous oversight /eye to detail, and the effectiveness of all their quality monitoring systems.

It also highlights the strengths and working relationships between myself, the deputy, and the wider team and how all have a voice and contribute to the overall running of the home.

Signed: 	Date: 26.2.2024
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**Comments from the responsible individual:**

A really good report that evidences strong management oversight and the positive impact this has upon the children and families ensuring all children and their families receive a high and consistent standard of care.

Signed: 	Date: 26.2.2024
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## The Independent Person's Report

Report as per Regulation 44, Part 6, *The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015*: Visits by the Independent Person must form an opinion as to whether (i) children accommodated at the children's home are effectively safeguarded; and (ii) the conduct of the children's home promotes the well-being of the children accommodated there. NYAS is an independent children's rights charity.



<b>Visitor's name</b>	Davina Hanley	<b>Date of current visit</b>	16/02/2024 - Unannounced
		<b>Date of previous visit</b>	12/01/2024
<b>Time of arrival</b>	12:45am	<b>Time of departure</b>	16:55pm
<b>Home</b>	The Seeds	<b>Ofsted URN</b>	SC040437
<b>Initial/s of young people living in the home</b>	R, who is in The Seeds on an extended short break.	<b>Initial/s of young people present</b>	R
<b>Has the local authority been informed about any admissions / discharges since the last visit?</b>	The Seeds is an adolescent unit registered to offer outreach, short breaks, and emergency residential care. It operates within the local authority adolescent services.	<b>Initials of staff on duty and their position</b>	JS – Deputy manager CA – Principal adolescent support team worker (ASTW) AC – Adolescent support team worker (ASTW) SG & CT – ASTW's (was finishing their shifts on my arrival)
<b>Visitors' book</b>	The front door was opened by JS who welcomed me in. She asked me to sign in the visitors' book. This book is general data protection regulation (GDPR) compliant.		
<b>Permission to view young people's core files</b>	Permission is on file and my pen portrait is displayed.		

Recommendations from the previous regulation 44 visit	Actions taken by the registered manager
There were no recommendations from my visit in January 2024.	Not applicable.
Judgement from the last Ofsted inspection and any subsequent requirements and/or recommendations	Actions taken by the registered manager
<p>Inspection dates: 14 and 15 November 2023</p> <p>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account: good.</p> <p>Details of this inspection are fully recorded in the December 2023 report.</p>	<p>The registered manager has responded promptly to the requirement and recommendation suggested by the Ofsted inspector.</p>
Theme/s that have been identified for this month's visit	
<p><u>How effective is management oversight in this home</u></p> <p>JS and I had a conversation about this month's theme. She explained that managerial oversight starts from the referral at the adolescent Services' panel and continues through the time that the young person receives support from The Seeds. She provided me with examples to evidence how management oversight confirms individual risk management plans and support plans; the chronology, short breaks and finishing the journey of support, recognising the achievements gained during the young person's time with The Seeds. There has had to be managerial confirmation of the need to hold off any short breaks whilst R is being offered an extended short break within the home. I was able to see the minutes of a risk management review for R on 01/02/2024 and read the management oversight for decisions being made. Accidents, incidents and missing from care incidences are always signed off by the manager, though there were no examples of these happening in the last month.</p> <p>JS confirmed that personal supervisions completed by the principal adolescent team workers and the deputy are overseen by the residential manager, and she checks the paper work read and has discussions with the relevant senior members of staff.</p> <p>MC, the residential manager, attends the team meetings and steers decisions and actions. The responsible individual will be coming to the March team meeting to spend time with the staff and gain an understanding of how day to day issues and plans are being managed.</p> <p>I can see a strong managerial input into all support that is offered to the young people in The Seeds. It is worth mentioning that The Seeds have around a caseload of 65, according to JS, so the fact that the manager is able to oversee the support that is being delivered and plans agreed for each young person is quite a feat.</p>	

## 1 The Quality of Care Standard (see regulation 6)

**Physical condition of the home, fixtures and fittings (internal and external) in this monitoring period. To include young people's bedrooms where possible/permission has been given**

Page 44	<p><b>Internal/external condition</b></p> <p>It was raining when I arrived and walked up the path to the front door. The garden was tidy, the outdoor furniture covered up, football nets ready for use in better weather, and the trees, plants and wall displays had all been kept to a high maintenance standard.</p> <p>The inside of the house is bright, clean, fresh, warm and organised. There are many attractive wall decorations, signs and photos. Doors to the various rooms; pool room, craft room, living room, games/chill out zone, were open and invited use by young people. The entrance hall and dining area are central to the whole of the downstairs of the home, surrounded by relaxing and activity rooms and the kitchen and utility room. On my visit it was quiet as there was only one young person in the home, and he spent time in the games/chill out room and in his bedroom.</p> <p>Upstairs the landing is a conglomeration of bedrooms for young people, bathrooms and an office area. Again, everywhere was tidy and organised, in preparation for restarting short breaks stays, whilst having a relaxed and informal atmosphere for the young person who was currently living in the home. The office, the hub for staff activity, is set up effectively to enable staff to work at computers, locate files and check information. The whiteboard is a useful daily information point to check times of staff working and tasks that need to be completed.</p>
	<p><b>Have young people's bedrooms been seen with their permission?</b></p> <p>R kindly showed me the room he was staying in, the graffiti room. He had his personal belongings strewn around, making this space his own, his bed was made, he had the window open with window restrictors. R told me that this was his favourite room. He told me that he likes to be in a room far away from the staff bedroom and office. He was keen to show me two cuddly toys, books and lamps, a reading lamp and a night light. He said that some young people like to use white noise to help them sleep and staff can organise this for them, but he doesn't like it. He showed me the toiletries provided by The Seeds. He said that he appreciated that if there was something he needed the staff would buy it straight away. Apparently in other places where R has stayed, he has had to wait.</p> <p>I looked into the campervan room, grey room and marvel room and these were all prepared for short breaks. The bathrooms around the bedrooms were clean and had nice quality mats and towels in place.</p>
<b>Interviews with staff at the home</b>	
<b>Job role</b>	<b>Comments</b>

Deputy Manager	<p>JS outlined the reasons behind R's extended short break stay with The Seeds. R, a 16-year-old boy, is well known to The Seeds as they have been supporting him whilst he has been living at home with his mother in the local area, and he has regularly participated in short breaks. He had been moved to a placement outside the area after Christmas when R signed a section 20 agreement, but this placement failed and he revoked the agreement and returned home. Over the last couple of weeks R has been coming to The Seeds through short breaks as a response to difficulties that have erupted at home. LG, a principal adolescent support team worker, who has been doing some mediation work with R and his mother, but sadly the relationship between the two remains erratic. R's social worker has agreed to search for a new residential placement for R and in the meanwhile, R remains with The Seeds under the auspices of an extended short break. <b>It was decided that short breaks for other young people would not be offered whilst R was having an extended short breaks on the weekend of my visit, however short breaks on the other weekends in February have been offered to young people.</b></p> <p>It was agreed that R would benefit from being given some additional emotional support due to him going through relationship difficulties with his Mum. JS explained that R was having some increased anxieties and worries and by supporting him this way he was able to emotionally regulate himself with support from staff when things became overwhelming for him. Whilst R is on an extended short break, staff are offering outreach sessions to young people who would normally have had short breaks. The local authority is offering additional support activities for R through an independent youth support organisation to support The Seeds' staff in managing other young people who need their services.</p> <p>JS explained that a decision has been made with the missing from care team that if young people go missing and are known to The Seeds that The Seeds' staff will take on the missing from home return interview. This decision recognises the value of the relationship that The Seeds' staff have with young people and this role could well help to unearth true reasons for being missing. I asked if all staff felt comfortable with this arrangement and she confirmed that the majority of staff have had experiences of talking to young people about being missing and are familiar with the paper work. She added that for any newer member of staff who does not have this experience, that support would be offered.</p> <p>JS contributed hugely to other sections of this report and I appreciate the time she gave me in this visit.</p>
ASTW	<p>AC talked about a young person, C who I have met previously, who comes to short breaks. C is waiting for an ASD (autistic spectrum disorder) diagnosis. C struggles socially and AC explained how she is helping C to build up her confidence without putting any pressure on her. She chooses quiet evenings for her to come on a short break session and C is slowly building up some tentative friendships. AC has been able to encourage her to join in group outings and explained how she is learning to be careful how she makes suggestions. She explained that following a trip to the beach with another young person, she had mentioned the name of a famous fast-food restaurant as a general idea of</p>

a place to get food, but C would only consider going to this restaurant, which, as AC said, complicated the end of the day out. AC added that C can become distressed very easily and finding an easy solution to resolve a problem is not always easy. She talked about a recent trip to the gym, in which C ripped a nail, became upset and just repeated her need to see her mother. AC called her mother and put C on the phone and after a short conversation, C was calmed and able to continue her session. As C says, it is important to recognise and validate C's feelings and that nothing will be achieved unless this happens. AC shared that when C is making loud noises, she uses humour to help her to recognise this and quieten herself. AC has been teaching C to bake and in the last couple of weeks they have been making cupcakes and pancakes. As AC said, it is difficult to see her making mistakes and her not wanting to listen to advice, but considered that maybe when it goes wrong, she can learn the right way of doing things. Encouraging C to talk with other young people can be difficult, but last week when C and another young person were having tea together, AC lead on a conversation about "would you rather ..." and this encouraged both young people to share ideas and talk. It sounds to me like AC has a skilful approach in working with C and is helping her to gain confidence.

AC also told me about starting some support with two sisters who live with different members of the family, one with her mother and one with her grandfather. She says that there has to be sensitivity in contacting the different family members and the girls are enjoying having some time together, as well as some sessions on their own.

Principal ASTW  
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CA explained that she was rostered to do shifts on the day of my visit and the two days over the weekend, with time off on Saturday afternoon and evening. She would however, be on call at this time. I asked her how she felt about being in work for an extended amount of time. CA explained that this arrangement was unusual and the senior staff were able to share out responsibilities more evenly, but due to annual leave, this shift pattern had been put in place. CA said that she didn't mind and that she would enjoy some extended time away from work when other seniors were on duty.

My conversations with CA are captured in other parts of the report.

**Interview with parents / carers and professionals**

Status	Role	Comments
Parent, J	Uncle of young person, A	J explained that A has been enjoying short breaks, trips out to the local cities and has been a part of the music group. J said that I really likes going to The Seeds and was disappointed this weekend that the planned short breaks night could not go ahead. As A's uncle, he told me he appreciates The Seeds giving A opportunities to do things away from the house. He told me that all arrangements are made in advance and A's case worker, SH, is "great at letting me know what is happening and how it

		went". He hopes that The Seeds' support can continue because "it's helping A to be around more people of his own age and adults".
Parent, L	Mother of young person, L	L told me that her son is supported by CT, who comes and takes him out, sometimes they play pool. "It's good for L to be out of the house." She added, "CT is very good, he rings me up and gives me an update about what L has been doing". She said that she thinks L is being brought out of himself and feeling more comfortable talking to adults. "This is good for him". She thinks that L likes spending time with CT and looks forward to having a weekly meeting with him.
Professional 1, SP	Social worker of A	I spoke to SP by telephone. She said, "I can't say a bad word about The Seeds". She spoke about A, his traumatic childhood, his difficult relationship with his mother and school, being confused about who his father is, and moving to live with his aunt and uncle which initially was very unsettled. SP said that The Seeds' involvement arrived at just the right time for A. Through outreach support and short breaks, they have been able to provide support for his new home life living with his aunt and uncle and given him new experiences and some happiness at a low time for him. She told me that SH is his caseworker and he has built up a good relationship with this young boy, who has been closed off to professionals and to any activities. As a social worker, SP appreciates the constant support that The Seeds offer to A, and this is particularly valuable when she is not available or in work. She used an example of the support offered to A when he was arrested. She said that SP and the manager MC led on a transition plan to get A back to his carers and identified the support he would need to make this a successful return. Having some short breaks has helped to ease A back into this home life. She has appreciated input from SP in multi-agency meetings considering how to support A emotionally and help him to build up his relationships. She told me that A really enjoyed the music group, yet he had never had any experiences of playing music beforehand and now he would like to carry it on. "This is what is great about The Seeds, they give young people new opportunities and open doors to unfound and unknown skills". SP confirmed that contacting The Seeds is easy and if SH is not around all the other staff members are helpful. She thinks the home itself is wonderful and likes having the chance to show new young people around and enjoys seeing their reaction to visiting this home.
Professional 2, AP	Social worker of three young people; H, L1 and L2	AP has three young people on her caseload who are receiving support from The Seeds. She talked about them individually. H's caseworker is LG, and says "he looks up to him, listens to him and has the best relationship ever". She described H as being complex and hard work and yet LG is influencing some positive behavioural changes in him. He particularly enjoys going to the gym with LG. L1 loves to come to The Seeds. Her case worker is EH and apparently L1 tells AP that "I want

		to move in.” AP thinks that the most important thing for L1 is that she is being given a voice by The Seeds as she has had a difficult restrictive life at home. For L2, AP describes his caseworker TT as being “fantastic” and explains that L2 presents many challenges for social care with him going missing and yet “TT is all over it”, contacting him and helping him to resolve immediate problems. AP said that her only wish is that The Seeds could be allowed within the authority to just concentrate on short breaks and outreach work because when an emergency placement arises, it disrupts the regular activities. As she then pointed out, this is not The Seeds’ fault; they have to do what they are asked to do.
Professional 3, KF	Family support worker for young person C	We spoke about The Seeds’ support of C who has unidentified additional needs and is on the ASD pathway. She talked positively of how The Seeds contribute to a joined-up approach with all professionals working with C which is providing a consistent way of working, to which C is responding well. KF acknowledged that C’s caseworker, AC, has helped to build up a trusting relationship with C, doing direct work with C at times that best suit her and ensures all activities don’t overwhelm her. She talked about the positivity of AC attending meetings and describing how C behaves whilst in The Seeds and with other young people. This information will direct future planning and support for C so KF feels this is extremely helpful.

Page 4

**Visitor’s evaluation of the interviews conducted. Has the standard or quality of the accommodation changed since the last visit?**

I am grateful to the staff and professionals for giving me valuable pen pictures of some of the young people who are being supported by The Seeds. In all these cases, the young people are progressing and developing as a result of having dedicated time with a worker and in being given new experiences and activities. The professionals all referred to the benefits of The Seeds being a valuable participant in multi-agency planning and support.

The Seeds’ accommodation is of a high standard, one which is a pleasure to spend time in, and clearly the young person R is very happy living in.

**2 The Children’s Views, Wishes and Feelings Standard (see regulation 7)**

**Interview/s with young people present with their consent and in private (where possible) / or observations made. Use quotes from the young people**

	Comments
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Interviewed y/n	Y	<p>I had several conversations with R during my visit. He told me that The Seeds “are better than all the other places I’ve been”. He spoke about going to the cinema later on with a member of the private support organisation who are involved in R’s care. He asked JS which members of staff would be working over the weekend. Having heard that ASTW, TT would be on shift on Saturday he expressed his wish to remain in the home as “I have fun with TT”. I asked him what he liked to do with TT. R listed, going for drives, playing loud music and going for food. I asked him about life in The Seeds whilst he is waiting to move somewhere else. R told me the rules “were fair”, the staff “great” and he has to do “chores; cleaning, cooking and washing”. I asked R if he thinks he is different from having support from The Seeds from how he used to be. He told me that “I am getting better at keeping calm” and then went on to tell me that he managed to deflect an angry situation at a recent trip on the dodgems with a calm approach, not reacting to accusations made towards him. R added that, “I trust the staff more. I used to hate coming here, but now I really like it”. He appreciates that the staff share his wishes and feelings with his social worker and recognises that The Seeds will help the staff in the new placement to understand him before he moves. He added though, “I wish The Seeds could be my long-term care home”.</p> <p>I observed him talking about the importance of career choices with staff members. He had a humorous conversation with JS about him helping with the cleaning, by doing the hoovering downstairs picking up beanbag polystyrene balls. When I first saw R, he was expressing disappointment that he could not use the Xbox as the license needed to be renewed. He politely raised this problem with JS and CA responded to this immediately. I asked R later if he could now use the Xbox, and he confirmed he had been able to do so.</p>
Observed y/n	Y	
Initial	R	

**How are young people consulted day to day and how do young people have a positive impact on the home as a result of their engagement and participation?**

CA informed me about how The Seeds are involved in the local authority voice and participation council meeting and plans to ensure more young people are able to shape and influence services. She explained that some of the Seeds’ young people will be involved in the young inspectors’ work that is an important mechanism to enable the young persons’ voice to be heard. CA told me that there will be a training session in April to include staff and young people and this will enable specific members of The Seeds to roll out more young inspectors’ training going forward. There will also be training for young people interested in interviewing and recruitment. She talked about the underpinning processes, which include a contract for each young person thinking about their time, ensuring that their participation is outside the school day, that they are rewarded through vouchers and that they are able to evidence their involvement through an ASDAN (life skills programme) Careers and Future module. She said that there is currently some consideration to come up with a variety of ways that young people can record their findings and views in inspection and recruitment work, recognising that not every young person likes to write. CA

reminded me that the Young Inspectors visited The Seeds last year; The Seeds are still waiting for their certificate and once this arrives, they will update the service leaflet.

CA confirmed that the former “you said, we did” board will be reinstated in the pool room. There is no doubt in my mind that the young people’s wishes and feelings are paramount to service and support plans within The Seeds, but this board is an excellent and visible way of proving that young people’ ideas and views are being responded to.

At the January team meeting, there was a discussion about the young people’s meeting and how they wanted to link it to research, so in February they planned to do a consultation about LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning). In the pool room I saw that a new information board has been designed, very well put together being visible with flags, terminology explanations, famous soundbites and a timeline of the history of LGBTQ. A new internet safety board has been created alongside the vaping board. All these boards have been designed with young people in mind, are attractive and I think will draw their interests into looking more closely.

There was a young people’s meeting on 05/02/2024 with six young people. They helped to design the LGBTQ board, and there are photos of this activity. They were consulted about what this meant for young people. This group also talked about the Chinese New Year and a banquet was ordered for them. This was a good experience for these young people as some of them had never eaten Chinese food. Future activity requests were discussed and logged.

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### 3 The Education Standard (see regulation 8)

This section does not necessarily need to be assessed / completed at every visit. If education was assessed last time and there appears to be no significant change in circumstances, it can be left. However, this section must be completed at the next visit).

#### **How does the staff team ensure that young people make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and how are they helped to do so?**

Initial	Individual education plan (IEP) / personal education plan (PEP), education, health and care plan (EHCP). Review dates	How are these plans being used to help young people?
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The Seeds’ staff have liaised with school staff over supporting R, who is in his last year of formal education, to attend college open days and interviews. He has expressed an interest in doing barbering. Staff have helped him to compile a CV (curriculum vitae).

The music group young people have recently finished their six-week project and have gained an ASDAN (life skills programme) music arts award to evidence their skills and progress made.

#### **Visitor’s evaluation of educational progression for this monitoring period from young person’s / people’s starting point/s**

The Seeds are not involved in supporting R’s education whilst he is staying in The Seeds, though they are developing his life skills. It was half term on the week of my visit. I heard them gently supporting R’s thoughts about returning to school to complete his qualifications prior to

going to college, though R is currently not showing a lot of motivation, saying he hates the school and that he will do English and Maths at college.

#### 4 Enjoyment and Achievement Standard (see regulation 9)

(This section does not necessarily need to be assessed / completed at every visit. If enjoyment and achievement was assessed last time and there appears to be no significant change in circumstances, it can be left. However, this section must be completed at the next visit).

**Evaluate in this monitoring period how young people take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meet their needs and develop / reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interests and skills**

CA explained that half term has been filled with more outreach activities for their young people. Pancake mixes were given out to their families. R talked about activities that he has enjoyed during his time in The Seeds.

The music group has now finished. I asked CA about the participants and outcomes: three of them will be continuing to attend a youth service weekly music group, one has asked to do one to one sessions, so a request to the social worker for funding has been made, one enjoyed the musical instruments and hopes to continue playing in school, and one enjoyed the gaming and pod cast side of the group and has gained in confidence. It is clear to me that all six young people gained a lot from participating and five of them want to continue doing some music in their leisure time.

A new boys' group is due to start next month, led by DB, an ASTW. A sign-up sheet will be placed in the pool room so that young people can sign up. CA added that it is felt to be a good way to create a group through young people's interest as well as asking ASTWs to nominate their young people.

The gym membership has ended and currently suspended as there hasn't been a lot of interest in it. At the January team meeting, it was agreed to find prices for a six-month membership and see how well it is used. In the meanwhile, anyone who wants to go can under a pay as you go arrangement.

CA and JS told me that there will be holiday activities planned for the Easter holidays using HAF (holiday activity fund) funding. Individual requests for activities will continue to be agreed to if they are safe and easy to carry out. It is hoped that the music group will restart again in April.

I can see that the enjoy and achieve standard is very much aligned with the wishes of the young people receiving a service from The Seeds, and can tell from talking to the staff members that they are open to all suggestions.

#### 5 The Health and Well-being Standard (see regulation 10)

(This section does not necessarily need to be assessed / completed at every visit. If health and well-being was assessed last time and there appears to be no significant change in circumstances, it can be left. However, this section must be completed at the next visit).

**Evaluate in this monitoring period, how young people's health / well-being needs are met. Do they receive tailored advice, services and support and are they helped to lead healthy lifestyles?**

I heard from staff and professionals how health support particularly in relation to emotions has been supported in individual work with young people. There is valuable health promotion through information boards in the pool room, in relation to LGBTQ, vaping and on-line safety. I noticed that in the games / chill out zone there are "becoming your healthy self" colouring books.

I was delighted to see how staff are encouraging positive mental health through a black board in the kitchen entitled New Year resolutions. Many staff members have written how they intend to support their mental health and young people anonymously have written their own thoughts. By having the board in the kitchen enables an informal chatty conversation whilst young people congregate in the kitchen whilst a staff member is cooking.

A health and wellbeing blog has been written and displayed in the pool room. This blog showed lots of photos of ways young people felt could be good for their health, including dog walking and walking, and there was information about the winter workout of exercises that was completed by young people and staff together. It just goes to show that doing something together can be more fun and more achievable.

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**6 The Positive Relationships Standard (see regulation 11)**

Observed positive relationships and conversations between R and the staff on duty during my visit. R spoke politely and respectfully, mirroring responses from staff.

The professionals also referred to positive relationships between staff and their young people and evidenced how this is benefitting them.

**Use of restrictions of movement and / or liberty during this monitoring period**

Have there been any restrictions of movement?  
If so, how many and with which young people?  
Is this less or more than the last period?

There have not been any restrictions of movement during this reporting period.

<p>How does the manager assess the appropriateness of these interventions? If there has been an increase / decrease does the manager understand how / why?</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>	
<p>Are approaches to restorative practice used? If so, give examples.</p>	<p>Young people actively choose to come to The Seeds so there is no need for restorative practices to be used.</p>	
<p><b>Complaints / compliments during this monitoring period</b></p>		
<p>Date</p>	<p>Complaint or Compliment</p>	<p>Comments and response/action taken by the home</p>
<p>Page 53</p>	<p>There have been no complaints or compliments so I cannot evaluate the effectiveness of managing complaints and compliments.</p>	
<p><b>7 The Protection of Children Standard (see regulation 12)</b></p>		
<p><b>Health and safety arrangements</b></p>		
<p>What health and safety checks have been completed since the last visit?</p>	<p>JS explained that The Seeds' cleaner is currently off sick, so the staff are sharing out all cleaning responsibilities. I first saw CA on this visit carrying beanbags, explaining that she had decided to clean the outside covers, but this involved emptying out the polystyrene balls, and this resulted in sprinkles of balls all around the house. Everyone was extremely relaxed about these tiny balls appearing in every room in the house and laughed about the potential difficulties of removing them all.</p> <p>I checked the main health and safety file and the kitchen file and all checks have been diligently completed. I looked into the fridge and freezer and the food has been arranged safely and carefully to avoid any contamination. The recycling bins are clean and accessible for use before moving recycling to the outdoor bins.</p>	

	I asked about short strings attached to some of the lights in the bedrooms. JS assured me that these lights are not working and confirmed that the strings are short to prevent any risks. JS added that emergency lights are being replaced in the bedrooms and the tube light in the office.			
How are fire prevention measures implemented? Evaluate arrangements and actions taken to keep everyone safe since the last visit	<p>There was one fire induction carried out with a young person since I last visited.</p> <p>I can see that all weekly fire checks have been completed throughout the home.</p> <p>I think that all fire drills should include young people, plus any new or agency workers, who will be less familiar with escape routes.</p>			
Fire drill/evacuation, duration of drill, attendees since the last visit	Date	30/01/2024	Staff present	JS, LG, MC
	Time taken	2 minutes	Young people present	No young people
<b>Significant incidents and events that relate to young people's welfare and safety in this monitoring period, (including allegations against staff)</b>				
Page 54 Young person	Date regulation 40 notification/s if made	Who else was notified, i.e. Local authority designated officer (LADO)/placing authority (LA)/police/parents/carers/other agencies/professionals?	Comment on actions/outcome	
There have not been any significant incidents and events in this reporting period.				
<b>How, in this monitoring period, have incidents of young people being absent or missing from home been managed to ensure their safety and welfare is promoted?</b>				
There have not been any incidences of missing from care during this reporting period.				
<b>Risk management and assessment</b>				
<b>Have there been any updates to risk assessments?</b>	I looked at the risk management assessment for R who is currently on an extended short break session with The Seeds. There are no new updates. It is a comprehensive assessment which covers all identified risks based on R's background and incidents that have occurred, and describes strategies that should be followed should any potential risky situations arise.			

### Evaluate how the home are keeping the young people safe and protect them from harm.

In the team meeting in January, staff were warned to be vigilant about young people in the home having access to videoing and drop in applications.

I heard from my visit that staff are careful in following safeguarding measures with young people when on outreach activities, ensuring staff know where they are and keeping in touch using the specific home what's app. The senior in charge at the time has responsibility to oversee what is happening, whether in or out of the home. This was the gist of the conversation JS and CA were having about planning weekend activities for young people due to receive some outreach support. In the home during my visit, I was aware that staff ensured that they knew where R was and if he was downstairs a member of staff went to work downstairs, to loosely supervise him. CA also checked with R's private support organisation about plans for the support for the evening, times for arrival and drop off.

## 8 The Care Planning Standard (see regulation 14)

### Visitor's evaluation of young people's contact arrangements / planned care and progress since the last monitoring period

There were many examples in my visit to evidence how The Seeds work closely with professionals within the adolescent services team and with external services, and how they contribute to the young people's lives within the care system. Some of them are in this section, whilst others are talked about by the professionals I spoke to.

I heard of a wonderful example of how The Seeds are supporting R's social worker in a transition to a new residential placement. The Seeds are keeping R safe and occupied through extended short breaks whilst the local authority considers various options. The staff have supported R's social worker, who is new to him, by adding to the pen picture for the referrals, and they will be involved in the transition. They intend to prepare staff from the new placement to understand R, and give advice about how best to handle his emotions and suggest ways to help him to settle in. I heard conversations with staff with R, being matter of fact though reassuring, about him moving on to a residential placement, despite his constant declarations that nowhere will be as good as The Seeds.

Whilst R is participating in extended short breaks at The Seeds, staff are preparing him for independence by developing his life skills, encouraging him to take on cleaning, washing and cooking tasks. R is responding well to learning these skills though says he would prefer not to be independent and wants to be taken care of.

JS talked about another young person, well known to The Seeds, who they are supporting through a difficult period in her life. D, who was recently supported to move schools, has been being bullied and was assaulted. She called her caseworker, SS, for help, and because SS was not available, she called on her colleagues to intervene. CT, an ASTW, went to meet D and offer support. Since then, staff have been working with the social worker, D, her foster carers, who have given notice and D's mum, with whom D now wants to live. This is a sensitive situation, and as JS explained, the advantage that The Seeds have is that they can advocate on D's behalf, as they know her extremely well.



AC attended a multi-agency meeting on the morning of my visit and kindly told me about this. The young person, C, receives psychological support within the local authority to enable her to manage her emotions and build up her social prowess. She is waiting for a diagnosis for ASD (autism spectrum disorder). The meeting considered how valuable The Seeds are to supporting C's behaviour and agreed that they were doing a "wonderful job". The meeting highlighted the benefit of working together by the social worker, psychological team, mother, youth service and The Seeds and there a recognition of the value of having a consistent approach and being careful over language used with C to avoid any misunderstandings. Professionals acknowledged that there have been occasions where C's wishes have been given priority over other young people to avoid her becoming upset, and so work will be done to help her to recognise that others also have choices. Staff have been advised that they should recognise her feelings and validate them and help her to build up resilience as she gains more confidence in being around her peers.

A big strength of The Seeds is that they work well within a larger team for the benefit of the young people and their families and carers, communicate effectively, think creatively about how to engage a young person, advocate on the young person's behalf and are not limiting themselves to a restrictive area of work but looking beyond The Seeds, constantly ensuring that the young person has a support network beyond life with The Seeds.

## 9 The Leadership and Management Standard (see regulation 13)

**Evaluate whether the registered manager knows and understands the home's strengths and weaknesses, is able to prevent shortfalls, identifies and takes effective action when needed? Since the last visit, what changes have taken place as a result of this knowledge / understanding?**

JS and I discussed this. She acknowledged that keeping staff shift rotas full has been a challenge this month, that there have been a few personal worrying issues affecting staff's ability to come into work. This has come at a time when requests for annual leave are higher as the end of the financial year approaches. She said that despite all of this, staff are coming into work with a smile on their faces and are offering extra shifts, supporting working together as a team. I asked how the caseloads for the staff off sick being managed. She explained that some young people don't need weekly support and are happy with a telephone call, whilst others are being prepared for closure. JS added that not being able to offer short breaks to other young people whilst R is on an extended short break is frustrating, but hopes that he will be moving to a new placement next week. Caseloads have increased this month following a higher request for The Seeds' service from social care professionals.

**What monitoring /quality assurance processes are in place to inform the development of the home? Since the last visit, what evidence is there for this?**



The principal adolescent support team workers (Principal ASTWs) have now taken on the auditing role having been prepared for this over the last few months. SP, a Principal ASTW, has been working with MC, the manager, auditing all the journey of support documents, and were pleased to be able to recognise outstanding quality of work in these documents. JS said that the next stage of the auditing process is for the Principal ASTWs to bring the ASTWs into the audit as a learning opportunity for them.

JS explained that there is more focus on checking in the case supervisions that staff are meeting the targets agreed with their young people, matching up the reasons for referral with the support work being offered to the young person and their families or carers.

Evaluate how the Registered Manager has managed the staff team during this period?

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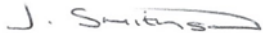

JS explained about the current staffing difficulties affecting The Seeds. There are three members of staff off on sick leave at the moment and a number, including the registered manager and responsible individual on annual leave. The cleaner is also off sick. I asked JS about how The Seeds support staff who are off sick and she explained about having welfare meetings in venues of their choosing to enable them to feel relaxed. I asked about the contingencies of having an unexpected significant number of staff members not being in work at the moment. JS explained that there are higher than usual use of regular casual staff; one who used to work for The Seeds and a couple who already work for the local authority. A new casual worker, a family support worker for the authority, is doing her induction with The Seeds and will be in work on the day after my visit, completing her training and shadowing of staff. JS said that she and the manager MC have helped to fill in some gaps along with flexible working from other staff members.

JS and I talked about training within the monthly team meetings. There are plans to measure the impact for young people participating in short breaks. She said that training is being given to the staff in team meetings. They will also be having in the next couple of meetings some bite sized sessions on research in practice and attachment and trauma. The last team meeting was on 17/01/2024. Information about future training was provided.

I overheard a conversation between JS and CA as they discussed which young people would be having outreach support over the weekend and what the staff on rota would be expecting to do, including one long term casual worker and also a new casual worker who has agreed to cover a shift. CA confirmed she would be doing the handover for staff on Saturday, and return on Sunday, whilst being on call during the time when she was out of the home.

It was good to see the white board in the office being used to communicate new information. On this visit, I saw the Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance which was updated in December 2023 and information suggesting better ways of working together, and also information from the neglect strategy from the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children).

How are newly recruited staff or staff still on probation supported with their training and development?	There is one probationary member of staff who I did not meet or discuss during my visit. I will ensure I follow up progress for this member of staff in my March visit. The new casual support worker has nearly completed her induction, is completing her medication training on line and will be spending some time with CA learning about some of the working processes that are specific to The Seeds.
<b>Visitor's overall evaluation of leadership, management and staffing in this period</b>	
Leadership is strong, and over the last few weeks has had to be creative in keeping all rotas fully staffed and all young people supported. JS, with support from senior members of staff, has successfully kept all The Seeds' "balls in the air". CA, as a principal ASTW has gone over and above to support the staff team over the weekend following my visit. I could see that both JS and CA work well together and collaborate for the benefit of the staff team and the young people.	
<b>10 Summary and Sign-off</b>	
<b>Young people's suggestions</b>	
Page 58	just simply wants to remain at The Seeds, which he realises is impossible.
<b>Visitor's summary of the visit</b>	
This was an unusually quiet visit, and I appreciated all the support I received from the three members of staff in work. I left with JS' words ringing through my ears that although staffing is a challenge at the moment everyone still comes to work with a smile on their faces. What a wonderful passionate team. I was overwhelmed by the number of positive case studies from staff and professionals and recognise that without The Seeds' input things would not be anywhere near as good for the young people. Even R, the young person, was able to evidence how he has changed because of The Seeds. These testimonies reinforce the reasons why The Seeds is such a successful service.	
<b>Recommended actions to consider</b>	
I do not have any recommendations on this occasion.	
<b>Sign off by the independent visitor</b>	
I am satisfied that at the time of this visit the young people accommodated at this children's home are effectively safeguarded and their well-being promoted.	

Signed: <i>Davina A Hanley</i>		Date: 19/02/2024
<b>Manager's comments with regard to any recommendations made by the independent visitor</b>		
<p>This is a positive Reg 44 report, despite some staffing issues and extended short breaks for R all of our YPs have been seen and supported through outreach sessions.</p> <p>Feedback from young people, parents and professionals evidence the good work we do and it is good when this is captured through feedback from our Reg 44 inspector.</p>		
 Signed: J Smithson		Date: 28.02.2024
<b>Comments from the responsible individual</b>		
<p>This is another positive report and evidences the support for a YP that was on an extended short break and the continued support for all the children and young people that attend SEEDS</p>		
 Signed:		Date:

## **BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN**

### **VIRTUAL SCHOOL HEADTEACHER ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23**

#### **Background and Purpose**

The Children and Families Act 2014 requires local authorities in England to appoint at least one person for the purpose of discharging the local authority's duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked after children, wherever they live or are educated. That person – hereafter referred to as the Virtual School Head (VSH) - must be an officer employed by the authority or another local authority in England

The key responsibilities of the Virtual School Head (VSH) are:

- To ensure every looked after child has a suitable educational place that meets their needs
- To maintain an up-to-date roll of looked after children who are in school or college settings and gather information about their education placement, attendance and educational progress.
- To inform headteachers and designated teachers in schools if they have a child on roll who is looked after by the VSH's local authority
- To ensure social workers, designated teachers and schools, carers and Independent Reviewing Officers IROs understand their role and responsibilities in initiating, reviewing and updating the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) and how they help meet the needs identified in that PEP
- To ensure up-to-date, effective and high quality PEPs that focus on educational outcomes and that all looked after children, wherever they are placed, have such a PEP
- Allocate the Pupil Premium Plus to support improved educational outcomes for children in care
- Ensure the educational achievement of children looked after by the authority is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare
- Report regularly on the attainment of looked after children through the authority's corporate parenting structure

In 2018, additional duties were added to the VSH role to include previously looked-after children. For this group the VSH acts as a source of advice and information to help their parents advocate for them as effectively as possible. VSHs are not acting as part of the corporate parent role in these circumstances but are there to promote the educational achievement of these children through the provision of advice and information to relevant parties.

In September 2021 the role of Virtual School Heads was further extended to include strategic responsibility for children with a social worker. Whilst this is non-statutory it is clear that the VSH has a strategic responsibility for:

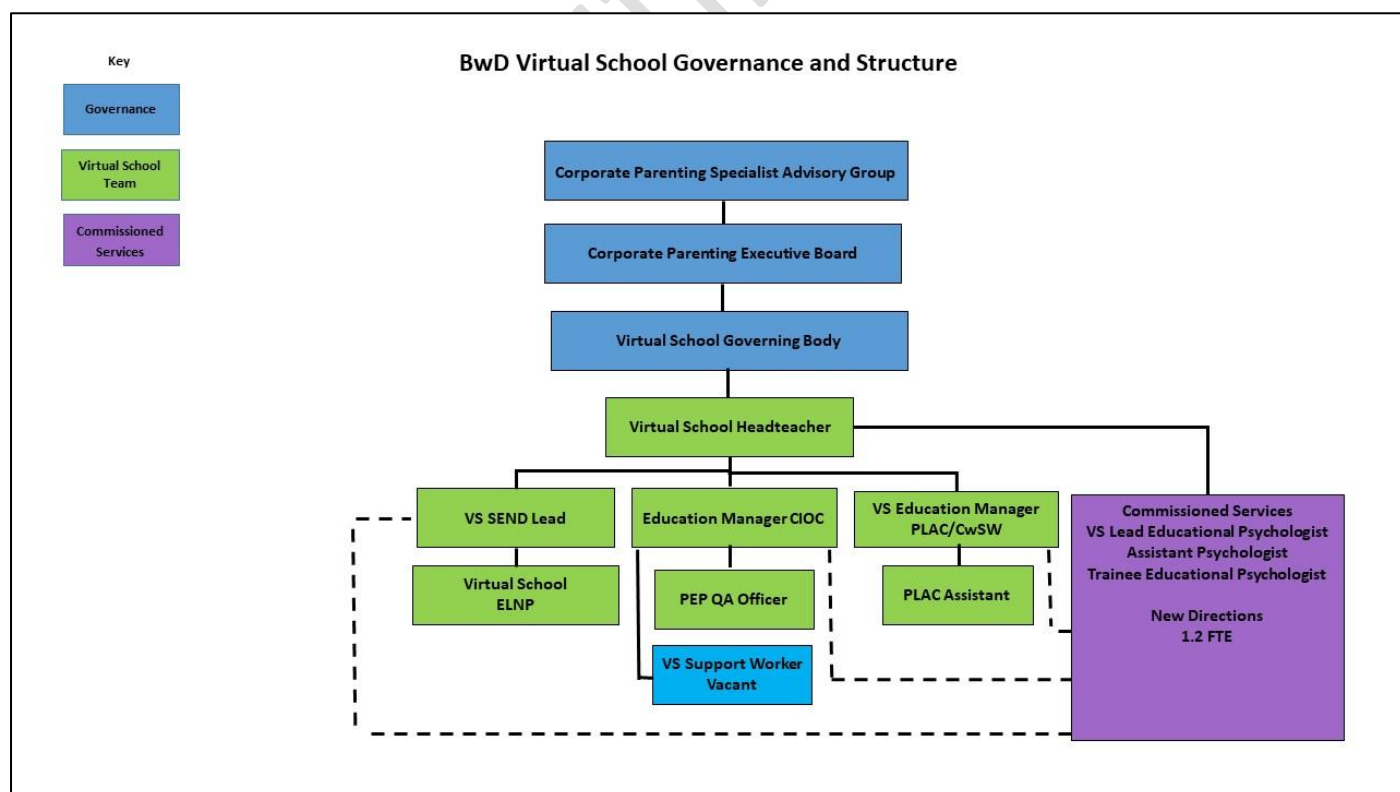
- understanding and addressing the barriers and challenges this group face in attending school
- strengthening partnerships between education settings and local authorities
- establishing a culture of high aspirations that helps these children to progress in education

More locally, in April 2023, the Strategic Director of Children’s Services requested that the VSH take responsibility for the development of a Virtual College to support our care leavers up to the age of 25.

The purpose of this report is to give the Virtual Head’s overview of these areas for the financial and academic year 2022-23. Please note that all the data used is provisional and un-validated at this stage and are subject to correction when DfE issue the final data release. All data included in this report is based on children in care for 12 months or more at 31st March 2023, is matched data included in the National Pupil Database. The Government have stated that there has been a return to pre-pandemic grading in Summer 2023 in England with protection in place for students. It is most meaningful to compare results to 2019, the last summer exam series before the pandemic although for CIOC the small cohorts involved limit the usefulness of year on year comparative data.

### Structure and Governance

All school age Children in our Care (CIOC) are on the roll of the Virtual School. In BwD the Virtual School ‘staff’ includes the Virtual School Head, CIOC Education Manager, VS SEND Lead, Education Manager PLAC, CwSW, Emotional Literacy and Nurture Practitioner, PEP QA Officer, PLAC Assistant, Virtual School Educational Psychologist, VS Assistant Psychologist and New Directions Advisors. In addition, there are close working links with Clinical Psychologist/Revive, Early Years, Leaving Care teams to support our children and young people holistically. The Virtual School is overseen by a Governing Body and reports to the Corporate Parenting Executive Boards and the Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group. The Virtual School also has working links with Adoption Now, our Regional Adoption Agency.



## Virtual School Roll

The Virtual School has a challenging make-up in terms of its roll, is typically boy heavy and made up of 80% White British (unusual for BwD). At the start of the academic year 2022/23 the Virtual School had 225 school aged Children in Our Care (CIOC) on roll, 108 primary and 117 secondary. 154 (68%) of children attended school in the borough, 79 primary and 75 secondary and 71 attended out of borough schools, 29 primary and 42 secondary. The total school roll by the end of the academic year 2022/23 had decreased to 219. These figures are within the typical range of the Virtual School.

The Virtual School roll includes learners aged 16-18 of which at the start of the academic year there were 75 on roll with 38 students in Year 12 and 37 students in Year 13. Within the post 16 cohort, students attend a range of establishments to continue their education. On-going support for NEET students is provided through our New Directions commission working closely with the social workers and the Leaving Care team.

Month	Year 12					Year 13					Yr12-13 combined				Participation		Cohort
	Yr12 NEET %	No of NEET YP	Yr12 NK %	No of NK YP	Yr 12 Cohort	Yr 13 NEET %	No of NEET YP	Yr 13 NK %	No of NK YP	Yr 13 Cohort	Total YP Yr12-13 NEET	% Yr12-13 NEET	Total YP Yr12-13 NK	% Yr12-13 NK	No of Yr12-13 in EET	% of YP participating Yr12-13	
Sep-22	5.2%	2	0.0%	0	38	13.5%	5	0.0%	0	37	7	9.3%	0	0.0%	68	90.7%	75
Oct-22	10.0%	4	0.0%	0	40	21.2%	7	0.0%	0	33	11	15.1%	0	0.0%	62	84.9%	73
Nov-22	10.0%	4	0.0%	0	40	26.7%	8	0.0%	0	30	12	17.1%	0	0.0%	58	82.9%	70
Dec-22	10.0%	4	0.0%	0	40	31.0%	9	0.0%	0	29	13	18.8%	0	0.0%	56	81.2%	69
Jan-23	9.8%	4	0.0%	0	41	37.5%	9	0.0%	0	24	13	20.0%	0	0.0%	52	80.0%	65
Feb-23	11.9%	5	0.0%	0	42	38.0%	8	0.0%	0	21	13	20.6%	0	0.0%	50	79.4%	63
Mar-23	18.2%	8	0.0%	0	44	42.1%	8	0.0%	0	19	16	25.4%	0	0.0%	47	74.6%	63
Apr-23	20.5%	9	0.0%	0	44	43.8%	7	0.0%	0	16	16	26.7%	0	0.0%	44	73.3%	60
May-23	15.9%	7	0.0%	0	44	25.0%	3	0.0%	0	12	10	17.9%	0	0.0%	46	82.1%	56
Jun-23	13.6%	6	0.0%	0	44	66.7%	4	0.0%	0	6	10	20.0%	0	0.0%	40	80.0%	50
Jul-23	13.6%	6	0.0%	0	44	66.7%	4	0.0%	0	6	10	20.0%	0	0.0%	40	80.0%	50
Aug-23	18.2%	8	0.0%	0	44	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0	8	18.2%	0	0	36	81.8%	44

\* Please note changes/reductions to cohort size which impacts when reviewing NEET % data.

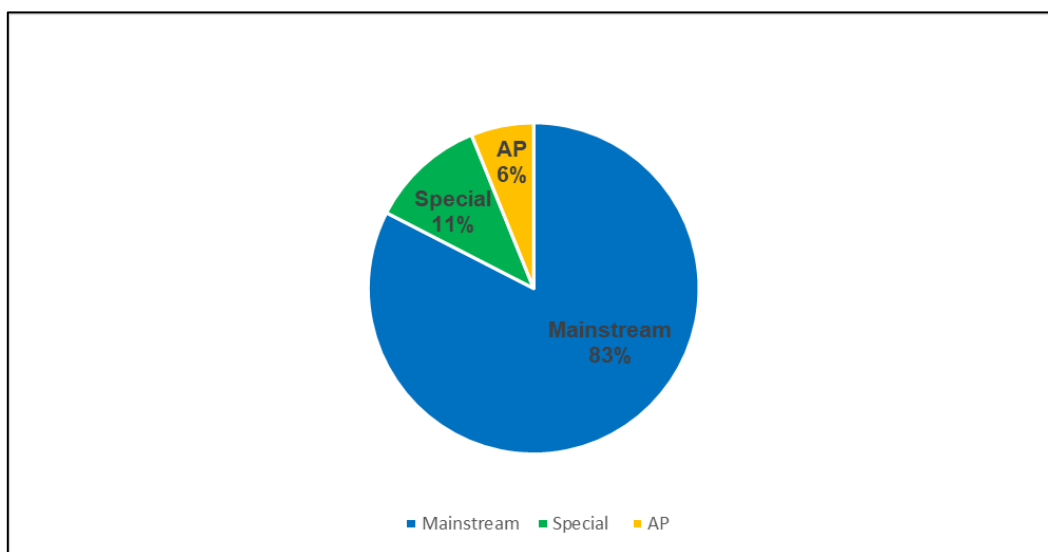
## School Ofsted Categories

The Virtual School is committed to providing a high quality education or training placements where learning is inspiring and challenging, leading to the best possible outcomes for every child and preparing them well for adult life. The school the child/young person attends plays a vital role in meeting this commitment and as such the Virtual School monitors the Ofsted grades of the schools/settings attended both through the PEP and a monitoring system. If a school is inspected and deemed inadequate or requires improvement consideration is given as to whether a change of school would be appropriate. However, it is unlikely that a school move would be instigated if, following review, the child/young person is making good progress, is settled socially and their wider needs are being met.

An analysis of the inspection judgements at the end of the academic year 2022/23 for schools with Blackburn with Darwen children attending show that 74% of looked after children attend schools judged good or better, with 4 children attending an inadequate school – 3 children in 1 school who were already attending the BwD school when the inadequate judgement was made and 1 in another out of borough. This has been closely monitored and kept under regular review by the Virtual School to ensure needs are met and good progress is made. There are no safeguarding concerns in either school.

The majority of CIOC attend mainstream settings however some do attend special schools or alternative provision. Below is a breakdown as of September 2022.

### CIOC School Type 2022/23



### Special Educational Needs and Alternative Provision

#### SEND Profile

By the end of the academic year September 2022 to July 2023 a total of 58 Children in our Care (CIOC) had held an Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP). 16 Primary, 26 Secondary and 16 Post 16. 1 CIOC had an Individual Pupil Resourcing Agreement (IPRA).

Of the 58 students with EHCP's, 32 had EHCP's which were managed by the Blackburn with Darwen (BwD) Statutory Assessment Team. A further 26 had EHCP's managed by other Local Authority Statutory Assessment Teams due to their home addresses being outside of the BwD boundary. These Local Authorities included, Lancashire, Bradford, Bolton, Rochdale, Greater Manchester, Liverpool, Stoke on Trent and Tameside.

CIOC with EHCP's are educated in a variety of settings depending upon their level of need. Over the academic year 26 CIOC were educated in mainstream provision (from Primary to Year 13), 14 attended maintained Special Schools (from Primary to Year 13), 13 attended Independent Special Schools (from Primary to Year 13), 4 were educated in Alternative Provision Settings and 1 was accommodated within a Secure Mental Health facility.

Upon assessment of a child's needs, the Statutory Assessment Team determine what a child / young person's Primary Category of need is. For the cohort 2022-23 the Primary Category of Needs included ASD (8), Moderate Learning Difficulties (11), Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (1), SLD (2) Physical Difficulties (1), Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties (28), Speech, Language and Communication needs (7).



During this academic year 2 new EHCP's were issued to CIOC, both initiated and issued whilst in their Primary setting. As well as a further 8 requests for Education, Health Care Needs Assessments being prepared over the summer term for consideration in the late summer early Autumn Term.

### **Attendance for CIOC with EHCPs**

Attendance is generally very good for the CIOC with an EHCP. However, there is a very small cohort whose attendance has fallen well below expected levels. In these cases, the VS SEND Lead has worked closely with a multi-agency groups of professionals in a bid to improve this attendance pattern. In all cases we have looked at implementing bespoke timetable which support engagement with education. Results are varied but they remain a priority for both education and social care.

### **Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions for CIOC with EHCPs**

During the academic year 2022-23, 7 CIOC with EHCP's experienced suspensions totalling 30.5 days. The majority of suspensions were as a result of Persistent Disruptive Behaviour. Following all suspensions, the schools are offered a Post Exclusion Consultation with the Virtual School Educational Psychologist (EP). The VS SEND Lead also contacts schools in relation to the suspension and identifies when the EHCP review is due and if there is a need to expedite this. In some cases, the exclusion is as a result of a one off incident that the school deem of a nature that a fixed term suspension is required. However, in other circumstances it has been necessary to become involved in seeking alternative education provision for young people who clearly are not managing in their current setting. We have had no permanent exclusions this year for CIOC with EHCPs.

### **Year 11 Examinations for CIOC with EHCP's**

In July 2023 we had 9 Year 11 CIOC with EHCP's. Of these young people 3 attended mainstream schools, 4 specialist provision and 2 attended Alternative Provision. Of the 9, 5 had attended more than one high school setting prior to reaching Year 11. Exam results for this cohort were all within GCSE Grades 1 - 3, however in all cases the 9 have moved on to College Provision accessing courses in line with their GCSE qualifications. 1 of the 9 is completing an apprenticeship with college support.

### **The role of the Virtual School SEND Lead**

Unlike a traditional school SEND Lead (SENCo), who is able to monitor all children within their setting, the Virtual School Lead, works across all schools (both in and out of borough) who educate BwD CIOC. Identifying CIOC with SEND is done through advice received from schools and interrogation of the Personal Education Plan (PEP). Once a child is identified, the Virtual School SEND Lead, will liaise with both schools and Social Workers and endeavour to attend any meetings in relation to that child (including PEP Meetings, LAC Reviews, Progress Meetings). This allows her to identify what provision is in place and ensure in the case of a child with an EHCP that the school is providing all the recommended provision. Where we have a child / young person with identified SEND needs but no EHCP, the VS SEND Lead can ensure that the school



is following a robust graduated approach and is maintaining momentum in relation to applying for an Educational Needs Assessment (EHC). As part of this work training is delivered on 'The implications of Children in our Care with SEND' to highlight the challenges facing CIOC as well as how supportive tools such as the PEP or Virtual School EP / Emotional Literacy & Nurture Practitioner (ELSNP) can assist schools in meeting a graduated approach to identifying and meeting needs. Regular attendance at meetings has meant that the VS SEND Leas has become a familiar face to our parents / carers, allowing them to have a contact both to ask questions but also to raise concerns in relation to SEND.

To date, each case has been considered on an individual basis as schools have required varying amounts of support depending upon the scenario. In some case students have EHCPs and are in settled home placements attending schools where all provision is in place and needs are being fully met. In these cases, involvement from the VS SEND Lead has been very light touch. However, there are other cases which involve residential moves, challenges within school, or those were a request for an EHC needs assessment are being prepared where the involvement is more substantial. The VS SEND Lead take responsibility for leading the SEND focus areas in the Virtual School Development Plan.

### **Attendance and Exclusions/Suspensions**

Performance in attendance is strong demonstrating that BwD Local Authority and its schools and schools where are children attend promote good attendance as a priority. Average attendance for 2022-23 was 93% which is slightly above the 2021-22 figure of 92% and slightly below the pre-Covid figure of 94%. Daily attendance is monitored through the Welfare Call service commissioned by the Virtual School. This data can be viewed online in real time by the Virtual School and enables the Virtual School to intervene promptly to individual cases and develop strategic responses to trends when looked after children are absent from school. During this academic year we have commissioned time from our Family Support team who have been able to support with some home visits. It is noticeable that the majority of our young people with attendance concerns are placed with their birth parents. This system also gives early warning of suspensions/exclusions with the provider collecting relevant notification letters which we then utilise as part of our Post Exclusion/Suspension process supported by the Virtual School Educational Psychologist.

### **Suspensions and Exclusions**

There has been one permanent exclusion for a young person with which was issued by an out of borough secondary school. The number of suspensions is a cause for concern and this is an issue for Virtual Schools nationally and regionally and reflects also the wider number of exclusions/suspensions issued within BwD more generally. Our response to this has been to offer a post exclusion/suspension review with our VS Educational Psychologist where we aim to offer support and a problem solving framework to help schools plan to reduce the likelihood of suspensions in the future. This is a pathfinder to help us understand if it may assist in reducing further exclusions. We ask that school participate in a 45 minute consultation (online) with our Educational Psychologist following a suspension for a Child in Our Care. It is important that key people attend the meeting including the Designated Teacher and wherever possible the

Headteacher as they are the decision maker regarding suspensions. Not all schools take up the opportunity but are actively encouraged to do so. This is an opportunity for support and challenge to the school by the Virtual School. We also take the opportunity to remind Headteacher and Designated Teachers of their responsibilities with regards exclusion/suspension of Children in our Care and offer a wide range of training to help staff understand the challenges faced by our children and how they may be best supported through a trauma informed approach. Additional support including direct work with children may also be offered through our Emotional Literacy and Nurture Practitioner. She also works to develop the practice around the child within the school, under the supervision of the VS Educational Psychologist and VS SEND Lead.

	2020/21 Academic Year	2021/22 Academic Year	2022/23 Academic Year
<b>Permanent Exclusions</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total Pupils Receiving Suspensions</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Total Number of Days Suspensions</b>	<b>87.5</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>216</b>
<b>Primary Pupils Suspensions</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Secondary Pupils Suspensions</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Mainstream School Suspensions</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Alternative Provision Suspensions</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Special School Suspensions</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>

\*Please note that some pupils received a suspension in mainstream and also in alternative provision.

## PEPS

The Personal Education Plan is an important document which provides the opportunity for care and education professionals to work together with children and their carers/parents to support their educational achievement. As such, improving practice and outcomes through high quality PEPs, effectively delivered and monitored is a priority area for the Virtual School. PEP documentation is reviewed and updated annually ready for the start of the academic year. There has been a focus on the roll out of the Delegation Portal, which links to the Protocol application for the completion of PEPS. This will provide secure access for schools as well as social workers with write back directly to the social care system. The portal was made live in September 2019 and although there have been some challenges in establishing the process and technology overall this has worked well and been positively received by professionals. The roll out was extend in September 2020 for Post 16 PEPs and in autumn 2022 for Early Years PEPs.

A PEP tracker is in place to monitor termly completion rates, audit and other key information. A quality assurance process is an important part of using PEPs to drive improved educational outcomes. All PEPs receive an initial quality assurance and compliance check whereby the PEP is returned to the social worker and school with immediate feedback if there are queries or it is non-compliant. A more detailed audit comprises of a large sample PEPS (30-40%) for that term taken

from a cross section of in and out of borough schools and across the range of social work teams. The document is reviewed using the PEP audit tool and the audit team comprises of the Virtual School team plus volunteers from social care, education, school staff etc. The completed audit tool is sent as feedback to SW, SW manager, Designated Teacher and Headteacher and funding is not released where a PEP is judged inadequate although there is an opportunity for this to be rectified and re-submitted. School staff and social workers who have taken part have reported that the process has aided their own professional development in terms of producing high quality PEPs. Outcomes for the previous academic years are detailed below and demonstrate that there is still a need for a constant drive in this in both completion rates and quality of documentation, Post ILACS there has been a specific focus on quality of SMART targets within the QA and detailed audit process with limiting judgements where SMART target are weak. PEPs remain a key priority within the Virtual School as well as the wider department. This analysis has also enabled the Virtual School to identify training and development activities needed to support practitioners in different areas one of which has been to promote greater engagement from children and young people in completing the 'voice' section of the PEP and attending some or all of their PEP meeting. Through this work we have seen an increase in the number of children and young people attending their PEP and continue to strive to improve this.

### School Age\*

	Completion Rate	Quality % Good or Better	Notes
Baseline Average 2021/22	90%	63%	In this year a smaller number of PEPs were audited.  Completion rate was impacted by technical issues with portal.
Average 2022/23	96%	40%	Revised PEP documentation and audit tool. Particular focus on SMART targets.

### Children & Young People Attending PEPs – School Age

	Primary	Secondary	Total Average
Baseline Average 2021/22	13%	26%	20%
Average 2022/23	22%	37%	28%

### Children and Young People Voice Section Completed

	Primary	Secondary	Total Average
Baseline Average 2021/22	88%	74%	81%
Average 2022/23	95%	87%	90%

## Post 16 PEPs

	Completion Rate	Notes
Baseline Average 2021/22	98%	PEPs completed by leaving care PAs
Average 2022/23	96%	PEPs completed by social workers. Note 100% spring/summer

## Post 16 Young People Attending PEPs

	Total
Baseline Average 2021/22	44%
Average 2022/23	60%

## Early Years

	Completion Rate	Notes
Baseline Average 2021/22	18%	Word based PEPs
Average 2022/23	55%	PEPs moved to portal Some delays/technical issues in autumn – much improved completion by summer term (73%).

### \*Notes

Completion rates impacted by a significant technical issue with the delegation portal in summer 2022 which lasted for a full half term. A smaller number were audited in detail during 2021/22 due to operational pressures and therefore the good or better measure should be treated with caution. Improvements in the quality measure have involved implementing a tighter focus on targets has had some impact on the judgement regarding quality. To support this, work has included additional training and support for school staff alongside consultation for changes to the PEP documentation to support staff in 2022/23.

## Findings from PEP Audits in 2022/23

- 68% of CIOC met or partly met their SMART targets
- 58% were judged by schools to be meeting or partly meeting age related expectations
- 87% were judged by schools to be making good personal progress
- 83% of PEPs showed schools were providing academic interventions linked to SMART targets utilising the Pupil Premium Plus. Other provisions included behaviour/emotional support, learning equipment and some extra-curricular activities.

This area of work was identified as a continuing priority in the 2022-23 academic year and is covered in training attended by all Designated Teachers, Social Workers and relevant CIOC professionals. The PEP audit tool includes recording the use and impact of PP+ at school level. Where necessary this is followed up with individual school contact and training. It is clear that whilst we are still seeing positive outcomes in terms of progress for CIOC there are issues with the quality of target setting which we continue to strive to improve through training and support to schools.

## Pupil Premium Plus

In 2022/23 (financial year) the total pupil premium allocation was £677210. The spend on centralised resources/provision was approximately 50% of pupil premium budget. During the financial year, a Pupil Premium Plus Policy for CIOC has been maintained alongside a Pupil Premium Plus tracker which has been used to ensure that the VSH can effectively manage the statutory responsibilities in these areas. This includes dates when PEPs including costed provisions are submitted, when payments have been made, to whom and for which CIOC and outcomes of quality assurance processes. In addition to the standard maximum allocation of £2410 per CIOC per annum that was tracked and impact measured through the PEP/ provision map we have also been able to centrally fund the following:

Virtual School Use of PP+	Impact /Evidence
Virtual School Educational Psychologist.	<p>Permanent Exclusion rates remain relatively low. We have implemented a trial post-suspension review process whereby when a young person receives a suspension the EP offers a 45 minute online consultation with the school. This offers support and challenge to the school and gives the opportunity to discuss whether a more detailed request for involvement is needed as well as giving some immediate strategies to consider. Take up of this has been a little disappointing in 2022/23 with schools (particularly those out of the borough) not taking up the offer. 20 post suspension consultations took place compared to 32 in the previous year however an additional 5 were moved to the full EP involvement request due to their complexities. Where there is a request for involvement, schools are provided with appropriate strategies to best support the child/young person in meeting their learning and social, emotional and mental health needs. Those who need it are progressed to EHCP panel at which the EP report is essential. 43 new requests for EP involvement were received during this period. 25 reports were finalised and EP work fully concluded whilst the remaining requests remain open with on-going work and support.</p>
Welfare Call, attendance monitoring service.	<p>Attendance within the Virtual School is good – please refer to attendance section for a detailed breakdown. Attendance monitoring and reports provided by Welfare Call allow for swift intervention where attendance drops below expected</p>

	<p>thresholds or if there are emerging patterns. Suspensions are picked up quickly from the attendance reports and inform discussions with schools regarding any necessary interventions. Social workers also receive direct notification of any absence and can respond accordingly.</p>
<p>Virtual School SEND Lead</p>	<p>The Virtual School Send Lead is a role which enhances the existing VS duties to provide specific support and oversight to CIOC with EHCPs or on that pathway. This has helped to manage our concerns regarding the SEND belonging regulations where EHCPs are transferred/sit with the LA where the child lives rather than the LA with who holds parental responsibility. The VS SEND Lead has dedicated tight oversight of all such cases, attending all meetings and offering support and challenge to schools regarding provision and to LA SEND teams. In addition, she is able to support colleagues within social care regarding SEND issues such as writing advice and being a point of contact where a child with an EHCP needs to move placement/school.</p>
<p>Letterbox (book parcels) for Pre-School and Primary aged pupils to promote reading.</p>	<p>Reading is an important aspect of learning at all ages and we actively promote this at home. Children tell us they enjoy receiving the parcels and actively engage with these alongside foster carers and social workers. Some foster carers fail to collect parcels if they are not at home when the post arrives and these parcels are then returned to the Virtual School. Where this is an issue, it has been raised by Virtual School with social workers/fostering to ensure these are collected and used. Some social workers like to take the packs when they undertake visits and engage with CIOC about them. We have also provided spare books to the Foster Carers Association for use at their activities and events and also offer those not collected to other vulnerable children. Feedback from a carer of one of our children</p> <p><i>“ G advised that A loves receiving the books and how he really takes pride in them – having them to hand on a bookshelf in his room. She said he will often go back and read ones he has previously read.</i></p>

	<i>She commented that they are quality books which would be costly if they were to purchase them. A said he loves reading and school advised that this is clear as he loves to read in school also and is also keen to make up his own stories”</i>
Maths and English tuition for students via Kip McGrath study centre.	The sessions have been delivered weekly either virtually and face to face based on the preference of the young person. The option of online makes it easily accessible and is inclusive for all of our learners wherever they live. We continue to offer tuition to Years 5, 6, 9, 10 and 11 including sessions during the summer holidays. 33 children and young people have taken up the offer during the academic year. Of the Year 11s who attended, 50% of those who attended achieve a grade 5+ in English and Maths.
Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) training/supervision and Nurture training /supervision.	Following our ACE pathfinder work the roll of the ELSA was identified as a key role within school for supporting children and also driving change. The Virtual School has funded a programme to ensure all BwD schools have at least one qualified ELSA. Where possible we have extended this to out of borough schools who have our CIOC on roll. We now have 109 fully accredited ELSAs working with our children in schools in BwD and beyond. ELSAs and other school staff have also taken up our training offer for Nurture and the associated supervision.
Events including the Annual CIOC Celebration of Achievement.	The highlight of the Virtual School Year is this event. We were able to celebrate the successes of our children and young people together at Ewood Park. As is our tradition we eat together and then have our awards bringing together all those who support children and young people and their corporate parents.
New Directions Commission	All of our young people in Years 9 to 13 receive high quality, impartial careers, advice and guidance wherever they live or are educated. This has been extended to ensure it continues until the end of Year 13 regardless of when the young person turns 18 (the point at which they are removed from the roll of the VS) 90% of our Year 12/13 cohort were in EET in September 2022 with the remaining 10% being actively supported to re-engage.

PEP Quality Assurance Officer	All PEPs have an initial QA check with immediate feedback to social worker/school where they do not meet requirements linked to the needs of the CIOC. This role ensures that the drive to ensure all CIOC have a high quality PEP that meets their educational needs is maintained and that social workers and school staff are supported in achieving this. PEP QA Officers have been fundamental to the roll out of the ePEP via the Delegation Portal.
Additional resource/support on a case by case basis such as 1:1 tuition.	1:1 tuition and Nisai online tuition is used to support our young people on a short-term basis often when they have moved placement and are awaiting a school place out of area. Nisai core curriculum allows us to give young people access to a core timetable of on-line learning with less than 24 hours' notice to the service. This and bespoke support through 1:1 tuition is used when young people need to move a short notice and whilst we await a school place in another LA or if they cannot attend school for safeguarding reasons.
Foster Carers Association	The Virtual School has a strong working relationship with BwD FCA. Fundraising for the FCA is a challenge in the current financial climate. The Virtual School was able to offer £2500 to support events for CIOC /foster families. This included for example summer gala, outdoor activity residential and day trips.
Participation and Inclusion Manager	The PP+ makes a contribution to the salary of the Participation and Inclusion Manager. She leads the work with Our Care Leavers and CIOC Voice Groups and supports gathering of feedback from CIOC and care leavers.
Mind of My Own App	This is an inclusive app that empowers young people to participate in their lives and communicate their views to a trusted adult. The Virtual School has funded this for a 3 year period to support participation of children and young people. The roll out is being led within social care and is currently in the implementation phase. In 2022/23 a pioneer team was setup and trained with plans to train further practitioners in 2023/24. There will be involvement from the Practice Development Team in supporting the



	project with plans to review practice standards, bitesize training and a train the trainer model alongside a comms plan.
ELKLAN Training	This was a 5 day accredited practical course to develop speech and language support for 11-16s for BwD secondary practitioners (8). We know that speech and language difficulties impact on a young person's ability to access learning so developing practitioners to understand and meet their needs is significant. This work will be further developed in 2023/24 looking at a whole school approach to speech and language for secondary schools.
FSW Commission	Although overall attendance for the Virtual School is good, a small number of pupils struggle to attend school regularly. A commission was agreed 2 days per week to provide specific and targeted support for these young people (often on care orders at home). This is a slow process as often the attendance issues are entrenched pre-care. This was a new arrangement beginning in April 2023 with impact of this approach to be reviewed in Spring 2024.

## Attainment and Progress

### Note:

*Please note that all the data used is provisional and un-validated at this stage and are subject to correction when DfE issue the final data release. **All data included in this report is based on children in care for 12 months or more on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, is matched data included in the National Pupil Database.** The Government have stated that there has been a return to pre-pandemic grading in Summer 2023 in England with protection in place for students. It is most meaningful to compare results to 2019, the last summer exam series before the pandemic.*

### Summary

Although overall, gaps in performance between looked after children and their non-looked after peers remain large there are many strengths for BwD CIOC.

Performance at the end of KS4 is often a challenge but our KS4 young people had much success in 2022/23 despite the turbulent times of previous years. It is important that these figures are contextualised for each cohort given the complexity of their individual circumstances, consideration should be given for example to Gender, SEND status, when the young person came into care and the number of placements (stability) they have had during this time. An overview of this is provided at the start of each section for each key stage. Size of the cohort clearly impacts on percentages when the group is small.

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Context	Virtual School	North West CLA	National CLA
Cohort (matched)	7	270	1110
Gender Boys/Girls	(5) 71% / (2) 29%	52% / 48%	56% / 44%
SEN Support	(3) 43%	26%	23%
EHCP	0	7%	9%
Educated in LA	(4) 57%	-	-
<b>Assessments</b>			
Good Level of Development	28.6%	39%	41%
Average No Exp ELGs	13.0	11.1	11.1
Prime Goals	57.1%	48%	48%

Whilst our EYFS children performed below their peers regionally and nationally for GLD they achieved significantly higher in the prime goals. In terms of specific goals Maths was a real strength with 85.7% achieving that goal which was not only higher than their peers nationally and regionally but also than all children in BwD schools.

## PHONICS

Context	Virtual School	North West CLA	National CLA
Cohort (matched)	10	340	1450
Gender Boys/Girls	(7) 70% / (3) 30%	50% / 50%	54% / 46%
SEN Support	(5) 50%	32%	32%
EHCP	0	9%	12%
Educated in LA	(6) 60%	71%	65%
<b>Outcome</b>			
Working At Standard	80%	62%	61%

The threshold to be working at or above standard in phonics is 32. Our Year 1 children performed well in the phonics test 50% achieving the standard in the 37-40 range. 3/5 of our children with SEN achieved the standard.

## KEY STAGE 1

Context	Virtual School	North West CLA	National CLA
Cohort (matched)	6	350	1640
Gender Boys/Girls	(1) 17% / (5) 83%	50% / 50%	53% / 47%
SEN Support	(2) 33%	34%	35%
EHCP	0	11%	16%
Educated in LA	(5) 83%	77%	65%
<b>Assessments</b>			
Reading EXS	83.3%	53%	46%
Writing EXS	83.3%	44%	36%
Maths EXS	83.3%	53%	46%
Science EXS	83.3%	65%	57%

RWM	83.3%	39%	32%
RWMS	83.3%	39%	31%

2022/23 academic year is the final year for the end of national curriculum assessments at the end of key stage 1 from 2022/23. Whilst it should be noted that our KS1 cohort is very small our KS1 pupils outperformed their peers nationally and regionally as well as all pupils in BwD.

## KEY STAGE 2

Key Stage 2 attainment and progress is measured based on outcomes from tests and teacher assessments undertaken at the end of primary school.

Context	Virtual School	North West CLA	National CLA
Cohort (matched)	13	550	2620
Gender Boys/Girls	(9) 69% / (4) 31%	52% / 48%	52% / 48%
SEN Support	(8) 62%	32%	33%
EHCP	(2) 15%	24%	25%
Educated in LA	(12) 92%	74%	66%
<b>Assessments</b>			
RWM EXS	38.5%	37%	36%
Reading EXS	46.2%	57%	54%
Writing EXS	46.2%	47%	47%
Maths EXS	53.8%	52%	50%
<b>Progress</b>			
Reading	-0.15	+0.88	-0.09
Writing	+1.08	-0.54	-0.68
Maths	-1.25	-0.01	-0.70

Maths was the subject where attainment was highest and above CLA peers regionally and nationally and in Reading, Writing and Maths combined they were also slightly higher.

Progress - a score of zero means pupils in this school, on average, do about as well at Key Stage 2 as those with similar prior attainment nationally. A positive score means pupils, on average, do better at Key Stage 2 than those with similar prior attainment nationally. A negative score means pupils, on average, do not make as much progress by the end of Key Stage 2 as those with similar prior attainment nationally. Progress figures for KS2 were better than CLA regionally and nationally in writing but somewhat below in Maths despite this being the area where attainment was highest.

## KEY STAGE 4

**GCSE Grades** – GCSEs are now measured as 9-1 (9 being the highest), Grade 4 is a 'standard' pass and Grade 5 is a 'strong' pass. A key measure is whether pupils achieve both English and Maths.

Context	Virtual School	North West CLA	National CLA
Cohort (matched)	28*	960	5110
Gender Boys/Girls	(15) 54% / (13) 46%	52% / 48%	55%/45%
SEN Support	(3) 11%	22%	23%
EHCP	(10) 36% **	23%	22%

Educated in LA	(19) 68%	67%	62%
In care KS3/4			
<b>Attainment/Progress</b>			
Avg Att 8 Score	18.4	19.8	19.9
Avg Prog 8 Score	-1.29	-1.41	-1.24
GCSE English 4+	28.6%	28%	36%
GCSE English 5+	21.4%	18%	23%
GCSE Maths 4+	21.4%	26%	33%
GCSE Maths 5+	14.3%	12%	17%
GCSE Eng & Maths 4+	21.4%	20%	26%
GCSE Eng & Maths 5+	14.3%	9%	12%
Achieved at least 1 qualification	(27) 96%	-	-

\* please note that 1 pupil is included in this figure in the national data set who were NOT in Year 11 in 2022. This figure has however been used to ensure consistency of reporting with national data.

\*\* the EHCP figure included in the national data set was 21% - this was a significant variation from the correct figure therefore the LA figure has been used.

The percentage of Young People in Year 11 with EHCPs was significantly higher than their peers regionally and nationally however it is possible other LA data is incorrect in a similar way to BwD. Many of these young people did not necessarily access GCSE qualifications but did achieve other qualifications in line with their needs.

One young person chose not to sit any exams due to bereavement but is attending in college with plans to sit GCSE in Year 12. A talented artist she gained a distinction in her art coursework and continues on this path in college.

### **KS4 Success Stories**

- 2 YP achieved 9 GCSEs at Grade 4 and above including English and Maths at Grade 5.
- 2 YP gained 6 GCSE passed at Grade 4 and above including English and Maths at Grade 5.
- 2 YP gained 6 and 7 passes at Grade 4 and above including English and Maths
- All of our YP with EHCPs gained at least 1 nationally recognised qualification.
- One of our unaccompanied asylum seeking young people who arrived with us in December 2021 with no English made fabulous progress achieving Grade 2 in GCSE English, Maths and Science as well as ESOL certificates and other entry level qualifications.

### **Destinations**

In September 2022, all Year 11 young people had an offer of Education, Employment or training or continued in their existing provision and 16 Care Leavers were attending university and 2 undertaking apprenticeships within the council.

### **Management Information**

The Virtual School has continued its use of a management information system to enable effective tracking and analysis of data utilising SIMS. The development of the system to date incorporates the following:

- Maintenance of the Virtual School roll incorporating pupils from Reception to Year 13.
- Termly assessment data collected and imported into the system.
- Appending PEPs, EHCPs, Educational Psychology reports and other relevant documents to each child's file.
- Recording of SEN status.
- Recording of Protocol ID to enable matching to the social care system Liquid Logic.
- All relevant SEND details and documents are also saved within Liquid Logic in order to ensure Social Care colleagues are fully aware of a child's SEND status.

## **Children in their Early Years**

Early Years Personal Education Plans (EY PEPs) are a statutory requirement for three and four-year-old children who are accessing their free early learning offer. These children are eligible for EYPP funding which the setting claims to support them with appropriate resources to meet their individual needs and targets. The EY PEP also details the impact of how this funding is spent.

Over the last year we have established an online Portal return for settings who previously submitted electronic copies. This has facilitated an increase in returns as the settings are prompted to complete these termly by the Virtual School.

## **Quality Assurance**

The Early Years Quality Improvement Team undertake quality assurance work of EY PEPs, providing feedback where an EY PEP is considered less than good, to support ongoing improvement. The EY PEP information should reflect that the child's individual needs are being met and that they are making good progress with their targets. It is also important that the voice of the child drives their early education with their interests shaping these targets. This consideration will impact more on their learning, development and emotional wellbeing

This year we have found that challenges arise when a LAC is attending a setting out of area (OOA) or has moved from one setting to another during the year. We have noticed a trend this year where social workers are applying for 30 hours funding to further support children attending settings in their pre-school year.

## **Post 16**

The Virtual School roll incorporates Post 16 students in Years 12 and 13 recording where they attend for their education, employment, and training or if they are NEET or Not Known. Post 16 PEPs are in place and due to changes within children's social care, these are now undertaken by social workers rather than the Leaving Care Personal Advisors working with young people and their education providers. Completion rate is good for this group with an average of 96% for the academic year. A commission is in place utilising the Pupil Premium Plus funding with the New Directions team to provide all of our young people in Years 9 to 13 on the roll of the BwD Virtual School with good quality, impartial careers, advice and guidance wherever they live or are educated. As young people officially come off the role of the Virtual School when they turn 18, we have worked with New Directions to extend the commission to the end of Year 13 so that young people are supported in progression to Higher Education or work. The main focus of work in the Autumn term was to engage with Year 11 pupils regarding their post 16 options. Support at this

time was also focused on the Year 12 and 13 that are at College or NEET. During the Spring and Summer terms, the focus has been to engage with Year 9 pupils supporting them through their option choices and with Year 10 pupils in preparation for Year 11 whilst providing continued support for the Year 11, 12 and 13 young people. Typical work involved assisting with CV creation, applications for part & full -time employment, apprenticeships and training opportunities, working closely with Leaving Care PA's. New Directions Advisors have attended PEP meetings held in school/colleges and seen the pupils individually in school and through home visits. They have been able to feedback to school and support pupils with their choices. New Directions Advisors also attend selected LAC reviews, particularly in years 11-13 where concerns regarding education, training and employment have been highlighted. They have continued to work closely with Social Workers, Designated Teachers and carers to ensure that they are kept informed of the New Directions role and how they can support. Our advisors also work with SEND teams regarding post 16 destinations and funding and Youth Justice Service for a small number of our young people both pre-post 16. By the end of the summer term our pupils have been seen or offered the services of New Directions, working to ensure that post 16 young people access and then remain in post 16 education, training and education which makes a positive difference to their lives.

### **Virtual College for Care Leavers**

The Virtual College was established following the ILACS in response to concerns raised that there was a 'cliff edge' for care leavers in terms after the age of 18 – particularly in relation to their Education, Employment and Training.

The Virtual College Partnership Board was put into place with a draft terms of reference and membership in October 2022. For a period of time the Virtual College for Care Leavers and the Virtual College for SEND merged as there was some overlap however following joint meetings it was clear the remit for the groups needed to have different focus. The 2 areas were then separated. A NEET/EET working group was already established and became a sub-group of the Virtual College for Care Leavers.

Easter 2023 the Strategic Director of Children's Services requested that the Virtual School Headteacher take responsibility for the development of the Virtual College for Care Leavers. This fits with the direction of travel of the DfE who have proposed that VSH have extended duties for care leavers up to the age of 25.

#### **Terms of Reference: Objectives**

1. Listen and respond to the voice of young people and young adults to understand what young people want and need to fulfil their ambitions, and continually monitor views.
2. Support and challenge young people to raise their aspirations and achieve successful outcomes.
3. Increase the number of young people in or have left care who are engaged in Education, Employment & Training.
4. Develop a strategic partnership that pools intelligence across the authority to influence the range of employment, education and training opportunities available in the borough for young people to engage in and identify areas of development.
5. Ensure every young person up to the age of 18 has a Personal Education Plan in place.

6. All CIOC and Care Leavers have a pathway plan in place from the age of 16 which supports their transition to adulthood.

### **Terms of Reference: Outputs**

- Develop a Virtual College Strategic Action Plan
- Monitor the progress of the delivery of the Action Plan and flex the strategy for continuous improvement.
- Develop effective links with all organisations who provide education, employment or training both within the borough and where our young people are living. To influence their plans to reflect what young people are communicating that they want and need
- Ensure every young person in care 16 + and those who have left care and are 18 plus to have opportunities to engage in education, employment or training and receive appropriate information, advice and guidance to support this.
- Have oversight of the work of the Virtual College Subgroups.

There are 2 operational sub-groups to deliver specific activities that report into the Virtual College Partnership Board.

- NEET/EET Sub-Group
- Dare to Dream Project

### **Previously Looked After Children**

In January 2023 the Virtual School Education Manager for PLAC and CwSW took up post. After introducing the new role, she has supported parents in regard to their understanding of the role of a school in their child's life. For example, one parent was unsure of their child's needs in education and she was supported in a meeting with the school to look at need, plans in place and next steps. The parent valued this input as the school ensured interventions were in place and the Education Manager was able to explain to her what school was doing and why.

As part of initial consultations, parents of SGO and adoptive parents felt that there was a limited offer for them in terms of support with the trauma that their children exhibited. In August a support and training group was established utilising some of the available PLAC grant funding. This is offered utilising additional time with the VS Educational Psychologist to support these parents and carers as a specific group and will continue on a termly basis based on positive feedback.

To support school the Education Manager undertook an audit with schools and has ensured all Designated Teachers are aware of their duties in relation to PLAC. An Inclusion Plan has been devised and trialled and will be recommended to schools for evidencing the use and impact of the Pupil Premium Plus from September. The existing offer of support for PLAC pupils to be supported by the New Direction Team for Careers Information Advice and Guidance was not being fully utilised. An updated offer was developed and issued to the relevant people in the school and this is now in place for 6 pupils.

For adopted pupils specifically, work has been undertaken to understand the current policies and procedures in place through building relations with our Regional Adoption Agency, Adoption Now.

### **Extended Duties – Children with a Social Worker**

On taking up post the Education Manager PLAC and CWSW contacted all Blackburn with Darwen schools, social workers, Independent Reviewing Officers and the Youth Justice Service to introduce the new role and remit of the Education Manager. All professionals understood what support is offered and for which children. This was received with enthusiasm and was recorded on the audit of each school.

It was noted that some schools were questioning access to training for Trauma Informed Practice specifically linked to Children with a Social Worker. Consequently, the Education Manager became involved with the working group in regard to Trauma within the LA to ensure this pathway was clear and delivered to the schools. In addition, she also joined the Neglect Working Party, Emotionally Based School Avoidance group, Education Manager Network and Mental Health in Schools Team steering group to ensure she was up to date with the latest statistics and guidance for vulnerable pupils in the LA. There has been a full exploration of the training that was on offer both in and out of the borough so that schools could be signposted where relevant.

A review as undertaken of the education data that was held by social workers on the social care system. Following an audit of this there were some gaps that could hinder getting information to the relevant professional in the relevant school. Working with the Deputy Director of Children's Services a discussion of the findings was shared and issues noted for action. To support the development of this for professionals, a contacts tracker that recorded each school's DSL, DT, DDSL, SENCO and SMHL name and contact email to ensure the correct information is there for social workers to select in the system. This is now maintained withing the Virtual School and updated on a monthly basis.

Another outcome from the school audits was that the DSLs at times felt isolated and not sure of where to gain up to date information specific to their role. Working with the Designated Safeguarding Manager half termly meetings were organised for the secondary schools initially. These have been well attended and next steps will be to put them in place for primary schools.

Part of the non-statutory guidance for CwSW is to monitor data on vulnerable pupils. As an LA we have decided to concentrate on those open on Child Protection initially as the cohort is smaller and it does not have the same complexities in terms of consent as those open at lower levels of the continuum of need. Plans were made to gather regular data on the number of open cases, part time timetables, attendance and exclusions. This will all be in place by September 2023. This will facilitate challenge and support schools, social workers and other professionals to ensure the children are given the correct support and intervention relevant to their need at the right time.

LA transition days for Nursery to School and year 6 to 7 with a specific focus on those with SEMH needs were developed by our SEMH team. The Education Manager attended both days and made a recommendation that all vulnerable pupils should be discussed as part of this work not just SEMH. This will be implemented in the plans for the new academic year.

## **Training and Events**

A training plan was offered through the Virtual School to support the priority 'CIOC make good progress through supported, trained and developed Virtual School staff/governors, designated



teachers, social workers and foster carers. Since the pandemic, training has been adapted to be delivered over Teams where appropriate but some sessions are face to face, the following sessions were offered in most cases on a termly basis:

- Writing PEPS/SMART targets Training
- Introductory Counselling Skills Training
- Nurture Supervision
- Children In Our Care – Special Educational Needs / EHCP's Training
- ELSA Supervision
- 3 Day Nurture Course
- NEW Designated Teacher Training
- Speech & Language Support for 11-16's Elklan Course
- Introductory Counselling Skills Training
- Blended ELSA & Nurture Supervision
- ELSA Full 5 Days Training
- Living with Trauma & Attachment Training
- Social Worker Induction
- Governor Training

A further area of focus was transition and ensuring Year 6 and Year 11 pupils were well supported in what can be a tricky time for many. The VSH and CIOC Education Manager also attend and support Foster Carers Association or forum meetings as required. Post our ILACS inspection, there has been an on-going focus on writing PEPs/SMART Targets as this was identified as an area to further develop, this training is offered termly.

The annual Celebration of Achievement for Children in our Care and Care Leavers took place in November 2022. Children and young people in care and care leavers who attended were nominated for awards by their carers, schools and Children's Services staff in the categories of, academic achievement/progress, attendance, behaviour, sport, arts, resilience and determination and making a positive contribution. In addition, there were a number of special awards for those who have particularly excelled in these areas. We also celebrated those who are now University students and those who have gained apprenticeships including within the council. The Premier Suite was full with 135 people comprising of children and young people in care and care leavers, foster carers, parents, school staff, Mayor and consort, Leader of the Council, Chief Executive, Acting Director of Children's Services and a range of officers from Children's Services Department. Our special guest for the evening was comedian and Britain's Got Talent Finalist Steve Royle who presented the awards and provided some great entertainment which was great fun. Have you ever seen mouth juggling and someone balance a hat on their nose? We were also treated to a very special singing performance from one of our young people. The John Bury Trust kindly sponsored one of the special awards and all of our award winners received a certificate and gift voucher. Feedback from those who attended the event:

***“The award ceremony for all the young people with Blackburn with Darwen on Wednesday was wonderful. What an amazing event. I felt so privileged to be a part of it and it was so wonderful to see the young people getting recognised for their efforts. And all the carers and guardians too”.***

***“Just wanna say how proud I am of anyone who is or has been in care. It was brilliant to see so many happy young people and their guardians supporting them for the celebration evening. It's so***

***important we celebrate our achievements in such an inviting way make new friends and finding new ambitions in our path to adulthood”.***

The Virtual School team contribute to various activities/working groups across the council and externally. These have included:

- Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group
- Corporate Parenting Executive Board
- Governor Services Training Programme
- Multi-agency audits
- Commissioning Panel
- Foster Carers Association Meetings
- St Thomas’s Centre Management Committee
- School governing body
- NW VSHs leadership and sub-groups
- Virtual College and associated sub-groups
- SEND Fragile Cases
- SEND Data Mapping
- SEND Improvement Group
- SENCO Induction
- EBSA Working Group
- CSAP Neglect Champions Operational Group
- DSL Forum
- Parents in Partnership
- Year 6/7 Transition LA Event

### **Staff CPD**

It is important to build the expertise of the team through relevant CPD and to ensure that the needs of our children and young people are met. The following has been undertaken by members of the Virtual School team:

DOJO Cyber Security Training 2022-23	BwD Information Governance Training 2022-23
Climate Emergency	BwD Governance 23/24
Safeguarding Children & Adults Awareness	Living with Trauma & Attachment
Contingency Planning.	Ensuring accurate identification of SEN in school and college settings.
Making the Most of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).	Collaboration is Key – Multi Agency Approaches to Tackling Exploitation.
Joint Health Funding.	Reducing Health Inequalities for CYP Workshop - Autism in Schools.
Neurodiversity Conference.	Early Years SEND Support Service Roadshow.
SEN Professionals: Helping Neurodiverse Children Engage with School.	Strategies for Supporting Speech and Language in School.
Fire Marshall Training.	Personal Plan Approach.
Information Governance Training.	Local Authority CME Best Practice.

Trauma Informed Lancashire Basic Awareness - Multi Agency Partnership Staff.	Circle of Adults
Power Bi Training 2023	Graded Care Profile
Children Social Workers Attachment and Trauma	Counselling Skills
Nurture	ELSA
UCAS webinar	Clearing Webinar
T Level update	Post 16-PPG webinar
NAVSH Webinars	SASH - Support Around Sexual Harm
ASK update/Webinar on Supporting Young People into Apprenticeships	ACT Awareness (Action Counters Terrorism)
Supporting the Supporters - HE for CEES (x3 sessions)	Various updates from Providers including Blackburn College, Blackburn Rovers, MPCT,
Advancing Access CPD - Supporting Students to makes choices at 16 and 18	NAVSH National Conference
Equality Diversity and Inclusion	Fire Safety
Health and Safety in the workplace	Manual Handling
Safeguarding against Radicalisation the Prevent Duty	Safeguarding Children and Adults Awareness
Working with Display Screen Equipment	Safer Recruitment
EP Team Development Days	Safeguarding - Modern Slavery Awareness
Safeguarding - Boys and Child Sexual Exploitation	

## Next Steps and Areas for Development

The Virtual School, like all schools, has a School Improvement Plan, which focuses on key priorities for the new academic year alongside the corporate plan and wider departmental plan. For 2023/24 the priorities are identified as:

1. Ensure that CIOC attendance is closely monitored with a clear plan for those where issues arise.
2. Introduce attendance monitoring for those open on CP plans and monitor the impact. Working with professionals to narrow the gap ensuring attendance targets are in place for children on a plan.
3. Implement systems to monitor and promote educational attainment and achievements of CIOC and care leavers to improve outcomes.
4. Further develop and implement specific systems and process for monitoring and supporting VS SEND pupils with/or potentially in need of an EHCP, wherever they live or are educated.
5. To improve practice and outcomes through high quality PEPs, effectively delivered and monitored.
6. Pupil Premium Plus policy is implemented to ensure its use is clearly documented and has an impact on the outcomes for CIOC
7. CIOC and PLAC make good progress through supported, trained and developed Virtual School staff/governors, designated teachers, social workers and parents/carers.
8. Give priority support to CIOC age 14-17 to increase education, employment and training (EET) activity and lead the work of the Virtual College to support care leavers age 18-25.
9. Ensure Virtual School staff have a safe working environment and opportunities for professional development.
10. Develop the Virtual School structure to provide full coverage for all statutory and non-statutory duties and support delivery of Virtual College

11. Further develop our understanding of the specific educational needs of BwD children with a social worker. Continue to create a culture of high aspirations across both education and social care that helps to ensure children with a social worker make educational progress and reach their potential.

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Draft Awaiting Approval