

Cared For Children and Care Leavers Committee

Supplementary Agenda

Date:	Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025
Time:	2.00 pm
Venue:	Committee Suite 1, 2 and 3, Delamere House, Delamere Street, Crewe, CW1 2JZ

The agenda is divided into 2 parts. Part 1 is taken in the presence of the public and press. Part 2 items will be considered in the absence of the public and press for the reasons indicated on the agenda and at the foot of each report.

Please Note: This meeting will be live streamed. This meeting will be broadcast live and a recording may be made available afterwards. The live stream will include both audio and video. Members of the public attending and/or speaking at the meeting should be aware that their image and voice may be captured and made publicly available. If you have any concerns or require further information, please contact Democratic Services in advance of the meeting.

PART 1 – MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESENT

7. Cared for Children and Care Leavers Quarter 2 Scorecard (Pages 3 - 12)

To receive the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Committee Quarter 2 Scorecard for 2025-26.

8. Cared for Children and Care Leavers Committee Annual Report 2024-25 (Pages 13 - 42)

To receive the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Committee Annual report for 2024-25.

11. Virtual School Head Teacher Annual Report 2024/25 (Pages 43 - 102)

To receive the Virtual School Head Teacher Annual Report for 2024-25.

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Membership: Councillors M Beanland, S Bennett-Wake, D Clark, L Crane (Chair), R Fletcher, E Gilman, G Hayes, S Holland, R Moreton, B Puddicombe, J Saunders (Vice-Chair) and L Wardlaw

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Cared For Children and Care Leavers Committee

02 December 2025

Cared for Children and Care Leavers Scorecard August 2025

Report of: Tracy Stephen, Director of Family Help and Children's Social Care

Ward(s) Affected: All

For Scrutiny

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report sets out the performance for the Cared for Children and Care Leavers service for July and August 2025. The Cared for Children and Care Leavers committee is asked to note the performance for July and August and to provide support and challenge in relation to performance for our Cared for Children and Care Leavers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cared for Children and Care Leavers Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the contents of the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Scorecard August 2025 report.

Background

- 2 The Cared for Children and Care Leavers Scorecard provides key performance data, previously reported quarterly, however currently reported monthly, which indicates the trajectory of practice and performance across the service and for our cared for children and care experienced young people. This report

highlights key practice areas with supporting narrative for information, assurance and scrutiny purposes.

3 Key strengths and areas for development identified within the scorecard are outlined.

3.1 Strengths

Across July and August 2025, the continuing downward trajectory in relation to the number of children becoming cared for in Cheshire East has been consistent, albeit by small numbers of children. This is positive as it indicates that our work is supporting children to remain living with their parents safely. Our rate per 10,000 of cared for children (66%) sits below the national average (70%) and above that of our statistical neighbours (60%). There are further improvements to be made in this area, which should be achieved through our Families First reforms and in progression of discharging Care Orders for children who no longer require us to share parental responsibility.

Across July and August, 90% of our cared for children have had their cared for children reviews within timescales; this shows an improvement on Q1 data which was 80% and means that children's care planning is being reviewed and scrutinised independently without delay. 98% of children have been involved in their reviews, again this is a positive increase on Q1's data of 92%.

There has been an improvement in the number of care leavers being in apprenticeships, 16 in August 2025, an increase by 33% from 12 in Q1. We have 35% of care leavers aged 19-21 years who are not in education, employment and training (NEET); this has remained consistent and is below the national and statistical neighbour data of 38% and 37% respectively.

The previous Scorecard report to the Committee highlighted that an area of focus within the service is the updating of child and family assessments so that we effectively understand and are able to meet children's needs. The data tells us that 70% of cared for children have an up-to-date assessment which is an increase on Q1 data of 62%.

3.2 Assurance

The scorecard shows an increase in the number of children living in residential care, at 54 children and young people in August 2025, an increase from 46 in Q1. We know that this figure has remained the same during September 2025. This is indicative of the challenges we face regarding placement sufficiency, something which is a challenge for most Local Authorities throughout the country.

We have recently commissioned an organisation called ReConnect. ReConnect co-designs and delivers targeted intervention programmes that enable children to transition from high-cost residential care into more beneficial

care settings. The organisation aims to improve foster carer sufficiency by providing proactive and targeted recruitment strategies that enhance foster carer availability, by tapping into the transferable skills of individuals in related fields. Our aim is to work with ReConnect to enable children, for whom residential care is inappropriate, move to suitable family environments, either within their own family or a foster carer. This work is in very early stages, with initial meetings held on 4th November 2025 and decisions relating to commissioning awaited.

The narrative provided in relation to children living in residential provisions also applies to children living out of borough, which has increased to 205 in August from 197 in Q1. For a small number of children, their care plan includes them living outside of the local area, due to risk factors identified; however, for the majority of children living outside of the local area, this is influenced by availability of placements. A number of the children living out of area are also living in residential care, so the work with ReConnect should support us in bringing children closer to Cheshire East.

Data for children having review health assessments and dentist visits has remained stable over the last two months. SDQ performance remains low, and this is due to, as outlined in the last report, the reporting differing to the practice. Reporting is for SDQ's after 3 months in care; however, we seek SDQ's after a child has been in care for 10 months, current compliance against this indicator is 76%. This aligns to statutory guidance that an SDQ should be available at a child's review health assessment, completed at 12 months in care and annually thereafter.

It is understood that work is ongoing within the ICB for SDQ's to be completed at the point a child enters care, and once this process is implemented, this will allow for a baseline of a child's strengths and difficulties and the review at around 10 months into care will tell us the areas in which the child is progressing or requires additional support.

The number of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) has risen by 5 between Q1 2025-26 and the end of August. There are a number of factors influencing this, which include young people finishing study programmes in June/July and being unsure what they want to do next, taking a period of time until engaged in EET. The Local Authority had a high number of UASC enter care around 2022/2023 and this impacts upon an increase in data of NEET to some extent, as for some of our UASC who become care leavers, they do not have the right to work and may have exhausted all study options at age 18 due to language barriers. It is anticipated that data in September and October will remain high, as typically, it is during this time of year that young people commence a programme of study which they decide not to pursue and move between courses or between education, training and employment.

- 3.3 Our ongoing improvement work will continue, with a particular focus on the below indicators.

Whilst we have improved performance relating to children having up to date assessments of their needs, 70% compliance in this area remains lower than we want it to be. Therefore, this area of practice remains a key focus over the remainder of 2025 because it is crucial that we understand our children's assessed needs so that we can ensure their care plans are responding to unmet need.

We will be working closely with ReConnect over the coming months to identify children and young people who are living in residential provisions because of sufficiency challenges, rather than as a result of their individual needs, and seeking to implement a step-down plan into foster care or family care. Similarly, we will be considering children whose plan is one of residential care, to review their current needs and to consider whether a step-down to foster care would meet their needs.

The leadership team will consider the most helpful way to report on SDQ data. We need to better understand from ICB colleagues, a timeframe for implementing SDQ's being requested at the time a child enters care, to make a decision upon whether to retain the current performance measure indicator or to alter it to report on SDQ's at 10 months in care so that the data aligns with practice. Attempts have been made to gather this information from the ICB however the person who can provide the information is on annual leave.

Consultation and Engagement

- 4 There is no consultation required; the report is for information.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 5 The Committee's role includes scrutinising the performance of Children's Services so this report is for information.

Other Options Considered

- 6 Not applicable; the report is for information.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 7 No relevant issues identified.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 8 There are no direct financial implications or changes required however for context the 25/26 Cared for Children net budget is £45.513m.

Human Resources

9 There are no human resources implications identified.

Risk Management

10 There are risks associated with some performance measures as set out above.

Impact on other Committees

11 Scorecard information in relation to cared for children and care leavers will also be reported to the children and families committee.

Policy

12 There are no direct policy implications.

Commitment 1: Unlocking prosperity for all	Commitment 2: Improving health and wellbeing	Commitment 3: An effective and enabling council
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Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

13 There are no decisions or proposals being made within this paper which require and Equality Impact Assessment.

Other Implications

14 None identified.

Consultation

Name of Consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
<i>Statutory Officer (or deputy) :</i>			
Ashley Hughes/ Chris Benham	S151 OfficerDeputy S151 Officer	19/11/25	19/11/25
Kevin O'Keefe	Interim Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)	19/11/25	21/11/25

<i>Legal and Finance</i>			
Jennie Summers	Head of Legal Services	20/11/25	20/11/25
Kathy Oliver / Samantha Longshaw	Principal Accountant	19/11/25	20/11/25
<i>Other Consultees:</i>			
<i>Executive Directors/Directors</i>			
Dawn Godfrey	Executive Director, Children's Services	18/11/25	18/11/25

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Allison Sollom Allison.sollom@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Cared for Children and Care Leavers Scorecard August 2025
Background Papers:	No background papers.

Aug 2025 - Cared for and Care Leavers Scorecard

Notes: The boxes that are grayed out are where national data is not applicable or data isn't available.

Notes: The column highlighted in blue reflects the most recent quarter being reported on

Notes: Rates from Q1 24/25 are calculated using the new 2023 ONS mid year population estimate 0-17 of 81,634 (Office of National Statistics) and are calculated as a rate per 10,000 children aged 0-17. This enables the local authority to be compared on a like for like basis with different local authorities or groups of authorities.

Priority	Indicator	Indicator name	24/25 outturn	Q4 24/25	Q1 25/26	Jul-25	Aug-25	25/26 outturn	Benchmark National (most recent available)	Benchmark Stat N'bour (most recent available)	Corporate Plan Aim	Acronym
General	G1	Number of cared for children	550	550	542	541	540				Fair	
	G2	Rate per 10,000 cared for children	67	67	66	66	66		70	60	Fair	
	G3	Number of care leavers (aged 16-21)		343	352	352	351				Fair	
Priority 1 - We will care for our Children and Young People as any good parent would	1.1	% cared for children reviews in timescales	91%	82%	80%	90%	90%				Fair	
	1.2	% of children and young people involved in their reviews	96%	96%	92%	94%	98%				Fair	
Priority 2 - Improved Education, Employment and Training outcomes	2.1	Number of 16-18 year old care leavers that are NEET		14	25	26	30				Fair	NEET - Not in Education, Employment or Training
	2.2	Number of care leavers accessing higher education (University)		26	29	25	21				Fair	
	2.3	Number of Cheshire East care leavers in apprenticeships (18+)		11	12	13	16				Fair	
	2.4	% 19-21 year care leavers that are NEET (as per national reporting)	36% NEET at birthday	37%	35%	36%	35%		38% NEET at birthday	37% NEET at birthday	Fair	NEET - Not in Education, Employment or Training.
rem safe	3.1	Number of cared for children in external foster care		119	131	126	112				Fair	
	3.2	Number of cared for children in internal foster care		120	121	115	133				Fair	
	3.3	Number of children in care living with relatives and friends (inc reg 24)		112	102	102	97				Fair	Reg 24 -Regulation 24
	3.4	Number of children placed with parents		37	41	42	44				Fair	
	3.5	Number of children and young people in residential care		47	46	51	54				Fair	

Priority	Indicator	Indicator name	24/25 outturn	Q4 24/25	Q1 25/26	Jul-25	Aug-25	25/26 outturn	Benchmark National (most recent available)	Benchmark Stat N'bour (most recent available)	Corporate Plan Aim	Acronym
Priority 3 - We will work to give all children and young people a forever home and keep them safe	3.6	Number of individuals with 3 or more placements (rolling 12mth figure)	63	63	61	66	60				Fair	
	3.7	% cared for children in care for at least 2.5yrs at the end of the period and living in their current placement for at least 2 years	69%	69%	69%	68%	65%		71%	72%	Fair	
	3.8	Number of cared for children placed over 20 miles from home address (Cheshire East and out of borough)		147	153	150	161				Fair	
	3.9	Number of children living out of borough		204	197	199	205				Fair	
	3.10	Number of cared for children who have been missing in the quarter (monthly from July 25)		28	45	15	16				Fair	
	3.11	Number of children who have a long term matched placement		117	119	110	112				Fair	
	3.12	Number of placement moves in the quarter (monthly from July 25)		91 (83 individuals)	81 (65 individuals)	44 (42 individuals)	37 (35 individuals)				Fair	
	3.13	% of currently cared for children who have had a C&F assessment in the last 12 mths		61%	62%	66%	70%				Fair	C&F - Children and Family
	3.14	% of Cared for Children in care for more than 1 mth who have had a review in the last 6 mths		93%	93%	95%	93%				Fair	
	3.15	% of children ceased to be looked after due to granting of special guardianship order (SGO) - year to date figure	14%	13%	17%	15%	14%		13%	12%	Fair	SGO - Special Guardianship Order
	3.16	% of children ceased to be looked after due to adoption - year to date figure	11%	11%	10%	7%	8%		10%	11%	Fair	
	3.17	Number of children with an adoption decision		46	40	44	43				Fair	
	3.18	Average number of days between entering care and moving in with adoptive family (A10 national indicator) - yearly figure		609	582	510	491		376		Fair	
	3.19	Average number of days between placement order and match with adoptive family (A2 national indicator) - yearly figure		281	261	199	195		185		Fair	
	4.1	Children looked after who had their annual health assessment (%)	92% (OC2 cohort)	89%	84%	85%	87%		89% (OC2 cohort)	86% (OC2 cohort)	Fair	
	4.2	Children looked after who had their teeth checked by a dentist in the last 12 months (%)	91% (OC2 cohort)	66%	96%	95%	95%		70% (OC2 cohort)	65% (OC2 cohort)	Fair	
	4.3	% of 4-16 in care for 3 months or more with a completed SDQ score in the last 12 mths	83% (OC2 cohort)	52%	46%	48%	52%		77% (OC2 cohort)	75% (OC2 cohort)	Fair	SDQ - Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. T

Priority	Indicator	Indicator name	24/25 outturn	Q4 24/25	Q1 25/26	Jul-25	Aug-25	25/26 outturn	Benchmark National (most recent available)	Benchmark Stat N'bour (most recent available)	Corporate Plan Aim	Acronym
	4.4	% of young people with a SDQ score of 20 or above	45% (OC2 cohort)	31%	30%	30%	30%		37% (OC2 cohort)	40% (OC2 cohort)	Fair	SDQ - Strenghts and Difficulties Questionnaire.
	4.5	Number of care leavers with a health passport		15/15 100%	21/21 100%	10/10 100%	5/5 100%				Fair	
Priority 5 - We will prepare young people for Adulthood	5.1	% of care leavers aged 16-21 with an up to date pathway plan in the last 6 mths		89%	94%	96%	95%				Fair	
	5.2	% of pathway plan reviews completed in timescales in the period		80%	86%	86%	89%				Fair	
	5.3	% of pathway plan reviews completed in the period where Young persons view were not sent/ gained		7%	7%	3%	0%				Fair	
	5.4	% of former relevant care leaver aged 18-21 that we are in touch with		97%	98%	99%	99%				Fair	
	5.5	% of 16-17 years old currently cared for with a PA allocated		34%	44%	43%	38%				Fair	PA - Personal Advisor
	5.6	% of 17-18 former relevant care leavers in suitable accommodation	96%	96%	93%	95%	97%		90% at yp birthday	88% at yp birthday	Fair	
	5.7	% of 19-21 former relevant care leavers in suitable accommodation	92%	96%	96%	95%	95%		88% at yp birthday	88% at yp birthday	Fair	
	5.8	Number of cared for children in secure/ remand placements		1	1	1	0				Fair	
	5.9	Number of former relevant care leavers aged 17-21 in custody		7	8	9	9				Fair	
	5.1	Number current UASC being cared for	38	28	34	35	34				Fair	UASC - Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker
	5.11	Number current/ former UASC care leavers (aged 18- 24)		125	124	123	123				Fair	UASC - Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker
	5.12	Number of individuals in staying put arrangement (aged 18-21)		54	55	46	49				Fair	

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Cared for Children and Care Leavers Committee

2 December 2025

Cared for Children and Care Leavers Annual Report 2024-25

Report of: Allison Sollom, Head of Service – Cared for Children and Care Leavers

Ward(s) Affected: All

For Scrutiny

Purpose of Report

- 1 The Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee Annual Report 2024-25 at Appendix 1 sets out the work of the committee and progress against the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy since April 2024.
- 2 This report supports the work of the committee in achieving the aim in the council's Corporate Plan to 'be the best corporate parents to our children in care.'

Executive Summary

- 3 The purpose of the Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee as an advisory committee to the Children and Families Committee is to ensure that the Council effectively discharges its role as corporate parent for all children and young people in care and care leavers from 0-25 years of age and holds partners to account for the discharge of their responsibilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cared for Children and Care Leavers Committee is recommended to:

1. Scrutinise the contents of the Cared for Children & Care Leaver Annual Report 2024-2025 & note the contents therein.

Background

- 4 The Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee Annual Report details the progress and achievements over 2024-25 against the six pledges the Council has made to cared for children and care leavers in the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy.
- 5 Key stakeholders, including cared for children and young people and care leavers, are regularly consulted on the work of the Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee and Council and partner services. The six pledges within the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy are based on what young people told us matters most to them.
- 6 As an advisory committee to the Children and Families Committee, one of the roles of the Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee is to act as advocate for cared for children and care leavers, ensuring that their needs are addressed through key plans, policies and strategies throughout the Council and its commissioned services.

Consultation and Engagement

- 7 There is no consultation required; the report is for information and scrutiny.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 8 The Committee's role includes scrutinising the performance of Children's Services so this report is for information and scrutiny.

Other Options Considered

- 9 Not applicable; the report is for information and scrutiny.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal/Governance

- 10 The recommendations proposed fall within the remit of the Cared for Children & Care Leavers Committee as outlined in the functions of the committee in Chapter 2 Part 4 of Cheshire East Constitution.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 11 There are no direct financial implications or changes required to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as a result of the recommendations in this report. Services which support and deliver the Local Authority's corporate parenting role will continue to work to ensure that they operate within the MTFS approved budgets. For context the 25/26 Cared for Children net budget is £45.513m.

Human Resources

- 12 The number of children in care and care leavers has implications for staffing, both within children's social care and enabling services.

Risk Management

- 13 Cared for children and care leavers are a vulnerable group for whom there are a number of risks, including poor outcomes in education and training, health, safeguarding and transition into adulthood. The Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy outlines plans to mitigate these risks.

Impact on other Committees

- 14 This report will be relevant to the Children and Families Committee given their function includes oversight and scrutiny of performance within Children's Services.

Policy

- 15 There are no direct policy implications.

Commitment 1: Unlocking prosperity for all	Commitment 2: Improving health and wellbeing	Commitment 3: An effective and enabling council
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Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 16 There are no decisions or proposals being made within this paper which require and Equality Impact Assessment.

Other Implications

- 17 None identified.

Consultation

Name of Consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
<i>Statutory Officer (or deputy):</i>			
Ashley Hughes/ Chris Benham	S151 Officer/Deputy S151 Officer	18/11/25	19/11/25

Kevin O'Keefe	Interim Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)	19/11/25	27/11/25
<i>Legal and Finance</i>			
Jennie Summers	Interim Head of Legal Services	19/11/25	24/11/25
Kathy Oliver	Principal Accountant	19/11/25	24/11/25
<i>Other Consultees:</i>			
<i>Directors</i>			
Dawn Godfrey	Executive Director, Children's Services	18/11/25	18/11/25

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Allison Sollom Allison.sollom@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Cared for Children and Care Leavers Annual Report 2024-25.
Background Papers:	No background papers

Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee Annual Report

2024 – 2025



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The Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee

Having the right values, beliefs and culture around prioritising and championing the needs of cared for children and young care-experienced adults is essential to achieving excellent outcomes for children and young people. Our corporate parenting responsibility is a shared one that requires a high level of commitment from the leadership of the council, as well as the support and ambition of all council employees and partners.

The name of the Corporate Parenting Committee was changed to the Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee in 2023 and in response to feedback from care experienced children and young people.

The purpose of the Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee, in its role as an advisory committee to the Children and Families Committee, is to ensure that the council effectively discharges its role as corporate parent for all children and young people in care, and care leavers from 0-25 years of age, and holds partners to account for the discharge of their responsibilities. The terms of reference are included within the [council's constitution](#), and these are reviewed annually.

The Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee is comprised of twelve cross-party members, with council officers in

attendance to support agenda items as required. The committee is administered by officers from democratic services. The committee meets bi-monthly.

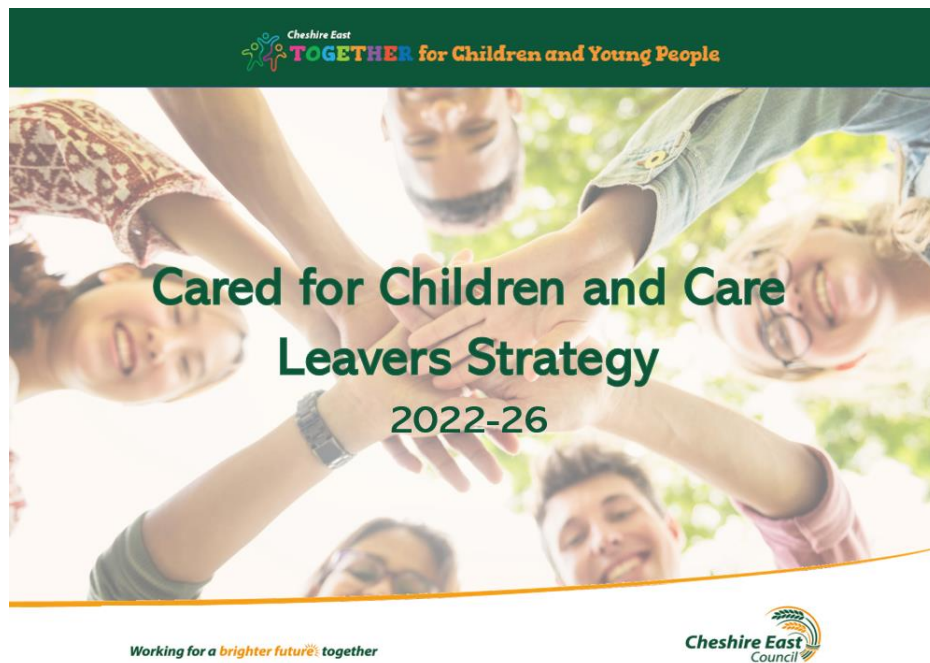
In preparation for the discussion and challenge at committee, our Shadow Committee of young people meets in advance to comment on the matters that are to be presented to committee. They share their lived experience of how services are designed and delivered and ultimately what it feels like to be a cared for child or care-experienced adult in Cheshire East.

Officers and partners present information to the committee. This includes information on how services are supporting cared for children, young people and care-experienced adults, and provides feedback from external scrutiny, so that members can evaluate the service that is being delivered to ensure we are effectively meeting children and young people's needs. Performance reporting and impact is scrutinised by the committee, along with issues and risks.

The committee oversees the delivery of our Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2022-2026 and the pledges that we made incorporated within this document.

Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy and Pledges

The **Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2022-26** was co-produced with children and young people and launched in July 2022.



The strategy sets out a number of pledges we are making to our cared for children and young people and those who are care

experienced. These are based on what these children and young people have told us will make the most difference to their lives:

Pledge One

We will care for our cared for children and care leavers as any good parent would

Pledge Two

We will improve education, employment, and training outcomes

Pledge Three

We will be truly aspirational to give all children and young people a forever home and to keep them safe

Pledge Four

We will improve health and wellbeing outcomes

Pledge Five

We will prepare young people for adulthood

Pledge Six

We will work **TOGETHER** with children and young people

Committee meetings receive performance reports alongside the Cared for Children and Care Leavers scorecard. Workstream groups aligned to the pledges are in place to ensure that the strategy is delivered effectively.

Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy Progress

Pledge One

We will care for our cared for children and care leavers as any good parent would
Staff and elected members will understand their responsibilities and be ambitious in their roles and they will advocate and champion the needs of cared for children and care leavers in everything they do.
We will know ourselves and the needs of our cared for children and care leavers well , and design and deliver services that meet these needs.
Decisions about children and young people’s lives, and the services that support them, will be made with them and for them . We will always value their views.

Key achievements this year

- The timeliness of cared for children’s reviews continues to be good, this was 90% at the end of August 25 and 98% of children were involved in their reviews. This means that our

children and young people have the opportunity to tell us their wishes and feelings in relation to their care planning.

- In May 2025, our Sector Led Improvement Partners from North Tyneside Council undertook a two day visit focusing on our Care Leaver service and to assess the impact of the improvements made since the ILACS in February 2024. Their findings highlighted strengths of practice in relation to performance indicators; the voice of the child was evident in all records viewed; there was strong evidence of the service supporting sustained family connections and strong evidence of engaging young people in education, employment and training.
- We have implemented a Corporate Parenting Champion Group, whose members are staff from across a range of services within Cheshire East Council. This group is led by one of the Cared for Children Service Managers and is in its infancy. The aim of the group is to develop insight into our corporate parenting responsibilities across the organisation and to utilise skills, experience, knowledge and opportunities that this brings for the benefit of our cared for children and care experienced adults. We have recently invited our Counsellor who is our Care Leaver Champion to join this group.
- Councillor Frontline visits took place to our Cared for Children service, our Court team and our Care Leavers service. Councillors told us that they were impressed with the dedication of staff who they described as passionate about

meeting the needs of our cared for children and young people and care leavers.

- We are in a consultation period currently with our care leavers in relation to their views about care leaver status becoming a protected characteristic. So far, this move is welcomed by those who have expressed their views. Once the consultation period ends, work will begin to progress this being agreed.
- Our Shadow Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee continues to take place regularly and our Care Leaver Ambassadors often attend our Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee to update members on the ongoing work of the Shadow Committee and to influence decision-making.
- In 2024, we opened two Care Leaver Hubs, one in Crewe and another in Macclesfield. Our care leavers were involved in this piece of work. There are regular drop-ins at the Hubs with access to a range of services, available to care leavers, including monthly cooking sessions. We have recently extended the opening hours so that late evenings are available to our care leavers in employment.
- Our Care Leaver Survey in 2024 had 92 participants who shared their views on services, including education, housing, health, and adulthood preparation. Regular focus groups are held to gather recommendations for service improvement. Some of the themes discussed include housing, pathway

plans, education, health, relationships and service accessibility.

- We are part of the regional Change and Integration Programme. The programme is a collaboration of 9 Local Authorities across the region who are working together to seek to implement positive change regionally for cared for children and care leavers.

Next steps

- November 2025's Children's Rights Month includes a number of activities for our children and care experienced adults to enjoy, including bowling, willow weaving, bushcraft, a trip to Salford University and an art project.
- We will gather the views of our care experienced young people in relation to our Local Offer, at an evening event scheduled in November 2025, and use their views to shape future developments. Our Care Leaver Ambassadors have been involved in planning this event and will be co-delivering it.
- Our STAR awards are scheduled in November 2025. This event is a celebration of our children and young people's achievements and successes and gives recognition through nominations from professionals. Our young people have been involved in the planning of this event.

- Continue to work with cared for children and care leavers to change the language we use.
- Continued stabilisation of the workforce is a priority, so that children and young people benefit from enduring relationships with their social worker. We have recently converted a number of agency practitioners to permanent roles which is positive, but we have more work to do in this area through our revised Recruitment and Retention strategy.
- Through our Corporate Parenting Champion group, we want to develop insight across the Council internally and more widely across the community in relation to how we can best meet the needs of our cared for children. We aspire for cared for children in Cheshire East to have the best corporate parents possible from within the community extensively.
- Work will continue to progress making 'care leaver' a protected characteristic as recommended in the national review of children's services.
- We are visiting our SLIP North Tyneside Council in December 2025 and the visit will include us looking at the work undertaken there relating to the voice of the child, so that we can inform our ongoing development work.
- Our recently revised Independence Packs, which support young people developing their independent living skills, will be launched in December 2025.

Pledge Two

We will improve education, employment and training outcomes

We will have **high aspirations** for every child and young person and will **help them to achieve their ambitions**, using opportunities in the 'family business' and our contacts so that they can be **happy and successful** in their education, training and employment.

Every child and young person will have an **education plan that is targeted to enable them to reach their full potential**.

We will strive to ensure that every child and young person will have **access to consistent, high quality, well-matched, opportunities in education, training, and employment**.

Key achievements this year

- As outlined earlier in this report, our Sector Led Improvement Partner work identified strong evidence that we are supporting and encouraging care experienced young people to be engaged in education, employment or training, including our unaccompanied asylum seeking young people being engaged in learning English.

- We have introduced a "Good Education and Skills workstream" which aims to focus on the inclusion of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups; multi-agency collaboration; robust systems to track data and embedding the voice of young people into planning and delivery. This workstream is chaired by the Head of the Virtual School.
- The workstream has implemented an action plan and some task and finish groups are in place to drive forward improvements.
- The last year has seen the introduction and embedding of the Education, Employment and Training (EET) team. Their work covers four primary areas of focus. Supporting young people in EET to remain engaged; supporting those who are not in EET to become engaged; supporting those unable to be in EET in alternative initiatives and developing new opportunities to encourage engagement in EET. The Team Manager is part of the wider workstream.
- There is an EET Adviser and Apprenticeship Co-ordinator in place who offer 1:1 support to those wishing to explore opportunities; they have offered this to 23 young people in the last 3 months.
- All young people who are not in EET and who are considered able to be, are allocated an EET practitioner who works with them to create a 1:1 plan focused on achieving EET. 68% of care leavers aged 19-21 years are in EET which is an 8% increase on figures a year ago. In the last 6 months, the team

have secured education, employment or an apprenticeship for 34 young people.

- All young people at college up to the age of 21 in Cheshire East have termly EET meetings. This aims to support them to remain in education by addressing any identified concerns.
- Young people in apprenticeships up to the age of 21 also have EET reviews which are attended by the Apprenticeship Co-ordinator. Our Apprenticeship Co-ordinator supports all young people on Apprenticeships which is now at a total of 15 across all ages, 17-24.
- A NEET challenge panel is held monthly, to review and explore options for young people who are NEET and deemed able to be in EET. The panel has representation from the Youth Support Service which improves collaboration.
- Drop in support regarding EET is available weekly at the Crewe and Macclesfield Care Leaver Hubs. In the last 6 months, 57 young people have accessed these sessions.
- We have Venture with Confidence programmes available to support young people who need assistance to be able to engage in EET. Recently we partnered with Eleven, a graphic design company, who engaged 11 of our young people in completing an art and design project.
- Venture with Confidence is our 12 week employability programme aimed at improving the skills and confidence of young people with a view to engaging them in EET. The programme includes visits to colleges and universities, outdoor activities, support with CV writing; 25 young people have

engaged in this programme over the last 12 months. Those attending include young people with additional needs and who are supported with an Education, Health and Care Plan.

- We had 13 young people attend a 5 day Ignite employability course, offered by Equans across February to August 2025.
- As part of National Apprenticeship week, we organised 2 Planning your Future events at the Care Leaver Hubs, alongside the SEN Transition Team. These were marketplace events, and we had professionals from colleges, Pure Insight, DWP, Housing, Adult Social Care, Supported Employment, and our own Apprenticeship worker and Venture with Confidence Team offering advice and information to young people and their support workers.
- The Cheshire and Wirral NHS partnership have offered opportunities for care experienced young people. We linked in with them when they had an administrative role available. 3 young people were supported to apply for the role. 1 young person saw the process all the way through and has been offered the role. She is due to start in this position imminently.
- The Virtual School Headteacher's report will be presented alongside this report and will give more detail relating to the work of the Virtual School.
- At the year end March 2025, 60% of cared for children aged 2-4 years were accessing educational provision. By the end of July 2025, this figure had increased to 96% which is a

significant area of strength, with only one child of this age not accessing some form of provision.

- Across the Spring term of 2025, 75% of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) that were completed were of good or outstanding quality.
- In July 2025, 86% of cared for children in primary school had 90% or more attendance. In March 2025, 61% of cared for children in secondary school had 90% or more attendance; this reduced slightly to 53% which is as a result of year 11 children leaving school early, at the end of their exam period.
- At July 2025, 88% of cared for children were attending schools graded good or outstanding. Where schools are not graded good or outstanding, the Virtual School advisor provides increased visiting and support.
- The Virtual School and social work teams have strong and collaborative working relationships, ensuring a co-ordinated approach to education for our cared for children and young people and our care leavers.
- We have had no permanent exclusions of cared for children for over five years.

Next steps

- Our workforce development team have developed an ELSAP framework and are looking at implementing a guaranteed interview scheme for care leavers.

- We are hoping to gain support from our Corporate Parenting champion group in identifying work experience and apprenticeship opportunities.
- Our EET Team Manager has started a piece of work, liaising with Council services, with the aim of creating more work experience and apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers. They are soon to expand this into businesses within the local community.
- We have arranged a trip to Salford University for a day focussed around music. This is open to anyone with an interest in music whether they are planning on going to university or not.
- We plan to deliver another Venture with Confidence programme in Spring 2026.
- As part of November Care Leaver month, we are offering sessions at the Hubs, focusing on aspirations boards, skills and CV's, employers and next steps. As part of this we have invited employers to come and meet with young people. This will include, Equans, Eleven, John Lewis, and Childcare. We also have a representative from the new Youth Zone coming to a session to talk both about the activities that young people will be able to access once they open and also a number of job opportunities they will have coming up.
- The Virtual School are attending the Cared for Children and Care Leaver whole service day on 14th November 2025 to present to the service, ensuring that practitioners who are new to the

service are aware of and engaged with the work of the Virtual School.

- Continue to progress the Good Education and Skills workstream, driving forward completion of the recently implemented action plan.
- Continue to improve the completion rate and quality of PEPs across all years from early years to post-16.

Pledge Three

We will be truly aspirational to give all children and young people a forever home and to keep them safe
We will strive to ensure that every child and young person will have the opportunity to live in a good, safe home locally , either with their family or in another long-term home. All decisions will be made and reviewed with them, without delay.
We will respect those people who are important to our children and young people and make sure that these safe relationships are sustained.
We will keep children and young people safe .

Key achievements this year

- We are constantly monitoring the numbers of cared for children and looking at ways to ensure that we are reviewing plans for children to achieve permanence at the earliest opportunity.
- In August 2025, we implemented a revised Permanence Panel and tracker, which will mean that all of our cared for children’s plans for permanence will be reviewed regularly until permanency is achieved. The Panel’s initial focus was to review children placed with their parents (44 as at August 25) and this work resulted in a number of children being

considered for discharge of their Care Order. The Panel is currently reviewing children who are in short-term foster placements to consider whether permanency can be secured through a return to family care, Special Guardianship Order or a long-term match with their carers.

- We have a dedicated resource for our unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) within the service; currently, three Social Workers have specialist knowledge in this area and are able to support our UASC and young people in ensuring they have suitable accommodation and their holistic needs are met.
- In February 2025, a dedicated Court team was established to undertake care proceedings work. The team is not yet fully embedded and there have been some teething problems, however, there has been an improvement in the duration of care proceedings and we are now taking the necessary steps to embed the team into the establishment of the service and to further develop the work being undertaken within the team to ensure early permanence is achieved for children.
- This will also enable us to recruit staff to the team on a permanent basis, resulting in improved stability and increased specialism in this area, which should improve outcomes for children.
- Early explorations of a service available through ReConnect are taking place. ReConnect has the potential to provide intensive intervention to children, their families and carers, in

order to enable children in residential care to return home or to step down into foster care, where they can benefit from living in a family environment, improving their sense of belonging.

- The work with ReConnect will also focus on the recruitment of foster carers, from backgrounds related to working with children, such as education, health and youth justice. This will increase our pool of foster care provision meaning that we will be able to support more children to live within a family. This work would be implemented over the next 18 months.
- Our Ofsted Monitoring Visit in October 2025 identified that decisions for children to enter care are appropriate and that children remain living within their family through kinship care where this is safe.
- The process for children coming into care has been revised and the arrangements now ensure that the Director has oversight of such decisions, including when they take place out of hours.
- The exceptional use of unregistered arrangements and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) are overseen by the Director, both at the point of decision-making and through regular review. Our Ofsted Monitoring Visit identified that there is improved management oversight of such situations.
- As at August 2025, 87% of our cared for children under the age of 16 years are living within a family environment (foster

care, kinship care, placed with their parents), with 54 children and young people placed in residential care.

- 65% (August 25) of children in care for 2.5 years or more have been in their placement for more than 2 years. We are placing a focus on the earlier use of stability meetings in order to improve stability of living arrangements for our children.
- 64% (August 25) of cared for children and young people are living within a 20-mile radius of their home address. Some of those placed out of area are living within their family networks or are in the process of achieving permanence. We expect that our work with ReConnect will help us to bring more children and young people closer to home.
- At the end of Q4, 2025, we had 46 children with a decision that they should be placed for adoption.
- Across 2024 we had 23 Adoption Orders granted, and the first two quarters of 2025 show a similar performance. We currently have 11 children placed for adoption where Adoption Orders are likely to be made, within the next 6 months. Our Regional Adoption Agency, Adoption Counts, has shared that other Local Authorities who have been Pathfinders in relation to the reforms have seen a reduction in the number of children adopted, likely because of the improved and increased focus on working together to enable children to remain in their family.

Next steps

- We continue to work with our colleagues in Commissioning to mobilise our 16-25 accommodation plan, which is due to go live in 2026.
- Our Families First work is currently a priority, and will continue to be, through until April 2026, when the model will be implemented. The aim of this work is to provide improved and earlier intervention to families; to enhance our multi-agency working in order to increase the number of children who can be supported to remain living within their families and with the least intervention.
- Within our Families First work, we are going to be introducing a revised offer through an Edge of Care service which will provide intensive support to families who require this in order for children to remain living safely in their family.
- We are ensuring that there is additional resource available within our legal services team to enable us to achieve discharge of Care Orders for children who no longer need our intervention, including the progression of Special Guardianship Order applications for children who can achieve permanency within their wider family and network.
- In November 2025, we are due to begin our revised Legal Gateway Panel. This is intended to improve the rigour and robustness of our pre-proceedings work and decisions to issue care proceedings for children, ensuring that where appropriate, all children have had the opportunity of a family network

meeting and that intervention to support children living safely with their families is robust. This will help to ensure that children come into care in a planned way, which is an area for development identified in our Ofsted Monitoring Visit.

- There will be consideration of commissioning a service from ReConnect, which should lead to an increase in the number of foster carers we have and the step-down into foster care for some children who are currently in residential care, as a result of sufficiency challenges.
- Our Ofsted Monitoring Visit identified that our assessment work is variable, so we will be doing some work to improve this. This includes a scheduled training plan to be delivered by our Lead Practitioners and support to Team Managers through Ingson, a management development programme due to commence in November 2025.
- We are working with our SLIP, North Tyneside Council, and staff from Cheshire East are scheduled to visit North Tyneside for two days in December 2025. During this visit, we will learn about the work undertaken in North Tyneside in their Legal Gateway Meeting, family time service, life story work, their IRO service and their work around permanency. We will be able to bring learning back to Cheshire East or consideration of how this can influence our practice positively.
- We are due to review our Special Guardianship work. Currently, the work around assessments, support and

oversight happens across our fostering service, cared for children service and early help service. We would like to streamline this so that we have a Special Guardianship team under one service area to improve consistency of practice and support in this area. We also want to develop a clear process and policy around entitlements and support for Special Guardians.

Pledge Four

We will improve health and wellbeing outcomes

We are committed to **understanding the health needs** of our children and young people **as early as possible** and to ensure they are **given the highest priority** in every service.

We will ensure that **practitioners understand and meet the diverse health needs** of our children and young people, **including those with health inequalities** faced by race, ethnicity, ability and disability and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

We have **ambition to ensure that we further improve responses** to children and young people in relation to having their **health needs met**.

We will **equip** our children and young people to have **high aspirations for their own health and wellbeing**.

Key achievements this year

- Annual audit of feedback following annual health assessments told us that 100% of children and young people who responded reported their experience of the health assessment to be either good or excellent.

- The percentage of children who had their annual health assessment in 24/25 was 91.8 %; this is an improvement on last year's figure of 91.0% and ahead of last known England average of 89%. The figure is slightly higher than our statistical neighbours' average of 85%.
- Weekly meetings take place between health and social care teams to help to resolve barriers in children receiving their initial health assessment in a timely manner, which is helping to reduce the length of delays.
- 100% of children aged five and under had their developmental checks completed within timescales.
- 93.2% of routine childhood immunisations were completed.
- A group has been set up to focus on the health needs of care leavers. Achievements include consulting with care leavers to redesign and improve the care leaver health summary and work to improve uptake of sexual health services and immunisations by separated migrant young people.
- Health colleagues have access to the case record system to improve the timeliness of health assessments. They are automatically notified when a child enters care.
- We have had a focus over recent months on improving the number of our cared for children who are seen by a dentist and as a result, this data has significantly improved from

66% at the end of Q4 2025 to consistently 95% each month since then. This performance is above that of the national and statistical neighbour average of 70% and 65% respectively.

- The NHS England dental referral scheme across Cheshire and Merseyside provides an opportunity for our children and young people to access a dentist more easily. However most under 18s can access a dentist routinely, resulting in reduced demand for the scheme. As such in 2025/26 the scheme will be expanded to include care leavers as a 12 month pilot.
- Our performance in ensuring we complete Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ's) for our cared for children, to understand any unmet health needs had been reported at around 45-50%. In seeking to address this, we were able to recognize that the data reporting is based on children who have been in care for 3 months or more, and our local practice is to seek SDQ's for children in care for 10 months or more. There is an SDQ task and finish group in progress and we will be implementing SDQ's at the point that children enter care, which will provide a baseline of cared for children's health needs at an early stage and an understanding of any change upon follow up.

- We continue to commission a strong emotional wellbeing offer through Pure Insight, which is supporting 150 young people annually.
- We have maintained 100% of young people that consent to a health passport having received one by their 18th birthday.

Next steps

- Progression of the work around SDQ's needs to be made, in a timely way.
- Dr Suzie Roberts, Public Health Consultant, is attending a Cared for Children and Care Leaver whole service day in November 2025 to deliver a presentation outlining the range of emotional wellbeing support available for our children.
- Set up a multiagency workstream to focus on improving the health and wellbeing of cared for children and care leavers, supported by a care leaver ambassador.
- Promote the NHS England dental referral program to ensure care leavers have access to timely dental health services.
- Raise awareness across our workforce and promote and monitor access to a range of services and agencies available to support the health needs of our children and young people.
- Track and monitor the health needs of our children and young people, including those who are currently living outside of Cheshire East, ensuring their needs are met.

- Support children and young people in care to have improving emotional mental health and wellbeing.
- We will ensure cared for children and care leavers have their health assessed in a timely way and that assessments are of a good quality and used to inform the care plan.
- Work with regional colleagues to understand best practice to improve access and timeliness of full health-screening for all UASC.
- We will support timely and effective transitions from children's services to adult services.

Pledge Five

We will prepare young people for adulthood
We will support young people early with the skills needed to prepare for their future through access to a range of good quality services.
We will be a consistent guide for our young people. We will celebrate their successes and support them when things don't go well .
We will respect our care leavers as young adults and adapt our relationships to their needs.

Key achievements this year

- We are currently working with 545 former relevant care leavers aged 18 – 25 years, and we are in touch with 498. A further 23 young people are open to the 21+ offer and the remainder do not want to have contact with us.
- Following the ILACs Inspection in February 2024, an improvement plan was devised and has been driven forward. Monthly Care Leaver workstreams have taken place to ensure actions are being completed and embedded within the service. The most recent workstream took place on 5th November 2025 and 32 of 35 actions are complete (91%), 2 are amber E (6%), and 1 is on track (3%).

- In May 2025, our Sector Led Improvement Partner (SLIP) North Tyneside, completed a two-day evaluation of the care leaver service and found that quality and consistency of practice for care leavers in Cheshire East had improved. They noted several strengths of practice, including, passionate and committed staff; excellent resources for separated migrant children and young people; improvements to case recordings; young people reporting good support from their Personal Advisors and they felt that as a service, we know our strengths and areas for development well.
- Care Leaver Ambassadors joined a cared for children and care leavers service day to present the Local Offer and associated Junction 16 app and data tells us that between 3rd July and end September 2025, there were 85 new users, an increase of 142.9% from quarter 2. We have appointed a dedicated Personal Advisor to ensure the Junction 16 app remains up to date and to push notifications to care leavers of events and support available to them.
- Pathway plan data is consistently good in relation to young people aged 18-20 years, with 90% or more having up-to-date plans on a regular basis. This means that we are ensuring we understand and meet the needs of our care leavers in this age range.
- Following the ILAC inspection, we strengthened our 21+ offer, where young people did not want an allocated PA, we would

complete In-Touch calls every 12 weeks to ensure welfare. The guidance states “although there is no requirement to proactively keep in touch with all young people aged over 21 up to age 25 throughout the year, the new duty requires local authorities to make care leavers aware that they can continue to request PA support when the person turns 21; and on at least an annual basis thereafter” (Extending Personal Adviser Support to all Care Leavers to age 25 February 2018 pg13). Therefore, as a Local Authority we are exceeding our requirements.

- We have improved our service to cared for young people by seeking to allocate a Personal Advisor at age 17 years. This allows time for relationship building and identification of transition support needs. We would like to extend this by offering this service to young people when they turn 16 years old.
- We have developed a Staying Close team with the support of DfE funding. The team provides bespoke support, including in relation to accommodation, employment, education and training to young people leaving residential care, who often have a limited support network available to them.
- We have improved our oversight of performance, to ensure that our cared for children and care leavers are receiving the right service at the right time. This includes weekly performance meetings being delivered by Team Managers and Service Managers, 6 weekly performance clinics with the Head

of Service and a directorate performance meeting 6 weekly chaired by the Director of Family Help and Children’s Social Care.

- On a monthly basis, managers across the service meet to thematically dip sample young people’s case files to better understand the quality of practice. Findings are disseminated across the service and used to target specific areas of practice where improvement may be required.
- When a young person is allocated within the care leaver service, we have introduced a joint supervision of Social Workers and Personal Advisors, so that there is robust information sharing and understanding of the young person’s own needs, which enables targeted support to be provided and mitigates the need for our young people to “retell their experiences”.
- We have a strong financial offer for care leavers, including an increased £3000 setting-up grant, dedicated financial support for young people at university, financial support while young people wait to receive Universal Credit, and financial incentives for those who are not ready for work but can volunteer.
- The monthly Ignition Panel helps young people make informed choices about where they might live in the future. All 16-year-olds continue to be considered at Ignition Panel to strengthen early planning and support for independence.

- At the end of Q4 2025 we had 26 young people attending university and 11 young people in apprenticeships, with an increase to 16 as at August 2025.
- We currently have 49 young people in Staying Put arrangements, which means that post 18, they can continue to live with and receive support from their foster carers.
- 47 care leavers have been housed via Cheshire Homechoice into social housing in 2025 to date and a total of 90 care leavers in the last 2 years
- We have purchased 67 tenancy ready courses since April and there have been 30 courses completed since April, an average of 4 per month in last 7.5 months.
- The number of ignition taster flats has increased from 16 to 18 to support young people to be tenancy ready.
- The Care Leavers Survey found that 68% of care leavers rated their support as being 8-10 out of 10 with 35% rating at a 10 (on a scale of 1-10 where 10 is very good). When asked how the service could be improved, one young person said *“Nothing. J has been an absolute god send for me. I suffer really easily sometimes and J is always there to talk to when things get hard. She is the best.”*
- 89% of young people reported feeling listened to by their Personal Advisor (PA) with 91% confirming that they are

confident about getting in touch with their PA. 82% of care leavers felt in control about decisions made about their life.

- Effective mentoring and wellbeing support, including support for young parents, is in place through Pure Insight which supports 150 young people per year.
- Q4 2025 data shows that 95% of care leavers aged 19-21 are in appropriate accommodation compared to 88% nationally and for our statistical neighbours. The rate is not 100% because we have a small number of young people who are in prison, currently 9. The other main reasons for accommodation being classed as unsuitable is emergency accommodation or homelessness. We have a weekly meeting to seek to prevent homelessness for our young people and typically have no more than 3 young people in homelessness accommodation.
- As of the end of Q4, 95% of care leavers had up-to-date pathway plans. Pathway plan reviews continue to be undertaken by the safeguarding service to ensure that they are reviewed in a timelier way and to allow for external scrutiny.
- 65% (August 2025) of our 19 to 21-year-old care leavers are in education, employment or training (EET), compared to 62% nationally and 63% across our statistical neighbours. Our performance in this area has increased from 55% in 2023 and we continue to strengthen our work in engaging young people in EET.

- We are in touch with 99% of our former relevant care leavers aged 18-21 years which demonstrates significantly strengthened practice in this area and means we are providing improved support to this cohort of care leavers.

Next steps

- Across the month of November, we are supporting Care Leavers month with a range of activities being on offer to our care leavers, in collaboration with our partner agencies.
- There will be a Local Offer review, with care leavers and staff invited, on 12th November 2025 to further promote the use of the Junction 16 app.
- We are working with our Business Intelligence team to improve the performance data available in relation to our practice for cared for children and care leavers, making key data more easily accessible.
- We continue to work with managers and practitioners across the service to raise the quality of Pathway Plans for young people. We know that practitioners know young people well and we want their Pathway Plans to reflect this and to incorporate up to date information and planning. Team managers will be working together to devise what a good Pathway Plan looks like and what information needs to be included in each section of the plan. They will then deliver this to their team within team meetings.
- We are working with the Participation Team to recruit new Care Leaver Ambassadors, who will be involved in all aspects of service delivery and improvement.
- The Junction 16+ App contract is due for renewal during 2026/27. The service will work with procurement and finance to ensure the app remains live and fit for purpose.
- We will give consideration to extending our Personal Advisor service to young people when they turn 16 years old.
- Staying Close is being mandated through the Children's Wellbeing and School Bill. The current DfE funding ceases in March 2026 so we will need to determine how we continue to provide this support to our care leavers.
- To ensure there is a clear qualifying care leavers process, we will be writing to all qualifying young people to ensure they understand their entitlements and we will be delivering training to children's social care colleagues to ensure that care leavers who are qualifying as a result of the Care Order being discharged are identified and offered the relevant support.
- We will continue to drive practice improvements for our young people, specifically in relation to the quality of their Pathway Plans, case summaries and supervision, recognising that these are areas of practice which need to be stronger.

Pledge Six

We will work TOGETHER with children and young people
We will work TOGETHER with children and young people in all that we do.
We will work to make sure that participation is at the heart of everything that our staff, partners, and elected members do.
Cared for children and care leavers will be empowered to make decisions that affect their lives .

Key achievements this year

- My VOICE is a group of care experienced young people who work together to make a positive difference for others who are cared for. They campaign for change, share their experiences, and help improve services and support for cared for children and young people. They work with decision makers and the participation team to make sure children and young people's voices are heard and acted on, helping shape policies, practices, and outcomes.
- Cared for Children attended and took part in the National Youth Work Week event, sharing views and experiences to

inform the work of Children’s Trust Board and Children and Young People’s Plan.

- They also took part in opportunities for November Children’s Rights Month in 2024 including a Takeover Day and developing the understanding of Hate Crime and Discrimination by taking part in the Hate Stops Here campaign sessions.
- At the beginning of 2025, Cared for Children were given the opportunity through phone calls, one to ones and focus groups to contribute feedback, experiences and ideas to the recommissioning of the Independent Visitor and Advocacy Service.
- Our young people worked with the Virtual School to review Personal Education Plans and made recommendations for improvement.
- Young people take part in interview panels so that they are part of the decision making about staff we recruit to work in the service. They were involved in the recruitment of the Executive Director of Place and a Family Help Worker, gaining skills in interview preparation and decision-making.
- Young people co-delivered training on “what makes a good foster carer,” to our Fostering Panel, shaping their recruitment practices and contributing ideas to the questions asked at Panel.

- Care Leaver Ambassadors have been recruited; there are currently five. They support various aspects of our work, including co-production of strategies, policies and events, co-delivery of events and recruitment of staff. They are our Shadow Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee and attend our Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee to help to influence decision-making.
- We have continued to embed our practice of writing to the child on their electronic records and in the minutes of their cared for child reviews. This is a strength in practice on the case notes of children's files and continues to develop in relation to other key documents. This practice helps to focus on the language used when writing about our children and young people and means that if children view their case records when an adult, they will be able to see that we have thought about them individually at every stage of practice.
- We will be delivering focus groups to inform the forthcoming Cared for Children Survey, which will be co-produced with our young people.
- We will be supporting our young people to choose and lead their next campaign project.
- We are going to begin ASDAN accreditation for our Care Leaver Ambassadors.
- Following the annual survey of cared for children, all services to evidence actions based on recommendations by children and young people.
- Ensure that children and young people are involved in the recruitment of all key posts in Children's Services.
- Ensure that the child's voice and their lived experience is evident in decision making when commissioning services.

Next steps

- Continue to work together with children and young people to enable children to participate in a meaningful way to develop our services and inform practice.
- Embed the TOGETHER approach with our children and young people, making sure that all staff, partners, and elected members are working to listen to and act on what children and young people tell us.



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Cared for Children and care leavers Committee.

02 December 2025

Virtual School Headteachers Annual Report 2024/25

Report of: Iain Peel Interim Director of Education, Strong Start and Integration

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report presents an overview of the operation and impact of the virtual school during 2024/2025. The role of the virtual school is clearly defined in Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children statutory guidance for local authorities 2018. The Virtual School supports all children in care regardless of their length of time in care, however the educational attainment data in the report relates to those who have been in continuous care from 31 March 2024 to 31 March 2025.
- 2 The Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report details the progress and achievements throughout academic year 2024-25 for cared for children and care leavers' education. It relates to the delivery of pledge two of the cared for children and care leavers strategy, that 'We will improve education, training and employment outcomes.

Executive Summary

- 3 The Virtual School continues to deliver statutory duties for cared-for children and extended responsibilities for children with a social worker and those in kinship care. The service operates on a locality model, enabling strong partnerships with schools and agencies, and has strengthened leadership capacity with interim deputy headteachers
- 4 Most of our cared for children are educated in good or outstanding schools (80% in July 2025). 14% of schools are without an updated Ofsted rating due to academy conversion or results not being published yet. For the coming academic year, Ofsted grading has changed and there will be no overall grade. We are awaiting DfE guidance, but in the interim are making decisions based on our knowledge of the schools and assessing the judgements in the separate sections

- 5 Overall attendance fell to 88.3% (from 92.3% 23/24); Primary attendance remains strong at 95.1%; secondary attendance dropped to 81.5%. Persistent absence affects 34.2% of the cohort which is an increase of 4% from same time last year.
- 6 No Cheshire East cared for children have been permanently excluded for over seven years.
- 7 Data, including GCSE, attendance and suspension data is currently provisional/unvalidated. Once published, validated data will be provided with local and national comparisons.
- 8 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) assessments: Children are defined as having reached a good level of development (GLD) at the end of the EYFS if they have achieved at least the expected level for the ELGs in the prime areas of learning and the specific areas of mathematics and literacy. There were 22 children within the overall cohort

7 out of 22 children achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD), which is 31.8%. Eligible children: 3 achieved GLD (27.2%)

The overall GLD attainment is low, with less than one-third of children meeting the expected level. This is a key focus this year we will be working alongside our early years teams to ensure targeted support and actions are incorporated into our Best Start for Life Local Plan which is due to be finalised by March 2026.
- 9 Key Stage 2; As of July 2025, there were 19 cared for children with 12 within the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months or more as of 31 March 2025).

A total of 16 children (11 eligible children) were entered for the SATS tests meaning 84.2% of our Year 6 cohort were entered for their SATs this past academic year. The 3 remaining children did not sit SATs as it was not appropriate for the child due to their academic profile and/or their specific Special Education Needs

KS2 combined Reading/Writing/Maths attainment more than doubled from the previous year from 16.6% to 46.2%. Early data indicates this was above the percentage achieved for looked after children regionally
- 10 As of 31 August 2025, we had 55 young people in our Year 11 cohort. However, not all of these were entered for examinations or sat GCSEs for various reasons: 4 are Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children who came into the care of Cheshire East between the exam window, 7 were attending specialist provisions and were enrolled on alternative pathways.

39 (32 of whom are classed as being in the eligible cohort) of our Year 11 cohort were entered for at least one GCSE subject with the average number of entries per child being 6.4 GCSEs.

Standard pass (Grade 4+) in English & Maths rose from 16.7% to 21.8% for the eligible cohort. English standard pass improved from 23.3% to 31.2%; Maths from 23.3% to 28.1%.

- 11 At the end of the academic year 2024/2025, there were 66 students in total in year 12. Of this, 29 were not in education, employment, or training at the end of the academic year. 20 young people were re-engaged through various activities, including Kings Trust, Venture with Confidence, Post 16 tutor and work experience opportunities.

Of the 66 young people, 51 had clear pathway plan for the start of September 24; These next steps and pathways included, employment, apprenticeships and further education and training or re-engagement activities.

- 12 A total of 86 students were enrolled in Year 13. As of September 2025, 58 of the 86 students (67%) have secured a positive destination. These include Higher Education (University), Further Education (College/Training), Employment or Apprenticeships.

Four students are currently undertaking apprenticeships in the following areas: Hairdressing – Completed Level 2, progressing to Level 3, Decorating – Working towards Level 2 qualification, Early Years Education – Working towards Level 2 qualification, Car Body Repair – Working towards Level 3 qualification

14 young people completed Level 3 qualifications, including A Levels, BTECs, and T Levels. Achievements include Distinction grades in Health and Social Care, Public Services, and Business Studies. A Level highlights: Art and Design (A), Textiles (A*), English Language (C), Sociology (D).

University destinations secured in first choice destinations/courses: Children's Nursing (Huddersfield), Law (Brighton), Policing (Chester), Sports Journalism (Oxford Brookes), UCLA Preston, English and Philosophy (Nottingham), Fine Art (Loughborough).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cared for Children and Care leavers Committee is recommended:

1. To endorse the Virtual Headteacher's Annual Report 2024/25

Background

- 13 The annual headteachers report outlines the educational progress and update from academic year 2024/25.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 14 The Cared for Children and Care leavers Committee is an advisory group to the Children and Families Committee and, as such, needs to be aware of any national or local issues that are likely to impact on cared for children and care leavers. The Cared for Children and Care leavers Committee needs to be able to scrutinise and challenge performance to improve outcomes for cared for children and care leavers.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 15 The role of the Virtual School Head (VSH) is set out in the statutory guidance for local authorities Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked after children.
- 16 The statutory guidance must be followed unless there are exceptional circumstances that justify departing from it. The guidance sets out the framework through which local authorities discharge their statutory duty under s22 (3A) of the Children Act 1989 to promote the educational achievement of looked-after children. The guidance also sets the framework through which local authorities discharge their statutory duties under s23ZZA of the Children Act 1989 where a local authority must make available advice and information for the purposes of promoting the educational achievement of previously looked-after children.
- 17 It is the role of the VSH to report regularly on the attainment, progress and school attendance of looked after children through the authority's corporate parenting governance structure.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 18 There are no financial implications of the report. Finance advice will be sought, as appropriate, upon all relevant emerging issues. For context the 2025/26 Virtual School Head expenditure budget is £1.226m which is mainly funded by grants (net base budget of £0.058m).

Policy

- 19 Please refer to the priorities in the [Cheshire East Plan](#) the report supports (this will be used for performance management purposes) and refer to any of the Council's key strategies that relate to the recommendations/ decisions

Unlocking Prosperity for All	Improving Health and Wellbeing	Being an Effective and Enabling Council

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 20 Cared for children and care leavers are a vulnerable group that are at risk of a number of factors, including poor education and training, health, safeguarding and transition into adulthood; the cared for children and care leavers strategy prioritises these areas, alongside our new improvement plan.

Human Resources

- 21 NA

Risk Management

- 22 NA

Rural Communities

- 23 NA

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

- 24 Cared for children and care leavers are a vulnerable group that are at risk of a number of factors, including poor education and training, health, safeguarding, additional needs not being identified and met and transition/preparation into adulthood; the cared for children and care leavers strategy prioritises these areas, alongside our new improvement plan.

Public Health

- 25 NA

Climate Change

- 26 NA

Consultation

Name of Consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
Statutory Officer (or deputy):			

Chris Benham	Deputy S151 Officer	21/11/25	24/11/25
Kevin O'Keefe	Interim Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)	21/11/25	27/11/25
<i>Legal and Finance</i>			
Jennie Summers	Head of Legal Services	21/11/25	21/11/25
Kathy Oliver	Principal Accountant	21/11/25	21/11/25
<i>Other Consultees:</i>			
<i>Directors</i>			
Dawn Godfrey	Executive Director, Children's Services	21/11/25	21/11/25

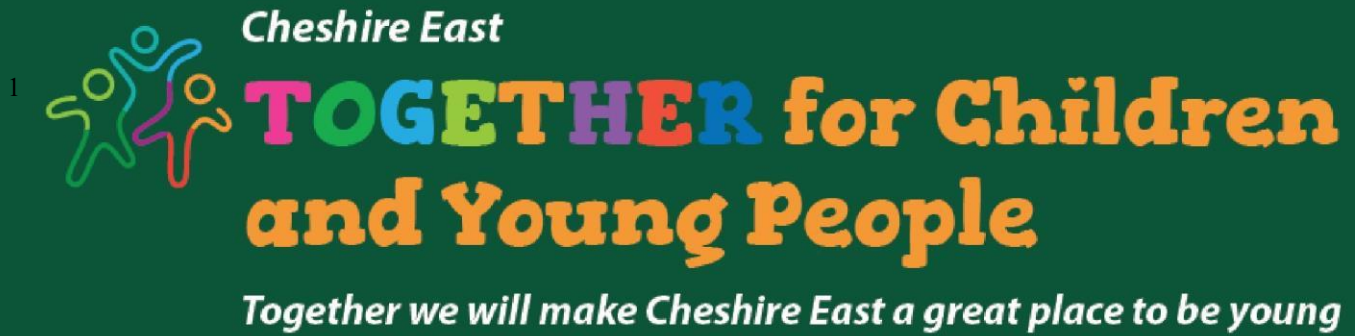
Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Laura Rogerson Head of Service Inclusion
Appendices:	Virtual School annual headteacher report 2024/25
Background Papers:	

Appendix 1

Approvals trail: to be removed before Committee

Name	Title	Comments	Date
Contributors:			
Approvers:			

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Virtual School for Cared for Children Head Teacher's Annual Report 2024/25



Introduction

This report presents an overview of the operation and impact of the virtual school during 2024/2025. The role of the virtual school is clearly defined in *Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children statutory guidance for local authorities 2018*. The Virtual School (VS) supports all children in care regardless of their length of time in care; however, the educational attainment data in the report relates to those who have been in continuous care from 31 March 2024 to 31 March 2025.

Data, including GCSE, attendance and suspension data are currently provisional/unvalidated. Once published, validated data will be provided with local and national comparisons.

During 2024/2025, the virtual school has continued to support all cared for children to ensure it is meeting its statutory duties while providing effective support to children and young people, families, carers, schools, and settings. Every child and young person are allocated to a worker within the virtual school to ensure effective oversight and support is in place. The Head of Service for Inclusion fulfils the role of head teacher at the virtual school and leads on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). To ensure sufficient leadership capacity, a deputy headteacher of virtual school role has been developed to support with the operational running of the virtual school alongside the Head of Service for Inclusion; currently with two interim deputies within this role during this academic year.

The overall number of children cared for has been relatively consistent. To continue to improve outcomes, targeted support is in place for all schools and settings to monitor and track attainment, progress and attendance of all children and young people through virtual school and coordinated across wider teams and services.

All children have access to additional pupil premium plus funding, to put in place interventions which are additional to the normal school support and are linked to specific targets within Personal Education Plans (PEPs), to ensure interventions are tracked and monitored for evidence of impact and accountability.

The virtual school has a duty to work with head teachers to try and avoid excluding a cared-for child and to make sure that they have the support in place to thrive and make progress. In the case of repeat exclusions, additional PEPs will be held to check that all necessary support is being given. There have been no cases of a cared for child being permanently excluded in 2024/2025.

The virtual school works closely with other services across the partnership such as social care, SEN, school admissions, medical needs, attendance, and youth support. As a result of the partnership working, processes and procedures have been revised to become more efficient. The virtual school has delivered cross service training on how all services can support improving the educational outcomes of cared for children.

Executive Summary: Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report 2024–2025

Overview

The Virtual School continues to deliver statutory duties for cared-for children and extended responsibilities for children with a social worker and those in kinship care. The service operates on a locality model, enabling strong partnerships with schools and agencies, and has strengthened leadership capacity with interim deputy headteachers.

Key Successes

- GCSE Outcomes Improved: Standard pass (Grade 4+) in English & Maths rose from 16.7% to 21.8% for the eligible cohort. English standard pass improved from 23.3% to 31.2%; Maths from 23.3% to 28.1%.
- No Permanent Exclusions: Maintained for 7+ years.
- Outstanding Personal Education Plan (PEP) Completion rates across all phases: 99.6% of school-aged children received at least one PEP; 82% rated Good or Satisfactory, with Post-16 achieving 100%. Over 95% of children had the full 3 cycles of PEPS completed. Reflects strong collaboration between Virtual School, social care, and education settings.
- Training Impact: Over 22 schools accessed extended duties training (ELSA, MeLSA, Emotion Coaching, Attachment & Trauma). Expanded Raising Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY) programme and launched Attachment Resource Community (ARC) through extended duties for children with a social worker.
- Alternative Pathways for pupils not entered for GCSEs: Achievements include Entry Level, Functional Skills, ASDAN, and BTEC qualifications. Demonstrates flexibility and personalised support for diverse needs.
- Post-16 Engagement: Venture with Confidence re-engagement programme supported 10 young people; 6 moved into education, 3 into work/apprenticeships.
- Post-16 Tutor: Delivered bespoke 1:1 tuition for 16 students, including Functional Skills and English for Speakers Of other Language (ESOL), for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, plus ASDAN Citizenship and Food Safety qualifications.
- Post-16 Learning Mentor: Supported 21 referrals, ran weekly college drop-ins, and helped secure pathways for NEET students.
- Higher Horizons: Delivered university taster events for KS3–KS5 students, including campus tours, finance workshops, and sample lectures—boosting aspirations for higher education.
- Level 3 Achievements & University Destinations: 14 young people completed A Levels or Level 3 BTECs, achieving grades from Distinction* to A*. University destinations include Huddersfield (Children's Nursing), Brighton (Law), Chester (Policing), Oxford Brookes (Sports Journalism), Nottingham (English & Philosophy), Loughborough (Fine Art), UCLA Preston. Additional pathways include apprenticeships in Hairdressing (progressing to Level 3), Car Body Repair, and Early Years Education

Improvements from Previous Year

- GCSE standard pass rate up by 5.1% for English & Maths combined.
- KS2 combined Reading/Writing/Maths attainment more than doubled (16.6% → 46.2%).
- Primary suspensions were reduced from 15 episodes (7 children) to 10 episodes (4 children).
- Expanded trauma-informed and emotional literacy training across schools.
- Revised Personal Education Plans template now includes Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) indicators, Reading Age, SDQ scores, and robust attainment tracking.

Areas of Focus

- Attendance: Overall attendance fell to 88.3% (from 92.3%); secondary attendance dropped to 81.5%. Persistent absence affects 34.2% of the cohort which is an increase of 4% from same time last year; severe absence at 10.3%.
- Early Years Outcomes: Good Level of Development (GLD) attainment at 31.8%, far below Cheshire East average (70%).
- Secondary Suspensions: Increased from 121 episodes (41 children) to 155 episodes (47 children).
- SEND: 151 cared-for children have EHCPs; focus needed to ensure timely annual reviews and transitions.

Inspired (it's cool)

***It's cool to be inspired, even if it sounds hard
It's cool to have a dream
It's cool to listen to your heart***

***It's cool, no matter what
Always follow the dream, even if it's hard
You can always (as a friend once told me)
Persevere
Be inspired always!***

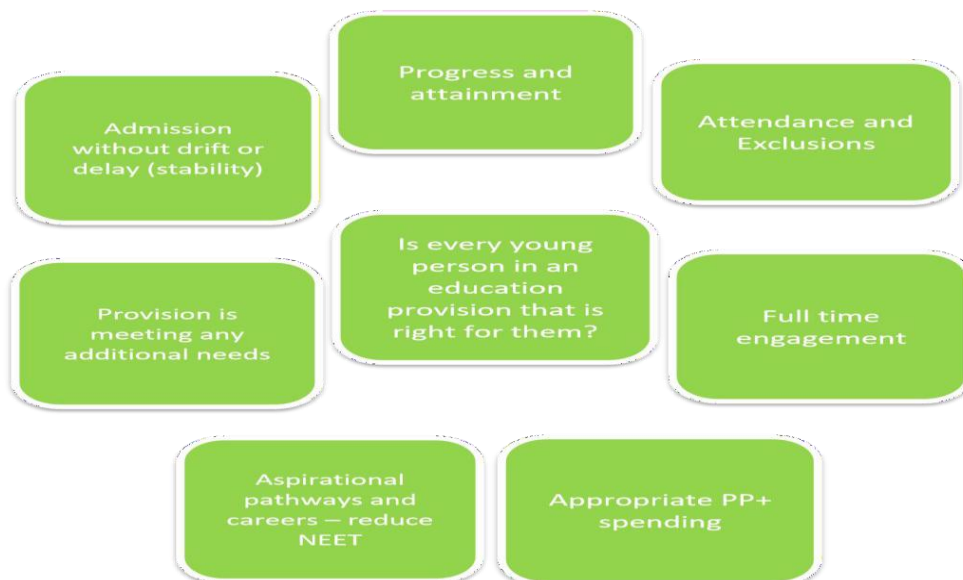
Poem by Cared for Child (Aged 12)

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Making a difference to education outcomes for every child

Below outlines the key focus areas for the virtual school regarding promoting the educational achievement of cared for children, wherever they live or are educated.



Quote from foster carer

“Navigating the school system, even as a retired teacher, is mind blowing at times. There are so many additional bits and pieces to learn, and I've learnt that Virtual School and DTs are the jigsaw makers. You fit the pieces together that don't seem to go anywhere or find the perfect part that was missing. I bet you never thought of yourself like that!”

Remit and operation of the Virtual School in Cheshire East Council

Local authorities have a duty under the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child looked after by them. This includes a particular duty to promote the child's educational achievement, wherever they live or are educated. The local authority must therefore give particular attention to the educational implications of any decision about the welfare of those children. The local authority is required to appoint a Virtual School Head teacher (VSH) for the purpose of discharging this duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked after children, wherever they live or are educated. Our Head of Service for Inclusion holds the role of the Virtual School Head teacher.

The virtual school operates using a locality model. This has helped significantly in the development of relationships with schools and other professionals, resulting in better working practices.

The Government guidance, Promoting the Education of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children> outlines the Statutory responsibilities of Local Authorities, including each Local Authority's Virtual School Head. The corresponding guidance, The Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-teacher-for-looked-after-children> outlines the statutory duties for education settings.

In 2021 the role of the Virtual School Head (VSH) was extended by the Department for Education (DfE) to include a duty, as yet still non-statutory, to promote the education of children and young people, from birth to the age of 18 years, who have a social worker. These are children and young people who live with their parents and who are supported via a Child in Need (CiN) or Child Protection (CP) Plan. It is the young people's parents who retain parental responsibility for the children and young people and not the social worker.

In September 2024, the role of the Virtual School Headteacher was extended further still to include all children and young people living with kinship carers – these are children and young people who live with a relative, or another close adult, such as a grandparent, aunt, uncle or family friend. Although there are similarities between those in foster care and those with kinship carers, there are some key differences surrounding legal responsibilities, the approval process and support available.

The information about these duties can be found in the DfE guidance document, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/virtual-school-head-role-extension-to-children-with-a-social-worker>

Staffing and Organisation

The make-up and nature of the virtual school team is kept under review to ensure that the skills available match the needs of the cohort. We continue to work in localities to facilitate improving support to schools and develop working groups within local areas to develop training and share best practices.

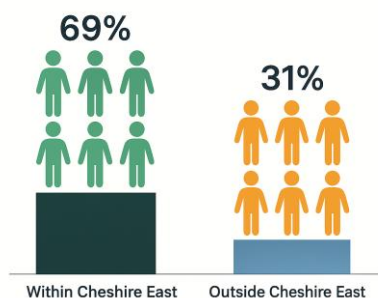
The team has evolved to provide more direct contact and support for children and young people so that the interventions can be more closely tailored to meet needs and monitored for individual impact.

Virtual School Team

- Head of Service for Inclusion (SEND and Virtual School Headteacher)
- Deputy headteachers (Currently two interim deputy headteachers)
- Education advisors (North, Central, South)
- Education advisor (NEET/Careers)
- Learning mentors (North, Central, South)
- Post 16 education advisor
- Post 16 learning mentor
- Post 16 tutor
- Two specialist attendance officers (to cover across all areas, including children out of borough)
- Data and administration manager
- Team administrator
- Personal Education Plan administrator

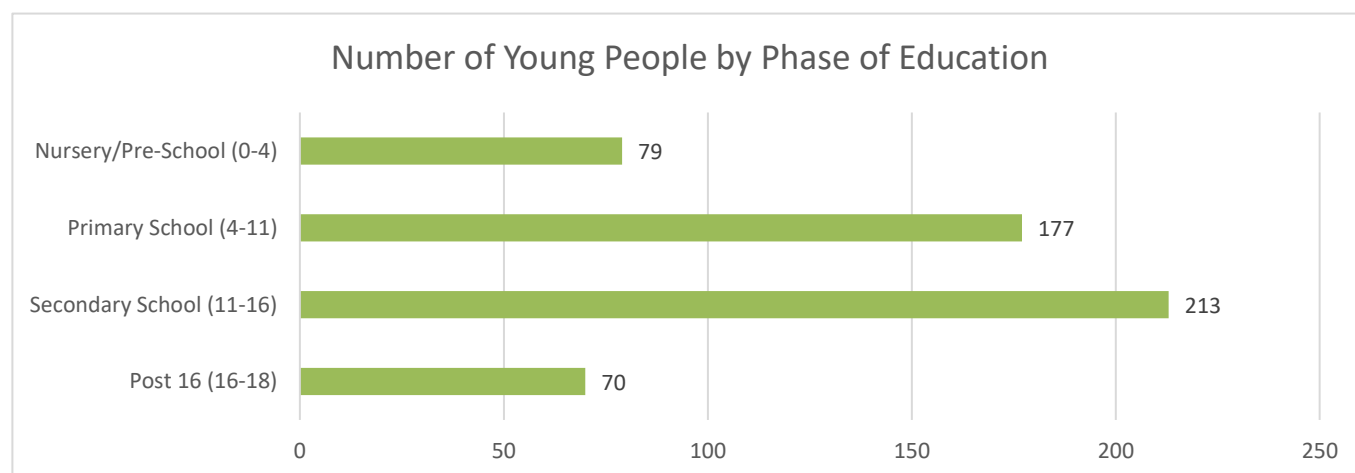
The Virtual School Head teacher and deputy head teachers are members of the Northwest Virtual School Head group which links directly with National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH) and through this network the virtual school can keep abreast of current developments and to be updated on government guidance, attend workshops and training days, and share good practice.

At the end of the 2024/25 academic year, there were 616 cared for children up to the age of 18 receiving areas of support from the Virtual School throughout the academic year. 69% of Cheshire East cared for children from reception to year 11 attended Cheshire East schools, with the remaining attending schools in different local authorities. Those children and young people attending schools out of authority are mainly due to placements being out of borough, 68% of these were placed within neighboring authorities such as Cheshire West, Manchester, Stockport, Warrington, Staffordshire, Halton, Bury and Stoke on Trent. The chart below shows a breakdown of age/school groups.

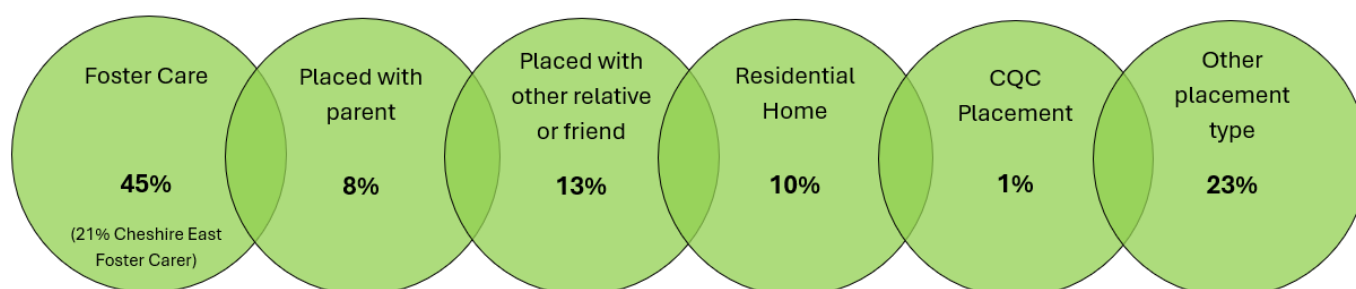


There were 539 cared for children/young people at the end of the 2024/2025 Academic Year

- M (Male): 302 – 56.5%
- F (Female): 232 – 43.2%
- I (Indeterminate) 2 – 0.3%



Placements



Partnership working

Partnership working is crucial to the efficacy of the virtual school, and we recognise our role in being part of a team with the child at the heart. We strongly believe that to be effective we need to have close working relationships with our partners in the name of being a successful 'corporate parent'.

As a virtual school we work with various teams across the partnership some of which include:

- Social care – social workers, care leavers, fostering and cared for support therapeutic teams, contextual safeguarding service, attending permanence panel meetings weekly to support sharing information on education when placement moves are being considered/sourced. Alongside attending stability meetings with social workers and carers.
- Independent reviewing officers
- Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) team
- Youth Justice Service (YJS)
- Youth Support Service – monthly meetings to support interventions to reduce young people who are not in education, employment, or training
- Early Years team

The Virtual School also works with the Independent Reviewing Officers and foster carers, providing training and support as needed. Through membership with education, headteacher and virtual school head regional groups, the virtual school can keep abreast of all current events and news items both regionally and nationally to ensure best practice is shared and partners are aware of matters which influence their area to promote the educational outcomes of cared for and previously cared for children.

Equally, virtual school advisors with areas of responsibility regularly attend regional meetings with colleagues from various Local Authorities around topics such as previously looked after children, post-16 education, SEND, extended duties etc.

Our key priorities are outlined in the cared for children and care leavers strategy:

Pledge Two: We will improve education, employment, and training outcomes

We will have high aspirations for every child and young person and will help them to achieve their ambitions, including using opportunities in the 'family businesses and our contacts so that they can be happy and successful in their education, training, and employment.

Every child and young person will have an education plan that is targeted. Our ambition is to ensure they have the support in place to reach their full potential.

We will strive to ensure that every child and young person will have access to consistent, high-quality, well-matched opportunities in education, training, and employment.

Training and Support

The virtual school provides training on educational issues relating to children-in-care. Head teachers and governing bodies are required to appoint a designated teacher, to champion the needs and support of children in care and should ensure that the nominated member of staff has access to training. Wider school training has continued to be offered to all schools/settings. In Cheshire East this is provided in a variety of ways:

- Update/network meetings open to all schools and led by the Virtual School
- New Designated Teacher training in the autumn term
- Annual cross service designated lead training
- Bespoke training in individual schools which can be around a particular child or for all staff including attachment and trauma whole staff training
- Arranging outside speakers to provide 'expert' input
- School Governor training
- Training for social care and new social workers on improving educational outcomes of cared for children, statutory responsibilities, and PEPs
- An annual training programme for foster carers that consisted of in person training, and virtual training, on topics such as effective exam preparation, alternative provisions phonics/early reading, and SEND
- Independent Reviewing Officer training that takes place in the summer term

The sessions held in 2024 and 2025 were well attended by school/setting representatives and provided a range of workshops delivered by a multitude of services. Sessions provided support on attendance, children with a social worker, family hubs, therapeutic alternatives to suspensions, using AI and SMART targets, and access to support through our learning mentors. The sessions also included a presentation by a Cheshire East care leaver sharing her voice on her educational journey.

Positive feedback was received following the various training days:

"It was a really informative day overall. There is nothing that wasn't informative or useful."

"The carousel was really useful to ask questions and also find out more. But I absolutely loved hearing from Pupil X as it reminds you why we do the job and why it's so important!"

"All of it has been really useful. Thank you!"

"Brilliant day, thank you so much, it was also really useful to gain an overview of the whole PEP process and hear from multiple different roles. Meeting the pupils was inspiring - what amazing young men."

The Educational Psychology Service and the virtual school continue to work in close partnership to improve outcomes for cared for children and children with a social worker, through a combination of staff training, consultation, and direct work with children and young people and their support systems.

In the 2024–2025 academic year, the Virtual School funded training to build the capacity of school staff, including:

- **MeLSA and ELSA training** for individual staff - enhancing the support available in schools to promote cognition and learning skills and emotional literacy development.

- o MeLSA training aims to proactively build the capacity of school staff in supporting skilled and independent learning by increasing staff's understanding of the psychology of mediated learning and building preventative interventions into school settings that foster independent learners.
- o ELSA training provides school staff with the psychological underpinnings of emotional literacy and practical strategies to promote emotional literacy development, allowing them to provide targeted, proactive support to vulnerable pupils at an individual and small group level.
- **Whole-school training** in attachment-aware and trauma-informed practices, and Emotion Coaching techniques, to build emotionally safe and inclusive environments and to provide staff with psychological understanding and practical strategies to better understand and support this population.
The EP Service was also able to engage in casework with several children and young people, which included:
 - Facilitation of person-centered planning meetings (e.g., PATHs and MAPs) to ensure the voice of the child was central in collaborative decision making.
 - Regular consultations with key adults to support effective Assess–Plan–Do–Review (APDR) cycles.
 - Attendance at multi-agency meetings
 - Support around key school transitions
 - Direct work with (including assessment, pupil voice etc.) the children and young people themselves

In 2025–2026, this collaborative work will continue and expand. The Virtual School and Educational Psychology Service will be:

- Continuing funding for training in MeLSA and ELSA roles.
- Continuing to offer training in attachment-aware and trauma-informed practices and Emotion Coaching to education settings.
- Funding training in Using PACE approaches in schools and training in Lego-based therapeutic interventions, to further support social and emotional development.
- Continued casework with children and young people, and their key stakeholders - delivered flexibly and in a bespoke manner to meet the needs of the CYP

This ongoing partnership reflects a shared commitment to promoting stability, emotional wellbeing, and educational progress for children cared for and those with a social worker, through psychologically informed and relationally attuned practice.

The universal training programme offered by the Virtual School for Designated Leads in schools

Date	Title	Objectives
November 2024	Annual Autumn Designated Teacher Conference – Oakenclough Family Hub & Canalside Middlewich	A range of topics were covered in various training sessions this year, the vast majority of which were suggested as areas our Designated Teachers felt they needed support in. Special Guardianship Orders and Adoption Counts Updated/revise PEP training Improving the quality of the PEP through PP+ and using AI for SMART Targets

July 2025	Training for those new to the role of Designated Teacher - Virtual Annual Summer Designated Teacher Conference – Oakencrough Family Hub & Canalside Middlewich	A child's journey through care The graduated approach and SEND Toolkit Structure of the Virtual School/Children's Services What is a corporate parent? Attainment and attendance data Extended duties Statutory guidance Personal Education Plan guidance Attainment data/outcomes Statutory guidance and best practice target setting Impact of trauma and ACEs Carousel Activity: Cheshire East Inclusion Strategy Learning Mentors, Family Hubs, PP+ Spend Therapeutic alternatives to suspension – EP guidance
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Extended Duties for Children with a Social Worker

The Department of Education announced an extension of the Virtual School Head teacher's duties to include all children and young people with a social worker in 2021. This extension continues to be supported by grant funding. The guidance outlines this as a strategic role rather than direct working with our key responsibilities to offer support/advice and guidance indirectly.

We continue to offer universal training, which is available to all schools/settings with children with a social worker, those who are previously looked after or those in kinship care. Training is being delivered in collaboration with our Educational Psychology team,

22 Schools
Supported

6 different
training courses
approved

ELSA - School Age

•11 Schools

ELSA Training - EYFS

•2 Schools

LEGO training

•3 Schools

Emotion Coaching

•3 Schools

Attachment and Trauma Training

•2 Schools

MeLSA

•8 Schools

A total of 22 schools requested training, with nurseries, primary, secondary and special schools all benefiting from this offer.

Mediated Learning Support Assistant (MeLSA) training continued to be one of our popular courses. MeLSA is a psychological evidence-informed approach to supporting the cognition and learning needs of pupils. The implementation of MeLSA helps to build the capacity of schools to meet their learner's needs and assists them in becoming skilled and independent learners.

*'I've learnt about how children learn and the different factors that impact learning'
'How to mediate activities for children if they are struggling'*

As part of our ongoing vision for ensuring children have access to Emotional Literacy Support Assistants, this training was offered for school age and early years settings. ELSA is an evidence-based initiative that aims to give professionals working with children and young people a strong level of psychological understanding. This enables them to support positive social, emotional and behavioural outcomes.

Targeted funding

We worked with several schools who continued their targeted work, for whom funding was allocated last academic year.

Extended Duties Impact Summary – School 1

School 1 utilised targeted funding to support children with a social worker, through a range of interventions including Educational Psychology, Forest School training, Dog Therapy, Think for the Future Mentoring, Restorative Justice Mentoring, and Attendance Support.

Key Interventions and Impact of Targeted Work with School 1

Educational Psychologist Support

- **4 students** received direct support; 2 successfully stepped down from higher levels of need.
- **Pupil 1:** Improved social integration and emotional stability. “She no longer requires the use of our Inclusion HUB and has developed a group of friends.”
- **Pupil 2:** Attendance rose from **68.3% to 81%**; fewer exclusions and improved behaviour.
- **Pupil 3:** Ongoing mental health challenges; EP outreach continues with home visits planned.

Dog Therapy (Creative Action Team)

- Delivered weekly sessions for up to 8 students over 30 weeks.
- Focused on emotional resilience, relationship-building, and self-esteem.
- **Pupil Z:** Suspensions reduced from **13 to 2**; attendance increased from **53% to 83%**. “We are now at a stage where we feel this pupil does not require EHCP level of support.”

Restorative Justice Mentoring

- **12 staff trained**, whole-school rollout.
- Restorative Justice dialogue embedded in mentoring.
- **Pupil A:** Attendance improved from **50–65%**; now attending full days.
- **Pupil B:** Increase in time accessing mainstream curriculum
- **Pupil C:** No suspensions or alternative provision in summer term after Restorative Justice mentoring.

Think for the Future Mentoring

- Delivered from Sept–Dec 2024
- **Group 1:** 100% improved behaviour, attendance, and academic progress.
- **Group 4:** 80% reduction in challenging behaviours.
- **Group 5:** 30% showed attendance improvement.

“Students consistently looked forward to their sessions and engaged well.”

Attendance Support (Traded Service Offer)

- Local Authority officer supported weekly attendance meetings, home visits, and parental engagement.
- **Student A (Cared for Child):** Attendance rose from **59% to 98%** by Half Term 6.
- **Student B (Child Protection):** Attendance improved with no concerns about punctuality or unexplained absences.

Conclusion

The extended duties funding has had a demonstratable impact on the wellbeing, attendance, and behaviour of vulnerable students. Interventions such as dog therapy, mentoring, and restorative justice have led to measurable improvements in engagement and outcomes within the targeted schools this academic year.

Extended Duties Impact Summary – School 2**Overview**

School 2 received funding to enhance its existing Animal-Assisted Therapy provision for students with social workers, particularly those experiencing difficulties arising from trauma relating to attachment. The funding enabled weekly sessions instead of fortnightly, allowing more students to benefit from longer, more impactful therapeutic experiences.

Key Intervention and Impact of Targeted Work with School 2**Animal-Assisted Therapy**

- Funding supported an additional half-day per week of therapy, enabling tailored interventions for children with complex emotional needs.
- The initiative was so successful that the school has continued funding independently, reflecting its value and sustainability.

Qualitative Outcomes

- Staff used symbol questionnaires, behavioural monitoring, and photographic evidence to track progress.
- Early findings show:
- Increased student engagement
- Improved emotional expression
- Reduction in concerns

“Students frequently report feeling calmer and more comfortable after sessions... therapy animals help them regulate themselves and the sessions are a motivator to keep them on track.”

Case Study: Child A

- Experienced early childhood trauma and severe anxiety; unable to communicate verbally.
- Initially observed animals from a distance, then progressed to nonverbal interaction and eventually used one-word vocalisations—a breakthrough.
- Therapy pets acted as a bridge to trust and communication, helping him engage socially and reduce anxiety.

“His anxiety levels decreased, and he showed increased willingness to participate in social activities.”

RADY

We are also pleased to share that we are working alongside the School Improvement Officer to continue to further develop the fantastic work focusing on Raising Attainment for Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY). Within this first year, we have supported 10 schools to continue their work into their second year, and a further 10 schools to begin phase 1 on their journey as a RADY school.

Thinking Differently for Disadvantaged Learners

In addition to our continued investment in the Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY) programme, we have funded a complementary training platform titled *Thinking Differently for Disadvantaged Learners*. This resource is available to all schools and is designed to be embedded within their professional development frameworks. The overarching aim is to ensure that as many staff as possible across all schools engage with high-quality training, enabling disadvantaged learners to achieve outcomes comparable to their non-disadvantaged peers.

Attachment Resource Community (ARC)

We are pleased to report that nine schools participated in an ARC launch event during the Summer Term, led by one of the organisation's Trustees and Cheshire East's Specialist Education Psychologists. ARC (Attachment Resource Community) promotes the development of attachment and trauma-informed practices within educational settings, with a focus on enhancing mental health and well-being for all members of the school community. These schools now have access to a comprehensive suite of resources and will begin their ARC journey in September 2025. We anticipate expanding this initiative in future academic years.

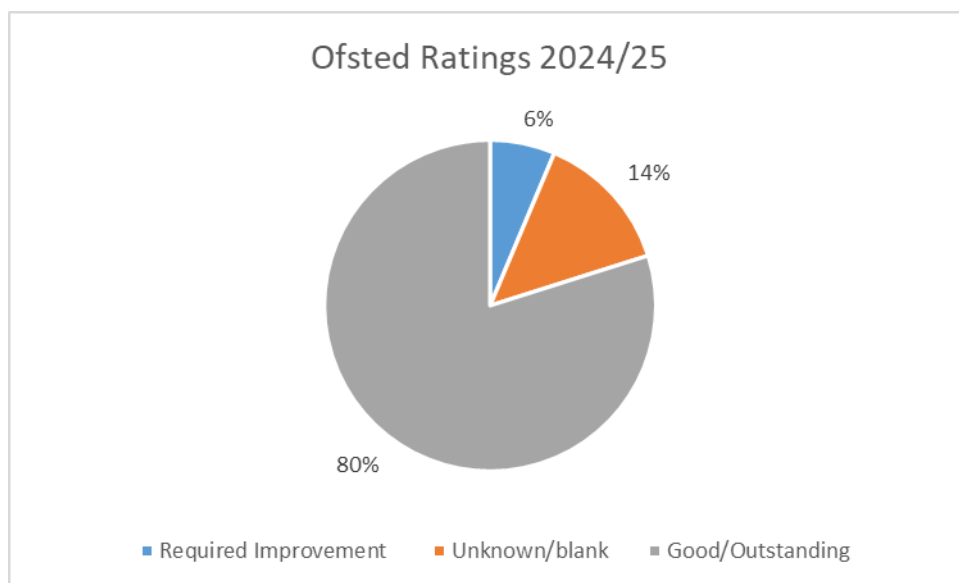
Bookshelves

To further support children open on Child in Need and Child Protection Plans, we have established dedicated bookshelves in Macclesfield and Crewe offices positioned within the social care team bases. These collections are accessible to Social Workers and Family Support Workers and have been curated in consultation with Play Therapists and Educational Psychologists. The books cover a wide range of topics tailored to children in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stage 1, with a particular focus on helping children navigate complex and sensitive issues.

Ofsted Ratings

The statutory guidance states that schools judged by Ofsted to be 'good' or 'outstanding' should be prioritised for cared for children. If any Cheshire East child is placed in a school rated below 'good' then virtual school advisors will visit every school prior to any child being placed to ensure that pastoral and curriculum support is of a good standard. Advisors will attend PEPs and track progress each term throughout the year of all children in schools graded below 'good' to ensure that children are well supported and are making progress. PEPs are completed immediately when schools' grades are moved below 'good' following Ofsted inspection to ensure that the needs of the child are met. The chart below shows the proportion of pupils attending schools with identified Ofsted ratings.

** (6%, 50 schools) Unknown due to conversion to academy, out of area, independent, new schools, so they have not had their first inspection report.*



For the coming academic year, Ofsted grading have changed and there will be no overall grade. We are awaiting DfE guidance, but in the interim are making decisions based on our knowledge of the schools and assessing the judgements in the separate sections.

Special Educational Needs

At the end of academic year 2024/25 there were:

151 Cared for Children and Young People with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) across all years (0-18).

1 of our early year's cohort had an EHCP.

114 of our statutory school aged Cared for young people had an EHCP.

36 Year 12 and 13 young people had an EHCP.

16 of our Care Leavers (ages 19 – 21) had an EHCP.

134 EHCPs were maintained by Cheshire East for our Cared for Children and Care Leavers (0 – 21).

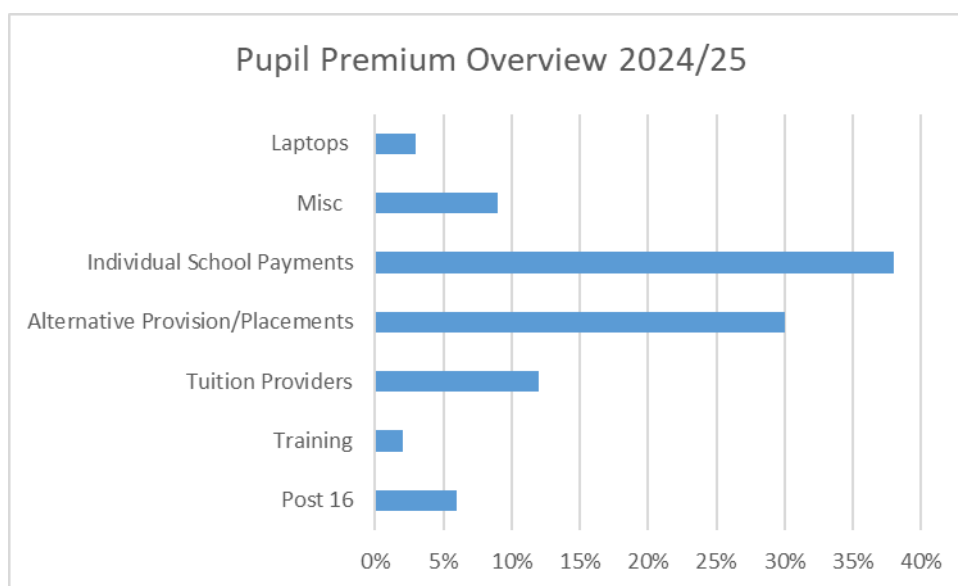
The virtual school has an identified SEN lead advisor who meets with advisors and the senior key workers from the SEND team monthly. This is to review cases to ensure effective timeliness and interventions are in place, plans are finalised, and advice is received. The virtual school SEN lead also meets with advisors and feeds back to the SEND team on a half termly basis. At present we are focusing on improving and strengthening Annual Reviews. This is to ensure annual reviews are taking place alongside the PEP and

within statutory timescales, for both those young people with plans maintained in and out of authority. We continue to work closely with the SEN team and social care to make sure school moves are timely and well planned where possible, including those moves within a transition phase of education.

The virtual school has continued to embed cross-service working within the SEND team to ensure that children are in the correct school to meet their needs and make progress. Advisors are involved if an application for a needs assessment is made and are contacted by the SEND team to request any advice to be included in the assessment process. In cases where school moves are required for children with an EHCP, there is support in place to ensure that all children have access to interim education whilst the consultation process takes place

Pupil Premium Funding 2024/25

The virtual school's main budget is pupil premium plus (PP+), which is devolved to the local authority and is to be used as seen appropriate by the virtual school head to best promote achievement and progress of cared for children. The amount that was made available to the Local Authority for 2024/25 is £2,570 per child in care as reported on the March return. The guidance makes clear that while it is expected that the majority of this is used for direct support of children, it does not need to be allocated equally as some children will need less than £2,570 and some will need considerably more. The funding criteria also state that the pupil premium can be used to fund staff or central services such as training if they have a direct impact on improving the experience and outcomes for children. Retained funding is used to provide a range of additional support and services. This includes virtual school staffing, commissioning of any specialist services and attendance systems, training and development opportunities.



The main use of pupil premium plus was to fund intervention work and provisions delivered directly through schools/settings and identified through individual PEPs. The remaining funds have been used to provide support for children which is above and over what is offered as part of the usual school curriculum/ offer. These may include attending alternative provision sessions, as part of bespoke timetable packages for children who require additional support within mainstream school. These provisions offer a series of off-site support such as animal therapy or forest schools, having a weekly work placement to add variety, help with preparing for adulthood or funding specialist support such as counselling. Funds were also allocated to schools to support remote learning, access targeted support, or to prepare for transition. The aim of this was to ensure that children were supported regarding increasing their skills and knowledge before the exams/assessments and to support improving their preparation and confidence.

School age children in care are allocated pupil premium plus when a PEP is returned with a funding request form which outlines how this would be spent and the intended outcomes and, in some cases, funding is allocated to children outside this age range if the need is evident

Case Study

Child A is a year 3 young person who moved to live with Grandparents in the spring term, Child A attends a mainstream primary school. They have a diagnosis of ADHD and ASC and has an EHCP. Child A had been increasingly struggling to manage their emotions and behaviour choices in school. They found it difficult to access learning in the classroom, which was also having an impact on the learning of other young people. There were significant safeguarding concerns and challenging behaviour. School was increasingly concerned that there was not always a discernible trigger for Child A and their dysregulation had no prior warning - therefore it was extremely difficult for staff to support them and others due to the unpredictability.

School had tried lots of interventions and were responding to more crisis situations. Child A could become extremely dysregulated at times; It was identified that they required a bespoke timetable during this time.

Type of Intervention:

An urgent review of Child A's EHCP was requested due to the increase in complex behaviours they were displaying as they came into care. It was agreed Child A required specialist provision and the SEND team began to consult with suitable settings. Child A was referred to CAMHS for specialist intervention to manage their own mental health and wellbeing.

In the meantime, the virtual school provided support via an ELSA trained learning mentor to enable Child A to express their emotions and to understand some of their big feelings. Pupil Premium+ was also provided for Child A to attend an alternative provision for Forest School on a 1:1 basis to support them with valuable education outside of the classroom, self-regulation and confidence. They started to access boxing classes on a 1:1 basis to support their ability to self-regulate, and to boost confidence and cooperation skills in a safe, controlled environment.

With additional PP+ funding, school were able to support Child A on a 1:1 basis during the school day this enabled Child A to have access to individual specialised provision, emotionally available adults, more safe spaces to use in school and extended PSHE learning opportunities. Regular multi-agency meetings took place to ensure the right support was in place for Child A and that everyone was responding to any changes in need.

Impact of Intervention:

Although the situation remains complex, there has been some demonstrable progress made. With increased support, Child A has continued to access mainstream primary school and they have been seen by CAMHS for intensive support, strategies were also shared with school, grandparents and other professionals in order to support Child A. Child A no longer struggles with their mental health episodes as frequently and has built really strong relationships with key members of staff in school.

By attending the alternative provision Child A's presentation has started to improve in social situations and the time needed to be isolated away from peers has reduced, they have gradually been able to reintegrate back into the classroom safely for some teaching time with support and supervision. Staff felt supported and better equipped to support Child A during periods of dysregulation, build trusting relationships and be readily available to support emotional wellbeing.

It is clear the use of Pupil Premium+ was fundamental in ensuring the continuity of this young person's education provision and supplemented by CAMHS, was also able to have a clear positive impact on their mental health.

Below is an outline of some of the interventions supporting our children and young people.

Emotional literacy support assistant



ELSA (emotional literacy support assistant) is designed to build the capacity of schools, to support the emotional needs of their pupils from within their own resources. This is achieved by training teaching assistants to develop and deliver individualised support programmes to meet the emotional needs of children and teenagers in their care. It recognises that children learn better and are happier in school if their emotional needs are also addressed. Within Cheshire east we have worked alongside our educational psychologists to fund delivery of ELSA for four learning mentors and additional places were allocated for designated teachers from Cheshire East schools to attend and to help support with their cared for children. This support will ensure that provision is in place for one-to-one or small groups with social, emotional, and mental health needs alongside school staff.

Letterbox Book Trust



The virtual school are supporting our children to have access to books and reading through funding Letterbox parcels; each child receives their own colourful parcel of books, math's games, stationery, and other high-quality materials once every month for six months. This year we have had a specific focus on signing up all our children moving into reception up to year 6 to receive the Letterbox Book Trust parcels to support them with their transition into their assessment years. During last year we commissioned 948 parcels to be delivered spread equally between each of our Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 children and young people containing a variety of learning resources and short stories/novels.

Recreational Activities

The virtual school has also supported children to access recreational activities which they may not normally be open for them to access. We have supported with additional funding for animal therapy, art therapy, residential trips, swimming lessons, music lessons for several instruments including piano, drums, singing, dance and performing arts including 1 CYP that attended and took LAMDA exams.



Our Space activities are based on the principles of Forest School. Their ethos is a holistic and inclusive approach that will empower individuals. Guided learning, review and reflection are key to their approach.

The private woodland site enables them to offer a wide range of activities for our young people. The aim is to boost their physical and emotional wellbeing by spending more time outdoors! Over the past year, several of our young people have accessed this resource and benefitted from the opportunity to learn new skills outside of a typical classroom setting.

Britannica

Britannica Digital Learning has been working in partnership with virtual schools across the UK since 2014 to help support the challenges that cared for children and young people face when online.

We know it is important for parents/ carers to feel assured that children are using a safe, reliable website and one that they can explore independently and unsupervised. For 250 years, Encyclopedia Britannica's editorial team has collaborated with experts, scholars, and specialists to produce trusted content. Through working closely with authorities, carers, parents, and educators, we have been able to adapt this for the new generation of digital learners. Cheshire East virtual school has funded this to ensure that all children, parents, and carers have access to Britannica online digital learning platform.

**Work Based Learning Programmes**

Within virtual school we have supported funding children and young people to have access to structured work-based learning programmes which support children and young people with the transition from school to workplace. We ensure that all programmes are a structured employability pathway designed to ensure children are equipped with the tools they need to go into the world and become an independent employee, fully preparing them for adulthood. Alongside this, we have funded a targeted programme for post 16 to support increasing engagement in education, employment, and training. For some young people with an education, health and care plan they have been able to access the step 16 programme which is work-based learning alongside functional skills and other qualifications. This is a one-year programme to support them in readiness for their transition to education, employment and training.

Learning Mentors



Last academic year, the virtual school had four learning mentors supporting school-aged children, each trained as an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA). In addition, we have a dedicated post-16 learning mentor who continues this support as our young people transition beyond school.

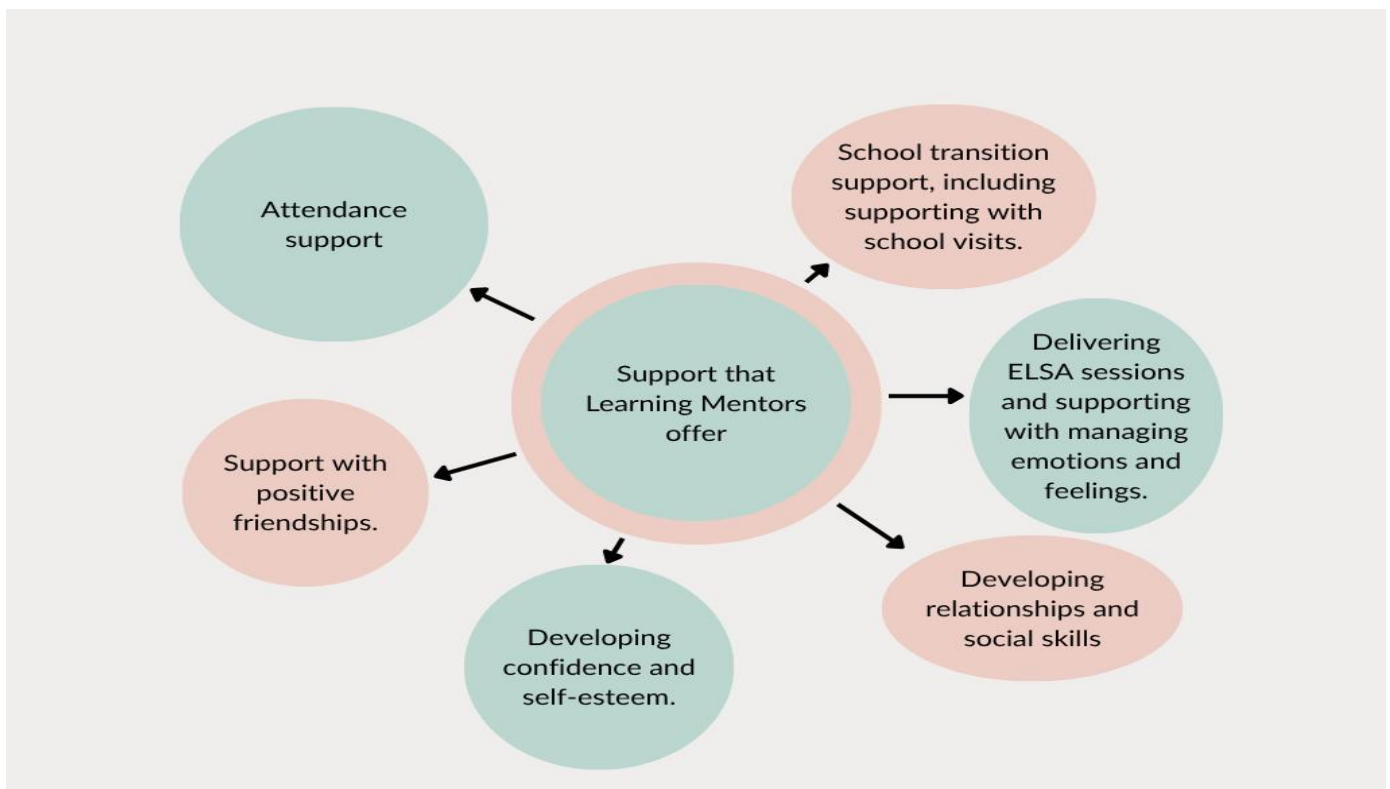


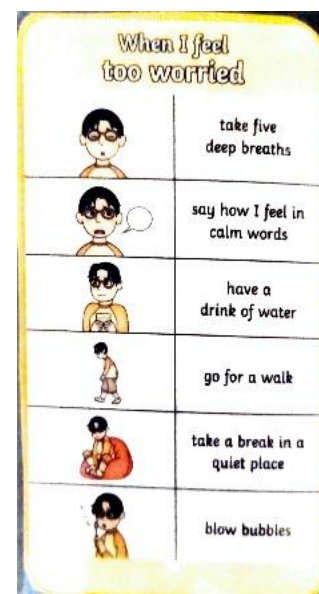
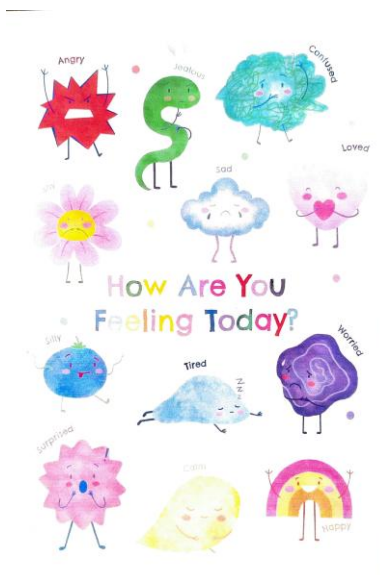
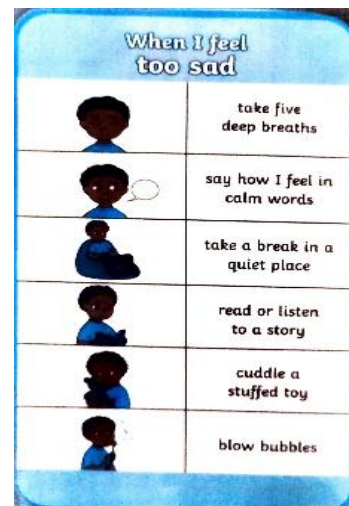
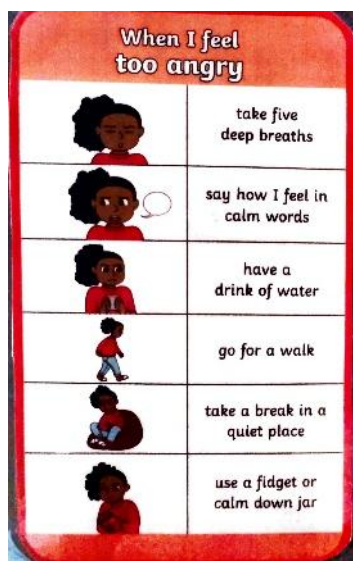
ELSA is a key element of our approach, providing targeted support to help children and young people develop emotional literacy—an essential foundation for wellbeing, resilience, and positive engagement in education. It underpins much of our work and enables mentors to respond sensitively and effectively to the emotional needs of those they support.



Our learning mentors play a vital role in the journeys of our children and young people, delivering targeted sessions that address a wide range of needs, as illustrated in the diagram below.

Each mentor plans sessions in collaboration with designated teachers, social care teams, virtual school advisors, and other professionals involved in the young person's care.





Case Study

Child B generally presents as happy and settled in the school environment, and is progressing very well, academically professionals have observed that they may sometimes say what they believe adults want to hear. There are concerns that Child B may not always be able to express their own thoughts and feelings. Child B can be reluctant to share their true emotions which raises concerns about their ability to process and make sense of their experiences. It was felt that Child B would benefit from opportunities to safely explore their lived experiences. Support should focus on helping them develop an understanding of healthy relationships and environments.

Type of Intervention:

- Learning mentor was assigned to support Child B
- The learning mentor visited school once a week to provide therapeutic ELSA informed support
- Sessions focused on exploring Child B's wishes and feelings in a safe and supportive environment and will explore emotions and feelings.
- The learning mentor acted as a point of communication between professionals, sharing relevant updates and observations from the sessions

Overview of Intervention

The learning mentor began working with Child B in January 2025 to provide emotional support and explore their wishes and feelings. From the outset, Child B presented as bubbly and happy, engaging positively in sessions. However, professionals had raised concerns that Child B may mask their true emotions.

To build rapport, the initial sessions involved a 'getting to know you' activities including using Jenga and getting-to-know-you question prompts. Child B responded well, showing enthusiasm and expressing a desire for continued sessions.

A range of therapeutic activities were used to support emotional awareness and expression:

- Emotion Cards Game
- Three Houses Activity
- Circles of Support
- Emotion Recognition Drawing
- Gingerbread Person Activity
- "Who is in My Circle?" Activity
- Emotional Regulation Session

Throughout the sessions, Child B showed a good level of emotional awareness but appeared hesitant to express emotions perceived as negative, such as sadness or anger. The Learning Mentor consistently reinforced that all emotions are valid and encouraged open communication.

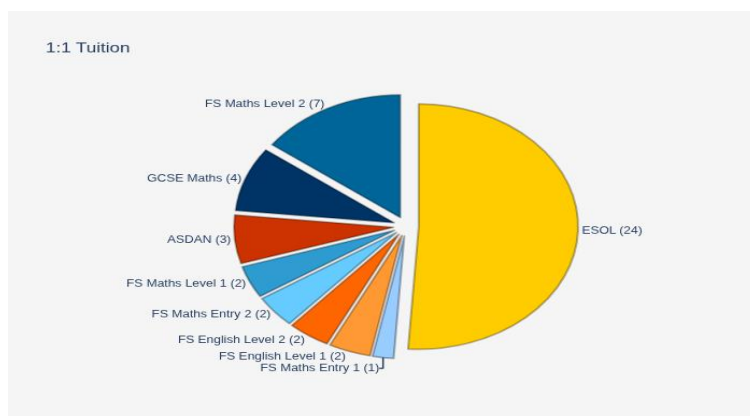
Creative activities such as pebble decorating, jar decorating, dream catcher making, drawing, card making, and jewellery making were also incorporated to support engagement and build a good relationship. Child B participated enthusiastically and appeared to enjoy these sessions.

Overall, the intervention provided Child B with a safe space to explore emotions, identify support networks, and begin to understand that expressing a full range of feelings is both normal and healthy.

- Child B demonstrated the ability to recognise and accurately label a range of emotions.
- They were able to provide examples of situations that may lead to specific emotional responses.
- Child B showed an understanding of how emotions can influence physical sensations in the body.
- Child B remained somewhat reserved when it comes to expressing emotions they perceive as negative, such as sadness or anger.
- A positive and trusting relationship was established between Child B and the learning mentor, which supported engagement and emotional exploration throughout the sessions.
- The intervention provided a safe and supportive space for the learning mentor to identify any worries, fears, or experiences that may be distressing for Child B that could then be shared with other professionals.

Virtual School Post 16 Tutor

The virtual school post-16 tutor provides bespoke one-to-one tuition for learners aged 16–18, with a particular focus on young people who are not currently engaged in education, employment, or training (NEET) and may have limited formal qualifications. Support is also extended to those under 16 or over 18 where additional help is required, ensuring smooth transitions into the next stage of learning or work. This targeted intervention aims to help students achieve qualifications, build confidence, participate in positive activities, and progress into further education, employment, or vocational training.



Personalised Learning

The 1:1 tuition programme offers Functional Skills in both Math's and English, with each learner provided access to an online platform tailored to their individual requirements. At enrolment, students complete an initial assessment to establish their current proficiency, enabling the development of a bespoke learning plan. Throughout the 2024/2025 academic year, this initiative supported a total of 16 students, many of which will continue through this support and tuition during next academic year.

ESOL

Alongside core subjects, this initiative prioritises English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people (UASC) entering care. Learners progress at their own pace using textbooks, home study materials, and a mobile app. The program focuses on introducing English at Pre-Entry Level and developing skills at Entry Levels 1 and 2. This year, 12 students received one-to-one support and 12 participated in group sessions, preparing them for ESOL courses and ensuring readiness for college transition in September 2025. Out of that cohort, 16 students moved on to an ESOL course at the college, 4 continue college education, and 1 continues 1:1 tuition.

Community Involvement and ASDAN

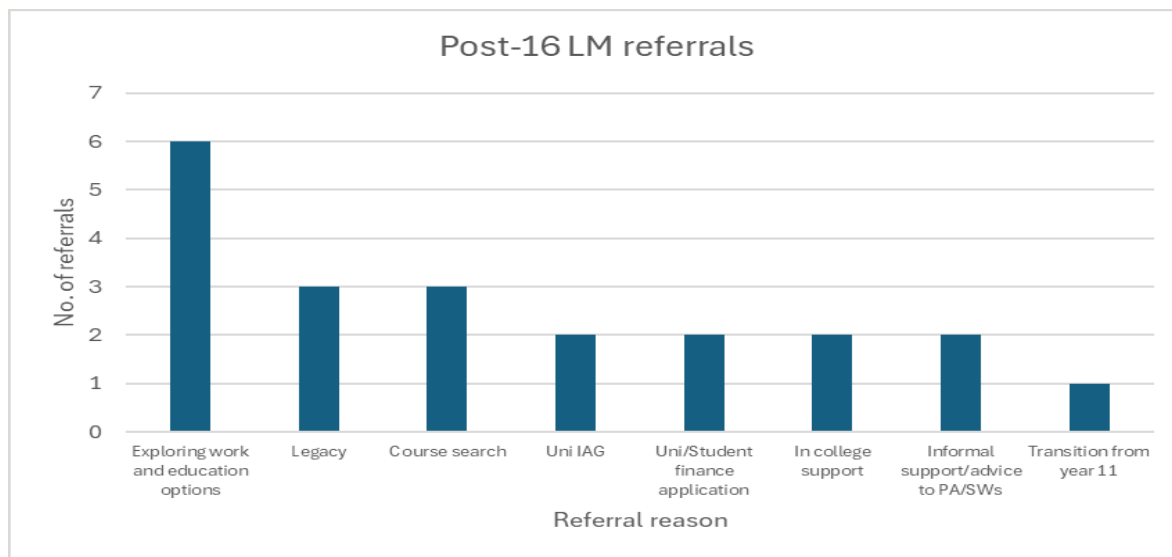
Students engaged in ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) activities, planning and delivering community projects to achieve the accredited Citizenship Short Course certificate. This year, three students successfully gained this award, developing valuable skills in teamwork and civic responsibility. Additionally, three students completed an online Food Safety Level 1 qualification, further enhancing their practical knowledge and employability.

Volunteering and Personal Development

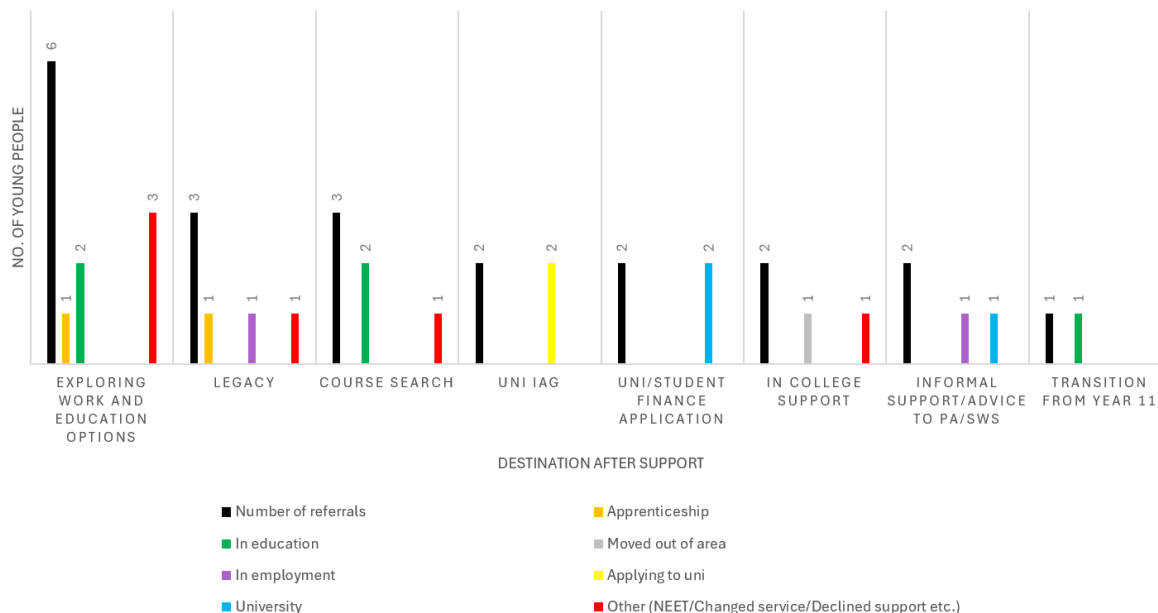
To support personal growth, particularly for young people who are currently NEET, the initiative promotes volunteering opportunities. These experiences help build confidence, develop practical skills, and strengthen engagement with the post-16 tutor. Highlights include volunteering in a care home, where students assisted with resident activities and garden maintenance, and at a dog rescue Centre, where they refurbished outdoor enclosures and constructed agility equipment. Such activities foster a sense of community and often encourage learners to participate in one-to-one tuition.

Post 16 Learning Mentor

The virtual school post-16 learning mentor offers specific support to our young people with re-engaging back into education, employment, and training. There was a total of 21 referrals, with charts below showing the reasons for referral, and the destinations following support. The post-16 learning mentor also started a weekly drop-in session at a local college to offer support to all cared for and care leaver students, offering support for various issues/queries including bursaries, transport, college work, next steps, and university information, advice, and guidance.



POST-16 LM REFERRALS AND DESTINATIONS



Case Study:**Background:**

Child C was in year 12 and had just completed the King's Trust. They had moved to a foster placement in a different area of Cheshire East in the past couple of months and were still feeling unsettled.

There was no plan in place for their education, and they would only consider one college, which was difficult to get to following the move.

A referral was made to Post-16 Learning Mentor for support to explore next steps for education and employment.

Key concerns:

Although they had successfully completed the King's Trust, Child C was unsure what they wanted to do next and often changed their mind. They had attended college for a short time in year 12, but this did not work out, and they left early on.

Type of intervention:

- Child C referred to post-16 learning mentor in response to concerns raised.
- The post-16 learning mentor and advisor initially met with child c at home for introductions, and to create a plan.
- Post-16 Learning mentor to build a trusting relationship, get to know Child C, and explore post-16 options.
- Post-16 learning mentor to support researching college courses, applications, visits, and liaising with college to ensure a support plan was in place.
- Post-16 learning mentor to support child C with researching transport options and understanding the route.

Impact of intervention:

Child C stated they were interested in hands-on subjects, including automotive care, plumbing, bricklaying and other trades. They were very talented at art but were not sure if they wanted to study it. The learning mentor spent time with Child C to investigate course options, and what modules each included, which helped to narrow their choices. They met at the library so they could be supported by getting a library card, and two applications were made to Child C's college of choice. However, this college was far away, and so the learning mentor researched public transport options, which would be lengthy, and difficult to navigate. Child A still did not want to consider other options and was confident they would manage the transport.

The learning mentor arranged for Child C to meet with the designated lead from a college much closer as an additional option and supported with the meeting.

A practice public transport trip to college was arranged, but after fully understanding how long the journey would be (3 buses each way), and how early in the morning they would have to leave (before 6am), Child C agreed that this was not feasible for the whole year and decided to apply for the closer college. They felt comfortable after having already met the staff and knowing that the learning mentor would be at the college once a week to offer drop-in sessions to students.

Child C started college in September, is happy, and has a good friendship group.

Venture with Confidence Programme



This year we worked closely with our care leavers service to run a joint programme for children who are not in education, employment, **Venture with Confidence**. The 12-week programme aims to help these young people to work towards moving into employment, further education, or training.

The objective of the programme is to support our young people to:

1. Recognise their skills
2. Develop further skills
3. Build their confidence
4. Explore ideas of what they might like to do in the future
5. Arrange work experience
6. Build relationships with local groups and organisations
7. Do something for their local community



The young people also had the opportunity to achieve an ASDAN (Award scheme development and accreditation network) certificate in citizenship.

The 'Venture with Confidence' scheme is run by members of virtual school team and care leaver service. The teams worked together with other services including Youth Support Service, Pure Insight, and Higher Farm. During the 12-week course the young people took part in team building activities. They also enjoyed employability workshops and completed a community project. This year the young people dismantled reclaimed and donated pallets and used the wood to build a large piece of play equipment for Pawprints to Freedom, a local dog charity.

10 young people completed the programme. 6 of these young people moved into education, 3 are being supported to take next steps into work experience/work or Apprenticeships. 1 young person continues to be support to explore further support options.



Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

PEP is the document which records the children's education provision, achievements, and how the school or other provider will help to improve their outcomes. It is the joint responsibility of the local authority and school to ensure that there are PEPs in place, and the virtual school has a duty to monitor these and provide advice and support as necessary. The PEP should be reviewed each term at a meeting between school, carers, young people, and social workers. The virtual school attends all initial PEPs for children and young people between the ages of three and eighteen years old.

We have continued to develop the PEP following feedback from schools to further enhance the quality and content, with almost all primary and secondary schools now effectively using the PEP portal system. This year we have focused on getting the post 16 and early years settings onto the portal system, and we will continue to do so across all ages to ensure we are using our systems in the most efficient way.

Virtual School advisors support all initial PEP meetings and complete the first PEP which will provide a template and standard for future support. This includes ensuring that actions and targets are specific and measurable. These PEP meetings take place within 20 working days and are available for the first cared for review meeting. PEPs are subsequently reviewed each term with the education provider taking a lead alongside social care by reviewing the child's progress, the impact of the previous actions, and updating the PEP targets where appropriate.

There is a quality assurance process in place within the virtual school team where each PEP is reviewed and categorised based on the level of support needs of the child. Those with the highest support needs are rated as red, in which case the advisor will attend all PEPs and will provide more frequent contact with the child, carer, school and social worker. Cases rated as amber may require less oversight from the advisor whilst those rated as green are monitored with attendance at one PEP per year. The virtual school criteria involvement in the PEP is:

- New into care
- School or placement move
- Moved out of Borough
- Red rated cases
- Repeat suspensions
- Attendance below 90%
- Need an independent chair.

Exemplar PEPs are shared across localities during training sessions to share good practice.

The quality of the PEP is the joint responsibility of the local authority and the school. As well as updates on their attainment and progress, this should include discussion of their attitude, emotional state, friendships etc. During next academic year we will be having specific focus on improving alignment of the EHCP annual review and PEP meetings.

99.6% of school aged children received at least one PEP within the school year.

PEP completion by education phase	Primary	Secondary	Post-16 (up to age 18)
Cared For Full Year	364	120	64
3 × PEPs	329	114	55
2 × PEPs	33	19	9
2 or More PEPs	362	119	64
% Completion	99.5%	99.2%	100.0%

PEPs completed academic year 2024-2025

Primary school aged children Completed PEPs 2024-25		
Autumn Term 2024	Spring Term 2025	Summer Term 2025
125 Children in care	131 Children in care	127 Children in care
124 PEPs completed	129 PEPs completed	126 PEPs completed
99.2% PEPs completed	98.5% PEPs completed	99.2 % PEPs completed

Secondary school aged children Completed PEPs 2024-25		
Autumn Term 2024	Spring Term 2025	Summer Term 2025
173 Children in care	183 Children in care	195 Children in care
170 PEPs completed	174 PEPs completed	187 PEPs completed
98.2 % PEPs completed	95.1% PEPs completed	95.9% PEPs completed

Post 16 (up to age 18) Completed PEPs 2024-25		
Autumn Term 2024	Spring Term 2025	Summer Term 2025
99 Children in care	88 Children in care	57 Children in care
93 PEPs completed	81 PEPs completed	55 PEPs completed
93.9% PEPs completed	92% PEPs completed	96.5% PEPs completed

Quality Assurance of Personal Education Plans

After the summer window for PEPs had closed the virtual school completed quality assurance to have oversight of the number of PEPs completed, how many PEPs were considered 'satisfactory' or better, and how many young people we considered to be 'Red'. Equally, we completed a moderation of the PEPs from all advisors to ensure a consistent approach to quality assurance. This is a process we will repeat in each subsequent term in the new academic year alongside the development of our new quality assurance framework.

Autumn Term

Good: 33.7%

Satisfactory: 49.5%

Requires Improvement: 16.7%

Spring Term

Good: 36.31%

Satisfactory: 42.94%

Requires Improvement: 20.75%

Summer Term

Good: 33.4%

Satisfactory: 50.1%

Requires Improvement: 16.4%

Year Average

Good: 34.47%

Satisfactory: 47.5%

Requires Improvement: 17.95%

81.97% PEPs Good or Satisfactory

Having conducted a thorough review of our Personal Education Plan (PEP) we have recently updated this and feel this is now a more comprehensive document. We have now included sections requesting information in relation to NEET Indicators for all our statutory school age young people, SDQ scores, which has the voice of the child embedded within.

We have strengthened to ensure more rigorous and robust data is evidenced for reading and assessment from all key stages (GLD-Key Stage 4) so that progress can be tracked across all key stages.

This revised PEP was presented to both our young people (through the Participation Team) and colleagues across social care, before undertaking a trial with 10 pilot schools and adapted based on their feedback before implementation.

We are now in the process of reviewing our EYFS PEP which is a project that will take place during this academic year.

Attendance

The virtual school monitors attendance of all cared for children by commissioning an independent company who contacts schools to collect a record of attendance. This data is then used to track and monitor all children to ensure effective and timely support is in place. Within the virtual school we have two specialist attendance officers that monitor attendance daily and work with schools and partners to ensure timely support is in place.

	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
Primary attendance %	94.18%	95.55%	95.12%
Secondary attendance %	89.3%	89.06%	81.51%*
Children with 100% Attendance	7.4% (21 children)	18.86% (53 children)	13.1% (46 children)
Children with above 95% Attendance	58% (164 Children)	66.9% (188 children)	52% (182 children)

*this data includes that of our Year 11 cohort whilst on study leave at the end of the academic year

% Attendance	2022/23	2023/24	2024/2025
Cheshire East-LAC* Attendance	93.3	92.3	88.3
Northwest-LAC Attendance	91.5	87.9	88.4
England-LAC Attendance	91.7	89.7	91.2
Cheshire East- All pupils Attendance	93.3	93.8	93.9*
England-All pupils Attendance	92.6	92.8	93.1*

*LAC stands for looked after children which are known as cared for children in Cheshire East.

Data in the tables shows that the three-year trend outlines primary attendance remains strong and stable, whereas secondary attendance shows a worrying drop in 2024/25. Those children with high attendance (100% and >95%) improved in 2023/24 but took a slight dip 2024/25. Overall attendance data shows that we are in line with Northwest average for looked after children; but we recognise that these figures are below all other children and National data therefore we will be undertaking a deep dive into data analysis for targeted support during next academic year.

CLA Data from DfE publication [Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England, Reporting year 2024 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

This provides figures for children looked after continuously for 12+months *

All pupils data from DfE publication [Pupil absence in schools in England, Autumn and spring term 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

There is information available for All pupils Cheshire East, NW and National for combined August 2024 and Spring 2025 terms, but this is not available for cared for children.

National Attendance data as in the table above for the academic 2024/25 has not been fully collected yet and as such comparative full year data will not be available until next year.

Children With a Social Worker Attendance

Primary

	% Attendance
Child in Need (244 children)	90
Child Protection (102 children)	88
Combined CiN/CP (346)	89

Secondary

	% Attendance
Child in Need (229)	75
Child Protection (59)	66
Combined CiN/CP (288)	70.5

Combined Primary and Secondary

	% Attendance
Primary and Secondary CiN/CP (634)	79.75
All CiN/CP/in borough CfC (986)	82.5

This is our first-year virtual school have been supporting to monitor the attendance data of all young people who are open on Child in Need or Child Protection Plans. What is evident is that there is a significant drop in attendance between secondary age young people when compared to their primary age peers. Overall, the average secondary child with a social worker falls well below (-9.5%) the 'persistently absent' threshold. In the year ahead we will be working closely with services across the partnership to monitor the attendance of all children with a social worker and support to extend the offer of targeted training, support and guidance for schools across Cheshire East. This will be fed into the Education Board.

Alternative Provisions

Recognising that Alternative Provisions are a key aspect of many young people's education package, in 2023/2024 we introduced our new Alternative Provision Guidance and Process. Underpinned by guidance from the Department for Education ([Alternative provision - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision-guidance-and-process)) we wanted greater assurances as to the quality of Alternative Provision attended by our Cared for Children, and a better understanding of how this impacted their weekly timetables. As such, we brought in a referral and quality assurance process to better support the schools we work with to effectively record, monitor and safeguard our young people.

Data around Alternative Provisions

Of the 29 young people who were attending an Alternative Provision at the end of 2024/2025, 15 were in Ofsted Registered provisions.

64 young people attended an Alternative Provision for at least part of their timetable in 2024/2025, and

45.7% of these then either transitioned back into their original home school or moved on to other full time education provisions once the work within the AP had concluded.

Only young people who were attending an AP that was Ofsted Registered were placed there on a full-time basis – no one attended an unregistered AP for more than 15 hours per week.

All Alternative Provisions were quality assured by a combination of the home school, the virtual school, Ofsted, or via the Northwest framework.

Case Study

Background:

Child D was a Year 10 Child whose attendance at the time of referral was 77.4%. Child D was referred by the virtual school advisor following multiple concerns discussed during a PEP meeting one of which was around attendance and punctuality.

Child D was in school but arrived late after the close of registration which had a negative impact on attendance. There were also concerns regarding the frequency of days absent due to illness.

Type of Intervention:

Following a PEP meeting outlining concerns regarding attendance and punctuality the child's allocated virtual school advisor referred Child D for support via an attendance Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) meeting led by virtual school attendance officer in order to bring all services together to provide a holistic approach and support for both the young person and wider family.

The MDT process involved fortnightly meetings with all professionals around Child D to meet and discuss the issues at hand and seek resolution to the barriers to attendance and punctuality. Various barriers and worries that young person had came to light after these discussions which meant we were not only able to keep attendance at the fore of all correspondence but also consider the wider context that might be impacting poor attendance.

Impact of Intervention:

During, and after, the MDT approach we observed some positive improvements/developments. Child D's attendance increased because of the child attending school more promptly and thus being in before registers closed; attendance soon raised to 78.6%.

The number of days of illness reduced after open conversations between the specialist attendance officer, school and home during the MDT meetings. This open dialogue led to more positive relationships for all adults around Child D and this has continued even after the close of the MDT pathway.

Transport and distance from school were one of the challenges identified early in the MDT, however, with all colleagues and professionals together we were able to attain support from social care which enabled Child D to move closer to school and transport was assigned to Child D.

Child D also shared concerns regarding Maths and English. Extra support was put into place by Virtual School, which included 1:1 tuition in these subjects, which has had a positive impact on Child D's confidence and emotional wellbeing.

At the end of the MDT process Child D's attendance rose to 80% which is an improvement of +2.6% in the space of six school weeks and regular weekly registration document checks showed that attendance continued to improve from that point into the new academic year and attendance this year is at 93%.

Suspensions and Exclusions

The virtual school has a duty to work with head teachers to try and avoid excluding a cared-for child and to make sure that they have the support in place to thrive and make progress. During 2024/2025 the virtual school has been quick in its response to suspensions so that a joint plan for the child can be implemented which identifies any key triggers and intervention required. If a suspension was unavoidable then there were similar meetings held afterwards to try and avoid any repeat exclusions of children. Schools or carers are asked to inform the virtual school whenever a suspension takes place. In the case of repeated incidents, additional PEP meetings will be held to check that all necessary support is being given.

The virtual school has funded places at both the Fermain Academy and Cornerstones, and this has contributed to the reduction in some instances of repeat fixed term exclusions and ensured that the children have received the right support at the right time. The staff have accessed training through virtual school on understanding the needs of cared for children and how to support children with insecure attachment; pupil premium funding has been used to help provide a mentor/key worker to support our children as a cared for champion.

There have **not** been any cases of Cheshire East cared for child being permanently excluded for over 7+ Years.

In academic year 2023/24 there were 15 suspensions (for a total of 7 children) of primary school age. In academic year 2024/2025 there were 10 suspensions (for a total of 4 children) of primary school age.

In academic year 2023/24 figures there were 121 suspensions (for 41 secondary age children). In academic year 2024/2025 there were 155 suspensions (for a total 47 children) of secondary school age young people.

The table below outlines fixed term exclusion data from 2022-2025. National Attendance data as in the table below for the academic 2024/25 has not been fully collected yet and as such comparative full year data will not be available until next year.

% of pupils with at least one suspension from school	22/23	23/24	24/25
Cheshire East % LAC*	13.26	12.46	13.9
CE all CYP	2.70	7.33*	*
Northwest % LAC**	11.97	13.7*	*
England % LAC**	13.5	13.7*	*

CLA Data from DfE publication [Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England, Reporting year 2024 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

*This provides figures for children looked after continuously for 12+months

** This is the most current data available on these demographics within the public domain

[Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England, Reporting year 2024 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

Participation of young people

The Virtual School recognises that young people are at the heart of all its work and that to be effective in helping young people to succeed in education, their wishes and feelings must be listened to. Each year we celebrate the success of our children and young people through our 'STAR' awards, jointly coordinated and led across children's services.

All young people are invited to contribute to their PEPs, either by attending the meeting or by sharing their thoughts on the 'My Voice' form which can be presented at the meeting on their behalf. Specific interventions and plans are influenced by this input in a variety of ways such as:

- Deciding what subjects to have tutoring in and when/where this takes place based on aspirations
- Agreeing targets for improvement in attendance or behaviour
- Identifying any issues/concerns in school
- Deciding whether additional adult support, e.g. mentor is required



Where children are not making expected progress and are struggling in school the virtual school advisor works 1:1 to gain understanding from the child of what support can be put in place. The virtual school has dedicated Learning Mentors who work 1:1 with children, they work closely with schools to empower and train staff to continue to support children/young people.

In addition to contributing to their Personal Education Plan meetings, our young people form an essential part of significant decisions made within the virtual school such as supporting interviews and recruitment. Our young people regularly attend events held by the Participation Team to present changes we hope to make in the ways we work, and the offer we have for our children. For example, our young people helped us to decide upon necessary changes to our new PEP which came into effect in 2024/2025 to reflect what they want their PEPs to look like. The young people who work alongside the participation team helped us to decide which subscription providers we commissioned to continue to foster a love of reading in our children. The virtual school collated a range of resources from different providers and presented these to the young people for their input as to which they felt was the most desired option. Their feedback was clear and helped us shape our offer to our Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 students for the forthcoming academic year. As a direct result of this piece of work we decided to continue working with Book Trust to ensure our young people had a say in what they felt was the best service to engender a love of literature, and to continue to improve the literacy and reading ability of all our children.

Higher Horizons

In the academic year 2024/2025 we worked alongside Higher Horizons which is a project that works closely with Local Authorities to help young people explore their post-16 and post-18 options. Recognising that nationally there is a clear disparity between the number of cared for young people and their non-care experienced peers who go on to Higher Education, we were eager to expose as many of our young people as possible to what life is like in undergraduate study and assistance that is in place for children in the care of the local authority.



In June and July 2025, we were involved in three separate events for Key Stage 3-5 children hosted by two local universities that were attended exclusively by Cheshire East children. At these events our young people had workshops on student finance, a campus tour, and attended sample lectures on film studies and sports science among others. Our young people had a great time and it was felt by all to be a thoroughly positive experience and so these events will continue into the new academic year with further dates planned for 2025/2026.



Quote from foster carer

“The day itself was really well structured, giving myself and my foster child plenty of time to get settled in, take in the aims of the day, and engage with the speaker and the material really well. The information was well presented and accessible to everyone who attended, then the Q&A backed it all up and gave us chance to consider lots of variables relating to higher education.

I think the most important aspect of the whole thing was the difference in my young person from walking in to walking out. They really didn't have any real expectation of further education, feeling that whilst it was something they wanted to look into it was somewhat unachievable. By the time we were leaving they were ready to submit an immediate application to the University, and it was lovely to see the positivity and enthusiasm for continuing their education.”

Attainment

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) assessments

Children are defined as having reached a good level of development (GLD) at the end of the EYFS if they have achieved at least the expected level for the ELGs in the prime areas of learning and the specific areas of mathematics and literacy.

For each ELG, teachers must judge whether a child is:

- meeting the level of development expected at the end of the EYFS (expected); or
- not yet reaching this level (emerging)

There were 22 children within the overall cohort

- 7 out of 22 children achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD), which is 31.8%.
- Eligible children: 3 achieved GLD (27.2%)

The overall GLD attainment is low, with less than one-third of children meeting the expected level. This is a key focus this year we will be working alongside our early years teams to ensure targeted support and actions are incorporated into our Best Start for Life Local Plan which is due to be finalised by March 2026.

	Cheshire East cohort size (CLA)	Number in eligible cohort (CLA)	% All CE CLA achieving GLD	% CE eligible CLA cohort achieving GLD	% CE All Children	NW LAC (NCE R data)	National LAC (NCER data)
22/23	9	5	22%	40%	69.0%	37%	42%
23/24	13	6		50%	69.2%	42%	41%
24/25	22	11	31.8%	27.2%	70.0%	39%	41%

Key Stage 1

Year 1 Phonics

1. Overall: 10 out of 16 pupils passed = 62.5%
 - Eligible: 7 out of 9 = 77.8%
 - Eligible pupils performed significantly better, with a much higher pass rate and no disapplication's.

Year 2 Phonics

1. Total pupils: 17
 - Eligible: 8

2. Passed in Year 1

- Total passed: 9 (53%)
- Eligible: 5/8 (62.5%)

3. Phonics Screening in Year 2

- Phonics Yes: 4 pupils (2 eligible)
- Phonics No: 2 pupils (1 eligible)
- Combined Year 2 outcomes: 6 pupils
- Success rate in Y2: 4/6 (67%)

Summary

- Overall phonics success (Y1 + Y2): 13/17 pupils (=76%)
- Follow-up in Y2 was effective for those who didn't pass in Y1 = 67% of those retested passed.

Key Stage 2

As of July 2025, there were 19 cared for children with 12 within the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months or more as of 31 March 2025).

A total of 16 children (11 eligible children) were entered for the SATS tests meaning 84.2% of our Year 6 cohort were entered for their SATs this past academic year.

The 3 remaining children did not sit SATs as it was not appropriate for the child due to their academic profile and/or their specific Special Education Needs.

	Cheshire East cohort size (CLA)	Number in eligible cohort (CLA)	% All CE CLA Reading	% CE eligible CLA cohort Reading	% All CE CLA Writing	% CE eligible CLA cohort Writing	% All CE CLA Maths	% CE eligible CLA cohort Maths	% All subjects (R, W, M)	% all subjects eligible cohort	CE All Children	NW LAC (NCER data) all subjects
23/24	19	12	63.20%	75%	21%	25%	42.10%	41.60%	15.70%	16.60%	63%	33%
24/25	21	13	42.90%	53.80%	42.90%	53.80%	42.90%	53.80%	38.10%	46.20%	64%	35%

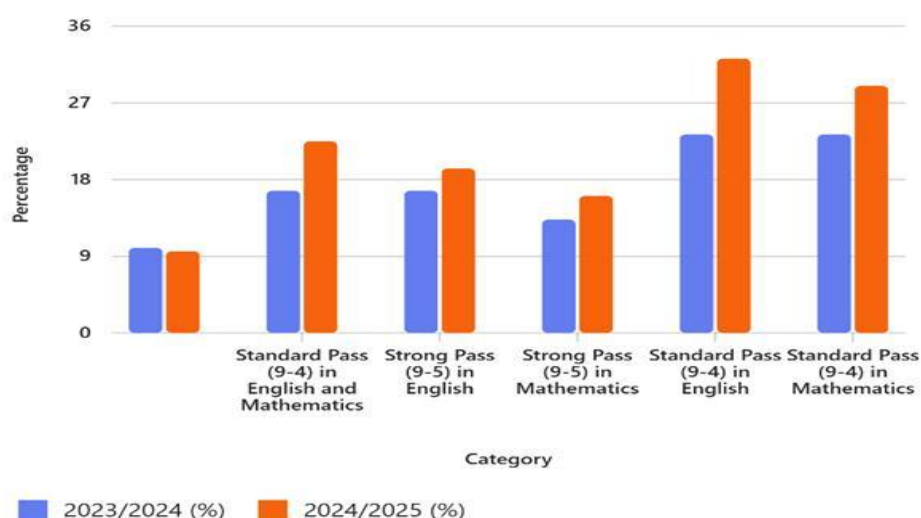
Key Stage 4 (unvalidated GCSE data)

As of August 31st, we had 55 young people in our Year 11 cohort. However, not all of these were entered for examinations or sat GCSEs for various reasons:

- 4 are Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children who came into the care of Cheshire East between the exam window and August 31st
- 7 were attending specialist provisions and were enrolled on alternative pathways

39 (32 of whom are classed as being in the eligible cohort) of our Year 11 cohort were entered for at least one GCSE subject with the average number of entries per child being 6.4 GCSEs (many were entered for Religious Education short course which counts as 0.5 of a GCSE).

16 CYP were not entered for GCSE; of these 8 were within the eligible cohort



Summary Comparison: GCSE Performance Eligible and entered Cohort

Strong Pass (9–5) in English and Mathematics
 2023/2024: 3 children → 10%
 2024/2025: 3 children → 9.4%
 Slight decrease in percentage

Standard Pass (9–4) in English and Mathematics

2023/2024: 5 children → 16.7%
 2024/2025: 7 children → 21.8%

Strong Pass in English

2023/2024: 5 children → 16.7%
 2024/2025: 6 children → 18.7%
 Slight increase.

Standard Pass in English

2023/2024: 7 children → 23.3%
 2024/2025: 10 children → 31.2%
 Notable improvement.

Strong Pass in Mathematics

2023/2024: 4 children → 13.3%
 2024/2025: 5 children → 15.6%
 Slight increase.

Standard Pass in Mathematics

2023/2024: 7 children → 23.3%
 2024/2025: 9 children → 28.1%

	23/24				24/25			
Cared for Children Attainment	All CE Cared for Children (47 CYP)	Eligible CE Cared for Children (30 CYP)	CE All children	National CLA	All CE Cared for Children (39 CYP)	Eligible CE Cared for Children (32 CYP)	CE All children	National CLA
KS4 English and Maths (4-9)	12.8%	16.7%	67.8%	17%	17.9%	21.8%	67.6%	*
KS4 English and Maths (5-9)	8.5%	10%	47.4%	8%	7.8%	9.4%	44.9%	*
KS4 English (4-9)	14.9%	23.3%	73%	24%	23.4%	31.2%	73*%	*
KS4 English (5-9)	10.6%	16.7%	56%	16%	15.3%	18.7%	55*%	*
KS4 Maths (4-9)	17.0%	23.3%	74%	22%	25.6%	28.1%	74*%	*
KS4 Maths (5-9)	10.6%	13.3%	55%	11%	12.8%	15.6%	53*%	*

Overall performance has improved in most categories, especially in standard pass rates. Strong pass rates are relatively stable, with slight increases in English and Mathematics individually.

As detailed in the data above, although the number of our young people achieving strong passes in English and Maths have dropped slightly (by 0.6%), **the number of our children reaching that grade 4**

benchmark of a standard pass has increased by 5.1% meaning more options are available to our young people without the need to resit one of their core subjects in English and Mathematics. We can also see significant improvements in the % of our eligible cohort who achieve a standard pass in both English and Mathematics.

What is also apparent, is that most of the grades list above in the whole cohort are also those from the eligible cohort meaning we can see very clear impact on the educational outcomes of those children and young people who have been Cared for by Cheshire East for 12 months or more at the time of entry.

As well as our various successes for those young people who were entered for their GCSEs this past year, we have a great many Year 11s who have completed alternative qualifications/certificates and followed different pathways. Many of these children attend specialist provisions, however, some of the qualifications listed below are simply in addition to their GCSE results and demonstrate the flexibility of our schools in supporting our cared for children in reaching their goals and aspirations.

Of 16 not entered for GCSE (of these 5 CYP came into the country either just prior or after the exam window closed);

Of the 11 CYP within this overall cohort 6 achieved other qualifications/certificates. 8 are within the eligible cohort with 5 gaining a qualification/certificate.

A list of these achievements and attainment can be found below:

Entry Level 1 in English

Entry Level 1 in Maths

Function Skills in English (2 young people)

Function Skills in Mathematics (2 young people)

ASDAN in Careers

ASDAN in Personal Finance

ASDAN in Citizenship

ASDAN (Gold) in Meal Preparation and Cooking

BTEC in Hair and Beauty

BTEC in Health and Fitness

BTEC in Sports Studies

BTEC in Home Cooking (3 young people)

BTEC introductory Award in Supplied Science

BTEC in Performing Arts

BTEC in Workskills

ESOL Skills for Life

ICT Tech Award

Post-16 education, employment, and training

Year 12 Summary – Academic Year 2024/2025

Total Cohort: 66 students

Education, Employment, and Training (EET) Status

NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training): 29 students (44%)

- 16 students began provision in September but disengaged during the year.
- 8 students entered care during the academic year, primarily in the summer term. Tuition and support were arranged for these students.
- 1 student is a parent and currently not seeking EET.

Re-engagement

- 20 students re-engaged through several programmes:
Venture with Confidence
Post-16 tutor support
King's Trust
Work experience opportunities

Pathways for September

- Clear Pathway Identified: 51 students of the 66 (77%)
 - Destinations include employment, apprenticeships, further education, training, and re-engagement programmes.
 - No Confirmed Pathway: 15 students of the 66 (23%)
 - 3 students are actively seeking apprenticeships with support.
- The Virtual School continues to work with social care and wider services to ensure all students have access to local support and guidance.

Education and Employment Outcomes

- 36 students accessed further education.
- 1 student is currently in employment.

FE Education (incl. King's Trust)	Bespoke Provision	Vocational Entry Level	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3 (first year)	A Level (1st year)	BTEC and A Levels (1st year)
Number of Students 27	1	5	7	7	2	4	1

ESOL	Pre-Entry	Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1
9	3	6	0	0	0
Maths	Pre-Entry	Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1
9	4	5	0	0	0

Year 13

At the conclusion of the 2024/2025 academic year, a total of 86 students were enrolled in Year 13. This report outlines the post-16 destinations of these students, including those in education, employment, apprenticeships, and those currently not engaged in any formal pathway.

Positive Destinations

As of September 2025, 58 of the 86 students (67%) have secured a positive destination. These include:

- Higher Education (University)
- Further Education (College/Training)
- Employment
- Apprenticeships

Current Status Breakdown

Category	Number of Students	% of Cohort
In Education	47	55%
On Apprenticeships	4	5%
In Employment	7	8%
Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)	31	36%

Students in Post 16 EET	Bespoke Provision	Entry Level	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3 (1st year)	Level 3 (2nd year)
32	2	1	0	10	5	14

ESOL	Pre-Entry	Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1
16	1	9	2	4	0
Maths	Pre-Entry	Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1
16	0	6	3	2	5

Details of NEET Students

Of the 31 students currently not in education, employment, or training:

- 1 has secured a college place for September
- 1 has an army application in progress
- 3 are young parents (1 continues to engage with their post-16 tutor)
- 3 are participating in work placements via work placements

All of our young people who are currently NEET are reviewed monthly in our NEET Challenge Panel which is attended by our post-16 virtual school advisor, post-18 EET advisor, EET advisor, Apprenticeship Co-ordinator, Personal Advisors and lead advisor for the Youth Support Service.

Apprenticeship Pathways

Four students are currently undertaking apprenticeships in the following areas:

1. Hairdressing – Completed Level 2, progressing to Level 3
2. Decorating – Working towards Level 2 qualification
3. Early Years Education – Working towards Level 2 qualification
4. Car Body Repair – Working towards Level 3 qualification

Level 3 results and destinations

Of the 14 young people who completed their A Levels/ Level 3 qualifications the following grades were achieved:

L3 T Level in Education and Childcare
 International Baccalaureate – 27 points
 L3 BTEC in Health and Social Care- Distinction
 L3 BTEC Ext Diploma in Public Services – Distinction, Distinction, Distinction
 L3 WJEC Dip in Criminology- E
 L3 CTEC Business Studies – Distinction*
 L3 BTEC Ext Dip in Engineering- Merit
 L3 BTEC Sports Coaching and Development- Merit, Merit, Merit
 L3 BTEC Criminology- E
 L3 BTEC Health and Social Care - Merit
 A Level Law- E
 A level Criminology – C
 A Level English Language- C
 A Level Art and Design- A
 A level Textiles – A*
 A Level Media Studies– C
 A Level English Language and Lit – D
 A Level English Literature- E
 A Level Sociology- D
 A Level History- C
 A Level English Literature- A
 A Level RE- B
 EPQ- A

Destinations

Huddersfield Uni- Children's nursing
 Brighton Poly University- Foundation Degree in Law
 Chester Uni- Foundation Degree in Policing
 Oxford Brooks University- Sports Journalism
 Nottingham Uni- English and Philosophy
 Loughborough Uni- Fine Art
 UCLA Preston- English Literature

During the next academic year 2025/26 the key priorities for the virtual school are:

1. Work alongside partners to further strengthen the inclusive practice across all schools and settings to ensure children have access to the right support at the right time. This will include a key focus on improving the outcomes of the most disadvantaged children.
2. Work alongside our attendance and out of school team to support to embed 'attendance as a protective factor to ensure a key focus on improving attendance for all children and support to reduce the number of suspensions.
3. Improve the overall attendance of all cared-for children with a specific focus on those who are persistent and severely absent.
4. Strengthen and monitor the offer for our extended duties for children with a social worker and those in kinship care, monitor and track impact of both universal and targeted support.
5. Ensure a clear focus on early years working alongside our early years teams to ensure targeted support and actions are incorporated into our Best Start for Life Local Plan to ensure improvements in overall progress and gaps in learning.
6. Ensure we continue to have a clear focus on tracking and monitoring attainment and progress regularly to ensure gaps in learning are identified early for access to support and interventions.
7. Develop and further strengthen our training offer across all schools and settings, enhancing the opportunity to share good practice and peer support.
8. Continue to work with schools and settings to further strengthen the quality of PEPs and ensure clear focus on measuring impact and outcomes for our children and young people to improve the overall quality and content of PEPs through the development of a Quality Assurance framework.
9. Continue to work closely with our care leavers and youth support team to ensure we have a clear focus on reducing young people not in education, employment or training.
10. Continue to strengthen the work alongside SEND service to maintain a focus on our CYP with special educational needs, ensuring they have access to the right support to meet their needs and achieve their outcomes.

The Lost Girl

Lost in the crowd
Lost in the noise
She thought she knew the way to go
She wandered clumsily
Wind swept across her face
Standing so still.

Lost in a world, that scares me to death
Her, not knowing what to do next
Her tears trickled down her face
She felt alone
Little did she know...

She was going to be found...

Appendix 1 – Attendance Data

2024/2025 attendance

24/25 attendance data	Overall attendance
Whole cohort	87%
Y11 - 51	71.67%
Y10- 48	81.82%
Y9- 43	81.57%
Y8- 34	89.83%
Y7 - 31	87.57%
Y6 -20	86.32%
Y5- 23	96.58%
Y4 - 20	96.76%
Y3- 25	91.95%
Y2-18	94.06%
Y1 -18	94.79%
Rec - 20	92.23%

24/25 Persistent absence (below 90% attendance) whole cohort

2024/2025 data	% of whole Cared for Children cohort who were Persistent absentees (below 90%)
Number of our whole cohort with attendance below 90% - 120	Percentage of our whole Cared for Cohort had attendance below 90% - 34.2%
Y11 - 37	10.5%
Y10 -19	5.4%
Y9 - 21	6%
Y8 - 12	3.4%
Y7 -11	3.1%
Y6 -2	0.75%
Y5 -0	0
Y4 -1	0.2%
Y3 -7	2%
Y2 -5	1.4%
Y1 -2	0.57%
Rec - 3	0.85%

24/25 Severe absence (below 50% attendance) whole cohort

2024/2025 data	% cohort of whole Cared for Children cohort who were Severely absent (below 50%)
Number of our whole cohort with attendance below 50%- 36	Percentage of our whole Cared for Cohort had attendance below 50% - 10.28%
Y11 -15	4.28%
Y10 - 8	2.28%
Y9 - 6	1.71%
Y8 - 1	0.28%
Y7- 3	0.85%
Y6 – 0	0%
Y5 - 0	0%
Y4 - 0	0%
Y3-0	0%
Y2 - 1	0.28%
Y1 - 0	0%
Rec - 2	0.57%

Suspensions 24/25

	Year	Episode	Children	Male	Female
Primary	rec	0	0	0	0
	Y1	0	0	0	0
	Y2	2	2	2	0
	Y3	6	1	0	1
	Y4	0	0	0	0
	Y5	2	1	1	0
	Y6	5	2	2	0
Secondary	Y7	36	4	2	2
	Y8	42	9	7	2
	Y9	20	7	4	3
	Y10	22	10	5	5
	Y11	20	11	7	4
	total	155	47	30	17

Suspension by cohort educated Cheshire East schools 24/25

	Year	Episodes (how many)	Children (how many)
Primary	Rec	0	0
	Y1	0	0
	Y2	1	1
	Y3	0	0
	Y4	0	0
	Y5	2	1
	Y6	5	2
Secondary	Y7	28	3
	Y8	12	3
	Y9	17	5
	Y10	12	4
	Y11	14	7
	total	91	26

Suspensions by cohort educated outside of Cheshire East schools 24/25

	Year	Episodes (how many)	Children (how many)
Primary	rec	0	0
	Y1	0	0
	Y2	1	1
	Y3	6	1
	Y4	0	0
	Y5	0	0
	Y6	0	0
Secondary	Y7	8	1
	Y8	30	6
	Y9	3	2
	Y10	10	6
	Y11	6	4
	total	64	21

