

# Cared For Children and Care Leavers Committee

## Agenda

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**Date:** Tuesday, 3rd December, 2024  
**Time:** 2.00 pm  
**Venue:** The Capesthorpe Room - Town Hall, Macclesfield SK10 1EA

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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.

It should be noted that Part 1 items of Cheshire East Council decision making meetings are audio recorded and the recordings will be uploaded to the Council's website

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

1. **Apologies for Absence**

2. **Declarations of Interest**

To provide an opportunity for Members and Officers to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests, other registerable interests, and non-registerable interests in any item on the agenda.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting** (Pages 3 - 6)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2024.

4. **Update from the Shadow Committee** (Pages 7 - 18)

To receive an update and presentation from the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Shadow Committee.

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For requests for further information

**Contact:** Josie Lloyd

**Tel:** 01270 686466

**E-Mail:** [josie.lloyd@cheshireas.gov.uk](mailto:josie.lloyd@cheshireas.gov.uk) with any apologies

5. **Update from the Corporate Parenting Strategic Board (Verbal Update)**

To receive a verbal update from the Corporate Parenting Strategic Board.

6. **Virtual School Headteachers Annual Report 2023-24** (Pages 19 - 72)

To receive the Virtual School Head Teacher Annual Report for 2023-24.

7. **Care Leavers Annual Report 2024** (Pages 73 - 78)

To receive the Care Leavers Annual Report 2024.

8. **Cheshire East Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service - The Children's Society Annual Report** (Pages 79 - 102)

To receive the Cheshire East Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service Annual Report 2023-24.

9. **Cared for Children and Care Leavers Committee Quarter 2 Scorecard 2024-25**  
(Pages 103 - 114)

To consider the performance of the Cared for Children and Care Leavers service for quarter 2 of 2024-25.

**Membership:** Councillors M Beanland, S Bennett-Wake, J Bird, C Bulman (Chair), D Clark, E Gilman, G Hayes, S Holland, B Posnett, B Puddicombe and J Saunders (Vice-Chair)

**CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the  
**Cared For Children and Care Leavers Committee**  
held on Monday, 30th September, 2024 in the Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,  
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

**PRESENT**

Councillor C Bulman (Chair)  
Councillor J Saunders (Vice-Chair)

Councillors M Beanland, S Bennett-Wake, D Clark, D Edwardes, G Hayes,  
B Posnett and B Puddicombe

**Officers in attendance**

Theresa Leavy, Interim Executive Director Childrens Services  
Lisa Davies, Interim Children's Services Improvement Director  
Andrea Stone, Interim Director of Family Help & Children's Social Care  
Annemarie Parker, Head of Service: Cared for Children & Care Leavers  
Laura Rogers, Head of Service Inclusion and Virtual Cared for Children  
Annie Britton, Participation Team Lead  
Rachel Graves, Democratic Services Officer  
Nicola Booth, Operations Manager Adoption Counts  
Alice Taylor, Adoption Counts  
Nicola Wycherley, Designated Nurse Cared for Children, Integrated Care Board  
Josette Niyokindi, Associate Director of Quality & Safety Improvement, Integrated Care Board

**13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor E Gilman. Councillor D Edwardes attended as a substitute member.

**14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**15 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING****RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2024 be approved as a correct record.

## 16 UPDATE FROM THE SHADOW COMMITTEE (VERBAL UPDATE)

The Committee received a presentation outlining the recent activities of the shadow committee, My Voice. This included:

- My “Voice of in Care Experience” held on Tuesday 6 – 8 pm during term time.
- launch of Junior My Voice, held on Tuesday 4 – 5.30 pm.
- activity days and project days during the summer holidays
- launch of the Care Leavers Hub
- Involvement in recruitment for Executive Director Place and Family Hub Worker.

It was reported that Care Leaver week would take place week commencing 28 October 2024 and that the Star Celebration Day would be held on 24 November 2024.

The Committee asked about the Care Leaver Hub and the need to ensure that they were offering the services that care leavers wanted. In response it was explain that were two bases, one in Crewe and one in Macclesfield. Young people were attending the hubs for planned sessions such as cooking and education as well as using them as a base to drop into, knowing that there would always be someone there to offer a hot drink and support. The longer-term plan was to have a bespoke hub at the Crewe Youth Zone. Free bus travel for Care Leavers aged 16 to 21 would be operational from 30 September 2024 and this would assist young people to access the Hubs.

## 17 ADOPTION SERVICE SIX MONTHLY REPORT

The Committee considered the six-monthly report on the Adoption Service, which covered the period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023.

The Committee as concerned about the timeliness of reporting as the data in the report was a year old. In response it was stated that there was a process which the data had to go through before it could be reported to the Committee. Data from Adoptions Count and from local authority were collected and went to the Leadership Board to be checked before any report could be written. It was usually a period of three- or four-months following collection of data and checking before it could be presented. It was reported that Adoption Counts had now appointed a Data Officer who now coordinating data and processed it and hopefully this would help with the timeliness of reporting the data.

Reference was made to the timeliness of stage 1 assessments and in response it was stated that the statutory checks that were required to be undertaken often took a longer to be completed. To help with this process, there would be dedicated recruitment and assessment social workers who would work with families during stage 1 of the process.

It was asked about the refusal of health assessment by a young person and what happened if this was the case. It was stated that although it was a statutory requirement, the young person's consent was needed. If an assessment were refused another appointment would be offered and the service worked with the young person to understand their reason for refusal and would make adjustments if required to enable them to undertake the health assessment. If they still did not want a health assessment, a health plan would be created from their paper records.

**18 CARED FOR CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS COMMITTEE  
QUARTER 1 SCORECARD 2024-25**

The Committee received the Cared for Children and Care Leavers scorecard for quarter 1 of 2024-25.

The Committee welcomed the inclusion of the health details in the scorecard.

There was concern about the number of children being housed in hotels and that these children were usually more vulnerable and needed extra support. It was reported that the number in hotels since the scorecard was published had reduced from eight to two. The main reason for using this type of accommodation was that they had exhausted all other options. The service worked closely with housing to resolve their accommodation needs.

Reference was made to the number of social workers, and it was reported that there were 24 social workers with the additional social workers to be recruited as part of the Children Services Improvement Plan.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee note the Quarter 1 Scorecard 2024-25.

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and concluded at 5.36 pm

Councillor C Bulman (Chair)

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Cheshire East

**TOGETHER** for Children and Young People

# Cheshire East Cared For Children and Care Leavers Committee December 2024



OFFICIAL

# Care Leaver Ambassadors

- In Cheshire East we have 5 Care Leaver Ambassadors.
- As ambassadors, our role is to be the voice of Care Leavers.
- Today we want to talk to you about the Local Offer.

# Local Offer Review

- The Local Offer is a document that explains what services and support are available to Care Leavers.
- The Local Offer is reviewed every year to establish what changes and updates need to be made.
- This year we presented the results and recommendations from the Care Leaver survey and used this to start conversations on important topics.
- The Care Leaver survey, was conducted between October 2023 and January 2024, with themed focus groups following this to identify recommendations.

# Local Offer Review

On 13<sup>th</sup> November, we were part of the Local Offer Review event and gathered feedback from young people on the themes of:

- Care Leaver Service
- Education, Employment, Training, Apprenticeships
- Housing, Safety and Pathway Plans
- Family and Health
- Preparing for Adulthood
- Other Recommendations

We would like to share with you the feedback and recommendations gathered on the day.

# Local Offer Feedback

## Care Leaver Services

- Out of hours support needs improving. Expanding evening and weekend services is a priority, utilising the Hubs, Cheshire East services and partnerships with external agencies like Pure Insight to provide social activities, mentorship, and therapeutic support.
- The Leisure Pass to be offered as a leisure budget so that the funding can go towards other leisure sports and activities – such as horse riding, boxing, team sports, hobbies such as sewing clubs etc Young people may also need support to start attending leisure activities such as gym sessions.

# Local Offer Feedback

## Education, Employment, Training and Apprenticeships

- Increased financial support for parents: Care leavers who are parents need support with childcare or family-related costs. Funded child support could help parents who want to work but struggle with additional expenses.
- Support with accessing and completing English and Maths qualifications to enable progression into further education opportunities, such as apprenticeships. Courses should be delivered in settings that young people can access easily, such as online or at the Care Leaver Hubs.

# Local Offer Feedback

## Housing, Safety and Pathway Plans

- Starter Kits for young people moving into homes (housing, kitchen tools, bedding, etc.) For example, a 'Moving in Pack' with essential items provided for young people when transitioning to independent living, including: Kitchen items: Plates, cups, cutlery, glasses, pots, pans, utensils; and Household items: Bedding, basic toolkit, cleaning products, and food starter set.
- There should be more housing options available to young people and in the areas that they want to live. Also there needs to be better understanding and support with the Homechoice process. A dedicated housing officer within the team could act as a mediator between the Leaving Care Service and Housing.
- Setting Up Home Grant, there is a £1000 gap in funding based on when you turn 18, we feel that the offer should be standardised for all Care Leavers regardless of age. In addition to this, costs to cover non-negotiable aspects of tenancy, such as flooring, are huge costs that don't leave much left to 'set up' and make a house a home. This is especially problematic if we are to move and there is no grant left to pay for new carpets a second or third time, or if the grant has been used whilst in semi-independent accommodation to purchase items.

# Local Offer Feedback

## Family and Health

- We would like more emotional support. Social events like group activities, days out, or special occasions (e.g., a Christmas party) would help young people build networks as well as emotional support to combat loneliness and isolation. Young parents, especially those feeling isolated or unsupported, would benefit from more emotional and social support, not just practical or task-focused visits.
- We would like to have Laundry and Washing facilities (showers) available to us as part of the Hub offer. In addition to this, there should be more practical help and support for young parents, such as being able to access nappies, maternity clothing, and creche facilities.
- There is no standard 'new parent' gift for Care Leavers. There needs to be an increase in financial support for parents as there are significant costs associated with purchasing items such as a pram, car seat, nursery furniture etc.

# Local Offer Feedback

## Preparing for Adulthood

- Independence needs to start before 16 years old. Independence preparation should be gradual and start before the age of 16, with support from foster carers, residential staff, and semi-independent housing providers. This could include skills-building around managing a household, cooking, and budgeting.
- We need to improve the Independence Packs. Could we further consider the ASDAN model for independence packs, ensuring that the language is not patronising, with tenancy readiness based on real skills and assessments over time.

# Local Offer Feedback

## Other Recommendations

- More support accessing tech equipment and Data. Support to provide essential tech equipment (laptops, tablets) and support for digital connectivity (Wi-Fi, data plans), would help care leavers to stay connected with essential activities and services such as job applications, study, and accessing mental health support.
- Bus passes for care leavers up to 25 years old.



# Any Questions?



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OPEN

**Cared for Children and care leavers  
Committee.**

**03 December 2024**

**Virtual School Headteachers Annual  
Report 2023/24**

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**Report of: Claire Williamson Director of strong start and Education**

**Purpose of Report**

- 1 This report presents an overview of the operation and impact of the virtual school during 2023/24. 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 2023 to 31 March 2024.
- 2 The Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report details the progress and achievements throughout academic year 2023-24 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 During 2023/24, the virtual school has continued to support all cared for children/care leavers 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 has an allocated 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).

- 4 Most of our cared for children are educated in good or outstanding schools (85% in July 2024). 12% of schools are without an updated Ofsted rating due to academy conversion or results not being published yet.
- 5 Most cared for children have good attendance at school (92.3% in 2023/24) which is higher than figures recorded in 22/23 both nationally and regionally for looked after children. We saw a rise from 7.4% (22/23) to 18.86%(23/24) for CYP achieving 100% attendance at school.
- 6 No Cheshire East cared for children have been permanently excluded for over four 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 50% of the eligible cohort in Reception have achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD).
- 9 Year 1 Phonics: As of July 2024, there were 12 cared for children in total and 6 were within the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months or more as of 31 March 2024). Of the 6 in the eligible cohort, 3 passed the phonics test and 2 were disapplied but can be entered in Year 2.
- 10 Key Stage 2 SATS: As of July 2024, there were 19 cared for children with 12 within the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months or more as of 31 March 2024).

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.

75% of the children achieved standard in reading, early data indicates this was above the percentage achieved for all children both regionally and nationally

42% achieved standard in Maths, 58.3% in Grammar, punctuation and spelling.

- 11 At the end of the academic year July 2024, there were 47 Cheshire East cared for children. Of the 47 there were 30 in the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months or more as of 31 March 2024).

Of the 47 cared for children, 26 were entered for GCSEs. Of the 30 in the eligible cohort, 17 of these were entered for GCSEs.

Approximately a third of our Year 11 cohort were either not entered for any examination, sat a reduced number of qualifications, or followed an alternative curriculum to the standard GCSE pathway. Of the children not entered for GCSEs, a number of these gained a range of other functional skills qualifications or awards

- 12 At the end of the academic year 2023/2024, there were 79 students in total in year 12. Of this, 14 were not in education, employment, or training (17.72%). 10 young people were re-engaged through various activities, including Venture with Confidence, Post 16 tutor and work experience opportunities.

Of the 79 young people, 68 had clear pathway plan for September (86.07%) These next steps and pathways included, employment, apprenticeships and further education and training or re-engagement activities.

- 13 A Level results and HE destinations: 11 young people completed their A Levels/ Level 3 qualifications.

One young person has a high-level apprenticeship in Insurance.

One young person is working full time for an insurance company.

9 young people have gained a place on their preferred choice of university

One young person wants an apprenticeship, is currently NEET and actively looking and receiving support from the apprenticeship co-ordinator

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cared for Children and Care leavers Committee is recommended:

1. To endorse the Virtual Headteacher's Annual Report 2023/24

## **Background**

- 14 The annual headteachers report outlines the educational progress and update from academic year 2023/24. The LA are required to develop an improvement plan following the outcome of our ILACS inspection which will include specific areas of focus and actions directly in relation to Education. The improvement plan sets out the actions we will take to improve services. What is most important is that what we do makes a difference, so each month we will assess progress and impact against the plan.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 15 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*

- 16 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.
- 17 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.
- 18 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*

There are no financial implications of the report. Finance advice will be sought, as appropriate, upon all relevant emerging issues

*Policy*

- 19 <Please indicate the policy implications of this report and its recommendations/decisions here, including reference to the policy framework and any deviations. Please refer to the priorities in the [Corporate Plan](#) that 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.>

<p><b>An open and enabling organisation</b></p> <p><b>(Include which aim and priority)</b></p>	<p><b>A council which empowers and cares about people</b></p> <p><b>(Include which aim and priority)</b></p>	<p><b>A thriving and sustainable place</b></p> <p><b>(Include which aim and priority)</b></p>
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*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

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Laura Rogerson Head of Service Inclusion
Appendices:	Virtual School annual headteacher report 2023/24
Background Papers:	



*Together we will make Cheshire East a great place to be young*

# Virtual School for Cared for Children Head Teacher's Annual Report 2023/24



## Contents

Introduction .....	3
Poem By A Cared For Child (Aged 12).....	4
Making a difference to education outcomes for every child .....	5
Remit and operation of the virtual school in Cheshire East Council.....	6
Staffing and Organisation .....	7/8
Partnership Working.....	9
Training and Support.....	10
The Universal training programme offered by the Virtual School for Designated Leads in Schools	11/12
Extended duties for children with a Social Worker .....	13/15
Ofsted Ratings & Special Educational needs .....	16
Pupil Premium Funding 2023/24 .....	17
Case Study .....	18
Outline of some of the interventions supporting our children and young people .....	19/21
Learning Mentors .....	22
Virtual School Post 16 Tutor .....	23
Post 16 learning mentor.....	24
Case Study .....	25
Venture with Confidence Programme .....	26/27
Personal Education Plans (PEPs).....	28/31
Attendance.....	32
Multi-Disciplinary Team Meeting.....	33
Alternative Provisions .....	34
Exclusions .....	35
Participation of Young People.....	36
Attainment .....	37
Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) assessments and PEPs.....	37
Key Stage 1 .....	38
Key Stage 2 .....	39
Key Stage 4 .....	40/41
Post-16 education, employment, and training .....	42/44
Development Priorities for 2024/25.....	45
Appendices - Attendance Data .....	48

## Introduction

This report presents an overview of the operation and impact of the virtual school during 2023/24. 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 2023 to 31 March 2024.

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

During 2023/24, 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 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 cared for children has been relatively consistent at roughly 550 children and young people for the past 12 months. In order 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 the virtual school and coordinated across wider teams and services.

All children have access to additional pupil premium 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 2023/24.

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.

**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)***

**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.



*“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!”*  
 Quote from foster carer

### **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 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. 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 locality areas to develop training and share best practice.

The head teacher monitors and supports the team on a day-to-day basis to inspire and facilitate the best outcomes for all. As of the start of June 2024 this role was passed down to the two newly allocated deputy head teachers.

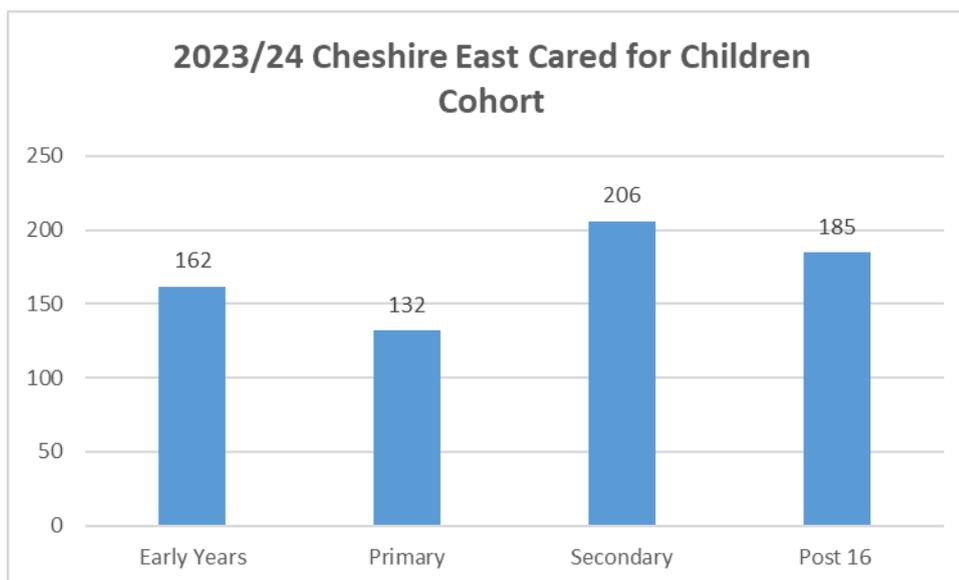
The team has evolved to provide more direct contact and support for children and young people so that the interventions can be more closely tailored to meet needs and monitored for individual impact.

## 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 (YJS)
- 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 2023/24 academic year there were 685 cared for children up to the age of 18 receiving various areas of support from the Virtual School. 67% 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 is mainly due to placements being out of borough, 66% of these were placed within neighboring authorities such as Cheshire West, Manchester, Stockport, Warrington, Staffordshire, and Stoke on Trent. The chart below shows a break-down of age/school groups.



\*Some school age will fall in the 0-4 categories due to their birthdays.

## 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, attending all resource and accommodation panel meetings weekly to support sharing information on education when placements move are being considered/sourced. Attending stability meetings with social workers and carers.
- Independent reviewing officers
- Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) team
- Youth Justice Service (YJS), with a YJS advisor who works part-time within the virtual school team.
- 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 work 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 particular areas of responsibility regularly attend regional meetings with colleagues from across 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 are:**

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.

We are also active members in the risk of NEET indicators (RONI) initiative spearheaded by our youth support team lead which seeks to identify young people who are at risk of being NEET at an earlier age.

## 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 cared for children 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.
- Training for social care and new social workers on improving educational outcomes of cared for children, statutory responsibilities, and PEPs.
- Locality cluster sessions held regularly throughout the academic year for all schools and settings
- Independent Reviewing Officer training that takes place in the summer term

The sessions held in 2023 and 2024 were well attended by school/setting representatives and provided a range of workshops delivered by a multitude of services. Sessions provided support on Higher Horizons, Springboard, Staying Close, Extended Duties, and Alternative Provisions. 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:

**“Hearing the Care Leaver speak about her experiences was so impactful and really quite emotional.”**

**“It was really useful hearing about the Virtual School’s new process around monitoring and recording Alternative Provision usage for Cared for Children.”**

**“Loved being able to network with colleagues from other settings and also great to hear about training offers and plans for Extended Duties.”**

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

Date	Title	Objectives
November 2023	Training for those new to the role of Designated Teacher - Virtual	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions and meeting the team</li> <li>• Structure of the Virtual School and staffing updates</li> <li>• Statutory role of the Designated Teacher</li> <li>• Previously Looked After Children</li> <li>• Effective use of Pupil Premium+</li> <li>• The support the Virtual School can provide to schools</li> <li>• Attendance monitoring lead by virtual school specialist attendance officer</li> </ul>
Monthly drop in sessions	Locality Training - Virtual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing good practice for improving the quality of PEPS, pupil premium and safeguarding in post 16 education.</li> <li>• Drop-in opportunity with each Advisor within their locality teams</li> </ul>
May 2024	Annual Designated Teacher Conference – Middlewich, Canalside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure of the Virtual School and staffing updates</li> <li>• Statutory role of the Designated Teacher</li> <li>• Data analysis and outcomes for each Key Stage</li> <li>• Higher Horizons presentation around Higher Education</li> <li>• Social care updates from Service Manager around UASC/separated children</li> <li>• Springboard presentation on independent schooling for Cared for Children</li> <li>• Staying Close Cheshire East housing for Care Leavers</li> <li>• CWSW and Extended Duties</li> <li>• Expectations of Personal Education Plans</li> <li>• Post-16 pathways</li> <li>• Educational Psychology input on training opportunities for professional development</li> <li>• One Page Profiles for transition year groups</li> <li>• Alternative Provisions and reducing exclusions</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Careers and preparing for adulthood</li></ul>
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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. During the academic year 2023/2024, enabling us to support as many schools as possible, we used the funding to implement a universal training offer. This training was available to all schools/settings with children with a social worker. We also offered targeted support for those schools with high numbers of children with a social worker.

By working closely with our Education Psychology and Safeguarding teams we were able to build a training package that could support children with a social worker, alongside our wider virtual school training offer.



A total of 40 schools requested training, with nurseries, primary, secondary and special schools all benefiting from this offer.

One of our popular courses was MeLSA - Mediated Learning Support Assistant training offers. 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 assist them in becoming skilled and independent learners.

Comments from this training were:

*‘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.

Feedback from these sessions found that delegates had:

- *A greater understanding of how psychological theory underpins and guides our way of working with children and young people.*
- *found the collaborative environment a useful space to share experiences of working with children and young people.*

- *learnt new information and felt this supported their professional growth and their confidence when supporting children and young people*

We worked with 6 schools to undertake some targeted work for those settings with a higher number of children with a social worker.

The impact of this work was seen throughout the summer term, with many of our schools continuing their work into the 2024/2025 academic year.

Counselling sessions within school	Animal Assisted Therapy for group sessions	Educational Psychologist input
Forest School Training	Mentoring Training	Attendance traded offer
Reading Interventions	Well-being support with a focus on raising attendance	Home - School Liason Support

One specific primary school was funded to undertake targeted intervention to help boost and accelerate reading and literacy; they were able to share the impact of the funding they received during this academic year for the identified cohort of CYP:

*The outcomes in reading have increased from an average of 84.5 (Spring Scaled Score) to 93.6 (Summer NTS Scaled Score). This intervention supported accelerated progress, closing the gap on age related expectations. The CYP made 9.1 points of progress, in comparison to the rest of the cohort who made 5 points during this same time period. Attendance also improved as a result of the access to additional support through the programme as part of improving health and wellbeing, this also reduced persistent absence within the cohort from 45% to 35%.*

*One of our secondary schools was supported to undertake targeted intervention; impact made through the support they received outlined within the evaluation and assessment using the star scaling tool was used to track the impact of the program of support. The evaluation star looks at 9 different strands linked to a students' thoughts, feelings and well-being. A low score (minimum of 10) indicates significant concerns for students, whereas higher scores (maximum 90) indicate that the students' mental health and well-being is in a good state.*

**Learning Mentor Evaluation Star**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Form Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Physical Health  
Friendships  
Emotional Health  
School  
Safety  
Relationships  
Substances  
Confidence  
Home

Date Beginning: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date End: \_\_\_\_\_  
Score Beginning: /90  
Score End: /90

**Evaluation Star Notes**

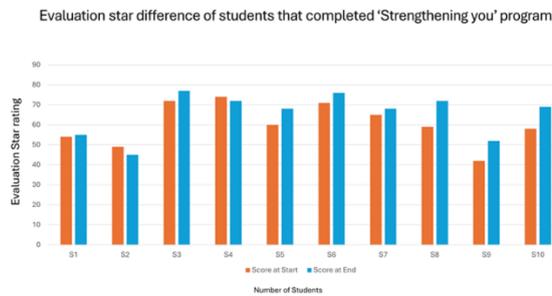
**Quick Guide**

1 = It's a huge problem for me / I need lots of help to make changes with this

5 = I have some worries or concerns here / I need help to improve

9 = There is no problem with this aspect of my life / I am fully achieving

Each section of the star is scored between 1 and 9. 1 = I need lots of help, 5 = I have some worries, 9 = I am fully achieving in this area. *The Evaluation Star scaling scores show an average of +8.77% between the start and end of the intervention made to children's wellbeing having taken part in the Strengthening you program.*



These duties have again been extended for 12 months by the DfE. We have reviewed our recent training offer to confirm next year's annual programme, developing on from the successes of this year to include targeted/funded work with Attachment Resource Community (ARC) and Raising attainment for disadvantaged youngsters (RADY) programmes during next academic year.

“The support we have had from your team has been amazing! The team are wonderful human beings and have made such a difference to my work. I spoke to my CEO of our MAT this week to tell what a difference it has made.”

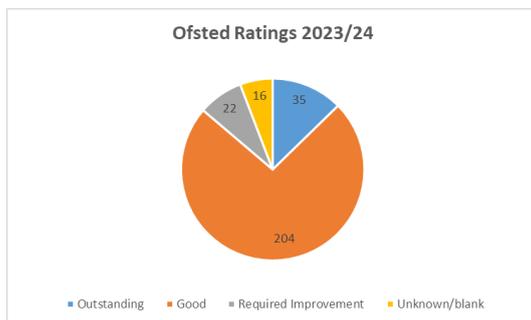
Please pass on my positive feedback because having another professional involved for me, as SENDCO/DSL/CFC teacher/teacher etc has been so supportive – both team members are just brilliant and worth their weight in gold.”

Quote from a teacher sent to the attendance and children out of school team

## 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 being met. The chart below shows the proportion of pupils attending schools with identified Ofsted ratings.

*\* (16 schools) Unknown due to conversion to academy, out of area, independent, new schools, so they have not had their first inspection report.*



## Special Educational Needs

### At the end of academic year 2023/24 there were:

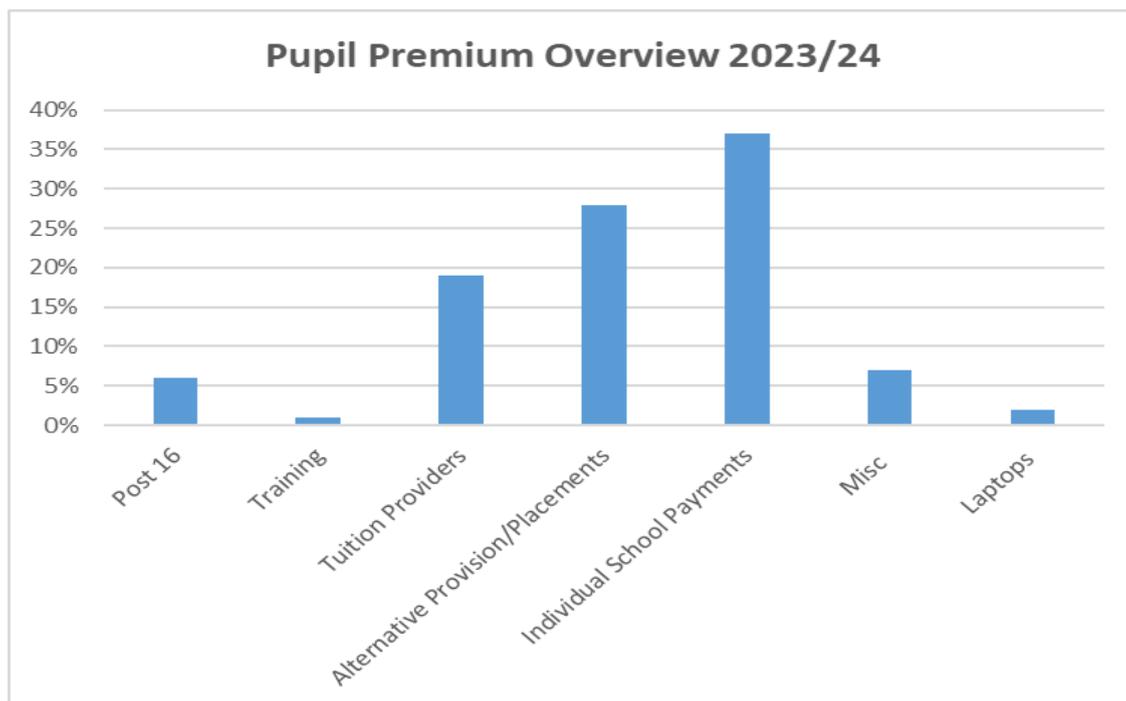
- 155 Cared for Children and Young People with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) across all years (0-18).
- None of our early year’s cohort had an EHCP.
- 107 of our statutory school aged Cared for young people had an EHCP.
- 48 Year 12 and 13 young people had an EHCP.
- 16 of our Care Leavers (ages 19 – 21) had an EHCP.
- 123 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 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 making 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 2023/24

The virtual school's main budget is pupil premium plus, which is devolved to the local authority and is to be used as seen appropriate by the virtual school head as to best promote achievement and progress of cared for children. The amount that was made available to the Local Authority for 2023/24 is £2,530 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 £2,530 and some will need considerably more. The funding criteria also states 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.



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 with 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 was allocated to children outside this age range if the need was evident.

## **Case Study**

### Background:

Child A became cared for in September 2022 through a Police Protection Order. Child A started a level three two-year course in Applied Science at a local College in September 2022 following successful completion of GCSEs at a local high school. Child A does struggle with their mental health and is supported by CAMHS. Child A also has several other health needs and diagnosis. Child A has always had high aspirations to attend University after completing college, to study a science related subject, potentially infectious diseases. In November 2023 Child A was supported through a tier 4 placement.

### Key Concerns during last academic year

There were huge concerns with Child A regarding mental health and the impact on next steps and education. We wanted to be able to support Child A to complete their course and fulfil their aspirations of going to university, whilst being mindful of the impact of this may have on his mental health.

### Type of Intervention:

Access to PP+ funding to support 1-1 tuition at a local library. The tutor liaised closely with the tutor from the local college to ensure clear support and planning for course delivery and resources. There was a requirement for Child A to complete in person practical assessments in order to complete their course, it was arranged so that they were able to do this after their peers had finished for the day and was able to be supported by their foster carer. Their tutor from college also offered to meet with Child A weekly to support and discuss any concerns and progress. PP+ was also used to fund one day a week placement at a local work placement as part of their bespoke package.

### Impact of Intervention:

Child A successfully completed their level 3 Applied Science course achieving three merits. Child A was offered a place at their preferred university to study a Biomedical Science Degree. Child A started their course in September 2024 and have shared that they are enjoying the start of their course and University life. Child A continues to have aspirations to work in the field of infectious diseases once they have completed their degree. Following on from their placement at the RSPCA Child A has started volunteering at an animal rescue centre.

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 our three new 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.

### 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 in the great outdoors!

### 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.



### Peak Pursuits

This past year some of our young people attended Astbury Watersports Centre as an alternative provision to supplement their education. Peak Pursuits and Astbury Watersports Centre offer a range of water and land-based activities including canoeing, kayaking, paddleboarding and orienteering. Peak Pursuits specialises in working with schools and authorities to provide young people with the opportunity to develop their social skills and education through bespoke packages that aim to:

- Build resilience and self-confidence.
- Develop new physical skills.
- Reconnect with nature and promote mental health.
- Strengthen team-building abilities.
- Cultivate a positive attitude towards learning.

### RSPCA

We commission animal based therapeutic work through the RSCPA exclusively for our cared for children for 2.5 hours per week. Some of the work and opportunities offered include:

- To see and learn about animals, their welfare and the work of a wildlife hospital and rehoming cattery
- Seeing and learning behind the scenes, for example, learn about how to help a poorly hedgehog
- Learn how to care for, and spend time with cats who need company while they wait for a forever home
- Learn about animal welfare and how we can all help
- Spend time outside in nature and in our garden spaces.
- Design, craft and practical activities



### Work Based Learning Programmes

Within the 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 the virtual school

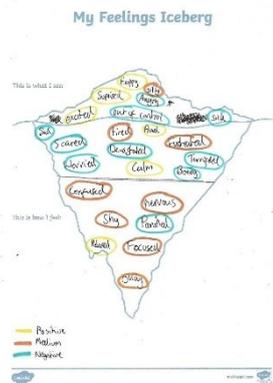
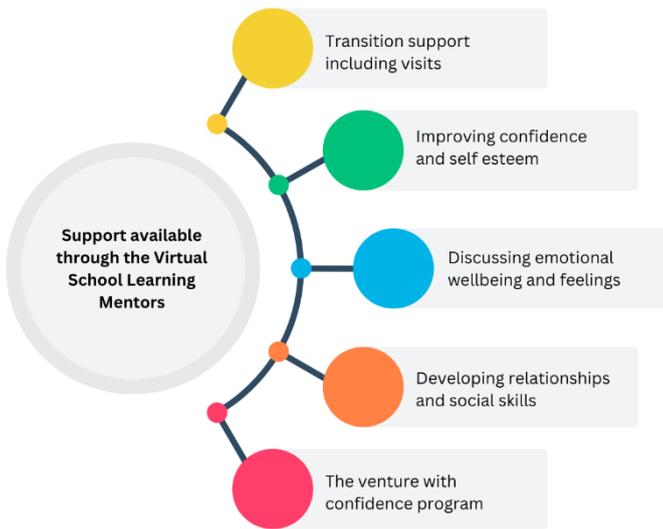
also has an additional budget to fund a targeted programme for post 16 to support increasing engagement into education, employment, and training. For some young people with an education, health and care plan they have been able to access the step 16 programme which is work based learning alongside functional 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



The Virtual School had three learning mentors for school aged children last academic year. Each learning mentor is Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) trained or is currently receiving ELSA training. We also have a post-16 learning mentor who supports our young people upon leaving school and onto the next stages. Our learning mentors are an important part of our young people's journeys providing them with targeted sessions focusing on a variety of different needs as displayed in the diagram below. Each of our mentors has a dedicated caseload of children and young people and sessions are planned through linking with the designated teachers, social care, virtual school advisors and additional professionals.



**Virtual School Post 16 Tutor**

The Virtual School Post 16 Tutor offers tailored 1:1 tuition for 16–18-year-olds, focusing primarily on young people who are currently not engaged in education, employment, or training (NEET) and often lack formal qualifications. This personalised support extends to those under 16 and over 18 when there’s a specific requirement for additional assistance, facilitating effective transition planning for these learners. The primary aim of 1:1 tuition is to help students gain qualifications, enhance their confidence, engage in positive activities, and progress into further education, employment, or vocational training.

**Personalised Learning**

The 1:1 tuition offer includes Functional Skills in Math's and English, with every student having access to an online learning resource tailored to their individual needs. Upon enrolment, students complete an initial assessment test to determine their current skill level, allowing for the creation of a personalised learning plan. During the 2023/2024 academic year, a total of 21 students were supported through this initiative. The qualifications achieved in Functional Skills underscore its effectiveness, with students completing various levels in Math's and English: 4 students attained Math's Entry 2, while others achieved qualifications ranging from Entry 3 to Level 2.



**ESOL**

In addition to core subjects, this initiative emphasizes English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), specifically targeting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people (UASC) who have recently entered care. These students work at their own pace, developing portfolios that cover 16 different ESOL topics. The primary aim is to introduce English to non-speakers at the Pre-Entry Level and enhance their language skills at Entry Levels 1 and 2. This year, 10 students received 1:1 intervention, preparing them for their upcoming ESOL courses and ensuring readiness to transition to college in September 2024.

### Community Involvement and ASDAN

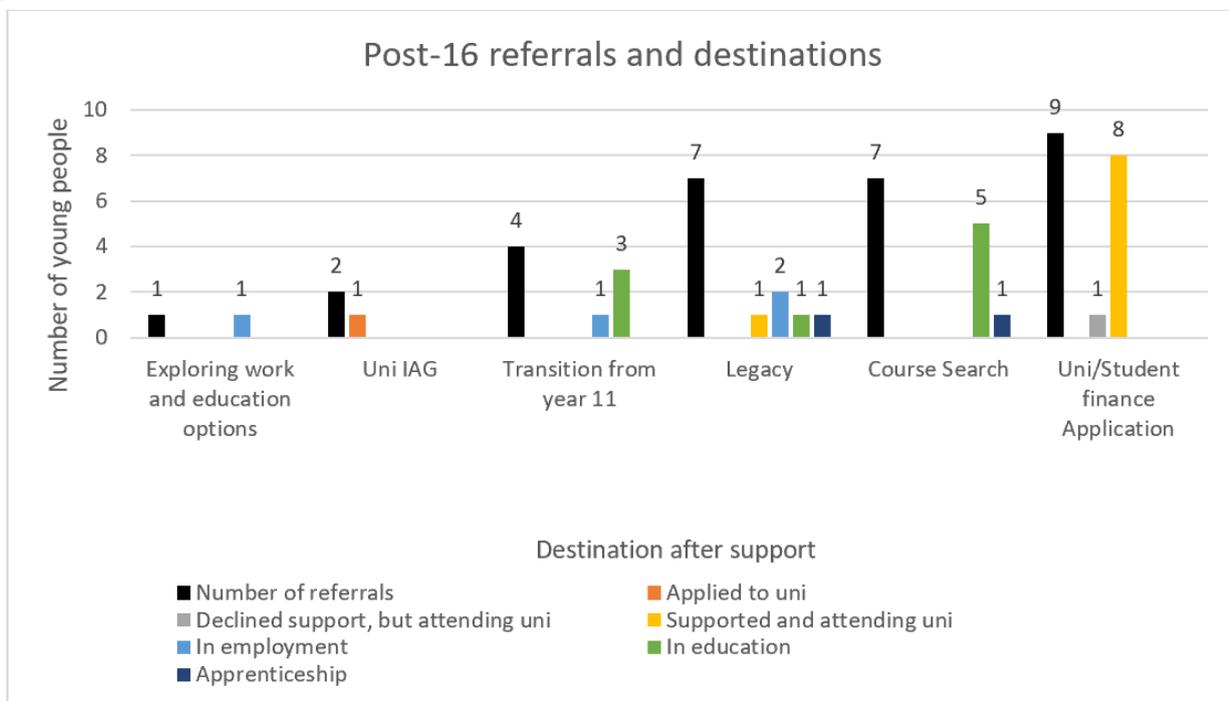
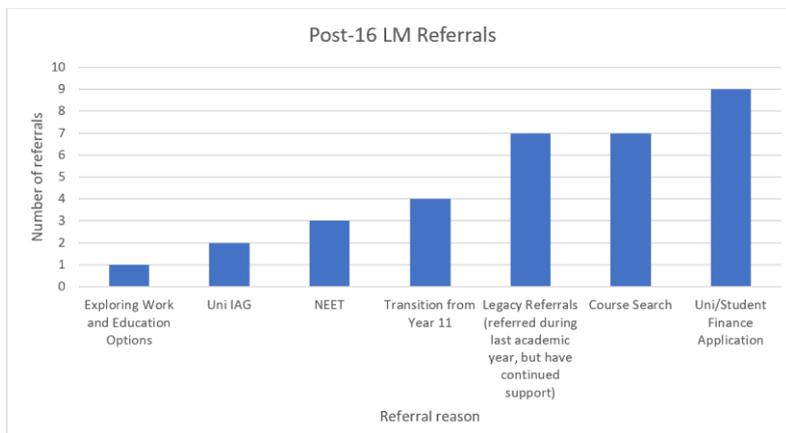
ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) initiatives are also included, where students plan, prepare, and deliver Community Projects to achieve an accredited Citizenship Short Course certificate. In the current academic year, 13 students successfully earned this certificate, thereby gaining valuable skills and experience in community involvement. Additionally, students were supported in completing an online Food Safety Level 1 course, with 10 students successfully attaining this qualification.

### Volunteering and Personal Development

To bolster personal development, particularly for those whom are currently NEET, the initiative encourages volunteering. Participation in volunteer activities helps young people build skills and confidence, often facilitating trust and engagement with the Post 16 tutor. Notable volunteering experiences included working in care homes, where young people engaged in activities with residents and contributed to garden maintenance, and at a dog rescue facility, where they helped clean and refurbish outdoor enclosures. Such experiences not only foster a sense of community but also encourage students to consider engaging in 1:1 tuition.

### Post 16 Learning Mentor

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 33 referrals, which was an increase of 9 on the previous year. Below is a chart showing the reasons for the referrals she has had this year:



## Case study

### Case Study:

Child A was in year 11, in their last year at school  
Was referred to Post-16 Learning Mentor for transition support

### Key concerns:

New into care, and only recently enrolled in school  
School unsure what GCSEs they would be taking  
No current post-16 progression plan  
English not their first language

### Type of intervention:

Support from post 16 learning mentor to explore post-16 options and build a trusting relationship  
Post 16 learning mentor to liaise with the school and young person to formulate a clear pathway plan

### Impact of intervention:

Young person stated they wanted to become an air steward, so the learning mentor researched all available courses nearby. The learning mentor was also in regular discussion with the school and social care to see what exams would be taken, and whether there was the option for young person to stay on another year to take further GCSEs. However, Child A was open and honest about their wishes, and said that they really wanted to attend college, in particular, one in Manchester. The learning mentor researched all available options, public transport times, costs, and locations, but ultimately social care felt that it was too far for them to travel each day.

After researching other course options that Child A had suggested, they had a choice of courses at a different college, and a visit was suggested. Child A attended an open day, and realised the college was nice, and they were happy to apply there. They enrolled at college and started in September, where they are making good progress.

### 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 them into employment, further education, or training.

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

- Recognise their skills
- Develop further skills
- Build their confidence
- Explore ideas of what they might like to do in the future
- Arrange work experience
- Build relationships with local groups and organisations
- 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, and food safety Level 1.

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 Horizons. 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 organised and completed a 12-hour bikeathon to raise enough money to replace the cooker at the Lighthouse Church in Crewe. With support from the staff team, wider Cheshire East staff, external services and even members of the public, the team managed to raise nearly £900!

Comments from young people who took part in the programme.....

“I was feeling quite isolated in my flat and this programme has got me out of the house and spending time with others, which has supported my mental health”

“Doing Venture was great fun and helped me see what I am good at”

“ The Bikeathon was hard work, but really good fun on the day and we raised money to help others, which I am proud of”

“I wasn't sure what I wanted to do and seeing the college helped me to make the decision to return in September”

12 young people were referred and took part in the programme. One young person was referred part way through the programme as they were new into care. Following the completion of the programme, of the 12 young people, 8 moved into education, 1 joined the Prince's Trust, 1 gained an apprenticeship, and 2 continue to be supported to look for work or education.





Bikeathon  
20th June  
Crewe Lifestyle Centre

buckets for change  
Speakers Music  
Karaoke  
busking  
Job roles / Team leader / ride slots / Times of arrival  
safeguarding / risk assessments / Medical issues / hydration  
fancy dress  
face paint  
glow in the dark sticks  
Best area



## Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

The 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 the 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 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 for 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.

## 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 as '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 in quality assurance. This is a process we will

repeat in each subsequent term in the new academic year.

Below is the outcome from our PEP moderation for the Summer term 24 for our school aged Cared for Children (5% of completed PEP = 17 of the completed PEPs were moderated)

	<b>Percentage of PEPs</b>	<b>Number of PEPs</b>
PEPs that were moderated as Red	29.4%	5
PEPs that were moderated as Amber	41.18%	7
PEPs that were moderated as Green	29.4%	5
PEPs that were moderated as 'requires improvement'	0%	0
PEPs that were moderated as 'satisfactory'	70.6%	12
PEPs that were moderated as 'good'	29.4%	5

There is a quality assurance (QA) process which has been developed jointly by the virtual school and the designated teachers, this has ensured that the quality of PEPs continues to be strengthened to support schools to develop their own practice, this is reviewed each year to ensure the process is robust. Will have a specific focus this year on further strengthening this process with the virtual school headteacher/deputy headteacher undertaking moderation and deep dive audits and supporting to feedback to schools/settings and social care to ensure we are sharing good practice and further improve the quality and completion rates of PEPs; this will be monitored and tracked to evidence impact throughout this year.

99.5% of school aged children received at least one PEP within the school year.

Following the successful implementation of our integrated PEPs within Liquid Logic, we currently have 388 primary and secondary schools effectively using this system. We have further improved the content of the PEP following working with our schools and have developed a signs of safety approach with more emphasis on SMART targets ensuring pupil premium is reviewed in detail for impact. We have now continued with the development of our integrated PEP system to enable it to be used for post 16 and we have now 60 colleges using the system effectively. We are also continuing with the development to include early years to ensure consistency across all age ranges and currently have 46 nurseries using the PEP portal effectively. This year we will be further developing the PEP system to ensure that preparing for adulthood is included to support careers and aspirations for all children/young people.

#### PEPs completed academic year 2023-24

<b>Primary school aged children Completed PEPs 2023-24</b>		
<b>Autumn Term 2023</b>	<b>Spring Term 2024</b>	<b>Summer Term 2024</b>
94 Children in care	105 Children in care	134 Children in care
93 PEPs completed	103 PEPs completed	134 PEPs completed
99% PEPs completed	98% PEPs completed	100% PEPs completed

<b>Primary school - Number of PEPs held over the academic year 2023-24</b>		
<b>1 PEP completed</b>	<b>2 PEPs completed</b>	<b>3 PEPs completed</b>
25	106	91

#### PEPs completed academic year 2023-24

<b>Secondary school aged children Completed PEPs 2023-24</b>		
<b>Autumn Term 2023</b>	<b>Spring Term 2024</b>	<b>Summer Term 2024</b>
168 Children in care	181 Children in care	210 Children in care
167 PEPs completed	174 PEPs completed	183 PEPs completed
99% PEPs completed	96% PEPs completed	87% PEPs completed

<b>Secondary school - Number of PEPs held over the academic year 2023-24</b>		
<b>1 PEP completed</b>	<b>2 PEPs completed</b>	<b>3 PEPs completed</b>
23	160	148

**PEPs completed academic year 2023-24**

<b>Post 16 Completed PEPs 2023-24</b>		
<b>Autumn Term 2023</b>	<b>Spring Term 2024</b>	<b>Summer Term 2024</b>
168 Children in care	177 Children in care	183 Children in care
159 PEPs completed	153 PEPs completed	125 PEPs completed
95% PEPs completed	86% PEPs completed	68% PEPs completed
NCP 4	NCP 8	NCP 29

\*Nb if a young person has turned 18 and they are NEET, they will be monitored through the NEET Challenge Panel monthly (NCP).

<b>Post 16 - Number of PEPs held over the academic year 2023-24</b>		
<b>1 PEP completed</b>	<b>2 PEPs completed</b>	<b>3 PEPs completed</b>
182	138	107

## Attendance

The virtual school monitors attendance of all cared for children by commissioning an independent company who contact 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.

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Primary attendance %	86.2%	94.18%	95.55%
Secondary attendance %	86.3%	89.3%	89.06%
Children with 100% Attendance	13% (39 children)	7.4% (21 children)	18.86% (53 children)
Children with above 95% Attendance	55.4% (163 children)	58% (164 Children)	66.9% (188 children)

CLA Data from DfE publication [Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England, Reporting year 2023 - 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, Academic year 2022/23 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

There is information available for All pupils Cheshire East, NW and National for combined August 2023 and Spring 2024 terms, but this is not available for cared for children.

% Attendance	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Cheshire East-LAC* Attendance	88.8	93.3	93.3	92.3%
Northwest-LAC Attendance	90.1	92.2	91.5	
England-LAC Attendance	90.9	92.2	91.7	
Cheshire East- All pupils Attendance	95.7	92.6	93.3	
Northwest-All pupils Attendance	95.3	92.5	92.7	
England-All pupils Attendance	95.4	92.4	92.6	

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

National Attendance data as in the table above for the academic 2023/24 has not been fully collected yet and as such comparative full year data will not be available until next year.

### Multi- Disciplinary Team Meeting

At the end of this academic year, we started to pilot targeted MDT (Multi-disciplinary team) meetings focused specifically on improving attendance of identified children/young people. This is a new pilot and will be monitored throughout the year to show whether this is an effective way to support the individual child's attendance. MDT Meeting focus is initially to target children with below 75% attendance (figures for this data can be found below).

A meeting will be initiated by the specialist attendance officer to include school, social worker, foster carer/residential manager or key worker /parent and any other relevant professional involved with the child that could support attendance.

The meeting will run in 3 stages over a period of 6 weeks. Barriers are discussed and actions set to support the child.

- Initial meeting
- Update after 2 weeks
- Review after a further 4 weeks

	Number of Young People with attendance below 75%	Percentage of Young People with attendance below 75%
<b>2021/2022</b>	51	13.5%
<b>2022/2023</b>	53	14%
<b>2023/2024</b>	51	13.2%

### Case Study

Background:

Pupil C was a reception age child with attendance of 68.5% at the time of the referral from their virtual school advisor,

Type of Intervention:

Following a statutory PEP meeting outlining concerns regarding attendance and the impact this was having on Pupil C's wellbeing and academic progress a virtual school advisor referred Pupil C for support via an attendance MDT approach to bring all services and teams together to provide a holistic approach and support for both the child and family.

Impact of Intervention:

During, and after, the MDT approach we observed many positive impacts. First and foremost, attendance and punctuality improved, and attendance raised to 84% (+20% on attendance at the beginning of MDT meetings). Pupil C's Mum commented how she was very proud of how much she has achieved and felt so much better in herself, Mum also began attending appointments for her mental health which continues to this day. She felt happy to see the difference in Pupil C's sleep pattern, playfulness, and a positive change in eating habits. Intensive support was beneficial and the changes in sleep, toileting and behaviour have greatly improved which has impacted on the positive rise in attendance, behaviour, and engagement at school. Equally, school have noticed a positive change in presentation, behaviour, and attendance. Pupil C now enjoys reading at home as books and toys have been provided. This has lead to Pupil C responding well within school, and they are noticeably happier and enjoys working with the teaching assistant. Pupil C has also been able to form positive friendships at school supported by his rise in attendance and confidence.

Both Mum and school continue to have good communication, and attendance has remained positive after

support was withdrawn.

### **Alternative Provisions**

Recognising that Alternative Provisions are a key aspect of many young people's education package, this year 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/guidance/alternative-provision)) 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 our schools we work with to effectively record, monitor and safeguard our young people.

### **Alternative Provision Referral Process**

If a school was considering utilising Alternative Provision in the education of one of our Cared for Children, we asked that parents/carers, social worker, virtual school advisors, and the child themselves, were involved in the decision making and planning process. Once this has been agreed the school's Designated Teacher would complete our referral form that asked for information as to what strategies had been tried prior to commissioning AP, what the targeted piece of work for them to complete would be, when their place within the AP was planned for review, and copies of all quality assurance documentation that school had completed in advance of the referral.

All of this information then fed into our Alternative Provision tracker that allowed us to monitor the AP's role in their education more robustly. This data was managed by advisors individually but then reviewed on a monthly basis with our attendance team. Having this oversight and tracking in place meant we were assured as to the pieces of work being done with the children and young people, but this also meant we could ensure the use of Alternative Provisions were time-bound and students were reintegrated back into mainstream education in a timely manner (where appropriate). This process was presented to, and agreed by, our Board of Governors in December 2023.

### **Data around Alternative Provisions**

Of the 32 young people who were attending an Alternative Provision at the end of 2023/2024, 20 were in Ofsted Registered provisions.

54 young people attended an Alternative Provision for at least part of their timetable in 2023/2024, and 40.7% 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 the Local Authority.

## 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 2023/24 the virtual school has been quick in its response to exclusions so that a joint plan for the child can be implemented which identifies any key triggers and intervention required. If an exclusion was unavoidable then there were similar meetings held afterwards to try and avoid any repeat exclusions for children. Schools or carers are asked to inform the virtual school whenever an exclusion takes place. In the case of repeat exclusions, 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 the 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 a cared for child being permanently excluded in the academic year 2023/24.

Last academic year 2022/23 there were 8 suspensions (for a total of five children) of primary school age. This academic year 2023/2024 there were 15 suspensions (for a total of 7 children) of primary school age.

Last year 2022/23 showed a decrease in numbers to 65 suspensions for 22 secondary age children. However, this academic year 2023/2024 there were 121 suspensions (for a total 41 children) of secondary school age young people.

The table below outlines fixed term exclusion data from 2021-2024 which shows Cheshire East and are below both North-West and national figures. National Attendance data as in the table below for the academic 2023/24 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	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
Cheshire East % LAC*	8.43	8.10	13.26	12.46
CE all CYP	1.79	2.42	2.70	
Northwest % LAC* *	9.25	11.97		
England % LAC**	9.80	12.22		

CLA Data from DfE publication [Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England, Reporting year 2023 - 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 2023 - 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 attaining 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. Last year, two of our care experienced young people helped us make our most recent appointment within the Learning Mentor team – on this day they interviewed the prospective candidates and spoke about their experiences of foster care and what they appreciated in adults who work with them. Similarly, we 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 will be coming in 2024/2025) to reflect what they want their PEPs to look like and decided upon which literature subscription we would be commissioning in the forthcoming academic year.

"I really enjoyed helping to interview for the new learning mentor. She is very good because she listens to what you say, respects it, and cares about it. We asked her lots of questions, played Jenga, and she was very kind and respectful to what we wanted to say."

Quotation from Cared for Young People in Year 7 and 8

## Attainment

### Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) assessments

The EYFS profile is a statutory assessment of children's development at the end of the early years foundation stage (EYFS). A new EYFS was introduced in September 2021 with revised early learning goals (ELG's) making data comparison with last year possible.

The EYFS profile is intended to provide a reliable, valid, and accurate assessment of each child's development at the end of the EYFS. It is made up of an assessment of the child's outcomes in relation to the 17 early learning goal (ELG) descriptors.

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)

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.

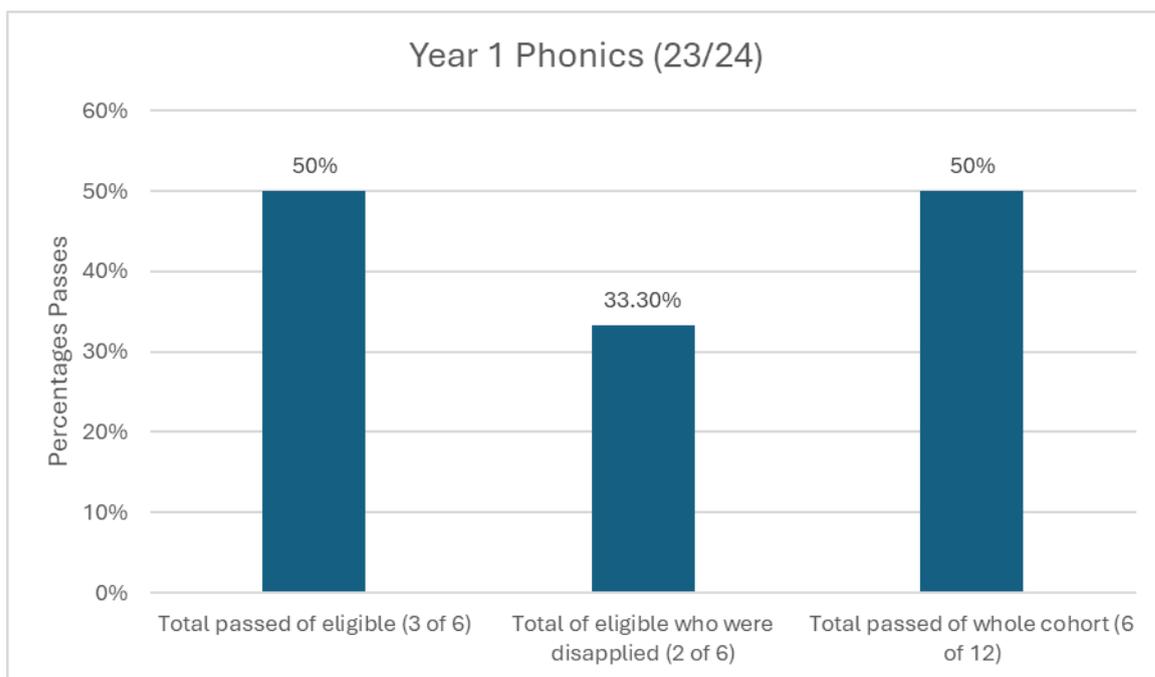
There were 13 cared for children in reception as of July 2024 with 6 in the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months as of 31 March). Of the 6 eligible reception age children 3 reached a good level of development 50% which is an increase of 10% from the previous academic year.

<b>Group</b>	<b>Pupils</b>	<b>% Of results received</b>
Full Cohort	13	100%
Out of area	0	
Out of Age Range	0	
Results received for eligible Reception C4C	6	100%
Achieving GLD	3	50%

**Key Stage 1**

**Year 1 Phonics**

As of July 2024, there were 12 cared for children in total and 6 were within the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months or more as of 31 March 2024). We have received results for all 12 children. Of the whole cohort of 12 cared for children, 6 passed the phonics test. Of the 6 in the eligible cohort, 3 passed the phonics test and 2 were disapplied but can be entered in Year 2.



**Year 2 Phonics**

As of July 2024, there were 20 cared for children in total and 12 were within the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months or more as of 31 March 2024). We have received results for all 20 children from the Year 2 cohort.

Of the whole cohort of 20, 7 passed phonics in 2023, a further 4 passed in 2024. Of the 12 eligible cohort, 4 passed in 2023, and one further child passed in 2024. This means 11 of the 17 (64.7%) young people entered for their phonics test over the last two years have achieved the expected benchmark of 32 out of 40.

**SATs**

It is no longer a statutory requirement to report Key Stage 1 SATs results to the Local Authority and so this data is not available.

## Key Stage 2

As of July 2024, there were 19 cared for children with 12 within the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months or more as of 31 March 2024).

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.

In whole cohort (total of 19 children, 3 whom we are yet to receive data on)	Cheshire East			All Children	
	All children (19)	Eligible cohort (12 children)	% Of eligible cohort (12 children)	National	Regional
Achieved expected standard or Greater Depth in Writing	4	3	25%	72%	70%
Achieved greater depth in Writing	0	0	0%	13%	11%
Achieved standard in Reading	12	9	75%	74%	73%
Achieved standard in Maths	8	5	41.6 %	73%	73%
Achieved standard in GPS	9	7	58.3%	72%	72%
Achieved standard in Reading, Writing and Maths	3	2	16.6%	61%	59%

### Key Stage 4

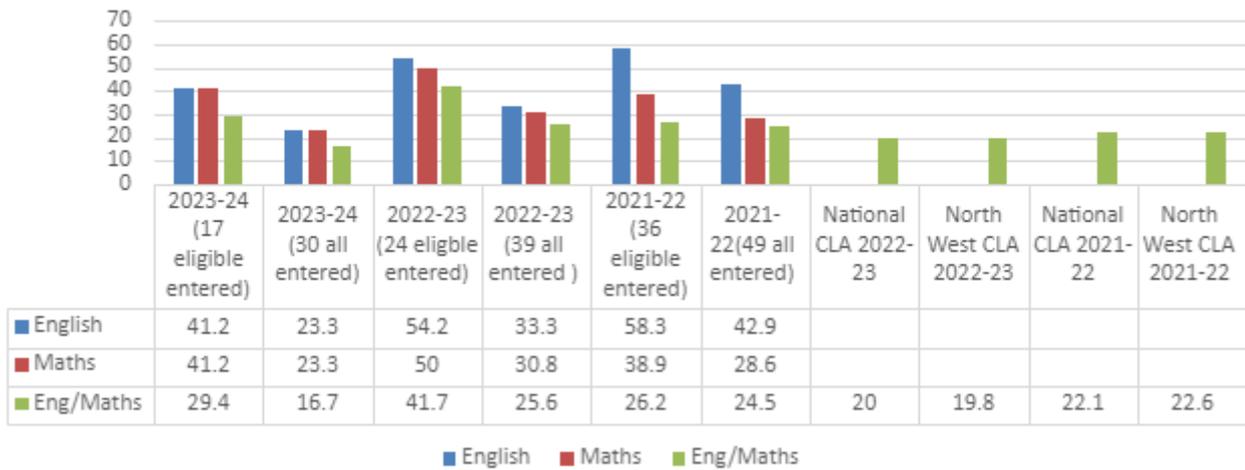
At the end of the academic year July 2024, there were 47 Cheshire East cared for children. Of the 47 there were 30 in the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months or more as of 31 March 2024).

Of the 47 cared for children, 26 were entered for GCSEs. Of the 30 in the eligible cohort, 17 of these were entered for GCSEs.

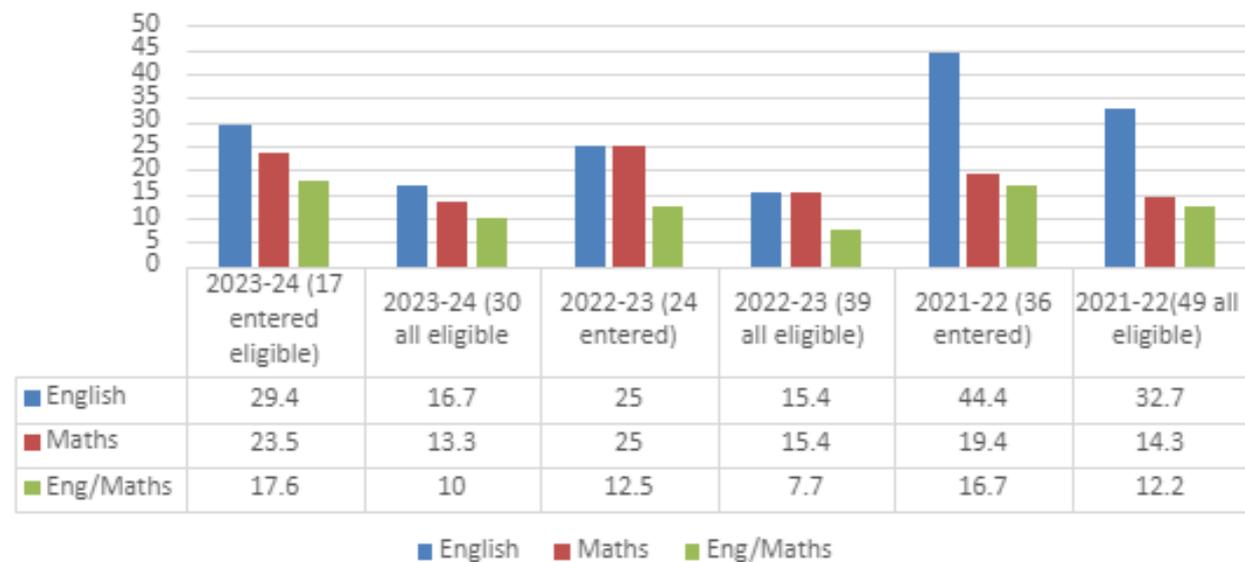
This year's cohort of young people – 25.5% (12 young people) of our Year 11 cohort were enrolled at a specialist provision, 6% (3 young people) attended a Pupil Referral Unit and 2% (1 young person) was an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child who was not entered for any examinations as they became a Cheshire East Cared for Child very late in the academic year. This means that roughly a third of our Year 11 cohort were either not entered for any examination, sat a reduced number of qualifications, or followed an alternative curriculum to the standard GCSE pathway. Of the children not entered for GCSEs, a number of these gained a range of other functional skills qualifications or awards.

	<b>Number of eligible cohort 30 children</b>	<b>Number in full cohort 47</b>	<b>Eligible cohort %</b>	<b>Number of entered eligible cohort (17)</b>	<b>Entered eligible cohort %</b>
Achieving Strong Pass (9-5) in English and mathematics	3	4	10	3	17.6
Achieving Standard Pass (9-4) in English and mathematics	5	6	16.7	5	29.4
Achieving Strong Pass (9-5) in English	5	6	16.7	5	29.4
Achieving Strong Pass (9 - 5) in mathematics	4	6	13.3	4	23.5
Achieving Standard Pass (9 - 4) in English	7	9	23.3	7	41.2
Achieving Standard Pass (9 - 4) in mathematics	7	10	23.3	7	41.2

### % Achieved Level 9-4



### % Achieved Level 9-5



## Post-16 education, employment, and training

### Year 12

At the end of the academic year 2023/2024, there were 79 students in total in year 12.

Of this, 14 were not in education, employment, or training (17.72%).

10 young people were re-engaged through various activities, including Venture with Confidence, Post 16 tutor and work experience opportunities.

Of the 79 young people, 68 had clear pathway plan for September (86.07%) These next steps and pathways included, employment, apprenticeships and further education and training or re-engagement activities.

Of the 11 young people who did not have a pathway for September, one young person is pregnant and concentrating on her pregnancy. The virtual school continue to support, working alongside social care and wider services to ensure that all young people have access to local support to explore their options for moving into a positive destination.

Of 79 young people in year 12, 48 accessed further education (although one young person left due to pregnancy after completing an exam), 2 were on an apprenticeship and 5 were working.

<b>FE Education</b>	<b>Bespoke Provision</b>	<b>Vocational Entry Level</b>	<b>Level 1:</b>	<b>Level 2:</b>	<b>Level 3 (first year)</b>	<b>A Levels (1st year)</b>
No of Students 29	1	1	6	10	7	4

<b>ESOL</b>	<b>Pre Entry</b>	<b>Entry 1</b>	<b>Entry 2</b>	<b>Entry 3</b>	<b>Level 1</b>
19	8	9	2	0	0
<b>Maths</b>	<b>Pre Entry</b>	<b>Entry 1</b>	<b>Entry 2</b>	<b>Entry 3</b>	<b>Level 1</b>
18		10		8	0

### Year 13

At the end of the academic year 2023/2024, there were 104 students in year 13.

83 young people had a positive destination in place for September 2024 (79.81%). These pathways include university, college/training, work, and apprenticeships.

Of the 104 young people, 21 were not accessing education, employment, or training which equates 20.19%, this was a slight decrease compared to the same time last year.

All these young people will continue to be supported by the cared for and care leavers team collaborating with the virtual school advisor and wider services to ensure all support is in place.

NEET Challenge panel takes places monthly, where young people who are NEET and able to work are discussed and appropriate actions of support agreed.

### **Apprenticeships**

Four young people in Year 13 are currently on an apprenticeship.

One is working towards a L2 in customer service.

Two are working towards a Level 2 in Early Years

One is working towards a L3 in Youth work.

### **Other destinations**

There were 32 young people who were not in education at the end of year 13

Of these young people there were

11 in employment

2 in HMP

4 in re-engagement activities (2 on Venture with Confidence and 2 on the Cygnet programme)

15 young people were not in any form of education, employment or training.

Of the 15 NEET young people, those who were able to look for work receive support to explore options available to them.

### **Year 13 Educational Achievements**

<b>Students in Post 16 EET</b>	<b>Bespoke Provision</b>	<b>Entry Level</b>	<b>Level 1:</b>	<b>Level 2:</b>	<b>Level 3 (1st year)</b>	<b>Level 3 (2<sup>nd</sup> year)</b>
36	1	4	4	9	4	14

<b>ESOL</b>	<b>Pre-Entry</b>	<b>Entry 1</b>	<b>Entry 2</b>	<b>Entry 3</b>	<b>Level 1</b>
32	7	12	8	5	
<b>Maths</b>	<b>Pre-Entry</b>	<b>Entry 1</b>	<b>Entry 2</b>	<b>Entry 3</b>	<b>Level 1</b>
28		10	10	8	

### **A Level results and HE destinations**

Of the 11 young people who completed their A Levels/ Level 3 qualifications the following grades were achieved:

L3 Diploma in Applied science - Distinction\*, Distinction

L3 Diploma in IT - Distinction

L3 Extended Diploma in Games Development- Pass

L3 Diploma in Creative Practice and Design- Pass

L3 Extended Diploma in Animal Management Foundation- Distinction\*, Distinction\*, Distinction

L3 Diploma in Digital Media- Distinction

L3 Diploma in ICT- Merit

L3 Diploma in Performing and Production Arts- Distinction

L3 Applied Science- Merit, Merit, Merit

A Level Psychology- B

A level Biology – B

A Level Maths- C

A Level Chemistry- C

A level PE- B

A Level English Language– B

A Level Biology – C

A Level English Language- D

A Level Sociology- D

A Level Media Studies- D

**Destinations**

One young person wants an apprenticeship, is currently NEET and actively looking and receiving support from the apprenticeship co-ordinator.

One young person has a high-level apprenticeship in Insurance.

One young person is working full time for an insurance company.

9 young people have gained a place on their preferred choice of university.

The following courses are being studied at different universities.

Popular Music Performance at BIMM

Law at MMU

IT at Teesside

HNC Media at Hopwood Hall

Wildlife Conservation at Salford

Media at Edge Hill

Dance at Milton Keynes

Bio Medical Science at Keele

Chemical Engineering at Newcastle

Oversight for young people moving on from year 13 will be by the care leaver EET manager and transition meetings have taken place between the Post 16 virtual Adviser and EET manager in the lead up to the new academic year to ensure smooth transition and support is in place.

**During the next academic year 2024/25 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 to team to support to embed 'attendance is everybody's business to ensure a key focus on improving attendance for all children.
3. Improve the overall attendance of all cared for children with a specific focus on those who are persistently and severely absent and post 16 learners.
4. Strengthen and monitor the offer for our extended duties for children with a social worker, monitor and track impact of both universal and targeted support.
5. Ensure a clear focus on early years and primary children to support 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 ensuring clear focus on measuring impact and outcomes for our children and young people to improve the overall quality and content of PEPS
9. Continue to work closely with our care leavers and youth support team to ensure we have a clear focus on reduction of 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...**

**Poem by Cared for Child (A**

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Attendance Data

2023/2024 ATTENDANCE

2023/2024 ATTENDANCE DATA	OVERALL ATTENDANCE
WHOLE COHORT	90%
YEAR 11 (47)	76.03%
YEAR 10 (44)	86.43
YEAR 9 (37)	86.12
YEAR 8 (39)	91.52%
YEAR 7 (31)	92.9%
YEAR 6(19)	96.32%
YEAR 5 (21)	95.82%
YEAR 4 (23)	97.07%
YEAR 3 (20)	97.23%
YEAR 2 (20)	92.29%
YEAR 1 (12)	92.01%
RECEPTION (13)	95.51%

2023/2024 PERSISTENT ABSENCE

2023/2024 DATA	PERSISTENT ABSENTEES, BELOW 90%
WHOLE COHORT	30.17%
YEAR 11 (35)	8.73%
YEAR 10 (15)	3.74%
YEAR 9 (17)	4.24%
YEAR 8(17)	4.31%
YEAR 7 (8)	2.03%
YEAR 6 (3)	0.76%
YEAR 5 (3)	0.76%
YEAR 4 (3)	0.76%
YEAR 3 (3)	0.76%
YEAR 2 (9)	2.24%
YEAR 1 (5)	1.26%
RECEPTION (3)	0.76%

**SUSPENSIONS 2023/2024**

	YEAR	EPISODES	CHILDREN	MALE	FEMALE
PRIMARY	REC	0	0	0	0
	Y1	0	0	0	0
	Y2	5	1	0	1
	Y3	1	1	1	0
	Y4	1	1	1	0
	Y5	7	3	3	0
	Y6	1	1	0	1
SECONDARY	Y7	22	6	6	0
	Y8	25	6	4	2
	Y9	12	8	5	3
	Y10	37	14	7	7
	Y11	25	7	2	5
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>19</b>

**SUSPENSIONS BY COHORT EDUCATED IN CHESHIRE EAST SCHOOLS**

	YEAR	EPISODES	CHILDREN
PRIMARY	REC	0	0
	Y1	0	0
	Y2	0	0
	Y3	0	0
	Y4	0	0
	Y5	6	2
	Y6	0	0
SECONDARY	Y7	11	2
	Y8	2	1
	Y9	7	4
	Y10	24	9
	Y11	5	3
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>21</b>



**SUSPENSIONS BY COHORT EDUCATED OUTSIDE OF CHESHIRE EAST SCHOOLS**

	<b>YEAR</b>	<b>EPISODES</b>	<b>CHILDREN</b>
<b>PRIMARY</b>	REC	0	0
	Y1	0	0
	Y2	5	1
	Y3	1	1
	Y4	1	1
	Y5	1	1
	Y6	1	1
<b>SECONDARY</b>	Y7	11	4
	Y8	25	6
	Y9	5	3
	Y10	12	4
	Y11	20	4
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>26</b>





# **Care Leavers' Service Annual Report 2024**

**Laura McLoughlin and Jessica Hillman – Care Leavers' &  
UASC Service Manager**

## **1. Purpose Of This Report**

1.1 This report highlights the progress since the Ofsted inspection which concluded in March 2024. The findings of this inspection have been accepted in full and focussed work is continuing to address the areas of practice identified by Ofsted that require improvement. It is clear that improvement in some areas will take concerted effort over a sustained period of time before these are embedded in the service.

## **2. Executive Summary**

2.1 There has been progress and improvements in several key areas:

- Sufficiency of accommodation for 16–25-year-olds.
- Local Offer.
- Contact and services to care leavers over the age of 21.
- Creation of Care Leaver Hubs.
- Improved Support for Care Leavers not in education, employment and Training.
- Securing DfE funding for the Staying Put Project.
- Development of the Care Leaver App- Junction 16plus
- Free bus travel for Care Leavers aged 16 to 21.

There continues to be challenges in managing caseloads and ensuring that there are sufficient staff in post to meet the needs of all our young people. Recruitment is underway and further work will take place over the next three months to ensure that services to care leavers meets identified needs and national standards. This includes developing consistency of good practice, quality of plans and impact of management oversight and supervision.

## **3. Engagement of Young People and the 'Local Offer'**

3.1 There is good engagement with care leavers and the service benefits from an effective participation team. A number of care leavers are supported to be Care Ambassadors and they lead a very well-attended and impactful Local Offer event on 13 November 2024.

3.2 Care leavers were clear that they require more from the service including support out of hours, increased and flexible visiting from Personal Advisors (PA) when they are in crisis and specific support around budgeting, cooking, the benefits system and housing. Following the feedback on 13 November 2024 work is underway to develop the ideas and views of care leavers into a revised local offer.

3.3 The two Care Leaver Hubs that have opened are a positive and provide the base in which to respond to the needs of care leavers and provide support around the things that they have requested. However, there is more to do to maximise their accessibility and ensure that all care leavers can access the Hubs and that those who are not geographically near have an alternative provision and opportunities.

3.4 There is more to do to ensure that the new version of the Local Offer is representative of the needs of our young people. This includes ensuring that services not run by the Council are fully utilised and accessible. It is also recognised that there is more work to do with Housing colleagues so that Care Leavers get the maximum support to secure tenancies in public housing.

The current Local Offer can be seen at:

<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/care-and-support-for-children/services-from-childrens-social-care/local-offer-for-care-leavers.aspx>

#### **4. Care Leaver Accommodation**

4.1 The provision of a suitable and affordable range of housing options for our care experienced young people is a significant challenge. The provision in place currently is not sufficient to meet current needs. Extensive work is now underway with colleagues in the Commissioning Team, Housing and Adult Services to put together a new commission for a range of 16-25 accommodation. There are now more options for care leavers in crisis and the additional three beds mean it is far less likely that unsuitable accommodation is used to meet emergency need. Commissioning colleagues continue to work hard to secure further accommodation, and nine additional beds will be available in January 2025 through expanding partnerships with the YMCA.

#### **6. Tenancy Readiness Courses**

6.1 The Care Leavers' Service and our colleagues in Housing have continued to run the Tenancy Readiness Course and since the turn of the year, 20 young people have started this journey towards securing a place of their own. However, we also know that there is enormous pressure on our housing stock with as many as 10k+ live applications on Cheshire Homechoice at any one time.

#### **7. Emotional Wellbeing and Mentoring**

7.1 The Local Authority commission a local charity to deliver mentoring and well-being support to our Care Leavers. This is a 6+ year partnership with them and it represents an essential cornerstone of the Local Offer to our Care Leavers across emotional well-being and psychological support, mentoring and support to young parents. In 2023/24, they supported 144 of our care leavers.

7.2 In August last year we submitted a joint funding bid to the DFE with our colleagues in Halton and Warrington to extend Pure Insight's work which was successful in bringing in additional funding to extend the mentoring offer to our young people.

If any officers or members would consider becoming a mentor please email [ce@pure-insight.org.uk](mailto:ce@pure-insight.org.uk) or check the website [www.pure-insight.org.uk](http://www.pure-insight.org.uk)

#### **8. Financial Support**

8.1 Care leavers remain under significant pressure in respect of their financial security. This is a threat to them achieving the right outcomes in life. The cost of housing is high, employment for too many is low paid and there is a gap between rents and the amount paid in benefits for those in education or are unable to work. Whilst budgeting and practical skills will assist, there is more to do in considering what other assistance can be provided.

## **10. Employment Education & Training (EET)**

10.1 The EET Team has been created this year to offer support Care Leavers with Education Employment and Training. The team is made up of an EET manager, an EET adviser and an Apprenticeship Co-ordinator. Time has been spent establishing the team and working together with Social Workers and PA's in the wider team to offer an extra level of support in this area to ensure that young people have the right support and skills. There is more work to do in this area and this includes continuing to develop an apprenticeship/work experience model for our young people.

We are introducing Corporate Parenting Champions across all departments in the Council to increase awareness and support for Care Leavers including apprenticeships and work experience opportunities.

## **11. Support for Migrant Young People (or Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) & Adults**

11.1 This year there has been a fall in our UASC population, caused almost exclusively by the temporary closure of the four Home Office adult asylum hotels in the borough and the subsequent drop in age-disputed referrals.

11.2 The Cared For population of under 18s has now dipped below 40 from a peak of over 60 last year, and whilst Care Leaver numbers are currently high in the mid-80s, they will also fall as young people turn 21.

11.3 However, in the last two weeks, two of the four adult asylum hotels have reopened, and we have already seen an increase in referrals through the front door whereby individuals claim that the Home Office has made the wrong decision about their age, and this then falls to the Local Authority in which they live. The other route into our care will be through the National Transfer Scheme at a rate of between 4-8 young people per annum and the increasingly rare occurrence of spontaneous arrivals in the borough via the M6 corridor.

## **12. Staying Close**

12.1 In May of last year we were successful in applying for £1.2m of additional DfE funding as part of the next stage of the roll out of Staying Close. This is a scheme that essentially seeks to replicate the core benefits of Staying Put but for young people who have either grown up in residential care or been placed in 16+ semi supported accommodation. Our project targets 25 young people in each of the first two years with a core offer of 'a trusting relationship and somewhere to live' with workers then building on this to address EET, emotional health and wellbeing and family reunification.

12.2 Our Staying Close project became operational on 1<sup>st</sup> November 23 and at this time we:

- Recruited a team manager and 4 Personal Advisors
- Identified the Year 1 and Year 2 cohorts
- Established a Steering Group chaired by the Director of Children's Social Care
- Developed a Staying Close policy document and guides for both professionals and young people

12.3. We now need to ensure that we consider the sustainability of the project with the end of DfE funding on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, fast approaching.

**13. Next Steps**

13.1 Following the review of the Local Offer on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2024, we will produce a Service Plan for 2025/26 which will outline our key priorities over the coming year and beyond.

13.2 We will continue to work with our colleagues in Commissioning to mobilise our accommodation plan.

13.3 The Head of Service responsible for the Care Leaving service will work with key managers in the service to ensure that all relevant Care Leavers have an allocated worker and that individual needs of young people are met.

13.4 The Care Leaver Hubs are continuing to expand, and we want to extend the times they are open and increase the offer and range of activities for young people.

13.5 We will continue to develop our EET support and apprenticeship opportunities.

13.6 We will continue work with our Care Leaver Ambassadors ensuring they are involved in all aspects of service delivery and improvement.

13.7 We will introduce Corporate Parenting Champions across the council.

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# **Cheshire East Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service – The Children's Society**

## **Annual Report**

October 2023 - September 2024

## **Contents**

**Pg 3 – The Children's Society's Vision**

**Pg 4 – Team Structure**

**Pg 5 – Advocacy**

**Pg 6 – Referral Breakdown**

**Pg 7 – Themes and Trends**

**Pg 8 – Achievements**

**Pg 8 – Impacts of Delivery and Performance**

**Pg 10 – Advocacy Case Study**

**Pg 12 – Independent Visiting Service**

**Pg 13 – Referrals**

**Pg 13 – Achievements**

**Pg 15 – Impacts on Delivery and Performance**

**Pg 16 – Independent Visitor Case Study**

**Pg 17 – Volunteer Case Studies**

**Pg 18 – Aims and Progress for 2023-24**

**Pg 19 – Developments for 2023-24**

**Pg 22 – Feedback Received**

**Pg 23 – Team Contact Details**

## **The Children's Society Vision**

The Children's Society is commissioned to deliver the Children's Rights Advocacy and Independent Visiting Service for Cheshire East Council. The Children's Society has held the contract since November 2014 and was recommissioned on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019 for 5 years.

This annual report provides an overview of the work undertaken between **1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024**.

### **The Children's Society's Vision - *A society built for all children.***

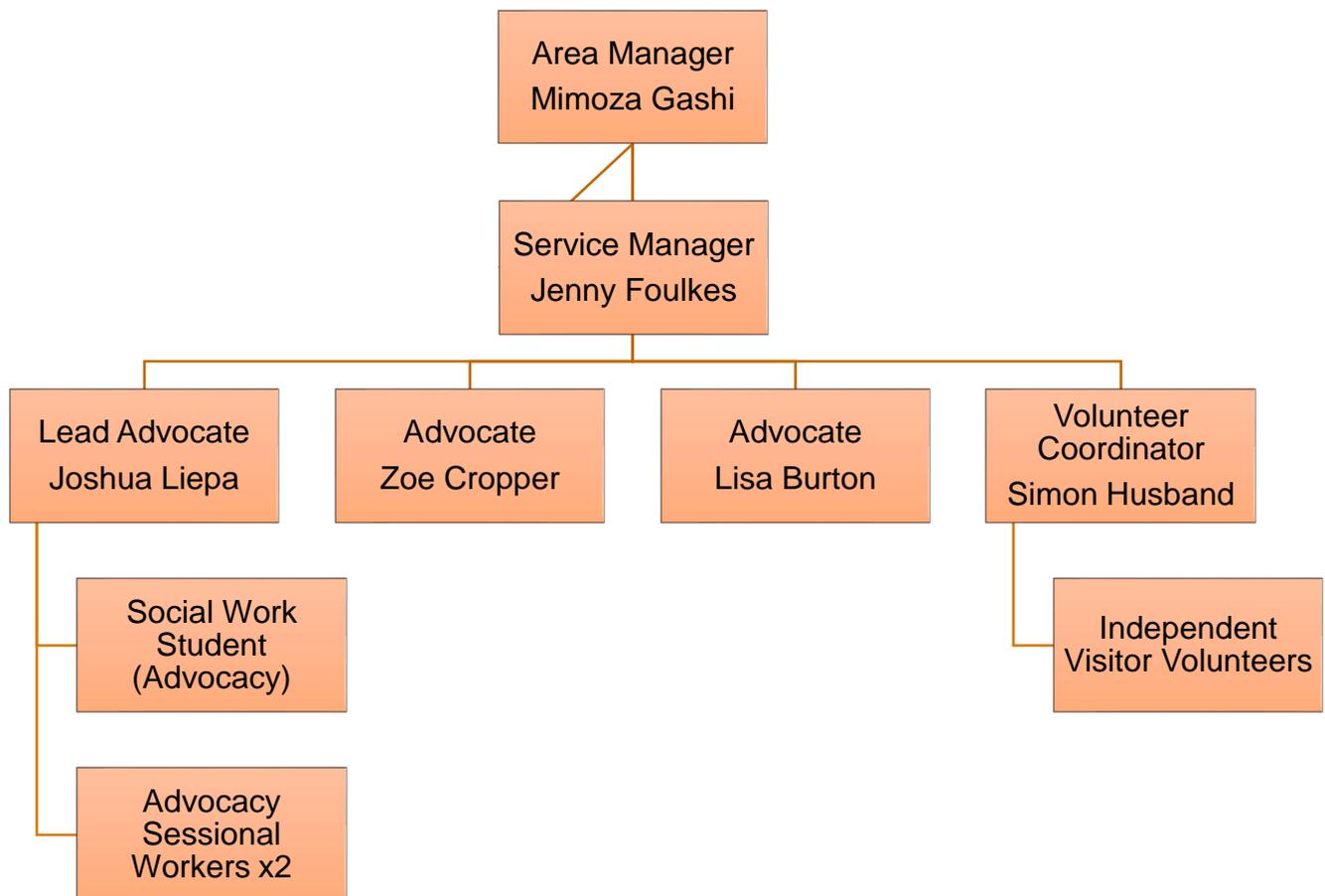
Our vision is the world we seek to create. And we won't rest until we've achieved our vision. Where together with young people and our supporters, we've created a society built for all children. Where hope is alive in every child.

### **The Children's Society's Goal - *By 2030 we will have overturned the damaging decline in children's well-being, setting a path for long lasting growth.***

In the decade ahead we are determined to make sure this generation of children have a better childhood. So we will set out to build a happier, safer society for young people to grow up in, where they can look forward to their futures with more hope.

## Team Structure

The structure of the Cheshire Children's Rights team as of 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024



## Advocacy

Advocacy is offering support and information to children and young people, empowering them to ensure their rights are respected, their views and wishes heard and reflected in decision-making about their lives.

We offer independent children's advocacy for children and young people who fit the following criteria:

- Cared for by Local Authority (0-17)
- Care Leavers (18-25)
- Have a disability (0-18 and up to 25 if in transition to adult services)
- Homeless 16-17 year olds
- Private Fostering
- Unaccompanied asylum seeking young people
- Subject to a Child Protection Plan
- CYP making a complaint against a social care service

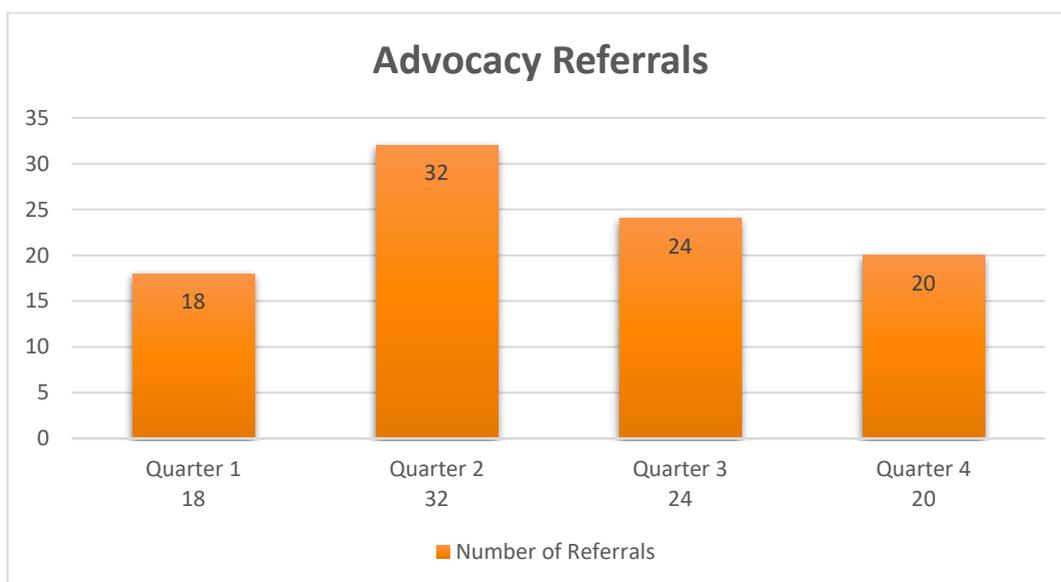


The Children's Society

## Referrals

Number of eligible children and young people accessing advocacy services:

We received 94 referrals from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 to September 2024. In the previous year, over the same period, we received 91 referrals.



## Children and Young People's Eligibility Status

Eligibility Status	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Cared for child	4	11	12	10
Care Leaver	2	8	3	5
Child or young person with a disability	3	2	4	5
Child or young person on a Child Protection Plan	1	1	0	0
Asylum Seeking Child or Young Person	7	9	2	1
Homeless 16/17 year old	0	2	3	0
Private Fostering	1	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>21</b>

## Themes and Trends

We continue to deliver high quality advocacy support to young parents who are either cared for or are care leavers. We continue to receive high numbers of referrals and this work is lengthy and time consuming due to the length of court proceedings. We have received positive feedback from the young parents who tell us that they would have struggled to understand what was happened if they didn't have an advocate to support them.

In response to the increase in referrals for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people (UASC), Cheshire East provided temporary additional funding to increase advocacy capacity to support this work. We received high numbers of referrals and provided excellent support to these young people. This funding has stopped and we have since received a small number of referrals for UASC young people.

We have seen an increase in referrals for homeless 16-17 year old young people this year. It is useful in receiving these referrals early to ensure the young people understand their rights and any issues are addressed at the earliest stage. Some of the reasons for these referrals were;

- Support for another pregnancy
- Support to attend meetings and have their views shared
- Risk of placement breakdown
- Movement of residential placement
- Young person has become recently homeless
- To request care records
- To make a complaint to children's social care

We have received 9 self-referrals over the year, an increase of 6 from last year. where the young person makes direct contact with us to ask for our support. 33 referrals were re-referrals (18 last year) where the child or young person has received advocacy before and has asked to engage with the service again. The high increase of re-referrals could be seen as a positive for our service, but the concerns are that this is a large number of children and young people who have felt the need to come back to us because of an issue.

## **Achievements**

We started the year with a waiting list for advocacy. We have recruited new advocates who are highly skilled and knowledgeable to support the team. We have been able to attract social work students to have placements with us and we were lucky to host two students in January, who worked extremely hard to support some of our young people with lower level advocacy issues. This freed up our advocate's time to support on more complex issues.

Two of our advocates completed their level 3 'Advocating for Children and Young People' qualification in February 2024. This was a great achievement and we have enrolled our third advocate on this course in December 2024.

The funding received from Cheshire East to deliver advocacy work specifically for unaccompanied asylum seeking young people enabled us to support 23 UASC young people with a range of issues that affected them (including being the appropriate adult in age assessments). Our advocate is highly trained in this area and was able to work closely with the social work teams, sharing his knowledge and providing advice and support.

## **Impacts on Delivery and Performance**

- For the duration of 2023, we were holding a waiting list for advocacy, which has previously not happened before. Due to capacity and numbers being referred, we were unable to bring the number down significantly in 2023. We do not want any child or young person waiting for an advocate to be allocated, however we no longer have a waiting list.
- Recruitment has been a challenge, we had two separate recruitment rounds for advocates over 2023 and on the first occasion we had to go out for recruitment twice. It is important for us to ensure we recruit well experienced, compassionate, trauma informed and child-focused workers who can effectively advocate for children and young people in Cheshire West and Chester. Although this was a challenge, we have

recruited excellent workers who are providing a consistent and high quality service.

- We are seeing increased complexity in the advocacy issues that children and young people that are being referred for. The more complex the issue, usually the longer the advocacy involved is for. For example, we regularly support young people who are pregnant and cared for, our advocates are experienced in supporting through legal processes and ensuring young people understand what is happening and why.

## Advocacy Case Study

### Summary of the case

The service received a referral from the young person's social worker, who was concerned about his well-being and wanted to ensure that his wishes and feelings were taken into consideration during fostering meetings. The social worker said that they found it challenging to gather information from the YP directly, as he was not very open with her. YP is a high school student without any additional needs, and was living in private fostering arrangement. The YP was unhappy with his current living situation and expressed a desire to move in with his aunt.

Initially placed with a family member, YP's needs were not being fully met, and he ended up living with a private foster carer who also happened to be a friend of the family.

The YP lives in private foster care in Wales, but he is allowed to visit his aunt in Crewe every Saturday. His aunt picks him up in the morning and drops him off in the evening, which is something he always looks forward to. This arrangement works well for W, his family, and the foster carer. He also gets to see his paternal grandparents when he visits Crewe.

The YP expressed some concerns to me that made me very worried. He complained that his bedroom was damp, and the house was sometimes cold because the house was in a farmland. Additionally, he mentioned being called offensive names by the carer's husband and son.

When the advocate visited him at school, he handed him a handwritten letter expressing his unhappiness with the way he was being treated by the carer's husband and son at home.

W expressed his desire to return to his family in Crewe or spend weekends there, and he needed reassurance about the possibility of this.

### What you did that worked well

The advocate scheduled a visit to the school to meet the YP, introduce himself and to share what advocacy is and what support could be offered.

During the initial visit, the advocate conducted a worksheet activity with the YP, which allowed him to understand the YP's wishes and feelings. The advocate also took the opportunity to speak to the assistant headteacher to assess how the YP was coping at school.

By taking a holistic approach to working with the YP and gaining an understanding of the significant aspects of his life, the advocate created a comprehensive advocacy report based on his wishes, direct observations, and his relationships and presentations. The report was shared with his social worker, who then shared it with other professionals during the private fostering meeting. During the meeting, various aspects were discussed, and it was suggested that a risk assessment should be conducted to determine if the YP could spend weekends with his aunt.

Additionally, it was proposed that the aunt assist the YP in finding a basketball team in Crewe, as this is the sport he prefers over cricket, which his foster carer takes him to play. This gives the YP assurance that his voice is being heard.

#### **What the impact was on the child/ young person / family**

At the end of the advocacy support, the YP was still unhappy with his private fostering placement and he has asked if he can move back to Crewe and live with his aunt or spend the weekend at Crewe.

The advocate made the social worker aware of the YP's wishes and she has assured me that she would be visiting the aunty to make an assessment if it is safe for him start staying over for the weekend. The advocate explained what the social worker told him to the YP and until he moves back to Crewe he will continue to be unhappy.

The positive thing in his life at the moment is that the YP is passionate about basketball and by having an advocate who made sure his voice is heard. The YP has joined a basketball team in Crewe and he is very happy. He attends a training session every Saturday. Joining a basketball team has provided the YP with a sense of belonging and purpose. He now has a regular activity to look forward to and a supportive community of teammates. This not only improves his physical health through regular exercise, but also enhances his social skills and self-confidence, contributing to his overall happiness. This has had a positive impact on the YP, and he is now looking forward to finding out whether he will be allowed to spend the weekend in Crewe or move back in with his aunt.

Once a basketball team had been found for the YP, the advocate spoke with him about the sports kit he needed. The YP wanted to buy some basketball shoes, so they completed an application to Pot of Gold (an internal TCS fund that is run by young people, for young people) and the YP asked for money to buy specific shoes that he liked. The YP was successful with the fund because the young people felt that it was a really positive thing for him to be involved in. The advocate purchased these for the YP and gave them to him for his training.

#### **What impact did the child / young person / family feel it had?**

During the initial visit, the YP mentioned that he struggles to build relationships with professionals. However, the advocate worked hard to develop a good working relationship with him, and he was able to openly share his views. The advocate actively listened to him, showed genuine interest in whatever he tells him, and consistently supported and shared information from the fostering meetings with him. The YP stated, **"He listens to me and also makes sure my voice is heard in meetings"**. He expressed satisfaction with the advocacy support and said, **"Without advocacy, I would not have joined a basketball team because I have asked several times and have been ignored by my carer."**

## Independent Visitor Service

The role of the IV was introduced as a statutory service for looked after children in the Children Act 1989. An Independent Visitor is a volunteer who is matched with a child in care aged between 8-18 years of age.

Independent Visitors offer the chance for children in care to build a “trusting, positive relationship with a trained volunteer. We ask volunteers to commit to 2 years. The service has a KPI target of 20 matches at any one time.

All our independent visitor volunteers are fully trained in their role, including training in a comprehensive safeguarding program. They are recruited by safer recruitment trained volunteer managers and are DBS/reference checked.

All volunteers are required to engage in group support meetings and supervision every 3 months.



The Children's Society

## Referrals

**Quarter 1** – 5 new referrals / 3 new matches

**Quarter 2** – 1 new referral / 2 new matches

**Quarter 3** – 1 new referrals / 3 new matches

**Quarter 4** – 2 new referrals / 1 new match

**Total** – 9 new referrals / 9 new matches

Last year we received 7 referrals over the year and matched 5 children. We are encouraged by the increase in referrals and matches and plan to increase the number of matches next year.

At the end of September we had 17 children matched with an independent visitor, opposed to 14 at the same point last year.

## Achievements

- Part of the Independent Volunteer (IV) role, we ask all volunteers, at point of application, to commit to a minimum of 2 years for this role to ensure longevity and consistency for the children and young people who are referred for an IV. Our longest Independent Visitor matches are over 3 years for 7 children and young people. This is extremely positive for these children as they have a consistent adult in their life to do fun activities with.
- The Children's Society recently commissioned SCIE (Social Care Institute for Excellence) to carry out an external audit to look at safeguarding within our volunteering services. The Cheshire Children's Rights Independent Visitor service was part of the audit and one young person met with the auditors to share their experiences of being matched with an Independent Visitor. Some of the feedback we have received was;

- *Practice is exemplary*
- *There are comprehensive policies and procedures*
- *CYP's voice is very strong in case recording*
- *Risks are well considered*
- *Volunteers have as much training as staff, if not more in some circumstances*
- *Good combination between online and face to face training*
- *Volunteers know where to go if there is a safeguarding concern*
- *Not just safer recruitment, but safe recruitment, which is some of the best practice we have seen*
- *TCS stood out as being equally as strong in their commitment to adult safeguarding as children's*
- *Overall the safeguarding systems and practice are some of the best we have seen.*

**3.1.25** The auditors recognise that whilst conducting this safeguarding audit, they saw a wealth of good practice which was fully compliant with statutory requirements regulated by the charity commission, and which frequently went beyond this with processes and practice matching or exceeding what one would have expected to see within the statutory sector. This was excellent to see and created many opportunities for positive safeguarding cultures to develop across the domain.

#### **Analysis**

**6.1.48** It is apparent that the concept of safeguarding is not just understood within volunteering in Youth Impact Domain, it is integrated into every aspect of the domain, embodying a safe culture for both those delivering and receiving support.

- Our compliance with volunteer recruitment and supervision is extremely high and consistent. All volunteers have DBS checks and all are within three years. Any volunteers whose DBS checks are coming towards three years old, they are updated. Any volunteer who has a DBS check older than three years is not allowed to continue volunteering until this is renewed. All volunteers have two positive references and have participated in a package of training prior to volunteering. All volunteers take part in supervision every 3 months.
- Our children and young people and volunteers can apply for additional money from internal funds to improve children's wellbeing. One young person and their volunteer applied for horse riding lessons, they were successful and have had an extremely positive experience with this.

- Our volunteer co-ordinator has increased communication with social workers of children matched with volunteers. At the children and young people's reviews, consent is gained to share an update of the progress of the match. This has helped social workers to be more aware of what is happening for the child or young person and for us to be kept up to date about any significant changes happening.

## **Impacts on Delivery and Performance**

- There remains a waiting list for the IV service. We have seen an increase on initial enquiries to volunteer, however it still remains a challenge to recruit, train and retain volunteers. We have a large number of young people who are placed in care out of area and referred for an IV. We have been proactive in trying to find volunteers in these areas, but we are not always successful.

## Independent Visitor Case Study

### Summary of the case

This young person has complex needs and is non-verbal. Our service has been providing him with an independent visitor since 2014. Over the 10 years there has been 6 different IVs. We have worked closely with the team who look after the YP so we can understand his needs and what he can do and what he is not able to do. Each time the IV made a visit to see the YP they have spent some time reading or singing to him or spending time out in the grounds.

### What you did that worked well

The collaboration with the staff at the hospital placement and the Cheshire East Disability social work team in providing a suitable person who will be the IV has been successful. As the YP is in a specialist placement, it is not in the Cheshire East area. Therefore, recruiting the IV has proven to be a struggle, however, due to a change in circumstance of one of our more experienced IVs, they were able to take up this position most recently.

### What the impact was on the child/ young person / family

The feedback we receive is how the YP seems happy when his IV visits and does not show any sign of concern or distress. On previous occasions we received reports on how the YP enjoyed the singing and the close contact from the IV who stroked his hair. He smiled and seemed relaxed. A more recent report stated how they had read to the YP who seemed to enjoy the book and was relaxed.

### What impact did the child / young person / family feel it had?

The YP is non-verbal so it is difficult to measure the impact as we are not able to ask him. What we can do is report on how he reacts when he receives a visit by the IV and although the latest IV has only been visiting a few months, the YP has seemed happy and relaxed and enjoying the attention and the activity they do together.

### What can we learn from this piece of work or how can we build on this to inform future practice?

This case has proven to be a challenge in providing the YP with a consistent IV. There are many reasons for this; including his complex care needs, the fact his placement is outside of the Cheshire East area and getting the right volunteer who is experienced and well trained. We have needed to work closely with the YP's carers and the social worker to understand his needs and

how we can provide the suitable volunteer and how we can provide the information they require in order to spend quality time with the YP. How they can read his behaviours rather than listen to his words. There are many different reasons as to why we have had so many IVs but none of the reason are because of the YP. We have also had some long breaks between IVs and the main reason for this is due to being out of area.

## Volunteer Case Studies

### A

A is one of our longest service volunteers and has been an Independent Visitor for over 5 years. Simon Husband refers to A as *'a bundle of joy'* as she brings such a wonderful energy to the role and to the group supervision sessions. A is always supportive of the other volunteers and goes out of her way to offer advice and share her experiences with her peers.

A has been matched with D for 5 years and has also been an IV to another YP, which has now come to an end. A is extremely child focused, and plans excellent activities with D. In a recent review, D said; *"I am happy with A, she makes me laugh and she is funny. A makes me smile all the time. I am happy with all that I have been doing with A and I don't want to change anything"*. In conversation with the carers at D's residential home, they said that A is a great role model for D and this has reflected in how well D is developing.

### W

W is one of our longest-serving volunteers in Cheshire East. W was matched with C for 5 years and was a constant, reliable person in C's life. W supported C through two placement changes and was a strong advocate for C's wishes and feelings. W has ensured that people have listened to C and that his voice is heard by professionals. C has medical needs, which means there is always a support worker on the meetings. W became very knowledgeable about C's needs and was very supportive of him, often changing visit days when cancellations have had to happen last minute. C said at his most recent review; *"I like that he takes me places and we have a chat. W seems to understand me and what I like to do. I like that he takes me to have a look around the shops."* C has recently turned 18 and therefore the IV match came to an end. It was a planned and positive ending following an extremely successful match.

## **R**

R has been a longstanding volunteer with the Independent Visitor service. R has always championed the IV role, often sharing her experiences within the university she studies at. R has been an IV to two young people and provided very positive experiences for them. One of the young people said that *“R is very nice, and we get on together. I am happy being with R because I have been out and I had fun. We went to the skate park, and this was my favourite activity.”*

R's circumstances changed and she had to move back to her hometown, which is a significant distance from Cheshire. As R is so invested in the service, she has stayed on as an active volunteer, providing support to Simon Husband, IV co-ordinator. R co-facilitates IV training, where she provides peer support and shares her experience and knowledge to new volunteers. R also supports promotional events, such as University volunteer fairs to talk to people who are interested in becoming an IV.

## **Our Aims for 2023-2024 and progress made**

### **1. To ensure that children and young people's voices are an integral part of our service delivery.**

*This is still a development opportunity for our service. We are working with our internal youth voice team to look at developing our youth voice offer within the Cheshire Children's Rights service for 2024-25. Our priority has been on delivering high quality advocacy and independent visiting services, which has impeded on capacity for starting this work.*

### **2. For the advocacy team to all be trained in Level 3 Advocating on Behalf of Children and Young People.**

*Two advocates now hold this qualification following completion in January 2024. Our third, and newest advocate will be starting the training in November. This means that the service manager and all advocates will hold this important qualification.*

**3. To create child and young person friendly reporting material to share with My Voice (CICC) and other interested CYP.**

*This has been completed and is ongoing. Each quarter, a child and young person-friendly report is created and shared with My Voice and social care colleagues. Annual reports are created in a CYP-friendly format and shared. This will continue for the remainder of the contract.*

**4. To increase the number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking young people (UASC) that we support once we have recruited a UASC-specialist advocate.**

*The service was awarded additional funding in September 2023 to deliver specialist advocacy to unaccompanied asylum seeking young people. We recruited an advocate to deliver this work, which was extremely successful and we supported 23 UASC young people. This funding has not been continued and this work ceased at the end of September 2024.*

**5. To increase referrals for children and young people to access the independent visiting service.**

*This year we have received 9 new referrals and completed 9 new matches. Last year we received 7 referrals over the year and matched 5 children. We intend to increase matches so that we are consistently at our target of 20 matches.*

**6. Aim to attract more volunteers to the service. We will do this by improving our links in local areas with voluntary services, universities and local authorities.**

*Our independent visitor service has gone from strength to strength this year. The IV coordinator has concentrated on promoting the service and bringing in new volunteers. We have seen a significant increase in interest in the role and we have been able to create many new matches over the year. (see data above).*

- 7. To continue to involve social care students to support the service and to ensure that children and young people receive a good quality and timely service.**

*In quarter 2 (January-March 2024) we hosted two social work students on placement. This was a very positive placement and the students have been offered sessional posts within the Children's Society now their placements have come to an end. We are working with University of Chester and Salford University and hope to host students this year. The increase in cost of living is impacting on the number of students who have access to vehicle and we are unable to offer placements to non-drivers.*

## **Developments for 2024 - 2025**

- **To promote the service to children and young people and their families who have Special Educational Needs / Disabilities**

*We would like to ensure that children and young people and their families who are not already involved with children's social care are aware of the advocacy service and know how to access the support.*

*We will promote the service to schools and other agencies that support children with SEN and disabilities.*

*We want to increase the number of advocacy referrals where disability/SEN is the primary referral criteria.*

- **We plan to continue to involve social work students support the service to ensure that children and young people receive.**

*We are working alongside Chester University and Salford University to offer student placements within the advocacy and IV services.*

- **To create a youth voice participation group, who will help us develop as a service and input their ideas.**

*We plan to work closely with our internal youth voice team who will lead on this work and by supported by advocates within the team.*

- **To increase child protection advocacy referrals for children and young people who require an independent person to support them to share their wishes and feelings**

*We will work with the child protection social work team and the child protection Independent Reviewing Officers to ensure that we receive appropriate advocacy referrals for children and young people going through the child protection process.*

## Feedback Received



*"H sends his thanks for all your help (as do we) and thinks your help has definitely had an impact on the local authority reversing their decision"*  
Parent shared their and their child's thanks for advocacy support around school placement.

*"My advocate was nice and I could talk to her with ease, she helped me with my emotions"*  
Young person's feedback from satisfaction survey

*"My IV and I get on really well together they are fun to be with and easy to talk too, they make my day when they visit. After we have talked she makes me feel lighter and really happy"*  
Young person talking about their IV during review with IV co-ordinator

Social worker commented that YP had shared info with advocate which they had not shared with social care previously, which shows YP was comfortable sharing their views.

*"Thanks again for all your support with this, S feels more empowered to be able to express her wishes and feelings."*  
Email from foster carer after advocate supported YP with complaint.

*"Thank you for helping me to express my thoughts and for always telling me the truth. Sometimes I didn't know what was going to happen and you always explained it to me"*  
YP shared thanks during closing visit.

In a Child Protection Conference, professionals cited the increased understanding of the young person's lived experience through advocacy as the major factor behind professionals' confidence in

## CHESHIRE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The  
Children's  
Society



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*Working for a brighter future together*

## **Cared For Children and Care Leavers Committee**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	3 December 2024
<b>Report Title:</b>	Cared For Children and Care Leaver's Q2 score card 2024/25
<b>Report of:</b>	Executive Director of Children's Services
<b>Ward(s) Affected:</b>	All Wards

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### **1 Purpose of Report**

1.1 This report sets out the performance for the Cared For Children and Care Leaver's service for quarter 2 of 2024/25 (1 July 2024 – 30 September 2024). The cared for children and care leavers committee is asked to note the performance for quarter 1 and to provide support and challenge in relation to performance in relation to cared for children and care leavers.

### **2 Executive Summary**

2.1 This report provides an overview of quarter 2 performance for children and families services for the relevant indicators for the reporting year of 2024-25

### **3 Recommendations**

3.1 The Cared For Children and Care Leaver's Committee is asked to:

3.2 note the performance of children's services for quarter 2.

3.3 provide scrutiny in relation to performance in relation to cared for children and care leavers.

### **4 Reasons for Recommendations**

4.1 One of the key areas of focus for the cared for children and care leavers committee is to review performance and scrutinise the effectiveness of services for cared for children and young people and care leavers.

## **5 Other Options Considered**

5.1 Not applicable

## **6 Background**

6.1 This quarterly report provides the committee with an overview of performance across cared for children and care leaver's service. This report relates to quarter 2 of 2024-25 (1 July 2024 – 30 September 2024).

6.2 The following indicators have been highlighted for consideration

## **7 Briefing information**

7.1 Cheshire East Council were responsible for 557 cared for children at the end of quarter 2. This is an increase from 536 at the end of quarter 1. The cared for children population changes daily as children enter and leave care. Children cease to be cared for due to several reasons, these include turning 18, returning to their birth family, adoption, and special guardianship. The latest comparable data we have across the region shows that Cheshire East's rate of 68 per 10,000 is slightly below the national average of 70 per 10,000 and is above that of 60 for statistical neighbours.

7.2 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. Positively, the number of children who are discharged from care continues to increase, since April 24, 55 children have ceased to be cared for (in addition to those turning 18). We have several applications currently before the court so we are hopeful that this positive progress will continue. We are demonstrating a commitment to not intervening in children's lives when this is not necessary.

7.3 At the time of writing this report, the cared for service has 9 permanent social work vacancies out of an establishment of 24. These vacancies are filled with agency social workers. Positively, most of these agency social workers have been in post for over 12 months and whilst not ideal they have brought some stability and experience to the service. This is particularly necessary of cases which are before the Court. Locally and nationally social work recruitment is a challenge. Positively, we have been able to recruit newly qualified social workers, but we have not been successful in recruiting any experienced social workers. As we train our new social workers, we hope to be able to reduce the number of agency social workers within the service. Work is being undertaken with HR colleagues and our Improvement Director to consider how we retain our existing workforce and how we recruit experienced social workers. They are looking at neighbouring authorities to ensure that the Cheshire East offer is attractive and competitive. We are also increasing our workforce through 'grow your own' methods such as offering social work apprenticeships and student placements. We are also considering how we can use alternatively qualified staff for those children who do not require a qualified social worker. This would allow experienced social workers to work with the most complex cases.

7.4 The timeliness of cared for children's reviews needs some improvement, as performance has dipped to 72% in Q2. Overall, in 2023/24 the performance was at 94%. We know that most reviews were re-scheduled within a few days and were therefore only marginally out of timescale. However, this decline is not acceptable. There has been some sickness within the safeguarding service which has impacted upon timeliness. Some additional recruitment of Independent Reviewing Officers is underway to ensure that there is sufficient capacity within the service. However, we also know that some reviews were cancelled because social workers had not prepared the report in time for the review to take place. This is now an area of focus for weekly performance sessions. Positively, 93% of children were involved in their reviews. It is important that children and young people are involved in their plan, and we are always looking at how we can develop and improve their participation.

7.5 Q2 data shows that the number of children placed with in-house foster carers has dropped to 116. (126 in Q1). Positively, the number of children placed with connected carers has increased to 130 in Q2 from 116 in Q1. This means that children are living with someone they have an existing relationship with. We are constantly looking at how we can increase recruitment of foster carers, which will mean that we can place more of our children with Cheshire East foster carers. Generally, we want children to remain local and within Cheshire East where possible. For some children, they may live out of the area because they need a specialist placement, or they want to be close to birth family who have moved away. Arrangements for any child who lives at a distance are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure this remains appropriate.

7.6 It is our ambition to have as few children placed in residential care as possible and where they are, this is a matched placement to improve their outcomes. Positively in Q2 the number of children living in residential care has reduced to 40, this is a reduction from 46 in Q1. We remain committed to ensuring that children have the opportunity of living within a family wherever possible and continue to review children's placements to see if there are alternatives. Cheshire East now has its first registered Children's Home open with another home planned to be opened, registered and operational by the end of December 2024.

7.7 The number of adoptions continues to increase with 11 children already adopted since April 2024. In 2023/24 we had a total of 24 children adopted. We have a further 18 children living in their adoption placements. Of the 11 children legally adopted in 2023/24, unfortunately the number of days from entering care to moving into placement with an adoptive family is skewed by a small number of children where there has been delay. Q2 data shows that it took on average 631 days, compared to a national average of 376. We understand the delay involved for some of these children but have remained ambitious in terms of continuing to search for an adoptive family for them. Some of this delay relates to an older sibling group who have now been able to move to their adoptive placement and so the outcome is positive in terms of the fact that they will not remain cared for throughout their childhood. Locally and nationally the timescales for placing children within their adoptive families is monitored to avoid unnecessary delay for children. For those children where delay was experienced, their individual circumstances are well

understood, and we continue to scrutinise planning to ensure that children do not experience unnecessary delay.

7.8 A number of our most vulnerable Care Leaver's continue to be supported under Staying Close as a result of funding from the DFE. Staying Close is a model which provides an enhanced support package for young people leaving care from children's homes and supported accommodation and is designed to be a comparable offer to the option to Stay Put, which supports young people in foster care to remain with their former foster carers until age 21. These bespoke packages of support help young people to develop their confidence and skills for independent living, and for their emotional health and wellbeing. The funding for Staying Close ceases at the end of March 2025. Currently it is unclear if the DFE will mandate Local Authorities to continue with Staying Close projects.

Placement stability for cared for children still needs to improve and we have plans in place to ensure that social workers are prioritising long term matching of children. Q2 data shows 63% of cared for children in care for at least 2.5yrs at the end of the period have been living in their current placement for at least 2 years. We have developed a permanence tracker which is assisting in monitoring and driving forward children's plans and ensures that children exit care if possible.

The number of children with 3 or more placements within a 12-month period has increased in Q2 to 75 children. Sometimes, these moves can be positive, such a move to an adoptive placement. However, there is further work to undertake so that we understand the narrative for each of these children. Audit work will be undertaken to explore this in more detail.

7.9 The NEET data in Q2 for our 19 to 21-year-old young people shows that 45% of this cohort are not engaged in education, employment, or training. This is a decline from 38% in Q1. However, we believe that this decline is an issue with recording rather than a true decline. As of today (18.11.2024) the NEET figure is 36%. The national average for 2023/24 was 38% with statistical neighbours being 37%. We continue to look closely at this data and the circumstances for these young adults which include pregnancy, parenting, or illness, but are not exclusive to this. Within the Staying Close project there are dedicated EET workers and an apprenticeship coordinator, which is positively assisting in terms of supporting our care leavers to access education and employment.

7.10 The number of children who had their annual health assessments within timescales within Q2 was 85%. Positively this is an increase from 83% in Q1. Some of the delay relates to children who are placed out of area and where we are reliant on other health services to undertake these assessments.

7.11 Positively 100% of Care Leavers had Health Passports by the time they left care. Progress in this area is now being sustained.

7.12 Q2 data shows that 74% of cared for children saw a dentist within the last 12 months. Nationally, the average is 70% and our statistical neighbour average is 65%. This continues to be an area of focus, and we are looking at ways to ensure that this

data is captured. This includes the IRO's recording the dates of dental checks within Cared For Reviews.

7.13 Q2 data shows that 89.5% of our care leavers (aged 16 to 21) are in appropriate accommodation. This was a decline from the previous quarter and reflects a period where we had a number of young people in emergency accommodation. As of 18.11.2024, 94% of Care Leavers are in suitable accommodation. This is not 100% because we have a small number of young people who are in prison, and this is never recorded as being appropriate. We have seen a recent increase in young people in Custody. Some of these young people are on remand for serious offences, others have been sentenced. When a young person is in custody, they continue to be supported by a Personal Advisor who visits and advocates on their behalf.

7.14 The number of young people living in emergency accommodation varies on a day-to-day basis. Members will be aware that at the time of the Ofsted inspection there were 3 young people living in hotels. Through intensive work with housing colleagues we have reduced this to 1 young person. Accommodation continues to be our greatest challenge. Young people who end up in hotels are usually our most vulnerable and complex young people and have exhausted all other options. They often present with issues such as criminality and substance misuse. We know that when a young person has accommodation stability, it is much easier to support them with their complex needs. Work is ongoing in respect of widening our offer of accommodation options to young people aged 16 to 25. This work is part of the Improvement Plan and updates are provided to the Improvement and Impact Board monthly and to each Children and Families Committee. Positively there has been an increase in provision with some of our commissioned providers and this has reduced the number of young people in emergency accommodation.

7.15 82% of care leavers have up-to-date pathway plans and 84% of care leavers had their plans reviewed within timescales. We have introduced a new Pathway Plan which was developed with young people to ensure that this is user friendly. We will continue to consult with young people and involve them in the development of service changes.

7.16 Care Leaver hubs are now operational. There are 2 bases, one in Crewe and one in Macclesfield. Young people are attending the hubs for planned sessions such as cooking and education as well as using them as a base to drop into, knowing that there will always be someone there to offer a hot drink and support. The longer-term plan is to have a bespoke hub at the Crewe Youth Zone. Free bus travel for Care Leavers aged 16 to 21 is now operational and will greatly assist our young people to access the hubs.

7.17 We held a review of the Council's Offer to Care Leaver's on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2024. Young people co-chaired this meeting, and it was an opportunity to hear from young people about how the council can improve its offer to our young people. We are in the process of developing an action plan in terms of the requests from young people and looking at ways in which we can ensure the needs of our young people are met.

**8 Consultation and Engagement**

8.1 Not applicable.

**9 Implications**

**10 Legal**

10.1 There are no direct legal implications.

**11 Finance**

11.1 There are no direct financial implications or changes to the MTFS because of this briefing paper.

**12 Policy**

12.1 There are no direct policy implications.

**13 Equality**

13.1 Members may want to use the information from the performance indicators to ensure that services are targeted at more vulnerable children and young people.

**14 Human Resources**

14.1 There are no direct human resources implications.

**15 Risk Management**

15.1 There are risks associated with some performance measures, e.g. increases in demand and timeliness of services.

**16 Rural Communities**

16.1 There are no direct implications for rural communities.

**17 Children and Young People/Cared for Children**

17.1 Performance reports enable members to identify areas of good performance and areas for improvement in relation to children and young people, including cared for children.

**18 Public Health**

18.1 There are no direct implications for public health.

**19 Climate Change**

19.1 This report does not impact on climate change.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Annemarie Parker
Appendices:	Corporate Parenting Score Card Q2
Background Papers:	None



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Sept 2024 - Cared for and Care Leavers Scorecard - This contains a rolling 4 quarters for comparison

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	23/24 outturn	Q3 23/24	Q4 23/24	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	24/25 outturn	Benchmark National (most recent available)	Benchmark Stat N'bour (most recent available)	Corporate Plan Aim	Acronym
General	G1	Number of cared for children	541	533	541	536	557				Fair	
	G2	Rate per 10,000 cared for children	69	67	69	63	68		70	60	Fair	
	G3	Number of care leavers (aged 16-21)		319	312	335	332				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	94%	83%	79%	76%	72%				Fair	
	1.2	% of children and young people involved in their reviews	98%	94%	98%	94%	93%				Fair	
Priority 2 - Improved Education, Employment and Training outcomes	2.1	Number of 16-18 year old care leavers that are NEET		5	11	13	1				Fair	NEET - Not in Education, Employment or Training
	2.2	Number of care leavers accessing higher education (University)		26	21	23	25				Fair	
	2.3	Number of Cheshire East care leavers in apprenticeships (18+)		6	6	9	9				Fair	
	2.4	% 19-21 year care leavers that are NEET (as per national reporting)	47% NEET at birthday	47%	47%	38%	45%		38% NEET at birthday	37% NEET at birthday	Fair	NEET - Not in Education, Employment or Training.
Item safe	3.1	Number of cared for children in external foster care		118	124	119	115				Fair	
	3.2	Number of cared for children in internal foster care		125	126	126	116				Fair	
	3.3	Number of children in care living with relatives and friends (inc reg 24)		92	102	116	130				Fair	Reg 24 -Regulation 24
	3.4	Number of children placed with parents		35	35	31	34				Fair	
	3.5	Number of children and young people in residential care		42	46	46	40				Fair	

Priority	Indicator	Indicator name	23/24 outturn	Q3 23/24	Q4 23/24	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	24/25 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	3.6	Number of individuals with 3 or more placements (rolling 12mth figure)	66	54	66	65	75				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	66%	68%	66%	61%	63%		71%	72%	Fair	#NAME?
	3.8	Number of cared for children placed over 20 miles from home address (Cheshire East and out of borough)		141	152	134	146				Fair	
	3.9	Number of children living out of borough		221	212	201	209				Fair	
	3.10	Number of cared for children who have been missing in the quarter		25	41	36	36				Fair	
	3.11	Number of children who have a long term matched placement		137	138	127	127				Fair	
	3.12	Number of placement moves in the quarter		75 (66 individuals)	88 (73 individuals)	72 (60 individuals)	120 (88 individuals)				Fair	
	3.13	% of currently cared for children who have had a C&F assessment in the last 12 mths		78%	72%	75%	72%				Fair	C&F - Children and Family
	3.14	% of Cared for Children in care for more that 1 mth who have had a review in the last 6 mths		94%	90%	90%	92%				Fair	
	3.15	% of children ceased to be looked after due to granting of special guardianship order (SGO) - year to date figure	12%	12%	12%	8%	6%		13%	12%	Fair	SGO - Special Guardianship Order
	3.16	% of children ceased to be looked after due to adoption - year to date figure	9%	8%	9%	11%	10%		10%	11%	Fair	
	3.17	Number of children with an adoption decision		38	37	36	38				Fair	
	3.18	Average number of days between entering care and moving in with adoptive family (A10 national indicator) - yearly figure		484	498	519	631		376		Fair	
	3.19	Average number of days between placement order and match with adoptive family (A2 national indicator) - yearly figure		126	133	167	244		185		Fair	
	4.1	Children looked after who had their annual health assessment (%)	91% (OC2 cohort)	86%	91%	83%	85%		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 (%)	87% (OC2 cohort)	53%	87%	82%	74%		70% (OC2 cohort)	65% (OC2 cohort)	Fair	

Priority	Indicator	Indicator name	23/24 outturn	Q3 23/24	Q4 23/24	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	24/25 outturn	Benchmark National (most recent available)	Benchmark Stat N'bour (most recent available)	Corporate Plan Aim	Acronym
	4.3	% of 4-16 in care for 3 months or more with a completed SDQ score in the last 12 mths	63% (OC2 cohort)	56%	63%	58%	68%		77% (OC2 cohort)	75% (OC2 cohort)	Fair	SDQ - Strenghs and Difficulties Questionnaire. T
	4.4	% of young people with a SDQ score of 20 or above	26% (OC2 cohort)	32%	26%	30%	33%		37% (OC2 cohort)	40% (OC2 cohort)	Fair	SDQ - Strenghs and Difficulties Questionnaire.
	4.5	Number of care leavers with a health passport		23/23 100%	21/21 100%	34/34 100%	18/18 100%				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		90%	89%	88%	82%				Fair	
	5.2	% of pathway plan reviews completed in timescales in the quarter		85%	88%	92%	84%				Fair	
	5.3	% of pathway plan reviews completed in the quarter where Young persons view were not sent/ gained		8%	5%	7%	3%				Fair	
	5.4	% of former relevant care leaver aged 18-21 that we are in touch with		98%	98%	97%	94%				Fair	
	5.5	% of 16-17 years old currently cared for with a PA allocated					45%				Fair	PA - Personal Advisor
	5.6	% of 17-18 former relevant care leavers in suitable accommodation	95%	95%	95%	95%	93%		90% at yp birthday	88% at yp birthday	Fair	
	5.7	% of 19-21 former relevant care leavers in suitable accommodation	96%	95%	96%	92%	86%		88% at yp birthday	88% at yp birthday	Fair	
	5.8	Number current UASC being cared for	38	60	38	38	34				Fair	UASC - Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker
	5.9	Number current/ former UASC care leavers (aged 18-24)		91	104	114	116				Fair	UASC - Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker
	5.10	Number of individuals in staying put arrangement		27	41	42	43				Fair	

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