

Sheffield Virtual School for Children Looked After



Annual Report 2023/24

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Virtual School Annual Report 2023-24

Welcome to the Virtual School Annual Report for 2023-24

The Sheffield Virtual School exists to promote the educational outcomes of Children Looked After (CLA) by Sheffield City Council, previously-CLA living in Sheffield (PLAC) and Children with a Social Worker (CWSW).

The Virtual School is the key educational advocacy service for CLA regardless of where they are placed. Each member of the team has a caseload of CLA whom they support by promoting their educational achievement, and challenging schools and other education providers to ensure that CLA have the best possible education. The Virtual School does not itself provide education. Instead, it recognises that schools are responsible for the educational outcomes of their children and holds them to account for the provision they offer and deliver, to ensure the life chances of each CLA is improved.

For PLAC and CWSW the Virtual School oversees the statutory duties for the local authority to ensure that children are safer in education, offering advice, guidance and training. Those duties are:

- Promoting the education of looked after and previously looked after children
- Promoting the education of children who have and have had a social worker

The Virtual School has 12 members of staff, providing a range of expertise e.g. in teaching, education welfare, careers' guidance and therapeutic interventions. The team provides guidance, training and support for Designated Teachers across all education settings and for Social Care. The Virtual School also commissions a SENCO and 2 Educational Psychologists to support the work and priorities of the team. Sheffield's Virtual School Head Teacher is a member of the National Association of Virtual School Heads.

Profile of the Sheffield Virtual School

- At any one time the Sheffield Virtual School works with 620 CLA. Approximately 40 CLA in early years, 430 school aged CLA, and 160 in post-16. This number can vary throughout the academic year.
- 56% males, 44% females.
- Children of White British ethnicity account for 55% of Sheffield CLA, 17% are Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups, 10% Black, African, Caribbean or Black British, 8% are Asian or Asian British, 10% other ethnicities.
- 28% of the cohort has an Educational Health & Care Plan (EHCP), 27% have SEN Support.
- Of the children with an EHCP, 50% have SEN primary need of SEMH (social, emotional and mental health).
- 34% attend schools outside Sheffield.
- The number of CLA per 10,000 population is below the national average (57 per 10,000 in 2023). The national average is 71 per 10,000 population.
- The annual SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) census of mental health status suggests that the average score (16.3) for Sheffield CLA is higher (worse) than the national average (14.4).
- Children living in Sheffield who were previously looked after (PLAC), and children with a social worker (CWSW) also are now part of the Sheffield Virtual School.

- In the summer term 2024, there were 2346 CWSW overall, and 1716 were of school age and attended Sheffield Schools.

Achievements 2023-24

- By the end of the academic year, 97% of our Early Years CLA cohort accessed a FEL place
- 62% of our KS2 cohort achieved age related expectations in reading, 57% in writing, and 52% in maths.
- Of the children who participated in the Building Learning Power club, 85% reached the expected standard in reading and 69% in writing and maths in KS2 SATS.
- 122 care experienced children were supported by a reading volunteer
- 1700 Personal Education Plans (PEPs) were completed throughout the year, with completion rates consistently around 90%
- 68% of PEPs were quality assured as Good or Excellent, with detailed feedback provided on how to improve the rest of the plans
- 71% of our Post-16 cohort were in education, training or employment
- 81% of our pupils attended good or outstanding schools
- 5% of Care Leavers progressed to higher education

Challenges 2023-24

The educational outcomes for CLA are often poorer than their peers due to instability and frequent placement moves; emotional and behavioural challenges due to past neglect and trauma; lower expectations and stigma associated with being in care; lack of a stable support system to help with homework, learning and encouraging extra-curricular activities; and potential un-met health needs including mental health needs.

- For Sheffield, the attainment data reveals similar trends to the national picture, emphasising the persistent gap in educational attainment between CLA and their peers. Only 8% of the 2024 Y11 cohort achieved 4+ in English and maths in the summer GCSE examinations. The data underscores the critical need for ongoing support and tailored educational strategies to improve outcomes for CLA.
- Overall attendance was 81% with 11.8% of the cohort classed at 'severely absent' (below 50%). Persistent absence remains high concentrated in older CLA, those arriving late into care, and those in residential provision.
- 13% of the cohort received at least one suspension and 3 children were excluded this academic year. 2 children had an exclusion rescinded. Suspensions predominantly focused on secondary age CLA and KS4 in particular.
- 29% of the Post-16 cohort were classed as NEET (not in education, training or employment)

Virtual School Priorities 2023/24:

1. Improve Attendance
2. Improve Attainment
3. Support Aspiration

The section below is a high-level summary of work done to support the Virtual School priorities this year. The Virtual School also have an Action Plan that provides further operational detail, enabling work and interventions that support these priorities to be tracked throughout the academic year.

Actions to support the Virtual School priorities 2023/24:

As corporate parents we recognise the incredible achievement of our looked after children who have made progress in all phases with some impressive individual success stories. We have worked towards our 3 priorities this year in the following ways:

1. Improve attendance

The Virtual School advocate for:

- **Stable Placements and Consistent Schooling** – We work alongside the child and all professionals to keep the child in the same school even if their living arrangements change whenever this is possible.
- **Emotional and Mental Health Support** – We support access to counselling and therapy services to address trauma and emotional difficulties that may affect attendance and learning.
- **Foster Carers and Social Worker Involvement** – We support good communication between schools, carers, and social workers to ensure that attendance is closely monitored and issues are addressed promptly. Training is given to foster carers to equip them with strategies to support the child's education and attendance.
- **Incentives and Rewards** – We promote the use of reward systems for good attendance, such as certificates, praise, and small rewards to motivate children. We encourage schools to focus on celebrating our children's successes in achieving academic and attendance milestones.
- **Flexible and Inclusive School Policies** – Advocates provide advice to schools to encourage them to consider approaches such as the use of flexible school hours or part-time schedules to accommodate children's needs and therapy appointments. We encourage and challenge schools where necessary to ensure they have inclusive policies that are sensitive to the needs of CLA, avoiding punitive measures for attendance issues beyond their control.
- **Multi-Agency Collaboration** – We foster collaboration between schools, Social Care, healthcare providers, and other agencies to provide comprehensive support and attend frequent review meetings involving all stakeholders to discuss the child's progress and attendance.

Key Virtual School actions taken concerning attendance:

Attendance is monitored daily, irrespective of how long the child has been in care or on the Virtual School roll. Daily monitoring enables the Virtual School to challenge schools where individual attendance drops and/or there is a developing pattern of absence. The PEP also requires schools to describe their strategy for addressing poor attendance, including points for review; and work with the Social Care Service to investigate and improve the links between school attendance and social care placement.

The Virtual School prioritise attendance at PEP meetings for CLA who have had a suspension or where schools have recorded that behaviour is a cause for concern in the previous PEP so that strategies and interventions can be put in place to prevent further suspensions.

The importance of attendance is promoted through all the Virtual School networks, including the Sheffield city-wide 'Every School Day Matters' campaign.

The number of students not attending provision is closely tracked through weekly monitoring of this cohort. Regular multi-professional meetings and escalation to the CLA Educations Solutions Panel supports a collaborative approach to problem solving issues are unblocked quickly.

We monitor, challenge and advocate for any children without a school place, those not accessing a full-time timetable or being educated offsite and work closely with the Admissions Service and the Children Missing from Education Team to ensure all children have a full-time offer.

We identify all CLA who are educated in Alternative Provision and will question whether or not they may have unmet SEN needs and require further assessments. We work closely with the Admissions Services and schools in and out of city to ensure there is a seamless transition for all Sheffield children in care between key education phases.

2. Improve Attainment

The Virtual School advocate for:

- **Supportive Educational Environment** – We identify key staff in school to oversee the progress and welfare of CLA, monitor their academic progress and ensure they receive tailored support. We develop and regularly update PEPs to address each child's unique educational needs and set specific, achievable goals.
- **Tutoring and Academic Support** – We have supported children with additional tutoring through Pupil Premium to help them catch up and stay on track with their studies and encourage homework clubs or after-school programs to offer extra academic support in a structured environment. We have worked with schools to ensure children have access to the study materials they need, including books and technology.
- **Access to Extracurricular Activities** – We have supported children in participating in extracurricular activities, which can enhance their social skills, self-esteem, and overall development.
- **Positive School Environment** – We promote a school environment where CLA feel safe, valued, and understood.
- **Educational Advocacy** – A Sheffield Virtual School advocate is assigned to each child to represent the child's educational needs, ensuring they receive the necessary support and resources.

Key Virtual School actions taken concerning attainment:

We track the attainment of our cohort on a termly basis through regular Pupil Progress Meetings and use these meetings to challenge and support schools to unpick un-met SEND needs and improve outcomes. Pupil Premium funding is used to support schools to boost attainment through targeted interventions, particularly focusing on preparations for KS4 exams and supporting post-16 courses.

The Building Learning Power (BLP) project for CLA in Y5 and Y6 has been effective in raising attainment and progress in preparation for SATS.

We have encouraged reading at home through the Letterbox and Storytime projects and resources developed by the Virtual School. The Virtual School runs a reading volunteers project and recruits, trains and co-ordinates one-to-one literacy support by 140 volunteers across Sheffield.

A Foster Carer Handbook has been produced containing key strategies for promoting education at home and to maximise the impact of the Letterbox scheme by encouraging carers to support the child's reading at home. A Residential Home Handbook has also been produced containing key education strategies and clarity on processes and resources available.

3. Support Aspiration

The Virtual School advocate for:

- **Role Models and Mentorship** - We promote and utilise mentorship programs (such as the Building Learning Power club) where CLA are paired with successful adults, including care experienced adults, who can provide guidance and inspiration
- **Positive Reinforcement and Encouragement** We promote a culture of celebrating academic and personal achievements, no matter how small, to build confidence and motivation. We nurture an approach that maintains high expectations and communicates belief in the child's potential to succeed.
- **Academic and Career Guidance** – All CLA have access to regular career counselling sessions to help children understand different career paths and the education required for them. We have worked hard to identify work experience placements and internships to give our children practical insights into various professions.
- **Access to Higher Education Information** - We encourage visits to universities and colleges to expose children to higher education environments and opportunities. Information is provided about scholarships, bursaries, and financial aid available to CLA to support their higher education aspirations.
- **Peer Support Groups** -We promote peer support groups such as the Sheffield Children in Care Council and Sheffield Care Leavers Union where CLA can share experiences, challenges, and successes, fostering a sense of community and mutual encouragement.

Key Virtual School actions taken concerning aspiration:

We have identified dedicated support to ensure that the transition arrangements for current Year 11 are robust and maximise progression to EET. Routine case meetings with Community Youth Teams and Leaving Care Service take place as well as attendance at Leaving Care Steering Group and Care Leaver EET Strategy Group to ensure support for NEET 16 – 18s and identify onward pathways.

A dedicated section has been created in the PEP to track preparation for adulthood conversations and identify actions required.

We have continued to work in partnership with the Higher Education Progression Partnership (HEPP). The University outreach scheme runs each year with a group of Y10 and Y11 CLA attending a 3-day Summer School.

Project and Partnership working:

To support the priorities in the previous section, the Virtual School were involved in the following wider work activity and actions:

Strategic Planning – The Virtual School has invested significant Leadership & Management time in building relationships with elected members and senior leaders. There is an increasingly shared understanding of what the Virtual School's role is, and how it operates. Involving the Virtual School in strategic arrangements to promote stability have had a positive impact on permanence planning. There is representation from the Virtual School at various meetings with children's social care Heads of Services and senior managers to monitor stability and plan appropriately to ensure education placements are a priority factor in achieving positive long- term outcomes for children in care. The Virtual School is represented at Community Parenting Board; Inclusion Strategy Programme Board and Complex Case Panels. The Virtual School also regularly attends the Education, Health and Care Panel and Social Care Placement and Resources panel. This enables the Virtual School to participate and contribute to key decision-making processes for our children and young people.

Personal Education Plans (PEPs) – The Virtual School works to ensure all children have a high-quality Personal Education Plan (PEP) that is regularly reviewed and updated and that considers the child's Educational Health & Care Plan (EHCP) and/or the social care plan where necessary. All PEPs are quality assured in a way that clearly demonstrates impact and enables:

- Putting in place appropriate training and support to those writing information in PEPs that enables consistent high quality.
- A trauma informed approach to be embedded and appropriate emotional well-being support to be identified.
- Clarity on the potential gaps in learning and the routes to narrow these gaps.
- Rigorously track and monitor pupil premium spend to ensure this is used appropriately to raise the attainment of Sheffield Children Looked After.

SEND – We have commissioned a SENCO working in the Virtual School to enable increased knowledge and support for Children Looked After with additional needs at every level of the graduated approach. This has increased our clarity on the processes around SEND and ensured the individual pupils have a clear SEN Support Plan or EHCP that outlines their strengths and areas of need, including attendance at a specialist provision where appropriate.

Educational Psychology – We now have dedicated Educational Psychology time working in the team. The EP's focus has been initially on children with emotional based school non-attendance (EBSNA) and explored what strategies can be used to re-engage the child back in school. In addition to this the EP's have put a focus on children with no identified SEND needs who have been out of education for a considerable length of time, they have helped schools to consider the graduated approach including what assessments may be needed for these children to ensure their needs are met. The EP's have also provided excellent training for the Virtual School team!

Emotional Health and Well-Being - Emotional health has an impact on achievement, so the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ) are used to help us to target the right support at the right time for individual pupils. The new model for using the SDQ, has ensured that for the first time there is consistent and regular multi-agency consideration of the emotional health of individual pupils at their PEP reviews. When an SDQ score is high and giving cause for concern, an outcome

relating to improving emotional and mental health and wellbeing is included in the PEP and pupils are flagged on the Pupil Progress meetings to investigate for un-met SEN needs.

Transitions – The Virtual School have dedicated Early Years support to ensure that CLA have access to Free Early Learning (FEL) and transition arrangements for reception are robust.

Dedicated Post-16 support is in place to ensure smoother progressions for young people in Education, Employment and Training (EET), with a Post-16 EET destination confirmed and communication links between key staff made where possible.

We now have better processes in place to identify and co-ordinate support for NEET young people – in-city NEET young people have a named ‘NEET-to-EET’ professional assigned to support them with choices through the Autumn term where possible to secure pathway into EET. We have improved the messaging around Post 16 PEP process/completion and importance of NEET PEPs so providers and Social Workers are better informed of processes and more confident with holding PEPs for NEET young people.

UASC – To improve access to education for CLA with English as an Additional Language, the Virtual School funds language support from the EAL Service for new arrivals while a member of the Virtual School is trained as an EAL champion. Strong links have been established with ESOL providers in the city and useful resources to support English as a second language provided and funded by Pupil Premium.

Training – A key part of the role of the Virtual School is to ensure that professionals who work with CLA are trained and equipped to support the education of CLA, understand their statutory responsibilities and are clear about the Personal Education Plan process.

To fulfil its training and development role, members of staff of the Virtual School have taken part in and/or led a series of training events. The Virtual School produced a training brochure for 2023-24 outlining the training offer for professionals involved with CLA and those Previously Looked After. Training was also advertised on the Virtual School website, the termly newsletter, and in emails to schools / settings and Social Care.

Attendance by the Virtual School and promotion of the ‘Trauma Informed Schools’ diploma course. The Virtual School developed an in-depth understanding of the long-term impact of specific adverse childhood experiences and how to enable the child or teenager to work through feelings of anger and traumatic loss. This gave the members of the team the ability to advise school colleagues on strategies for early intervention and when to refer on to other agencies when in meetings for Sheffield CLA.

To meet the training needs of Designated Teachers and other staff working with Children Looked After in relation to their education, the Virtual School commission services from AC Education. Creating engaging, interactive online courses for educators, AC Education bring this knowledge and understanding to help teachers support vulnerable and traumatised children.

In 2023-24 a Virtual School team member directly supported our residential home settings, offering additional support and training regarding education.

Creative Curriculum – We have worked hard to develop learning in the wider sense including music, literacy and sport through commissioned support using Pupil Premium.

- Music Hub – We commission and work in close partnership with the Sheffield Music Hub so CLA can have music lessons in Sheffield and access to out of school groups.
- Close partnership working with the Sheffield Children in Care Council (CICC) with various themed workshops supporting CLA and SCLU (Sheffield Care Leavers Union) provides our children with the opportunity to work with partners across the city.
- We continue to roll out the ‘Assembly Squad’ resource with Sheffield Children in Care Council addressing the stigma of being in care – this has been extended to include national partners.
- The ‘Create and Change Group’ is run for 7–12-year-olds and their foster carers. The group supports activities run in partnership with Endeavour and CICC on a quarterly basis with a regular attendance of 28 individuals and their Carers.
- Older CLA and SCLU have had the opportunity to take part in a photography project with the Site Gallery culminating in an exhibition.
- 14–16-year-olds have enjoyed activities to explore music genres and experience performing at live events.
- Partnership with the Voice & Influence workers undertaking consultations has promoted positive change for care experienced young people across the city (Music Hub, Concerteenies, Create Sheffield, Sheffield International Venues).

Data Dashboard - The figures in the monthly report feed in directly to the Community Parenting Board so senior management are regularly kept informed of performance. The dashboard has been a significant tool in tracking ongoing trends so challenge and resources from the Virtual School can effectively be deployed to areas of concern. A Virtual School dashboard has also been developed for the Children with A Social Worker (CWSW) cohort to analyse trends and help target training and resources.

Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) Strategy Statement 2023-24

A PP+ grant of £2530 was allocated for every eligible school age CLA and previously looked after child. The VSH receives the funding for CLA only and manages the grant allocation to be used for the benefit of the child’s educational needs as described in their Personal Education Plan (PEP). All payments are subject to the completion and signing off a ‘good’ quality PEP by a termly deadline. For the academic year 2023-24 our total PP+ budget was £1,330,780. In line with our PP+ policy we top-sliced £730 from each grant of £2530.

The Sheffield Virtual School also received extra grants in 2023-24 (Recovery Premium, School Led Tutoring Grant and Post-16 Pupil Premium) and these were used to provide targeted academic support to make sure that pupils who needed it received extra tuition and support in the classroom, and to support non-academic barriers to success in school such as attendance, behaviour, and social and emotional support. This extra funding was allocated to schools and Post-16 providers to support the educational needs of our CLA as described in their personal education plan.

Pupil Premium Spend	Amount	Impact
Termly payments direct to schools.	£530,900	Funding forwarded to schools at the end of each term attached to CLA to support the learning outcomes detailed in their Personal Education Plans.

		<p>In 2023/24, the majority of Pupil Premium was allocated to support academic and achievement (58%) and emotional health and well-being (23%) targets.</p> <p>Overall, 35% of target outcomes with allocated Pupil Premium were achieved and 51% partially achieved. Only 14% of target outcomes with attributed Pupil Premium spend were not achieved.</p>
<p>Education support commissioned or provided in partnership by Sheffield Virtual School:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspire Project • Children In Care Council (CiCC)/Create and Change Group/Writing and Music projects • Links with Create Sheffield • Handbooks and Resources • Go Further, Go Higher (Work With HEPP) • Music Hub • Y6/Y5 Study Group (BLP) • EAL Support • SENCO Support • Educational Psychology Support • Progressions Team (Alternative Provision) 	£253,607	<p>BLP - Additional support for Sheffield CLA in Y5 and Y6 with preparation for SATS – 85% of participants achieved the expected standard in reading, and 69% in writing and maths in the summer 2024 SATS.</p> <p>Music Hub - 56 children and young people have accessed lessons via the Sheffield Music Hub (52% of whom were new students)</p> <p>Creative Curriculum –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music School NEET workshops and training - 8 NEETs attended a regular weekly activity afternoon session. • 1:1 Music Tuition for various students - 11 students had music tuition; 10 students attended a weekly Saturday music school • Concerteenies and spoken words and music workshops for CLA - supporting Early Years, primary and secondary aged children. 76 CLA attended. • 8 creative curriculum workshops delivering various themes for CLA and their foster carers. • Voice and Influence workers - 5 new care experienced workers, supported to work with services to improve outcomes for CLA. <p>SENCO - Dedicated support from a SENCO who assisted the Virtual School with complex cases concerning SEND. The SENCO's expertise has tightened working with the SEND Team and resolved a number of issues at risk of a delayed outcome. Knowledge and support for CLA with additional needs has improved at every level of the graduated approach.</p> <p>Virtual School Resources - Over 100 carers have received a Foster Carer handbook, ensuring that carers have information regarding education whilst raising the profile of the Virtual School / ensuring carers are aware of support that is available.</p>
Additional support for targeted interventions and to support children not on a school roll	£410,481	<p>Over 170 CLA supported for additional targeted funding agreed in the 2023/24 financial year. These requests have included one-to-one tuition / additional adult support / nurture provision / funding alternative provision / revision guides and access to therapeutic support.</p>

Attendance monitoring and EPEPs - Welfare Call	£79,884	<p>Sheffield Virtual School were able to effectively monitor attendance and progress of all CLA and host an electronic personal education plan that schools and social care could access and update. PEP completion rates were around 90% for the whole financial year.</p> <p>Tracking attendance through the PEP has kept CLA absence consistently at or below the average absence level of all Sheffield children in most key stages, though persistent absence remains high concentrated in older CLA, those arriving late into care, and those in residential provision.</p>
Literacy development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letterbox • Storytime • ESCAL Volunteering project 	£34,379	<p>Letterbox - 163 children in years 3 to 8 received a regular parcel of learning materials. Analysis of educational progress over time indicates that this programme has had a positive effect with more than half of the children showing significant progress in their attainment. Feedback from the children was positive and they enjoy receiving the parcel.</p> <p>Storytime - 166 children in years -2 to 5 received a monthly magazine of stories, poems and word games to encourage reading at home.</p> <p>ESCAL - Over 47 CLA supported with a reading volunteer in 2023/24. Number of volunteers increased due to social media awareness campaign.</p>
Training related costs – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team CPD • NAVSH conference • NAVSH membership • AC Education online training • Trauma Informed Schools training 	£21,508	<p>Membership to national community of Virtual Schools sharing good practice and research.</p> <p>AC Education - 160 courses allocated to DT's and staff who work directly with CLA. In response to the Covid pandemic, 58 staff members have completed the AC Education 'Bereavement' module and 32 completed 'The Role of the Designated Teacher' (DT) amongst other modules to support the role of the DT.</p> <p>Trauma Informed - The course aims to train school staff and community staff to be mental health literate, and trauma-informed practitioners - 38 individuals trained.</p>
Total	£1,330,780	

Pupil voice

We strive to have meaningful conversations with our CLA learners about their education. Listening to what our children are saying gives us an insight into their experiences of school so that we can take action when needed to make things better.

Ways we listen to children:

- the ePEP pupil views and aspirations sections and in conversations at PEP meetings.

- Brightspots survey
- listening at EHCP and CLA reviews.
- Children in Care Council and other groups which the Virtual School directly work with.
- We ensure that Sheffield Children Looked After have access to quality careers advice at the right points throughout their education and at transition points to further education, employment or training.

Pupil Said	We Did
Harry said he found his mainstream provision overwhelming and that he felt he needed a more bespoke environment to suit his learning needs.	We liaised with his care team and local authority to update his EHCP and find a more suitable provision for him.
Jess said she wanted additional Maths tuition	We agreed an additional funding request to support one-to-one Maths tuition for the remainder of the year. This boosted her confidence attainment in preparation for the Maths exam.
Alice was not attending education, employment or training said she needed a bespoke music programme to help her focus and re-engage.	We worked with Red Tape to tailor a music programme for her. She successfully engaged with the programme and has taken the decision to return to full time education from September.
Zubair said he wanted to improve his English. He also stated that he won prizes for his boxing when in Afghanistan.	We liaised with his care team, and we agreed a pupil premium request and a laptop was purchased to support his academic studies. We also arranged tuition to continue over the summer. We liaised with school to ensure he had the opportunity to develop his talents and they have incorporated boxing into his PE curriculum.
Sam said that they wanted a forum to be able to express themselves and raise awareness of the LBQT community in school.	We worked with the Designated Teacher in school and SLT to support students to develop a group that are supported in sharing their experiences of being members of the LBQT community via whole school assemblies, communal resources and reading materials that can be accessed by all.

Previously looked after children (PLAC)

Children and young people who have experienced early life trauma can continue to experience a range of challenges in school. We understand the long-term impact of trauma and loss and this informs the support and guidance we give to parents, carers and professionals who live and work with previously looked after children. The Virtual School achieved the following actions in relation to this cohort:

- Redrafting of the information and guidance for schools across Sheffield outlining roles and responsibilities.

- Support for schools when accessing Pupil Premium for Post CLA and awareness raising of when to claim.
- Ensuring schools complete the October census to enable them to claim the appropriate funding.
- Creation of a training package for schools to ensure all are informed about their responsibilities.
- New approaches being taken within Sheffield City Council to raise further awareness of PLAC in schools and the responsibilities that need to be taken.
- Attendance at Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) quarterly meetings supporting PLAC signposting, information, and guidance working across the Sheffield City Region.
- Representation at Adoption UK regional network meetings giving advice and guidance.
- Representation at Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) RAA led steering group.

Children with a social worker (CWSW)

From September 2021, local authorities received funding to resource Virtual School Heads to work with early years settings, schools, colleges and social care leaders to create a culture of high aspirations that helps all children with social workers to make educational progress.

In the 2023/24 summer term there were 1736 children in Sheffield with Child in Need (CIN) status and 700 with Child Protection Plan (CPP) status.

The Sheffield Virtual School worked extensively with partners across all sectors and developed a training resource that will be delivered to education and social care settings, promoting strategies, information sharing and advising best practice for working with this cohort and promoting their educational progress.

Partnership working has also been developed with the Access and Inclusion attendance teams to identify CWSW with attendance concerns and target specialist support and training through schools and trusts, and social care areas and individual teams.

Impact evaluation:

Early Years

We need more feedback from schools about the impact the PP+ has had on progress and achievement for every year group. From the termly teacher assessment data collected through the ePEP we know that 83% of pupils were making good overall progress. More information and improved impact will be a priority for next year.

Key Stage 2

Locally calculated results for 2024 show that the proportion of KS2 Sheffield CLA reaching the expected standard in all individual subject areas increased from the last published results (2023), and is higher in KS2 than the last published national average. However, the percentage who reached the expected standard in reading, writing and maths combined was lower than in 2023.

Termly Pupil Progress meetings have enabled us to target the progress of pupils in KS1 and KS2 so that a higher proportion are working in their age-related curriculum.

Key Stage 4

The percentage of CLA who achieved 4+ in English and maths fell to 8%. This is a disappointing outcome for our Y11 learners, but context is important, with a number of factors potentially having a negative impact on learning and therefore GCSE performance. The reportable cohort was 51 pupils, and 69% have SEND (45% with EHCPs). The percentage who achieved 4+ in English and maths and attended a mainstream setting only was 11%.

Some of the SDQ scores of the higher achievers were high, which indicates strong personal resilience as well as effective support from care teams and schools. Stability was not as good as we would have liked it to be, with 24 pupils entering care after the start of their GCSE courses, 30 pupils experiencing a placement move during their GCSE courses, 16 pupils having suspensions from school and overall attendance for Y11 of only 66%. All of the CLA who achieved the headline measure of 4+ in English and maths were in a foster placement rather than any other placement type. The support provided throughout GCSEs has created further opportunity for our Year 11 leavers whose high aspirations have led 72% into further education, full-time training or apprenticeships for September 2024.

Pathways at 16

72% of our Year 11 school leavers have a destination in education, employment or training for September 2024, and the retention rate of Year 12 and 13 learners in Further Education has improved to 70%. An over representation of learners with SEND (39% have an EHCP) have contributed to the high NEET figures. Professionals are in contact to ensure that guidance is available, and pathways are ready to be developed when the time is right.

SEND

Outcomes for children with SEND were poorer than that of children with no SEND. Over half of our children need SEND support or have EHCPs, so it is pleasing that 1 child met their age-related expectations in Phonics, 3 children achieved expected standard at the end of Key Stage 2, and 3 pupils achieved the headline measure of 4+ in English and maths at GCSE. From Early Years upwards however, progress and achievement needs to improve and this will be tracked through termly Pupil Progress meetings next year. Overall, there are some encouraging signs here but there is still a lot of work to do. We need to make sure that the recovery funding is being used for maximum impact and that the social, emotional and mental health needs of our children are being met so that they can make much faster progress.

Ethnicity / Race

The national and local data for CLA does not show an obvious pattern of children from non-White ethnic origins being disadvantaged in educational outcomes, and in some of the performance indicators they are performing better than children of White ethnicity.

The Sheffield Virtual School have the mechanisms and reporting functionality to take ethnicity and first language into account on a child-by-child basis so individual needs are addressed in regular PEP meetings, and plans address any specific needs that are identified through this process.

Children with a Social Worker

Understanding who this cohort of children are has evolved during the year and a dedicated data dashboard highlighted past attainment trends for this cohort, and comparisons with all Sheffield pupils. For the current CWSW cohort, our work this year has been focused on attendance KPIs, but

clear long term performance indicators will be established. Our aspiration is to make this cohort of children visible so that improving educational engagement and progress is an integral part of every pupil's plan.

Education outcomes for Looked after Children in all key measures, 2024

2024	Sheffield CLA 2023	National CLA 2023	Sheffield CLA 2024	National CLA 2024
Phonics Year 1	50%	63%	60% (9/15)	Not available yet
KS2 R/W/M – expected standard	48%	37%	38% (8/21)	
KS2 Reading – expected standard	50%	55%	57% (12/21)	
KS2 Writing – expected standard	52%	48%	57% (12/21)	
KS2 Maths – expected standard	50%	51%	52% (11/21)	
KS2 Reading – progress score	-0.13	0.04	N/A yet	
KS2 Writing – progress score	-0.08	-0.33	N/A yet	
KS2 Maths – progress score	-1.28	-0.62	N/A yet	
KS4 English 4+	28%	28%	18% (9/51)	
KS4 maths 4+	28%	27%	12% (6/51)	
KS4 E&M 4+	24%	20%	8% (4/51)	
KS4 Attainment 8	17.7	19.4	N/A yet	
KS4 Progress 8	-1.67	-1.26	N/A yet	

Number of pupils in each cohort shown in brackets. National CLA 2024 – Not available yet

What are we going to do next? – Highlights from the Virtual School Action Plan for 2024-25

Action Priority	Areas to Cover
Improve Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued Integrated working with the Education Service - Access and Inclusion attendance specialists. Consistency of challenge from the Virtual School to improve concerning reduced timetables and strategies recorded in the PEP to address persistent absence. Understanding barriers to attendance through the child's voice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where Mental Health is the predominant reason for non-attendance, the Emotionally Based School Non Attendance (EBSNA) strategies (including risk and resilience card sorts) will be used to capture the overarching barrier, but also the obstacles in overcoming this barrier. Where distance is the barrier, proactive consideration of continuation of education will be considered in the interim until another school place can be sought. Close working with the SEND Service to ensure EHCP annual reviews are effective, and appropriate support and interventions are identified to ensure the young person can attend the named setting within their plan. Collaborative working with residential staff to ensure that children residing in children's homes are accessing education and closing attainment gaps.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close working with schools and the exclusions and reintegration team to reduce the number of suspensions of our CLA cohort. • Continue to develop the training offer for Schools and Social Care. • Lead worker linked with the national review of residential settings. • Developing a joined-up offer for EAL CLA. • Roll out of guidance and resources for Designated Safeguarding Leads and children's social workers to support CWSW.
Improve Attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop termly CLA Pupil Progress reviews with input from school colleagues. • Y1 Phonics results analysed and learning needs to be picked up by the Virtual School SENCO. • Focus on KS2 SATS with the continuation of the Building Learning (BLP) club. • Focus on KS4 attainment and extra support for current Y10 and Y11 children • Quality assurance and moderation of PEPs with a focus on SMART academic outcomes. • Continue to expand the reading volunteer programme to support CLA and Post-CLA, CWSW.
Support Aspiration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the Post-16 PEP and Post-18 planning. • Trauma Informed practice to inform redevelopment of Pupil Voice. • Continued development of a creative curriculum and partnership working with the Children In Care Council.