

Children in Care engagement in education

Impact of the Department
for Education (Dfe) Post 16
Pupil Premium Pilot

February 2023

Table of contents

- Overview of the Post 16 Pupil Premium Pilot 2021-2022..... 3
- The role of the Virtual School..... 3
- Education, employment and training opportunities 4
- Cohort characteristics 4
- Implementation of the Post 16 Pupil Premium Pilot 5
- Allocation of funding 6
- Outcomes of the Post 16 Pupil Premium Pilot and next steps 8

The Post 16 Pupil Premium Pilot 2021-2022

In July 2021, the Department for Education (DfE) invited local authorities to submit an Expression of Interest to participate in a Post 16 Pupil Premium Pilot. The pilot would run from October 2021 to March 2022 with the aim to test the extension of financial support to looked after children and care leavers in general further education (FE). Through this work, the DfE aimed to build an evidence base to inform any further support for this cohort. The proposed outcomes of the pilot were to:

- raise the profile of children in care and care leavers by strengthening close working relationships and sharing expertise on the needs of this cohort;
- Improve the attendance of these young people in FE by putting in place tailored interventions to support attendance;
- Better support the delivery of Personal Education Plans, pathway plans or equivalent at both an individual and cohort level;
- Identify models of good practice used by LAs across the country to respond to individual and cohort needs.

In early September 2021, Lincolnshire Virtual School received confirmation of an invitation to participate in the pilot alongside 29 other Local Authorities following a successful expression of interest.

The role of the Virtual School

The role of the Virtual School is to promote the educational achievement of young people in care aged 3-18 years. Whether educated in Lincolnshire or placed out of the authority, the Virtual School Team works to support our young people to fulfil their potential and access opportunities on the same basis as their non care experienced peers. Each young person has an allocated Virtual School Education Progress Co-ordinator. As education advocates, the team supports our children and young people on a case work basis, endeavouring to build strong relationships and to develop the confidence, self-esteem, and resilience of our students. In addition, the Virtual School ensures that each young person has an up to date, effective and high-quality Personal Education Plan (PEP) that focuses on the improvement of educational outcomes. The PEP has a focus on how to best support the young person to access, sustain engagement and make progress in their identified educational setting. PEPs are reviewed on a termly basis for all young people and involve the young person, education setting, care, Social Worker, Independent Reviewing Officer, and any other relevant professionals.

Providing support and challenge that encourages high aspirations and individual achievement, with a minimum of disruption, is central to improving immediate and long-term outcomes for young people in our care. In addition, the Virtual School ensures that social workers, designated teachers and education settings, carers, and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) understand their role and responsibilities for initiating, developing, reviewing, and updating each young person's PEP.

Education, employment and training opportunities for Post 16 students

Under current legislation, young people are required to continue in education, employment or training until they are 18. There is a range of Post 16 provision available to young people once they have finished their statutory schooling:

- Full time study at school, college or training provider. Enrolment is normally at the start of an academic year with limited opportunities to join or move courses mid-year.
- An apprenticeship, traineeship or supported internship which provide on-the-job training and accompanying study.
- Full time employment or volunteering combined with part-time study or training.

Some young people may require additional support to enable them to be ready for full time study or employment. Within Lincolnshire there is a range of opportunities to equip young people with the skills and confidence to progress to full time college courses or employment which include:

- Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service Work Preparation Course which leads to work experience opportunities;
- Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service Mentoring programme;
- Young People's Learning Provision (YPLP) which offers alternative education opportunities in small nurturing groups. Young people can enrol at any time throughout the year;
- Training providers who offer short courses to improve young people's skills and enhance their chances of success in the job market.

Cohort characteristics

In September 2021, at the start of the Post 16 Pupil Premium pilot, there were 159 young people in the care of Lincolnshire in the post 16 cohort, 60% of whom were male and 40% female. 17.6% of the cohort were Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) who presented in Lincolnshire as a 'spontaneous arrival' or through the mandated National Transfer Scheme (NTS). Most of these young people have accessed very little education in their countries of birth and arrive in the UK with minimal understanding or use of English. ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) courses are the most appropriate educational provision for these young people which are offered by local colleges and training providers. Young people can progress through beginner to advanced levels which will provide them with the essential language skills to communicate and to access mainstream college courses.

Personal Education Plans completed during the Autumn Term 2021 identified the following employment, education, or training provision that each young person was accessing at the time of their PEP meeting.

Type of Provision	Number of young people accessing	Percentage of cohort
Mainstream secondary school	7	4%
College	66	42%
Special School	6	4%
Independent Special School	8	5%
Post 16 learning provision	29	18%
Apprenticeship	1	1%
Home Tuition	2	1%
Young Offenders Institute	2	1%
Part-time or full time employment (without training)	7	4%
NEET/Not currently attached to a setting	31	19%

The young people not engaged in any employment, education, or training opportunities (NEET) at the time of their PEP included 2 young people who had EHC plans and were awaiting offers of places through the SEND statutory process, 3 young people who had recently moved placements and were looking for provision in their new local area and 4 UASC who had only just moved into Lincolnshire. Of the remaining group, some of the young people were actively seeking employment whilst others were being encouraged to explore education or training options. Barriers to engaging in education included significant mental health difficulties and changes to personal circumstances which the young person felt they needed to prioritise over education at that time.

Implementation of the Post 16 Pupil Premium Pilot

Building on the foundations of existing effective practice in allocating Pupil Premium for statutory school aged children, it was agreed to use the Personal Education Plan process to identify individual needs to support our young people in accessing and attending education, employment, and training opportunities. An initial information briefing was attended by Children's Services colleagues, Lincolnshire Post 16 providers and semi-supported accommodation providers. An overview of the pilot was shared, and attendees were asked to identify how additional funding could impact our young people in care to promote the outcomes of the pilot.

Potential barriers to young people engaging in Post 16 provision where attendees felt that additional funding would be of benefit included the cost and availability of public transport to promote independence in travelling to and from settings, lack of incentives to encourage regular attendance particularly for those young people in semi-supported accommodation who were having to learn to budget and develop independent living skills and availability of resources to promote raising self-confidence and self-esteem.

Following the briefing, individual meetings were held with the FE colleges and training providers who had a high number of our children on role, to consider how any additional

funding may support them strategically. Although there appeared to be good support for our students through the Post 16 bursaries and universal provision, the settings identified the following areas of need for additional funding:

- Enhanced pastoral support for our children in care;
- Enhanced Designated Teacher support to promote effective Personal Education Plans and communication sharing;
- Trauma informed training for all college staff;
- Extra-curricular activities and additional ESOL provision for our young people who are unaccompanied asylum seekers.

The providers were then asked to submit a funding request, highlighting how additional funding could be used to raise the profile of our children in care, promote attendance and attainment and ensure holistic support based on the needs of their cohort.

The PEP template for Post 16 students was adapted to enable professionals to request funding for individual students and all local training providers and colleges were set up as suppliers on the LCC finance system to ensure that funding requests for individual young people could be met in a timely way.

To enhance the Caring2Learn offer to post 16 settings, we identified excellent practice for children in care and care leavers as part of the academic and pastoral support offered by a local FE college. Funding was allocated to the college to enhance the Designated Lead's working hours in order for her to take on the role of Post 16 Education Champion. This enabled partnership working on the following areas:

- Reviewing the Caring Schools Award toolkit and producing a bespoke toolkit for use in Post 16 settings and colleges
- Reviewing the Caring2Learn training and development workshops and developing a bespoke training offer for Post 16 settings and colleges
- Developing the Post 16 Education Champion role to offer additional guidance, advice and support to other settings around good practice and support for children in care and care leavers

A bespoke training pathway offer has been designed to meet the needs of Post 16 settings and this is currently being trialled with another local FE college who have identified Professional Development Training Days for both academic and pastoral support staff. Once these have been completed impact evaluations will take place on an ongoing basis. The plan is to roll this training out across further colleges from April 2023.

Allocation of funding

Lincolnshire Virtual School was allocated **£124,200** based on the information provided in the expression of interest. This was distributed to post 16 settings and Social Care teams to cover the costs of purchases for individual young people, with a proportion of the funding contributing to the staffing costs of the Virtual School co-ordinators and development of the

ePEP system. Some resources for young people were also directly purchased by the Virtual School.

Post 16 Pupil Premium Pilot: Allocation of Funding	
Went directly to FE colleges and post 16 settings with high numbers of children in care on roll to	£54,380
Used to purchase resources and interventions for young people identified through PEP process.	£34,420
Additional support for students including PEP development and training delivery	£35,400
Total	£124,200

The funding allocated directly to FE colleges and post 16 settings enabled them to better support our children in care through:

- Providing enhanced support through pastoral teams and Designated Leads, enabling our young people to have increased access to key staff.
- Increasing training opportunities for all staff to promote their understanding of the potential impact of trauma and how best to support our vulnerable students
- Developing sports-based activities to promote our students’ self-confidence, self-esteem and peer relationships
- Providing additional ESOL sessions to enable our UASC students to accelerate their learning in order to access a wider range of college courses
- Enhance information sharing through the PEP process to ensure appropriate interventions are in place to support attendance, engagement, progress and attainment.

Through the PEP process, a wide range of resources were identified for individual young people to support them in their studies, to promote their re-engagement in learning/training or support their preparation for employment. Some examples of the support provided through the Post 16 Pupil Premium funding include:

- Additional tuition to help young people prepare for their GCSE resits.
- A contribution towards driving lessons e.g., for a young person on an apprenticeship with a construction company to increase his employment possibilities once his apprenticeship had ended.
- Functional skills on-line learning courses for young people who had not achieved English and Maths qualifications at the end of Year 11 but were not emotionally ready to attend group learning at a post 16 setting.
- Suitable clothing to enable young people to participate in work experience as part of their college courses.
- Suitable clothing to attend college and job interviews.
- Laptops to support completion of college work.

- Bicycles and bus passes to promote young people’s independence and attendance at college, training courses and work experience.
- Improved Wi-Fi to enable a young person to complete their college work in their home.
- Resources to enable young people to participate in their college course e.g., barbering equipment, tools for plumbing, hair and beauty resources.

Outcomes of the Post 16 Pupil Premium Pilot and next steps

Lincolnshire Virtual School staff, nominated social workers, College leads and foster carers took part in the Rees Centre evaluation study commissioned by the DfE. The recently published ‘Phase one evaluation of the Virtual School Head’s extension to duties to children with a social worker and the post 16 Pupil Premium pilot’ (See Appendix B) provides an overview of the key findings from all the local authorities that participated:

Page 11:

“Raising the profile of children looked after (CLA)/ care leavers (CLs) in FE by strengthening close working relationships

The profile of CLA/CLs in FE has been raised in most pilots as evidenced by the accounts of DCSSs, VSHs, FE Leads and some Social Workers (SWs). Close working relationships have been strengthened between the VS and colleges, SWs and the VS and colleges and SWs, not least through the significant increase in training provided by the VS. There is more progress to be made on how these relationships play out, in particular in the PEP process. The respective responsibilities of VSHs, SWs and FE Leads within the PEP process could be clearer, with some confusion perhaps reflecting different practices across LAs. Extension of the pilot would create more time and space for engaging FCs and young people more effectively in the PEP process.

Improving the attendance of young people in FE

Attendance emerged as a key focus across the sites in the implementation of the pilot with monitoring post-16 attendance presenting challenges. Both LAs and colleges reported further development of their data systems for monitoring attendance. Interventions aimed at supporting attendance included funding equipment and transport. CLA/CLs’ sustained motivation to attend could be improved by enhancing their college experience through help with relationships, study skills and, for some CLs, addressing the challenges of independent or semi-independent living. Enrichment opportunities were reported from across the sites, these aimed to raise CLA/CLs’ self-esteem and confidence thus increasing attendance and retention.

Better supporting the delivery of Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

PEPs were a major focus of the training provided by VSHs in the pilot, to both FE college staff and SWs. For SWs, this has been about increasing the focus on education in the PEPs and producing clear educational targets. Attendance at PEP review meetings by some SWs varied within, rather than between, LAs as did effectively engaging the FCs and young people. FE

Leads usually felt well supported by the VS but when having to deal with PEPs from multiple LAs, found the process and variations in format very challenging and time-consuming, reducing the time they could spend directly supporting CLA/CLs.”

Due to the pilot ending in March 2022, midway through the academic year, end of year outcomes for young people cannot be attributed solely to the pilot. Every young person up to the age of 18 continued to receive termly PEPs and the funding provided to colleges enabled the enhanced provision to continue until the end of the academic year. Consideration should also be given to the difficulties in providing end of year data for Year 13 students as the Virtual School involvement ends when the young person turns 18.

Highlights from our PEP data include:

- The number of Year 12 students on roll at FE colleges remained stable throughout the academic year.
- Two students who left their post 16 settings moved onto a college course.
- Two students who left college continued to access education at an alternative Post 16 setting.
- The number of students securing a place at a college for the next academic year rose to 50. Of these, 22 students progressed onto their second year at college and 6 students started at college having previously attended post 16 alternative provision.
- For those young people not engaging in employment, education or training opportunities, their termly PEPs evidence discussions about the potential barriers to them re-engaging, suggestions of appropriate local opportunities and the support the young person may require to access.

The college that has the majority of our UASC students on roll reported that the extra ESOL sessions and sports sessions had a positive impact on the young people’s attendance and attainment, resulting in many of the students making accelerated progress in acquiring the necessary English skills to enable them to access universal courses.

As a result of the pilot, a training pathway has now been developed for Post 16 providers which raises staff’s awareness of the potential impact of trauma and best practice in meeting the needs of our children in care. The identified Education Champion provides mentor support and share good practice with professionals in other colleges.

A Post 16 page has been added to all Year 11 PEPs to strengthen the focus on transition planning into further education. This summarises the progress in securing post 16 educational provisions throughout the year and details visits to college open days, interviews and offers of places.

Termly discussions take place with the Virtual School and Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service EET team to identify young people who may have the necessary qualifications to progress

onto the Care Leavers Apprenticeship or who would benefit from attending the Work Preparation Course and work experience opportunities. This ensures a smooth transition of support in sustaining engagement in education, employment and training as the young people leave care.

'Phase one evaluation of the Virtual School Head's extension of duties to children with a social worker and the post-16 Pupil Premium pilot' outlines the following recommendations for DfE:

Page 14

- **The DfE should commission longer-term evaluation** to test the validity of, and the potential impact of adopting, the recommendations that have emerged from this initial study as detailed below:
 - o **State clearly the business data needs of the VS/LA** to enable VSs to undertake their role (and remain compliant with the Data Protection Act) in mediating access for FE Leads to secondary school data to enhance planning in the colleges.
- **Clarify the data needs and reporting structures for NEET/EET** status of CLA/CLs which are currently overly complicated.
- **Extend the PP+ post-16 pilot to all LAs** giving all CLA/CLs the same entitlement to support and clarify funding and support arrangements for those in one LA attending a college in another.
- **Extend the funding calculation beyond those in FE colleges** to focus more broadly on post-16 provision allowing funding to support CLA/CLs in Years 12 and 13 of schools and employment schemes (e.g., apprenticeships).
- **Extend the funding beyond 18** for CLA/CLs still or newly engaged in education and training. This should be discretionary for those returning to education/training after 18.
- **Make the FE Lead in colleges statutory** since the DT role in schools is statutory and mirror the statutory guidance to DTs, which would give FE Leads greater status and thereby possibly a more realistic time allocation.
- **Produce statutory guidance** for colleges on meeting the needs of CLA/CLs, echoing that already produced for higher education. This should further clarify how PP+ funding is spent on CLs who attend colleges out of the LA, including in non-pilot authorities.

In July 2022, the Lincolnshire Virtual School was advised that the Post 16 Pupil Premium pilot had been extended for another year with an increased number of local authorities participating. This has provided additional funding to continue to support our young people in care in FE colleges until 31 July 2023.