



Department  
for Education

# **Phase one evaluation of the virtual school head's extension of duties to children with a social worker and the post-16 pupil premium plus pilot**

**Research report**

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**Professor Judy Sebba, Dr Andrew Brown, Dr Tracey Denton-Calabrese, Dr Neil Harrison, Dr Nikki Luke, Dr Mariela Neagu, Dr Alun Rees  
Rees Centre, Department of Education, University of Oxford**



Government  
Social Research

## Glossary

Overall number of Children with a Social Worker

Small less than 4,000      Medium 4,001-9,000      Large more than 9,000

Rate of Children with a Social Worker per 10,000 children

Small less than 400      Medium 401-800      Large more than 800

AD	Assistant Director
ADCS	Association of Directors of Children's Services
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CIN	Children in Need [used here just for those children on CIN plans]
CL	Care Leaver
CLA	Children Looked After
CME	Children Missing Education
CP	Child Protection
CPP	Child Protection Plan
CSC	Children's Social Care
CWSW	Children with a Social Worker
DCS	Director Children's Services
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead
DT	Designated Teacher
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EET	Education, Employment or Training
EHCP	Education, Health, and Care Plan
EHE	Elective Home Education

Eol	Expressions of Interest
ESOL	English to Speakers of Other Languages
Ever6 FSM	Eligible for Free School Meals any time in previous 6 Years
FE	Further Education
FC	Foster Carer
FSM	Free School Meals
LA	Local Authority
MAT	Multi-Academy Trust
NAVSH	National Association of Virtual School Heads
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
PA	Personal Advisor
PAb	Persistent Absence
PEP	Personal Education Plan
PLAC	Previously Looked After Children
PP+	Pupil Premium Plus
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SW	Social Worker
SWIS	Social Workers in Schools
VS	Virtual School
VSH	Virtual School Head

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Judy Sebba, Andrew Brown, Tracey Denton-Calabrese, Neil Harrison, Nikki Luke, Mariela Neagu, Alun Rees

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Rees Centre, Department of Education,

University of Oxford

# Executive Summary

## Background

From September 2021, the role of the Virtual School Head (VSH) was extended to include all children who have or have had a social worker including children in need (CIN), and those subject to child protection plans (CPP). Funding was allocated to VSHs in every local authority (LA) until 31 March 2022. The objectives were to ensure that there would be a local champion for children with a social worker (CWSW) in the Virtual School (VS) in every LA in England, increase the profile of CWSW in schools and promote the educational needs of CWSW in children's social care, target strategic support earlier for CWSW and provide strategic leadership, "to create a culture of high aspirations that helps all children with a social worker to make educational progress"<sup>1</sup>.

From October 2021, the Government also introduced a pilot in 30 LAs to support 16-18-year-old children looked-after (CLA) and care leavers (CLs) in general Further Education (FE) colleges through the extension of pupil premium plus (PP+) funding to post-16. This was allocated to VSHs in 30 pilot local authorities for six months until 31 March 2022. The proposed outcomes of the pilot<sup>2</sup> were to raise the profile of CLA and CLs in FE by strengthening close working relationships, improve their attendance, better support the delivery of Personal Education Plans (PEPs), Pathway Plans or equivalent and identify models of good practice.

The Rees Centre was commissioned to undertake the evaluation of these two programmes. The evaluation covered the initial stage – the first six months of each programme. The VSH extended duties programme has been extended since the evaluation was completed.

## Methodology

The evaluation approach taken aimed to identify what works, for whom, to what extent and under what conditions. Mixed methods were used in the evaluation including Theory of Change<sup>3</sup> workshops, surveys, case studies that included interviews with a wide range of stakeholders and documentary analysis. Findings from these different sources were brought together to provide as robust an evaluation as possible in this initial phase of the programmes.

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<sup>1</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/994028/Promoting\\_the\\_education\\_of\\_children\\_with\\_a\\_social\\_worker.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/994028/Promoting_the_education_of_children_with_a_social_worker.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> These objectives are taken from the guidance to applicants for the pilot [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/997952/PP+\\_post-16\\_pilot\\_application\\_guide\\_July-2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/997952/PP+_post-16_pilot_application_guide_July-2021.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> A theory of change explains how the activities undertaken by an intervention (such as a project, programme or policy) contribute to a chain of results that lead to the intended or observed impacts.

For the evaluation of the extension duties to CWSW and Post-16 Pupil Premium Plus Pilot, four Theory of Change workshops were held with between seven and nine VSHs to identify their expectations of short, medium and long-term outcomes. Two surveys were conducted nationally with all VSHs about both programmes, one in October 2021 (with a response rate of 76% including 28 of the PP+ post-16 pilots) and the second in March 2022 (with a response rate of 82% including 27 of the PP+ post-16 pilots).

Thirteen LAs were selected to participate as case studies and 174 people from these LAs were interviewed online including VSHs, Directors of Children's Services (DCSs), Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) and Designated Teachers (DTs), Social Workers (SWs), FE Leads, Foster Carers (FCs), parents and LA data managers. Some LAs provided documents such as action plans, briefings and guides which were also analysed. For the evaluation of the PP+ post-16 pilot, the successful Expressions of Interest to the DfE were also analysed as were seven PEPs.

## **Findings related to the extension of VSH duties to CWSW**

### **Establishing a local education champion for CWSW in every LA**

LAs reported having enhanced staffing capacity, invested in data collection and access to better understand the cohort and its needs, and/or provided training to raise the awareness of school staff and SWs. However, the six month and one year funding announcements, with a short lead-in time, was reported by VSHs and DCSs to limit progress towards this objective particularly in relation to recruitment difficulties. The absence of statutory guidance relating to the extension of duties to the VSH was widely acknowledged by VSHs as limiting the potential impact of the extension of duties.

### **Providing strategic leadership to ensure greater focus on CWSW, targeting support earlier**

VSHs accepted the strategic nature of the role which led them to focus on empowering SWs and DSLs to address individual needs. Extensive activities to raise the profile of CWSW and of the VS were reported, indicating progress towards one of the key strategic outcomes identified in the Theory of Change. These activities also contributed to the VSHs' influence, enabling leverage of other services that can support CWSW including children's social care (CSC), Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Youth Justice. Some schools struggled to provide the support for CWSW due to resource constraints and noted that while a significant number of CWSW were eligible for pupil premium funding, many were not.

## **Creating a culture of high aspirations that helps all CWSWs to make educational progress**

The inconsistent availability of data on CWSW in many LAs, may reflect a previous lack of focus on their educational needs. The pandemic highlighted issues about attendance data stimulating some LAs to begin to draw together CSC and educational data, but the extension of duties galvanised more LAs to go further in seeking more robust data on the education of CWSW. While this has yet to transform the expectations for this group of children, it was a key mechanism for improvement identified in the Theory of Change. More VSs were making effective use of data on attendance and exclusions to identify CWSW most at risk of poor attendance, suspensions and exclusions and encouraging other services to intervene with support. VSHs, supported by DCS/ADs, have also begun to raise the confidence of SWs to intervene in schools which, in time, should deliver more effective advocacy and be reflected in better outcomes for CWSW.

## **Findings related to the PP+ post-16 pilot**

### **Raising the profile of CLA/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 DCSs, VSHs, FE Leads and some 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.

## Identifying models of good practice used by LAs across the country

The evaluation of the pilot has identified perceived models of good practice in implementing the PP+ post-16. Survey 2 invited VSHs to describe what they considered to be models of good practice, and these are reported in section 4.5. They are further exemplified from the interview data reported in the case studies.

## Recommendations related to CWSW

These recommendations have emerged from the feedback from a wide range of relevant stakeholders during this initial phase of the evaluation of the extended duties.

### Recommendations for DfE

- **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:
  - **Longer-term funding commitment** needed from DfE to enable a) quality, continuity and stability of staffing; b) LAs' investment in data; c) LAs' (via schools and MATs) investment in intervention/support programmes.
  - **Make the CWSW VSH duties statutory** as they are for CLA and PLAC to strengthen the profile, commitment, and longer-term investment. The role will also need further clarification through guidance.
  - **Any future statutory guidance should focus sharply on the strategic role of the VSH** in raising awareness and expertise of schools to meet the needs of CWSW in their LA, and of SWs to advocate effectively for CWSW in all educational settings.
  - Ensure that **Ofsted inspection guidance highlights CWSW** and links their outcomes to any safeguarding judgement.

- **Extend Pupil Premium to all CWSW<sup>4</sup>** to strengthen the profile, commitment and longer-term investment in CWSW.
- **State clearly the business data needs of the LA** so that schools must share the data necessary to enable VSHs to undertake their role while remaining compliant with the Data Protection Act.
- **Revise the social work training curriculum to ensure the importance of learning as a protective factor** is clear to all newly qualified SWs.
- **Revise guidance on child in need plans and child protection plans** to ensure that the importance of learning as a protective factor is explicitly addressed and that plans reference the views of the child.
- **The DfE should facilitate the next stage of evaluation by:**
  - **Consulting with NAVSH at regional and national level** to agree on what cohort level data is needed to best monitor the impact of VSHs' strategic role with respect to CWSW during the next period of evaluation.
  - **Defining 'Ever' CWSW as Ever6 CWSW** so a clear dataset limited to 6 years can be created and monitored locally and nationally.
  - **Facilitating local and national evaluation of impact by adding a CWSW 'flag'** to existing data collection/supply so that timely local and national data are available from schools.

## Recommendations for VSHs/LAs

- DCSs/ADs to ensure that professionals working with CWSW **minimise disruption to lesson times** by seeing them outside lessons or by reducing the number of visits per day or week. VSH to facilitate the sharing across services of effective school policies and sensitive SWs practices on this.
- LAs should ensure **there is appropriate governance in place** to provide support for, and scrutiny of, the work of the VSH in relation to the extension of their duties.
- Regional VSHs groups to **share models of good practice** on implementing the extension duties and share these with Ofsted.
- VSHs to **prioritise understanding the protective value of education for CWSW** and ways in which their educational needs can be better met in their training and work with SWs, DSLs and other services.

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<sup>4</sup> 35% are currently ineligible (though this varies with age and CIN/CP). CPAG (2020) <https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/two-five-uk-children-under-poverty-line-are-not-eligible-free-school-meals> notes 1.2m children living in poverty are not eligible for FSMs

- VSHs to **document evidence on local progress** made towards achieving the short-term, interim and long-term outcomes identified in the Theory of Change for the programme.

## Recommendations related to the PP+ post-16 pilot

These recommendations have emerged from the feedback from a wide range of relevant stakeholders during this initial phase of the evaluation of the PP+ post-16 pilot.

### Recommendations for DfE

- **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:
  - **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.

## Recommendations for VSHs

- Regional VSHs to develop **greater consistency in PEP formats**, procedures, and eligibility. This would improve efficiency of FE Leads who find the current differences challenging and time-consuming and be helpful to partner services such as youth justice.
- Regional VSHs groups (and VSH peer reviews) to **share models of good practice** on implementing the PP+ post-16 and share these with Ofsted.
- VSHs to continue their **training and work with SWs** on understanding the protective value of post-16 education to CLA/CLs, the educational needs of post-16 CLA/CLs and improving the PEP process.
- VSHs to provide more **guidance for FCs** on the support available for CLA post-16.
- VSHs to **document evidence on local progress** made towards achieving the short-term, interim, and long-term outcomes identified in the Theory of Change for the programme.

## Recommendations related to future evaluation

These recommendations are for the evaluation team in discussion with DfE. Any longer-term evaluation should:

- **Start from the outcomes reported above** proposed in the two Theory of change outputs developed by the VSHs.
- Consider employing a quasi-experimental approach to analyse data on CWSW from the national datasets (e.g., NPD), **undertaking comparisons with children who are eligible for Ever6 FSM but not CWSW**.
- **Work with DfE to create clearer definitions** of the characteristics of the cohorts (e.g., Ever CWSW) to ensure that participants in the evaluation share common definitions.
- **Undertake annual online surveys of all VSHs** repeating key questions from the first stage to enable comparisons over time and capture important metrics not included in the national datasets, including spend on the programmes and education focus in CIN/CP plans. Multiple-choice questions on implementation and impacts should be used as much as possible to decrease the burden on respondents.
- **Interview annually the 13 VSHs** from the first stage evaluation to provide more detail on impact, and enable progress, barriers and facilitators to be identified over time.



- **Undertake case studies in a small number of LAs** to provide a deep dive to complement the secondary data analysis and surveys. Where possible, these should be drawn from those in the first stage evaluation and include interviews with the same people to maximise assessment of progress over time.
- Explore the options and ethical requirements for **collecting the perceptions of CWSW** through existing surveys, consultations or Children in Care Councils (85% of the members having been CIN) in the case study LAs.

# 1. Background

This report covers the evaluation of two DfE programmes, the extension of duties to children with a social worker (CWSW) and the pilot of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) to children looked-after (CLA) aged 16-18 years and care leavers (CL) in Further Education (FE) colleges. The evaluation covered the initial stage – the first six months of each programme. The VSH extended duties programme has been extended since the evaluation was completed.

## 1.1 Objectives of the extension of duties to CWSW

On 16th June 2021 it was announced<sup>5</sup> that the role of the Virtual School Head (VSH) would be extended to further include all children who have or have had a social worker including children in need (CIN), and those subject to child protection plans (CPP). Funding was allocated to VSHs in every local authority (LA) and ran from 1 September 2021 to 31 March 2022. The objectives were to:

- ensure that there would be a local champion for CWSW in the Virtual School (VS) in every LA in England
- increase the profile of CWSW in schools and children’s social care (CSC) and the awareness of the role of the Virtual School (VS) in supporting them
- target strategic support earlier for CWSW to help improve their engagement in education
- provide strategic leadership, “to create a culture of high aspirations that helps all CWSW to make educational progress”<sup>6</sup>, in contrast to the VSHs’ existing role with children looked after (CLA), which includes targeted support for individual children

## 1.2 Objectives of the evaluation of the extension of duties to CWSW

The Rees Centre, University of Oxford was commissioned by DfE to evaluate the implementation of the extension duties with the objectives of understanding:

- how the funding was being used, how the extended VSH role had been implemented and how LAs and education providers have responded to it

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<sup>5</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/news/16-million-to-support-young-people-with-a-social-worker>

<sup>6</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/994028/Promoting\\_the\\_education\\_of\\_children\\_with\\_a\\_social\\_worker.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/994028/Promoting_the_education_of_children_with_a_social_worker.pdf)

- the difficulties and barriers VSHs had encountered in setting up and delivering their extended responsibilities
- any early benefits of the extended VSH role
- the differences between the extended VSH role and their previous role

In addition, the evaluation would:

- assess the feasibility and potential options for continuation of the VSH extension.
- use the learning to help inform policy thinking on whether the extended VSH role should be made statutory
- develop an approach and methodology to measure the longer-term impact of the VSH role extension

### 1.3 Objectives of the PP+ post-16 pilot

In June 2021, the Government also announced a pilot to support 16-18-year-old CLA and CLs in general FE colleges through the extension of PP+ funding to post-16. This was allocated to VSHs in 30 pilot local authorities and ran from 4 October 2021 to 31 March 2022. The proposed outcomes of the pilot<sup>7</sup> were to:

- raise the profile of CLA and CLs in FE 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 (PEPs), Pathway Plans or equivalent at both an individual and cohort level
- identify models of good practice used by LAs across the country

The funding provided to each of the 30 LAs in the pilot was based on the number of CLA and CLs in that LA's Virtual School (VS) who were attending a general FE college in years 12 and 13 in the 2021/22 academic year. The allocation was £900 per pupil, less than half the £2,345/pupil<sup>8</sup> PP+ for pre-16 year-olds, and the amount received by the 30 LAs ranged from £30,000 to £306,000 depending on their numbers of eligible pupils. However, the guidance to applicants did state:

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<sup>7</sup> These objectives are taken from the guidance to applicants for the pilot [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/997952/PP+\\_post-16\\_pilot\\_application\\_guide\\_July-2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/997952/PP+_post-16_pilot_application_guide_July-2021.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> PP+ for pre-16 year olds was £2345 in FY 21/22 at the time of the pilot, increased to £2,410 in FY 22/23

VSHs in pilot site LAs will have the flexibility to use the funding as they see best to support other cohorts in wider post-16 settings, or those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)

though DfE funding was not specifically provided to these 'other cohorts'.

## 1.4 Objectives of the evaluation of the PP+ post-16 pilot

The Rees Centre was commissioned to evaluate the initial pilot and to build an evidence base about what worked, how and under what conditions. It was intended that the findings from the evaluation would inform decisions about the feasibility of continuation of the support. The specification for the evaluation of the PP+ post-16 pilot stated that the objectives were to:

- understand how the PP+ post-16 pilot has been implemented and how LAs and education providers have responded to it
- identify any difficulties or facilitators that VSHs have encountered in setting up and delivering their responsibilities
- explore how selected LAs have used PP+ post-16 pilot funding and explore early impacts or effects of this funding, comparing it to LAs that did not receive it

## 1.5 Previous evidence about the educational outcomes for CWSW

England introduced Virtual Schools as a pilot in 2007 to support the education of CLA. Following an evaluation of the pilot in 2009<sup>9</sup>, the role became statutory in 2014. In 2018, the role was extended to supporting the education of children previously looked after (adopted) and those subject to a Special Guardianship Order. For these two cohorts of children, the LA was not the corporate parent, so funding associated with the role was allocated directly to schools. As far as we are aware, outside England, the VSH role only exists in Victoria, Australia and Scotland, both these areas having modelled their service on the English experience. Aberdeen City was the first place to have a VSH in Scotland in 2015, and there are currently 19 (of 32 LAs) VSHs covering 76% of Scottish CLA. CELCIS, University of Strathclyde, is undertaking research comparing the role in Scotland and England. Wales is currently moving in a similar direction following the recommendations of the Macdonald Report<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Berridge, D. (2009) Looked after and learning: Evaluation of the Virtual School Head pilot. London: DfE

<sup>10</sup> Macdonald, A. (2020) An integrated approach to improving educational outcomes for looked after children in Wales. Cardiff: Welsh Government

The CIN review<sup>11</sup> published in June 2019 found that at least 1.6 million children needed a social worker (SW) between 2012/13 and 2017/18, this equating to around 1 in 10 children overall or an average of 3 children in every classroom that have (or had) a SW in the previous 6 years. Research by the Universities of Bristol and Oxford<sup>12</sup> on the education of CIN found that 1 in 7 children in school had a social worker at some time over the 11 years of the analysis. This was more than the 1 in 10 identified in the CIN review due to the longer timeframe in that analysis. These children had lower attainment at each Key Stage of schooling than children who had never needed a SW.

The Independent Review of Children's Care<sup>13</sup> quoted the Bristol/Oxford research in stating that Key Stage (KS)4 attainment was 34% lower for a child on a CIN plan, 46% lower for a child on a CPP and 53% lower for a CLA, when compared to children with no social work interventions during the school years. Through the analysis of national datasets and in-depth interviews with VSHs<sup>14</sup>, CLA, CIN, their teachers, SWs, parents and FCs, the Bristol/Oxford study identified some of the factors contributing to these poorer outcomes.

A substantial component of the relatively low attainment at age 16 of pupils who had ever been CIN or CLA was accounted for by information available at age 7: the child's attainment, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This suggested that broader forms of disadvantage, which were more prevalent in these groups than in other children, had a lasting effect on children's educational attainments throughout their schooling. The study recommended raising the profile of the CIN group within schools and extending the role of VSHs to include CIN. This previous research informed the design of this evaluation.

## 1.6 Previous evidence about post-16 CLA/CLs

The role of FE for CLA/CLs has received very little research attention to date in England<sup>15</sup>. A forthcoming study, led by the Rees Centre and focusing on CLs' transitions into the labour market, will be reporting in October 2022<sup>16</sup>. It examined the relationships between experiences of care, compulsory education, post-16 education/training routes, and outcomes at 21. Emerging findings from secondary quantitative analysis of linked datasets demonstrated a strong correlation between overall KS4 attainment for CLs and

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<sup>11</sup> [Review of children in need - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/811111/Review_of_children_in_need_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk).pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Berridge, D., Luke, N., Sebba, J., Strand, S., Cartwright, M., Staples, E., McGrath-Lone, L., Ward, J., & O'Higgins, A. (2020). Children in need and children in care: educational attainment and progress. Final Report to the Nuffield Foundation

<sup>13</sup> MacAlister, J. (2022) The Independent Review of Children's Social Care. <https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk>

<sup>14</sup> Sebba, J. and Berridge, D. (2019) The role of the Virtual School in supporting improved educational outcomes for children in care. *Oxford Review of Education* 45(4), 538-555.

<sup>15</sup> There has historically been more focus in Scotland – e.g. [https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/35857/10/SFC\\_Care\\_Leavers\\_in\\_Further\\_Education\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/35857/10/SFC_Care_Leavers_in_Further_Education_Final_Report.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.education.ox.ac.uk/research/care-leavers-employability-in-england>

their propensity to move into post-16 education/training, as well as the type and level of study. This KS4 attainment was then strongly related to becoming NEET, which was substantially more common among CLs, particularly due to disability (especially mental health issues<sup>17</sup>) and caring responsibilities.

Reflecting their lower attainment, CLs were 'heavy users' of FE relative to other young people. Importantly, they were found to have experienced substantially more disruptions and challenges during their compulsory schooling – for example, they were more likely to have changed school or to have been persistently absent (e.g., for health reasons). Interviews with CLs described how these factors delayed their learning and reduced their KS4 attainment, limiting their post-16 options – maths and English were particularly salient in this regard. While FE was used more frequently by CLs (than by their non-care experienced peers) because of their lower KS4 attainment, it was also found to provide an important later route back into learning once their personal circumstances (e.g., mental health) permitted<sup>18</sup>. This reinforces earlier research that points to delayed or punctuated transitions into adulthood<sup>19</sup>.

Access to post-16 education/training was also important for CLs' routes into higher education. They were substantially more likely than their peers to use pathways other than A Levels to gain entry to higher education<sup>20</sup>. These included vocational qualifications, work-based learning and access courses – all of which were predominantly offered through FE colleges. FE thus had both an intrinsic value for CLs and also was a stepping-stone into higher education.

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<sup>17</sup> Holmes, C., E. Murphy and K. Mayhew (2021) What accounts for changes in the chances of being NEET in the UK? *Journal of Education and Work*, 34(4): 389-413.

<sup>18</sup> Hanrahan, F., J. Boddy and C. Owen (2020) 'Actually there is a brain in there': uncovering complexity in pathways through education for young adults who have been in care, *Children & Society* 34(1): 46-61.

<sup>19</sup> e.g., Stein, M. (2012) *Young people leaving care: Supporting pathways to adulthood*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

<sup>20</sup> Harrison, N. (2020) Patterns of participation in higher education for care-experienced students in England: why has there not been more progress? *Studies in Higher Education* 45(9): 1986-2000.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1582014>.

## 2. Methodology

The approach taken was a realist, mixed methods evaluation which aimed to identify what works, for whom, to what extent and under what conditions. Mixed methods included Theory of Change<sup>21</sup> workshops, surveys, case studies that included interviews with a wide range of stakeholders and documentary analysis. Findings were triangulated to strengthen the ‘trustworthiness’ of the conclusions. Ethical clearance was provided by the University of Oxford.

### 2.1 Theory of Change workshops

We invited each of the nine English regions to nominate one VSH to attend each of two Theory of Change workshops, one focused on CWSW and one on PP+ post-16, to clarify their aims, objectives, and expectations for the two new initiatives. A second workshop was held for each group to complete the process of drafting the Theories of Change. These workshops explored the following topics:

- VSHs’ views on the short, medium, and long-term outcomes anticipated for each of the populations: (a) CWSW and (b) CLA/CLs in the PP+ post-16 pilot LAs, recognising that those LAs selected for that pilot were likely to have already explored some aspects of post-16 support or provision
- Options for measurement of these outcomes to be used in any further evaluation of both initiatives

The first CWSW workshop was attended by eight VSHs and one representative from the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) and the second by eight VSHs. The first PP+ post-16 workshop was attended by nine VSHs all drawn from the post-16 pilot LAs and one representative from ADCS, the second by seven VSHs, from the post-16 pilot LAs. The outputs from each group were circulated back to those who attended for comments and then to all VSHs nationally who were also invited to comment. Around 20 did so and their views were considered in the final drafting of the Theory of Change. The outputs presented in this report will be subject to further development in the next stage of any work that is commissioned.

### 2.2 Documentary analysis

Analysis was undertaken on documents received from VSHs by reviewing them and comparing the content with the objectives set out by DfE for the CWSW extension duties and for the PP+ post-16 pilot. Documentary analysis was completed on all 30 successful PP+ post-16 Expressions of Interest (EoI) submitted to the DfE for the pilot, using the DfE

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<sup>21</sup> A theory of change explains how the activities undertaken by an intervention (such as a project, programme or policy) contribute to a chain of results that lead to the intended or observed impacts.

headings provided in the application. The intentions set out in these bids were compared with the progress reported in Surveys 1 and 2 which were completed by 28 and 27 PP+ post-16 pilot LAs respectively and no significant mismatches were identified. Additional documents provided by LAs such as action plans for the extension duties, were drawn on in the text that describes activities and progress.

## 2.3 National surveys of VSHs

Two national surveys<sup>22</sup> to all VSHs were conducted, one in October 2021 and the other in March 2022. The timing of these was agreed with the National Association of VSHs (NAVSH) who kindly postponed their annual survey until December 2021 to reduce burdens on VSHs. The two surveys in Appendix 3 were attached as Microsoft Word documents to an e-mail and had an explanation about the purpose, reporting and ethical details including a consent form at the start.

Survey 1, circulated to all VSHs in mid-October 2021 requested information about their current situation and any challenges in data collection, access and use, and asked for some specific data on CWSW (including 'Ever' CWSW) and post-16 CLA/CLs. It also asked about any work that the VS was already doing with CWSW and with post-16 CLA/CLs when the initiatives started. In relation to CWSW, information was requested on how the VS expected their role to change (including time allocation of the VSH), staff appointed to meet the additional responsibilities, activities planned and undertaken including contact with schools and SWs, briefings and training offered, facilitators and barriers to implementation, contact with other services and governance. In relation to post-16 provision all VSHs were asked to state what provision, if any, they made for post-16 CLA/CLs before the pilot began and how this was funded and, for the pilot LAs only, whether their plans had changed from the EoI and what challenges they had encountered in implementation. Completed Survey 1s were returned over a protracted period of six weeks, ending at the start of December due to varied half term dates across LAs.

Survey 2 was circulated to all VSHs in March 2022. The information requested included progress in data collection, access and use, training and other activities for schools or colleges and SWs, working with other services, facilitators and barriers to implementation, governance and an overall assessment of their progress. In Survey 2, the post-16 section was addressed only to the 30 post-16 PP+ pilot LAs and asked about progress made and facilitators and barriers to implementation. For both initiatives, the respondents were asked to describe evidence of any early progress made against the Theory of Change outcomes (which were circulated with the survey) and to provide what

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<sup>22</sup> The blank surveys are provided in Appendix 3



in their view, were any examples of good practice developed in response to the initiatives. Completed Survey 2s were returned within three weeks of receipt.

## 2.4 Case studies in 13 LAs

From the Survey 1 responses, we selected 15 LAs to participate as case studies, ensuring a geographical spread (at least one from each region), and a range of size, urban/rural, and previous Ofsted judgements on children's services. We aimed to select at least five that were in the PP+ post -16 pilot and a few that were participating in the Social Workers in Schools Project (SWIS) because of the perceived overlap with the extension duties. From the survey we selected some LAs that we felt had reported promising practice on CWSW including on data, raising the awareness of CWSW, attendance, training or working with other services.

For PP+ post-16 pilots we selected VSHs that reported in Survey 1 that they were working closely with colleges, engaging CLA/CL in FE or improving attendance or PEPs. Many respondents reported interesting practices, and we were unable in the timescale to verify the activities of those we selected. We tried to identify activities that we thought other VSHs may find inspiring or supportive to their own developments.

Two of the 15 LAs invited were unable to participate due to re-structuring and lack of agreement from senior managers within the timeframe, but it was agreed that the remaining 13 would provide sufficient data. In each case study we invited a range of managers, professionals, FCs and parents to participate in interviews. Table 1 shows the numbers of each category of interviewee. All types of interviewees were included in each LA but eight LAs were unable to recruit parents and in two LAs, FCs. Data managers were not included in our initial list of interviewees, but from Survey 1, it was apparent that data was a significant area of interest, so we interviewed those whose LAs identified them as relevant contributors to implementation.

## 2.5 Data Analysis

Documentary analysis was undertaken by reviewing the documents and for the EoI and PEPs, generating categories (in the EoI using the DfE headings) and assigning responses to these. Additional documents provided by LAs were drawn on in the text that describes activities and progress.

In Survey 1, the quantitative analysis included 113 of the 116 (76%) LAs who responded. Two LAs' had very small numbers so were excluded and one survey covered two LAs but combined the data (which was treated as one LA in the analysis).

In Survey 2, the quantitative analysis included 120 returns covering the 124 (82%) LAs who responded, two LAs were excluded due to very small numbers and those VSHs who

cover more than one LA each returning one set of combined data (which was treated as one LA in the analysis).

The quantitative data collected in the surveys was analysed using SPSS to generate descriptive statistics on, for example, numbers of VSHs who had completed training activities with DSLs and SWs. The open-ended questions were analysed by using a deductive framework analysis approach with NVivo.

For the questions on data collection, access and use in the surveys and interviews, the following definitions were used in the analysis:

For CWSW

- *Data collection:* Collecting new items of information not previously collected (e.g., CWSW on PT timetables), or new ways of identifying CWSW in existing data (e.g., being able to single out CWSW from other children).
- *Data access:* New ways in which data already collected (by schools, LA or others) and separated out for CWSW, can be accessed by VS/schools/SWs or all of them. We also coded developments on matching CSC and education data as access as this requires bringing information together from different sources (e.g., attendance, exclusions and attainment of CWSW). Data sharing agreements that enable access are included here.
- *Data use:* Developments in what is done with the data to inform targeting of resources (funding and time), provision, intervention, etc.

For the PP+ post-16 pilot

- *Data collection:* Collecting new items of information not previously collected (e.g., college attendance), or new ways of identifying CLA/CLs in existing data.
- *Data access:* New ways in which data already collected (e.g., by colleges, or LAs) and separated out for CLA/CLs, can be accessed by VSs, colleges or SWs. Data sharing agreements that enable access are also included here.
- *Data use:* Developments in what is done with the data to inform targeting of resources (funding and time), provision and interventions.

Interviews were recorded (with interviewees' permission), transcribed, and coded in NVivo by four researchers. Codes were generated through the four researchers reading a sample of the same interviews and discussing the themes that emerged, with additional codes added when needed as the thematic analysis progressed.

The evidence used in this evaluation report is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Evidence base for the evaluation**

<b>Evaluation activity</b>	<b>Participants</b>
Four Theory of Change workshops	17 VSHs
Analysis of EoI for PP+ post-16 pilot	30 successful EoI
Survey 1	112 responses covering 116 LAs, 76%, including 28 of the 30 pilots
Survey 2	120 responses covering 124 LAs, 82%, including 27 of the 30 pilots
Case studies (9 post-16 pilots, 4 SWIS)	13 LAs - 106 interviews with 174 interviewees including:
Interviews	25 VSHs and Deputies/Leads CWSW/Post-16
	22 DCSs/ADs (Education, Social Care)
	28 DSLs/DTs in schools
	26 FE Leads <sup>23</sup>
	29 SWs for CWSW (8 SWIS)
	17 SWs for Post-16, plus one Post-16 Progression Advisor
	18 FCs (post-16)
	5 Parents of CWSW
	3 Data Managers
Documentary Analysis	LA Action plans, strategic plans, briefing documents, guides for SWs on education, guides for FE leads, 7 post-16 PEPs

<sup>23</sup> There is no nationally recognised formal role of 'FE Lead' but in some colleges a pastoral manager, tutor, inclusion manager or others have been given designated responsibility for CLA/CLs. We refer in the rest of this report to FE Leads

## 3. Findings related to the extended duties on CWSW

### 3.1 Overview

This section reports on the evidence relating to the implementation of the extension duties for CWSW. It starts with the support for CWSW that VSHs provided before the extension duties began, as reported in Survey 1. Activities provided by the VSHs are presented, followed by the early outcomes reported including the Theory of Change for the CWSW extension duties developed in the workshops. The evidence of early progress against the outcomes identified in the Theory of Change, and examples of good practice provided by the VSHs in Survey 2 are then reported. The barriers and facilitators to implementation of the pilot reported in the surveys and interviews are discussed and finally, the views of the VSHs about the progress made and anticipated in the future are presented.

### 3.2 VSH activities related to CWSW before the extension duties were introduced

Of the VSHs responding in Survey 1, 55 (49%) reported on activities undertaken in relation to CWSW before the extension duties were introduced. Forty-seven (42%) reported that they had attended meetings, given advice, or been involved in bringing CSC and education together to discuss CWSW's needs before the extension began. Eighteen (16%) had been involved in training for DSLs/DTs (most often in attachment and trauma), and 7 (6%) had contributed to SW training on the educational needs of CWSW.

Many VSHs noted that the pandemic had precipitated a significant concern about the attendance and well-being of children Eligible for Free School Meals any time in the previous 6 Years (Ever6 FSM, which applies to around two thirds of CWSW). CWSW specifically, were reported by DCS, DSLs and VSH to have found it difficult being back in a classroom after restrictions were relaxed, having to comply with school authority again. Attendance suffered because as one DSL stated:

...the different kind of radicalisation and grooming that's gone on that has led to potential school refusal, lack of engagement from parents. Lack of boundaries at home have meant that they then haven't been trying to get their children to come back into school, and they've gone long periods of time without learning out-of-school as well. [DSL]

DSLs also reported that during the pandemic, there was an increase in criminal activity in CWSW, in particular 'county lines', and one or two had returned to school with knives,

leading to increased exclusions. Furthermore, decreases in attendance and progress were also noted. One DSL (who was also a parent support worker) commented:

We've noticed the gaps [in progress] increase over COVID where there's been lack of support at home to sit down and do your five hours on Teams<sup>24</sup>. [DSL]

Although schools set up systems for all children to access work online during the pandemic, this DSL reported that when CWSW had not responded on Teams, they had visited their homes to do welfare checks.

Five VSHs stated that after the announcement of the extension duties in June but before the start of the grant, they had provided briefings for schools, SWs or senior managers or developed an action plan to address the extension prior to it starting in September. However, many noted that such activities were not possible because the lead-in time was short and covered the summer months during which staff had taken some leave.

### **3.3 VS activities related to CWSW since the introduction of extension duties**

#### **Use of the funding**

From Survey 1 and the interviews with DCS/ADs and VSHs, the main uses of the funding reported had been to appoint new staff or enhance existing roles, invest in data systems, and provide training to SWs and DSLs. While most interviewees commented on the short duration of funding, of the 97 that responded to the staffing question in Survey 1, an average of 1.8 FTE additional staff time had been added to the VS. Only 3 reported no added capacity to cover the extended duties. New or enhanced posts were mainly Deputy VSHs with responsibilities for either CWSW or post-16 or both. Where two posts had been added, these were typically allocated so that one covered early years and primary, the other secondary and FE (including the CLA/CLs in the post-16 pilot LAs). Most posts were fixed-term for the duration of the pilots, but some LAs made permanent appointments having accessed additional sources of funding (e.g., LA budgets for inclusion, high needs, DCS special discretionary funding) to do so.

In all the tables and text that follows, percentages are calculated using the number of responses received to each specific question in the surveys. In Survey 2, 27 (24%) of VSHs reported that funding had been invested in data systems, and 16 (14%) in additional data posts to bring together education and CSC data, often not only to support the VS:

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<sup>24</sup>Software for meetings and teaching online

...someone's been hired funded initially by the extension grant but made it a permanent post [with additional funding from the LA given not only covering the VS]. This person was already working in the LA in another capacity [but now] sits very firmly within the expertise of the data team, ...we fumbled along working out what we needed. What we've got is an expert in data management who can produce reports. [VSH]

Some case study interviews reported allocating funding to training and this ranged from around £5,000 to £27,000 of the grant (around 5-27% for most LAs). The LA that reported spending £27,000 had offered training to school staff in attachment, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) and mental health.

## Training

In Survey 2, 84 (71%) of VSHs reported providing training for school staff and 63 (53%) for SWs. This represents a substantial increase: double the 42 (35%) of VSHs providing training for school staff from Survey 1 in November 2021 and seven times the 9 (8%) reported in Survey 1 for training SWs. A few LAs also mentioned having provided training for parents and governors.

Table 2 shows the types of training for school staff, with 36 (30%) of VSHs reporting training for school staff on attachment and trauma. Adding to this those that listed training on mental health, well-being, and behaviour, gives nearer 83 (70%) of VSHs offering training on these key topics.

**Table 2: Types of Training – school staff (Survey 2, 119 responses)**

Type of Training	Number	%
Trauma informed practice/Attachment/Virtual Reality training/Understanding ACEs	36	30
Mental health, anxiety, emotional literacy, well-being etc.	14	12
Behaviour (relational rather than behavioural)	8	7
DT/DSL networks - awareness, signposting, info sharing, identify, tracking educational progress	5	4
Strategies to address common barriers and outcomes for CWSW	5	4
Attendance, inclusion, exclusion of CWSW/Emotion based school avoidance (EBSA)	5	4

DSL, DT, SENCO training: identifying new cohort and new VS Advisory Team; working together	4	3
Promoting, guidance to support positive transitions	3	2
Sensory processing workshop for DSLs, parents & carers	3	2
A journey through (to) care	3	2

One case study VS was supporting schools to create Relational Support Plans for CWSW who were finding access to education particularly challenging. One Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) in that LA had previously taken quite a behavioural approach (described as *three strikes and you're out*) with their young people. The VS had conversations with the MAT and reported that they were shifting their thinking about being more relational and trying to see the young people's perspectives. The relational, restorative, approach that the LA was taking was informed by experience in another LA and was being embedded in CSC and Early Help provision as well as schools.

Table 3 shows the types of training for SWs reported in Survey 2. VSs' training for SWs addressed school admissions, attendance, and exclusions in 21 (18%) of LAs, with a further 7 (6%) on the language, systems and processes relating to education and 8 (7%) on SEND/EHCP procedures. Thirteen (11%) of the VSHs addressed attachment and trauma for SWs with a further 5 (4%) on behaviour. In some case study LAs, SW training had not yet begun, though meetings with SWs and network meetings, separately for SWs, DSLs/DTs and heads, had been facilitated by the VS.

**Table 3: Types of Training – SWs (Survey 2, 119 responses)**

Type of Training	Number	%
School admissions and attendance, exclusions & challenges, Emotion based school avoidance (EBSA) <sup>25</sup>	21	18
Attachment & trauma informed practice	13	11
Introduction to new duties/responsibilities explained	8	7
SEND/Understanding EHCP and supporting parents through the EHCP process	8	7

<sup>25</sup> EBSA describes a group of children who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school.

Understanding language, systems and processes connected with education	7	6
Behaviour	5	4
Understanding the curriculum in schools	3	3
Key issues which help SWs challenge and support education for CWSW	3	3
What works for raising education outcomes for CWSW	3	3
Coaching and signposting available services for SWs regarding CWSW	2	2
Children missing education (CME) and Elective home education (EHE)	2	2
Adolescent development	2	2
Importance of education in keeping children safe	2	2

Workshops were also provided by a few VSs for parents and carers on, for example, sensory processing or Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy (PACE)<sup>26</sup>. More detailed examples on training are provided in the Filton Cross and Redbury case studies in Appendix 2.

## Other activities

Table 4 shows that briefings on the new duties were the most frequent activity in Survey 2, three times the percentage that reported this in Survey 1 and with only 11 (9%) of VSHs not listing this. Case study VSHs reported that these had taken place in the January-March 2022 period once new or enhanced appointments were in place. Accessing and analysing data were also mentioned more frequently than in Survey 1, with only 16 (14%) not listing these (compared to 57 (51%) in Survey 1). Network meetings with DTs increased only marginally and with DSLs reduced slightly which might reflect that this was the most frequent activity reported in Survey 1 and respondents might be expected to have progressed to other activities by Survey 2.

As noted, the guidance for the extension stressed that this was a strategic leadership role with no expectation that VSs would support individual children. However, at the time of Survey 2, 67 (56%) of VSHs reported engagement in panels and review meetings related

<sup>26</sup> PACE is a way of thinking, feeling, communicating and behaving that aims to make the child feel safe.



to CWSW, some of which were likely to have focused on individual children. In addition, 35 (29%) of VSHs were providing specific support for individuals such as mentoring, laptops, one-to-one tuition, and therapeutic interventions. The 13 VSHs interviewed in the case studies all acknowledged that the role had to be strategic given the numbers of CWSW, but some noted that to empower SWs and DSLs to intervene effectively, the VSH initially had to gain their confidence by working alongside them and offering support on individual casework. Most described risk assessment systems for identifying and targeting the CWSW most in need of support in relation to attendance, suspensions, part-time timetables, or alternative provision. One VSH reported having delegated this casework to another member of staff in the VS.

### **Surveys and consultations with schools and SWs about the needs of CWSW**

In Survey 2, 70 (59%) of VSHs reported having undertaken consultations, reviews or surveys of school staff, SWs and other professionals to identify priorities for CWSW for future work. In one case study LA, the VS undertook a survey of all schools to identify key barriers to progress for CWSW (schools were given 14 choices including attendance, literacy, SEND, parental engagement, mental health) which achieved a 50% response rate (covering nearly half their CWSW). The most frequent barrier identified was SEND, particularly speech and language issues in primary schools and anxiety and mental health issues in secondary schools. DSLs were then asked to rate the children's progress compared with 'expected progress' using a green, amber or red scale. The findings were fed back to SW managers, DTs/DSLs (though the DSLs interviewed did not mention it) and the LA senior leadership team. The VS prioritised support packages to the schools with the highest number of children rated 'red' for progress and the VSH had been into seven schools to work with them. They planned to repeat the survey in six months' time to assess the impact of their support.

### **Raising the profile of CWSW and of the VS Duties**

Many of the activities reported in Table 4 were aimed at raising the profile of the educational needs of CWSW. These included guidance, newsletters, briefings, network meetings and information for SWs, schools, and parents. One case study VSH gave the newly appointed CWSW leads a remit to spend the first six weeks meeting the relevant people and groups (including the SWs in the SWIS programme) to explain their roles. They also presented at a conference for DTs/DSLs on their roles. One of the three DSLs interviewed in that LA was in a school that had received a visit to explain the new duties but the other two were unaware of the extension.

In another LA, the VSH reporting that they had been attempting to build relationships with schools and liaising with SWs through ongoing communication (weekly SW e-mails for this cohort). Through these activities, the DCS, VSH and SW for CWSW suggested that the profile of the education of CWSW and of the VS has been raised within CSC as well as altering the perceptions of this cohort within schools. The DSLs were more likely to

report seamless provision for CWSW with little change since the introduction of the extension duties in their regular contact with SWs and occasional contact with the VS. The SWs held a different view, that the VS was increasing the SWs' capacity to influence schools through raising the awareness of the educational needs of CWSW in schools.

**Table 4: Other activities (Survey 2, 119 responses)**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>% S1*</b>
Briefings on new duties e.g., guidance, bulletins, briefings, newsletters, social media, webinars	108	91	30
Accessing and analysing data on CWSW	103	87	49
Network/forum meetings of DTs facilitated by the VS	83	70	66
Network/forum meetings of DSLs facilitated by the VS	74	62	66
Meetings with SWs (with or without the school) about individual children	72	61	10
Surveys, consultations to collect views of professionals	70	59	
Panels and review meetings relating to CWSW	67	56	14
Monitoring attendance or intervening to improve attendance of CWSW	66	55	
Facilitating/referring others to additional services for CWSW e.g., CAMHS, YOT, specific therapies.	59	50	3
Network/forum meetings of SWs facilitated by the VS	57	48	
School visits (beyond attending a review meeting that happens to take place in school)	56	47	25
Increasing consultation with, or engagement of, CWSW	55	46	
Network/forum meetings of head teachers facilitated by the VS	51	43	15
Facilitating specific support for individual CWSW e.g., mentors, laptops, 1:1 or small group tuition	35	29	
Facilitating enrichment activities e.g., sports clubs, cultural visits, for CWSW	28	24	

\*The % from Survey 1 is given where the same activities were listed

### 3.4 Attendance, suspensions and exclusions

A major focus of the extension duties was reported by most interviewees to be attendance, suspensions, and exclusions. DCSs, VSHs, DSLs, SWs and parents interviewed all referred to issues relating to attendance and exclusions. One case study VSH had asked all schools to give the VS names of the CWSW whose attendance was 95% or less, because the VSH reported that below this level they were at risk of slipping into persistent absence (PAb) and thereby not being safe. They expected the SWs to let them know when CWSW's attendance fell below 95% which triggered interventions including working with parents and SWs so they understand the importance of attendance. They had invested extensive time initially with schools and SWs to ensure their understanding of attendance and that they actioned any triggered interventions. A SW in another LA commented on the importance of teachers in supporting attendance:

Our caseload is so very vulnerable at times that going to school is one of their [CWSW's] lowest priorities, and they've got a lot of other things contextually going on for them. ...[we know] how important education is ...whether it's education, social relationships or ...building their own future towards adulthood. I don't think children are more likely to go to SWs. ...they're more likely to go to someone they see every day and someone they trust, or they might have known for a longer period. The SW can only potentially be involved in their lives for days, weeks or months, whereas the teacher might be there for five years. [SW]

SWs welcomed the additional support from the VSs. A SW in one case study LA noted the importance of SWs working in partnership with schools about the wider context around CWSW's absences to identify the reasons rather than seeing it only as an attendance management issue and taking parents to court or fining them. Another SW noted the difficulty of supporting parents with teenagers and recounted the challenges that they were experiencing with a family of three teenage siblings whose attendance was 65% and the parent was finding it too difficult to get them into school. They reported that parents do not always ask for help on attendance because it can draw attention to what might be happening at home which they prefer to avoid, and they tended not to engage with schools themselves often having had bad experiences from their own schooling. SWs appreciated the support they were now getting from VSs stating that this facilitated their work with schools and parents. VSHs noted that sometimes SWs needed better information and understanding about the legal issues around parental rights in relation to part-time timetables and exclusions if they were to best support families.

Some case study VSHs reported using Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) programmes including questionnaires that can be done with CWSW, by schools or another professional with whom they have a good relationship, to gain their views on their anxieties about school, their likes and dislikes, and the barriers or triggers within school. VSHs noted that while home factors were often predominant, some CWSW were struggling with aspects of being in school and the EBSA resources helped to identify these issues. A SW in SWIS reported how the school had created a 'rebuild' class (supported by the VS since the extension duties began) to reintroduce CWSW with very poor attendance or part-time timetables slowly into mainstream lessons, starting with lessons in which they felt most comfortable, then working through to the ones they were more anxious about. Two CWSW were reported to have benefitted significantly, becoming high attenders.

SWs interviewed also welcomed VSHs support on suspensions and exclusions. This was sometimes about understanding the legislation, appeals process and how this was applied in schools of different kinds. VSHs also reported undertaking work with parents about the legal rights relating to exclusions but misunderstandings were still evident in the interviews with SWs and parents. Other issues included the VSH supporting the SWs to challenge schools to provide more support before the child was excluded permanently. DSLs pointed out that they tried to avoid suspension or exclusions of CWSW but sometimes the message this gave the other students regarding the consequences of particular actions was not acceptable. Most DSLs noted that before any child was excluded there was a risk assessment, and CWSW or pupils with SEND were considered more carefully. However, if the safety of others was judged to be at risk, then the exclusion went ahead.

All VSHs interviewed saw part of their role as helping school staff to understand the reasons for challenging behaviour with over 70% of those responding in Survey 2 having reported offering schools training on attachment, trauma, well-being, and behaviour to address this. They and the SWs also expressed concerns that the implications of being excluded for CWSW who were in some cases already being criminally exploited, were very problematic.

One DCS maintained that inflexibility of the policies on attendance, suspensions and exclusions were unsuited to the uniqueness of each child, with system leaders inevitably pressured by public accountability frameworks. They noted that most exclusions were for persistent disruptive behaviour rather than major incidents, (e.g., involving knives). This disruptive behaviour, in their view, needs intervention not exclusion since the child was trying to communicate their needs, albeit in unacceptable ways. Schools were judged, the DCS suggested, on attendance levels and behaviour and Ofsted regard this as reflecting on the leadership of that school rather than on CWSWs' needs.

A SW echoed this in describing how the VS had supported them with a CWSW who was permanently excluded while waiting (20 weeks) for an EHCP because of their behaviour which reflected their unassessed and unmet needs. The VS helped the SW speed up the EHCP process and the child was placed in alternative provision where he made excellent progress. The SW felt that it should not have taken a permanent exclusion to secure appropriate provision but acknowledged how helpful the VS had been in achieving the outcome.

For more detailed examples on attendance see the Keldbeck and Redbury case studies in Appendix 2.

### **3.5 The VS working with SWs**

An immediate priority for VSHs reported in the surveys and interviews was to sharpen the focus on education in CIN/CP plans. VSs had worked hard with SWs to progress this through training, review meetings and one-to-one support as exemplified in the Henbrook case study in Appendix 2. Several VSHs interviewed felt that progress was evident with references to CWSWs' educational needs, outcomes and education issues integrated with the safety issues in CIN/CP plans.

SWs also identified their responsibility in overseeing CIN and CP plans and ensuring that the CWSW's views of the educational support needed by them, and their families was recorded in the plan. But they acknowledged that the school might be best placed to access the child's views as they had more contact with them. SWs also reported feeling well supported by the VSH attending the conference and review meetings, offering advice and help, negotiating with schools, advocating on behalf of the CWSW, and asserting their views when needed especially when it came to funding for alternative provision. While these activities sometimes initially involved the VSH in individual interventions, they reported that they were building the capacity and confidence of SWs to undertake this work independently of them in future. SWs noted that they had benefitted from the VSH offering support on inclusion and appeal processes. Another SW commented:

So she's got a lot of information around that [EBSA], ...for SWs it's quite difficult to have all that ...in terms of the assessments and what services are involved. So ...it's a gateway, ...to the other support services that are in place, and how they link together from an education perspective. Sometimes we have a lot of frustration with the education side, ...having somebody to guide you through that process ...is a huge help. [SW]

An issue raised by some VSHs was ensuring that any plan for a CWSW who attended a school outside the case-holding LA took account of possible differences in the support offered by the school or the LA where they were schooled.

### 3.6 SWs in Schools (SWIS)

The aims of SWIS were to strengthen pastoral support in school settings, provide advice and support to students, parents and staff, support earlier identification of children requiring SW intervention and improve outcomes (including reducing the numbers coming into care). The caseloads of the SWs overlap with the focus of the extension duties which was the rationale for including some LAs involved in SWIS in the evaluation. The timing of the SWIS programme made it likely that some evidence had been drawn from the months prior to the extension duties being implemented, though the VS involvement started around that time. Four case study LAs were in the SWIS programme and eight SWIS SWs were interviewed. They described their work as:

.. involving early intervention and prevention work in schools, so we are very visible in schools. We can be involved in training for staff. We're part of the safeguarding team so we meet with the safeguarding and the pastoral teams regularly. We have close communication with the DSL, that sort of sits alongside our role in school, and the school counsellor. [SWIS SW]

Some of the SWIS SWs interviewed were based in existing support centres, hubs or SEND departments of the schools which they found helpful because these were staffed by specialist mentors and teaching assistants, so CWSW were less likely to see the SW as a teacher. The SWIS SWs felt that made them more approachable to a CWSW seeking support because of turmoil at home or challenges in school, since they were available throughout the day as were the support centre staff and could build a relationship with the young people. Staff referred CWSW to the SWIS SWs, but the SWs noted that more spontaneous contact also occurred, as they saw some of the same CWSW daily, being in the area that CWSW come to calm down, get extra support or sometimes to have their lunch. It also encouraged CWSW not to attach the stigma to SWs often felt by families and reported in the DSL interviews.

The SWs commented that the programme had exposed schools to CSC because the SWIS SWs see how schools manage safeguarding issues, which has led to some instances of what they referred to as 'robust' discussions with either DSLs or the headteachers. They reported that they overheard and experienced the life of the schools and gained a better understanding of how the schools worked but were also able to intervene much earlier than in statutory safeguarding teams. The SWIS SWs

noted the need for them to work on parent-school relationships. Sometimes parents and schools reported to the SWs that they were trying to communicate with each other and not getting a response. As other interviewees stated, some parents of CWSW were reluctant to contact schools due to their own negative experiences of schooling or because they did not want to expose difficulties at home. The SWIS SWs felt that they and the VS needed to invest more of their time and effort in helping some schools and parents improve these relationships which, when effective, contributed to the CWSWs' attendance, engagement, and learning.

The SWIS SWs reported that they had regular contact with the VS, mainly through training of DSLs and SWs. In one LA, two school senior leaders and a SWIS SW attended training provided by the VS on trauma and attachment. With support from the VS, these teams in each SWIS school then completed an audit of current practice that identified, for example, the need to revise their behaviour policy or embed emotion coaching. This informed subsequent training by the team for the whole school staff. The VSH provided training for all the SWIS SWs about understanding education language, navigating the education system and factors influencing the education experiences of CWSW.

The interim evaluation<sup>27</sup> of the SWIS programme, which the SWIS SWs interviewed commented upon (see Earlham case study in Appendix 2), focused mainly on the impact on de-escalating CSC thresholds with some promising early findings on this. SWIS SWs interviewed also reported anecdotal incidences of preventing suspensions and exclusions, by intervening early before the child reached the school's threshold for these. Typically, they described undertaking emotional regulation work with individual CWSW to address anger and physical and verbal aggression which enabled exclusions to be avoided. DSLs in SWIS schools that were interviewed were universally positive, describing the communication with the SWs as very helpful. They linked up with other services more quickly and worked more closely with families addressing attendance issues while providing continuity. When asked about the impact of the programme on the schools, DSLs claimed that they did not think attendance and exclusion figures had changed significantly yet but that the main impact from SWIS had been fewer CWSW from those schools entering care, which one VSH confirmed with evidence.

### 3.7 The VS working with Schools

Table 20 in Appendix 1 shows the ways in which the 83 (69%) of VSHs who reported that the extension duties had changed the way that they work with schools, were

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<sup>27</sup> Westlake, D., Melendez-Torres, G. J., Corliss, C., El-Banna, A., Thompson, S., Meindl, M., ... & Cook, L. (2020). *Social Workers in Schools: An evaluation of pilots in three local authorities in England*. London: DfE



doing so. Fifty (42%) of VSHs stated that they had extended their contact with schools, through school visits, DSL networks and providing training with staff such as DSLs and SENCOs. Twelve (10%) of VSHs noted that the extension duties had led to contact with new schools with whom the VS would not have previously been involved, because they had CWSW but not CLA.

VS contact with new schools was regarded by SWs, DCSs, VSHs, though less so by DSLs, to have raised the profile of CWSW and increased school staff confidence, by clarifying expectations of schools and SWs about the educational needs of CWSW. Nine (7%) VSHs also mentioned that the profile of the VS/VSH had been raised in these schools evidenced by the DSLs contacting them for advice or support. Eleven (9%) VSHs noted improved communication between schools and CSC that they had mediated, though some interviewees felt further improvement was needed. A more detailed example on how the VS worked with schools is provided in the Henbrook case study in Appendix 2.

### 3.8 Governance of the VS work on CWSW

From Survey 2, VSHs were invited to complete a multiple-choice question on governance structures overseeing the extension duties, by listing all that applied. Their responses are summarised in Table 22 in Appendix 1. Children's Services Leadership Teams were listed by 77 (67%) of VSHs, a massive increase from the 16 (14%) who mentioned this governance structure in Survey 1. The relevant Assistant Director's Leadership Team (not given as an option in Survey 1) was listed by 71 (62%) and 63 (55%) listed the VS Board of Governors, a small increase from the 51 (44%) in Survey 1. The Corporate Parenting Board or Panel was mentioned by 43 (38%) a large increase from the 10 (9%) in Survey 1. One VSH described the changes in governance that had been introduced:

I wanted a layer above me. So that's what this [name of board] is. We had one meeting, it's ...partners from teams in the LA ...some SWs, inclusion, EWS, VS and then broader health, youth offending ...high level of accountability being chaired by an AD and feeds up into the [name] board and children's scrutiny at director level ...it'll be really beefing up this world around CWSW as one of our vulnerable groups. [VSH]

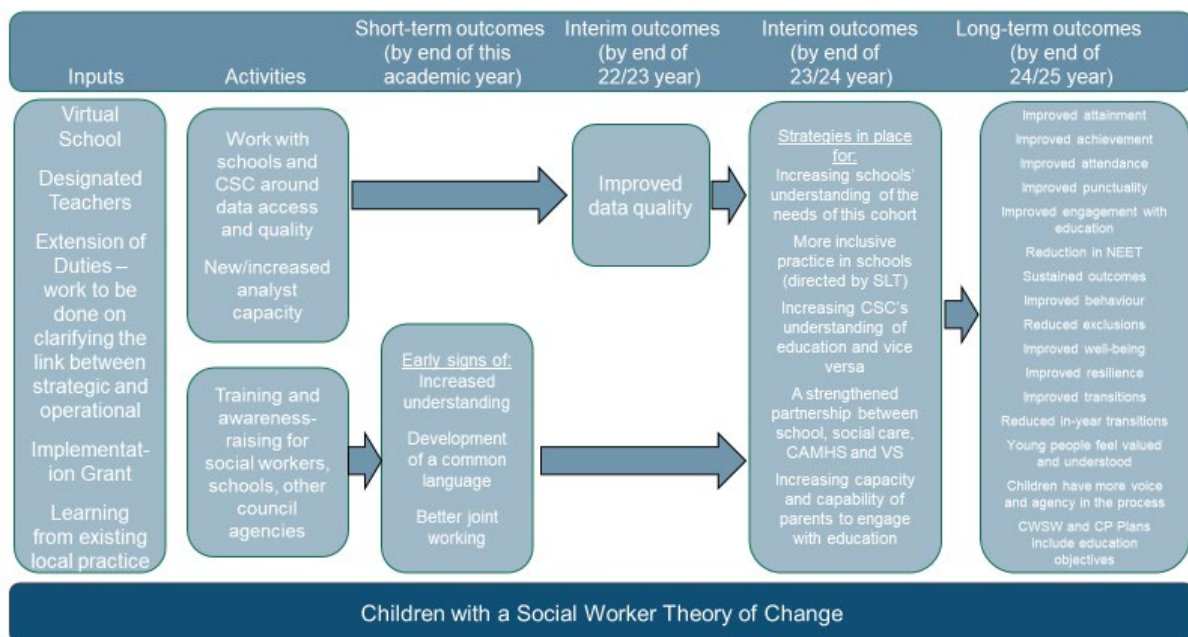
While there had been a significant increase overall in governance structures and specifically with The Children's Services Leadership Teams and Corporate Parenting Board, 12 (10%) of VSHs stated that there was no governance structure in place.

### 3.9 Evidence of outcomes from the extension duties

#### Outcomes of the Theory of Change<sup>28</sup> workshops

The Theory of Change relating to the CWSW work resulting from the workshops is shown in Figure 1. However, this will continue to be developed during the next stage of the evaluation. Figure 1 was then circulated with Survey 2 and VSHs were asked to report on their progress against the outcomes, providing examples of evidence.

**Figure 1: Theory of Change for the CWSW Extension**



#### Evidence of progress against the Theory of Change outcomes

In Survey 2, VSHs reported on any evidence of early progress against the outcomes listed in the Theory of Change for the extension of duties to CWSW. Table 19 in Appendix 1 summarises the 83 (69%) of VSHs' responses to this question, with 37 (31%) of VSHs either not responding or stating that it was too early to comment or that they had only just been appointed. The most frequently mentioned evidence of progress (39 (47%) of the 83 VSHs), was the short-term outcome of 'Better joint working to address educational needs of CWSW'. Responses given were categorised into collaborative working across and within LAs (such as strengthening connections between the VS and other services including SWIS), evidence from meetings, advice and clinics (such as improving consistency of education focus in performance and scrutiny and recording of education in CIN/CP plans) and better

<sup>28</sup> Definition of Theory of Change in footnote 17

joint working around data (such as improving consistency of data and information exchange across LA services around CWSW).

Another short-term outcome in the Theory of Change was improving data quality, mentioned by 37 (45%) of the 83 VSHs. Twenty-two (26%) of these VSHs cited evidence on data related to attendance, exclusions and inclusion (such as identifying CWSW with the highest PAb in order to prioritise resources). Responses on other outcomes related to data quality (such as schools regularly using data to support CWSW) were mentioned by 37 (45%, some listing more than one type of evidence).

Interim outcomes that were expected to be achieved nationally by the end of 2023-24 included schools' increased understanding of the needs of CWSW and SWs' increased understanding of education. Evidence of both these were listed by some VSs in Survey 2, suggesting that the timescales for achieving outcomes in the Theory of Change will vary across LAs. Evidence of progress related to schools' increased understanding of the educational needs of CWSW was listed by 36 (43%) of VSHs with examples given from discussions in meetings, forums, and training sessions, responses in surveys, and anecdotal reporting of improved attendance and less use of part-time timetables. Evidence of progress towards SWs' increased understanding of the educational needs of CWSW was listed by 29 (35%) of VSHs with examples including discussions in meetings, panels and forums reflecting increased understanding of the educational needs and provision, including greater confidence to challenge schools around attendance and exclusion.

## **Examples of good practice**

In Survey 2, we asked for examples of good practice that had developed in response to implementing the new duties and Table 23 in Appendix 1 shows the examples given. The same 83 VSHs who had provided evidence of progress against the Theory of Change listed examples of good practice with the same 37 not responding, saying that it was too early, or they had only recently taken up the post. Examples about training were provided by 34 (41%) of those responding, 26 (31%) about multiagency working, 19 (23%) were examples of use of data and 16 (19%) referred to consultations or clinics for SWs and/or schools. Best practice examples that they described included training and toolkits for schools addressing trauma-informed practice, with all school staff participating and attempts to evaluate subsequent improved outcomes through pupil surveys.

Multiagency working examples included the VSH joining panels such as Early Help and locality hubs and a system by which the VS provided additional support to ensure CWSW referrals to CAMHS were progressed. A more detailed example of strategic multiagency working is given in the Alsbury case study and of linking

education and CSC through a locality model in the Braddleton case study in Appendix 2.

Examples of good practice relating to the use of data were mainly about monitoring attendance, suspensions, exclusions and part-time timetables, and work with schools and SWs to address priorities identified from the data. Clinics and consultations were described as a means of SWs and schools contacting the VS for timely advice.

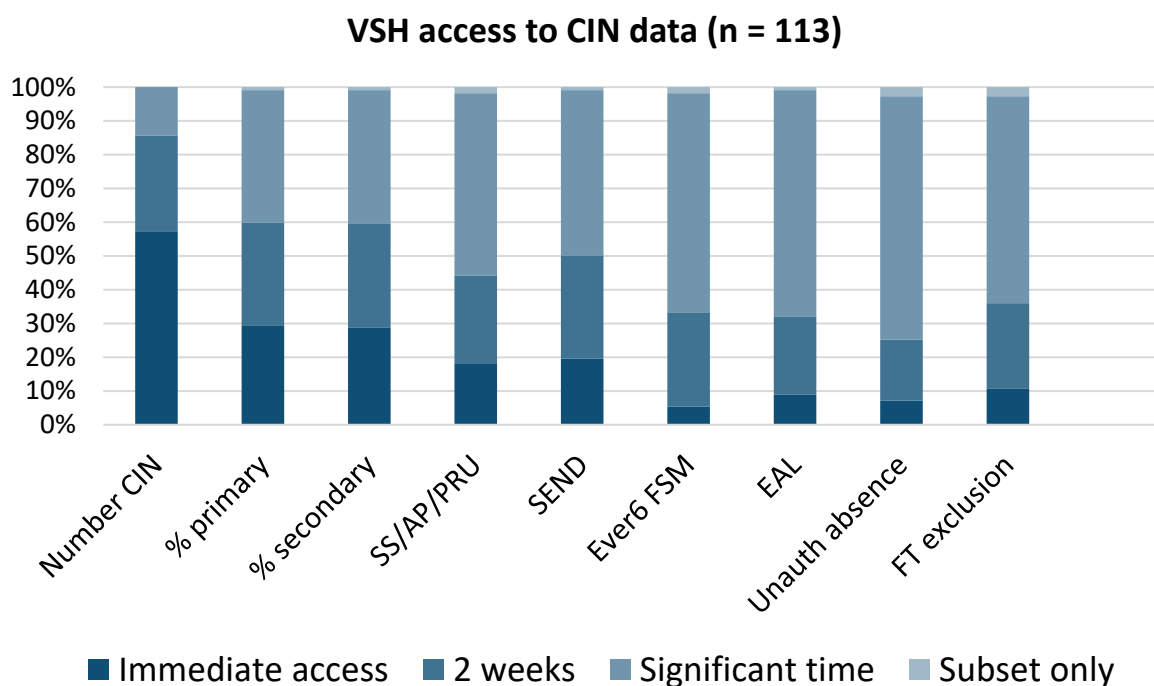
Examples of good practice listed less often (by fewer than 12 (14%) of the VSHs) were in the areas of reviews and surveys (including pupil surveys and requests for feedback on the impact of the VS), specific interventions (e.g., mentoring programmes for CWSW, allocating family support workers to CWSW to improve attendance), LA policy changes (to raise the profile of CWSW across the LA) and signposting such as maps of education services for SWs. Guidance for SWs, parents or governors about the educational needs of CWSW was mentioned by some VSHs. One VSH region shared across the VSHs what in their view were their examples of best practice as early as November 2021.

## **Collection, access, and use of data**

### **Data on current CWSW**

In Survey 1, our request for data on CWSW used variable names from the National Pupil Database and specified that the cohort in question should match the eligible criteria set out in the DfE documentation about the extension. The responses to the questions about how easily they could access the data are given in Figure 2:

**Figure 2: Accessing the data on CWSW<sup>29</sup>**



As Figure 2 shows, 97 (86%) of VSHs stated that they could access data on the numbers of current CWSW within two weeks and 68 (60%) could identify their phase of schooling (but less for specialist provision). Only 56 (50%) could access CWSW's SEND status within two weeks and only just over a third their EAL, Ever6 FSM or suspension status. Most problematic was unauthorised absence where less than a third could get these data within two weeks and only 9 (8%) immediately.

Where VSHs provided actual data in Survey 1, it was often unreliable, with figures outside the range given in other national sources (e.g., minimum LA percentages of SEND and Ever6 FSMs in CIN reported elsewhere were 18% and 26% respectively whereas in Survey 1, rates as low as 4% were reported for each of these). Examples of responses which did not fit the request included 'Number of CIN', where some responses excluded those on a Child Protection Plan or included CLA. In many cases, data were provided as percentages instead of numbers as requested, or vice versa. It was unclear whether this was due to a misinterpretation of the request, or because the named data were all that the VS could access at that point. The survey wording might have been unclear, and feedback suggested that the timing of our request did not match the established data collection points. However, feedback also suggested that our request led to many LAs reviewing what data they needed to meet the extension duties which has, in turn, stimulated helpful data developments.

<sup>29</sup> The figure refers to 'CIN' because that was the term we used in Survey 1. To address the confusion about the definition of CIN evident in responses to Survey 1, we refer throughout this report to CWSW

Appendix 1, Tables 14-16 summarise the responses received in Survey 2 about collection, access, and use of data in relation to CWSW. In Survey 1, 64 (57%) of respondents reported being able to access the number of CWSW immediately; by Survey 2, 97 (85%) could do so. From the case study interviews, several VSHs stated that they were working with schools to identify and track daily or weekly attendance, suspensions, and alternative provision for CWSW (some using commercial systems with a flag for CWSW which also recorded reasons for a child's absence). Several VSHs reported that COVID-19, rather than the extension duties, had driven the attendance and part-time provision of CWSW to be more frequently (typically weekly) recorded and passed to the VS.

A range of good practice was shown in use of the data to inform support targeted at sub-groups of CWSW identified as being at highest risk of PAb, suspension or exclusion. This included analysis and reporting of attendance, suspensions, and part-time timetables; risk assessment of the cohort by locality or schools; and reviewing data in the senior leadership team of the LA to inform targeting of resources. In one case study LA, after only two weeks of the new system being available, the VS lead for CWSW identified 17 permanent exclusions of CWSW across the LA in the previous term and seven suspensions in one secondary school which prompted them to make an immediate visit to discuss this. Following a NAVSH presentation on data, several case study LAs mentioned using the data to identify the schools for priority intervention, attended by the CWSW at highest risk. More detailed examples on the use of data are given in the Earlham and Alsbury case studies in Appendix 2.

### **Data on children who have ever had a social worker**

In Survey 2, we asked VSHs to report on any developments in data collection, access or use relating to children who had *ever* had a SW (Ever CWSW). Their responses are summarised in Appendix 1, Table 17, with examples of these developments given in Table 18. Whereas the evaluation period saw progress made in the access to and use of data on children who currently have a social worker, substantial challenges remained regarding data on Ever CWSW. In Survey 1, only one VSH reported having access to data for children who had ever had a SW; by Survey 2 this had increased to 26 (23%) of VSHs. We noted from Survey 1 the huge challenges in getting data on the Ever CWSW cohort, with VSHs suggesting they would need guidance on how far back to track these children. One data manager interviewed commented:

...if you could look back six months you can look back six years. But again, it is a case of going back how far, and I think that's a difficulty with the DfE definition [of Ever CWSW], are you including a 12 year old who was in care for six months when

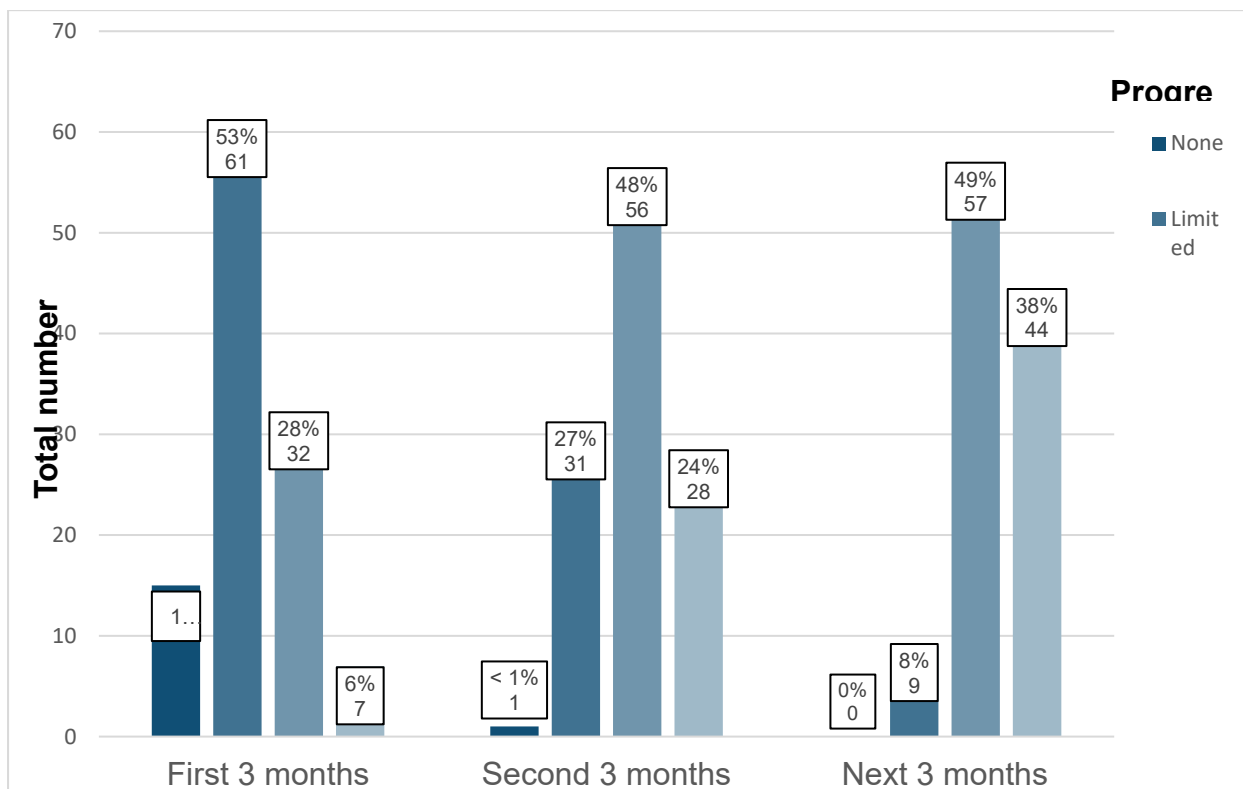
they were a baby or not in care, but you know open, you know on a CIN for six months when they were a baby, is that the cohort we're wanting to highlight? [Data manager]

Concerns were expressed that longer-term 'tagging' of the cohort would exacerbate the stigma attached to having a SW. However, two DSLs who had data on Ever CWSW in their schools, noted that it was important to support families who previously had a SW as they felt that their cases were often re-opened.

### VSHs' views of their overall progress

In Survey 2, we asked VSHs to assess their overall progress on the extended duties so far and their capacity to make progress in the future. Their responses are summarised in Appendix 1, Table 24 and Figure 3.

**Figure 3: VSHs' perception of their overall progress and capacity for future progress**



The responses show that initial progress was slow with 39 (34%) of VSHs making steady or rapid progress in the first three months, but 84 (72%) in the next three months. Looking forward, all but nine (8%) of the 116 who responded anticipated steady or rapid progress in the next five months (from April 2022). Reasons given for earlier lack of progress included delays in appointments of staff, lack of senior

management support, restructuring of the LA and the VSH being new to the role or the post currently vacant.

### 3.10 Barriers to implementation of the extended duties

Survey 2 included a multiple-choice question on the barriers to implementation of the extended duties, asking respondents to mark up to three of the most significant barriers. Responses were received from 116 VSHs as shown in Table 5, some marking less than three.

**Table 5: Barriers to effective implementation (Survey 2, 116 responses)**

Barrier	Number	%
You are not receiving some of the data you need on CWSW from schools	59	51
Social worker turnover and/or vacancies	53	46
Difficulties recruiting staff/enhancing existing roles to cover CWSW	49	42
Inadequate resources, specify: Mainly stated lack of funding/staff capacity	28	24
Lack of support from senior managers in the LA	9	8
Difficulties in relationship with social care	8	7
Other: <sup>30</sup> (please specify) Mainly stated short-term nature of the funding and data issues	48	41

#### Data access

Barriers related to data access were listed by half the VSHs who responded to this question. In general, these were mainly about access to data from schools outside the LA, though in a few LAs there were MATs or independent (fee-paying) schools that do not provide access to all the data VSs wanted, and there were also concerns about the quality of data, specifically the CSC data. For example, one VSH reported that 17 schools outside the LA attended by CWSW do not supply data and one academy trust does not provide GCSE data to the VS. The Confederation of School Trusts received this feedback from DfE early in the evaluation and has highlighted

<sup>30</sup>An open text question for respondents to list any other barriers was provided. 48 VSHs responded mainly about the duration of funding and data issues.



members' understanding that safeguarding cannot be realised without access to the data on CWSW attending their schools. This feedback appears to have significantly reduced the problems which were much more prevalent in Survey 1. One DCS noted the link between access to data and quality of education provided, noting the challenges of ensuring a high quality of education for CWSW attending schools outside the LA. In their view, the LA has a responsibility to ensure that the processes and quality assurance that apply to CWSW in schools within the LA, were similarly used for CWSW placed outside the LA, and reflected clearly in the CIN/CP plans.

VSHs who were interviewed reported having worked to ensure that education and CSC services share the data they hold on CWSW. Barriers included some children for whom matching the education and CSC data remained very challenging and (perceived) GDPR restrictions. DCSs, VSHs and data managers reported that the variations between data systems used across LAs continue to disadvantage efficiency and effectiveness for example when CWSW were placed in schools outside the LA. DSLs raised in interviews, the need for protocols on data around children moving to another LA. One recounted having a CWSW who they were concerned might go missing, but discovered that the parent had moved the child into a school in a neighbouring LA. When the DSL contacted the VS in the new LA, they were thanked, but no one asked for information on the child's progress, which the DSL felt reflected the lack of clear protocols for who was responsible for what and who leads, when working across schools, VSs and LAs.

## **SW turnover and vacancies**

In Survey 2, 46% of VSHs responding to the barriers to implementation question listed turnover and vacancies of SWs as a significant barrier. VSHs, DCSs, DSLs, parents and SWs themselves confirmed that this was a major issue impacting negatively on CWSW. One DCS commented that it was a national problem and that the DfE should be doing more to address it. A DSL in one school reported currently having children on CIN/CP plans with no SW. DSLs also described increasing SW caseloads, with no time to discuss 'lower end' cases with the DSLs who were having to hold more higher need cases at the level of 'early help' than before, because of the shortages of SWs. One DSL reported having made more emergency calls to the police for missing vulnerable students, but with little response from the police. Expectations on schools were described by DSLs as 'huge' and included supporting SWs who had little understanding of the CWSWs' educational needs. DSLs suggested that the SW had previously been the central point for services received by CWSW, but this locus had now moved to the DSL.

While changing SWs was sometimes reported as positive where a CWSW did not get on with the previous one, DSLs noted that frequent changes, in their view,

reduced the CWSWs' engagement in school. They explained that this reflected issues around attachment and the experience of 'rejection' felt by the CWSW which increased attendance and behaviour issues. Some of these changes were also reported to create problems for the DSLs because information was not always passed on to the new SWs. SWs interviewed commented that high caseloads and stress were the main causes of turnover, one reporting that she moved to an agency because she was in a 'failing' LA and did not feel sufficiently supported on personal safety. In her view, this was a major contributing factor to why SWs move to agencies where they only had to give two weeks' notice to leave.

### **Funding amount and duration (including difficulties recruiting and investment in data)**

While it was evident (from interviews in particular) that some very experienced and highly competent staff were appointed to deputy head in the VS to lead on CWSW, DCSs and VSHs noted that the duration of appointments possible (and some took the risk of appointing well beyond six months), limited the quality of those recruited. One VSH commented:

...you can't recruit the people with the levels of understanding and experience into a post for two terms. There's not many people sitting around waiting for a two-term opportunity. [VSH]

VSHs reported that the short-term funding coupled with short lead in time following publication of the extension duties, limited progress in LAs. The VSHs could not draw on additional resources or persuade senior managers to take risks. Some larger LAs fared better on this maybe because they have greater funding flexibility. Lack of capacity of LAs to appoint staff to undertake roles in the time led to alternatives to new appointments such as enhanced current roles, accompanied by back-filling, or in a few cases, attempting to use only the existing resources of the VS.

Some LAs have been unwilling to invest in better data systems for CWSW or data analysts without the commitment to longer-term funding from DfE. However, some appointed an additional analyst to cover the CWSW data analysis and other work across the LA. A data manager suggested that until the DfE make it statutory for schools to share this information with the LA, they rely on schools who they feel already experience extensive data collection pressures and had to prioritise statutory responsibilities. For that reason, this LA had rejected making a major investment into the data, especially when the role was funded for a short duration.

Many DSLs and VSHs commented on the 35% of CWSW that aren't eligible for pupil premium<sup>31</sup>. Some DSLs noted that even some of those eligible do not always declare so were unknown to the school. Another said that the school sometimes subsidise the CWSW, for example by providing revision books (for Year 11 CWSW) if they know that the parents were struggling with finance. These effects of poverty were seen by VSHs as a barrier to effective implementation of the extension duties. One DSL reported:

...we've had significant issues around uniform or some parents not paying dinner monies, we know some parents owe us lots of money and we write it off because that's what we do 'cause feeding them is the most important part of the day. [DSL]

SWs acknowledged the role of poverty in the engagement of CWSW in school, noting that peer pressure and social media increase the expectation of 'fitting in' and being part of that culture, so that not having the latest pair of trainers, a full PE kit or the best pencil case, could lead to social isolation, reduced attendance and even contribute to suspension. One SW recounted the story of a CWSW who had been out of school for months:

I'd taken him to school, and dropped him off and then, less than an hour later he gets sent home, ...because he was wearing trainers and ...we'd eventually got him into school and I was gutted as his SW, that his teacher didn't really understand the whole picture to get him in school. ...Forget what he's wearing on his feet, he didn't have shoes because that parent was, you know, trying to put food on the table and to buy six kids school shoes is huge. ...their [the school] priority was all children need to ...have black shoes on. So, I think school being ...less flexible in their understanding of children, different backgrounds and needs, and there's a huge barrier. [SW]

## Role of school culture

VSHs and SWs referred to the importance of school culture, suggesting that more understanding was needed in schools around contextual safeguarding (CWSW's experiences of significant harm beyond their families). The SWs in SWIS confirmed that this contextual safeguarding needed strengthening in the culture of the schools.

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<sup>31</sup> 35% are currently ineligible (though this varies with age and CIN/CP). CPAG (2020) <https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/two-five-uk-children-under-poverty-line-are-not-eligible-free-school-meals> notes 1.2m children living in poverty are not eligible for FSMs

In their view, the DSLs did not always refer children where they had safeguarding concerns, preferring to deal with the concerns in school, when external services should have been involved.

One VSH suggested that DSLs have been focused on safeguarding but now needed to give attention to the academic progress of CWSW, linking more closely with their curriculum leads to give this greater priority. This VSH was working with a teaching school to provide professional development and support to DSLs. A DCS suggested that the VS needed to build that culture in schools, so the schools (and SWs) know where they can go, and how they can tap into the expertise of the VS.

## **SEND provision**

DCSs, VSHs and DSLs all commented on the high rate of SEND in the CWSW cohort which they identified as a key factor impacting on their learning. One DSL suggested that they were more quickly labelled as SEND when their needs were more a product of disadvantage and sometimes trauma, requiring a different response if it was not to lead to low expectations. DSLs reported the SEND services to be a significant barrier to effective provision for CWSW. Delays in assessments and, mostly, in the schools receiving reports that were needed for the EHCP applications, were noted by DSLs interviewed. One DSL described the implications of these delays:

...And sadly, those three were recently permanently excluded from us, that's true of all three of them, they were all on our waiting list for educational psychologist and speech and language therapy and have been for a considerable amount of time. [DSL]

DSLs reported that waiting for reports so that they have the evidence needed for the EHCP application process was a key barrier to meeting the needs of CWSW.

## **Other barriers**

School changes for CWSW especially in KS4, were reported by DSLs to be very problematic. CWSW were often out of school for up to half a term because the schools process in year transfers too slowly and parents removed them from one school before the receiving school had agreed a start date. DSLs noted that some parents contact the new school and arrange a starting date, but at the time of the interview this DSL had one CWSW who had been off school for seven weeks. The reason for the move, leaving friends, picking up new friendships and the fact that

they were less likely to attend when they had no friends in school, were all reported by SWs to impact on CWSWs' learning.

CWSW, especially those with SEND, sometimes had contact with lots of other professionals. DSLs in one LA reported on an early help programme for CWSW leading to CWSW being taken out of lessons too frequently. The intervention team of potentially four professionals, additional to the SW all met with the young person regularly for 3-6 months, which disrupted their lesson time. They also noted that CWSW in the youth justice system were seen by professionals working on contextual safeguarding so, again, they were removed from lessons. They suggested that the CWSW who were on part-time timetables (to gradually re-establish full attendance) could be seen at home by these professionals which would enable them to better assess the home environment and possibly engage with parents. DSLs and SWs across several LAs noted that taking them out of lessons was both disruptive to their learning and embarrassing in relation to their peer and friendship groups as it highlights that they were different. CWSW were reported by SWs to request that they did not see them in school. Some SWs reported strategies they had taken to be sensitive to this issue such as not wearing their badges, meeting the CWSW in the car or seeing them outside school.

### 3.11 Facilitators to the implementation of the extended duties

Survey 2 provided a multiple-choice question on the facilitators to implementation of the extended duties, asking respondents to mark up to three of the most significant ones. Responses were received from 117 VSHs as shown in Table 6, some marking less than three.

**Table 6: Facilitators to effective implementation (Survey 2, 117 responses)**

Facilitator	Number	%
The additional resources from the extension	76	65
New staff/enhanced existing roles covering CWSW	71	61
Established good relationships with social care	65	56
Support from senior managers in the LA	57	49

<sup>32</sup> You are receiving some of the data you need on CWSW from schools	38	32
Other: <sup>33</sup> Mainly multi-agency working and external partnerships	17	15

## Additional resources

The additional funding was welcomed as essential to meeting the extended duties, with 76 (65%) of the 117 respondents listing this as a significant facilitator, while 28 (24%) had listed (in Table 5) lack of resources or capacity as a barrier. As noted earlier in the report, the funding was used to increase capacity in staffing and access to data and this was acknowledged by VSHs and DCSs to have enabled progress to be made in most LAs. In larger LAs where typically there was more flexibility in allocation of funding, DCSs and VSHs explained how other funding streams were ‘topping up’ development costs, acknowledging that these (e.g., training for school staff) often benefitted children in schools other than the CWSW. One AD noted that the overall sum reflected the strategic nature of the role but was not ‘huge’, making the likely impact ‘slow-burning’ but that this could make a difference in time rather than a major, immediate impact.

## New appointments, enhanced roles, and strategic responsibilities

Nearly two thirds of VSHs noted the significant contribution made by new and enhanced appointments to the VS team in meeting the extension duties. The few that had not made new or enhanced appointments were mainly smaller LAs who reported that they were waiting to see if the funding would be extended to enable longer-term increases in capacity. In these cases, the VSH was spending more of their time on CWSW, with concerns expressed by VSHs that their work with CLA might suffer. In the case study interviews, VSHs were often accompanied by the new appointees and their experience and commitment was evident to the interviewers. VSHs in Survey 2 reported huge differences in the proportion of their time spent on the extension duties (10-75%). In the VSH interviews, this was reported to have reduced over time as it initially included inducting and supervising the new and enhanced appointments which once established, enabled them to re-focus on CLA and overall management.

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<sup>32</sup>20 LAs gave both not receiving some of the data needed as a barrier and receiving some of the data needed as a facilitator – all we can conclude from this is that there is a lot of concern/interest and activity around data

<sup>33</sup>Open text question for respondents to list any other facilitators. 17 VSHs responded mainly about multi-agency working and external partnerships

The responsibilities of the new and enhanced staff reflected the understanding of the role of the VS as strategic in relation to CWSW. The DfE guidance on the extension duties stated explicitly that the VS was not expected to undertake individual casework or interventions with individual children. DCSs and VSHs reiterated this, noting that the VS was not resourced to undertake individual intervention with CWSW, and that it was impractical to replicate what had been done with CLA. They were not offering casework but instead, had invested in developing strategic influence, working with DSLs and SWs to think about what they should be doing with CWSW and how the VS can support that. However, the DSLs interviewed reported caseloads ranging from 2-61 and some SWs interviewed also reported high caseloads of more than 25 families. This needs to be acknowledged in the intention to empower them to undertake individual interventions with CWSW.

### **VS relationships with CSC including Early Help**

Fifty-five percent of VSHs in Survey 2 reported established good relationships with CSC as a significant facilitator. A key area of work for VSHs with SWs was around ensuring that education planning was at the core of CIN/CP planning. Another aspect of relationships which CSC frequently mentioned was making sure that the VS were invited to key meetings and panels, so they were aware of the issues relating to the most vulnerable children cohort.

A third of the VSHs in Survey 2 noted that the Early Help services had been one of the more responsive services in supporting them to meet the extended duties (see Table 21 in Appendix 1). For six VSHs this was a new contact, but others described their relationship with Early Help as being greatly strengthened. Early Help support was described as family support workers or children and family workers who focus on school attendance and other areas of challenge for the family. They were also reported by VSHs and DCSs to influence schools in the allocation of PP. An AD noted that for many CWSW (specifically, CIN), the services required the consent of the family, but that allocating a SW can create barriers with the family who felt that the media coverage of high-profile abuse cases increased the stigma attached to having a SW. This AD suggested:

...if there's one thing that a care review could sort, it would be to ensure that CP and CLA are looked after by SWs, probably very high-end CIN, and the majority of CIN sit with Early Help staff – people who don't have to have the burden of a qualified SW but practically, can put a lot more support into families. So, I think it's [having a SW is] a burden rather than a benefit for the majority of CIN. So, we've got [well over 1000] children. I would suggest

that probably at least 900 of those could probably sit in an Early Help service. [AD]

This AD went on to state that the VSH works closely with Early Help to shape the universal offer that schools can provide with the aim of preventing children being escalated up to CP unnecessarily. One DCS noted that the main aim of the extended duties in their view was to reduce the referrals to SW, which involved the VS and Early Help working together for young people and families who were struggling, which they claimed teachers were often the first to notice. The right support at the right time was reported to prevent escalation to SW allocation. Other DCSs supported these views on the value of Early Help working more closely with VSHs.

### **Services that were most responsive in supporting the extension duties**

From Surveys 1 and 2 and the interviews, it was evident that the VSs have increased their contact with other services, mainly with services with whom they had previously worked, but a few had started working with services that were new to them. Of the VSHs who responded to this question in Survey 2 (see Table 21 in Appendix 1 for the responses), 89 (80%) listed Children and Families as having been a most responsive service with eight VSHs noting that Children and Families were a new contact for them. Educational entitlement services that included attendance, inclusion and exclusions were listed as a most responsive by 74 (67%) of VSHs with five noting this to be a new contact. Others listed by more than a third of VSHs included SEND, educational psychologists, school improvement and Early Help with the latter being a new contact for six VSHs. One VSH interviewed illustrated the benefits of their new relationship with the Early Help team:

VS presented data on numbers of CWSW across schools to social care senior leadership team, Early Help noticed that the schools who had high numbers of CWSW were not the schools referring into Early Help, so some training has now been put into those schools. [VSH]

### **Support from senior managers**

Of the 117 VSHs that reported on facilitators (Table 6 above), 57 (49%) listed support from senior managers as a most significant facilitator in meeting the extended duties and 8% had listed lack of support from senior managers as a key



barrier. Given our selection criteria for case studies<sup>34</sup>, it was unsurprising to find that the VSHs interviewed commented positively on the support they received specifically from line managers (usually the AD for education or CSC). They noted that strong messages from the DCS about the importance of the educational needs of CWSW influenced others in LA services and schools to prioritise this work.

### 3.12 Definitions and non-statutory nature of the role

The issues raised in both the surveys and interviews about how the extension role was defined included both barriers and facilitators and were central to any future developments. We have therefore set out these issues in this final section on findings relating to CWSW.

The guidance issued by the DfE to support the extension, made clear that the role was non-statutory. Feedback from those interviewed was clear that as the role was statutory for CLA and Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC), it needs to be statutory for CWSW. One VSH commented that while primary schools were keen to learn best practice for CWSW, some secondary schools will be more likely to engage effectively with the VS *'when the requirements become statutory'*. Another VS team suggested that were it to become statutory they could say to schools and SWs *'this needs to happen, you need to include us in this meeting'* because without this recognition, not all partners will respond appropriately.

In both the surveys and interviews, some VSHs reported tensions between the strategic role and individual CWSW interventions into which they had been drawn. These often related to attendance or part-time timetables, exclusions and, occasionally, additional tuition or equipment. One VSH commented:

Keeping in our minds that this is billed as a... strategic role. But I'm also really determined that we don't get to the end of the pilot, and we've been so strategic we haven't actually made any real difference to real children in real schools and that schools don't perceive that it's a LA that's just calling more meetings, and nothing actually is happening. [VSH]

Another similarly suggested that while the role was strategic, there was inevitably a demand for casework support and quite often this was seen by school and CSC staff

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<sup>34</sup> The case studies selection criteria are set out in section 2.4 above. They included geographical spread, range of size, urban/rural, previous Ofsted judgements on children's services, some in the PP+ post -16 pilot, a few in SWIS and from the survey, some that we felt had reported promising practice on CWSW.

as of more value than the strategic work, putting pressure on the VS. They also noted that initially individual cases of CWSW highlighted the gaps in the system, identifying what they needed to target strategically.

Many VSHs have identified the schools or localities with highest numbers/most at risk CWSW and targeted resources at these schools and localities. A few LAs described in their surveys and interviews three levels of support: universal (e.g., training for schools and SWs in attachment and trauma), targeted (e.g., directing SW input into localities or schools with the highest risk CWSW) and bespoke (e.g., individual interventions undertaken by SWs or DSLs to support attendance). One region appeared to have shared this model across VSHs leading to its wider spread implementation.

## 4. Findings related to the PP+ Post-16 Pilot

The findings are reported under the main themes which were addressed in the data collection reflecting the outcomes set out by the DfE. The conclusions are presented under each of these outcomes.

### 4.1 Overview

This section reports on the evidence relating to the PP+ post-16 pilot. It starts with the support for post-16 CLA/CLs that VSs provided before the pilot began, as reported in Survey 1, before moving on to the analysis of the Expressions of Interest (EoI) from the 30 successful pilot LAs. Activities provided by the pilots are presented, followed by the early outcomes reported including the Theory of Change for the PP+ post-16 developed in the workshops, evidence of early progress against these outcomes, and examples of good practice provided by the VSHs in Survey 2. Finally, the barriers and facilitators to implementation of the pilot reported in the surveys and interviews are discussed.

### 4.2 LAs' support for post-16 CLA/CLs before October 2021

In Survey 1, we asked all LAs about their post-16 support to CLA/CL prior to the pilot to provide a context for the findings on the PP+ post-16 pilot. Almost all VSs were already making some provision with 105 responding to the question including 28 of the pilots. Many used pre-16 PP+ funding for post-16 provision and adapted what they offered pre-16 CLA to post-16 CLA/CLs. Activities listed included some designated post-16 staff roles within the VS while a few undertook PEPs with post-16 CLA/CL, and some targeted NEET and/or Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) or provided careers advice and training. Eleven mentioned small group or 1:1 tuition mainly in English and maths. Eight provided training in attachment and trauma for FE staff funded through other budgets in the VS or CSC. IT equipment for individuals was provided by pre-16 PP+, charities, or separate UASC or emergency Covid funding. Criteria varied across LAs for allocation of student bursaries, mostly to those meeting FSM eligibility and achieving full attendance at college.

Initiatives not funded by the pilot but of interest to other VSHs included an innovative employment scheme reported to have increased CLA/CLs' engagement with education, employment or training (EET):

There has been a big push on training and an apprenticeship scheme and employment opportunities has actually been created within the council. This provides young people with a guaranteed interview and potentially paid work experience to develop a CV for onward employment. Good outcomes for the majority of our care leavers are being achieved but always more can be done, especially for those furthest from employment, 30 CLA/CLs currently at university. [DCS]

This LA also noted that in their employment programme workers support young people (not only CLA) in schools at transition from year 11 to progress training plans, but the 11-16 schools were more engaged in this offer than the 11-18 schools who were described as ‘cherry picking’ the pupils to come back into Years 12 and 13. Another DCS interviewed in a non-pilot LA, confirmed by a FE Lead interviewed, was offering similar opportunities to a very small number of individual CLs, citing the example of one who was doing a doctorate at university who the DCS had given work in the LA without having to go through interviews. They described the LA as like a ‘family business’, in the way they supported and pursued aspirations for CLA/CLs, whilst acknowledging that they could not extend this across the cohort but were interested in the longer-term outcomes.

### **4.3 What the pilots had planned to do**

The 30 successful bids from LAs to pilot the post-16 extension of PP+ were analysed. The total number of young people that could potentially benefit from the additional funding to these 30 LAs was reported to be 3340, ranging from 34-340, with an average of 111 per pilot. In Survey 1, we asked for the numbers of 16-18 year old CLA/CLs in FE colleges. From the 37 responses received to this question, pilot LAs had significantly higher numbers of post-16 CLA and CLs in FE colleges (mean 136.8) than non-pilot authorities (mean 52.8).

Most LAs were intending to strengthen their staffing capacity only for the duration of the funding. In several LAs, the VS appointed or enhanced a current post to be a deputy with a strategic role for post-16. Milestones that they set, for example ‘to produce PEP guidance for post-16 by the end of March 2022’, were for the duration of the pilot, but some specified longer-term outcomes such as aiming for higher achievement and reducing NEET.

In general, the strategies planned were reported in the bids to replicate what VSHs regarded as successful support strategies used by the VS for under 16s. To improve

attendance<sup>35</sup>, most VSs planned to focus on prevention and early intervention, with more than one third of them intending to use a commissioned attendance monitoring service and follow up those absent. Another approach was to identify barriers to attendance and provide bespoke support to address these. Examples of this included allocating specific roles such as an Attendance Support Officer to the VS or colleges, emotional health mentors in the VS or strengthening cooperation between Personal Advisors (PAs) and college FE Leads.

Fifteen LAs planned to use the funding to increase the compliance rate and quality of post-16 PEPs. Typically, this included training for colleges to support tutors and other staff with PEP completion or providing administrative support for completion. Over half of the proposals highlighted the intention to increase the involvement of CLA/CL in the PEP process and/or young people's mentors or carers attending PEP review meetings. A third of LAs supporting significant numbers of UASC were proposing to use PEPs to develop clear education pathways, which responded to young people's identified needs.

About half the LAs focused on NEET, some trying to re-engage CLA/CLs in education or employment or, by providing mentoring support, aiming to enhance their self-esteem, and engaging with the staff and FCs of those identified as high risk of NEET. Eight VSs planned to involve a Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, (CEIAG) service.

Many VSs had already established some partnerships with FE colleges and their plans built on existing work. Two thirds did not specify the number of colleges they intended to work with. Of the third that did so, the numbers specified ranged from 2-26 providers.

## **4.4 Activities undertaken in the post-16 pilot**

### **How the funding was used**

Other than investing in data systems, the three main ways in which funding had been used (as reported by 27 PP+ post-16 pilot LAs in Survey 2, see tables 7, 8 and 9 for more details) were:

- appointment of new staff in the VS or enhancing existing staff roles to cover the additional post-16 responsibilities (16)
- support for individual students (24)

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<sup>35</sup> Throughout this report, our references to attendance are to young people attending courses on which they are registered, not just the initial registration.

- training for college staff (21) and social workers (9)

## **Appointing new staff or enhancing existing staff roles in the VS and colleges to cover the additional post-16 responsibilities**

New staff were appointed in 16 VSs, with the other pilot VSs enhancing existing posts. These new roles were most commonly Deputy Head for Post-16 or Lead Advisor on Post-16. Two thirds of the VSHs in the pilot reported that, initially, they or their post-16 lead allocated time to visiting the FE colleges to establish relationships with the FE Leads in colleges.

Other posts funded from the post-16 PP+ included mentors in the VS or colleges, part-funding a new role in a Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) provider to improve attendance, develop capacity and raise expectations, additional hours for the FE Lead and pastoral teams in colleges, and extra interpreter time for EAL students.

One of the case study VSHs not in the pilot, suggested that it was financially beneficial for FE colleges to support CLA/CLs from their own funding since within the FE funding formula, the cost of not retaining students made it worth investing in extra support to increase retention. This VSH stated that they knew other VSHs who had put in funding for somebody within the college, but that she had not done so because the college had already seen the value (financially and educationally) of having somebody to support CLA/CLs.

## **Support for individual students**

In Survey 2, 24 of the pilots reported that they had used the PP+ post-16 funding for individual student support. This included mentors in the VS or in colleges, as a way of either extending existing support or providing care leaver peer mentoring training. One FC noted the influence that the mentor had on completing course work at college:

...this word kept being bandied around that she had to have her own [art] portfolio. Our young lady needed a lot of encouragement, I wouldn't say that she was lazy, but she would do as little as possible at times. I was bandying around this word, "come on, get your portfolio ready" so many times but in the end, I asked the VS, would they help, support me... And so, the VS actually appointed a mentor and I think that really helped because it was another ...somebody ...saying, "come on, you gotta get this together tell me what you want to do in life..." and it was, I think it took the pressure off of us as the carers... So, she

had this mentor for a number of sessions... I think that was really good just to have another adult in her life. [FC]

Some VSHs and FE Leads described how, as part of the pilot, young people have been trained as mentors to offer individualised peer support which they reported led to enhanced self-esteem, well-being and engagement in the CLA/CLs with whom they were working. Personal coaches rather than mentors<sup>36</sup> were provided by some VSs and colleges and this was reported by FE Leads to have encouraged the development of skills through volunteering and other activities. Another VSH reported that they had reduced the number of CLA who were NEET, through intensive one-to-one coaching of an identified group of young people at the college to address their barriers to participation. Three of the case studies in Appendix 2, Fowley, Pottsgdown and Martonfield provide more detailed accounts of the use of mentoring in the PP+ post-16 pilot.

Emotional well-being was also prioritised through providing a safe dedicated space at college in one case study LA, specifically designed for CLA/CLs to meet and socialise whilst also having access to careers guidance and a SW based at the college. The Martonfield case study in Appendix 2 describes a health and well-being programme for CLA/CLs funded through the PP+ post-16 pilot. Additional support was provided in the pilot through laptops, one-to-one or small group tuition, specialist equipment needed for courses (such as art and design) and bicycles to provide transport to college, all funded through the PP+.

## UASC

National statistics show that in 2021, 27% of 18-year-old CLs were UASC, with a slightly lower proportion for CLA over 16<sup>37</sup> than CLs though this varies greatly across LAs. In Survey 2, 15 of the pilots reported allocating some of the PP+ post-16 funding to UASC. In some pilot LAs, UASC education had a separate additional (to PP+) allocation which allowed them to fund specific activities such as English language courses and GCSE-related tuition. FE Leads and VSHs interviewed stated that UASC had different specific needs from others in this cohort at college, the most obvious and immediate being language support:

...with my ESOL students, they've gone from learning probably at pre-entry level, so coming in and just working towards entry level 1, speaking and listening, to having additional tuition at

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<sup>36</sup> Personal coach: focuses on improving relationships, careers, and day-to-day lives, setting objectives. Mentor: guides a less experienced person by building trust and modelling positive behaviours

<sup>37</sup> DfE (2021) *Children Looked After in England including adoptions*. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions/2021>

home, in groups, and ...one-to-one tuition [using PP+]. ...I've got students that have moved straight onto the ESOL course, and are working towards entry level 2, entry level 3, so in such a short space of time they've moved so quickly, and it's a complete frustration for them, if they have had education in their previous country, and they're learning English, they feel like they've gone right, right back. [FE Lead]

Interviewees referred to the PP+ post-16 funding being allocated to UASC for visits to prospective universities, and to buy books, maths resources and picture dictionaries. In one LA with high rates of UASC, every asylum seeker had one of these picture dictionaries as part of their care package. In three case study LAs, the PP+ post-16 was being used to provide a laptop to every UASC (see Pottsdown and Twinburn case studies in Appendix 2 for detailed examples) and a SW in one of these LAs commented that although some of these young people would be moving elsewhere under the National Transfer Scheme, they will get to keep their laptops. Targeted resources such as a booklet written and translated to explain post-16 education to UASC were also funded by the PP+ post-16 to provide them with more support. FE Leads, VSHs and DCSs were quick to point out in interviews that with the right support, UASC were often highly motivated and made rapid progress.

## Training for college staff

In Survey 2, pilot VSHs were asked to list the types of training they had provided for colleges. Table 7 shows their responses.

**Table 7: Training for college staff (Survey 2, 21 responses from pilots)**

Type of Training	Number
Trauma informed practice/Attachment and trauma/understanding ACEs/SEMH training etc	11
Relational /restorative work with post-16 learners	2
Training sessions on aspects of the care system and how these impact on young people: A Journey Through Care training offered to FE leads, post-16 Team Hubs, SEND (Inclusion), e-PEP for post-16, DTs/DSLs	2
Briefing to college staff	1
Training on the Progression PEP delivered to key personnel in the FE colleges	1



New VS staff for post-16 shadowed college staff	1
Anxiety based school avoidance	1
Becoming a student success officer	1
Training led by CSC in relation to leaving care - what it means, legalities, support	1

Twenty-one of the 27 pilot VSHs in Survey 2 reported using some of the funding for training activities with FE staff (leads and subject tutors). This compares with eight of 105 LAs who reported providing training to colleges in Survey 1 when all LAs were asked about training for colleges. Only one of the eight also stated in Survey 2 that they were providing training, meaning that 20 pilots had undertaken new training activities between November 2021 and March 2022. One VSH commented:

...we're going to be training about 70 members of staff across [local college] because it's such a large college and when you look at their numbers in care and care leavers, I think they're talking about 130 young people, not necessarily from [LA name] alone, but from across the areas but also when you look at their cohorts, they've got a lot of vulnerable young people. We are looking at how we might roll that out to the other providers, but all of our private providers are already aware that they can log onto and sign up to the ...training that is generic. [VSH]

As shown in Table 7, most of the training in colleges reported in Survey 2 addressed trauma-informed practice or restorative and relational work (see Pottsdown case study in Appendix 2 for an example of training). Seventeen of the 27 VSHs in Survey 2 reported facilitating FE Lead networks across their LAs and others funded mentoring for FE leads. VSHs noted that many CLA/CLs attend colleges outside their LA, and it was not possible for them to offer training to all those colleges.

## Training for SWs

In Survey 2, pilot VSHs were asked to list the types of training they had provided for SWs supporting CLA/CLA post-16. Table 8 shows their responses.

**Table 8: Training in FE for SWs (Survey 2, 9 responses from pilots)**

Type of Training	Number
Trauma-informed training, attachment, sensory needs in the classroom, psychological transference, preventing exclusion	4
SWs' team meeting input from new college	1
Briefings on PP+ post-16 and the post-16 Progression PEP for SWs, UASC teams, learning difficulties and disabilities team, Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Team	1
Training for the leaving care team	1
VS post-16 lead providing individual training on PEP process and supporting CLA education post-16 for all SWs and PAs	1
Ad hoc – as and when needed for SWs on a 1:1 basis	1

Nine VSHs had undertaken training for SWs, a significant increase from that reported in Survey 1 in which almost no training for SWs was evident. They provided further details of this training in Survey 2, indicating that mostly it addressed trauma-informed practice, PEPs and options at post-16.

### Activities other than training

Many of the other activities reported used some of the PP+ post-16 grant but were harder to track back to specific spends. VSHs were asked to list the activities undertaken in the pilot, other than training and these are shown in Table 9.

**Table 9: Activities other than training (Survey 2, 27 responses from pilots)**

Activity	Number	%
Accessing and analysing data on post-16 CLA and CLs	24	89
Facilitating specific support for individual students in college e.g., mentors, laptops, language support, 1:1 or group tuition	24	89
Briefings on post-16 PP+ e.g., bulletins, briefings, newsletters, social media, webinars	21	78

Monitoring attendance or intervening to improve attendance of post-16 CLA and CLs	20	74
Facilitating enrichment activities e.g., sports clubs, cultural visits	19	70
Improving PEPs – through e.g., clearer targets, writing or editing responsibilities	19	70
Meetings with SWs about individual students outside of PEPs	19	70
College visits (beyond attending PEP meeting in college)	18	67
Network/forum meetings of FE Leads facilitated by the VS	17	63
Allocating PP+ through PEPs	16	59
Activities targeting NEET	16	59
Funding or part-funding new roles for FE in the virtual school	16	59
Facilitating/signposting others to additional services for students e.g., CAMHS, YOT, specific therapies	15	56
Activities targeting UASC, e.g., booklet written and translated to explain post-16 education provision to UASC	15	56
Other activities listed: aspirational visits to FE colleges for Years 7-9, FE awayday to share good practice mentoring/coaching programmes to raise (career) expectations	14	52
Panels and review meetings relating to CLA/CLs	13	48
Surveys/consultations to collect views of CLA/CLs	7	26
Funding or part-funding new roles in colleges e.g., to monitor attendance, mentors	6	22

## Raising the profile of CLA/CLs and of the VS

VSHs reported attempting to raise the profile of CLA/CLs and of the VS within colleges, across LAs or both. Activities, listed in Survey 2 and shown in Table 9 from 21 VSHs, included promoting awareness in FE colleges through bulletins, briefings, newsletters, social media and webinars.

## Attendance and Retention

Twenty of the 27 pilot VSHs reported in Survey 2 that they had been monitoring attendance or intervening to improve attendance of CLA/CLs under the pilot. From interviews it emerged that better data collection and access had enabled more forensic analysis, highlighting issues such as identifying one subject in which a young person has poor attendance despite good attendance overall. A few interviewees reported using the PP+ post-16 funding to give vouchers to CLA/CLs to incentivise attendance (see the Fowley case study in Appendix 2 for an example of payment incentives), but most relied on the college bursary only being released in response to good attendance. Two LAs (as reported by a DCS and VSH) described how the colleges were increasing their support hours for CLA/CLs (funded from PP+) to follow up first day absence and offer support at an earlier point to reduce dropout rates and provide some administrative support for PEPs. Another LA used the pilot funding to appoint a part-time pastoral support post in the VS who the college contacted if the young person's attendance started to drop. Since this started, in January 2022, this VSH reported no dropouts whereas previously, they typically would have had several over that three-month period.

## Improving PEPs

A major focus of activity in the pilots was around improving PEPs and, less often, Pathway Plans. Nineteen of the 27 pilot VSHs reported in Survey 2, trying to improve PEPs through using the funding for training for SWs, writing targets and drafting reports themselves as models for others to follow, or editing those written by others. A detailed example of using the pilot PP+ post-16 to improve the PEP process is described in the Westenhurst case study in Appendix 2.

VSHs and FE Leads were clear that PEPs needed improving and that the pilot had provided the opportunity to do this. They frequently commented on aspects of the PEP process such as CLA/CL eligibility for PEPs, who was invited to attend PEP review meetings, frequency, responsibility for organising the review and writing the plan, and where and when reviews were held. One FE Lead commented that the PEP process was undertaken without any meetings in their LA, the FE Lead was required only to complete a form. Generally, FE Leads were positive about PEP review meetings continuing to take place online in the pilot following the pandemic, as it saved them extensive travel time and enabled them to bring in tutors from the college for specific items. Most FE Leads thought it was the VS's role to complete PEP reports because their knowledge of the students was better. For FE Leads dealing with lots of different LAs, variation in PEP formats was a major issue causing them extensive work and frustration and this had increased because of VSHs in the pilot extending PEPs to more post-16 CLA/CLs.

In February 2022, as part of the case study data collection, we requested anonymised PEPs from the 13 case study LAs. We received seven, four from PP+ pilot LAs and three from non-PP+ pilot LAs. These were analysed by the research team using the criteria of strengths, achievements and concerns, coverage of educational needs, SMART<sup>38</sup> targets, stating a next review date, and evidence of input from FCs and CLA/CL. All four pilots were judged to demonstrate good educational coverage including attainment levels, SEND, well-being, educational targets and all but one, future plans. One of the non-pilots included all these except educational targets, the other non-pilots had very little educational coverage.

Targets were judged by the evaluators in all seven PEPs to vary from being vague (e.g., 'to ensure he engages in all lessons' without any indication of support) to SMART targets. Four LAs' PEPs, including one pilot LA, provided no evidence of FC input and only obtained indirect and brief input from the young person. This might have reflected the capabilities or preferences of the CLA. All seven included the next review date. Findings from the surveys and interviews identified the need for greater commitment from SWs to have clear educational targets with detailed action planning and establish effective input from FCs and where possible, young people. The challenges involved were confirmed by this analysis of a small sample of PEPs.

Frequent complaints about PEP review meetings from FE Leads interviewed concerned SWs not turning up to the meetings, young people not being appropriately engaged in the process and FCs not being invited:

A lot of the time SWs don't turn up for a PEP meeting, that's really, really difficult ...for the young person, difficult for the designated contact, particularly in our college where that young person may not have met the designated contact before they've attended a PEP meeting. And that SW acts as their advocate, somebody to support them. Also, that SW has access to ...other pots of funding... So basically, it really depends on what SW you have... a real big issue is that carers [are] not always invited to the PEP meetings... so we as education are the ones that are responsible for contacting the carer. I'm not sure that's appropriate.... [*FE Lead*]

## Improving Pathway Planning

Post-16 SWs interviewed in the PP+ pilot LAs explained that Pathway Planning should contain information about what education the young person wants, their interests and engagement, and they felt that the pilot had sharpened this focus. They

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<sup>38</sup> Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely.

reported using this information to inform the support offered in the pilot from PP+, whether it involves accessing apprenticeships, colleges, or other activities, with one LA continuing Pathway Plans to age 24 (though not funded from the pilot).

PP+ pilot VSHs in the surveys and interviews talked about the importance of earlier Pathway Planning in preventing NEET. One pilot VSH stated in Survey 2 that CLA/CLs who were NEET were now [with the pilot funding] directly accessing support into EET from a specialist service and another that academic and skills support were being offered through a NEET re-engagement programme. A third pilot VSH described how their LA were streamlining Pathway Plans, PEPs and 'employability passports' as part of their pilot work.

## **Working with Personal Advisors**

Some FCs noted in interviews when asked about their contact with PAs that PAs take over at 18 (so only cover 18-year-olds in the pilot) and that the contact transfers from the SW and FC to the PA and young person, more often initiated by the young person. The level of engagement of the young person with the PA was reported to vary depending on their relationship. Some PAs maintained contact with the FCs as well in the context of *Staying Put*, which enables CLA to stay with FCs until 21. FCs in the pilot LAs described the support given by the PA as covering job applications, clothing allowances and well-being.

In general, FE Leads interviewed from pilot LAs reported much less contact with PAs than with SWs and that they were more likely to initiate the contact with PAs, whereas SWs were reported to initiate the contact with the FE Leads. They reported that the PAs were seen by the CLs as there to help them, with less authority than a SW and therefore less threatening. One DCS suggested that, from their reviews of the PP+ pilot work, conversations between PAs and CLs were a bit 'fluffy and comfortable' and that the PAs needed to introduce a bit more challenge to encourage greater motivation in some CLs. This DCS reported that PAs provide good day-to-day support in many cases, with decisions being made by the young person rather than, as was the case more often with the SWs pre-18, having decisions made for them.

## **Activities designed to raise expectations and support employability**

Activities to raise the expectations of CLA/CLs were also provided by the VSHs in the pilot. Some VSHs arranged college visits for CLA/CLs before they enrolled though these occurred before the pilot had begun but after it was announced. DCSs and VSHs often commented that these activities needed to start earlier and one reported that as part of the pilot plans, all colleges in their area would be offering an

'aspirational day' for Key Stage 3 CLA, including a visit to the college and encouragement to start thinking about their futures. One FE Lead commented however, that earlier disruptions in CLA/CLs education continued to impact despite efforts to raise expectations earlier in their school career:

...reducing school exclusions and reducing the amount of disruption pre-16 in compulsory education ...anything that supports a young person to achieve as high as possible level qualifications against their potential is crucial. Because when I look at those who are unemployed in NEET and long-term NEET, you do find that they have had a disrupted education, they were excluded from school, and they achieve low level qualifications as well. [FE Lead]

Three VSHs reported collecting career interests, expectations, and action plans on EET via the PEP process to offer an enhanced careers programme tailored to individual needs, in one LA, in different languages for UASC. Briefings for FE staff, employment, and training providers about the needs of CLA/CL students were provided by pilot VSHs. They also introduced talks and visits from employers (in different languages for UASC) as part of the pilot activities. A detailed example of an employability scheme for CLA/CLs is given in the Fowley case study in Appendix 2.

The pilot was reported by DCSs and VSHs to have facilitated much more transition planning and thereby potentially to improve longer-term EET. However, one AD noted a gap around preparing CLA/CLs to achieve apprenticeships at Level 3 and felt that the PP+ post-16 funding could be better used for foundation courses to do this.

## **Working with Social Workers**

More than two thirds of the pilot VSHs in Survey 2 had been holding meetings with SWs about individual students outside of PEP review meetings. Pilot VSHs commented in interviews on the need to respect professional boundaries and empower rather than 'take over' from SWs. Pilot VSHs interviewed, suggested that these meetings were often about attendance and retention issues or, sometimes, confusion about the criteria for the use of bursaries. This was confirmed in interviews with FE Leads in the PP+ pilots who described the SWs as initiating frequent contact regarding bursaries, attendance issues and relationships with tutors or other students.

One VSH described how the PP+ has been used to increase the capacity of a SW based in the college. There was conflicting feedback from FCs and FE Leads in

interviews in PP+ pilots on their relationships with SWs, some were very positive, noting how proactive they were and easy to contact. Where a CLA/CL was attending a college in a different LA from their residence, communication with SWs was more challenging, one FE Lead noting that the college were not notified of changes of SW. The types of support CLA/CL were entitled to varied across LAs even when they attended the same college.

Accountability of the SWs was also raised as an issue, with FE Leads in one pilot LA noting that when a CLA/CL dropped out, the college was blamed whereas they felt that the SW should be more accountable, where for example, they had not given them the information needed to facilitate a more successful outcome.

## **Maths, English and life skills**

The practice of expecting CLA/CLs to retake maths and English GCSE where these were not obtained at school, especially for access to courses at Level 3, was viewed as problematic by SWs, FCs and VSHs in the PP+ pilots. Young people's enthusiasm about the course, peer group and college life at this key transition time was dampened by this requirement. Sometimes this was noted to limit CLA/CLs' engagement and retention in college. For CLA/CLs who have taken the GCSE (several times in some cases) and failed, it was suggested by a FC in a PP+ pilot LA that the PP+ funding could better be spent on practical skills courses including maths for daily living, but not making the GCSE a condition of going to college:

[Name] went to college, maths, English, other courses such as childcare - not enjoyed. Now working full time in a care home, just turned 18. Gone to stay with boyfriend, would like to buy own property. I have concerns when she didn't pass her maths qualification, will she be equipped for paying bills etc? [Name] doesn't wish to face this issue – there is a gap there in addressing that knowledge for practical skills. Preparation for life skills is key, especially when they leave foster care. SWs used to address this, but now they don't have time. Could the VS run some courses on this or do one-to-one sessions? [FC]

## **Enrichment Activities**

The importance of enrichment activities for enhancing the self-esteem and confidence of post-16 CLA/CLs was emphasised by many of the VSHs interviewed in the PP+ pilots and a few FE Leads. This confidence was regarded as an essential pre-requisite for learning, with activities that developed it regarded as a good investment. More than two thirds of the 27 pilot VSHs in Survey 2 stated that they



had facilitated these activities using the PP+ post-16, including sports clubs, visits to museums, theatre and cinema. One described an art project funded through the pilot in a public space created by UASC and representing their identities.

FCs and SWs interviewed in PP+ pilots also mentioned the importance of these activities. Frequent mention was made of Jamie's Farm, a national charity offering farming therapy at various locations; horse-riding was also mentioned, and cultural activities. One FC recounted opportunities:

There was a writing course in Yorkshire [pre-pilot] that she went away on... two nights in Yorkshire, just for improvement to her literature... Absolutely fantastic opportunity. ...And then there are, you know, activities more social sort of day things [funded through the pilot] trip to the cinema, rollerblading or something. And I believe that's all the VS as well. [FC]

One pilot VSH mentioned working with the local Football Academy as part of the pilot and similar links to other sports' organisations; and how one CLA is going to sixth form in mainstream provision because somebody took the time to recognise his capabilities in sport, and that made the difference for him. Another pilot VSH interviewed described a CLA whose attendance had been poor for the previous two years and who refused to see their SW but loved anything to do with horses. So, the VS arranged a dressage coach as a sessional tutor at the college (funded through PP+) and they were now pursuing an adult qualification in horsemanship.

## 4.5 Evidence of outcomes from the PP+ post-16 pilot

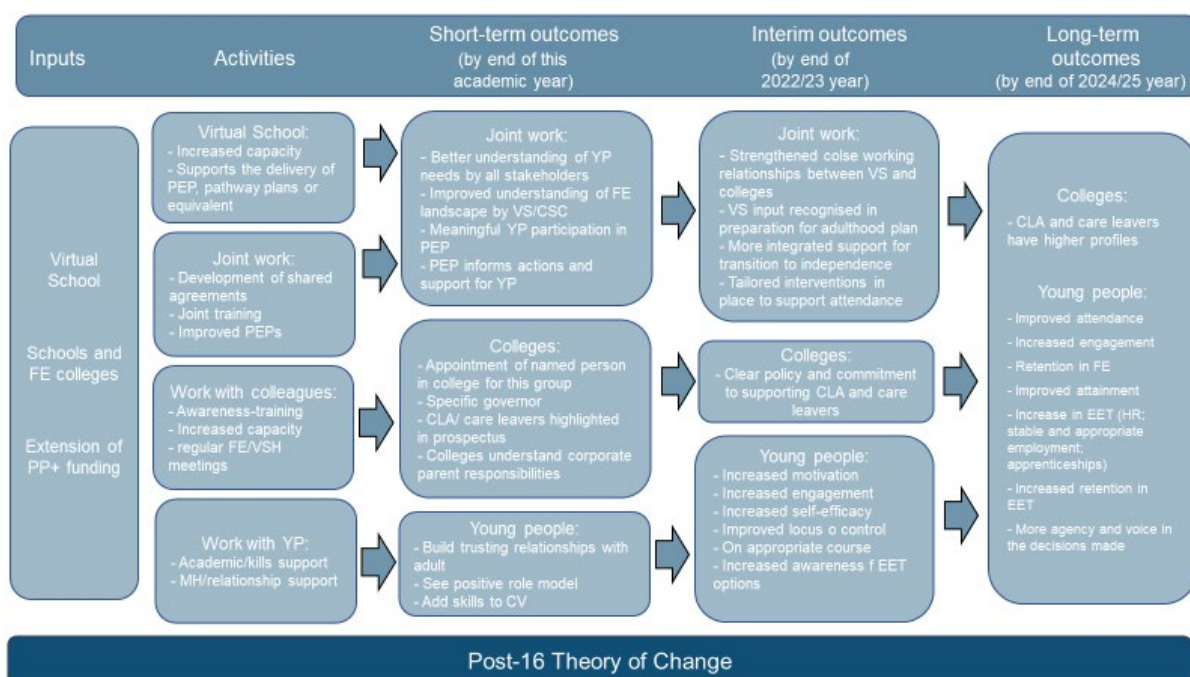
### Outcomes of the Theory of Change<sup>39</sup> Workshops

The Theory of Change developed in the workshops is shown in Figure 4. However, this will continue to be developed during any further evaluation. Figure 4 was then circulated with Survey 2 and VSHs in the PP+ post-16 pilots were asked to report on their progress against the outcomes, providing examples of evidence of this.

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<sup>39</sup> Definition of Theory of Change in footnote 17

**Figure 4: Theory of Change for the PP+ post-16 pilot**



## Evidence of progress against the Theory of Change Outcomes

### Short, interim and long-term outcomes

Table 10 shows the early evidence against the short-term outcomes from the Theory of Change as reported by 26 pilot VSHs who responded to this question in Survey 2. Only those categories of progress mentioned by more than one VSH are included here. No evidence of early progress was reported against the interim outcomes in the Theory of Change. For the longer-term outcome of ‘more agency and voice in the decisions made’, three VSHs reported that through PEPs, young people were fully engaged in decisions about how to use the PP+ funding to support their attendance and engagement. In the next phase it will be important to build in ways to assess these outcomes.

Some provided examples of the increased understanding of post-16 CLA/CL needs that had developed from the activities such as briefings and webinars listed earlier in Table 9, as early evidence of progress against the Theory of Change outcomes. One DCS described the major impact of the pilot:

LA has just restructured the provision for the dedicated care leavers’ service in January 2022 [in response to the pilot]. It is a strong offer – a level of integrated service with welfare, housing and rights covered – it is high profile across the council and with the Chief Exec, being represented directly via the corporate parenting panel... [DCS]

## Examples of good practice

In Survey 2, VSHs were asked to give examples of good practice arising from the pilot work. Table 11 covers all the main examples given by the 22 pilot VSHs who responded.

### Collection, access and use of data

In Survey 2, VSHs in the PP+ post-16 pilot were asked to report on developments in the collection, access and use of data. Their responses are reported in Tables 25-27 in Appendix 1. Twenty-four of the pilot VSHs in Survey 2 reported that the data collection on post-16 CLA/CLs was much improved compared to that available at the time of Survey 1. Twelve of these had invested pilot funding in better data collection, through a commissioned contractor or directly from colleges. This provided weekly, or in a few cases, twice daily, Years 12-13 attendance, and attainment and other data on a less frequent basis. Collecting attendance data was reported by those interviewed to be much more complex in colleges than schools since attendance is only required for individual subjects or programmes in colleges rather than for the full session or day. Nine pilot LAs in Survey 2 had started using the PEP system for capturing and reviewing attendance and progress data and this was reported to be informing and improving learning targets, accepting that PEP data at termly intervals might be more out of date. A data manager commented:

We now [since the pilot] monitor their [post-16] PEPs and we monitor attendance ...it's done ...weekly rather than daily. That's quite standard. At least we do get that attendance monitoring from [contractor name], which I know a number of other LAs don't yet, so we are already doing that. Which is why, as I'm sure VSH will have explained, we took, a different sort of view with [the next stage of] our post-16 pilot to do some intensive work with a small number of young people. [*Data manager*]

**Table 10: Early evidence of Progress against the short-term outcomes in the Theory of Change**

Short-term outcomes	Early evidence of Progress	Number
<b>Joint working</b>	Better understanding of needs by stakeholders (extended existing partnerships with SWs and PAs, training, VS staff attending CSC/FE meetings, post-16 newsletter)	5
	Enhanced cooperation between CSC, VS and FE (the FE college is now represented on the VS Governing body in one LA)	3
	Improved multi-agency working with Aftercare Service, to identify young people at risk of NEET and offer support	2
<b>Colleges</b>	Through pilot, VS provided enhanced training opportunities (on attachment/trauma) to wider/all staffing groups within colleges	6
	Funding used to extend current support through named person/mentors in college, additional hours for DT/pastoral team, mentoring for FE leads	5
	Better PEP completion by FE leads, identifying needs and targeted support/improved relationship with FE college impacted on PEP completion/attendance/ETE retention	4
	Colleges showing understanding of corporate parent role by including VS more regularly when needing support	2
<b>Young People</b>	More engagement of YP in PEP meetings (including virtually – YP have identified resources and support needed to improve attendance/promote engagement/ attainment e.g. Funding used for bicycles, specialist equipment/TA support	10

Short-term outcomes	Early evidence of Progress	Number
	Mentoring: Young people have been trained as mentors; individualised peer support led to enhanced YP engagement. Personal coaches for YP, encouraging skills through volunteering and other activities	4
	Trusted relationships with VS staff, college visits prior to start, specific support	3
	Young people's voice improved through creation, launch and development of 'Steps' programme – e.g. CV writing & building relationships with key college staff	3
	NEET cohort now directly accessing support from the Pathways service (YP better CEIAG understanding). Academic/skills support offered through NEET re-engagement programme.	2

**Table 11: Examples of good practice in implementing the PP+ post-16**

Area of reported good practice	Examples*	Number
Training	DT guidance for post-16 CLA/CLs to create consistency of practice across FE All college staff (including SLT, kitchen, etc) trained on trauma informed practice All FE settings signed up to an 11-day Trauma informed diploma Training for SWs/PAs on PEPs, education pathways for post-16	7
Staffing – new staff appointed	Retention-engagement officer to support YP to attend career interviews Keyworker role at college to settle learners and increase retention Care Leaver seconded as PA – completing PEPs throughout year 13 Identified a DT in a college who acts as a mentor for new DTs elsewhere	6
Mentors	Mentors for Year 13s to complete and submit UCAS applications Training care leavers to be mentors, developed transferable skills FE college pooled PP+ funding to employ pastoral mentor to support CLA/CLs experiencing anxiety	6
Interventions	Extra tuition/Catch up provided in college for those CLA that need it Individualised IAG system using the PEP interests' information	4
UASC	Interpretation service (funded PP+) to support UASC engagement in PEP, review options, benefit from mentoring, individual translation of presenter online	4

Area of reported good practice	Examples*	Number
NEET	Establishing work experience in house (several council depts) enabled activities and programmes of attendance from 1-2 hours/week to FT PP+ to purchase interview clothes	4
Multi-agency	Multi-agency transition/progression forum monthly to review all CLA/CLs aged 17, their current and future EET status, strengths and needs.	3
PEPs	Worked with colleges to roll out new PEP platform Funded and developed post-16 advisory teachers in VS who led on PEPs	3
Enrichment activities	Pottery, boxing, writing workshops, physical fitness/gym membership, football club for UASC – provided through allowance to mentors to enhance confidence and self-esteem	2
Resources	Web based myth buster handbook for YP produced by FE colleges to alleviate CLA anxieties about enrolling at FE Pre-prepared packs containing practical student equipment such as bag, pens, calculators, dictionaries, textbooks, prepaid student credit for meals	2

\*Each example given in the middle column has only been listed by one pilot LA in most cases but as they are only examples, it cannot be concluded that they were the only LA that progressed on this item.

Access and use of data was reported by VSHs to have improved from Survey 1 to Survey 2 in 12 of the 27 pilots that responded, which they attributed to the investment in data systems. At the management level, two pilot VSHs noted that data on CLA/CLs were now included in the weekly analysis by the LA senior leadership team to monitor trends for 16-18-year-old CLA/CLs and inform conversations with CSC and education. Two other pilot VSHs further noted that stronger links were reported between the VS and senior leaders in FE that ensure data flows were more timely, more detailed, and more widely disseminated. Better use of data in FE colleges was reported by FE Leads in interviews to be increasing the profile of CLA/CLs with FE staff, so they knew who these students were and responded to red flags such as non-attendance and poor emotional health more urgently, to target support. FE Leads did suggest however, that they needed access to data from schools to strengthen their induction of students on entry but that perceived data protection issues limited this. The data were stated to be informing support of CLA/CLs to maintain EET placements and two VSHs noted in interviews that better monitoring of NEET was also taking place through the PAs.

## 4.6 Barriers to implementation of the PP+ post-16

Survey 2 included a multiple-choice question asking pilot VSHs to list the three most significant barriers to implementation of the pilot. These are summarised in Table 12.

**Table 12: Barriers to implementation of the PP+ post-16 (25 responses)**

<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Number</b>
Social worker turnover and/or vacancies	10
Difficulties recruiting staff/enhancing existing roles to cover CLA/CLs	8
Not receiving data on CLA/CLs from colleges	6
Lack of engagement from colleges	6
Lack of engagement from CLA/CLs	5
Inadequate resources	2
Lack of support from senior managers in the LA	1
Difficulties in relationship with social care	1



Others listed: <sup>40</sup> duration of funding of pilot, eligibility of pilot cohort, PEP-related issues, lack of capacity across teams (VS/SW), CLA/CLs attending colleges in non-participating LAs, low expectations <sup>41</sup>	10
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## Social work turnover and vacancies

Ten of the pilot VSHs who responded in Survey 2, and most interviewees, reported that SW turnover and vacancies were a major barrier to implementing the pilot. VSHs stated that it created instability, insecurity, and lack of continuity for CLA/CLs. FE Leads and FCs interviewed also noted that SW turnover was a major issue, with consequent lack of continuity for the young person. VSHs, FCs and FE Leads all noted that changes of SW contributed to reduced engagement of the young person in college and contributed to a lack of trust of adults generally:

I've got students that have had the same SW and the same placement and are really settled, and then I've got students that have had many placement changes, and many SW changes, and they just don't engage with the SW. ...I've had ones that they've changed – they've taken the SW a long time and they've managed to build up a relationship with them, but it's taken a lot to get them to trust them because they've had so many SWs.

[FE Lead]

Longer-term consequences for the young person's progress of not having a trusted adult who 'looks out for them' were noted:

...changes in SWs, and changes with support staff, particularly like with these vulnerable disadvantaged learners, I think it's vital that they've got this golden thread really of someone that's got their back because just keep changing a SW isn't going to get them where they need to be. [FE Lead]

SWs working in the post-16 area reported high workloads, stress and gave cogent explanations for the turnover and vacancies, including frequent LA restructuring:

<sup>40</sup> An open text question for respondents to list any other barriers was provided. Each of these responses was mentioned by one respondent.

<sup>41</sup>Low expectations reported by VSHs in Survey 2 were not confirmed by VSHs, FE Leads, FCs or SWs interviewed. These interview responses cannot be generalised as they might reflect the self-selection/VSH selection of interviewees who may have been more positive.

I think we are very undervalued, very overworked, very burnt out. That means a high turnover of staff. Staff lose the passion, then think I'm just gonna go agency 'cause. I'm gonna get double the pay. So, then you bring your agency workers in, which then impacts on the staff team and then agency staff workers can just go within a week and you just got that running and running and running around of a cycle. [SW post-16]

FE Leads experienced the implications of this, mentioning delays and having to take on extra work in the PEP process because the SW has not completed their part of it which meant it could not be signed off.

## Funding

As with the extension duties to CWSW, the funding duration and short lead-in time were reported to be problematic. This was reported by nearly half of the respondents in Survey 2 and the majority of DCS/ADs and VSH (and some FE leads) in the 13 case study LAs. In particular, the duration and uncertainty over any continuation of the pilot beyond March 2022 made it difficult to attract the best candidates to the VS role to lead on the PP+ post-16. This led to some LAs re-allocating existing staff, but also affected recruitment of mentors in the VS or colleges, and limited continuity and sustainability of the support provided for CLA/CLs. Concern was raised about the impact on attendance and retention of CLA/CLs at college, of terminating the contracts of those employed to monitor and support attendance. The short duration also limited investment in data collection systems, longer-term training for FE staff and SWs, and in interventions to support CLA/CLs. Considering future funding models, one AD suggested that available funding for care leavers outside of PP+ was not used effectively. They went on to suggest that moving towards more use of personal budgets would better recognise that CLA/CLs' needs differ, some needing high levels of financial support while others need very little.

## Eligibility for PP+ post-16

While the application guidance stated that the funding could be used more flexibly to support CLA/CLs *in wider post-16 settings, or those who are NEET*, most LAs interpreted the funding requirements as being limited to those in FE colleges because this was the basis for calculating funding allocations in the pilot. This was regarded by the VSHs and DCSs as unhelpfully restrictive in enabling the highest number of CLA/CLs to benefit from support for engagement with learning in whatever context best suited their needs. Those that used the funding more flexibly were able to provide support for CLA/CLs in Years 12 and 13 of schools and for training and apprenticeships for increasing employability.

The fact that the pilot only covered CLA/CLs up to 18 was identified in Survey 2 and pilot interviews as a significant challenge. CLA/CLs engaged in programmes of learning that end after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, therefore might be trying to complete the course without the support needed. Services offered post-18 if any, not as part of the pilot, varied across LAs. One SW noted that often the CLA/CLs have little support after 18 with no family and few friends, so the Pathway Planning was about preparing them for independence, where there was no further support post-18. One FC commented:

...you wouldn't push your own children out at 18, so why should you do this with children that were taken into care in the first place because of their vulnerabilities? [FC]

Many interviewees, but especially FCs and SWs, noted the critical importance of continuing to provide educational support for CLA/CLs post-18. Research evidence<sup>42</sup> describes the truncated transition to independence that CLA/CLs experience given the support that they can access for education ends at 18, when many are just starting to study or train meaningfully. Furthermore, many have missed substantial amounts of schooling and may be just beginning to re-engage at 18. LAs have responsibilities to support CLs until 25 but the VS is only involved after 18 in some LAs and can only offer limited support, leaving CLs without support that is sufficiently focused on education. One SW commented:

I think that just because a child turns 18, ...they still require some support. They still require that help to plug that gap and it could be that like my young person who is 17 now, that they've been out of education and now they're really focused, and they want to do it and they're driven and we should still be supporting them in every way we can. Obviously, my role ends at 18. So, it becomes the battle of the personal advisor at 18 to get that support [SW post-16]

A pilot LA DCS suggested that focusing on the longer-term future is helpful. They noted that SWs were talking about the adults CLA will become, and not just the children they are today. They saw this as the job of the corporate parent who, like any parent, thinks about how the child can be supported to become the adult of tomorrow. An AD in a PP+ pilot critical of the cut-off point at 18, noted that for care leavers in their LA, there would always be the possibility of returning to education at the age of 28 or 29 because they were facing difficulties, or they wanted to do GCSE

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<sup>42</sup> Stein, M. (2012). Young people leaving care: Supporting pathways to adulthood. London: Jessica Kingsley

maths and English. That LA had an adult education system from which they could claim funding to cover education much later in life.

## Format, process and focus in PEPs

Most FE leads work with multiple LAs (as many as 10 were reported by an FE Lead in one case study LA). They raised the issue of variations in the support they received from VSs in different LAs (including those in the pilot). They also noted wide variation in the format required for PEPs, differences in the PEP procedure and eligibility criteria for PEPs. VS post-16 leads in interviews reported concerns that the post-16 SWs put insufficient emphasis on educational issues or put weak targets in PEPs, though improvements were reported to have resulted from the pilot.

## 4.7 Facilitators to the implementation of the PP+ post-16

In Survey 2, a multiple-choice question asked VSHs to list up to three of the most significant facilitators for implementation of the PP+ pilot. These are summarised in Table 13.

**Table 13: Facilitators for implementation of the PP+ post-16 (25 responses)**

Facilitators	Number
Good engagement/support from colleges	19
New staff/enhancing existing roles to cover CLA/CLs	16
Established good relationship with CSC post-16/care leaving team	15
Support from senior managers in the LA	12
Receiving data on CLA/CLs from colleges	8
Good engagement from CLA/CLs	7
Adequate resources	6
Others listed: <sup>43</sup> effective needs analysis over time to identify best value, existing relationship with LA Employment and Skills Service and Pathways team, access to outstanding providers who have successfully engaged CLA/CLs	3

<sup>43</sup> An open text question for respondents to list any other facilitators was provided. Each of these responses was mentioned by one respondent.

## Engagement of colleges

Good engagement and support from colleges was reported by more than two thirds of pilot VSHs in Survey 2 as a significant facilitator for implementing the PP+ post-16 pilot with only six VSHs reporting lack of support, such as the college not engaging with the VS (see Table 12). Eight of the 25 pilot VSHs who reported on post-16 data in Survey 2, identified receiving good data from colleges as a facilitator, but six VSHs reported not receiving data that they needed on CLA/CLs from colleges as a barrier.

## Funding

The funding provided was most often mentioned in interviews as a significant facilitator in implementing the extension of PP+ to post-16 CLA/CLs. Some pilot VSHs and their line managers (usually ADs) described it as transformational, having enabled a step-change in the numbers in FE and in improving attendance and retention. For example, one DCS reported using the funding for an attendance, well-being and transition officer which had, in their view, led to a 3% increase in EET in the first few months (not verified by the evaluation team). Others had used it creatively to provide a wider range of opportunities including training and work experience.

## Appointments and enhanced posts to the VS or colleges

FE Leads in colleges were introduced in the 28 pilots (from which we have data from Survey 1) where not previously established. Sixteen of the pilot VSHs reported in Survey 2 that the work undertaken by new or enhanced staff appointed to lead on post-16 and funded through the PP+ pilot had been a significant facilitator of progress. Some pilot VSHs have funded or subsidised enhanced roles in FE colleges<sup>44</sup>, a number focusing on attendance and retention which they reported had increased attendance and retention.

## Established good relationship with CSC post-16/care leaving team

Working closely with CSC colleagues was reported by DCS/ADs and VSHs in PP+ pilots to be key to providing an effective service for post-16 CLA/CLs. Half of the pilot VSHs in Survey 2 reported having established a good relationship with the post-16 and care leaving team(s), in some LAs this was one team which was reported to

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<sup>44</sup> The NNECL Quality Mark recommends a designated role in FE colleges for overseeing care leavers, but designated roles were still relatively uncommon. <https://www.nnecl.org/pages/195-nnecl-quality-mark>

improve continuity of support. In interviews, SWs and VS Leads for post-16 gave examples of these new working relationships.

### **Support for individual students**

Support for individual CLA/CLs at the right time was noted by SWs and FCs in interviews to facilitate engagement in college. They emphasised the importance of timely support as delays often led to demotivation and eventually, to drop out. Types of support reported to have facilitated engagement included various types of mentoring, equipment for courses or laptops and enrichment activities aimed at enhancing confidence and self-esteem, and this had been made possible by the allocation of the post-16 PP+.

## 5. Limitations of the Evaluation

The evaluation had limitations that need to be acknowledged. Some of these stemmed from the difficulty of evaluating the early stage of the extension duties and a short pilot with uncertainty about their continuation. Implementation of both initiatives varied across LAs. A few continued almost with business as usual, others tried to make lots of short-term changes that did not require additional funding from outside the grants and a few made significant investments from other budgets to build some sustainability irrespective of future funding arrangements. Hence comparisons between LAs were difficult to make and judgements of effectiveness hard to evidence. The six-month duration made any expectations of major change or access to evidence of improved outcomes, limited. In March 2022, the continuation of the VSH extended duties programme was announced, making it possible to seek more secure assessment of outcomes in any further evaluation.

The surveys provided a helpful overview of practice, but the timing of Survey 1 misjudged the impact of the half term holiday making the period (six weeks) over which surveys were completed and returned protracted which, in a short programme, meant those submitted later had longer to implement changes than those submitted earlier. We do not know whether those who completed their surveys differed from unresponsive LAs in any specific ways, though the very high response rates (Survey 1, 76%, Survey 2, 82%) will have minimised the potential impact of non-responders.

The request for data on CWSW and post-16 CLA/CLs in Survey 1 had been checked by a working group of VSHs, but a combination of different interpretations of terms, lack of clarity on definitions and lack of time for those trying to meet the requests, meant the data received was not reliable enough to report. However, merely asking these questions led to much debate and activities in the evaluation team, DfE and most importantly in VS teams. This seems, from the interview discussions, to have clarified definitions and options for VSs, who reported progress on data collection, access and use in Survey 2 and interviews.

Other questions in our surveys might have been clearer but the second survey was both reported to be easier to complete by VSHs and easier for the evaluation team to analyse, while still providing useful data. Some overlaps in questions remained, which was unhelpful (e.g., respondents repeating what they had written as evidence of progress in their responses on examples of good practice). This learning will be carried forward to inform any further evaluation.

There were several limitations in the case study methodology. The case studies were selected (in addition to establishing a range of types of LA, etc.) on the basis that they provided interesting developments and progress in Survey 1, that might inspire and support others. The interviewees were identified by the VSHs and then

invited to participate making them both selected and self-selected. Only five parents agreed to be interviewed and no views of CWSW or CLA/CLs were accessed. In both the surveys and interviews, those choosing not to participate may well have had fewer positive views than those that were involved. These issues all lead to the importance of not generalising from the findings though opportunities to triangulate between stakeholders' views helped to establish 'trustworthiness' of the findings. The richness of the in-depth data from the large number of interviews was an asset to the evaluation.

Overall, it is very early in the implementation process of both these programmes to expect to be able to identify securely any major changes. Furthermore, neither an experimental nor quasi-experimental approach which would be regarded as the 'gold standard' for robust impact evaluations, were possible because of the engagement of all LAs for the extension duties and LAs selected on specific criteria for the PP+ post-16. However, the lack of measurement of impact at national level will be an area worth further consideration in any future evaluation. Identifying what LAs might return to the evaluation team in terms of evidence of progress against the developing Theory of Change will be important.



## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusions and recommendations that follow were either explicitly identified by respondents in the survey data and interviews, or respondents reported issues which we then developed into conclusions and recommendations. The draft of these was circulated to the 13 case study VSHs for comment and discussed at the DfE Working Group, Delivery Board and a reflection workshop with a further 9 VSHs hosted by the evaluation team. Comments from all these sources led to further revisions.

### 6.1 Conclusions related to the extension of VSH duties to include CWSW

Section 3 of this report provided evidence for the implementation of the activities identified in the Theory of Change for CWSW, as well as promising evidence of progress towards some of the short-term and interim outcomes in the model. This section provides a summary of the main findings against the objectives outlined within the DfE document on the extension duties (which also emerged in the Theory of Change developed by the VSHs).

#### **To ensure that there would be a local education champion for CWSW in every LA.**

The grant accompanying the extension of duties to CWSW was welcomed and many LAs reported having used it to enable the VSH to better champion this group. They enhanced staffing capacity, invested in data to better understand the cohort and its needs, and/or provided training to raise the awareness of school staff and SWs. However, the six month and one year funding announcements, with a short lead-in time, was reported by VSHs and DCSs to limit progress towards this objective particularly in relation to recruitment difficulties. The absence of statutory guidance relating to the extension duties to the VSH was widely acknowledged by VSHs as limiting the potential impact of the extension duties.

#### **To provide strategic leadership that would ensure greater focus on CWSW, targeting support earlier, and helping improve their engagement in education.**

VSHs, supported by their ADs/DCSs, acknowledged the strategic nature of the role but lamented the inability to intervene in individual cases where they felt they could make a major difference. Instead, they accepted the need to empower SWs and DSLs to address individual needs. Extensive activities to raise the profile of CWSW and of the VS were reported, indicating progress towards one of the key strategic outcomes identified in the Theory of Change. These activities also contributed to

their influence, enabling leverage of other services that can support CWSW including CSC, CAMHS and Youth Justice. This influence was at this stage, more apparent with SWs interviewed than with DSLs. While preventative rather than directly supportive of CWSW, the Early Help services were identified as an important partner for the VSH moving forward and several DCSs/ADs noted that greater investment in this service would be more appropriate as it might reduce the numbers of CWSW and the stigma attached to families in having a SW.

Many professionals felt that some schools struggled to provide the support for CWSW that could make a difference due to resource constraints. While a significant number of CWSW were eligible for pupil premium funding, many were not. This was reported in interviews to create some inequality in the resourcing of work schools feel able to do to support CWSW on their roles individually or as a group.

### **To create a culture of high aspirations that helps all CWSW to make educational progress**

The inconsistent availability of data on this group of children in many LAs, and its often siloed nature, may be indicative of the ways in which an holistic view of this cohort's educational needs had not previously been considered. The pandemic had stimulated some LAs to begin to draw together CSC and educational data, particularly on attendance, but the extension duties galvanised more LAs to go further in integrating the data they held and seeking more robust data on the education of CWSW. While this has yet to transform the expectations for this group of children, it has begun to develop a picture of the group that such a transformation will require, and is a key mechanism identified in the Theory of Change for this programme. Some challenges remain on data collection on children attending schools outside the LAs, and professionals expressed the view that each LA was creating systems to capture and analyse cohort level data that could be more efficiently collected and disseminated by the DfE.

Some of CWSWs' absence has been linked to missed lessons or sessions when they were taken out of lessons by professionals for meetings or interventions. Some schools had policies to restrict this, equally, some SWs demonstrated sensitive practice in addressing this issue for example, by attempting to see CWSW outside of lessons.

A particular barrier to the educational progress of CWSW was their struggle to re-engage with learning following the pandemic, with increased absence, suspensions and exclusions noted by DCSs, VSHs and DSLs. This may, though, only reflect the underlying barriers CWSW and their families feel in engaging with schools more generally. The second Survey and interviews indicated that more VSHs were making effective use of data on attendance and exclusions to identify CWSW most at risk of

poor attendance, suspensions and exclusions and encouraging other services to intervene with support. They were also facilitating improved sharing of data between stakeholders and were active in developing more effective relationships between DSLs and SWs. The work of VSHs, supported by DCS/ADs, has also begun to raise the confidence of SWs to intervene in schools which, in time, should deliver more effective advocacy and be reflected in better outcomes for CWSW.

The high rates of SEND in the CWSW cohort also constituted a barrier to the educational progress of the cohort. DSLs noted that delays in SEND assessment and the EHCP process were putting themselves, and others, under greater pressure as they tried to meet the needs of CWSW. Lack of appropriate educational placements and support to meet the SEND needs of CWSW was a particular concern of parents, SWs and DSLs.

No recommendations are made on SEND as the SEND Green Paper was out for consultation on these issues as this evaluation report was going to be published. Similarly, the care review was published as this evaluation report was being published so no recommendations directly related to its remit are made.

## **6.2 Conclusions related to the PP+ post-16 pilot**

This section provides a summary of the main findings against each of the DfE objectives for the PP+ post-16 pilot. Overall, the findings suggest that continuation of funding is critical to enabling the engagement of CLA/CLs in colleges and other EET.

### **Raising the profile of CLA/CLs in FE by strengthening close working relationships and sharing expertise**

The profile of CLA/CLs in FE has been raised in most pilots as evidenced by the accounts of DCSs, VSHs, FE Leads and some 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. However, there is more progress to be made on how these relationships play out, in particular in the PEP process. There is evidence of good understanding between VSHs, SWs and FE Leads about each other's expertise but their respective responsibilities within the PEP process could be clearer, with some confusion perhaps reflecting different practices across LAs. While some excellent examples were given of engaging FCs and young people effectively in the PEP process, extension of the pilot would create more time and space for this to be strengthened in future, keeping in mind that CLA/CLs attending colleges may be sensitive about processes that identify and make public their care status.

## **Improving the attendance of young people in FE by putting in place tailored interventions to support attendance**

Attendance emerged as a key focus across the sites in the implementation of the pilot which also recognised that monitoring post-16 attendance presented different challenges than does sessional attendance up to the end of Year 11. Increased data activity was reported, some LAs appointing additional or enhancing existing staff to monitor and intervene on attendance or funding additional capacity in colleges to do so. Other LAs have commissioned companies to collect data, and in some examples, to act on it, on behalf of the LA. Colleges also reported further development of their systems for monitoring attendance.

Interventions directly intended to support attendance included funding equipment needed for specific courses and transport. While some financial support for transport is provided through CSC, particularly after the person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, this varied across LAs as did what could be covered by the bursary and PP+. Interviewees in rural LAs noted that getting to college could require, for example, two buses and a long walk. In these cases, some PP+ was used for bus passes or bicycles.

Longer-term attendance and retention required the young person's sustained motivation and that in turn needed support that enhanced their college experience through help with relationships, study skills and, for some CLs, addressing the challenges of independent or semi-independent living. Enrichment opportunities, such as using a gym and participating in cultural activities, not only those directly related to their courses, were said by interviewees from across the sites to raise CLA/CLs' self-esteem and confidence thus increasing attendance and retention.

## **Better supporting the delivery of PEPs, Pathway Plans or equivalent at both an individual and cohort level**

PEPs have been 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. Pathway plans were less often mentioned, perhaps reflecting the variation in the 16-25 responsibilities across LAs which meant that the SWs and VS staff interviewed were in some cases not involved with CLs after they reached 18. One LA reported streamlining the PEP and Pathway Plan. Attendance at PEP review meetings by some SWs which varied within, rather than between, LAs remains a challenge, as does effectively engaging the FCs and young people in some LAs. FE Leads usually felt well supported by the VS but when having to deal with PEPs from multiple LAs, were finding the process and variations in format very challenging and time-consuming, reducing the time they could spend directly supporting CLA/CLs.

## Identifying models of good practice used by LAs across the country

The evaluation of the pilot has identified perceived models of good practice in implementing the PP+ post-16. Survey 2 invited VSHs to describe what they considered to be models of good practice and some of these were reported in section 4.5. They are further exemplified from the interview data reported in the case studies.

### 6.3 Recommendations related to CWSW

These recommendations have emerged from the feedback from a wide range of relevant stakeholders during this initial phase of the evaluation of the extended duties.

#### Recommendations for DfE

- **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:
  - **Longer-term funding commitment** needed from DfE to enable a) quality, continuity and stability of staffing; b) LAs' investment in data; c) LAs' (via schools and MATs) investment in intervention/support programmes.
  - **Make the CWSW VSH duties statutory** as they are for CLA and PLAC to strengthen the profile, commitment, and longer-term investment. The role will also need further clarification through guidance.
  - **Any future statutory guidance should sharply focus on the strategic role of the VSH** in raising awareness and expertise of schools to meet the needs of CWSW in their LA, and of SWs to advocate effectively for CWSW in all educational settings.
  - Ensure that **Ofsted inspection guidance highlights CWSW** and links their outcomes to any safeguarding judgement.
  - **Extend Pupil Premium to all CWSW**<sup>45</sup> to strengthen the profile, commitment and longer-term investment in CWSW.

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<sup>45</sup> 35% are currently ineligible (though this varies with age and CIN/PPP). CPAG (2020) <https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/two-five-uk-children-under-poverty-line-are-not-eligible-free-school-meals> notes 1.2m children living in poverty are not eligible for FSMs

- **State clearly the business data needs of the LA** so that schools must share the data necessary to enable VSHs to undertake their role while remaining compliant with the Data Protection Act.
- **Revise the social work training curriculum to ensure the importance of learning as a protective factor** is clear to all newly qualified SWs.
- **Revise guidance on child in need plans and child protection plans** to ensure that the importance of learning as a protective factor is explicitly addressed and that plans reference the views of the child.
- **The DfE should facilitate the next stage of evaluation by:**
  - **Consulting with NAVSH at regional and national level** to agree on what cohort level data is needed to best monitor the impact of VSHs' strategic role with respect to CWSW during the next period of evaluation.
  - **Defining 'Ever' CWSW as Ever6 CWSW** so a clear dataset limited to 6 years can be created and monitored locally and nationally.
  - **Facilitating local and national evaluation of impact by adding a CWSW 'flag'** to existing data collection/supply so that timely local and national data are available from schools.

## Recommendations for VSHs/LAs

- DCSs/ADs to ensure that professionals working with CWSW **minimise disruption to lesson times** by seeing them outside lessons or by reducing the number of visits per day or week. VSH to facilitate the sharing across services of effective school policies and sensitive SWs practices on this.
- LAs should ensure **there is appropriate governance in place** to provide support for, and scrutiny of, the work of the VSH in relation to the extension of their duties.
- Regional VSHs groups to **share models of good practice** on implementing the extension duties and share these with Ofsted.
- VSHs to **prioritise understanding the protective value of education for CWSW** and ways in which their educational needs can be better met in their training and work with SWs, DSLs and other services.
- VSHs to **document evidence on local progress** made towards achieving the short-term, interim and long-term outcomes identified in the Theory of Change for the programme.

## 6.4 Recommendations related to the PP+ post-16 pilot

These recommendations have emerged from the feedback from a wide range of relevant stakeholders during this initial phase of the evaluation of the PP+ post-16 pilot.

### Recommendations for DfE

- **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:
  - **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.

### Recommendations for VSHs

- Regional VSHs to develop **greater consistency in PEP formats**, procedures, and eligibility. Would improve efficiency of FE Leads who find the

current differences challenging and time-consuming and be helpful to partner services such as youth justice.

- Regional VSHs groups (and VSH peer reviews) to **share models of good practice** on implementing the PP+ post-16 and share these with Ofsted.
- VSHs to continue their **training and work with SWs** on understanding the protective value of post-16 education to CLA/CLs, the educational needs of post-16 CLA/CLs and improving the PEP process.
- VSHs to provide more **guidance for FCs** on the support available for CLA post-16.
- VSHs to **document evidence on local progress** made towards achieving the short-term, interim, and long-term outcomes identified in the Theory of Change for the programme.

## 6.5 Recommendations related to future evaluation

These recommendations are for the evaluation team in discussion with DfE. Any longer-term evaluation should:

- **Start from the outcomes reported above** proposed in the two Theory of change outputs developed by the VSHs.
- Consider employing a quasi-experimental approach to analyse data from the national datasets (e.g., NPD), **undertaking comparisons with children who are eligible for Ever6 FSM but not CWSW**.
- **Work with DfE to create clearer definitions** of the characteristics of the cohorts (e.g., Ever CWSW) to ensure that participants in the evaluation share common definitions.
- **Undertake annual online surveys of all VSHs** repeating key questions from the first stage to enable comparisons over time and capture important metrics not included in the national datasets, including spend on the programmes and education focus in CIN/CP plans. Multiple-choice questions on implementation and impacts should be used as much as possible to decrease the burden on respondents.
- **Interview annually the 13 VSHs** from the first stage evaluation to provide more detail on impact, and enable progress, barriers and facilitators to be identified over time.
- **Undertake case studies in a small number of LAs** to provide a deep dive to complement the secondary data analysis and surveys. Where possible, these should be drawn from those in the first stage evaluation and include



interviews with the same people to maximise assessment of progress over time.

- Explore the options and ethical requirements for **collecting the perceptions of CWSW** through existing surveys, consultations or Children in Care Councils (85% of the members having been CIN) in the case study LAs.

## Appendix 1: Additional tables referred to in the report

**Table 14: Question 2 – What steps have been taken, if any to improve the collection of data on children who currently have a SW? (114 responses)**

Type	Examples	Number
<b>New information</b>	*Data team/analysts: VS working with data team to identify new data needs/collecting data on numbers of CWSW (by locality/schools), attendance ('live', daily, weekly), exclusions, SEND, PT timetable, attainment	49
	Commercial company to collect attendance (daily, weekly)/exclusion/termly assessment data	27
	Schools: Online questionnaire to schools regarding attendance/reviewing attendance with each secondary school/ pilot school sharpened/tightened existing internal tracking of cohort/Each school's CWSW champion sends tracking information to VS team every term	8
	Part-time timetables: Developed Microsoft form for capturing PT timetables of all children/ Completion requested weekly from DSLs on CWSW	2
<b>Data quality assurance</b>	QA of data/Data Quality Markers to improve accuracy	11
<b>Supply of, or ability to identify information on CWSW as a distinct cohort</b>	CWSW added to LA 'transition portal' (for Y6 & Y11 pupils, with a plan for Y2 children in time)	1
	Annual safeguarding survey: Built in audit information around new duties and attachment aware/ trauma informed practice	1
	Electronic Front Door Referral system for suspensions, exclusions and reduced timetables updated to ensure correct data collection for CWSW	1
	Home Education/No school: Data on CWSW with EHCP without school/home educated	1
	CWSW's Perception data collected	1

Source: 2022 survey responses

\*Where multiple data items, each response listed different combinations of these

**Table 15: Question 2 – What steps have been taken, if any to improve the access to data on children who currently have a SW? (114 responses)**

Type	Examples	Number
<b>Integration/matching/synthesis of existing information</b>	Matching/integrating/cleansing/sharing data from CSC and education/ attainment, attendance, exclusions, destinations at 16 (still problematic for CWSW at out of LA schools)	26
	**Data dashboard (e.g., Power BI, linking education and CSC data) developments/ LA data warehouse developing including CWSW – triangulated with Census, NEXUS & LAIT/ Recommissioned the whole Education Service MIS to fully integrate with CSC (Liquid Logic) 'This has highlighted how useful a national model/format would be'	25
	Appointed additional data post to bring together multiple LA (and some Trust) data sets	16
	CSC new and closing (CIN/CP) cases - accurate weekly updates/SWs directed (by VS) to add attendance data, new and closing cases	6
	Matching UPNs to school census for contextual information on FSM, EAL & SEND	3
	Data on CWSW on part-time timetables cross matched to SEND and CSC data centrally	1
<b>VS and others accessing data for a particular purpose</b>	Administrative support in VS to inform pupil's SW when exclusion/suspension takes place	5
	Supporting schools with technology for data upload and sharing/Bi-termly visits to schools to update barriers to learning and track impact/DSLs send tracking information to VS team termly	4
	CSC managers & EWO sent data by VS weekly for follow up	3
	Access to Children Missing Education Team SharePoint, enabling VS to identify CWSW on reduced timetables/below 60% attendance, multi-agency input YOS, CME, VS, EWO and SEND	1

	New access for VS to records on CSC platform that collate information on workers involved with CWSW	1
	Lead Advisory Teacher in VS has student tracker - all students being worked with, their referral reasons/school/SEN/Age and Gender	1
<b>Upskilling VS/Sharing practice on data analysis</b>	Training for VS colleagues on using computer programs to collect, analyse and present data/ VS staff completing internal apprenticeship in data analysis	2
	VSH Regional collaboration: set up working group with other virtual schools to discuss data collection and analysis	1
<b>Limitations of access to data</b>	Systemic issues with CSC data system: data managers constantly identifying inaccurate UPNs, incompatibility of CSC system with other databases	4

Source: 2022 survey responses

**Table 16: Question 2 – What steps have been taken, if any to improve the use of data on children who currently have a SW? (114 responses)**

Type	Examples	Number
<b>Using data to target support</b>	CSC information system updated monthly with suspensions/exclusions data, guidance sent to SW to support families in working with schools to reduce risks of further exclusion	5
	Analysis and reporting CWSW attendance data – used to inform CSC managers/target support/ Education indicators (inc. Attendance, exclusions, EHE) now form part of the regular Children and Families performance reporting	4
	CWSW RAG rated using data, identify most concerning, share across services to target support	3
	Using CSC data to identify schools and localities with highest numbers of CWSW and need, to target specific support/resources/Education Service review data on CWSW within each locality	3
	Monitoring impact: Setting up data scorecard for monitoring the impact of the new duty and targeting support/Using data to assess whether VS support impacts on CWSW	3
	Demonstrating through meetings and briefings how schools’ benefit from Universal, Targeted and Bespoke support from the data	3
	Working party with headteachers to review data	2
<b>Reviewing data for strategic planning</b>	SMT analysis: Monthly Summary of CP/CIN data, analysis at SMT /Joint strategic management meeting (monthly) between Education and CSC Senior team to specifically analyse data on CWSW	10
	Not in 25 meetings on PA gather data on attendance of CWSW, develop plans for CSC to action/Development of LA ‘part-time timetable’ recording template for CWSW/monitored by a monthly part-time timetable group	4

	Prioritised CWSW group within Covid Recovery Programmes, initiatives for SEN inclusion and collating data where necessary. CWSW identification within SEN EHCP applications	3
	Analyse attendance, exclusions and end of KS outcomes for CWSW at school level to conduct case studies and identify best practice.	2
	SWs complete an educational RAG form for each CWSW at each core group and review meeting	1
	Data has been analysed at a school level by the Head for 2 schools involved in the pilot action research	1
<b>Issues raised as barriers to development</b>	Timeliness: will utilise exclusion data but this is only available three times a year	2

Source: 2022 survey responses

**Table 17: Have any developments taken place on the collection, access and use of data on children who have EVER had a SW? (113 responses)**

Answer	Number	As a %
Yes	26	23
No	87	77

Source: 2022 survey responses

**Table 18: Have any developments taken place on the collection, access and use of data on children who have EVER had a SW? Examples listed (26 responses)**

Examples	Number
Data reports/dashboard developed/developing for Ever CWSW (2016-21 in one LA) to reflect live figures for numbers in cohort, SEND, Attendance, FSM, exclusions (currently/monthly/ termly, producing half-termly reports for headteachers)	16
Visited schools to request that they gather data about Ever CWSW (attendance, exclusions/suspensions, attainment and progress)/Conducting survey with headteachers on Ever CWSW/Safer in school panel for attendance tracking of ever CWSW/Raising awareness with schools and SWs of need to provide this information (at transition points)	5
RAG template information for use by education and social care includes pupils who have ever had a Social Worker (though one LA struggling with staff capacity to complete it)	2
Creating an education audit for children CSC/adapting education section of CSC database	2
GDPR: working with information governance team to address GDPR concerns around data sharing with schools in order to do this	1
Additional resources for admin support to cleanse and update data	1

Source: 2022 survey responses

**Table 19: Describe any early evidence of progress towards the CWSW outcomes shown in the Theory of Change**

Short-term outcomes	Early evidence of progress	Number	Examples
<b>Schools' increased understanding of the educational needs of CWSW</b>	Evidence of increased understanding in meetings/forums, conversations, requests for advice/ support/ training	36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VSH contacted by schools for guidance/advice/ training</li> <li>• Anecdotal evidence of de-escalation and learning readiness</li> </ul>
	Evidence of increased understanding connected to training, resources	28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training with DT/DSLs led to understanding of need, but little evidence so far of schools changing practice except our local Alternative Provision</li> <li>• Journey through Care training has increased awareness and discussion of the needs of CWSW</li> </ul>
	Increased understanding informed by data/research	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey to schools has highlighted needs of CWSW to school leaders</li> <li>• Identify barriers between the groups of children from data submitted</li> </ul>
	Understanding the lived experiences and awareness of needs of CWSW	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater school awareness of the needs of CWSW – evidenced through discussion with SLTs</li> <li>• Some schools beginning to consider the impact of lived experience of CWSW</li> </ul>



	Attendance, exclusion, inclusion	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevented two permanent and several fixed term exclusions of CWSW since VS Advisor in post</li> <li>• Improvements in attendance and reduced PT for some individual pupils</li> </ul>
<b>SWs increased understanding of the educational needs of CWSW</b>	Evidence of increased understanding of CWSW's educational needs in meetings/conversations/forums, requests for advice/school visits	29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings with SWs then acknowledging educational needs, reflecting basic understanding not there before</li> <li>• Increase in SWs approaching VSH for advice/guidance on CWSW</li> </ul>
	Attendance, Exclusion, Inclusion	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SW sourced (with extension funding) family support worker on attendance and punctuality, evidence of increased attendance</li> <li>• SWs more aware of how to challenge schools around the use of part time timetables and exclusions</li> </ul>
	Increased understanding informed by data/research	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing contacts from SWs on support addressing educational issues, using NCER data to track this</li> <li>• Pilot schools trialling Key Education Indicator form and YP's voice form, to be used within</li> </ul>

			statutory meetings to support SWs
	Improved understanding of educational system	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By making education a mandatory aspect of every assessment point, managers reported that profile of education has risen</li> <li>• Increased understanding of school support available across LA and referral routes within LA</li> </ul>
<b>Better joint working to address educational needs of CWSW</b>	Collaborative working across and within LAs	39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed an Extended Role Network to share best practice</li> <li>• Connections between the VS and growing number of services - YOS, Education Outcomes, CSC teams</li> <li>• Successful links and joint working with the SWIS</li> </ul>
	Evidence of joint working from meetings, advice, clinics, discussions	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team clinics and LA panels improving consistency of education focus in all performance and scrutiny across wider LA services and care planning recording on education</li> <li>• CWSW VS Advisor used as a source of reference for advice, support and guidance at multi agency meeting (health, police,</li> </ul>

			vulnerable learners, SEND, youth offending, CSC)
	Better joint working as a result of data	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing attendance data with EWO and Family service teams</li> <li>• Joint working improved through two surveys – one of SWs and one of DSLs. VS meeting senior SW to develop further</li> <li>• Improved consistency of data and information exchange across LA services around the CWSW</li> </ul>
<b>Development of a common language about the education of CWSW</b>	Training and resources	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-produced guidance and training across services within LA, development of consistent common language</li> <li>• SWs commented on misunderstandings when considering education and how training has allowed them to understand the 'language of education'</li> <li>• Information recorded on Child in Need and CP Plans is the focus for joint discussion of this aspect</li> </ul>
	Focus on and use of common language	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of schools, SWs and LA education service leads noting this</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginning, especially around trauma informed practice but this is a long journey</li> <li>• Use of the phrases e.g. 'attendance is a safeguarding issue' and 'attendance is everyone's business' heard much more often now in schools, SWs, inclusion service</li> </ul>
	Evidence of common language from meetings, conversations, advice, forums, panels, newsletters	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networks and forums held with services use the common language of 'Educational neglect' and 'Trauma informed practice' - understood and beginning to be championed</li> <li>• Particularly evident in the language and the understanding of 'educational' terms now being used by some CSC staff in communication with schools</li> </ul>
<b>Improved data quality about CWSW</b>	Responses <b>not</b> addressing attendance, exclusion/inclusion	37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduced Power BI to allow daily review of CWSW, training VS team on Power BI</li> <li>• Schools confidently using the data to support CWSW</li> <li>• VS access to CSC data used to target interventions within the duties consultation</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved % of matched CSC and education data – 98% for statutory school age compared with below 90% when this work was started.</li> </ul>
	Attendance, exclusion, inclusion data	22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to the Children Missing Education Team SharePoint includes Education reports, enables identification CWSW on reduced timetables or below 60% attendance, which has multi-agency input from YOS, CME, VS, EWO and SEND</li> <li>Data quality drastically improved, has allowed targeting of key priorities for high number of CWSW with high persistent absence over time</li> <li>Exclusion data tracked weekly to ensure swift and timely intervention, advice, support &amp; guidance</li> </ul>
	Attendance, inclusion, exclusion, behaviour & engagement	22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decreased exclusions in several schools who have completed the whole school A and T training and follow up work with SLT</li> <li>Slow but improving attendance</li> <li>Reviewing behaviour policies from a trauma-informed point of view,</li> </ul>

			<p>which have been impacting on exclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children’s Plans are more likely to contain educational aspects</li> </ul>
	Increasing school’s understanding of the needs of the cohort	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of schools has shown students who are home educated and on CIN plans who may be at safeguarding risk – targeting support</li> <li>• Young People’s voices form part of the Key Education Indicator document for schools</li> </ul>
<b>None/Too early to comment/new role</b>		37	

Source: 2022 survey responses

\* Meeting the outcomes at this stage would not be expected given the time frames agreed.

**Table 20: Question 5 - Has the extension of the duties to children that have, or have ever had a SW changed your relationship with schools? If so, how? (83 yes response)**

Categories	Number
Improved/extending contact/attendance at DSL networks/strengthening relationships/providing training with additional staff e.g. DSLs, SENCOs. Lots of shifting focus from DTs to DSLs	50
Initial positive conversations/greater exposure of VS with some new schools /more children in common (with CWSW compared to CLA)	12
Improved communication between schools and social care/schools welcomed VS bridging to CSC/mediating between school and CSC for CWSW	11
Raised profile of VS and VSH amongst schools	9
Some schools feedback that they are more confident/better supported to meet needs across all vulnerable groups	9
Schools understanding that they can pick up the phone/initiate contact to discuss any child/get advice (but need to acknowledge workload for VSH)	8
Sharing practice and interventions across schools around meeting the needs of CWSW	4
New adviser for CWSW/EP in VS (funded by Ext) providing much needed resources and training for schools, these have been very well received.	3
Schools receiving funding very willing to try out a range of strategies to improve children's engagement in learning and address challenging behaviour	3
Resourcing for staff enabled termly (in-person) visits to our secondary schools, rather than yearly.	3
Development of working group with schools/CWSW Steering Group around the needs of CWSW/trauma aware schools' strategy/ how to improve outcomes / pilot project with schools on attendance data/headteacher involvement in planning	3

Source: 2022 survey responses

**Table 21: Question 8 - Which of the following services have been most responsive in supporting the VS's extension duties to children that have, or have ever had a SW? Were any of these new contacts? Mark up to 3 answers (111 responses)**

<b>Services</b>	<b>Responsive: number</b>	<b>Responsive: %</b>	<b>New contact: number</b>
Children and Families' Services including social work/social care	89	80	8
Education Entitlement (Attendance, admissions, exclusions, EWS, EWO, elected home educated, EMAS)	74	67	5
SEND/Inclusion	53	48	1
Educational Psychology	52	47	2
School improvement	41	37	3
Early help	38	34	6
Youth Offending Team	26	23	5
Other (please specify)	11	10	1
Health	9	8	4
Police	3	3	1

Source: 2022 survey responses



**Table 22: Question 9 - Which group or body is providing oversight of the extension of the VSH’s strategic duties? (114 responses)**

<b>Group or body</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% Survey 2</b>	<b>% Survey 1</b>
Children’s Services Leadership Team	77	68	14
*Relevant Assistant Director’s Leadership Team	71	62	
Virtual School Board of Governors	63	55	44
Corporate Parenting Board/Panel	43	38	9
*Education Committee (Lead/Cabinet member led Board or similar)	17	15	
*Education Scrutiny Commission (Elected member-led Board or similar)	15	13	
Safeguarding Board	11	10	3
None of these (please specify, 12 specified that there was none)	9	8	35

Source: 2022 survey responses

\*These exact structures were not listed in Survey 1

**Table 23: Question 10 - Examples of good practice as reported by VSHs related to the extension duties to CWSW  
(83 responses)**

Area of good practice	Examples	Number
<b>Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trauma informed practice training for all educational settings (Early years to FE) for every member of staff, including caretakers, etc</li> <li>• Worked with group of schools about practice for CWSW to develop 'toolkit' and training for all schools – outcomes measured through pupil survey</li> <li>• Development of CWSW Professionals Guide, for DSLs, SWs and School Nurses</li> <li>• Training/advice/guidance to parents of CWSW/governor training</li> </ul>	34
<b>Multi-agency working</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VS joined panels e.g., CWSW panel, Early Help panel, Locality Hubs, YOT panel</li> <li>• YJ providing 'clinical supervision' to VS, looking at disproportionality of CWSW</li> <li>• Multi-agency working produced bespoke and creative curriculum combining best of mainstream and AP to meet CWSW's needs and reduced exclusions</li> <li>• Using VS funded credits to ensure CWSW referrals to CAMHS are progressed and receive better access to EP and therapies</li> </ul>	26
<b>Use of data</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance and exclusions data identifying trends, preventing/rescinded exclusions</li> <li>• All CP/CIN meetings ask for attendance and attainment data raising education focus</li> <li>• Data highlighted many CWSW on PT timetables, enabled direct work with schools</li> </ul>	19

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools' tracking and monitoring of their CWSW's progress identified 48% of CWSW not eligible FSM, but many needed targeted resources</li> </ul>	
<b>VS Clinics/Consultations for SWs/schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VS consultation slots/clinic (jointly with EPs) for schools and/or SWs</li> <li>Dedicated email referral route, more complex cases referred to clinic</li> <li>SWs pay more attention to education knowing VS is able to offer advice</li> </ul>	16
<b>Reviews/surveys</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Termly Education Review Tool for schools to establish need and relevant provision</li> <li>Survey all schools and SWs for their priorities for CWSW - understanding data and training, followed up with visits to identify good practice then shared</li> <li>5 questions on CWSW added when schools review behaviour policies to support focus on relational behavioural approaches</li> <li>Quality assure education element of CP/CIN plans to ensure ambitious and promote culture of high expectations</li> <li>School visits to carry out structured interviews with SLTs</li> <li>Review of impact of VS role through reviewing action plan implementation</li> </ul>	11
<b>Interventions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Termly Education Review Tool for schools to establish need and relevant provision</li> <li>Survey all schools and SWs for their priorities for CWSW - understanding data and training, followed up with visits to identify good practice then shared</li> <li>5 questions on CWSW added when schools review behaviour policies to support focus on relational behavioural approaches</li> <li>Quality assure education element of CP/CIN plans to ensure ambitious and promote culture of high expectations</li> <li>School visits to carry out structured interviews with SLTs</li> <li>Review of impact of VS role through reviewing action plan implementation</li> </ul>	11

<b>LA policy/focus change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporation of this work into the LA's overall education strategy</li> <li>• Influence the strategic direction of LA in relation to vulnerable children</li> <li>• Raising the profile of CWSW/VS within the LA</li> </ul>	9
<b>Guidance/signposting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporation of this work into the LA's overall education strategy</li> <li>• Influence the strategic direction of LA in relation to vulnerable children</li> <li>• Raising the profile of CWSW/VS within the LA</li> </ul>	4

Source: 2022 survey responses

**Table 24: Question 11 - Reviewing your answers to questions 1-10, please think about the overall progress your VS has made on the extended duties so far and its capacity to make progress in the future (116 responses, % in brackets)**

<b>Time period</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Limited</b>	<b>Steady</b>	<b>Rapid</b>
<b>The first three months (Sept to Nov 21)</b>	15 (13)	61 (53)	32 (28)	7 (6)
<b>The second three months (Dec 21 to Feb 22)</b>	1 (<1)	31 (27)	56 (48)	28 (24)
<b>The next five months (March to June 22)</b>	0 (0)	9 (8)	57 (49)	44 (38)

Source: 2022 survey responses

**Table 25: Question 13 - What steps have been taken, if any towards improving the collection of data on 16-18-year old CLA/CLs (24 responses, some gave more than one example)**

Example	Number
Purchase data collection system for weekly/twice daily Yrs 12-13 attendance (from company/directly from college) and attainment	12
Changing our PEP/ePEP to capture/review more suitable attendance data and learning targets/Improving the PEP process/robust data to identify progress at college within PEP system	9
Collected career interests/aspirations/NEET action plans via the PEP in order to offer an enhanced careers/aspirations programme - in different languages for UASC	3
VSH working with data team to identify destination data	2
NEET new to care data collected	2
Enhanced data collection, relating to the contact details of the Post 16 cohort, e.g., up-to-date emails and telephone numbers	1
Extension of PEPs to Post-18 to extend the data collection	1
Placement moves and how this affects retention and progress	1
Project with specific college collecting data at 3 points in time	1
Ensure regular data cleansing on Welfare Call; ensure gaps in data are filled	1

Source: 2022 survey responses

**Table 26: Question 13 - What steps have been taken, if any towards improving the access to data on 16-18-year old CLA/CLs (4 responses)**

Example	Number
Stronger links with Senior Leaders in FE to ensure data available/data flows are more timely, more detailed and more widely disseminated	2
Put in place data sharing protocol	1
Joined up work with Leaving Care team including access to Leaving Care Dashboard	1

Source: 2022 survey responses

**Table 27: Question 13 - What steps have been taken, if any towards improving the use of data on 16-18-year old CLA/CLs (6 responses)**

Example	Number
Increase profile of CLA with FE staff so they know who CLA are and respond to red flags (eg non-attendance, poor emotional health) more urgently and target support	2
Data now included in weekly analysis by SLT to identify trends and any actions/'High Level Performance' report to monitor trends for 16-18 year olds in care/care leavers to inform conversation with CSC and education	2
Post-16 cohort data much improved and informing support of them to maintain ETE placements and achieve their best/Better monitoring of opportunities for NEETS through PAs	2
Proforma to attach to PEP each term to RAG rate attendance, wellbeing/behaviour and academic progress.	1
Employment of data analyst to support monitoring of cohort	1

Source: 2022 survey responses



## Appendix 2:

### Overview of case studies

The following case studies are drawn from the qualitative data collected from 12 of the 13 LAs to provide in-depth examples of implementation of the two initiatives that might inform VSHs and others in their future work. The 13<sup>th</sup> case study is extensively drawn upon in the main report and therefore has not been presented as a separate case study. Anonymity which was an ethical requirement of the interviews, has been maximised by limiting the characteristics of both the LAs and the interviewees.

### Case Studies focusing on the CWSW

#### Earlham Case Study

##### Characteristics of the LA and Evidence base

Earlham is a large, mainly rural LA with a medium overall number and low rate per population of CWSW. The LA was in both the SWIS project and the post-16 PP+ pilot. Both surveys were completed by the VSH and eight interviews were completed (VSH and two advisors, DCS, 3 DSLs, 3 FE Leads, one SW (SWIS), 2 SWs (post-16), 2 FCs). Documentary evidence included briefing presentations and pamphlets about the new duties. In Survey 2, the VSH described the progress made as steady for the first three months but rapid since then. **This case study foregrounds<sup>46</sup> Earlham's work on the use of data, SWIS and post-16 pilot.**

##### Use of data

In Survey 1, Earlham VSH reported accessing data on CWSW except for their Ever6 FSM or EAL status. In acknowledging Ofsted's rating of requiring improvement, the DCS noted that the current priority is safeguarding and that while they have the infrastructure and capacity, currently they are focused on the metrics they must report to the DfE. The VSH and two additional advisors appointed to cover the extension duties reported that the LA data analysts had recently launched a new data system for data collection for CWSW to interrogate attendance (daily), suspensions, exclusions, part-time timetables, CME and EHE children on a weekly basis, and produce a single report to improve accuracy and responsive actions. One of the VS advisors noted:

We've only just been given access to this, ...and just before this meeting I went on and applied a whole load of filters and identified one school... that I'm not yet working with that has given a lot of fixed term exclusions since Sept to children in need and I hadn't [previously] been able to identify that school. So, ...I'm going to be contacting [them]... so it's really powerful. I found seven or

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<sup>46</sup> These foci were chosen from a range of possible activities to illustrate in a short space, some promising progress. Interviewees were selected by the VS and are likely to be more positive than representative.

eight FTE [suspensions] for children who were in the cohort we're working with, and I wasn't aware of that. [VS CWSW Lead]

The VSH noted that the new data system enabled recording of the reasons for CME, EHE or suspensions, allowing them to be followed up. The system includes data from all schools except twenty attended by Earlham children outside of the LA and one academy trust in the LA which refuses to give the VS the GCSE results (but does provide attendance and exclusions). The VS CWSW lead advisor was meeting the CSC managers to explain this application and explore how they want the data disseminated to the SWs. The VS team commented that progress on data was prompted by the realisation of the data needed from Survey 1 and had provided an excellent lever for them to work more closely with CSC colleagues.

## SWIS

Earlham seconded SWs to 12 secondary schools in SWIS from the safeguarding teams, creating vacancies in the latter which meant SWIS SWs had to carry a community caseload in addition to their school-based work. The LA created a second SWIS team using the COVID grant. None of the three DSLs interviewed were in SWIS schools. The SWIS SW interviewed, worked in a large secondary school and with its feeder primary schools. They had an 'open door' policy, went to the cafeteria to increase their visibility and aimed to be seen by pupils as a trusted adult. They described their work as in depth alongside children, their families and professionals, supporting them in a restorative way, partly preventative and also helping school staff with, and training them about, referrals of children at different thresholds or to appropriate services:

...members of school staff say 'I just can't get hold of those social workers' and because I have that network and that relationship with them, I'm able to call them on Teams from our social work system and we can have that instant discussion with them, building that communication bridge with schools and other social workers. [SWIS SW]

This SW believed that their knowledge and understanding of the educational needs of CWSW and the VS work is much deeper than that of other SWs. They worked closely with the headteachers, SENCOs and CAMHS to access services for CWSW, arranged home tuition for those out of school and sometimes supported the managed moves. The Edge of Care team provided access to in-house speech and language therapists, clinical psychologists and art therapists who can arrange support for CWSW through the VS commissioning them.

Feedback from schools and families in the (What Works Centre) evaluation undertaken was reported as very positive and the VS staff interviewed confirmed that the work of the SW in some schools had provided more effective support to families. This had led in their view, to increased attendance and fewer referrals to CSC but this varied across schools, reflecting the quality of the relationships that the SWIS SWs had managed to establish. However, their contracts ended in March 2022 and were then extended with short notice until August, which meant most of the SWs had found other posts. The SWIS SW acknowledged high national turnover in statutory SW teams but that the SWIS SW team had been very stable until the time that the contracts ended.

## Post-16 pilot

Earlham VS works with four FE colleges, two of which have employed additional support staff with the pilot funding to provide administrative support for PEPs and monitor young people's attendance which the VSH suggested had improved attendance. All four colleges had held open days for KS3 CLA to familiarise them with the college. The VS gave all post-16 CLA/CLs in college a small personal allowance to supplement the college bursary (which FE Leads reported were used up on travel and food). Staff from FE colleges shared good practice at a VS-led away day, where they received training on working relationally and target setting in PEPs. The pilot funding had been used to provide training on trauma-informed practice to all front-line staff in colleges. This led to the setting up of a benchmarking group for sharing good practice between FE providers which the DCS reported had contributed to improved PEP quality identified through the review of PEP reports.

The FE Leads described Earlham VS as 'incredibly proactive' and supportive, with increased interest in colleges. They reported only having an accurate list of CLA/CLs six weeks after the start of term and noted that were schools to send them this information earlier, induction would be more effective. One FE Lead covered over 100 CLA/CLs from 10 LAs, each using a different PEP format and processes creating excessive work. They described the PEP process in Earlham as much improved but noted that in other LAs' PEP meetings, SWs do not always attend, FCs are not always invited and targets could be more educational.

The two FCs interviewed emphasised their role in advocating for the young person, one noting how responsive the college was, ensuring appropriate action was taken such as accessing equipment for the course and extra tuition funded by PP+. One FC stressed the importance of *Staying Put* in reassuring the young person that they can stay beyond 18 which gives them stability and continuity for the future:

...at 17 years 11 months you have this young person that presents in a certain way, and at college at 18 years one day old, it doesn't change. [FC]

Both FCs had regular contact with the VS through PEP review meetings or when seeking information though neither had received any post-16 specific training. Neither was aware of the introduction of the PP+ specifically but described their contact with the VS as regular and seamless. The FC whose young person was due to start college in September 2022 had already visited the college twice with them. The FE Lead had phoned the FC twice about the young person's needs and had attended the transition PEP meeting. A PA had been appointed and had visited the young person. The carer commented that following a period of NEET:

...with the team working together we've been able to get her back into education. She aspires to go on to get a job, to marry, to have children, to pay taxes, to be just a normal person. And if we can achieve half of that, then her world will be totally, totally different to what it was. And that's what we're looking toward. She's not going to be an astronaut, you know what I mean, she just wants to be normal... [FC]

## Overall

The evidence suggests Earlham had made progress in implementing the extension duties, particularly in the use of data and the SWIS, though the VS feels they could be better collaboration between some of the SWIS SWs and themselves. The VSH stated that suspensions and SW shortages were immediate priorities. The interviews suggest that the VS will need to continue to raise their profile with all DSLs. The interviews also highlight the good progress being made in the post-16 pilot, with relationships between the VS and colleges strengthening while the main barrier appears to be the absence of a 'national post-16 PEP'.

## Filton Cross Case Study

### Characteristics of the LA and evidence base

Filton Cross is an urban LA with a small geographic footprint and a small overall number but medium rate per population of CWSW. It was in the SWIS project. Both surveys were completed by the VSH and nine interviews were completed (VSH and two deputies, DCS/AD, two DSLs, one FE Lead, four SW (CWSW), one SW (post-16), two FCs and one parent of CWSW). Documentary evidence submitted included a guide for SWs and an anonymised PEP. In Survey 2, the VSH described the progress made as rapid during the first six months, but anticipated it being steady moving forward. **This case study foregrounds Filton Cross's work on strategic provision through partnerships, lead professionals and training, enrichment activities and strengthening the voice of CWSW.**

### Strategic Provision for CWSW through partnerships

The VSH used the funding to appoint two part-time Assistant Heads in the VS, one to lead on CWSW, the other for post-16 CWSW and a part-time administrative assistant. The VSH reported that most of the VS work with CWSW was delivered through partnerships, signposting DSLs and SWs to services that already exist. A SW confirmed this, noting that the VS team forwarded details of early support intervention services for CWSW to address challenges that the SW was facing. Partnerships were also identified by the VSH as being key to providing training. For example, through the referrals to the VS, they identified parenting as a major issue and identified a partner to run a new parent training programme. A clinical psychologist attached to the VS and early intervention services for young people's mental health supported the mental health of CWSW as these needs were reported to have escalated during COVID. The VSH described the strategic nature of the role:

...we're always mindful of the fact that it is a strategic role and so we need to be using many partners within the local authorities to deliver the strategy. We've got aims. We've got our priorities. We know what we want to do, but who's actually on the ground... to deliver this for us and that's part of the reasons why we're using lead practitioners in schools as well as all these other agencies [VSH]

### Lead professionals and training

Seven lead practitioners for the education of CWSW have been selected by the VSH and AD Education, mostly DSLs or DTs but some are deputy/assistant heads who are described as having demonstrated excellent practice as well as passion and drive. The VSH described wanting to set a clear 'gold standard' so that the VS can be confident that the lead practitioners will demonstrate the very best practice for CWSW. They are part of a forum that the VS uses to train the trainers in the aims, priorities and style of training that they then deliver across all the schools.

The VS team noted that all schools in the LA have a named person, usually the DSL, who is the lead for CWSW. This person receives up-to-date information regarding CWSW, training and

support through the DSL forum, and half termly round-up emails. If they are new to the post, they are invited to bespoke training led by the VSH. Schools that have particularly effective practice and provide good quality support for CWSW are recognised and used to support those schools that may need to develop their practice.

The VSH organised a conference which was attended by school staff and SWs and included training sessions and workshops explaining the extended role. They noted that the VS psychologist ran training sessions at the conference about mental health, support and advice on what impacts on CWSW.

### **Enrichment activities**

The VS was trying to engage CWSW and their parents in enrichment activities. Eight projects were planned, two were up and running when the VS team was interviewed. Referrals to the projects came from schools, SWs and parents themselves. The first project was arts-based, the children received all the resources they needed to take part and had an online tutorial. The project was about CWSW's perception of themselves and having to interpret that through art using National Gallery resources. The art materials were funded through the extension grant, but a partner charitable organisation provided the delivery without cost to the schools or LA. The VSH suggested that these enrichment projects gave families opportunities to spend time together and have fun. Initially, they were offered over a time-limited window, but the VS then made them available throughout the year.

### **Promoting the voice of CWSW**

At the VS conference a care leaver spoke about their educational experiences and the support they had received from an advocate. This influenced the VS to consider how the advocacy support offered to CLA through a charity should be extended to CWSW. The LA extended its commissioning of this charity who currently work with CLA and SEND, to provide an online tutor to support CWSW to develop confidence and voice so that they can give their views to others who represent them or directly contribute themselves.

The VS had highlighted this support to the SWs and DSLs to encourage referrals to this service so that the voices of CWSW can be heard and advocated for in CIN and CP meetings. Where the CWSW do not attend the meetings, the advocacy service was reported by the VSH to be helping to get their views and experiences represented, which the VSH noted would enhance longer-term capacity and sustainability of CWSW to speak up.

### **Summary**

The VSH reported that they were well supported by managers who recognised the importance of the extension duties. The extension grant has provided an impetus for different parts of the LA to work together more effectively, and those partnerships were enabling the VSH to meet their responsibilities for CWSW strategically. The lead practitioners had only just begun but future evaluation of their impact might indicate whether they could be increased to cover all schools.

Similarly, it will be helpful to assess the impact of the advocacy support on the well-being and progress of CWSW.

## Henbrook Case Study

### Characteristics of the LA and evidence base

Henbrook is a mainly urban LA with a medium geographical footprint and a small overall number and low rate per population of CWSW. Both surveys were completed by the VSH and seven interviews were completed (VSH and two deputies, DCS/AD, two DSLs, two FE Leads, two SWs (CWSW), one SW (post-16) and one FC). In Survey 2, the VSH described their progress in implementing the duties as steady for the first three months, limited for the next three months, but anticipated it being steady moving forward. **This case study foregrounds Henbrook's work on enhancing SW practice to address the educational needs of CWSW and on working with schools.**

### Enhancing SW practice to address the educational needs of CWSW

The VSH described how they set up a working group of SW team managers, SW advanced practitioners, early support and safeguarding SWs who pulled together what they felt SWs might need to know about the education of CWSW. The VS Lead for CWSW talked to SWs and their managers who had no previous relationship with the VS, about the new duties, education, and the role of the VS. These discussions emphasised the importance of stating clear educational targets in the CIN/CP plans, familiarising themselves with names and contact details of the DTs in their CWSWs' schools and ensuring that these DTs attend CIN/CP planning meetings. The DCS reaffirmed the importance of a clear education focus in the CIN/CP plans. The VSH stated that moving forward, when managers in CSC undertake quality assurance where they look at CIN/CP plans or any other assessments, the VSH will be involved to see whether the focus and clarity of information about education has improved.

SWs acknowledged that schools play a pivotal role in supporting the CIN/CP plans, working alongside a SW, in terms of sharing information because teachers see the children every day for many years. One commented:

Some of our schools have better relationships with the children than we do. We tend to find sometimes that when we look for the children's voice, ...sometimes we're that stranger that comes in, when they're visited in their lives. Whereas actually, schools [what they] have day-to-day and might have had for years. So sometimes getting that information from children or getting children's experiences is better fed through school than it is through us. [SW]

The introduction of the extension duties identified the high number of CWSW with additional SEND needs and prompted the SWs to request training on SEND provision and on the options for SW support that might be identified through the EHCP statutory assessment. The VSH arranged for the SEND team to provide this training which the VSH reported had subsequently increased SWs' contact with the SEND team about CWSW.



## Working with schools

The VS ran DSL/DT networks at which they had undertaken awareness raising on the new duties. The VSH had drawn on *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, particularly the Appendix on the role of the DSL, to cover the schools' responsibility not just with respect to safety, attendance, and suspensions, but also to ensure that their attainment and progress is supported and that where school closures are unavoidable (e.g., because of staff illness), CWSW should still be getting face-to-face education for 25 hours.

The DSLs noted that this increased focus on CWSW had put further demands on them and their limited school resources. The VS provided training for schools on attachment and trauma (established before the new duties), but DSLs were concerned that the more support they offered in school, the less other services became involved with that child and family. One of the DSLs described a wellbeing centre at their secondary school with trained counsellors for example, to address self-harm. Staff at this centre make referrals to different services but these services often 'pushed back' to the school suggesting strategies that the DSL reported having tried prior to the current crisis. DSLs felt that when a child gets a CIN/CP plan they assume others will be involved taking pressure off them, but that CSC are sometimes too quick to close that plan because of limited resources and that they would welcome the VS's support on this. One recounted:

...Well, a lot of parents won't even answer the phone to us, so they won't come in for a meeting about attendance. It's difficult because we do prioritise our CPs and CINs for attendance for obvious reasons. ...sometimes there's been no progress whatsoever in school and outside of school, yet they're taking the child off [the plan], ... And we've often asked for it minuted that we disagree with those decisions. [DSL]

The DSLs felt that greater clarity in national guidance about responsibilities of who needs to take which role and when, and what support they can expect from the VS (though these two DSLs had not attended the VS briefing at which this was covered), would help them do their job more effectively.

The DCS suggested that some CWSW are not eligible for PP and others who are get lost in schools' use of PP but recognised that some schools rely on the money:

...sometimes we hear comments about "that child's at their age-related level and therefore they don't need any extra support." And I'm like "well, I want them to exceed their age expectations". ...so, there's something about tying in the PP very specifically to these children. But my school system would say ...they'd really struggle [financially]... the downside is that some of these children miss out on some really important interventions. [DCS]

One secondary school had a model where CWSW were flagged on their system and they tracked and monitored that cohort strategically, to record how PP is used in the school to support eligible CWSW. The tracking included lesson observations with members of staff which showed whether,

and how the needs of CWSW were being addressed in lessons through teacher questioning and feedback. The VSH had arranged for the school to present what they described as this 'forensic' model to all the schools in Henbrook at a forthcoming headteachers' meeting.

## **Summary**

Henbrook has had a strong focus on ensuring their SWs have the knowledge and understanding of the educational needs of CWSW and that this was reflected in CIN/CP plans. Schools have been briefed and good practice in monitoring the teaching and progress of CWSW identified and shared across schools. The VSH emphasised the importance of working with people in a timely manner so that implementation can be built on for the future, leading to system change, which cannot be achieved in a short period of time.

## Keldbeck Case Study

### Characteristics of the LA and evidence base

Keldbeck is a mainly urban LA with a small geographic footprint and a medium overall number and high rate per population of CWSW. The LA was in the post-16 PP+ pilot. Only Survey 1 was completed by the VSH, and seven interviews were conducted (VSH, DCS/AD, one DSL, one FE Lead, two SWs (CWSW), two SWs (post-16) and one parent of a CIN). Documentary evidence submitted included a NAVSH Peer Review. **This case study foregrounds Keldbeck's work on attendance of CWSW.**

### Attendance

The attendance project started in June 2021 when the LA knew that the extended duties were being introduced, with the aim of ensuring that professionals were aware that children who are in school are children who are safer. The extension funding was used to secure its continuation. The project aimed to improve the collection of attendance data on all CWSW, identify barriers to good attendance, and provide advice and support to stakeholders in education and CSC.

The VS appointed a full-time engagement officer (initially funded by the LA, not the extension grant) and surveyed schools and SWs to understand the barriers to good school attendance. The VSH noted in the interview that transport was a major barrier, due to the high levels of deprivation in Keldbeck (over 40% FSM eligibility), not many parents having access to a car but that their children did not meet the threshold for home to school transport. The VSH added that parents were also worried about their children using the bus due to bullying, lack of supervision and high anxiety levels of some CWSW. Many parents had themselves had bad experiences of education or did not see its value, so were reluctant to communicate with the school. A DSL interviewed described some parents as being frightened to set foot in the school because of their own bad experiences of schooling. The VSH stated:

...we've got a parent who wants to do the best thing for their young person and a school who wants the young person in school, but they were using different language which sometimes was in conflict even though they wanted the same aim. ...these are the goals that we're all aiming for, and [the engagement officer] can facilitate those positive conversations, listen to the family, understand their viewpoint and encourage them to work with the school in unity as opposed to in opposition, to remove those barriers to get children back into school. [VSH]

The VS team described a decision-making tool introduced as part of the extension duties that was triggered once the child's attendance dropped below a certain level. A weekly multiagency meeting reviewed the attendance data to identify the children who have not been at school for that week or been suspended. These cases are taken to the attendance and safety planning meetings attended by CSC, health and the engagement officer who spoke to schools and parents beforehand to understand the background, issues and barriers. The VS ensured that safety plans were updated, recording moves or stepping down to/from CPP/CIN, any need for more support or

whether visits needed to be increased. The DCS noted that the different plans (EHCP, CIN/ CPP, etc.) were properly aligned through these meetings. This multiagency teamwork ensured a stronger plan in the view of the VSH, because joint working better supported children back into education by jointly identifying barriers and ways to overcome them. SWs interviewed confirmed that they were being contacted about attendance promptly, and that this joint working had strengthened significantly in recent months since these review meetings started. The DSL interviewed reports attendance figures to the VS:

...we're able to now [since the extension duties started] to speak to the VS for support with attendance issues that we're having with CWSW, whereas obviously historically it was the CLA that we could ask for support. Now, they have appointed kind of a lead person, ...that would go out and visit families on our behalf if students weren't attending. [DSL]

The DSL also noted that the VS challenged them to say what the school had done to support attendance and believed this system will have a positive impact though it was too early to see the numbers changing yet.

The VSH saw their role as promoting a better understanding amongst education and CSC staff of the educational risks relating to poor attendance, reduced timetables, suspensions, and exclusions. The DSL interviewed noted a recent shift in the recognition that education in general, and attendance particularly, is really important, but expressed frustration that cases were stepped down (from CIN) thereby losing support despite attendance not improving or getting worse. This DSL (also deputy head) observed that SWs' understanding of school practices, procedures, and the law around attendance was varied and they had offered training for SWs, so they understood legalities better and did not misadvise parents. SWs interviewed viewed the school as the main authority on CWSW's education but admitted that sometimes safeguarding just seems to override these concerns.

Difficulties with attendance were often related to suitability of provision to meet the CWSW's needs. A parent interviewed together with her SW recounted the story of her son:

...previous secondary school contacted [name SW] about his attendance and were putting pressure on us and on the SW, threatening court action. ...[Name of boy] response was that he was anxious about what other children were saying about him. He would sit in the back of the SW's car to go to school because it had blacked out windows, he would pull his hoodie around his face, chewing his fingernails and showed other anxiety. SW had conversations with the headteacher and school staff to encourage them to think about things from my boy's point of view, [including] the trauma he had experienced. ...CAMHS recommended a very small unit, but his secondary school refused to refer him to the unit, VS had to persuade them to do the referral. He started in February 2022, ...he doesn't get lost there and he's really doing well now. ...he's much happier now, he gets up early, gets himself ready for school, and SW has ongoing contact with the VS about his progress. [Parent and SW]

Pressures on the VSH to undertake individual case work intensified following briefings about the extended duties to schools and SWs, with phone calls from head teachers and SWs. The VSH stated that the role was strategic but that initially, case work identified the strategic gaps which were being addressed through empowering SWs and schools to meet these challenges.

The AD reported that during the pandemic, CWSW missed out on transition visits which made their transition to secondary school more challenging and increased antisocial behaviour leading to unprecedented increases in suspensions. They had created a policy around 'under 25 hours' as part of the wider strategic outcomes for the extension duties. The DSL described themselves as the internal advocate for these students. They noted that they do not make the decision to suspend/exclude lightly and work with the VS or SWs to explain the reasons. The VS were challenging SWs to highlight children who have been on reduced timetables for more than six weeks. The VSH commented on their conversations with colleagues:

“OK, they've had five exclusions. That's a risk. OK, so they're missing education. They're under 25 hours. That's a risk. Their education placement is at risk and that would affect their attainment and progress.” So, it's about using the research, making sure that we're using that in practice and getting people's understanding on par. [VSH]

## Summary

Keldbeck pre-empted the start of extension duties with their attendance project in response to concerns that had increased during the pandemic. Better integration of services and joint working across the LA has been a key lever for addressing the barriers to attendance and thereby contributing more generally to support for CWSW. It is too early to see impact on attendance data, but the interviews confirmed that DSLs and SWs understood the new duties and feel supported by the VS.

## Redbury Case Study

### Characteristics of the LA and evidence base

Redbury is a mainly rural LA with a large geographic footprint and a medium overall number and medium rate per population of CWSW. The LA was in the PP+ post-16 pilot. Both surveys were completed by the VSH, and nine interviews were completed (VSH and two deputies, two DCS/AD, one DSL, two FE Leads, two SWs (CWSW), one SW (post-16) and two FCs). Documentary evidence included a presentation for SWs on the new duties. In Survey 2, the VSH described the progress made as steady in the first three months, rapid in the second three months and anticipated it to be rapid over the next five months. **This case study foregrounds Redbury's work on attendance and training in relation to CWSW.**

### Attendance

A new advisor for CWSW was appointed to the VS and had been running weekly attendance surgeries for SWs who reported positively on these, stating that they are able to drop in and talk about any educational problems influencing attendance, and where appropriate, they were signposted to other services. Data (including attendance) on CWSW were reported by the VSH to have improved, with schools having agreed to add an 'Ever6 CWSW' marker (similar to the existing Ever6 FSM) to the system and to the common transfer document (used when pupils transfer from one school to another). The VS was represented on the LA working group on the attendance of vulnerable groups, led by the attendance team integrating the work on CWSW into existing LA provision. This work was part of developing a culture across CSC and education that recognises attendance as everyone's responsibility, and the VS had contributed to the draft LA Attendance Strategy. The VSH suggested that locating the work on CWSW within the LA's prevention approach had reduced the impact of barriers to CWSW's attendance, while also reducing the need for individual interventions from the inclusion team (or the VS).

### Training

The VS reported having completed awareness raising across education and CSC by developing opportunities for them to share their expertise in response to the extension duties. This included the use of links with the Children's Services Learning and Development team in relation to forums on trauma informed practice, and information sharing and collaborative project opportunities across the Inclusion and Opportunity team. SWs reported having been briefed on the new duties, with information to extend their understanding of the educational needs of CWSW:

...the presentation that we had the other day talked about relationship-building between home and school and... I think that's absolutely paramount. It talked about having experiences within the community and a lot more community work and bringing local partnerships on board to give these children other means of learning, because learning doesn't just necessarily have to be in a classroom with a pen and a piece of paper. [SW]

The VS undertook a consultation that identified as a priority, opportunities for joint training between education and CSC staff. Training had been offered across school staff and CSC, addressing the needs of the wider school population, and reducing demands for specific individual interventions. SWs reported that the VS was offering a wide range of training to schools supporting them to become trauma-informed and mentally healthy, developmental trauma, infant trauma, and supporting parents to use Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy (PACE, a model of caring and parenting).

Online training material and webinars had been provided for professionals across services in both education and CSC in localities with high numbers of CWSW; these led to an accredited diploma in 'Trauma and Mental Health' in return for engagement with the VS. The DSL interviewed had found the training and a recent conference run by the VS to be excellent. The 11-day training is being offered to 20 settings across the age ranges, to increase conversations between teachers and SWs supported in each locality by a matched SW and member of the VS to build peer-to-peer networks. Training had been provided for over 200 staff in alternative settings for children without a mainstream placement. The VS had a waiting list for webinar access to be granted based on further promotion of this training through the LA's Learning and Development and Educational Psychology partners.

A two-day complementary course for senior leaders in schools, provided school staff who had completed the longer course with support to embed and disseminate learning. The VSH noted the importance of embedding a whole school culture that supports vulnerable children, irrespective of their particular vulnerability, rather than investing everything in individual interventions, acknowledging the mobility of this cohort:

... in some schools, what we'll be looking at is a school community [in which] almost all children fall into one or other, whether it's Ever6 FSM, ...service children, CWSW and actually, we need to think about how we turn it around so it's not about the child having that particular support but ...we're supporting those young people regardless [of being identified in a specified cohort through] ...a strong school with a good approach. [VSH]

The webinars have also been used with SWs. The VS has built a partnership with the Intensive Specialist Support Services teams who work directly with families to help SWs to support families, using the trauma informed webinars as part of their ongoing continuing professional development. This has involved 83 practitioners.

## Summary

Redbury have been very active on implementing the extension duties, particularly on attendance and joint training for education and CSC staff. The Directors interviewed reported that this was overcoming the previous 'silo' mentality. The VSH suggested that there is work yet to be done in making better connections with their colleagues in the Youth Offending Team and Health, but they are confident that they will be able to deliver strategically to CWSW based on the evidence of work completed in the first two terms.

## Alsbury Case Study

### Characteristics of the LA and evidence base

Alsbury is a rural LA with a large geographical footprint, a medium overall number and medium rate per population of CWSW. The LA was in the PP+ post-16 pilot. Both surveys were completed by the VSH and nine interviews were completed (VSH and one deputy, AD, one DSL, one FE Lead, two SWs (CWSW), one SW (post-16), one FC, one parent and one data manager). In Survey 2, the VSH described their progress in implementing the duties as rapid over the past six months and anticipated it continuing to be rapid. **The case study foregrounds Alsbury's use of data and strategic multiagency working.**

### Use of data

An educational psychologist, assistant head and three area-based leads for CWSW and a VS SENCO were appointed to the VS from the extension grant (with some additional LA funding) and met regularly with the data team. The VSH reported that an attendance dashboard had been created that recorded numbers of CIN and CP, their attendance, suspensions, and exclusions. A more integrated dashboard was being developed using the extension duties funding, to provide 'live' recording of locality and entry into CIN/CP. Use of it had been limited thus far by the fact that schools were readjusting following the pandemic, but it had provided an oversight at a cohort level, previously unavailable and not managed by the VS. The VSH suggested that previous use of data was linked to each professional area (e.g., SEND, CSC) and provided siloed knowledge. Over 30 schools (including some academies, independent schools and some small LA schools) had not signed the data sharing agreement. The AD commented that their strategy of admissions to 'local schools' with only a few CWSW outside their LA, made access to data less problematic.

The data manager worked across children's services and closely with the VS to provide analytical and performance support. They noted that CWSW had had much less attention than CLA previously, though this gained momentum during the pandemic and increased again with the extension duties. Data on CWSW stood out as having the lowest attainment and attendance, and highest rates of exclusion. They commented that:

...having this project has really ...brought the recognition that we need to have oversight of this cohort at senior level, strategic level, there's not always been the resources available to have oversight of what is an increasingly large cohort... but one that's really vulnerable ...the elements that we've implemented through the extension of the role of the VS have really tightened that up. It's been well received and arguably desperately needed for quite a long time in terms of a service taking ownership of a cohort, rather than just individuals. [*Data Manager*]

They reported that they had linked the education and CSC systems to get an accurate picture of CWSW which provided live attendance and exclusions data to the VS, whereas LAs relying on the school census only get these data termly. The extension duties gave them the impetus to access and make increasing use of the data, regularly monitoring the cohort. Links between all internal



systems (including youth justice), enabled them to triangulate information about the child and family's involvement with services. Their previous survey of children highlighted that CWSW wanted more support with education, but the resources had always been the challenge whereas now the VS was offering this strategically.

Data were reported as not always reaching those that needed it, though it was unclear whether this reflected communication rather than data access issues, the DSL reporting that occasionally they were not informed when a child became CWSW or when a case was closed. SWs noted that data were brought to the monthly meetings with the VS and together with the SWs' reports, the meeting was used to complete risk assessments. They commented on progress for some CWSW who at earlier meetings were rated high risk (not attending school) and had since come off the list because it was now possible to access these data. The VSH claimed they have evidence of improving attendance and fewer suspensions.

### **Strategic multiagency working to integrate education and CSC**

The VS had surveyed CWSW and their family members to ask them about the barriers to education that they had encountered. They also asked SWs about their priorities in understanding the educational needs of CWSW and these two inputs had informed their strategy. The AD considered the extension duties to have strengthened different parts of the system working together, joining up CSC, SEND and inclusion services (who oversee attendance and exclusions) on a more systemic, cohort level rather than focusing on the individual child. The data manager confirmed increased joined-up thinking and working across the services since September 2021.

The DSL interviewed, identified a SW who prior to the extension duties had claimed that education was entirely the DSL's responsibility and nothing to do with them, though noted that most SWs did not have this attitude. The AD commented that SWs had not necessarily previously seen the importance of education as a safeguarding perspective as well as an educational one and that the extension duties had provided the opportunity to address this. A SW interviewed stated:

We can often be in meetings and come to points of conflict, and ultimately we've all got the shared goal that we want these children to be safe and happy and grow up to be successful ... But how we get there can sometimes be quite disjointed ...we've got somebody now in the middle who can translate for each of us ...they are a bit more respected [by schools] than us, so ...they do get results in areas where we've struggled... meetings with the VS have created a bridge between us and education... it's woken us up to the education agenda  
[SW]

Improved strategic working across services was evidenced throughout the interviews in this case study. The SWs reported having frequent and increased contact with schools and at least monthly contact with the VS through multiagency and child protection meetings at which information and risks were shared, children who are not in education were reviewed and addressed. The VSH commented that getting everyone (education, CSC, health, youth justice) together does not guarantee joint working but helps breakdown silos and reduced services blaming each other. SWs

acknowledged that they used different language to their education colleagues and lacked understanding of educational barriers and EHCPs, but that the VS understands both worlds and can translate and mediate between those present. The parent of a CWSW interviewed commented that families need someone they can trust to support them through difficult times. They reported that they had received fantastic support from the headteacher and from the SW, both of whom were approachable and noted that the professionals were working together to help them. The DSL noted the excellent relationship with the local police who always informed the school of local incidents involving their students or likely to impact on the school.

## **Summary**

The extension duties had been well received in Alsbury and regarded as having been desperately needed for a long time in terms of the services taking ownership of a cohort rather than just individuals. This was reflected in their investment in data systems and use of data in multiagency meetings. SWs noted that the extension had reframed their role in education. The VS was reported by DSLs and SWs to have been a strong mediator between education and CSC increasing their understanding of each other. The next stage will be to see if this translates into better outcomes for CWSW.

## Braddleton Case study

### Characteristics of the LA and evidence base

Braddleton is a mixed urban and rural LA with a large geographical footprint and a medium overall number and medium rate per population of CWSW. The LA was in the SWIS project. Both surveys were completed by the VSH and seven interviews were completed (VSH, DCS, two DSLs, two FE Leads, three SWs (CWSW, SWIS, post-16), and two FCs). Documentary evidence included a plan for delivering the extended duties, self-assessment framework and an anonymised PEP. In Survey 2, the VSH described the progress made as steady for the first six months and anticipated it being steady moving forward. **This case study foregrounds Braddleton's work on raising awareness of the educational needs of CWSW and linking CSC and education through a locality model.**

### Raising awareness of the educational needs of CWSW

Braddleton's VSH described their approach to the new duties as trying to work within existing structures to raise the awareness of CWSW in schools. These structures included existing networks for DSLs (meetings of which were stated to be well attended), SENCOs, and designated teacher training. The AD emphasised the importance of ensuring that education had a voice across the services and the VSH felt that input to these networks provided this.

The VS had previously developed a self-assessment framework for schools for CLA, with all the key information in one place as a resource for DTs/DSLs to use either to look something up, for example around admissions, or as a self-assessment to consider the school's progress in terms of support. They updated it in 2018 for PLAC and more recently to cover the extension duties, making clear their responsibilities for CWSW and inserting guidance on attachment aware and trauma-informed practice.

The VSH acknowledged the previous context in which while SWs were highly skilled at writing assessments, they sometimes lacked confidence on the educational aspects, with safeguarding being prioritised above other educational issues. The example given was of a CWSW at risk of exclusion where the educational assessment focused only on the exclusion but in the VSH's view needed to be more holistic, with a broader picture of the child's educational history, to understand how the current situation had occurred and what options might exist. The VS had undertaken training with SW leads and teams, DTs and DSLs and whereas previously these groups were trained separately, the VS now encouraged school staff to attend with SWs.

The VSH noted that SWs needed to be more aware of parental rights particularly around part-time timetables and exclusions. They felt that the child's stability of education was key and therefore building SWs' confidence to support parents enabled schools to be challenged on exclusions and part-time timetables. The VS had seconded a schools' inclusion officer to lead on working with SWs and challenging schools on the needs of the CWSW cohort.

## Linking CSC and education through a locality model

Some disconnect between education and CSC was acknowledged by both SWs and DSLs. A DSL reported that SW contact could be at least weekly if not daily but that:

...there will be [some] cases that are [worse] than others, where in CIN plans maybe education isn't seen as being the main focus because it's usually about making sure that it doesn't escalate to a CPP [DSL]

Conversely, SWs noted that some schools communicated effectively with them while in a few it was like:

...getting blood from a stone to get through to anybody or to start any kind of conversation, because it was always this, "that's not my job or that's not your job, or we're too busy, or they're too difficult." So for me, it is [about] communication and trust. [SW]

This lack of integration between CSC and education had led to Braddleton adopting (before the extension duties were introduced) a district-based locality model through which SWIS, trauma-informed and restorative practices were integrated to provide greater cohesion. Each district had an operational lead who had oversight of all the functions - education, welfare, inclusion, SEND, CP and CIN. VS staff were also allocated to these districts. They all reported to that district operational lead who related to schools through the governance structure.

The AD talked about three kinds of structures. On the ground, schools came together in hubs to talk about the needs of pupils within their school. The next tier up is the Local Management Group that reviewed exclusions and attendance information (in which the AD stated that CWSW were over-represented), identified needs to be escalated and allocated additional resource or support. At the third level was the Inclusion and SEND partnership board that oversees the impact of all of that and actions arising. The AD emphasised the importance of Early Help in preventing escalation to CIN/CP status.

The SWIS was reported by the AD and VSH, as well as the SWIS SWs themselves, to be strengthening that link between education and CSC through SWs providing broader knowledge about the children's needs and services available and sharing that as part of the schools' leadership teams. The DSLs interviewed were not from SWIS schools, so it was not possible to verify this though their interviews.

## Summary

Braddleton VSH's activities are reported to have raised awareness of the educational needs of CWSW. They have taken a strategic role to investing in SWs to increase their confidence to challenge and support schools which particularly in the small number of schools in SWIS, had the capacity to enhance effective provision for CWSW. Support for CWSW has been integrated into the existing locality model which should enable Early Help to reduce the numbers of children

escalated at each threshold. The locality model was reported to be contributing to better integration of education and CSC, though further work on this was judged to be required.

## Case Studies focusing on the PP+ Post-16 pilot

### Fowley Case Study

#### Characteristics of the LA and evidence base

Fowley is an urban LA with a large geographic footprint, a medium overall number and medium rate per population of CWSW. Fowley was in the PP+ post-16 pilot. Both surveys were completed by the VSH and nine interviews were completed (VSH, DCS/AD, two DSLs, one FE Lead, one SW (CWSW), one SW (post-16), a supported lodgings manager, a data manager and a specialist post-16 adviser). Documentary evidence submitted included an anonymised post-16 PEP. **This case study foregrounds Fowley's work on the PP+ post-16 pilot including attendance, preventing disengagement and increasing employability.**

#### Attendance and preventing disengagement

In Survey 1, the VSH in Fowley had returned a full dataset on post-16 CLA/CLs except for unauthorised absence; by Survey 2 they were also accessing attendance data from colleges on a weekly basis. The VS had undertaken work on why CLA/CLs drop out of college and identified a key issue as being difficulties fitting in with their peer group, due to lack of funds to socialise with peers through activities such as visits to local cafes and nights out. The VS used the PP+ grant to fund a part-time administrator in the Professional Learning Team to make weekly payments of £20 to each CLA/CL for maintaining 80% attendance at college. The post-16 advisor in the VS managed this, overseeing the payments to ensure attendance, checking actions arising from PEP and Pathway Planning meetings were implemented, and having regular contact with the colleges.

Fowley had about 60 young people attending FE colleges who were benefitting from this new support. If attendance started to drop, the college contacted the part-time mentor, also funded from the PP+, who contacted the SW and CLA/CL to support the young person's re-engagement into college. The post-16 SW interviewed commented:

I'm seeing the benefits from all of that, ...it's a real incentive for the young people. So I've just been in a PEP meeting ...and they've had their additional £20, his attendance is 99%, which is absolutely fabulous. So you know, there's a real incentive there as well. ...I've got, you know, a couple of young people who are in Sixth Form and they didn't get the money, ...it needs to be universally fair [SW]

The data manager interviewed described a dedicated team that maintained its own system of tracking young people from pre- to post-16, that ensured robust recording of the data for this cohort. When the VSH was interviewed, there had been no 'dropouts' since this support was introduced six weeks previously. In Survey 2 (completed two months later), the VSH commented that the CLA/CLs' attitudes towards attendance were changing in response to the payments but that it was too early for this to be translated into improvements in attainment. Good relationships and communication had been established with college colleagues and this had helped the cohort

gain higher profile in colleges. The post-16 Lead from the VS interviewed recounted from a PEP meeting the day before how they had asked the CLA:

“How have you found it?” and she said, “Well, to be fair, it’s a little incentive that, if I don’t fancy going to one of my lessons, I go,” ...so it’s a little impact, because if she maybe has missed a lesson, she would drop below 80 percent, so if that keeps her just in. [VS *post-16 Lead*]

The manager of a supported lodgings where one CL attending college was living recounted that one tutor had recorded the young person as absent if they forgot to bring their book to college, which led to them not getting their £20 payment. The manager was unhappy at this incorrect application of the rules and took it up with the college as they said that motivating the CLA/CLs that they supported to attend college was their top priority and this incident had discouraged their attendance.

### **Increasing employability**

The two Fowley Directors interviewed referred to the previous commitment of the LA senior leadership team to addressing their high NEET levels before they were successful in their bid for the PP+ post-16 pilot. They commented that the pilot had provided an opportunity, boosted by the extra funding, to facilitate clear transition planning with the potential to reduce NEET through an existing initiative. There had already been a major focus on training and an apprenticeship scheme with employment opportunities created within the Council. The Council departments took it in turns to have a recruitment drive sourcing apprenticeship placement, with around 10% of vacancies in the Council ring-fenced for CLA/CLs. This provided young people with a guaranteed interview and the possibility of paid work experience to develop a CV for onward employment. The Directors reported that good outcomes were being achieved for most of their CLs but that there was always more that could be done to increase EET. While this programme was established before the pilot, the additional funding was reported to have enabled adjustments to be made and extra support, to increase participation of CLA/CLs, to be provided.

The Directors described the LA as having made a major investment in workers to support young people (not just CLA/CLs) to increase their future employability. For CLA/CLs specifically, the VSH described case workers who understood the PEPs, working together with some of these members of staff to progress training plans. The manager of a supported lodgings provision, commented that one of the CLs living with him had managed to secure employment but was then made redundant. They had returned to the Council programme which had previously provided a successful placement, hoping that it would lead to longer-term employment.

FE provision was noted by the Directors to be changing to a more grounded approach, with greater use of apprenticeships especially with respect to Level 2 which they anticipated would improve progress to Level 3.

## Summary

Fowley had used the PP+ post-16 pilot to introduce small weekly payments as an incentive for college attendance which was reported to have increased the attendance of some individuals and reduced dropouts. It had also provided additional support to CLA/CLs that was better coordinated between the VS, SW, and college. They also used the PP+ funding to enhance their existing apprenticeship and employment schemes that provide protected work experience in the Council. The Directors of Children's Services interviewed suggested that there remained a gap around preparing CLA/CLs to achieve apprenticeships at Level 3.



## Pottsdown Case Study

### Characteristics of the LA and evidence base

Pottsdown is an urban LA with a small geographic footprint, a small overall number and medium rate per population of CWSW. Pottsdown was in the PP+ post-16 pilot. Both surveys were completed by the VSH and eight interviews were completed (VSH, DCS/AD, two DSLs, one FE Lead, one SW (CWSW), one SW (post-16) and two FCs). Documentary evidence included a plan for delivering the extension duties and an anonymised example of a PEP. **This case study foregrounds Pottsdown's work on the post-16 pilot, specifically partnership working with colleges and support for individual students.**

### Partnership work with colleges

Pottsdown had an established service for post-16 within the VS before the pilot, provided through post-16 advisors, but their scope was limited by resources. At the time of the interview with the VSH, Pottsdown had over 60 CLA in colleges or in Years 12 and 13 in schools of whom around a third were following EAL courses, 15% A-levels, and the rest a range of other courses. The VS works mainly with one very large FE college, in which the FE Lead was interviewed. The VSH reported that the FE college had initially seemed reluctant to go 'the extra mile' for CLA/CLs but that the PP+ post-16 pilot had given them the leverage with the college who were pleased to be part of the national pilot. By Survey 2, which was three months after the interview, they reported that the FE college had greater understanding of CLA/CLs.

The FE Lead highlighted their good relationship with Pottsdown VS compared to the other eight VS with whom they worked, describing regular meetings being held with the VSH, sometimes focused on provision for the whole cohort, and other contacts regarding individual students. The purpose of the meetings was to ensure that the support provided met the students' needs and that the VS was aware of the college's provision. The discussions about the PP+ pilot had been about developing a more structured framework moving forward, including termly careers meetings and a half termly well-being meeting for every CLA/CL. In addition, the VSH reported that they had established a data sharing agreement with all the colleges they worked with to exchange information about attendance (which the FE Lead reported was very good for CLA/CLs), retention and progress. This had enabled the FE Lead to provide data on the CLA/CLs directly to the VS on a weekly basis, without the VS having to commission a contractor to do this. The VSH noted that DfE requirements on reporting from 16 to 18 could be extended to require colleges to report level 2 and 3 qualifications achieved. This would give a more meaningful measure of progress for CLA/CLs than the only measure currently collected which is EET at 18 and 19.

Training for all staff in the college, which the VSH estimated as 'hundreds', was reported by the FE Lead to have recently been provided by the VSH. The training included raising awareness of the needs of CLA/CLs and the barriers to learning that they face, including the impact of earlier trauma. This provided new tutors in the college, inexperienced in working with CLA/CLs an opportunity to gain relevant information. Further training, specifically for tutors with CLA in their classes and support services staff who have contact frequently with CLA/CLs, was planned.

The FE Lead noted that the VSH had looked at the college's safeguarding policy which already referred to CLA, to see if a separate policy on CLA was needed. The VSH wrote a model policy, and the FE Lead was taking it through the governance of their consortium of colleges for approval. They had also recently discussed whether the VSH could increase the speed at which mental health support was provided as this was reported by the FE Lead to be a major barrier to learning for CLA/CLs.

### **Support for individual students**

The VSH reported that in addition to the training provided, some of the post-16 PP+ funding was being used to enhance staffing in colleges. This was mainly through mentors, but the rest was allocated to support for individual students. The DCS interviewed noted the high proportion of CLA in Pottsgdown entering care in their mid-teens, making it harder to re-engage them fully in education by 18.

The SW from the care leaving team interviewed noted that since the start of the post-16 PP+ pilot, resources for individual support had been allocated through the PEP process, including revision books and extra tuition. The VSH suggested that allocation of PP+ to post-16 CLA/CLs would benefit from being informed by better research on effective interventions:

...we haven't got a clear picture about what an effective intervention for post 16, [CLA/CL] actually looks like, whereas we've got loads of evidence for what it might look like for school age, but it might be different for post 16 because their circumstances are very different ...[CL] doing an FE course living in semi-independent accommodation ...might be a completely different PP+ user from a 14 year old in long-term stable foster care in a mainstream school. So, you can't just replicate. The CLA/CL might need ...funding to go and visit an art gallery, or theatre because they are doing theatre studies. [VSH]

The two FCs interviewed reported very different experiences. One, with a young person in college was finding it much harder to get feedback on support than when they had attended school. Contact with the college was limited to PEP review meetings and the FC had been unsuccessful in ascertaining whether agreed provision was in place. Furthermore, the FC experienced further challenges in supporting the young person at home as they were unsure of the college's expectations. The FC with a young person in Year 12 in school reported having regular contact with the VS post-16 advisor and was very pleased with the support provided in the school.

The SW from the leaving-care team observed that whilst her friends' children were supported by their parents to visit potential universities, similar support for this was not available to the CLA/CLs with whom they worked. In their view, one CLA who was capable of attending university, and with whom they had discussed this option over a number of years, had no idea what different universities offered, how a campus university differed from others, or the opportunities available to talk to current students attending universities. The SW felt that this was an important priority for future individual support.

Substantial resources in Pottsgdown are allocated to UASC. A SW interviewed reported that there had been a massive increase in this group of young people in the LA over the previous few months with disputes over their age and accommodation leading to delays in engaging them in education. The SW noted that these young people were linked to the VS with English tuition provided and college opportunities identified. They also reported that the VS had been very prompt in authorising laptops for these young people. However, the SW was not aware of the post-16 PP+ pilot. The FE lead also commented:

UASC see the real benefit of being able to come to college, they enjoy it, they like their learning, they can see themselves really improving because that's the other thing too, it's amazing how quickly, when they come without the English, how quickly they can develop their language, and really see that they can start to think about what they want to do in terms of their career, where they might want to go, and how things might be. *[FE Lead]*

## Summary

Pottsgdown had made progress in developing their partnership with their main college provider, training staff and liaising over support for individual CLA/CLs, and the college acknowledged this progress. A FC interviewed with a young person in college did not reflect this though another FC with a young person in Year 12 at school receiving PP+ had a much more positive experience. The VSH was planning to facilitate a forum for sharing good practice across colleges in the region but felt that making the FE Lead statutory would leverage greater commitment to these activities. In addition, the VSH was hoping for revised DfE guidance on post-16 which they regarded as too minimal at present.

## Twinburn Case Study

### Characteristics of the LA and evidence base

Twinburn is a rural LA with a large geographical footprint, a medium overall number and low rate per population of CWSW. Twinburn was in the PP+ post-16 pilot. Both surveys were completed by the VSH and nine interviews were completed (VSH, DCS, three DSLs, five FE Leads, three SWs (CWSW), one SW (post-16 UASC) and three FCs). Documentary evidence included a detailed set of PEPs. This case study foregrounds **Twinburn's work on the PP+ post-16 pilot including strengthening the capacity of colleges to meet CLA/CLs' needs and addressing the individual needs of UASC.**

### Strengthening the capacity of colleges to meet CLA/CLs' needs

Twinburn VS used the post-16 PP+ funding to work with all colleges to ensure a designated lead for CLA/CLs was in place in an effort to mirror the role of the DT in schools. They were trained by the VS which also extended the learning framework that had been established in pre-16 provision for vulnerable children, to the post-16 provision. The VS identified someone they judged as an effective FE Lead who then led the development of the training strategy with the other colleges. The VS allocated PP+ funding to colleges based on PEP targets, but colleges were also asked to bid for funding to create capacity to work on raising the profile of CLA/CLs. One FE Lead had used the funding to increase the capacity to support CLA/CL from another member of staff.

The FE Leads interviewed reported that the post-16 PP+ funding had made a significant difference to service provision and inter-agency working, for example funding a drop-in service for CLA/CLs at one college with the VS and colleges working effectively together. Colleges were allowed to keep back some of the PP+ funding allocated to them to implement training to support CLA/CLs, but also reported that more training was needed for wider college staff.

The three FCs interviewed had varying experiences with (different) colleges suggesting inconsistency remained across the local FE sector. One was fostering a young person attending a fitness course and reported the college to be very supportive with regular PEP review meetings, parents' (carers') evenings, extensive support from tutors in college and contact details to enable them to take up any concerns. The college and VS were reported to be working together and had offered further support, but the young person had refused it. The second FC had two young people in college, spoke positively about the support offered by the SW, the VS and the college and reported that they work closely with all of them. They noted the importance of listening to the young person when there was a problem with college, a view confirmed by the AD interviewed. In this FC's view, gaining a qualification in a trade was very important for those CLA who did not want to attend university, and their experience was that *I tell them I absolutely expect them to do it and they can begin to believe in themselves*, which the FC attributed to building their confidence.

The third FC's experience was less positive and highlighted a more general issue about the provision of services. They had a young person (18 years old) in independent accommodation who came back regularly but was struggling to keep up with the college work. They felt extra tuition could have been beneficial. Their only contact was with the PA. Issues around services

(and PEPs) ending on the young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday (whether or not they had completed their course) were noted by SWs, FCs, FE Leads and the VSH. One FC noted:

I mean, really, once they're 18, I mean the day they're 18, they, unless you agree to have them stay, it's over, they've got to move out. They could be mid-college, mid-course. [FC]

## Addressing the individual needs of UASC

Some of the pilot funding had been directly allocated to UASC through the individual PEP targets to enhance young people's college and work attendance, and learning. One example was funding bicycles to travel to work. The needs of UASC were reported by the FE Lead and VSH to have been addressed through the PP+ post-16 funding:

UASC for instance, they really struggled to understand how to use a computer. ...because when you come from Afghanistan ...you're struggling. You can use your phone, but you don't understand [how to use the computer], so we've ...got about 20 young people working on a project around how they could access and develop better understanding of utilising laptops. [VSH]

The post-16 SW interviewed whose caseload was mainly UASC confirmed that the laptop training had been very effective because the colleges sometimes assumed that the young people knew how to use a laptop. The training had also improved their self-esteem and enabled the SW to have more regular contact with them online. The funding had provided EAL support to improve their language skills, combining that with additional laptop training sessions. The SW commented:

And a lot of them were struggling because English is not their first language. So, trying to sort of navigate an English computer and get on to an English college system to access a class I think was a big ask and a lot of them did struggle on that, but college didn't penalise them, and I think that was the direct intervention from the VS. So that was good. [post-16 SW, UASC]

The supported lodgings provider and the college were working together to arrange out of college provision for UASC to include opportunities for socialising to improve their well-being, for example, accessing a football pitch after the laptop training sessions. One young person wanted to train to be a barber and set up his own business but sometimes the process within colleges for them to access funding was reported to be too complicated. He wanted to get a dummy head and some wigs so that he could practise, so the VS transferred funding to the care leaving team who purchased these for him. Other examples included those training or working as technicians who needed their own tool set, bus passes and driving lessons. These were reported by FE Leads and SWs as immediate impacts supporting young people to transition into the world of work. The AD commented that this financial support has made a significant impact – noting that small steps can make a big difference to individuals.

## Summary

Twinburn has used the PP+ post-16 pilot to develop the capacity of colleges to respond to CLA/CL's needs though FCs' views on the impact this was having varied. The LA had also provided dedicated financial support to meet individual needs, particularly of UASC. Longer-term planning was reported by the AD and VSH to have been impeded by the uncertainty about future funding. Their priority moving forward was to find ways of increasing EET especially for those CLA/CLs in supported accommodation.

## Martonfield Case Study

### Characteristics of the LA and evidence base

Martonfield is an urban LA with a small geographical footprint, a small overall number and medium rate per population of CWSW. Martonfield was in the PP+ post-16 pilot. Both surveys were completed by the VSH, and ten interviews were completed (two deputy VSHs, DCS, two DSLs, two FE Leads, three SWs (CWSW), three SWs (post-16), two FCs and two parents). Documentary evidence included a report on the use of therapeutic spaces for children. **This case study foregrounds Martonfield's work in the PP+ post-16 pilot focusing on their health and well-being programme and a mentoring programme provided by CLs.**

### Health and well-being programme

A major focus of Martonfield's PP+ post-16 pilot was on health and well-being as a means of increasing post-16 engagement and learning. The provision was described by a SW interviewed as 'tailor-made' according to the needs of the individual and identified through the PEP process. The VS had achieved 100% PEP completion through training of FE Leads and SWs as part of the PP+ post-16 pilot and VS Leads interviewed suggested that the quality of these was now much improved, including young people's views specifically on their health and well-being needs.

In Survey 2, the VSH described one component of the health and well-being programme as commissioned health and fitness instructors who offered an eight-session programme in groups and 1:1 that had, so far, been completed by 10 post-16 students attending local FE colleges. A SW interviewed noted that the personal trainers visit the young person at home to introduce themselves and the programme before they attend the gym and that this had built confidence.

Referrals were made to the programme by SWs and FE Leads but also identified through the PEP process, supported by evidence from completed SDQs<sup>47</sup> and the views of young people. In Survey 2, the VSH stated that monitoring of SDQ scores through the PEP process led to referrals to a well-being panel managed by the VS who allocated PP+ funding for interventions to support emotional health and wellbeing. A SW interviewed confirmed, from their completion of SDQs, that a young person with a very high SDQ score would be referred to this well-being panel. SWs and FE Leads interviewed reported positively on the programme, providing examples of young people whose confidence, self-esteem and engagement in college had improved and stated that the programme was effective in addressing some mental health issues:

[Name] has got mental health issues but was thinking, "Maybe if I exercise it's going to help me to manage my emotional well-being – for my mind to be more stable." ...exercising does help emotionally, so I think it is good, what has been piloted by the VS. [SW, post-16]

One FE Lead interviewed noted the benefits for UASC, suggesting that the group fitness sessions had contributed to their English learning and social integration. In Survey 2, the VSH described as

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<sup>47</sup> Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire is a brief behavioural screening tool. <https://www.sdqinfo.org/a0.html>

early evidence of the Theory of Change outcomes, improved physical, emotional health, and wellbeing. This had been demonstrated through young people's emotional responses to a meditation session, the opportunity for which had been shared amongst the group within the training. A SW interviewed reported that due to its success, the programme had been extended to support 16 year old students from a PRU and CLA/CLs who were NEET.

Another development in the well-being programme implemented with the PP+ funding was the contribution to one college for 'zones'; safe sensory spaces specifically designed for CLA/CLs to meet and socialise whilst also providing careers guidance through a member of staff and a resident SW. The VS Lead interviewed described it as:

...it's a bit of a relaxed area where young people can talk about any issues, ...anything in terms of their welfare and their well-being so it allows for a member of staff in the college just to unpick that - goes probably beyond the pastoral element. ...it allows for their student body to connect more, the college's SW [funded by the college] to interact that way. [VS Lead post-16]

The FE Lead interviewed was positive about the use of these zones which they noted increased communication between CLA/CLs and provided another avenue (in addition to the PEP), through which FE staff and the SW can connect with the student and identify additional needs that might benefit from PP+ funding. The FE Lead recounted how, through this contact, one student had received equine therapy funded by PP+ which had improved their well-being and enabled them to engage in learning.

### **Peer Mentoring Programme**

A Peer Mentoring programme had been implemented as part of the PP+ post-16 pilot, involving care-experienced young adults (19+) and post-16 CLA/CLs. The VS Lead reported that through the pilot, four CLs from varied backgrounds, ranging from higher education to employment, had been identified, engaged, and trained to become peer mentors. Years 12 and 13 CLA had access to 1-1 individualised peer support to assist with future career goal setting, gaining insight and support into EET opportunities. This allowed both CLs and CLA to develop their interpersonal skills and work with mentors who motivated and built their self-esteem. The DCS commented:

...we're hoping that it's going to develop those transferrable skills, help think about how they do the CVs, and ...work ...around empathy, perspective, knowledge, and everything else. We've had ...the mentors and some of the mentees together, but just early days, but certainly we have started that process but we're trying to do things small and build up. [DCS]

An FE Lead recounted how several CL students, who completed college and are now at university (including one UASC), took CLA/CLs who are at college and want to apply to higher education to visit the university and answered their questions, emphasising what they could achieve. Another FE Lead noted that mentors were matched to CLA/CLs based on the latter's career interests which they saw as a huge advantage, in addition to the fact that the mentors were care-



experienced. This FE Lead suggested that the disrupted education many CLA/CLs had experienced could put them off university and direct them towards getting a job which they perceived would provide greater independence. Challenging them to consider university as an option was, therefore, important.

Early evidence of progress from the mentoring programme reported in Survey 2, against the Theory of Change included successfully supporting CLs to gain new knowledge and experience in mentoring skills, developing transferable skills, enhancing CVs and offering mentees empathy, perspective and knowledge-sharing which will support retention rates. The pairing of mentor and mentees was stated to have built trusting relationships where there was a mutual shared experience of being, or having been looked after and wanting to improve their life chances and goals.

## **Summary**

Martonfield's work on health and well-being demonstrated early progress on ways of using the PP+ post-16 funding to improve health and well-being as a means of enhancing engagement in learning and possibly in the future, retention in college. The small-scale peer mentoring programme showed promise in providing both a part-time career opportunity (in mentoring) for CLs and the potential impact of care-experienced young adults supporting those CLA/CLs in college to raise their expectations and increase future options. The two FE Leads and three post-16 SWs interviewed were universally positive about the way the VS had used the funding to 'open doors' that they regarded should have been open already.

## Westonhurst Case Study

### Characteristics of the LA and evidence base

Westonhurst is a mixed urban and rural LA with a large geographical footprint, a large overall number but medium rate per population of CWSW. Both surveys were completed by the VSH and 10 interviews were completed (VSH, DCS/AD, three DSLs, four FE Leads, one SW (0-18), one FC and one data manager). **This case study foregrounds Westonhurst's work in the PP+ post-16 pilot focusing on addressing NEET and the PEP process.**

### Addressing NEET

The VS used some of the PP+ post-16 funding to recruit a data manager from the LA performance team to lead on data in the VS, including taking over the established monitoring of post-16 attendance, PEPs, and EET. An additional dedicated post was appointed to the VS with the funding to join their established post-16 team. The high level of NEET was identified as a priority and work needed to be done to identify the barriers with young people and their wider networks to understand what prevented them from engaging.

One of the barriers identified was not achieving level 2 qualifications in English and maths at school, that led to CLA/CLs having to retake these in college, which they found demotivating and were reported by FE Leads and VSH to have increased the drop-out rate. The PP+ post-16 funding had enabled the VSH to address this, by registering the VS as a Functional Skills Exam Centre. One of the two Directors interviewed noted that the exam centre was important given the numbers of young people coming into care aged 15-17 (including UASC), without English and maths at GCSE which limited their college access and employability. This initiative enabled them to do their exams through the VS despite not being on a school roll, and then go to college the following year. The Director also noted that some schools would not admit anyone mid-term which further disadvantaged UASC who arrived in Year 12, but that the exam centre might be able to address this in future. As just under 50% of CLA/CLs were resident outside the LA, the VS also partnered with an organisation that enabled remote exam entry from wherever the CLA/CL was living.

The PP+ post-16 funding was also used to provide bespoke careers advice and guidance to a small number of CLA/CLs in Years 10 and 11 reported by the VSH to be at risk of NEET. The tailored provision to these young people involved three interviews, coaching and mentoring sessions for them and their networks (FC, SW, DT). In Survey 2, the VSH noted that they had already seen evidence that this trusting relationship yields results. Individuals who had previously not been interested in participating were now considering different activities including volunteering, having been shown the merits of it by the coach and supported to identify the right opportunity. Volunteering was highlighted as a way of gaining key skills for their CVs which could facilitate future access to employment. In the interview, the VSH reported this had led to a 7-10% decrease in NEET mainly in year 11.

The SW interviewed commented positively on this new intervention as they felt that motivating CLA/CLs was better achieved through one-to-one interactions than having them sit through an

hour's meeting, though so far only one CLA from their caseload had been invited, and they had not wanted to engage with it. A FC commented that young people rarely know what they wanted to do at that age, so it was important to maintain flexibility which was encouraged in this intervention. Another FC cautioned that CLA in their late teens did not want to be identified as 'in care' so it was important to handle interventions in a way that enabled them to participate without being identified as such. One of the DTs interviewed in an 11-18 school suggested that the VS needed to increase its support *in Year 11 by speaking to individual children about what they want and what their needs are and to check with the DT that the school are engaging them in the right course*. This DT was not as yet, aware of the small-scale intervention.

A FC noted that some carers are not able to provide sufficient support for those CLA that want to apply to university and that for those CLA/CLs who do attend university, the financial support once there drops off. The example given was of a CL who was still supported by the FC but was unable to secure a guarantor to rent a house. In contrast, the DCS reported that the VS had a post-18 worker (funded by the LA) supporting CL at university or those wanting to get back into education.

### PEP process

The VSH interviewed commented that the quality and timeliness of the post-16 PEP process had improved, through PP+ post-16 funded training for FE Leads and SWs focused on writing SMART targets, quality assurance and support. An FE Lead interviewed felt that the most effective PEP review meetings were when the advocates for the CLA/CLs who had benefitted from the training, were all present. Another FE Lead interviewed noted that when they run the PEP review meeting, and sometimes after the meeting, they give the SW (who was unable to attend) a call just to make sure that the targets set were agreed by both the SW and the college. The SW interviewed noted that they had a great relationship with the VS who always followed up if the SW had not actioned something agreed in the PEP.

A FC involved in the local FCs' association noted that they had produced a guide (not funded through the pilot) for carers to support them through the PEP process, and to help them ask appropriate questions because some carers had reported finding post-16 provision more complicated. This carer commented on the PEP process having recently improved:

I like the PEP process. It's very clear. FCs do not have anything to moan about with the PEP process. Their feedback is that they understand what it is, they understand when it should be. It's very clear in the expectation. The only thing I will say is our language as educators, we need to be a bit careful because sometimes we confuse issues, because sometimes people don't understand what a SMART target would be. Why would it be measurable? What are you measuring it against? So, I think further explanation needs to be offered with that sort of thing. [FC]

The VSH noted that the template used previously for the PEP had not reflected adequately the post-16 experience in a college environment so had been revised. A remaining challenge they reported, was trying to make the links with statutory Pathway Plans when the post-16 PEP is not

statutory, though Ofsted had asked to see the post-16 PEPs. They felt that the Pathway Plan is not detailed enough in relation to education to be helpful, particularly for those who followed a more academic path. However, the importance of the CLA/CL's personal choice about future options was acknowledged as critical in both.

The impact of the PP+ post-16 funding was noted by a Director interviewed:

Getting the buy-in of individuals into a PEP when there's something that can come out of it financially to support that young person is going to make a difference isn't it. So why wouldn't that be a good thing? Because a PEP without any resources is more limited. [DCS]

## Summary

The VS in Westenhurst has taken some innovative approaches to reducing NEET in the CLA/CLs population including registering themselves as an exam centre and piloting a bespoke coaching scheme with a small number of CLA in Years 10 and 11. A FC interviewed described the recent improvements in the support offered by the VS to post-16 CLA/CLs as transformational (acknowledging that those interviewed were selected by the VS), with much better access to support. The local FCs' association had produced their own guide on the PEP process but felt that a guide on post-16 provision would be welcomed given the difficulties FCs have with navigating PP+, bursaries, PEPs and Pathway Plans.

## Appendix 3: Blank Surveys 1 and 2



### Evaluation of the DfE VSH extension to children who have a social worker and the post-16 Pupil Premium Plus

The Rees Centre, at the University of Oxford, is evaluating two initiatives for the DfE with the support of NAVSH in order to find out how young people who have ever had a social worker and those post-16 in care and care leavers can be supported more effectively. More information is provided on the participant information sheet: <http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Info-sheet-VSHs.pdf>. In this survey, we are focusing mainly on children who currently have a social worker (since this is more manageable for data collection purposes) and referring to them as CIN. We have also included some questions about post-16 provision for looked after children and care leavers. This survey should take a maximum of about **45 minutes** to complete, but we recognise that others might need to be consulted.

#### Do I have to take part?

No, taking part is voluntary but this evaluation is vital to the future of how your role develops and is resourced. Along with the DfE, NAVSH is strongly supporting this evaluation. Those participating in the post-16 pilot have agreed to participate in the evaluation as a condition of joining the pilot. Choosing not to take part will not affect the resources you or your LA receive.

#### How will this survey work?

We are asking you to complete this Word document and return it to [VSextension@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:VSextension@education.ox.ac.uk) by 1st November 2021. We appreciate that you will need to consult with your team and others, especially with respect to the data being requested. We have asked you to provide the name of your LA as this will enable us to better understand your context without asking lots of additional questions but we will not share your responses with anyone else in your LA. We will assume that by actively returning the survey, you have consented to participate in the study.

#### What will happen to the information I provide?

When we receive your completed survey, it will be moved to a secure server at the University of Oxford, to which only the research team will have access. The information from individuals will be held confidentially and not shared with the DfE, NAVSH, ADCS or others. Overall findings from this study will be published in a report to the DfE that may use quotes from the survey responses, but these will not be linked to individual LAs. Research data will be stored for three years after publication and then destroyed.

#### What if I don't want to answer a question, or change my mind about taking part?

You can choose not to answer any of the survey questions or stop the survey at any time. If you change your mind about taking part after you have submitted your survey, it will only be possible for us to remove your information if you have included the name of your LA.

#### Will I have to do future surveys?

Participation in this survey does not imply participation in the future, but the information you provide will be really helpful to guide future policy and practice.

#### Contact details for any questions

Professor Judy Sebba, Rees Centre, University of Oxford, 15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY.  
E-mail: [VSextension@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:VSextension@education.ox.ac.uk)

## Evaluation of the DfE VSH extension to children who have a social worker (CIN) and the post-16 Pupil Premium Plus

### First survey: October 2021

Please state your local authority:

Please ensure you are familiar with the definitions of the eligible cohorts for these two initiatives, as described in [Promoting the education of children with a social worker](#) (page 5) and [Pupil Premium Plus \(PP+\) post-16 pilot: information on how to submit an expression of interest](#).

### Data availability

1. We know that Virtual Schools differ in whether and how easily they can access information about children in need and post-16 children who are in care or care leavers. Please mark the option (with a X) that most accurately describes your Virtual School:

If I needed to get data on....	A I already have immediate access to this	B I could get this quite easily (e.g. within two weeks)	C It would take me significant time and resources to get this
<b>Extension of VSH role to CIN</b>			
Number of current CIN* on 1 Oct 2021			
% of current CIN in (a) primary phase, and (b) secondary phase schools on 1 Oct 2021			
% of current CIN in special schools, alternative provision, or pupil referral units on 1 Oct 2021			
% SEND of current CIN on 1 Oct 2021			
% Ever 6 FSM eligibility of current CIN			
% EAL of current CIN on 1 Oct 2021			
Unauthorised absences (no of sessions missed) by CIN from 1 Sept 2021 to 18 Oct 2021			

Number of CIN who had fixed term exclusions 1 Sept 2021 to 18 Oct 2021			
<b>Post-16 CLA – please respond whether or not in the pilot</b>			
Number of post-16 CLA and care leavers on 1 Oct 2021			
% SEND of post-16 CLA and care leavers on 1 Oct 2021			
% Ever 6 FSM eligibility of post-16 CLA and care leavers			
% EAL of post-16 CLA and care leavers on 1 Oct 2021			
Unauthorised absences (total number of sessions missed) by CLA and care leavers from 1 Sept 2021 to 18 Oct 2021			
% UASC of post-16 CLA and care leavers on 1 Oct 2021			
% of post-16 CLA and care leavers not participating in any kind of education or training on 1 Oct 2021			
Number of CLA and care leavers a) admitted to FE colleges, b) in schools or sixth form colleges on 1 Oct 2021			

\* CIN here are children who currently have a social worker including both CPP and CIN that are not CPP.

**If you answered A or B to any of the questions above, please fill in the relevant information here:**

<b>• Extension of VSH role to CIN</b>	
Number of CIN on 1 Oct 2021	
% of all CIN in (a) primary phase, and (b) secondary phase schools on 1 Oct 2021	
% of current CIN in special schools, alternative provision, or pupil referral units on 1 Oct 2021	
% SEND of CIN on 1 Oct 2021	
% Ever 6 FSM eligibility of CIN	
% EAL of CIN on 1 Oct 2021	
Unauthorised absences (no of sessions missed) by CIN from 1 Sept 2021 to 18 Oct 2021	
Number of CIN who had fixed term exclusions from 1 Sept 2021 to 18 Oct 2021	
<b>Post-16 CLA - please respond whether or not in the pilot</b>	

Number of post-16 CLA and care leavers on 1 Oct 2021	
% SEND of post-16 CLA and care leavers on 1 Oct 2021	
% Ever 6 FSM eligibility of post-16 CLA and care leavers	
% EAL of post-16 CLA and care leavers on 1 Oct 2021	
Unauthorised absences (no of sessions missed) by CLA and care leavers from 1 Sept 2021 to 30 Sept 2021	
% UASC of post-16 CLA and care leavers on 1 Oct 2021	
% of post-16 CLA and care leavers not participating in any kind of education or training on 1 Oct 2021	
Number of CLA and care leavers a) admitted to FE colleges b) in schools or sixth form colleges on 1 Oct 2021	

2. **Please comment on the main challenges in accessing or compiling these data on CIN and on post-16 CLA and care leavers.**
  
3. **If you were asked to compile these data on children who have ever had a social worker, what would the main challenges be?**

### **VSH Extension of role to CIN**

4. **Please describe the approach of your Virtual School to supporting CIN, if any, prior to 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021**
  
5. **Please describe briefly:**
  - a. how you expect the role of your Virtual School to change as the extension to CIN is implemented
  
  - b. what the Virtual School has done to implement the new duties since 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021
  
  - c. what you plan to have done by the end of December 2021 to implement the new duties



6. **How many FTE additional staff will be employed and with what job titles (e.g. Lead Teacher CIN, administrative assistant), in order to cover the CIN work expected under the new duty?**
7. **What percentage of your own (VSH) worktime do you expect to spend on the VSH extension to CIN?**
8. **What percentage of schools in your LA has the Virtual School been in direct contact with (not necessarily face-to-face and not including general mailouts to all schools) specifically related to the extension of duties to CIN?**
9. **In relation to the new duties with CIN, which other services has your Virtual School engaged with so far (e.g. CAMHS, YOTs, etc) and what was the focus of that engagement?**
10. **What governance structures if any, have already been put in place to oversee the Virtual School's work with CIN?**
11. **For each of the following, please describe any activity already undertaken in relation to the new duties, who this involved and any planned activity:**
  - a. Training for school staff
  - b. School network meetings (e.g. with designated teachers or SENCOs)
  - c. Supporting and challenging individual school leadership teams
  - d. Strategic/policy discussions with schools
  - e. Meetings about individual children
  - f. Other (please specify)

**Post-16 Provision for CLA and Care Leavers (all VSHs to respond to Questions 12 and 13, please, not just those in the PP+ pilots)**

12. **Is your LA participating in the post-16 PP+ pilot?**
13. **What has been your Virtual School's approach to post-16 provision to CLA and care leavers prior to this school year, if any? How has this been funded?**

**The following questions are for those in post-16 pilot LAs only**

(Note: We have access to the successful Expressions of Interest and are therefore not asking for information we can get from them.)

**14. Have your plans changed since the submission of your application to the post-16 pilot?**

**15. What challenges have you encountered so far in implementing your plan?**



## **Evaluation of the DfE VSH extension to children who have or have ever had a social worker and the post-16 Pupil Premium Plus**

As you will be aware, the Rees Centre, at the University of Oxford, is evaluating two initiatives for the DfE with the support of NAVSH in order to find out how young people who have or have ever had a social worker and those post-16 in care and care leavers can be supported more effectively. More information is provided on the participant information sheet: <http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Info-sheet-VSHs.pdf>. In this survey, we are focusing mainly on children who currently have or have ever had a social worker. We have also included some questions about post-16 provision for looked after children and care leavers aged 16-18 years. This survey should take a maximum of about **45 minutes** to complete, but we recognise that others might need to be consulted.

### **Do I have to take part?**

No, taking part is voluntary but this evaluation is vital to the future of how your role develops and is resourced. Along with the DfE, NAVSH is strongly supporting this evaluation. Those participating in the post-16 pilot have agreed to participate in the evaluation as a condition of joining the pilot. Choosing not to take part will not affect the resources you or your LA receive.

### **How will this survey work?**

We are asking you to complete this Word document and return it to [VSextension@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:VSextension@education.ox.ac.uk) by **Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March**. We appreciate that you may need to consult with your team and others. We have asked you to provide the name of your LA as this will enable us to better understand your context without asking lots of additional questions but we will not share your responses with anyone else in your LA or with the DfE and NAVSH. We will assume that by actively returning the survey, you have consented to participate in the study.

### **What will happen to the information I provide?**

When we receive your completed survey, it will be moved to a secure server at the University of Oxford, to which only the research team will have access. The information from individuals will be held confidentially and not shared with the DfE, NAVSH, ADCS or others. Overall findings from this study will be published in a report to the DfE that may use quotes from the survey responses, but these will not be linked to individual LAs. Research data will be stored for three years after publication and then destroyed.

### **What if I don't want to answer a question, or change my mind about taking part?**

You can choose not to answer any of the survey questions or stop the survey at any time. If you change your mind about taking part after you have submitted your survey, it will only be possible for us to remove your information if you have included the name of your LA.

### **Will I have to do future surveys?**

Participation in this survey does not imply participation in the future, but the information you provide will be really helpful to guide future policy and practice.

### **Contact details for any questions**

Professor Judy Sebba, Rees Centre, University of Oxford, 15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY.

E-mail: [VSextension@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:VSextension@education.ox.ac.uk)

## Second survey: March 2022

**Please state your local authority:** .....

### Definition of the CIN cohort that is the focus of this survey

The definition of the cohort given by the DfE in the extension guidance is children who have been assessed as being in need under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and currently have a social worker and those who have previously had a social worker. This includes all children subject to a Child in Need plan or a Child Protection plan aged from 0 up to 18 in all education settings. This survey will apply to children aged 3 and over.

### VSH Extension of role to children with a social worker

1. Which of the following have been implemented specifically with a focus on children that have or have ever had a social worker since the extended duties began on 1 September 2021?

a) Training

**Mark X for ALL THOSE THAT APPLY**

Training for any <b>school staff</b>	
If YES, please specify subject of training:	
Training for <b>social workers</b>	
If YES, please specify subject of training:	

b) Other activities

**Mark X for ALL THOSE THAT APPLY**

Accessing and analysing data on children with a social worker	
Briefings on new duties e.g. bulletins, briefings, newsletters, social media, webinars	
Monitoring attendance or intervening to improve attendance of children with a social worker	
Surveys, consultations to collect views of professionals	
Network/forum meetings of DSLs facilitated by the virtual school	
Network/forum meetings of DTs facilitated by the virtual school	
Network/forum meetings of head teachers facilitated by the virtual school	
Network/forum meetings of social workers facilitated by the virtual school	
Meetings with social workers (with or without the school) about individual children	
Panels and review meetings relating to children with a social worker	
School visits (beyond attending a review meeting that happens to take place in school)	
Increasing consultation with, or engagement of, children with a social worker	
Facilitating specific support in school for individual children with a social worker e.g. mentors, laptops, 1:1 or small group tuition	
Facilitating enrichment activities e.g. sports clubs, cultural visits, for children with a social worker	
Facilitating/referring others to additional services for children with a social worker e.g. CAMHS, YOT, specific therapies, etc.	
Other (please specify)	

2. What steps have been taken, if any towards improving the collection, access and use of data on children **who currently have a social worker**? Please respond using up to 6 bullet points (no more than 50 words/bullet):

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3. Have any developments taken place on the collection, access and use of data on **children who have EVER had a social worker?**

**Mark X for ONE ANSWER**

No	
Yes, please specify (no more than 100 words):	

For questions 4 - PLEASE HAVE TO HAND THE OUTCOMES FROM THE THEORY OF CHANGE WORKSHOP ON CHILDREN WITH A SOCIAL WORKER THAT WE CIRCULATED WITH THIS SURVEY

4. Please look at the ‘Children with a Social Worker Theory of Change’ slide that we circulated with this survey.

**We are asking you to describe any early evidence of progress towards the outcomes shown in the Theory of Change, with reference to the activities you have ticked in question 1.** We acknowledge that meeting the outcomes at this stage would not be expected given the time frames agreed.

<b>Outcomes listed in the Theory of Change provided</b>	<b>Please describe below any early evidence of progress towards outcomes (leave blank if none)</b>
<b>Short-term outcomes</b>	
Increased understanding of the educational needs of children with a social worker (schools)	
Increased understanding of the educational needs of children with a social worker (social workers)	
Development of a common language about the education of children with a social worker	
Better joint working to address the educational needs of children with a social worker	
<b>Intermediate and long-term outcomes</b>	
Improved data quality about children with a social worker	
Any changes in the outcomes listed in the final two columns of the Theory of Change model	

Any other outcomes not listed in the Theory of Change. Please specify here:	
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5. Has the extension of the duties to children that have, or have ever had a social worker changed your relationship with schools? If so, how? **Please use UP TO 3 BULLETS (no more than 50 words/bullet):**
- - 
  -
6. What are the **most significant barriers** you have encountered in implementation of the extension duties to children that have, or have ever had a social worker?

**Mark X for UP TO THREE answers**

You are not receiving some of the data you need on children with a social worker from schools	
Difficulties recruiting staff/enhancing existing roles to cover children with a social worker	
Lack of support from senior managers in the LA	
Difficulties in relationship with social care	
Social worker turnover and/or vacancies	
Inadequate resources, specify:	
Other, please specify:	

7. What are the **most significant facilitators** of your implementation of the extension duties to children that have, or have ever had a social worker?

**Mark X for UP TO THREE ANSWERS**

You are receiving some of the data you need on children with a social worker from schools	
New staff/enhanced existing roles covering children with a social worker	
The additional resources from the extension	
Support from senior managers in the LA	
Established good relationships with social care	
Other, please specify:	

8. Which of the following services **have been most responsive** in supporting the virtual school's extension duties to children that have, or have ever had a social worker? Were any of these new contacts?

**Mark X for UP TO THREE ANSWERS**

	Responsive	New contact
Health		
Educational Psychology		
Children and Families' Services including social work/social care		
Youth Offending Team		
Police		
Education Entitlement (Attendance, admissions, exclusions, EWS, EWO, elected home educated, EMAS)		
SEND/Inclusion		
Early help		

School improvement		
Other, please specify:		

9. This question is to help us determine which group or body is providing **oversight of the extension of the Virtual School Head’s strategic duties** with respect to children who have, or have ever had a social worker.

**Mark X for ALL THOSE THAT APPLY**

Virtual School Board of Governors	
Children’s Services Leadership Team	
Relevant Assistant Director’s Leadership Team	
Education Committee (Lead/Cabinet member led Board or similar)	
Education Scrutiny Commission (Elected member-led Board or similar)	
Corporate Parenting Board/Panel	
Safeguarding Board	
None of these, please specify:	

10. Please **describe succinctly (max 250 words) any examples** of good practice related to children who have, or have ever had a social worker that have developed in response to the extension of your role. Please state why you consider this/these to be good practice.

11. Reviewing your answers to questions 1-10, please think about the overall progress your virtual school has made on the extended duties so far and its capacity to make progress in the future. Please **Mark (X) for the word** that you think best describes your perception for each of the three time periods.

	None	Limited	Steady	Rapid
The first three months (Sept to Nov 21)				
The second three months (Dec 21 to Feb 22)				
The next five months (March to June 22)				

## PP+ pilot LAs only - Post-16 Provision for CLA and Care Leavers

### Definition of the post-16 cohort that is the focus of this survey

The post-16 guidance for applications for the extension of PP+ defined the cohort as looked-after children and care leavers in general FE colleges. However, the guidance goes on to state: *VSHs in pilot site LAs will have the flexibility to use the funding as they see best to support other cohorts in wider post- 16 settings, or those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)*. Furthermore, additional clarification from DfE stated that the pilot is for 16-18 year olds only (which excludes care leavers in some LAs) but includes 16-17 year-olds who leave care (i.e. both *relevant* and *former relevant* children).

12. Which of the following have been implemented specifically since the PP+ pilot started?

- a) Training

**Mark X for ALL THOSE THAT APPLY**

Training for college staff (including FE leads and/or tutors)	
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If YES, please specify subject of training:	
Training for social workers on FE	
If YES, please specify subject of training:	

b) Other activities

Mark X for ALL THOSE THAT APPLY

Accessing and analysing data on CLA and care leavers post-16	
Briefings on post-16 PP+ e.g. bulletins, briefings, newsletters, social media, webinars	
Funding or part-funding new roles for FE in the virtual school	
Funding or part-funding new roles in colleges e.g. to monitor attendance, mentors	
Monitoring attendance or intervening to improve attendance of CLA and care leavers post-16	
Surveys, consultations to collect views of young people	
Network/forum meetings of FE Leads facilitated by the virtual school	
Improving PEPs – through training for SWs, writing or editing responsibilities, etc	
Allocating PP+ through PEPs	
Activities targeting NEET	
Activities targeting UASC	
Meetings with social workers about individual students outside of PEP meetings	
Panels and review meetings relating to young people in care/care leavers	
College visits (beyond attending a PEP meeting that happens to take place in college)	
Facilitating specific support in school for individual students e.g. mentors, laptops, language support, 1:1 or small group tuition.	
Facilitating enrichment activities e.g. sports clubs, cultural visits	
Facilitating/referring others to additional services for students e.g. CAMHS, YOT, specific therapies, etc.	
Other activities, please specify:	

13. What steps have been taken, if any towards improving the collection, access and use of data on 16-18-year olds in care and care leavers. **Please respond using up to 6 bullet points (no more than 50 words/bullet)**

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14. Please look at the 'Post-16 Theory of Change' slide that we circulated with this survey. **Describe any early evidence of progress towards the outcomes shown in the Theory of Change, with reference to the activities you have ticked in question 11.** We acknowledge that meeting the outcomes at this stage would not be expected given the time frames agreed.



Outcomes listed in the Theory of Change provided	Please describe below any early evidence of progress towards outcomes (leave blank if none)
<b>Short-term outcomes</b>	
Joint working	
Colleges	
Young people	
<b>Long-term outcomes listed in the final column of the Theory of Change provided (please specify)</b>	
Any other outcomes not listed in the theory of change. Please specify here:	

15. What are the **most significant barriers** you have encountered so far in implementing your plan?

**Mark X for UP TO THREE ANSWERS**

Not receiving data on CLA/care leavers from colleges	
Difficulties recruiting staff/enhancing existing roles to cover CLA/care leavers post-16	
Lack of engagement from colleges	
Lack of engagement from YP	
Lack of support from senior managers in the LA	
Difficulties in relationship with social care	
Social worker turnover and/or vacancies	
Inadequate resources, specify:	
Other, please specify:	

16. What are the **most significant facilitators** of your implementation of the PP+ for CLA and care leavers post-16?

**Mark X for UP TO THREE ANSWERS**

Receiving data on CLA/care leavers from colleges	
New staff/enhancing existing roles enabling cover of CLA/care leavers post-16	
Adequate resources, specify:	
Good engagement/support from colleges	
Good engagement from YP	
Support from senior managers in the LA	
Established good relationship with social care post-16/care leaving team	
Other, please specify:	

17. Please describe succinctly (max 250 words) any examples of good practice related to the extension of PP+ to post-16. Please state why you consider this/these to be good practice.

If you have any queries regarding this survey please contact Judy Sebba at  
VSextension@education.ox.ac.uk

Thank you very much for completing the survey

Please send the completed survey to VSextension@education.ox.ac.uk



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