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Pupil Premium Plus Post-16 evaluation

Interim report

September 2024

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This research report was written before the new UK Government took office on 5 July 2024. As a result, the content may not reflect current Government policy.

Glossary

ACEs Adverse childhood experiences

AD Assistant Director

AVSH Assistant Virtual School Head

CAMHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

CL Care leaver

CLA Children looked after

CSCS Construction Skills Certification Scheme card

CSC Children's social care

CV Curriculum vitae

DCS Director of Children's Services

DfE Department for Education

DT Designated teacher

EET Education, employment or training

ESOL English for speakers of other languages

FE Further education

HE Higher education

IRO Independent reviewing officer

NAVSH National Association of Virtual School Heads

NEET Not in education, employment or training

NNECL National Network for the Education of Care Leavers

PEP Personal education plan

PP+ Post-16 Pupil Premium Plus Post-16

RADY Raising Attainment of Disadvantaged Learners

SALT Speech and language therapy

SEMH Social emotional and mental health

SEN Special educational needs

SLT Senior Leadership Team

SMART Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound

SW Social worker

ToC Theory of Change

UASC Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

VS Virtual school (collectively the professionals working within the VS)

VSH Virtual School Head (referring to the professional in the leadership role of the VS)

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Executive Summary

Background

From October 2021, the government introduced a pilot in 30 local authorities to support 16 to 18-year-old children looked-after (CLA) and care leavers (CLs) in general further education (FE) colleges through the extension of Pupil Premium Plus funding to post-16 (PP+ Post-16). The 6-month pilot was completed between autumn 2021 and spring 2022¹, before funding was extended to a further 28 local authorities in autumn 2022 and subsequently extended to all local authorities in England in autumn 2023. The purpose of PP+ Post-16 was also extended in 2023/24 to provide funding to support all CLA and CLs at post-16, rather than focusing on support for CLA and CLs in general FE colleges².

PP+ Post-16 is managed by each local authority's Virtual School Head (VSH) and can be used to provide individual or cohort level support to improve educational outcomes. This includes supporting attendance, retention, and attainment at post-16, and to enable CLA and CLs to have sustained involvement in education, employment and training. The funding allocation has varied each year to accommodate additional local authority sites. In recognition of the different funding levels and points at which local authorities began to receive PP+ Post-16, this evaluation groups local authorities into 3 'cohorts':

- Cohort 1 sites (x30): Received the pilot funding in 2021/22
- Cohort 2 sites (x28): Started receiving funding in 2022/23
- Cohort 3 sites (x94): Started receiving funding in 2023/24

Methods

This mixed methods evaluation is formative in intention and involves an exploratory study of the use of the funding by virtual schools (VS). It also considers early evidence about progress towards the outcomes in the Theory of Change (ToC), developed during the pilot evaluation and updated at the start of this evaluation through a series of ToC workshops with VSHs. The outcomes are arranged in the ToC under 3 headings, which are outcomes relating to young people, post-16 settings and joint working.

¹ Evaluation of the virtual school heads extension and the pupil premium plus post-16 pilot [Evaluation of the VS heads extension and the pupil premium plus post-16 pilot - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-vs-heads-extension-and-the-pupil-premium-plus-post-16-pilot)

² Pupil Premium Plus post-16 programme: grant determination letters <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-plus-post-16-pilot-submit-an-expression-of-interest>

This interim report presents findings from year 1 of the evaluation (2023/24) based on a national online survey of VSHs, case study interviews in 6 local authorities involving interviews with a range of stakeholders, and documentary analysis.

Summary of data collected in year 1

Survey of VSHs: 120 responses received (81% response rate).

Case study interviews: 6 case study sites were recruited, 3 each from Cohorts 1 and 2. No Cohort 3 sites were recruited as this Cohort had only just begun to receive PP+ Post-16.

Case study interviews were completed with a total of 7 VSHs/Assistant Virtual School Heads (AVSHs), 4 Directors of Children's Services (DCSs)/Assistant Directors (ADs), 11 social workers (SWs) or personal advisers, 8 leads in post-16 settings, 7 designated teachers (DTs) in pre-16 and 9 carers.

Documentary analysis: Analysis of 57 anonymised Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and a range of reports and example guidance and policy from case study sites.

The final evaluation report will incorporate national data set analysis and cost benefit assessment, in addition to year 2 survey and case study findings.

Interim findings from year 1

Programme starting point

Eighty-five per cent of survey respondents across all 3 cohorts had used, or planned to use PP+ Post-16 to enhance or expand on an existing offer for CLA or CLs. Qualitative survey responses show that prior to receiving PP+ Post-16, the offer of support to CLA and CLs was more limited (e.g., some VSHs had focused on 'free' support such as information, advice and guidance, or repurposing other funding to provide support).

The guidance on PP+ Post-16 provides VSHs with some flexibility in who they use the funding to support. Case study sites defined the cohort eligible for the funding as CLA and CLs in school years 12 and 13 (or equivalent), and continuing until the end of the academic year in which a young person turns 18. Some sites reported continuing support for some young people beyond year 13.

Reported uses of PP+ Post-16

The majority of survey respondents across all 3 cohorts reported that they had spent, or planned to spend most of the PP+ Post-16 funding on activities directly related to young people (e.g., academic support and intervention to support attendance). Survey responses from Cohort 1 also suggest that in the early stages of receiving funding, VSs had prioritised some strategic activities related to joint working and the VS (e.g., training; supporting delivery of targets in PEPs, Pathway Plans or equivalent; and increasing VS staffing capacity at post-16). VSHs in case study sites reported that using the funding to increase staffing capacity in VSs had enabled them to increase engagement with other professionals, particularly post-16 settings, and to develop practice. These activities related to VSs and joint working are identified in the ToC and may suggest that funding is initially being used for strategic activities to set the foundations for supporting CLA and CLs.

Survey findings show that most VSs had delivered, or planned to deliver, training for staff in post-16 settings followed by training for SWs. Topics most commonly covered by training included trauma and attachment; PEPs and SMART targets (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound); role specific training; and training about the post-16 education landscape and transitions. Survey findings show that guidance on the use of the funding has been most commonly provided by VSs to post-16 settings and DTs, with a smaller proportion of VSs having provided guidance to carers.

Support provided to individual CLA and CLs in case study sites has included funding activities and resources directly related to young people's education, training and employment (e.g., tuition, careers guidance, mentoring, books, course equipment, and workwear). Funding has also been used for extra-curricular activities (e.g., sports, musical instruments and tuition, and theatre trips), viewed as bridging the opportunity gap between CLA and CLs and their peers, and supporting young people's social, emotional and mental health (SEMH). Survey findings show that although VSs were initially more reactive in their approach to supporting young people, some VSHs in Cohort 1 had increasingly begun to focus on early intervention and prevention.

Survey respondents reported using PP+ Post-16 to give extra focus to specific groups as a way of maximising the funding's impact. The two main cohorts reported as receiving extra focus are young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC), which was described as a response to the growth in the size of these cohorts.

Perceived barriers and enablers to the effective use of PP+ Post-16

Perceived enablers

Enablers most frequently identified by survey respondents include:

- having new staff in VSs or enhancing existing roles enabling cover of CLA and CLs at post-16
- good engagement and support from post-16 education or training settings
- established good relationships with social care post-16 or leaving care teams

The case study data suggest that joint working and relationships with partners existed prior to PP+ Post-16, but that funding has enabled VSs to strengthen those relationships (e.g., expanding VS teams has allowed for increased interaction with post-16 settings).

Additional enablers identified by case study interviewees include:

- flexibility in how VSHs use the funding
- strong relationships between the VS, post-16 settings and SWs
- VS staff having an increased presence at PEP meetings
- making approval of PP+ Post-16 spending dependent on completing a PEP
- the funding providing VSs with leverage during discussions with other stakeholders about support for CLA and CLs

Perceived barriers

Barriers most commonly identified by survey respondents were:

- SW turnover and/or vacancies
- not receiving data on CLA and CLs from post-16 education and training settings
- low engagement from CLA and CLs
- inadequate resources

Although low engagement by CLA and CLs was identified as a barrier, survey respondents and case study interviewees reported seeing an increase in engagement from CLA and CLs since starting to receive the funding, suggesting that this may become less of a barrier over time.

Additional barriers identified by case study interviewees included:

- the size and complexity of post-16 provision

- the lack of an established framework for supporting CLA and CLs in post-16
- a need for further guidance from VSs on the use of PP+ Post-16
- inconsistent communication with carers about available support
- challenges around transition planning
- the lack of consistency experienced by post-16 settings working with multiple VSs

Although VSHs valued having flexibility in how they used the funding as they could tailor its use to meet the needs of their local cohorts, this flexibility created less consistency for staff in post-16 settings working with multiple VSs where each VS had its own guidelines on use of the funding. Case study interviewees including leads in post-16 settings, SWs, DTs and carers identified a need for increased guidance from VSs about the use of PP+ Post-16 (e.g., clarifying permitted uses and suggesting ways in which the funding could be used to support CLA and CLs). A further challenge identified for post-16 settings working with multiple VSs, was that each local authority has its own PEP form and process. This meant there was a lack of consistency in the types of information required from post-16 settings to complete the PEP form. This challenge for post-16 settings working with multiple VSs to complete PEPs was also identified in the pilot evaluation of PP+ Post-16.

Comparison of survey responses for Cohort 1 from both the pilot evaluation and the current evaluation, conducted almost 2 years apart, show the 3 most commonly reported enablers (good engagement and support from post-16 settings; new staff or enhancing existing roles in VSs; and established good relationships with social care post-16 or leaving care teams) and the most common barrier (SW turnover and/or vacancies) have remained the same.

Data availability

Analysis suggests that some progress is being made to improve the availability of data relating to CLA and CLs at post-16. Survey respondents in Cohorts 1 and 2 described taking a range of steps to improve the collection, access and use of data about CLA and CLs, including:

- developing or commissioning data systems
- joint working to improve data sharing (e.g., with leaving care teams)
- extending PEPs to the entire post-16 cohort
- recruiting staff with responsibility for tracking or analysing post-16 data

The findings suggest that data availability is better in Cohort 1, although it is unclear whether VSs in this Cohort were already more focused on the data, or whether this is linked to receiving PP+ Post-16.

VSs were asked about challenges they faced in accessing or compiling data on CLA and CLs aged 16 to 18 years requested as part of the survey. Challenges identified included, collating data from different sources (e.g., data from different post-16 settings); a lack of post-16 attendance data; a lack of CL data; and slow responses by post-16 settings to requests for data.

Emerging outcomes

Survey respondents and case study interviewees from Cohorts 1 and 2 reported the following early evidence about progress towards the outcomes in the ToC since starting to receive the funding. These are described using the 3 outcome headings from the ToC, which are outcomes relating to young people, post-16 settings and joint working.

Emerging outcomes relating to young people

The 3 most commonly reported emerging outcomes relating to young people, identified by survey respondents were:

- increased engagement (e.g., through provision of tuition, mentoring, funding of training courses or extra-curricular activities)
- being able to add skills to their curriculum vitae (CV) (e.g., through PP+ Post-16 funding incidental expenses of doing work experience)
- an increased awareness of education, employment or training (EET) options (e.g., through provision of careers guidance and increased participation by young people in PEP meetings)

Interviewees in case study sites also reported seeing increased self-efficacy and empowerment amongst young people and reported a reduction in number of young people who were NEET since receiving the funding.

Emerging outcomes relating to post-16 settings

Most survey respondents stated that the majority of post-16 settings had a named person for CLA and CLs. Interviewees in case study sites described a named person or DT leading a team of staff working with CLA and CLs, due to the size of post-16 settings. This role already existed to an extent before the introduction of PP+ Post-16, but was perceived to have increased since the funding was introduced. Most survey respondents considered that the majority of post-16 settings understood corporate parenting responsibility, although views were more mixed amongst interviewees in case study

sites. Few survey respondents or interviewees in case study sites reported that CLA and CLs were highlighted in prospectuses. Survey respondents and VSHs in case study sites described how post-16 settings had begun to develop or amend policies to ensure that CLA and CLs are supported (e.g., amending policies to include allocation of a mentor or giving CLA and CLs priority when feedback is provided to students), and that staff in post-16 settings had an increased awareness of the needs of CLA and CLs (e.g., reported as being a result of strategic changes such as development of policy around CLA and CLs, and because of training addressing the specific needs of the cohort). Although interviewees in case study sites described activities using PP+ Post-16 contributing to outcomes relating to post-16 settings, it is possible that other factors not linked to PP+ Post-16 have also contributed to these outcomes.

Emerging outcomes relating to joint working

The 4 most commonly reported outcomes relating to joint working identified by survey respondents were:

- PEPs inform actions and support for young people
- strengthened close working relationships between VSHs and post-16 education or training settings
- better understanding of CLA and CLs' needs by all stakeholders
- tailored interventions in place to support UASC

Interviewees in case study sites also reported emerging signs of these outcomes.

Outcomes that Cohort 3 plan to achieve

Survey respondents in Cohort 3, who only started to receive PP+ Post-16 in autumn 2023, identified a range of outcomes that they were aiming to achieve relating to young people, post-16 settings and joint working. Despite the outcomes being reported in response to open text questions in the survey, they closely reflected outcomes identified in the ToC (e.g., increasing awareness of CLA and CLs' needs; increasing EET rates, and improving motivation amongst CLA and CLs).

Next steps and priorities

Interviewees in case study sites identified a number of next steps and priorities. These included VSHs' plans and ways in which other interviewees hoped that the funding would be used in future:

- prioritise the continuing development of support for CLA and CLs, (e.g., funding activities promoting SEMH and aspiration raising; support for late entrants to care; and providing life skills to young people transitioning to independence)

- further support transition into post-16 (e.g., identify and support young people at risk of becoming NEET during transition; provide funded apprenticeships and work experience ring-fenced for CLA at risk of becoming NEET; and use PP+ Post-16 funding to formalise the transition process)
- develop joint working and professional practice (e.g., through training of new and existing staff in post-16 and children's social care (CSC); work to help VSs understand what effective interventions look like in post-16; and further work to strengthen the PEP process)
- focus on supporting specific groups of CLA and CLs (e.g., young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET, CLs, UASC and young people in the secure estate)

Conclusion

Findings from year 1 of the evaluation show participants reporting emerging signs of progress towards a wide range of outcomes set out in the ToC. The outcomes reported are predominantly short-term or interim, which fits with the anticipated timeline for achieving outcomes set out in the ToC. This is encouraging as it indicates that activities and approaches implemented by VSHs using the funding are starting to change the way that CLA and CLs are supported at post-16. However, the findings should be interpreted with some caution, as they are based on subjective reporting by VSHs and other stakeholders. Further data on reported emerging outcomes will be collected in year 2 of the evaluation, providing any evidence of further progress towards outcomes set out in the ToC.

1 Background

This is the interim report for the evaluation of Pupil Premium Plus Post-16 (PP+ Post-16) following its extension to all local authorities in England. The evaluation is being undertaken by Cordis Bright and the Rees Centre, University of Oxford for the Department for Education (DfE).

1.1 The introduction of Pupil Premium Plus Post-16

From October 2021, the government introduced a pilot in 30 local authorities 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 funding to post-16. The pilot ran for 6 months between autumn 2021 and spring 2022. The pilot local authorities were chosen following an expression of interest and the pilot was evaluated by the Rees Centre³. In autumn 2022, further PP+ Post-16 funding was allocated to the pilot sites and extended to an additional 28 local authorities. The funding was subsequently extended to all local authorities in England in autumn 2023.

Although the original purpose of PP+ Post-16 was to support CLA and CLs in general FE colleges, in 2023/24 its purpose was widened to provide funding for all CLA and CL at Post-16⁴. PP+ Post-16 is managed by each local authority's Virtual School Head (VSH), and it is their responsibility to ensure it is used to support their CLA and CLs. VSHs can use the funding to provide individual or cohort level support to improve educational outcomes, in particular the attendance, retention, and attainment of this cohort at post-16, and enable them to have sustained involvement in education, employment and training (EET)⁵. VSHs should take account of the statutory guidance 'Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children'⁶ when using the funding.

The DfE has made a total of £24 million available to extend Post-16 Pupil Premium Plus-style funding in financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25, with £10 million available in 2023/24, and £14 million in 2024-25.

The funding allocation for each year is as follows:

³ Evaluation of the virtual school heads extension and the pupil premium plus post-16 pilot [Evaluation of the VS heads extension and the pupil premium plus post-16 pilot - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/research-data-and-analysis/evaluation-of-the-virtual-school-heads-extension-and-the-pupil-premium-plus-post-16-pilot)

⁴ Pupil Premium Plus post-16 programme: grant determination letters [Pupil Premium Plus post-16 programme: grant determination letters - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/research-data-and-analysis/pupil-premium-plus-post-16-programme-grant-determination-letters)

⁵ PP+ Post-16 Supporting Letter to LAs June 2023

⁶ Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children [Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/research-data-and-analysis/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-and-previously-looked-after-children)

- **2021/22** 30 local authority sites in England, £3 million = £900 per child
- **2022/23** 58 local authority sites in England, £5 million = £920 per child
- **2023/24** 152 local authority sites in England, £9.85 million
- **2024/25** 152 local authority sites in England, £13.84 million

In the first 2 years of funding, calculations were based solely on students in general FE colleges. In the years 2023/24 and 2024/25 funding was extended to include all CLA and CLs aged 16 to 18 years. Our understanding from discussion with the DfE is that allocations for 2023/24 and 2024/25 were calculated by adding the total number of CLA aged 16 years and over, and CLs aged 17 to 18 years per local authority, and dividing this by the overall number of CLA and CLs nationally. This gave the percentage rate of CLA/CLs per local authority, with funding allocated proportionately based on this rate. Data sources used in this calculation included education statistics published in early 2023 and 2021 census data.

For 2023/24 there is a 15% cap for those 58 local authorities already in receipt of funding, to ensure continuity of delivery in those areas. This means that funding for those local authorities will not decrease by more than 15% compared to 2022/23, with other allocations adjusted accordingly. For 2024/25, all allocations will be calculated using the same formula, without a cap in funding.

In recognition of the different points at which local authorities began to receive PP+ Post-16 and the variation in funding levels, this evaluation groups local authorities into 3 'cohorts':

- Cohort 1 sites (x30): Received the pilot funding in 2021/22⁷
- Cohort 2 sites (x28): Started receiving funding in 2022/23
- Cohort 3 sites (x94): Started receiving funding in 2023/24

1.2 Learning from the Pupil Premium Plus Post-16 pilot evaluation

Although in the pilot phase, the purpose of PP+ Post-16 was to support CLA and CLs in general FE colleges, there was evidence that some VSHs were already using the funding

⁷ To note: pilot funding was received from September 2021 to March 2022, followed by a gap before receiving the funding again from September 2022.

to target a wider cohort (e.g., CLA or CLs in years 12 and 13 of school, or for training and apprenticeships).

The pilot phase found evidence that PP+ Post-16 had increased the profile of CLA and CLs in FE by strengthening working relationships between Virtual Schools (VS), colleges and Social Workers (SWs). Training for SWs and college staff on the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process was identified as an important activity for VSs. The need for training was reflected in evidence about the challenges of the PEP process, including a lack of clarity about the respective responsibilities of different professionals in the process, the need to better engage foster carers and young people, and the challenge for college staff of being involved in PEPs from multiple local authorities. The pilot also identified promoting the attendance of young people in FE as an important focus for VSs, with pilot sites developing systems to record and monitor attendance data and establishing a range of measures to encourage and sustain young people's attendance.

1.3 Objectives of the Pupil Premium Plus Post-16 evaluation

Following the extension of PP+ Post-16 to all VSs in England, this evaluation is formative in intention and will conduct an exploratory study of the use of the funding and consider early evidence about progress towards the outcomes in the Theory of Change (ToC). Evaluation questions about implementation of the funding include assessment of:

- how VSs are using the funding
- enablers and barriers to its use
- the views of CLA, CLs and carers about the support available for post-16 education and training

The evaluation builds on the outcomes identified in the ToC developed during the pilot phase. Evaluation questions about progress towards emerging outcomes include:

- how successful participating sites are in delivering the intended outcomes for the cohort?
- what are the short-term, interim and longer-term outcomes that are being achieved for young people, post-16 education and training settings, and wider stakeholders?
- does the programme represent value for money?

A full list of evaluation questions is provided in Annex 1.

2 Scoping phase: Theory of Change workshops

During the evaluation scoping phase, 3 online ToC workshops were held with VSs to update and refine the ToC initially developed during the pilot evaluation. A separate workshop was held with VSs from each Cohort, recognising that they would be at different stages in implementing or planning for PP+ Post-16. VSHs (or their post-16 leads) were invited to participate in a workshop from VSs representing all 9 English regions. The workshops explored:

- how well the ToC developed during the pilot phase aligned with VSs' current or planned activities using the PP+ Post-16 funding
- views on whether outcome measures included in the ToC required updating

Across the 3 ToC workshops, a total of 22 participants attended from 18 VSs. A breakdown of participants is shown in Table 1. It is not expected that every local authority will deliver all activities or outcomes in the ToC. Rather, the ToC sets out the range of activities and outcomes that are expected to be delivered across the programme as a whole.

Table 1: Breakdown of Theory of Change workshop participants

Representation in each workshop	Cohort 1 workshop	Cohort 2 workshop	Cohort 3 workshop	Total
Regions	6	3	6	-
VSs	6	3	9	18
Individuals	6	5	11	22

Information gathered in the workshops was used to review and update the ToC to reflect the views of VSs receiving funding both during and since the pilot evaluation phase. The ToC contains four strands of activity leading to short-term, interim and long-term outcomes. The strands of activity are:

- activity relating to the VS (Table 2)
- activity relating to joint working (Table 2)
- activity related to post-16 settings (Table 3)
- activity related to young people (Table 4)

Table 2: Theory of Change for Pupil Premium Plus Post-16: Virtual School and joint working

Inputs	Activities	Short-term outcomes (Cohort 1 & 2 by end of 22/23 and Cohort 3 by end of 23/24)	Interim outcomes (Cohorts 1 & 2 by end of 23/24 and Cohort 3 by end of 24/25)	Long-term outcomes (Cohorts 1 & 2 by end of 25/26 and Cohort 3 by end of 26/27)
Virtual School School and post-16 settings Extension of PP+ Post-16 funding	Virtual School: Increased capacity Supports the delivery of PEP, pathway plans or equivalent Joint working: Development of shared agreements Joint training Improved PEPs Targeted work with NEET young people, UASC, and those in the secure estate Working across Virtual Schools (e.g., regional groups)	Better understanding of young people's needs by all stakeholders Improved understanding of the post-16 landscape by VSs/children's social care (CSC) Meaningful young person participation in PEP PEP informs actions and support for young people	Strengthened close working relationships between VSs and post-16 settings VS input recognised in Preparation for Adulthood Plan More integrated support for transition to independence Tailored interventions in place to support attendance, NEET young people, UASC, those in the secure estate	Post-16 settings demonstrate awareness of the needs of the cohort, reflected in their policies and practice Improved attendance Increased engagement Retention in post-16 Improved attainment Increase in EET (stable/ appropriate employment, apprenticeships, or higher education (HE)) Increased retention in EET More agency and voice in the decisions made

Table 3: Theory of Change for Pupil Premium Plus Post-16: Post-16 settings

Inputs	Activities	Short-term outcomes (Cohort 1 & 2 by end of 22/23 and Cohort 3 by end of 23/24)	Interim outcomes (Cohorts 1 & 2 by end of 23/24 and Cohort 3 by end of 24/25)	Long-term outcomes (Cohorts 1 & 2 by end of 25/26 and Cohort 3 by end of 26/27)
Virtual School School and post-16 settings Extension of PP+ Post-16 funding	Awareness raising Increased capacity Regular post-16/VSH meetings	Setting has a named person for this group in the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and/or a key person with decision-making powers CLA and CLs highlighted in prospectus Post-16 settings understand corporate parenting responsibility	Clear policy and commitment to supporting CLA and CLs	Post-16 settings demonstrate awareness of the needs of the cohort, reflected in their policies and practice

Table 4: Theory of Change for Pupil Premium Plus Post-16: Young people

Inputs	Activities	Short-term outcomes (Cohort 1 & 2 by end of 22/23 and Cohort 3 by end of 23/24)	Interim outcomes (Cohorts 1 & 2 by end of 23/24 and Cohort 3 by end of 24/25)	Long-term outcomes (Cohorts 1 & 2 by end of 25/26 and Cohort 3 by end of 26/27)
Virtual School School and post-16 settings Extension of PP+ Post-16 funding	Academic/skills support Mental health/relationship support Targeted work with NEET young people, UASC, those in the secure estate	Build trusting relationship with an adult See positive role model Add skills to curriculum vitae (CV)	Increased motivation Increased engagement Increased self-efficacy Young person feels empowered Young person on an appropriate course Increased awareness of EET options	Improved attendance Increased engagement Retention in post-16 Improved attainment Increase in EET (stable/appropriate employment, apprenticeships or HE) Increased retention in EET More agency and voice in the decisions made

3 Methodology

This formative evaluation uses a mixed methods approach drawing on recommendations about future evaluation made in the pilot evaluation report. Methods employed across the evaluation include:

- national online surveys of VSHs
- case studies in 6 local authorities involving interviews with a range of stakeholders and documentary analysis
- national data set analysis
- a cost benefit assessment

This interim report presents findings from the first survey of VSHs, the year 1 case study interviews and documentary analysis. The final evaluation report will incorporate national data set analysis and a cost benefit assessment, and further information about these is provided in Annex 2, together with an overview of the reporting and methods used across each stage of the evaluation.

Data reported in the interim report:

Survey of VSHs: An online survey circulated to all VSs in England, exploring:

- the ways in which VSs are using, or plan to use, the PP+ Post-16 funding
- reflections since receiving the funding
- views on outcomes for young people, post-16 settings, and joint working

Case study interviews: Interviews with stakeholders in 6 case study local authorities to provide an in-depth understanding of how PP+ Post-16 is being used and any reported signs of emerging progress towards outcomes in the ToC.

Documentary analysis: Analysis of documents relating to PP+ Post-16 supplied by VSHs in the 6 case study sites, including a sample of anonymised PEPs.

Data will be triangulated to strengthen their validity.

3.1 Survey of Virtual School Heads

In January 2024, the evaluation team distributed a survey to all VSs in England via an online software SmartSurvey. A copy of the survey is provided in Annex 3.

The purpose of the survey was to collect activity data from VSs to triangulate with findings from the case studies and outcomes data, that are not available in the national data sets. Survey questions build on those used in the surveys for the pilot evaluation and draw on learning from the ToC workshops. The national survey will be repeated in year 2 of the evaluation with questions informed by these year 1 interim findings.

A note on survey design

Please note that the wording for the survey was adapted based on when each survey respondent first received the PP+ Post-16 funding. Cohorts 1 and 2 were asked about how they have used the funding so far, as well as their views on emerging outcomes. As Cohort 3 first received the funding in September 2023 (i.e., a few months prior to the distribution of the survey), they were asked how they plan to use the funding, and were not asked for their views on outcomes. This difference in wording is reflected throughout the analysis in the Findings section.

Table 5 presents a breakdown of the response rate for each cohort. Overall, we received 120 responses, (i.e., an excellent response rate of 81%). Findings from the survey are presented in this report.

Table 5: Response rate for each cohort

Cohort (year PP+ funding was first received)	Response rate⁸
Cohort 1 (2021)	27 out of 30 (90%)
Cohort 2 (2022)	21 out of 25 (84%)
Cohort 3 (2023)	72 out of 93 (77%)
Total	120 out of 148 (81%)

⁸ Please note that response rates are out of the number of VSHs in England (148) rather than the number of VSs (152). This is because some VSHs are responsible for multiple VSs, but were only asked to submit 1 survey response.

3.2 Six local authority case studies

To build an in-depth understanding of use of the funding and emerging progress towards outcomes identified in the ToC, 6 local authorities were recruited as case study sites with data collected through in-depth interviews and documentary analysis.

Case study sites were recruited to provide examples of a broad range of uses of the funding and to represent local authorities encompassing a range of characteristics (e.g., size, urban/rural, number of CLA). Uses of the funding were identified through the expressions of interest submitted to the DfE by VSs seeking to become PP+ Post-16 pilot sites.

In year 1 of this evaluation, 3 case study sites were recruited from both Cohorts 1 and 2. No sites were recruited from Cohort 3 as this Cohort would have only just begun to receive PP+ Post-16. In year 2 of the evaluation, 2 existing case study sites will be substituted for 2 sites from Cohort 3. The characteristics of the year 1 case study sites are shown in Table 6, together with their pseudonyms.

Table 6: Characteristics of case study sites

Pseudonym	Geographic footprint	Urban/rural	Overall number of CLA 31.03.2023 ⁹	Rate of CLA per 10,000 children aged under 18 ¹⁰
Aldlake	Small	Urban	250 to 500	50 to 100
Bridmarsh	Large	Mixed	More than 1000	Less than 50
Cartdale	Large	Mixed	500 to 1000	50 to 100
Dorland	Small	Urban	250 to 500	50 to 100
Esterford	Large	Mixed	More than 1000	50 to 100
Foxbridge	Small	Rural	Less than 250	50 to 100

3.2.1 Case study interviews and focus groups

Case studies involved online one-to-one interviews with VSHs/Assistant Virtual School Heads (AVSHs) and Directors of Children's Services (DCSs)/Assistant Directors (ADs) in each of the 6 sites, and online small group interviews with a range of stakeholders including SWs or personal advisers, the PP+ Post-16 lead in post-16 settings, designated

⁹ Department for Education (2023) Children looked after in England including adoption: 2022 to 2023. Available at: [Children looked after in England including adoption: 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2022-to-2023)

¹⁰ Ibid

teachers (DTs) and carers. Small group interviews involved up to 3 participants from the same local authority holding a similar role. In one case study site, 2 focus groups were planned with young people aged 16 to 18 years – one focus group with young people who are EET and one focus group with young people who are NEET – to explore their views of the support they receive with education and training at post-16¹¹.

Interviews were recorded with the interviewees' consent and transcribed. Transcripts were initially coded thematically in Excel using pre-identified codes based on the evaluation framework and outcomes set out in the ToC. Researchers then discussed the initial coding to identify and agree further themes and sub-codes emerging through the analysis.

3.2.2 Documentary analysis

VSHs were asked to share any available documents providing further detail about their approach to PP+ Post-16 (e.g., local self-evaluations, audits, policy and guidance developed for local post-16 settings or SWs) to build on the information gathered through the in-depth interviews. The documents were reviewed for content relevant to the evaluation questions, and summarised into an Excel spreadsheet based on the evaluation framework developed during the project scoping phase. VSHs were also asked to provide a sample of 10 anonymised PEPs, including PEPs for young people who are EET, NEET and UASC. Analysis of the sample PEPs is intended to enable further exploration of the issues around development and delivery of PEPs identified in the pilot evaluation (e.g., variation in attendance at PEP review meetings by SWs and engaging foster carers and young people in the PEP process).

3.2.3 Data analysed as part of the case studies

Interview data from the following individuals were included in the case study analysis:

- 7 VSHs (one interview involved a VSH and AVSH in a case study site)
- 4 DCS/ADs
- 8 PP+ Post-16 leads in post-16 settings
- 11 SWs or personal advisers
- 7 DTs (pre-16)
- 8 carers

¹¹ It has not been possible to complete case study interviews in Foxbridge, other than with the VSH, or to complete the planned focus groups with young people. This outstanding data will be collected and incorporated into the final evaluation report.

The case studies incorporate survey responses received from 5 case study sites.

Documents received from case study sites for analysis included:

- 57 anonymised PEPs
- annual reports
- PP+ Post-16 guidance for post-16 settings
- PEP guidance, policies and procedures developed by post-16 settings
- partnership agreements between VSs and post-16 settings
- internal research and evaluation
- PowerPoint slides detailing a site's approach to PP+ Post-16

4 Findings

4.1 Overview

The findings presented in this section draw on the survey of VSHs and case studies, with illustrative quotes provided where appropriate. Examples from case study sites of how PP+ Post-16 has been used are included in blue boxes. Due to the availability of interviewees, other than the VSH, it has not been possible to arrange interviews with stakeholders (e.g., the DCS, SWs, leads in post-16 settings, DTs and carers) in Foxbridge, and it has not been possible to hold the focus groups with young people as planned in time to incorporate the findings into the interim report. The outstanding data will be incorporated into the final evaluation report.

A descriptive overview for each case study site summarising activities, barriers and enablers to use of the funding, and signs of emerging outcomes reported by VSHs can be found in Annex 4.

4.2 Programme starting point

Summary points

- The majority of VSs (85%) responding to the survey reported that the funding had been used, or would be used to enhance or expand on their existing offer for CLA and CLs, rather than establishing a new offer.
- Case study sites define the eligible cohort as CLA and CLs in years 12 and 13 (or equivalent), and continuing until the end of the academic year in which a young person turns 18. Some sites continue support for some young people into year 14.

4.2.1 Virtual Schools' approach to post-16 provision prior to receiving PP+ post-16 funding

Survey findings suggest that the majority (85%) of VSs across all 3 cohorts have used, or will use, PP+ Post-16 funding to enhance or expand on an existing offer for CLA or CLs. Conversely, 15% of respondents reported that the funding has enabled, or will enable, the VS to implement a new offer for CLA and CLs where previously there was none. In qualitative responses, survey respondents reported that prior to the introduction of PP+ Post-16, limited funding had restricted the offer of support available for CLA and CLs. In some cases, this meant that VSs had focused on 'free' support, such as information,

advice and guidance. In other cases, survey respondents reported repurposing other funding to provide support due to the level of need.

A few survey respondents reported having a more comprehensive offer for post-16 CLA and CLs prior to receiving the funding. These activities included completion of termly PEP meetings, particularly at the end of year 11; a dedicated officer to support post-16 CLAs and CLs within the VS; providing targeted support for young people who are UASC or NEET; and a focus on partnership working.

4.2.2 How is the eligible cohort defined by Virtual Schools?

The DfE guidance¹² provides VSHs with a degree of flexibility in how they interpret the cohort of young people eligible for support using the funding, although case study sites interpreted the cohort in a broadly similar way. All 6 case study sites described using PP+ Post-16 to support young people in years 12 and 13 (or at an equivalent stage where NEET), with support continuing until the end of the academic year in which a young person turns 18. Three case study sites reported the possibility of support continuing in some instances for young people in year 14 (e.g., for ongoing English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision).

¹² Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children [Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612222/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_and_previously_looked-after_children_-_GOV.UK.pdf) and the grant determination letter [Pupil Premium Plus post-16 programme: grant determination letters - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612222/Pupil_Premium_Plus_post-16_programme_grant_determination_letters_-_GOV.UK.pdf)

4.3 Uses of Pupil Premium Plus Post-16 funding

Summary points

- Activities most frequently reported to be delivered using PP+ Post-16 funding relate to direct work with young people, although in the early stages of receiving the funding, spending on strategic activities (e.g., training on the use of PP+ Post-16 and increasing staffing capacity in VSs) appears to have been a priority for VSs in Cohort 1.
- The funding has been used to provide a broad range of activities and resources directly related to young people's EET (e.g., tuition, course equipment, careers guidance), and extra-curricular activities (e.g., sport, music, theatre trips) to provide new opportunities and support young people's social emotional and mental health (SEMH). VSs have used PP+ Post-16 to give extra focus to specific groups of young people (e.g., CLA and CLs who are NEET or UASC), which was described as a response to the growth of these cohorts.
- In addition to funding direct support for CLA and CLs, the funding has been used for a range of activities related to joint working (e.g., training and developing guidance) and increasing staffing capacity in VSs at post-16.

4.3.1 Activities funded using Pupil Premium Plus Post-16

Across all 3 cohorts, the majority of survey respondents reported that they had spent (or planned to spend) most of the PP+ Post-16 funding to date on activities directly related to young people.

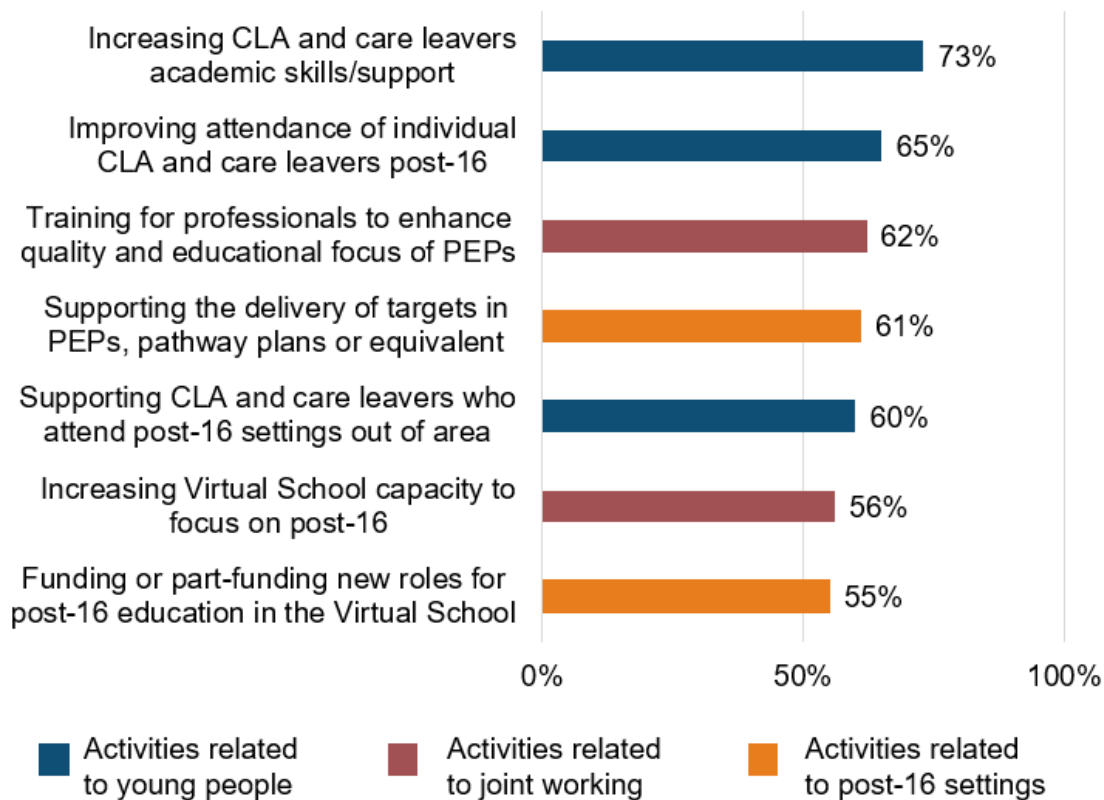
Figure 1 shows the top seven activities survey respondents reported spending (or planned to spend) the PP+ Post-16 funding on at any point over the last 3 years. The activities most frequently reported to be delivered using PP+ Post-16 funding relate to direct work with young people,¹³ with academic support (88 responses, 73%) and intervening to improve attendance (78 responses, 65%) reported most frequently within this category. This is closely followed by training for professionals to enhance the quality and focus of PEPs (74 responses, 62%), and supporting the delivery of PEP targets (73 responses, 61%).

Responses from Cohort 1 indicate that the proportion of survey respondents who had spent money on activities relating to joint working and post-16 settings has remained

¹³ The survey separates out activities into 3 categories: those relating to young people; joint working; and post-16 settings. This is in line with the ToC for the funding. However, we recognise that there may be crossover in some cases.

relatively stable over the 3-year period. In contrast, the proportion of Cohort 1 survey respondents who had spent money on activities directly related to young people had increased year on year since 2021. This suggests that funding may be being used to set the foundations with training and joint working initially, placing a greater focus on direct work with young people later on.

Figure 1: A breakdown of the activities the PP+ Post-16 funding has most frequently been spent on (n=120)



4.3.2 Rationale for the combination of activities delivered

Survey respondents were asked to elaborate on their rationale for the combination of activities delivered using the PP+ Post-16 funding.

Activities relating to young people

Most commonly, respondents described their rationale for activities focused on direct work with young people. The following themes were identified from the thematic coding of the data:

Responding to specific needs identified through data: Decisions about provision were informed by analysis of data on the size of cohort, NEET rates, number of UASC in

their cohort, and mental health needs. Many survey respondents also reported that they were responding to needs identified through the PEP process, to support individual CLA and CLs to meet specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) targets.

Delivering person-centred, holistic support: Survey respondents aimed to deliver a holistic approach to support addressing a wide range of complex needs. They noted that each young person is different and therefore requires a tailored, flexible and holistic approach to support to ensure that needs are met.

The rationale is to ensure that, as fully as we can, funding is used in line with our corporate parenting responsibilities. This means offering a broad range of support as any parent would hope to do for their child. – *VSH, survey, East of England*

Incorporating the voice of the young person: Some survey respondents reported that decisions had been informed by the young person. They reported building relationships with young people to understand their needs and ensure that their voices were incorporated into decision making.

Activities relating to post-16 settings

Some survey respondents described their rationale for activities relating to post-16 settings. The following themes were identified from thematic coding of the data:

Staffing and capacity building for post-16 settings: Many respondents reported a need for more staff, training and support for post-16 settings. This theme was more commonly reported by survey respondents in Cohorts 2 and 3, who reported that they were targeting this aspect first, before moving on to direct work with young people.

I first wanted to upskill and improve knowledge and understanding of college staff to enable them to better support our CLA. – *VSH, survey, West Midlands*

A case study example: providing staffing capacity to support post-16 settings

In Dorland (Cohort 2), the VS supports colleges by providing additional staffing capacity across a range of activities.

The VSH describes using the funding so that staff from the VS can visit UASC in colleges as they reach the end of their ESOL courses to discuss their EET options. The VS also provides staffing capacity in colleges to support completion of PEPs:

A DT across the whole FE college is a fairly daunting role, there just isn't the capacity, so we put capacity into the college. – *VSH, interview*

The VS provides staffing capacity in colleges to support students who are most at risk of becoming NEET and may need to change college course mid-year:

[Colleges] know we're going to do most of the legwork [...] we're managing the process of then trying to get them into more suitable courses, supporting them through those courses and it makes [...] communication a lot easier because they know they're going to be supported with it. That's an incentive for [colleges] to take these students with a very challenging brief in the first place, so they know that there is a level of support there. – *VSH, interview*

Early intervention and prevention: Some survey respondents reported that targeting post-16 settings was important to their work on early intervention and preventing CLA and CLs from becoming NEET. They stated that, prior to PP+ Post-16 funding, they had been unable to do this, as funding had previously been targeted on reactive support for those with the most acute need. Post-16 settings have an important role in NEET prevention, particularly when providing support to this cohort during transition periods. Respondents in Cohort 1 were more likely than those in Cohorts 2 or 3 to describe a focus on early intervention and prevention, and some reported that their VS had pivoted towards prevention after investing the first rounds of PP+ funding to address more acute need.

In the first year, we wanted to address the high proportion of our post-16 cohort who were NEET... In the second year, we looked at NEET prevention. – *VSH, survey, South East*

A case study example: identifying young people at risk of not achieving English and Maths in year 11

To intervene as early as possible with those at risk of becoming NEET, the VS in Bridmarsh (Cohort 1) took the decision to register as an exam centre for functional skills in Maths and English. For CLA identified as at risk of not passing exams in year 11, this enables the VS to reduce delay in entering young people for functional skills before they become disillusioned and disengage with education.

Activities related to joint working

Few survey respondents described their rationale for activities relating to joint working. Those that did reported that building relationships between the VS and post-16 settings was important for improving engagement with EET, particularly in terms of supporting young people with their transition to post-16, monitoring attendance and wellbeing and enabling early intervention to reduce exclusions. Some respondents noted that some CLA and CLs were NEET due to a shortage of placements. They stated that increasing joint working may result in CLA and CLs being prioritised for limited spaces due to improved understanding of the needs of this cohort. More generally, joint working was valued by survey respondents as a way to increase understanding of the provision available for CLA and CLs.

4.3.3 Support provided to individual CLA and CLs in case study sites

The case studies provide a more granular understanding of the range of support provided to individual CLA and CLs using PP+ Post-16. Support for specific groups of CLA and CLs (e.g., young people who are NEET) is discussed in a later section headed 'Using PP+ Post-16 to target specific groups of young people'.

Limitations on the use of Pupil Premium Plus Post-16

The forms of support that could be requested by post-16 settings and SWs varied depending upon parameters for the use of PP+ Post-16 set by each VS. For example, in 2 case study sites, PP+ Post-16 could not be used to fund support where alternate funding sources were available, (e.g., for items normally covered by carers, or the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund):

We're really keen that [PP+ Post-16] is additional and academically focused where it can be. So not for equipment that bursaries should be paying for, or uniform or those kinds of things, or if social care should be picking up transport costs. The focus is on trying to keep this as an additional funding stream. - *VSH, interview, Cohort 2*

The clarity of these parameters and the impact on Post-16 settings of each VS having its own guidelines for spending are discussed later in this report in the section on 'Barriers and enablers'.

Support for academic, training or employment purposes

Examples from case study sites of PP+ Post-16 being used for academic, training or employment purposes included:

- laptops and printer ink
- textbooks
- cookery equipment and bakeware for a young person studying catering
- a camera for a young person studying art and design
- travel (e.g., to and from college)
- workwear and equipment for apprenticeships (e.g., personal protective equipment)
- tuition
- mentoring
- careers guidance
- language tuition for UASC
- attendance at university open days
- Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) cards

Although laptops were described as an acceptable use of the funding in the majority of case study sites, SWs in one case study site stated that it was not a permitted use of the funding. Similarly, PP+ Post-16 could not be used to pay for travel in every case study site. Language tuition for UASC involved providing software, access to online language programmes, or funding face-to-face tuition.

A case study example: using PP+ Post-16 to ensure that CLA and CLs educated ‘out of area’ do not miss out

In Cartdale (Cohort 1), a DT in a post-16 setting situated in the neighbouring local authority to the case study site described using PP+ Post-16 to fund travel to an employability event for a young person from Cartdale:

So we've not disadvantaged our students just because of where they sleep. – *Lead in a post-16 setting, interview*

Tuition was frequently identified as a use of PP+ Post-16 and in particular, tuition to help young people acquire functional skills, or to retake maths and English exams. Carers in case study sites identified tuition as a valuable use of the funding. The issue of young people having to retake maths and English exams, and the risk that they disengage from education as a result, was identified as an issue in the pilot evaluation of PP+ Post-16.

Case study examples: using PP+ Post-16 to fund extra tuition

In Esterford, (Cohort 2), some of the PP+ Post-16 funding was used to purchase centrally commissioned tuition with options for in-person or online provision. The tuition was described as helping to increase aspiration and supporting young people needing to resit maths and English exams. The funding enabled the VS to secure a specific post-16 block of tuition.

In Cartdale (Cohort 1), the lead in a post-16 setting described the stigma felt by some young people where their friends saw them receive extra maths and English tuition. As online tutoring had not been found to meet the needs of these young people, the college used PP+ Post-16 to fund a member of its staff to provide in-person tutoring to CLA and CLs outside of college hours.

A carer in a Cohort 1 case study site described the difficulty they faced in accessing sufficient tuition in maths and English for a young person who had already unsuccessfully taken resits and needed to pass to complete their college course. Some tuition had been provided by the VS, but the carer described needing to supplement this through additional private tuition.

The use of PP+ Post-16 to provide careers guidance in case study sites included supporting CLA and CLs at specific points (e.g., transition into or out of post-16), and providing careers guidance to specific groups of young people (e.g., young people who were NEET or UASC).

A case study example: using PP+ Post-16 funding to provide careers guidance

In Aldlake (Cohort 1), the VS combined PP+ Post-16 with other funding sources to purchase careers advice for CLA and CLs in years 11 and 12. The AD described this as an example of a challenge that the authority could not previously have afforded to address:

I mean particularly a big challenge has been around ensuring that young people consistently get good careers advice. [...] ...this careers adviser post [funded partly by PP+ post-16] is very much just centred exclusively on [post-16]. And particularly also around employment, which is also a kind of [...] gap. It's also an area about how we promote better employment opportunities for young people that are not interested in education and training. - AD, *interview*

The VSH described the provision of careers advice as having improved retention in the first term of year 12.

Using support to meet young people's wider needs and interests

Interviewees including SWs, VSHs, and leads in post-16 settings described PP+ Post-16 funding a range of extra-curricular activities intended to enable CLA and CLs to develop wider interests and skills beyond the purely academic.

Examples of support referred to by interviewees included:

- music lessons
- providing a guitar
- animal therapy
- drama lessons
- sporting activities such as martial arts, boxing and horse riding
- theatre trips

Two explanations emerged as to why such activities were viewed as a valuable use of PP+ Post-16. First, some interviewees described PP+ post-16 bridging the opportunity gap between CLA and CLs and their peers:

So that [PP+ Post-16] for me, the biggest impact is bridging that gap between [CLA and CLs and their peers] and their opportunities and their experiences in life. That's really to me the most important thing that I'm seeing. – *Lead in a post-16 setting, interview, Cohort 2*

Second, funding of extra-curricular activities was viewed as improving young people's SEMH (e.g., through positive social interaction), which SWs and leads in post-16 settings described as a pre-requisite to young people being able to engage in education:

...in my opinion, using the money for the social and emotional needs is actually very, very beneficial because it's not only just good for their well-being but also for their learning as well. - *SW, interview, Cohort 1*

A case study example: using PP+ Post-16 funding to support SEMH

In Cartdale (Cohort 1), PP+ Post-16 had enabled young people who were UASC to attend martial arts classes. A SW described the importance of enabling these young people to be socially engaged in their community, which had helped them avoid feeling isolated, helped develop their language skills and led to some young people volunteering in their spare time:

It has given the young people some sense of purpose and some hobbies that they can focus on rather than focusing on the worries of applying for asylum and being away from their families. I think it has just been beneficial for them socially and emotionally. – *SW, interview*

Prioritising PEP meetings for the most vulnerable young people

Where young people were considered to be at particular risk of becoming NEET, some interviewees described prioritising their PEP meetings in the autumn term to ensure that they were on the most appropriate course and support was in place before the cut-off date for students to change course.

Listening to the young person's voice

Young people doing something they enjoyed and felt appropriately supported with were viewed as more likely to remain in EET. Listening to young people's views was therefore considered important to use PP+ Post-16 effectively. Interviewees referred to young people's views being sought as part of the PEP, but also outside of that process. The lead in one post-16 setting described PP+ Post-16 providing an incentive to get young people involved in their PEP meetings, which in turn enabled professionals to better understand how the funding should be spent:

...students getting involved in the PEP has been a little bit more now that they know they've got some money that they can spend, and they can give their ideas of how they want to spend it. And 9 times out of 10, if they don't come to the PEP, then we haven't really got an idea of what they want that money to be spent for. – *Lead in a post-16 setting, interview, Cohort 1*

One carer also emphasised the importance of listening to young people and suggested that post-16 settings could do more to seek their views and start building relationships during the transition into post-16:

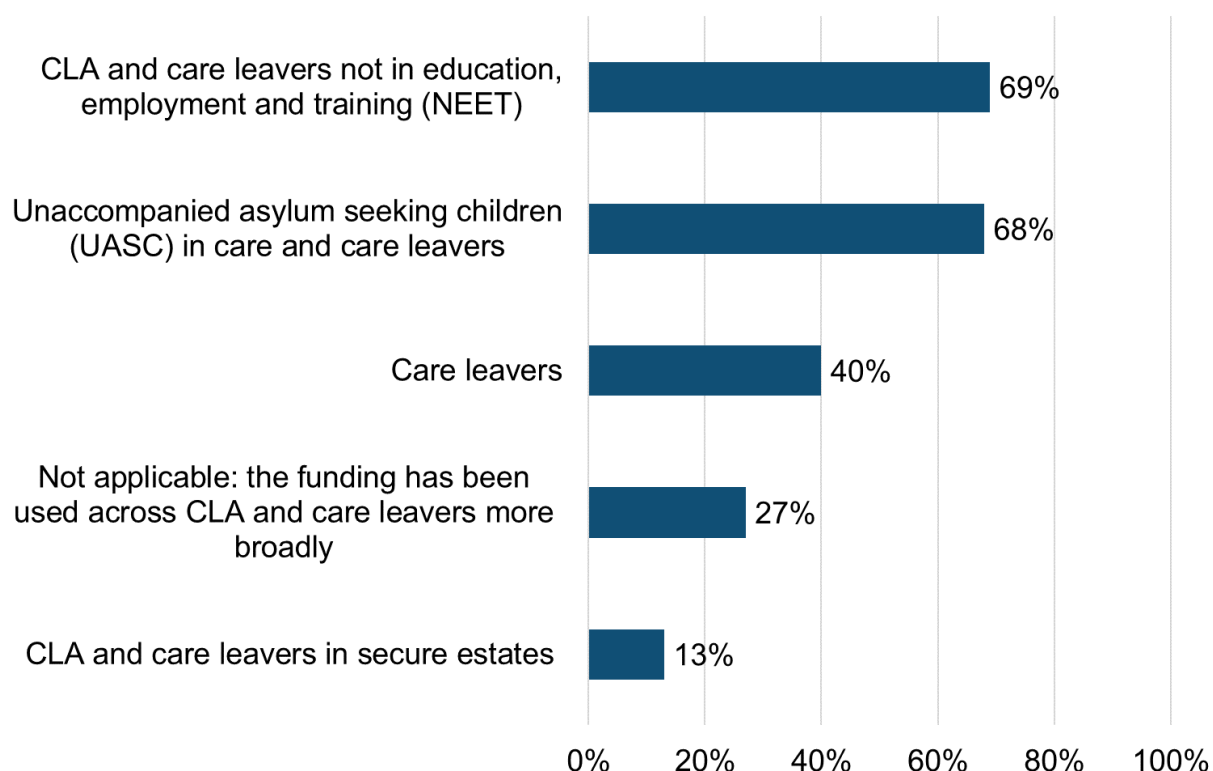
...just a 10 minute more informal meeting about, oh, 'When you are feeling anxious, what is it that helps calm you down?' now, rather than me telling them. The young person is perfectly capable at that age and to broach that conversation is important. [...] I don't see many doing that. – *Carer, interview, Cohort 1*

4.3.4 Using PP+ Post-16 to target specific groups of young people

Most survey respondents were using, or planned to use, PP+ Post-16 to focus on specific groups of young people, as shown in Figure 2.

Across all 3 cohorts, most survey respondents reported that they have used, or planned to use, PP+ Post-16 funding to give extra focus to CLA and CLs who are NEET (69% of respondents), and who are UASC (68% of respondents).

Figure 2: Since you started receiving funding, has the PP+ Post-16 funding been used to give extra focus to any of the following groups? Please select all that apply (n=120)



Survey respondents were asked in an open-text response to describe their rationale for using PP+ Post-16 to give extra focus to specific groups of young people.

Many survey respondents commented that maximising the impact of the funding had been an important driver behind the decision to focus on a particular group of young people. They noted that they would like to use the PP+ Post-16 funding to offer support to all post-16 CLA and CLs, but felt that the funding would then be too thinly spread:

These are the groups within the cohort who will most greatly benefit – especially as it [is] a relatively small amount of funding so the dissemination to all children in care in the cohort would be minimal and result in less impact. – *VSH, survey, London*

Survey respondents who reported that they had used the funding to place additional focus on specific groups of young people, gave the following rationales:

- **CLA and CLs who are NEET:** Survey respondents who have placed additional focus on young people who are NEET stated that this was due to a high and growing proportion of NEET CLA and CLs in their VS. Many respondents noted that there has previously been very little support for NEET young people, and felt it

was timely and morally important to rectify this. Some survey respondents reported that they were taking a phased approach to their focus on NEET CLA and CLs. This involved focusing first on reducing any immediate safeguarding risks and increasing stability for these young people, to then working towards raised confidence and aspirations, to then achieving more tangible EET outcomes which can support self-sufficiency in the future.

- **UASC:** The most commonly highlighted rationale for a focus on UASC was the growing number of young people in this cohort, and the corresponding shortage of appropriate post-16 places and interim educational provision. Many also noted a specific need for better ESOL provision. Several survey respondents stated that many UASC arrive later in the academic year and were therefore more likely to miss out on limited post-16 places. Respondents described the importance of engaging UASC with educational provision as soon as possible, as this group are likely at increased risk of becoming NEET.

A case study example: engaging UASC in educational provision

In the second year of their PP+ Post-16 funding, Bridmarsh (Cohort 1) focused on its offer to UASC. The VSH worked with post-16 colleges to provide vocational tasters to UASC, alongside their ESOL courses. This involved funding ESOL tutors to accompany young people to lessons in other subjects:

...so we can get a bit more aspiration and a feeling of progression rather than just, 'Oh, you can go and do ESOL'. – VSH, *interview*

Apart from supporting the young people themselves, the VSH is confident that the aspiration-raising work has raised the profile of UASC in post-16 settings.

- **Care Leavers:** Some respondents stated that they were targeting support to CLs specifically, particularly given the significant overlap with young people who are NEET. One respondent reported that support for CLs had previously been demand-led, so they were planning to use the funding to address this gap and provide full support for all CLs until age 21.
- **Young people with mental ill health:** Several respondents described their rationale for targeting PP+ Post-16 specifically to young people with mental ill health. They noted that CLA and CLs were particularly likely to have experienced trauma and emotional or mental health problems, which could be a barrier to their engagement with EET as well as their general wellbeing.

- **High achievers.** A few survey respondents reported that they were also planning to use the funding to provide targeted support to high achieving CLA and CLs, to support them with their journey towards HE.

A case study example: A Level tuition

In Aldlake (Cohort 1), part of the funding is used for A Level tuition to support young people to achieve the highest grades and apply to the most competitive universities. The VSH describes wanting to avoid any sense of complacency that reaching A Levels is a sufficient achievement for CLA and CLs, appreciating the opportunity that PP+ Post-16 has given the VS to offer this support:

I can't even believe that we're talking about A Level tuition now, you know? – *VSH, interview*

While most survey respondents reported focusing the funding on certain groups of young people, some respondents highlighted how the funding is used to offer all CLA and CLs support, including those in EET. Some explained that the funding was being distributed according to need through PEPs, while others reported that they were focusing on providing support to all young people at particular transitional stages (i.e., from year 11 to post-16, and from post-16 to adulthood). These were noted as being particularly high-risk times, which are important to target, with many young people becoming NEET shortly after transitioning from one stage to another. Survey respondents reported that extra support could help students to remain settled in EET, and would reduce the risk of young people becoming or remaining NEET.

4.3.5 Types of work delivered with NEET CLA and CLs

Survey respondents were asked to describe the types of work they were doing with NEET CLA and CLs. They reported the following:

One to one mentoring and support

The most commonly reported activity was providing one to one mentoring and support, which aimed to build trusted relationships with NEET CLA and CLs. In many cases, a new role of mentor, caseworker, adviser or careers coach was created. In a few cases, mentoring was linked to external programmes such as with a local university. The experience and qualifications of the mentor varied (e.g., whether they were a qualified careers coach or not) and the provision also varied in terms of whether it was provided for every NEET CLA/CL, for a targeted group, or for those who expressed an interest in having a mentor. Survey respondents emphasised that the ambition was to gain trust and

provide a consistent relationship as a basis for supporting young people back into EET. It was frequently mentioned that this role would include supporting young people with preparation for applications and interviews.

A case study example: a project providing intensive support to young people who are at risk of becoming long-term NEET

As a large local authority with a high number of CLA and CLs, the VS in Bridmarsh (Cohort 1) decided that rather than spread the funding across their cohort, they would use it to fund an action learning project focused on a small group of young people who were at risk of remaining NEET in the long term. The project initially worked with 8 young people, making high levels of resource available to identify what needed to happen for change to occur for these individuals. The aim was that learning from the project would then be scaled up across the VS's wider cohort:

So, it is having an open mind and curiosity, but nothing is off the table, whatever's been tried before has just not worked. And so, let's just turn it on its head and try something that is different and focuses on what the needs of the young person [are]. – *VSH, interview*

Part of the funding was allocated to provide specialist career provision at very generous ratios to work with the 8 young people:

Rather than shoehorn the young person into something, 'We've got these opportunities', we turned that on its head and said, 'No, we are going to look at, what is it that you want to do? What do you need to do it?' And we built those opportunities around the young people. – *VSH, interview*

The project resulted in significant learning for the VS around the barriers for individual young people, systemic barriers, and learning that challenged the VS's use and understanding of their data. For example, the VS found that some young people would only consider employment as an option, leading staff to identify further young people in this situation across their whole NEET cohort. In response, the VS team looked for sustainable employment options (e.g., by not involving zero hours contracts).

In recognition of learning from the project that young people form supportive connections with a range of individuals, the careers service developed an online careers guidance tool for lay people (e.g., carers) to help them talk to young people about what they would like to do in the future. The VS also worked with a voluntary sector organisation to make mature mentors (over 50s) available to young people.

The VSH reports that since implementing learning from the project, their NEET rate has fallen by nearly 50%.

Tuition

Several survey respondents reported providing one to one tuition for NEET CLA and CLs, particularly in English and maths. This work intended to remove barriers to accessing EET, with survey respondents reporting that NEET young people were more likely to engage with tutoring than with mainstream education. Some survey respondents reported that they had provided ESOL courses or tuition to enable UASC to access EET, or to bridge the gap between their arrival and the availability of an educational placement. One respondent mentioned that they were keen to provide tuition where there was a genuine need but did not want to encourage young people to expect tutoring as an alternative based on preference.

Activities supporting social emotional and mental health

Some respondents allocated resources to activities focused on improving SEMH for NEET CLA and CLs. These included peer groups, sports activities and arranging schemes for gym memberships. One survey respondent provided an example of support they had provided for UASC who were NEET:

We have set up a football team for UASCs that have registered in the local league. This has supported them feeling part of the community, improved their language skills and given them aspiration to succeed in their life goals. – VSH, survey, *East of England*

A case study example: including sport and enrichment activities within PEP targets

In Esterford (Cohort 2), the VSH describes how previously it would have been challenging to provide funding for sporting or cultural activities to young people at post-16. However, PP+ Post-16 has enabled the VS to build 'cultural and sporting entitlement' into their PEP, recognising the importance for young people of broadening their learning interests and being part of a community.

Other support delivered to NEET CLA and CLs

Additional forms of support for NEET CLA and CLs commonly reported by survey respondents included:

- **Skills based workshops.** Some respondents allocated resources to skills workshops (e.g., to support young people to learn skills for employability and independent living). One respondent reported that they provide “sessions with a

range of providers. Each week has a different focus: wellbeing, independent living skills, employability and enterprise, next steps” (*VSH, survey, East of England*).

- **Meeting practical needs.** Another common activity was identifying and meeting individual practical needs to overcome barriers to EET. This included providing funding for IT equipment, other course equipment or uniforms, and support with travel or paperwork. In many cases, PEPs were explicitly mentioned as the route for identifying these needs.
- **Careers workshops and work experience.** Another common theme was provision of careers workshops, activities or experiences to support NEET young people to understand their available options. These included careers fairs with local businesses, skills and apprenticeship shows, and work experience which in some cases led directly to employment opportunities.

4.4 Training and guidance provided by the Virtual School

Summary points

- Most survey respondents have delivered, or plan to deliver, training for staff in post-16 settings, followed by training for SWs on understanding post-16 education for CLA and CLs.
- Topics most commonly covered by training included trauma and attachment; PEPs and SMART targets; role specific training; and training about the FE landscape and transitions.
- Survey findings show that guidance on use of the funding has been most commonly provided by VSs to post-16 settings and DTs.

The provision of training and guidance by VSs includes activities related to both joint working and post-16 settings as identified in the ToC.

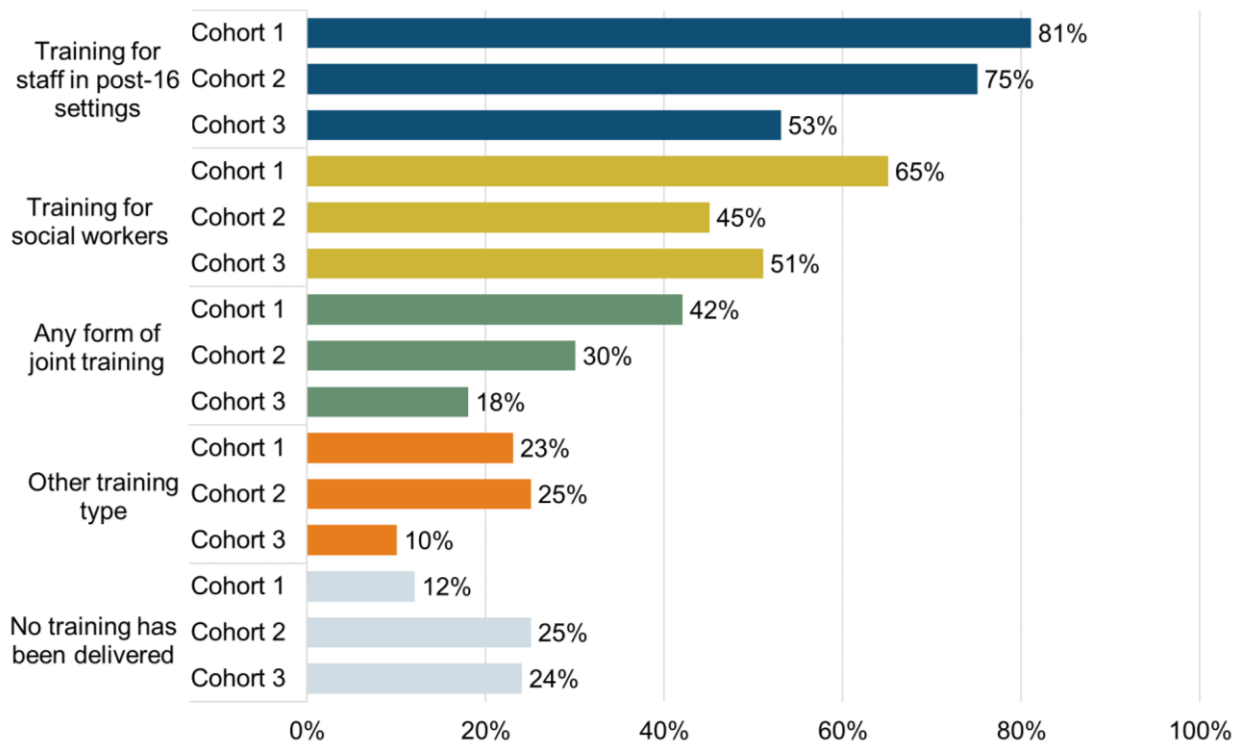
4.4.1 Training

Figure 3 below provides an outline of the types of training delivered by survey respondents from Cohorts 1 and 2, and planned by Cohort 3, using PP+ Post-16 funding.

- Across all 3 cohorts, most survey respondents have delivered, or plan to deliver, training for staff in post-16 settings, followed by training for SWs on understanding post-16 education for CLA and CLs.

- A higher proportion of those in Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 have delivered training for staff in post-16 settings than for SWs.
- Survey respondents in Cohort 1 were more likely to have delivered training at any point since they started receiving the funding than those in Cohort 2. This is likely to be due to their longer funding period.

Figure 3: Types of training delivered (Cohorts 1 and 2) and planned to be delivered (Cohort 3) with the PP+ Post-16 funding (n=114)



Survey respondents provided some additional context about the topics covered by the training sessions and their target audiences.

The most common types of training delivered, or planned to be delivered, were:

- **Trauma and attachment.** This was most commonly aimed at staff in post-16 settings.
- **PEP and SMART targets.** This was most commonly aimed at staff in post-16 settings and SWs.
- **Role specific training.** Particularly covering the care experienced cohort for staff in post-16 settings including DTs, and also for SWs, foster carers/residential care staff and VS staff.

- **The FE landscape and transitions.** This was most commonly aimed at SWs and foster carers/residential care staff.

Some respondents also reported delivering, or planning to deliver, training on:

- **Educational psychology.** Particularly for staff in post-16 settings.
- **UASC experiences and needs.** Particularly for staff in post-16 settings.
- **Communication.** Particularly for staff in post-16 settings and SWs.

A case study example: provision of training by the Virtual School

In Cartdale (Cohort 1), the VS has provided training to DTs in post-16 settings and SWs on the importance of post-16 to CLA and CLs and barriers to learning. The VS also runs quarterly network meetings for DTs in post-16 settings, during which staff from a number of post-16 colleges have presented workshops on year 11 transition to post-16.

The VS has provided PEP training mainly focused on DTs in post-16 settings, but the AVSH also plans to offer PEP training to new SWs in response to staff turnover.

4.4.2 Guidance from the Virtual School on use of the funding

The survey asked respondents whether VSs have provided guidance about the funding and how it can be used. Table 7 shows that VSs have most commonly provided guidance on how the PP+ Post-16 funding can be used for post-16 settings and DTs. Those in Cohort 1 were more likely to have provided this guidance than those in Cohorts 2 and 3, which is to be expected given the difference in funding durations.

In addition, a small proportion of those in Cohort 3 reported that they are planning to provide guidance for post-16 settings (12 responses, 17%) and DTs (13 responses, 18%) over the next year.

Table 7: Since you started receiving funding, has your Virtual School provided guidance about the funding and how it can be used for any of the following groups?

Group that guidance has been provided for	Cohort 1 (n=32)	Cohort 2 (n=16)	Cohort 3 (n=72)	Total (n=120)
Post 16 settings	24 (75%)	11 (69%)	31 (43%)	66 (55%)
DTs	23 (72%)	10 (63%)	31 (43%)	64 (53%)
Foster carers	15 (47%)	6 (38%)	15 (21%)	36 (30%)

A case study example: provision of written guidance by the Virtual School

In Aldlake (Cohort 1), the VS has provided written guidance about PP+ Post-16 aimed at staff in post-16 settings and other professionals involved in supporting CLA and CLs. The guidance sets out the target areas for improvement using PP+ Post-16 (e.g., attainment, attendance, retention); limitations to its use; and provides specific examples of support for CLA and CLs.

The VS has also developed PEP guidance for professionals supporting CLA and CLs.

4.5 Perceived enablers and barriers to the effective use of PP+ Post-16

Summary points

- Enablers identified by survey respondents and case study interviewees centred on having staffing capacity and building or strengthening relationships between professionals. In addition, VSHs in case study sites identified having flexibility to decide how the funding is used as a central factor in effective use of PP+ Post-16.
- The barriers most commonly identified by survey respondents were SW turnover and/or vacancies; not receiving data on CLA and CLs from post-16 education and training settings; low engagement from CLA and CLs; and inadequate resources. Additional barriers identified by case study interviewees included the challenge for post-16 settings of working with multiple VSs each with different guidance on the use of PP+ Post-16 and different PEP processes.
- Comparison of survey responses from the pilot evaluation and the current survey highlight similarities in the most commonly reported enablers and barriers.

Barriers and enablers were reported in the survey findings and case studies.

Most survey respondents in Cohorts 1 and 2 reported being able to deliver activities as planned to either a partial (31 responses, 70%) or full extent (12 responses, 27%).

4.5.1 Perceived enablers

Table 8 provides a breakdown of factors enabling VSs to deliver their plans for using PP+ Post-16, as reported by survey respondents. The most commonly reported enabling factors were:

- New staff, or enhancing existing roles, enabling cover of CLA and CLs post-16 (28 responses, 64%)
- Good engagement and support from post-16 education or training settings (25 responses, 57%)
- Established good relationships with social care post-16 or leaving care teams (24 responses, 55%)

As sample sizes are relatively small, significance testing has not been conducted and differences in percentages across Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 should be interpreted with caution.

**Table 8: Since you started receiving funding, what have been the most significant factors enabling the delivery of your plans for the use of PP+ Post-16 funding?
(Cohorts 1 and 2, n=44)**

Perceived enablers	Cohort 1 (n=29)	Cohort 2 (n=15)	Total (n=44)
New staff/enhancing existing roles enabling cover of CLA and CLs post-16	19 (66%)	9 (60%)	28 (64%)
Good engagement/support from post-16 education or training settings	15 (52%)	10 (67%)	25 (57%)
Established good relationship with social care post-16/leaving care team	15 (52%)	9 (60%)	24 (55%)
Adequate resources	13 (45%)	3 (20%)	16 (36%)
Support from senior managers in the local authority	9 (31%)	3 (20%)	12 (27%)
Good engagement from CLA and CLs	6 (21%)	5 (33%)	11 (25%)
Receiving data on CLA and CLs from post-16 education or training settings	7 (24%)	2 (13%)	9 (20%)

Comparison to findings from the evaluation of the PP+ Post-16 pilot

As part of the evaluation of the PP+ Post-16 pilot (undertaken by the Rees Centre, University of Oxford), a survey of the 30 VSs in Cohort 1 was conducted in March 2022. This survey also asked about the factors that had enabled implementation of their plans. The table below compares the findings from the March 2022 survey to findings for Cohort 1 from the survey in the current evaluation (completed in January 2024). As sample sizes are small, significance testing has not been conducted. As such, differences between the two surveys should be interpreted with caution. However, this shows that the most commonly reported factors across both years were:

- good engagement/support from colleges
- new staff/enhancing existing roles enabling cover of CLA/care leavers post-16
- established good relationship with social care post-16/care leaving team

	March 2022 (n=27)	March 2022 (n=27)	January 2024 (n=29)	January 2024 (n=29)
Good engagement/support from colleges	19	70%	15	52%
New staff/enhancing existing roles enabling cover of CLA/care leavers post-16	16	59%	19	66%
Established good relationship with social care post-16/care leaving team	15	56%	15	52%
Support from senior managers in the local authority	12	44%	9	31%
Receiving data on CLA/care leavers from colleges	8	30%	7	24%
Good engagement from young people	7	26%	6	21%
Adequate resources	6	22%	13	45%

Perceived enablers emerging from case study interviews

Although respondents in the current survey did not provide any additional context or information to their responses, thematic analysis of the case study data provide additional examples of factors enabling the use of PP+ Post-16. There is overlap between enablers identified by case study interviewees and survey respondents, but the case studies also highlight some additional enablers.

New staff/enhancing existing roles enabling cover of CLA/care leavers post-16:

Being able to increase post-16 staffing capacity in VSs was viewed as an important enabler by VSHs in case study sites. Having a larger and more established post-16 team (rather than post-16 being an add-on to people's existing roles) enabled VS staff to have more involvement with other professionals, particularly post-16 settings and to develop practice. One VSH described increased capacity enabling the VS to visit post-16 settings in person, which was previously challenging:

Just the sheer amount of people that post-16 providers in different ways, working with industry, working with businesses, some of this is apprenticeships and so on and so forth. It was really hard to try and deal with those people. So yeah, although we were sort of doing it, we weren't, were we? It wasn't making an impact in the way that it is now. - *VSH, interview, Cohort 2*

Flexibility in how Virtual Schools use the funding: For VSHs, having flexibility in how they used funding to support CLA and CLs emerged as an important enabler. This flexibility was used in different ways: requiring post-16 settings and SWs to use other available sources of funding before accessing PP+ Post-16; using the funding innovatively (e.g. the project in Bridmarsh focused on a small number of long-term NEET, which aimed to use learning from the project with its wider cohort); and being able to combine PP+ Post-16 with other sources of funding to maximise impact. One AD explained how access to a wider range of support through PP+ Post-16 strengthened the VS's work with CLA and CLs:

I think [young people] now have access to [...] bespoke individual support according to their needs that the money now enables us to provide. With children with very complex needs, we've got the flexibility within our model to actually provide more to a young person if their needs kind of demand it. So, I think that's been really positive. – *AD, interview, Cohort 1*

A case study example: having the flexibility to combine PP+ Post-16 with other sources of funding

Several case study sites described the benefit of being able to combine PP+ Post-16 with other sources of funding. For example, the VSH in Aldlake (Cohort 1) describes the benefit of being able to combine some of their PP+ Post-16 and pre-16 CLA PP+ funding, which has enabled the VS to buy in careers advice for years 11 and 12 where a gap in provision had been identified:

I would have to say [being able to combine PP+ Post-16 and other funding] has been hugely beneficial and effective and [the careers advisers] work really closely with the VS and colleges and it's just been really, really effective and I would say that's been a real bonus because I wouldn't have been able to do that before. – *VSH, interview*

The VSH explains that having the flexibility to use the funding in this way has enabled the VS to put an intervention in place that has improved retention in the first term of year 12. This suggests that young people are being made more aware of their EET options and that receiving the advice means they are increasingly enrolling on appropriate courses.

Strong relationships between the Virtual School, post-16 settings and social

workers: Some interviewees described the increased staffing capacity of VSs as strengthening joint working relationships, although it was acknowledged by interviewees in some case study sites, that VS staff were still thinly spread. One SW described a situation where their relationship with the VS had contributed to keeping a young person in education, where a college had removed them from their course:

...one of the [VS] advisers, he wrote this fantastic email [to the college] like of all of [the young person's] vulnerabilities, and like did that so quickly [...] and they reinstated [the college place] that day. So that was really good. And then we had a meeting [...] to like lay out what we expect of [college] and what they should expect of us and the young person. So that's really good to go into those meetings and feel supported. – *SW, interview, Cohort 1*

The presence of the Virtual School in PEP meetings: Although in some case study sites, it was not possible for VSs to attend every PEP meeting because of the high number of young people they had responsibility for, SWs, DTs and a carer from 3 case study sites described the value of having a VS presence at PEPs. Interviewees reported

that attendance by the VS helped to bring professionals together; VS staff brought their knowledge about available support; and by being at the PEP meeting with a young person, VS staff could better appreciate why particular support was being requested:

The [PEP] targets are much clearer and more useful, more tailored to the young person 'cause [VS staff] know what's available straight away, whereas I'll have to do a bit of research and dig to try and find out. – SW, *interview, Cohort 1*

Making approval of PP+ Post-16 spending dependent on completing a PEP:

Interviewees suggested that requiring completion of a PEP before the VS approves spending of PP+ Post-16 funding, has helped to ensure that funding is being used effectively. The documentary evidence supplied by case study sites, including PEP guidance and a sample of anonymised PEPs, highlights the use of SMART targets to underpin decisions on how to meet identified need.

Leverage when discussing support: The funding was described as providing VSs with something tangible to offer to post-16 settings when discussing support for CLA and CLs. One interviewee from a post-16 setting suggested that joint working and the PEP process had been strengthened as professionals knew there was money available to fund support for their young person.

A case study example: leverage pre-and post-introduction of PP+ Post-16

The VSH in Aldlake (Cohort 1), reported that prior to the introduction of PP+ Post-16, they had limited influence to persuade post-16 settings to accept their suggestions for interventions or support. The AD reflected on the benefit of having funding available to offer as part of the PEP process:

And obviously having the pupil premium gives a bit more clout to those PEPs, because there's actually something at the end of it that you could actually give to colleges if they need. So that's a really positive thing about it, because that encourages greater collaboration.
– AD, *interview*

4.5.2 Perceived barriers

Table 9 provides a breakdown of the barriers to the delivery of PP+ Post-16, as reported by survey respondents. This shows that across Cohorts 1 and 2 the most commonly reported barriers were:

- SW turnover and/or vacancies (21 responses, 50%)
- Not receiving data on CLA and CLs from post-16 education and training settings (11 responses, 26%)
- Low engagement from CLA and CLs (11 responses, 26%)
- Inadequate resources (10 responses, 24%)

**Table 9: Since you started receiving funding, what are the most significant barriers/challenges you have encountered in putting your plan into practice?
(Cohorts 1 and 2, n=42)**

Perceived barriers to implementation	Cohort 1 (n=28)	Cohort 2 (n=14)	Total (n=42)
SW turnover and/or vacancies	15 (54%)	6 (43%)	21 (50%)
Not receiving data on CLA and CLs from post-16 education and training settings	6 (21%)	5 (36%)	11 (26%)
Lack of engagement from CLA and CLs	6 (21%)	5 (36%)	11 (26%)
Inadequate resources	6 (21%)	4 (29%)	10 (24%)
Difficulties recruiting staff/enhancing existing roles to cover CLA and CLs post-16	6 (21%)	3 (21%)	9 (21%)
Lack of engagement from post-16 education and training settings	8 (29%)	1 (7%)	9 (21%)
Difficulties in relationship with social care	2 (7%)	0 (0%)	2 (5%)
Lack of support from senior managers in the local authority	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)

Comparison to findings from the evaluation of the PP+ Post-16 pilot

As part of the evaluation of the PP+ Post-16 pilot (conducted by the Rees Centre, University of Oxford), a survey of the 30 VSs in Cohort 1 was conducted in March 2022. This survey also asked about the most significant barriers or challenges to implementing the delivery of their plans. The table below compares the findings from the March 2022 survey to the survey findings for Cohort 1 in the current evaluation (completed in January 2024). Due to small sample sizes, significance testing has not been conducted. As such, differences between the two surveys should be interpreted with caution. However, the most commonly reported challenge across both years was social worker turnover and/or vacancies. Findings also suggest that inadequate resources may have become a greater challenge over time, increasing from 2 responses to 6 responses.

	March 2022 (n=25)	March 2022 (n=25)	January 2024 (n=28)	January 2024 (n=28)
Social worker turnover and/or vacancies	10	40%	15	54%
Difficulties recruiting staff/enhancing existing roles to cover CLA/care leavers post-16	8	32%	6	21%
Not receiving data on CLA/care leavers from colleges	6	24%	6	21%
Lack of engagement from colleges	6	24%	8	29%
Lack of engagement from YP	5	20%	6	21%
Inadequate resources	2	8%	6	21%
Lack of support from senior managers in the LA	1	4%	1	4%

Survey respondents in the current evaluation provided the following additional context to their most significant challenges and barriers:

Engaging and supporting post-16 settings

Many survey respondents reported a slow uptake and response rate from post-16 settings. They reported that some post-16 settings have required additional support to

understand how they could use the PP+ Post-16 funding to best achieve outcomes for CLA and CLs, including support with ‘thinking creatively’ about the best way to meet needs.

A case study example: network meetings for post-16 settings

In Cartdale (Cohort 1), the VS has established quarterly regional network meetings attended by post-16 DTs, including DTs from out of area settings who are supporting young people from the authority. The meetings have been used successfully to discuss subjects including, PEP processes, the VS’s expectations about how PP+ Post-16 should be spent, social and emotional behaviours and good practice.

The network has provided an opportunity, alongside PEP meetings, to help post-16 settings think about how the funding can be used to best effect.

Growing cohorts and increased levels of need

Many respondents reported that high and growing levels of need across the young people in their care have posed significant challenges to using the funding effectively. This, combined with an increase in the size of the cohort over time had decreased the level of funding per young person.

Uncertainty around the PP+ Post-16 funding duration

Several survey respondents reported that uncertainty around the duration of the PP+ Post-16 funding has resulted in challenges funding longer-term staffing posts, and implementing longer-term interventions and packages of support. However, they reported that recent confirmation that the funding would be extended for 2 years had helped with this.

A case study example: acknowledging the need for longer-term interventions

The VSH in Esterford (Cohort 2) suggests that because of the type of support required by its post-16 cohort, having access to longer-term funding would be very beneficial (e.g., for tuition):

Some of our children would benefit from much more sustained longer-term interventions because it's very much about engagement and relationships. – *VSH, interview*

Additional challenges reported by survey respondents were:

- Challenges accessing and analysing attendance data
- Recruitment challenges with hiring additional posts
- Capacity issues in educational psychology services
- Internal financial processing constraints

Perceived barriers emerging from case study interviews

Interviewees in case study sites identified a number of additional barriers to using PP+ Post-16:

The size and complexity of post-16 provision: Interviewees identified both the size of post-16 settings and the multiple routes available to young people through post-16 as a barrier to using the funding. Both VSHs and post-16 settings acknowledged the challenge for a single named person or DT to support CLA and CLs, particularly in large, multi-campus settings. As such, post-16 settings sometimes described DTs having oversight but being supported by a team of staff who would work day-to-day with young people and attend PEPs. However, several interviewees described continued funding for these team members being uncertain.

The lack of an established framework for supporting CLA and CLs in post-16:

Some interviewees stated that it was not a case of simply replicating the approach taken to delivering Pupil Premium Plus in schools within post-16 settings, as mechanisms and structures helping to deliver the funding in schools did not exist in post-16:

...there's still not the overall framework for looked after children in FE that there is in schools; DTs, reports to governors, that sort of thing that I would want to see being part of that suite of guidance for colleges. -
VSH, interview, Cohort 1

VSHs and DCS/ADs suggested that it would be beneficial to have statutory guidance on supporting CLA and CLs at post-16, including the DT role. Leads in post-16 settings in two case study sites also suggested that DT role should be statutory:

I think it's a really, really important role. Lots of responsibility. And we're working with probably the most vulnerable cohort in the college community, aren't we, at the end of the day. So, I think it's absolutely necessary. – *Lead in a post-16 setting, interview, Cohort 1*

Having a statutory DT role and introducing statutory guidance for colleges were recommendations in the pilot evaluation.

A need for further guidance: Following on from survey respondents reporting that some post-16 settings required help identifying how to use the funding, interviewees across all roles suggested there was a need for further guidance from VSs. For example, DTs in pre-16 from two Cohort 1 case study sites wanted more guidance to support transition planning:

...what we need is almost a menu of supports that we can draw on. We have to find them ourselves. – *DT, interview, Cohort 1*

Three particular strands of guidance were identified:

- guidance (with examples) of the types of spending permitted using PP+ Post-16
- guidance on the support that CLA and CLs could expect whilst in post-16
- guidance about the respective roles and responsibilities of professionals involved in the PEP process

Interviewees also recognised that professionals supporting CLA and CLs have different areas of expertise, (e.g., SWs may feel more confident identifying appropriate social and emotional support than educational support), so it was important that all professionals provided input into discussions about use of the funding.

Inconsistent communication with carers about available support: Awareness of PP+ Post-16 varied between carers as did their experience of accessing support for young people at post-16. Although some carers reported positive experiences, others described feeling less informed:

So, I understand it's there, but do I understand totally the mechanics?
No. – *Carer, interview, Cohort 1*

One carer wished they had been informed earlier about how much support would be available using PP+ Post-16, to give them more time to fill any remaining gaps:

I suppose it would be helpful when [young person] was at school to have been aware of what it is we're now learning [about the support available using PP+ Post-16], because we do need this extra help for [young person]. If we'd have known that beforehand, we'd [have] been better prepared [...] So more information before [young person] leaves school and goes into FE would've been useful. – *Carer, interview, Cohort 1*

Another carer suggested that VSs could communicate information about PP+ Post-16 via meetings with supervising social workers, as emails were easily missed:

So, we can't always access things mentally 'cause we're so consumed for the moment of being that sponge, soaking up the trauma for our young person, so they can go out that door and function for the day. So, get our supervis[ing] social workers to really talk to us about it. – *Carer, interview, Cohort 1*

The transition into post-16: Aspects of transition planning described by DTs in pre-16 created potential barriers to delivering support using PP+ Post-16. The main challenge appeared to come down to the timing and sequencing of events, with young people often only knowing what course they were doing once exam results were published in the summer. Ideally DTs suggested that post-16 settings would attend the final year 11 PEP, and although this was described as happening in some cases where young people knew which post-16 setting they would be attending, this was usually not the case:

I appreciate that colleges wouldn't necessarily come because they could be going to hundreds of those meetings and maybe only get a handful of those pupils meet the criteria. – *DT, interview, Cohort 2*

Another DT described how the final PEP in the summer term of year 11 might take place following exams once a young person had actually left the school.

One DT suggested that young people and carers should receive careers guidance at the point at which exam results were published to increase the likelihood of young people choosing an appropriate course.

Post-16 settings working with multiple Virtual Schools: Some interviewees from post-16 settings described the challenge of working with several different VSs, all with their own PEP processes and guidance for the use of PP+ Post-16. This could result in a lack of consistency in the types of support available to CLA and CLs in the same post-16 setting, where young people were the responsibility of different VSs. Different PEP processes also created a challenge for post-16 settings:

I must be working with five, six, seven local authorities and one like [name of their local VS] will use ASSET and [names of other VSs] will use ASSET, but they use it differently and the questions are different. So, it's very confusing. No one does it the same. And I don't know, for me it feels like common sense that everyone would use the same one. – *Post-16 setting, interview, Cohort 1*

This highlights a tension between VSs having flexibility to decide how the funding is used to meet local need, and providing a level of consistency for post-16 settings.

4.6 Data availability

Summary points

- Survey respondents in Cohorts 1 and 2 described having taken a range of steps to improve the collection and access to data and its subsequent use.
- However, challenges described by VSs in accessing or compiling data on CLA and CLs aged 16 to 18 years, requested as part of the evaluation survey, highlight the need for further work in this area.

4.6.1 Activities to improve data collection

Survey respondents in Cohorts 1 and 2 were asked if they had taken any steps towards improving the collection, access and use of data on 16-18-year olds who are CLA or CLs. Four themes were commonly identified in the responses:

Developing or commissioning data systems

Respondents had developed or commissioned improved systems for collecting and analysing data, particularly attendance data. Examples included data dashboards and extending the provision of attendance data collection systems such as Welfare Call to cover the post-16 cohort.

A case study example: developing a dashboard for better understanding of data

Esterford VS (Cohort 2) has used part of its funding to develop a Power BI dashboard, allowing improved filtering and exploration of their post-16 data.

This has enabled the VS to better understand its NEET cohort. For example, the VS has identified that NEET rates are higher for young people in particular placement types and also in certain social work teams. As a result, they have been able to look at the possible factors involved in greater depth:

We don't know whether it's geographical area or team culture, but that's given us another area to be able to look and say, 'What's going on?' – *VSH, interview*

The VS has also been able to share the data with social care colleagues and have exploratory conversations about what they collectively think is happening.

Joint working

Respondents had focused on joint working to improve data sharing. A particular focus was on improving joint working with leaving care teams to enable monitoring of CLs in year 13:

Regular liaison meetings are held half termly with Leaving Care to share information and track progress during the whole of year 13. – *VSH, survey, Yorkshire and Humber*

Extension of PEPs

By extending PEPs to the entire post-16 cohort, including NEET young people, respondents had improved their data collection, and were better able to monitor concerns. Some respondents took steps to improve the PEP system, such as through staff training or transitioning to an ePEP system.

Staffing

Respondents had improved their use of data by using PP+ Post-16 funding to recruit staff with the skills and responsibility for managing and tracking post-16 data.

4.6.2 Challenges in accessing or compiling data requested in the survey for this evaluation

Respondents to the survey in all 3 cohorts were asked to describe the challenges they faced in accessing or compiling data on CLA and CLs aged 16-18 years requested as part of the survey. Four themes were commonly reported:

Collating data from different sources

Many respondents described challenges in combining data from different sources, particularly where different methods had been used to collect the data and where data sets include different levels of detail. Examples included collating data for CLA and CLs, and from different post-16 settings. Differences in definitions across data sets were also reported to cause challenges, particularly around the term CL, (i.e., monitoring differences in outcomes between young people who leave care before turning 18, and young people who transition to supported living placements because they have turned 18).

Lack of post-16 attendance data

Many respondents in Cohorts 2 and 3 stated that they do not collect attendance data for the post-16 cohort. Some noted they relied solely on PEPs for attendance concerns to be flagged. No respondents in Cohort 1 reported this lack of data, but a few noted that their

post-16 attendance data was not as granular (detailing daily or session attendance) as the data they collect for statutory school age children.

A case study example: attendance data

Aldlake (Cohort 1) has developed a comprehensive data dashboard for both its school-age and post-16 cohorts, although the VSH notes that the attendance data collected for post-16 is not as robust as their data collected for pre-16. This is due to the nature of attendance data collected by colleges, which the VSH suggests could be improved by colleges being given a clear message that they should share their attendance data with VSs.

Lack of data for care leavers

Many respondents in Cohort 3, and some respondents in Cohorts 1 and 2 reported that they do not collect data for young people over the age of 18. Some noted that it was more difficult to collect this data because those over 18 could withhold consent for their data to be shared.

A case study example: data collection for care leavers

The VSH in Foxbridge (Cohort 2) described the challenge of collecting data from CLs:

... and they don't have to share data with us and stuff when they get to 18. And that makes it more complicated for CLs because they don't have to tell us anything. [...] So it is hard to track data, but the colleges up till that point will give us a heads up. – *VSH, interview*

Provider lag

Some respondents noted that post-16 settings were slow to respond to requests for data.

4.7 Emerging outcomes

Summary points

- Survey respondents from Cohorts 1 and 2 and interviewees in case study sites reported a wide range of predominantly short-term and interim outcomes beginning to emerge relating to young people, post-16 settings and joint working.
- The three most commonly reported outcomes relating to young people, identified by survey respondents, were increased engagement, adding skills to their CV, and an increased awareness of EET options. Interviewees in case study sites also reported starting to see increased self-efficacy and empowerment amongst young people and an increase in EET.
- Most survey respondents reported that the majority of post-16 settings had a named person for CLA and CLs, and understood corporate parenting responsibility, although views were more mixed on the latter amongst interviewees in case study sites. Survey respondents and case study interviewees also reported that post-16 settings had begun to develop or amend policies to ensure that CLA and CLs are supported, and that staff in post-16 settings had an increased awareness of the cohort's needs.
- The most commonly reported outcomes relating to joint working, identified by survey respondents, were that PEPs inform actions and support for young people; strengthened close working relationships between VSs and post-16 education or training settings; better understanding of CLA and CLs' needs by all stakeholders; and tailored interventions in place to support UASC. Interviewees in case study sites also reported emerging signs of these outcomes.

These emerging outcomes represent initial progress reported by VSs and other stakeholders since Cohorts 1 and 2 began to receive PP+ Post-16 in autumn 2021 and 2022 respectively. The outcomes reported here build on those identified in the ToC developed as part of the pilot of PP+ Post-16, which were subsequently refined following the ToC workshops. The short-term and interim outcomes set out in the ToC and described below should be considered mechanisms for achieving the long-term outcomes. Please note that evidence relating to outcomes is emerging and preliminary. The timeline in the ToC anticipates that outcomes for Cohorts 1 and 2 will emerge as follows: short-term outcomes (end of 2022/23); interim outcomes (end of 2023/24) and long-term outcomes (end of 2025/26). Further evidence on outcomes will be provided in year 2 of the evaluation.

4.7.1 Outcomes for young people

Tables 10, 11 and 12 provide an overview of the most commonly reported outcomes that are starting to be seen for young people by VSs in Cohorts 1 and 2. The 3 most commonly reported outcomes for young people were increased engagement, adding skills to their CV, and an increased awareness of EET options.

Short-term outcomes

Table 10: Since you started receiving funding, to what extent do you agree that the following outcomes for young people are starting to be seen? (short-term outcomes) (n=44)

Outcome	Timeframe	Number (%) of 'strongly agree' or 'agree' responses
CLA and care leavers have added skills to their CV	Short term	35 (80%)
CLA and care leavers build trusting relationships with an adult	Short term	34 (77%)
CLA and care leavers see a positive role model	Short term	30 (68%)

CLA and CLs have added skills to their CV: Survey respondents in Cohort 2 and case study sites provided examples of how PP+ Post-16 had helped young people add skills to their CVs. For example, a VSH in Cohort 1 described funding incidental expenses such as appropriate footwear or lunch to enable young people to do work experience. A VSH in Cohort 2 had built cultural and sporting entitlement into the PEP to promote young people developing wider interests. For UASC, the acquisition of language skills was central to accessing further skills and qualifications. Survey respondents in Cohort 2 outlined examples of the funding improving outcomes for UASC by providing them with additional resources and opportunities. One survey respondent reported:

Our UASC have been openly appreciative of the EAL [English as an additional language] package of support which has reduced their sense of isolation, and meets their desire to learn English from an early stage. –
VSH, survey, North East

It was reported that as a result, those young people who were UASC felt welcomed and supported by the community and had an increased ability to make independent decisions about their futures.

Building trusting relationships with an adult: Analysis of case study interviews suggest that PP+ Post-16 has helped some young people to build trusting relationships with an adult. Increased staffing capacity in VSs, which enabled VSHs to allocate named workers to individual young people, and the provision of mentoring were viewed as facilitating this change. A VSH described the type of positive feedback they had received from young people in response to having an individual VS worker:

'You drove me to my interview and the chat in the car on the way there was really helpful to me to help me get the job that I've gone into.' And stuff like that, which we wouldn't have been able to do that level of support previously. We would've supported them in terms of putting them in the right direction stuff." - *VSH, interview, Cohort 2*

An AD in another case study site referred to comments made by young people at a recent inspection:

...what they were talking about was somebody was interested in their education and somebody was interested in what they were doing and where they were going next, so again you could start to see some of the impact on that. – *AD, interview, Cohort 2*

Survey respondents also highlighted the impact of young people building trusting relationships with adults. For example, building trusting relationships with adults through mentoring and tuition provided using the PP+ Post-16 was viewed as increasing young people's confidence, making them more likely explore EET options. One survey respondent provided an example of how increasing young people's engagement in EET options then had a wider benefit on their setting:

Young people have co-developed [the local authority's] Virtual College. For example, they have co-presented [at an employment event] designed to increase awareness of CLs recruitment needs. – *VSH, survey, London*

A case study example: the benefit of young people building trusting relationships with adults

In Cartdale (Cohort 1), part of the funding has enabled the VS to allocate each CLA and CL with their own VS worker to help build trusting relationships. Since having the funding, the AVSH reports an increase in young people attending PEP meetings. They have also found that young people have been more willing to speak for themselves and ask for support in PEP meetings, rather than someone from their post-16 setting or a carer speaking on their behalf, suggesting an increased sense of empowerment and self-efficacy. The AVSH suggests that the increased willingness of young people to speak in their PEPs is helping to ensure that they are enrolled on an appropriate course.

Interim outcomes

Table 11: Since you started receiving funding, to what extent do you agree that the following outcomes for young people are starting to be seen? (interim outcomes) (n=44)

Outcome	Timeframe	Number (%) of 'strongly agree' or 'agree' responses
Increased engagement	Interim	38 (86%)
Increased awareness of EET options	Interim	37 (84%)
Enrolled on appropriate course	Interim	34 (77%)
CLA and CLs have increased motivation	Interim	29 (66%)
Increased self-efficacy (belief in their own abilities)	Interim	27 (61%)
CLA and CLs feel empowered (have a say in the decisions that affect them)	Interim	27 (61%)

Increased awareness of EET options: Survey respondents outlined how the funding has allowed them to provide CLA and CLs with an improved awareness of available EET options, which has encouraged young people to pursue EET options tailored to their specific interests or goals. As a result, young people were engaging or re-engaging with various education or employment opportunities and raising their own aspirations for the future:

Demonstrating the breadth of choice available to them has meant that more young people are willing to try different activities, where before they responded to what they perceived as a binary choice between college and work by disengaging completely. – *VSH, survey, South East*

In case study sites, VSHs also reported an increased awareness of EET options amongst young people (e.g., through provision of careers guidance and increased participation in PEP meetings). This in turn was viewed as helping to ensure that young people were enrolled on an appropriate course. However, interviewees from post-16 settings in one case study site discussed how ensuring a young person was enrolled on an appropriate course was also dependent upon other professionals not withholding relevant information, where they feared it may result in post-16 settings not offering someone a place on a course. Withholding information in this way was viewed as potentially setting a young person up to fail.

Increased self-efficacy and young people feeling empowered: VSHs in four case study sites (3 in Cohort 1 and one in Cohort 2) reported that young people were increasingly asking for support, or feeling able to speak for themselves in PEP meetings suggesting an increased sense of self-efficacy and empowerment:

It's something around the young person feeling they're more in control, more able to control. Feeling more in control and more able to control what's happening rather than done to, it's like, it's going away from the [...] the binary choice. Do you want this or do you want that? Well, I don't like either, or something that's a bit different - *VSH, interview, Cohort 1*

Some post-16 leads and an AD described opportunities, both academic and extra-curricular, provided by PP+ Post-16 giving young people a voice and some sense of control and decision-making power (e.g., providing UASC with careers guidance, or funding drama classes or art materials to pursue a new skill or interest). One post-16 setting doing Pupil Voice received very positive feedback from young people saying activities and resources funded by PP+ had enhanced and enriched their lives.

Although change in terms of increased self-efficacy and empowerment was reported by some interviewees, some carers highlighted how not all young people would know or be able to describe the support they needed. A carer also reflected on the high expectations placed on young people to go into PEP meetings with a group of adults:

And sometimes that's quite a hard thing. It'd be hard for us as articulate adults to say what we want and need, but the expectations on the young person, like, well... The voice of the child needs to be heard but sometimes for the children and young people, they need practice at that, and they need to practice saying something they want, that they don't want, and being able to change their mind.

And I've found that children in care are often not given that good grace to be able to change their mind. – *Carer, interview, Cohort 1*.

This highlights the importance of empowering young people to contribute to discussions about PP+ Post-16 in a way that suits the individual.

Increased motivation and increased engagement: Interviewees described seeing an increase in young people's motivation and engagement as a result of PP+ Post-16, including through provision of tutoring, mentoring, funding of training, and extra-curricular activities. The fact that provision was tailored to the needs of individual young people was mentioned by several interviewees including SWs, leads in post-16 settings and carers:

I have a young person that's incredibly anxious and she just can't go [to college]. [...] So that's when we did the [beauty] course for her [...] And that was just like...she just went, it was like one-to-one with this woman at this shop, and then like some of it was virtual. So, for her it was great, and if she hadn't had that access to that money she wouldn't have trained in anything this year. So that's like a really good example of it helping. – *SW, interview, Cohort 1*

Although low engagement by CLA and CLs was identified by survey respondents as a barrier to the use of PP+ Post-16, the fact that survey respondents and case study interviewees reported seeing an increase in engagement by young people suggests that this may become less of a barrier over time.

Long-term outcomes

Table 12: Since you started receiving funding, to what extent do you agree that the following outcomes for young people are starting to be seen? (long-term outcomes) (n=44)

Outcome	Timeframe	Number (%) of 'strongly agree' or 'agree' responses
Increased engagement	Long term	33 (75%)
Retention in post-16 education	Long term	30 (68%)
More agency and voice in the decisions made	Long term	30 (68%)
Increased retention in EET	Long term	28 (64%)
CLA and CLs have improved attendance	Long term	25 (57%)
Improved attainment	Long term	23 (52%)
Increase in EET: transition to HE	Long term	22 (50%)
Increase in EET: in stable and appropriate employment	Long term	22 (50%)
Increase in EET: in apprenticeships	Long term	13 (30%)

Increase in EET: Some case study interviewees reported long-term outcomes beginning to emerge from the use of PP+ Post-16. VSHs in 5 case study sites (3 in Cohort 1 and 2 in Cohort 2) reported starting to see an increase in EET / reduction in their NEET rates overall, or for specific year groups who had been the focus of work using PP+ Post-16. In one case, a VSH described the change as being partly attributable to PP+ Post-16. DCSs and ADs in 3 case study sites also referred to improvements in NEET to EET rates, although in 2 cases, did not link this directly to activities using PP+ Post-16.

Improved attainment: One VSH reported that the number of young people leaving year 13 with a qualification was now higher than the number in year 11. The VSH viewed this as emerging evidence of improved attainment stemming from careers guidance and mentoring provided using PP+ Post-16 helping professionals to understand where young people's interests lay. However, the VSH acknowledged that they currently had no benchmark to confirm their thinking.

A DCS/AD referred to the difficulty of showing exactly how far a young person had progressed, using only administrative data:

[The administrative datasets] don't take into account where that child has come from, do they? [...] What some of our children and young people achieve in terms of where their starting point is, is actually quite remarkable, and we don't capture that within the data. – *DCS/AD, interview, Cohort 1*

An interviewee from a post-16 setting also commented on the importance of viewing the progress of CLA and CLs in light of their circumstances and starting points. They gave an example of a young person who may not have achieved grade 4 maths, but in that individual's context, achieving grade 3 was cause for celebration.

When considering how to measure the progress of CLA and CLs, one VSH suggested that traditional measures of attainment (e.g., against national standards) may not be appropriate for all young people in this cohort. The VSH described using their management information system to track young people's progress along different pathways:

So, we're able we think, using a management information system, to flexibly baseline and flexibly track progress within those pathways, where we can evidence good outcomes across an entire cohort, not just ones doing national standards qualifications in a VS. – *VSH, interview, Cohort 2*

4.7.2 Outcomes for post-16 settings

Tables 13 and 14 provide a breakdown of the proportion of survey respondents reporting that outcomes included in the ToC have been achieved in 51% to 100% of post-16 settings. These show that:

- Most survey respondents reported that the majority of post-16 education and training settings understand corporate parent responsibility (37 responses, 84%).
- Most survey respondents also reported that the majority of post-16 settings have a named person for this group in the SLT and/or a key person with decision making powers (36 responses, 82%).
- In contrast, few survey respondents reported that CLA and CLs are highlighted in prospectuses in the majority (at least 51%) of post-16 settings (10 responses, 23%). Several survey respondents selected 'don't know' for this outcome. This may indicate that this is not an outcome that has been focused on by survey respondents so far, or that they do not currently hold information about this.

Analysis of interviews in case study sites and open text survey responses provide additional context for the survey findings:

Short-term outcomes

Table 13: Please estimate the proportion of post-16 settings where the following outcomes are being achieved (short-term outcomes) (n=44)

Outcome	Timeframe	Number (%) of survey respondents who reported that this outcome had been achieved in 51% to 100% of post-16 settings
Post-16 education or training settings understand corporate parent responsibility	Short term	37 (84%)
Setting has a named person for this group in the SLT and/or a key person with decision-making powers	Short term	36 (82%)
CLA and CLs highlighted in prospectus	Short term	10 (23%)

Setting has a named person for this group in the SLT and/or a key person with decision-making powers: Analysis of interview data from case study sites showed a reported increase in the role of a named or key person with decision making powers. Rather than having someone specifically in the SLT, interviewees in case study sites described post-16 settings having someone in a named person or 'DT type' role. This role already existed to an extent before the introduction of PP+ Post-16, but was perceived to have increased since its roll out.

Due to the size of post-16 settings, the named person or DT was usually described as leading a team of staff working with CLA and CLs. The DT (or members of their team) were generally reported as being a named contact both for CLA and CLs, and for other professionals. Survey respondents highlighted the value of having a single point of contact for CLA and CLs in post-16 settings (e.g., who could act as an advocate for the young person).

CLA and CLs highlighted in the prospectus: Analysis of interviews in case study sites found little evidence that CLA and CLs were highlighted in prospectuses, reflecting the survey findings. Only one VSH reported that CLA and CLs were mentioned in prospectuses of local colleges, and these colleges were run by the same provider.

Post-16 education or training settings understand corporate parenting

responsibility: Analysis of the interview data revealed mixed views on whether there had been an increase in post-16 settings' understanding of corporate parenting responsibility. An interviewee from one post-16 setting described how their college had made a pledge to be a corporate parent:

The post-16 setting's understanding of that corporate parent responsibility is obviously something that as a college we've understood and that's been rolled out to our staff in our weekly bulletins and things like that. – *Lead in a post-16 setting, interview, Cohort 1*

However, one VSH was less confident:

I'd say [post-16 settings] have a fairly limited understanding of [corporate parenting] and they certainly don't see themselves as part of it but then I don't think schools do either. - *VSH, interview, Cohort 2*

Interim and longer-term outcomes

Table 14: Please estimate the proportion of post-16 settings where the following outcomes are being achieved (interim and long-term outcomes) (n=44)

Outcome	Timeframe	Number (%) of survey respondents who reported that this outcome had been achieved in 51% to 100% of post-16 settings
Clear policy and commitment to supporting CLA and CLs	Interim	30 (68%)
Post-16 settings demonstrate awareness of the needs of this cohort, reflected in their policies and practice	Long term	30 (68%)

Clear policy and commitment to supporting CLA and CLs: VSHs in 4 case study sites (2 in Cohort 1 and 2 in Cohort 2) reported that post-16 settings had begun to develop policies and approaches to supporting CLA and CLs (e.g., setting out their offer around transition to post-16; or adopting policies and models developed by the VS). One of these case study sites provided examples of policies developed by post-16 settings.

Survey respondents, particularly in Cohort 1, also reported post-16 settings focusing on either amending current policies or creating new ones to ensure CLA and CLs were adequately supported by the staff in their settings:

Some of our colleges have amended policies to ensure that CLA and CLs are more prevalent and better supported, for example, allocated a mentor and given priority at times of feedback. – *VSH, survey, East of England*

Post-16 settings demonstrate awareness of the needs of this cohort, reflected in their policies and practice: The outcome for post-16 settings most commonly reported by survey respondents was enhanced knowledge and understanding of the needs of CLA and CLs amongst staff. Survey respondents reported that this was occurring because of changes at a strategic level in post-16 settings (e.g., focusing on policy development), and also through delivery of training addressing the specific needs of this cohort (e.g., the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), attachment theory and the use of trauma-informed approaches):

Training delivered always focuses on positive outcomes and raising aspirations for our young people, and includes information on our corporate parenting roles and responsibilities. – *VSH, survey, South East*

VSHs in case study sites also reported post-16 settings demonstrating increased awareness of the needs of the cohort (e.g., seeking the VS's support to develop attachment and trauma informed approaches and relational practice).

Survey respondents outlined their efforts to get changes to policy and practice recognised by a wider audience. For example, one survey respondent reported:

The college has begun developing their relationship with the NNECL (National Network for the Education of CLs) and due to the success of the pilot are now aiming to gain the NNECL quality mark. – *VSH, survey, North West*

4.7.3 Outcomes relating to joint working

Tables 15 and 16 provide an overview of the most commonly reported joint working outcomes emerging from analysis of the survey data for Cohorts 1 and 2. The 4 most commonly reported outcomes were that PEPs inform actions and support for the young people; strengthened close working relationships between VSs and post-16 education or training settings; better understanding of CLA and CLs' needs by all stakeholders; and tailored interventions in place to support UASC.

Analysis of case study interviews and open text survey responses provided further detail and examples of these outcomes, and identified a number of other emerging outcomes in addition to those shown in Tables 15 and 16.

Short-term outcomes

Table 15: Since you started receiving funding, how far would you agree that the following joint working outcomes are starting to be seen? (short-term outcomes) (n=44)

Outcome	Timeframe	Number (%) of 'strongly agree' or 'agree' responses
PEP informs actions and support for CLA and CLs	Short term	40 (91%)
Better understanding of CLA and CLs needs by all stakeholders	Short term	38 (86%)
Improved understanding of post-16 education landscape by VSs/CSC	Short term	37 (84%)
Meaningful CLA and CL participation in PEPs	Short term	34 (77%)

Better understanding of young people's needs by all stakeholders: Interviewees in different roles across case study sites described stakeholders having a better understanding of young people's needs, which they described being the result of:

- increased dialogue between professionals about individual young people, including a greater focus on the whole young person, not just their education
- collection of data and young people's views
- training by the VS
- sharing of information through data dashboards

Improved understanding of the post-16 landscape by the Virtual School and children's social care: VSHs and DCS/ADs across 4 case study sites reported improvements in SWs' understanding of the post-16 landscape:

I can see SWs considering, asking, encouraging, young people to be thinking about their education choices and pathways, in a way that I don't think was the case previously. – *DCS, interview, Cohort 2*

One SW in a Cohort 1 site explained why they wanted to learn more about post-16:

...sometimes I feel like I am looking back on my own experience of being 16, and like looking forward of like what options were out there and obviously that's just, that was just where I was at that time. And then since I've been working in social work, I've been like piecing little bits together and like learning about like what the modern-day experience of looking at courses is. – SW, *interview, Cohort 1*

PEP informs actions and support for young people: Case study interviewees and survey respondents described strengthened joint working helping to increase rates of completion and quality of PEPs. Analysis of documents supplied by case study sites (e.g. sample PEPs and PEP guidance documents) found that all 6 case study sites required SMART targets to be set and all sites had a quality assurance process in place. Survey respondents also reported the following improvements to the PEP process:

- increased attendance of relevant professionals at PEP meetings, which created opportunities for professionals to share examples of good practice and to facilitate positive discussions around the use of the PP+ Post-16 funding
- increased engagement and attendance of post-16 settings at year 11 PEPs
- clearer understanding of the PEP process and CLA pathway planning

A case study example: improvements to the PEP process

Cartdale (Cohort 1) has implemented a range of approaches, which it considers to have helped improve the quality of PEPs. These include developing a regional network for DTs in post-16 settings; the provision of PEP training; developing guidance about PP+ Post-16 and quality assurance guidance for DTs in post-16 setting about the VS's expectations for a good or excellent PEP. The VS has received positive feedback from social care colleagues in response to the post-16 PEP guidance about its perceived benefit for young people.

The VS's requirement that a PEP must be completed before any spending is approved is also viewed by the AVSH as increasing the PEP completion rate, which currently stands at over 90%.

Meaningful young person participation in PEP: VSHs in 2 case study sites (1 in Cohort 1 and Cohort 2) reported increased participation and voice of young people in PEPs:

[The young person's] voice is coming through a lot clearer through the PEPs now. [...] We're seeing young person led targets and their views very much on what their aspirations are. And you shouldn't be surprised, I'm not surprised, but being really creative with that funding that's available to them, not just, 'Get me a laptop'. So, I think we can hear the voice a lot more clearly. – *VSH, interview, Cohort 2*

Analysis of sample PEPs from case study sites showed that young people were recorded as having direct or indirect involvement in all PEPs supplied by 2 case study sites. The young person's voice was recorded in a minimum of 80% of the PEPs from the other 4 case study sites.

Interim outcomes

Table 16: Since you started receiving funding, how far would you agree that the following joint working outcomes are starting to be seen? (interim outcomes) (n=44)

Outcome	Timeframe	Number (%) of 'strongly agree' or 'agree' responses
Strengthened close working relationships between VSs and post-16 education or training settings	Interim	38 (86%)
Tailored interventions in place to support UASC	Interim	38 (86%)
Tailored interventions in place to support NEET young people	Interim	36 (82%)
Tailored interventions in place to support attendance	Interim	30 (68%)
Social care and education providers have a strengthened relationship	Interim	27 (61%)
More integrated support for transition to independence	Interim	24 (55%)
VS input recognised in 'preparation for adulthood' plan	Interim	14 (32%)
Tailored interventions in place to support young people in the secure estate	Interim	11 (25%)

Strengthened close working relationships between Virtual Schools and post-16

settings: VSHs in the case study sites described using PP+ Post-16 to increase the size of their post-16 teams as helping to strengthen working relationships with post-16 settings:

It's given us a bit of additional capacity in the VS team, which means that we have more ability to liaise with a range of post-16 providers, not just within [the local authority], but further afield. – *VSH, interview, Cohort 2*

VSHs reported that the funding has enabled them to provide more information and support to post-16 settings (e.g., through establishing network meetings, leading PEPs, discussing education and training options with young people coming to the end of ESOL courses). The funding has also provided more capacity for the VS to hold discussions with post-16 settings about individual young people. Staff in post-16 settings talked positively about their relationships with VSs, and how accessible and responsive they found VS staff to be:

Like everyone said, I can't praise [name of VS contact] enough really, but she's fantastic at communication, keeping everyone together in the loop.
– *Lead in a post-16 setting, interview, Cohort 1*

Survey respondents also reported that strengthened working relationships between stakeholders, such as colleges, VSs, social care and wider services, had been an important outcome of PP+ Post-16 funding. Improved communication between professionals enabled them to resolve issues quickly and effectively, and to provide a more bespoke offer of support to young people.

A case study example: the role of relationships with partners

The VSH in Esterford (Cohort 2) describes how using the funding to expand post-16 staffing within the VS has helped to strengthen relationships with partners.

Being able to increase the size of the VS's post-16 team, so it is no longer 'tokenistic', has strengthened joint working with post-16 settings:

...And I think it also shows that intent to partners, to our FE providers, to our social care colleagues, that [post-16] is a priority area. – *VSH, interview*

In addition to post-16 providers seeing that VSs are putting resource into post-16 and building relationships, the VSH reports that post-16 settings recognise that VS staff are knowledgeable about post-16:

We've got practitioners who really know what they're talking about and who understand the post-16 world. So, I think that whether there's a young person who's wobbling, it feels more of a team effort to try and stabilise them. – *VSH, interview*

The VSH has found that post-16 settings are more willing to work with the VS, there is better communication, and post-16 settings appear to feel more supported to take decisions that better meet a young person's needs. For example, the VS might discuss putting support in place to enable a young person to take a higher-level course where they may not quite have the required grades:

We didn't have the capacity previously to have some of those nuanced conversations. – *VSH, interview*

Some survey respondents reported focusing on strengthening existing joint working practices, whereas other respondents described PP+ Post-16 providing the opportunity to implement new ways of working. For those who implemented a new approach, most examples focused on the creation of new networks or multi-agency meetings for professionals working with CLA and CLs (e.g., the network for post-16 settings established by the VS in Cartdale). Survey respondents highlighted the value of these networks as a space to share best practice and learning, for example in relation to national reforms. One survey respondent reported:

A task and finish group was set up (with member involvement) looking at how successful approaches could be replicated and extended to the local authority's approach to increasing EET within the 19-25 CL population. – *VSH, survey, South East*

Survey respondents reported that outcomes from improved joint working were most evident for distinct groups, such as CLA and CLs who are NEET or UASC. One survey respondent provided an example of this:

The UASC offer is a good example of college, social care teams and VS working together to provide an educational offer to a young person when they arrive in the UK. – *VSH, survey, South East*

Tailored interventions in place to support attendance, NEET young people, UASC or those in the secure estate: Interviewees in case study sites reported introducing a range of tailored interventions, mainly for young people who were NEET or UASC. For NEET young people these included careers guidance and specific transitional courses (e.g., involving study skills, maths and English and signposting to next steps). For UASC, tailored approaches included work experience with a language component; talking to staff about career aspirations; and provision of vocational course tasters alongside ESOL courses.

There was less focus on young people in the secure estate, possibly due to the small number of young people in this cohort in each case study site compared with the NEET or UASC populations. One case study site referred to providing support to young people leaving secure institutions and another was considering the possibility of pooling funding with other VSs in the region to fund a specific worker for this group.

4.8 Outcomes Cohort 3 are aiming to achieve

Summary points

- Survey respondents in Cohort 3 identified a range of outcomes that they aimed to achieve relating to young people, post-16 settings and joint working.
- Despite planned outcomes being reported in response to open text questions in the survey, they closely reflected outcomes identified in the ToC (e.g., increasing awareness of CLA and CLs' needs; increasing EET rates, and improved motivation).

As Cohort 3 survey respondents had only recently begun to receive PP+ Post-16 funding at the point of completing the survey, they were asked via open text questions what outcomes they were hoping to achieve from the PP+ post-16 funding. This differed from Cohorts 1 and 2 who were asked specifically about outcomes identified in the ToC.

Outcomes for young people

- **Reduction and prevention of NEET.** By far the most common response was an aim to reduce the number of NEET and keep students engaged in EET. It was felt that students accessing careers guidance and making well-informed post-16 and post-18 choices would contribute to this.
- **Attainment.** Many respondents aimed to see improvements in the cohort's achievements in terms of gaining qualifications and skills.
- **Attendance.** Many respondents aimed to improve attendance.
- **ESOL.** Some respondents aimed to offer immediate access to ESOL lessons for UASC.
- **Motivation.** Some respondents explicitly stated that they aimed to increase young people's self-confidence and motivation through the support they would offer.

Outcomes for post-16 settings

- **PEPs.** Many respondents anticipated seeing post-16 settings complete PEPs to a higher standard. Some also mentioned PEPs for NEET CLA and CLs.
- **Understanding.** Many respondents expressed a desire to increase understanding amongst post-16 staff of the care experienced cohort's needs, and for this to translate into more supportive and flexible approaches to the courses offered and the approach to exclusions.

Outcomes for joint working

- **Communication.** Many respondents reported that they would like to see improved communication. This was particularly noted in the context of communicating early concerns to reduce the number of CLA being removed from courses without all partners being given the opportunity to support the young person to re-engage.
- **Joined up strategy.** Many respondents reported that they hoped the funding could enable the partners involved to gain shared understanding of the cohort and their needs, and to develop a clear strategy for supporting them.

The outcomes identified by Cohort 3 respondents closely reflected outcomes identified in the ToC (e.g., improving motivation, increasing EET rates, increasing attendance and attainment, increasing awareness of CLA and CLs' needs and improving PEPs).

Although access to ESOL, improved communication and joined up strategy are not specifically referred to in the ToC, there is some crossover with outcomes such as strengthened close working relationships between the VS and post-16 settings, or young people being on an appropriate course.

4.9 Next steps and priorities

Summary points

- Case study interviewees identified continuing to develop support for individual CLA and CLs as a future priority, including work with specific groups of young people (e.g., NEET and UASC cohorts).
- In addition, case study interviewees proposed using the funding for a range of future activities relating to post-16 settings (e.g., identifying and supporting young people at risk of becoming NEET during transition to post-16) and joint working (e.g., training new and existing staff in post-16 and CSC).

Case study interviewees described their priorities for the future use of the PP+ Post-16. This section includes plans identified by VSHs and ways in which other interviewees hope that the funding will be used in future.

4.9.1 Continuing to develop support for individual CLA and CLs

One VSH planned to build on successes supporting individual young people using PP+ Post-16 including, allocating an amount of funding per individual young person and commissioning tuition centrally:

Being able to say 'You don't need to go and look around for a tutor, we've centrally commissioned and here's a referral and there's the tutor'.
That's really been helpful. – *VSH, interview, Cohort 2*

Other case study interviewees predominantly suggested that future funding should be increasingly used for activities promoting young people's SEMH and aspirations (e.g., mentoring, visiting universities, sports, and cultural activities). A DT suggested that extra-curricular activities could help to avoid young people's education being derailed as they get older:

...those are the experiences that stop the child going down the drug route, or going down the socialising, partying hard route and turning away from their studies. – *DT, interview, Cohort 1*

One carer also highlighted the importance of CLA and CLs having the same access as their peers to college trips:

And we all know that if we can pay for counselling for their mental stimulation and health, then they should be also thinking about how it affects them not being involved in certain things. – *Carer, interview, Cohort 1*

Other suggestions for use of funding to support individual young people included support for late entrants to care such as tuition and assessment for ASD and ADHD; being able to roll over unused money to fund cookery and finance courses to equip young people moving towards independence; and creating a directory of local work experience and employment options.

4.9.2 Strengthening transition to post-16

Two VSHs described planning to strengthen transition into post-16. For example, a VSH in Cohort 1 planned to identify young people in year 11 who were at potential risk of becoming NEET and making sure that support such as functional skills was in place to prevent them disengaging during transition:

So that at least in September, they've got a chance of a college course rather than going to a NEET PEP in September because they didn't get their maths and English, you know? – *VSH, interview, Cohort 1*

Other suggestions from DTs in case study sites included providing tuition to support the progress from GCSE to A Level; funded apprenticeships and work experience ring-fenced for CLA at risk of becoming NEET; and the possibility of using PP+ Post-16 to help formalise the transition process. A SW suggested that young people would benefit from sessions to prepare for the move to post-16 to help them understand different expectations and systems in college compared with school.

4.9.3 Strengthening joint working and professional practice

Three VSHs reported plans involving further development of joint working and professional practice, including offering training to SWs joining an authority; upskilling post-16 staff and supporting post-16 settings to adopt trauma-informed practice:

I would like our FE partners to have as robust a relationship with us as schools do. I'd like them to be upskilled to the same level as schools. – *VSH, interview, Cohort 2*

Linked to the upskilling of staff, a VSH (Cohort 1) suggested that in the longer term, work is needed to help VS staff understand what an effective intervention looks like at post-16:

I bet if you ask most VSHs or VS people, 'What's Quality First Teaching in an FE college?' They probably wouldn't be able to tell you. I can tell you what Quality First Teaching is in secondary school... - VSH, *interview, Cohort 1*

In relation to further developing PEP processes, a SW wanted the VS to attend all PEPs in an authority where this was not currently possible. A DCS also suggested that further work was needed to better integrate PEPs and Pathway Plans so that supporting and enabling young people to engage in education and employment was not only encouraged by the VS, but also by CSC.

4.9.4 Focus on specific groups of CLA and CLs

UASC and young people in the secure estate: Only one VSH (Cohort 2) reported future plans around UASC, which involved providing a more direct offer around trauma. Two VSHs planned to look at using PP+ Post-16 to support young people in the secure estate. In one case, there had already been some discussion amongst VSs in the region about pooling some of their funding to create a specific VS role.

NEET or at risk of becoming NEET: Suggestions of future activities relating to young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET, included considering support into employment for young people who did not want to continue in education or training; providing one-to-one specialist career guidance for young people at risk of becoming NEET; and seeking the views of young people who are NEET to understand what they think would help them engage with EET. This suggestion, from a SW, involved learning gathered from young people being shared with post-16 settings. This idea reflects the approach taken by the VS in Bridmarsh (Cohort 1), which has used PP+ Post-16 to understand barriers faced by some of their long-term NEET cohort, feeding learning into other areas.

Care leavers: Case study interviews suggested that focusing on CLs and those making the transition to independence was viewed as a logical next step to continue and shore up the reported benefits of work undertaken with the post-16 cohort using the funding.

Staff in post-16 settings and carers highlighted a need to equip young people with the necessary skills for independent living, as transition to independence was identified by multiple interviewees as creating a particular risk to engagement in education. Young people in year 13 were described as particularly at risk:

It's a real pressure point when they move into independent living. It either goes well or it can be catastrophic and they just fall out of education. –
Lead in a post-16 setting, interview, Cohort 2

The VSH in one case study site wanted to extend their work with NEET to include CLs.

Although VSHs already have some flexibility to use PP+ Post-16 to support young people beyond year 13, DCSs or ADs in 4 case study sites reported wanting to offer increased support to young people aged over 18, as disruption to education often meant that CLA and CLs needed longer to complete post-16 qualifications:

If you think about what the purpose of this pupil premium is, and what you're trying to kind of achieve through it, then I think there's an argument to say, "Well, why are you stopping at 18?" For some young people it might actually be really beneficial if they're still in FE. They still need that additional support to actually enable them to finish that course.
– *DCS/AD, interview, Cohort 1*

5 Conclusion

The year 1 findings from the survey, case study interviews and documentary analysis provide a valuable snapshot of how VSHs have used, or plan to use PP+ Post-16, and the barriers and enablers to its use. Reported signs of emerging outcomes provide a useful indication of progress towards the longer-term outcomes set out in the ToC.

Overall, PP+ Post-16 is viewed very positively by VSHs and other stakeholders and is seen as reducing the potential cliff edge in terms of support for young people when they reach 16:

Obviously in a secondary school, they get the Pupil Premium Plus as a matter of course, plus any other funding, and then suddenly it all just goes. So, I think it's been a massive, massive help to FE, to have that allocation of money to support the learner in whichever direction they want to go to. – *Lead in a post-16 setting, interview, Cohort 1*

5.1 Implementation

The year 1 findings show VSHs using PP+ Post-16 in a variety of ways to meet the needs of their CLA and CL cohorts. During the early stages of holding funding, strategic uses have been a priority, with VSHs top slicing the funding to increase post-16 staffing. The increased capacity allowed VSHs to focus on post-16: providing training to post-16 settings and SWs; improving collection and use of data on the post-16 cohort; and developing policy and guidance about PP+ Post-16 and the PEP process.

In addition to strategic activities, VSHs have used the funding to provide direct support to CLA and CLs. In doing so, they describe taking a holistic approach, listening to the views of young people and seeking to meet individual need. Survey findings show that although VSHs initially provided support reactively to meet young people's acute needs, since first receiving the funding, some VSHs in Cohort 1 have increasingly begun to focus on early intervention and prevention.

Allocation of funding to individual young people is dependent on each VS's context and priorities, for instance, whether funding is used to support the whole CLA and CL cohort (shared equally or based on need), or whether some or all of the funding is used to provide extra support to specific groups of young people. The survey data show extra support most frequently targeted at the NEET and UASC cohorts, due to the growing number of young people in these groups and recognised gaps in support.

Mentoring and tuition were frequently reported as uses of the funding. Transition into post-16 and leaving care were identified as points when young people were at particular

risk of becoming NEET and provision of mentoring (e.g., peer support for transition to independence) and tuition (e.g., in functional maths and English skills) were identified as valuable activities to support young people during these periods.

5.2 Perceived enablers and barriers

The findings include a range of perceived enablers and barriers to delivery of PP+ Post-16 identified by stakeholders in the survey and case study interviews. An important enabler was the creation of new or enhanced roles in VSs, increasing their capacity at post-16. Other enablers reported by VSHs and case study interviewees included good relationships between VSs, post-16 settings and SWs; and attendance of the VS at PEP meetings. Barriers reported included SW turnover and/or vacancies; not receiving data on CLA and CLs from post-16 settings; and uncertainty about how PP+ Post-16 should be used. Comparison of survey responses for Cohort 1 from the pilot evaluation and the current survey, conducted almost 2 years apart, show the three most commonly reported enablers (good engagement and support from colleges; new staff or enhancing existing roles enabling cover of CLA/CLs at post-16; and established good relationship with social care post-16 or care leaving teams) and the most common barrier (SW turnover and/or vacancies) remained the most commonly reported responses. The continuing relevance of staffing capacity and relationships between professionals highlight their importance in the delivery of PP+ Post-16.

VSHs reported valuing the degree of flexibility that they had to decide how PP+ Post-16 was used as it enabled them to tailor their approach to meet the needs of their cohort. However, this flexibility created a lack of certainty for staff in post-16 settings supporting young people from different local authorities, as they were faced with differing guidelines on the use of PP+ Post-16 (e.g., provision of laptops or activities supporting SEMH). This tension between providing flexibility and certainty highlights the need for VSHs to provide sufficient guidance and training to post-16 settings and other stakeholders about permitted uses of the funding. Findings from the case study interviews demonstrate a clear appetite from staff in post-16 settings, SWs, DTs and carers for further guidance from VSHs.

Differences between the PEP processes used by local authorities also meant that staff in post-16 settings had to gather different information and to complete different PEP templates for multiple local authorities. This issue, which was also identified in the pilot evaluation, again demonstrates the importance of relationships between professionals and guidance from VSHs on PP+ Post-16 and PEPs to support post-16 settings navigating different processes.

5.3 Data availability

Findings relating to the availability of data about CLA and CL cohorts suggest that some progress is being made to improve its collection and use (e.g., through development of systems, joint working with social work teams, and recruiting staff with responsibility for data analysis). Findings suggest that data availability is better in Cohort 1, although it is unclear whether this is due to PP+ Post-16, or if these VSs were already more focused on their collection and use of data. The fact that few VSs in Cohort 3 reported collecting data on young people aged over 18 could potentially affect their ability to support CLs using the funding.

5.4 Emerging outcomes

Findings from year 1 show participants reporting emerging signs of progress towards a wide range of outcomes set out in the ToC. The outcomes reported are predominantly short-term or interim, which fits with the anticipated timeline for achieving outcomes set out in the ToC. This is encouraging as it indicates that activities and approaches implemented by VSHs using the funding are starting to change the way that CLA and CLs are supported at post-16. This includes changes to the types of support available to CLA and CLs, and the processes and mechanisms used to identify need and deliver that support. The findings should be interpreted with some caution, as they are based on subjective reporting by VSHs and other stakeholders. However, further data on reported emerging outcomes will be collected in year 2 of the evaluation, that will provide further evidence of progress towards outcomes set out in the ToC.

5.5 Areas for further exploration in year 2 of the evaluation

Based on the year 1 findings, we have identified the following areas for potential further exploration in year 2. A final decision on specific focus areas for further exploration will be taken as part of planning for year 2.

NEET cohort: The findings show that many VSs are using some of their funding to support young people to move from NEET to EET, and also to prevent young people from becoming NEET. A potential focus for year 2 is to further explore approaches taken to support this cohort, and building on findings from one of the case study sites (Bridmarsh), to explore whether any other VSs are seeking a more nuanced understanding of their NEET cohort to meet their needs more effectively. VSHs in year 1 case study sites have reported that NEET rates have decreased since the introduction of PP+ Post-16, so the extent of the data showing this decrease should be explored further.

Care leavers: VSs report using the funding to provide extra support to CLs, but not to the extent that VSs have focused on their NEET and UASC cohorts. However, the findings

suggest that stakeholders are interested in supporting CLs as a future focus for the funding. Further exploration could involve looking at the types of support and tailored interventions provided to CLs to help them cope with the transition to independence whilst continuing in EET. It would also be valuable to explore the approach of VSs to CLs who are NEET. Work in year 2 could explore where VSHs see the limits of the support that it is possible to provide to CLs using PP+ Post-16 as young people age out of care, (i.e., at what point would support using PP+ Post-16 end or taper?). Year 2 would involve exploration of further signs of emerging outcomes.

Points of transition: Stakeholders and particularly DTs reported the transition into post-16 as presenting an increased risk of young people becoming NEET. Further exploration of this period could involve focusing on experiences of joint working to ensure young people are aware of their EET options and are on the appropriate course; the process of transitional PEPs; and approaches to ensure that young people are fully supported over the summer period and through exam results.

6 Limitations of the evaluation in year 1

In the absence of formal treatment and control groups or a strong natural experimental design we recognise that findings on progress towards the outcomes in the ToC will be based on i) subjective reporting and ii) statistical analysis subject to low power and high levels of potential bias and are thus exploratory and descriptive.

There are several aspects of variation that have been considered in our lines of inquiry and analysis, including variation in delivery models; funding amounts received by local authorities each year; how the cohort is defined in each site and where they decide to focus the funding; and starting points for receiving funding.

Although the survey was piloted with a group of VSHs, it is possible that individual VSHs will have interpreted the questions differently and responded accordingly. Additional guidance and definitions were added to the survey after it had opened for responses. This followed a query by a VSH concerning a question about the numbers of CLA and CLs within their cohort. It is possible that VSHs responding prior to this clarification may have interpreted the question differently.

The 6 case study sites were selected as together, they provide a broad range of activities using the funding (based on expressions of interest in the pilot phase) and different characteristics (e.g., local authority size, rural/urban). However, their involvement was also dependent upon their willingness to participate.

Whilst the evaluation team supplied case study sites with an overview of the different categories of interviewee, the VSH or another staff member within the VS was ultimately responsible for identifying appropriate individuals and inviting them to participate in an interview.

As a result of these limitations and considerations, the evaluation methodology in year 1 relies on subjective measures in addition to quantitative data, and findings will be formative.

Annex 1: Evaluation questions

Implementation:

- How are local authorities and VSs using the funding to support CLA and CLs aged 16 to 18 years? To what extent do these reflect the activities identified in the ToC?
- How are VSs and post-16 settings using the funding to support the cohort – what activities or policies are in place or being prioritised and why?
- Is there any joint training and shared agreements across wider stakeholders? What has worked well and less well?
- What are sites doing to increase the understanding of, and elevate the profile of, the cohort in post-16 settings? What has worked well and less well?
- What are sites doing to engage the cohort in their PEPs or equivalent? What has worked well and less well?
- What are the enablers/ barriers to delivery from the perspective of post-16 settings, and wider stakeholders for CLA and CLs?
- What are views of CLA, CLs and carers about the support available to access or study in post-16 education and training?
- Have there been any unintended or unexpected issues in the delivery of the programme?

Outcomes

- How successful are the participating sites in delivering the intended outcomes for the cohort (attendance, engagement, retention, attainment and increased numbers in EET)?
- What appear to be the short-term, interim and longer-term outcomes for the cohort, post-16 settings, and the wider stakeholders for CLA and CLs? To what extent do these reflect the outcomes identified in the ToC?
- Do apparent outcomes vary by site and are there any elements of what each of the sites are delivering that lead to specific outcomes for the cohort, post-16 settings, and wider stakeholders?
- Does the programme represent value for money?
- Do the likely benefits outweigh the costs?

Annex 2: Further information about the wider evaluation methodology

Table 17 provides an overview of the reporting stages and methods used across each stage of the evaluation.

Table 17: Breakdown of reporting and methods used across stages of the evaluation

Stage of evaluation	Reporting	Method used: Theory of Change workshops ¹⁴	Method used: survey of VSHs	Method used: case studies	Method used: national data set analysis	Method used: cost-benefit assessment
Scoping phase	Evaluation framework	Yes	-	-	-	-
Assess extent of rollout and implementation (planned rollout/ implementation in Cohort 3); consider early evidence about progress towards outcomes in the ToC (Cohorts 1 and 2).	Interim report (Year 1)	-	Yes	Yes	-	-
Assess extent of rollout and implementation; mixed methods assessment of	Final report (Year 2) ¹⁵	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

¹⁴ The ToC workshop was used to refine the ToC and inform development of data collection tools. See Tables 2 to 4 for the updated ToC.

¹⁵ The timing of the final evaluation report to be agreed with DfE depending on whether the evaluation is extended beyond March 2025.

Stage of evaluation	Reporting	Method used: Theory of Change workshops ¹⁴	Method used: survey of VSHs	Method used: case studies	Method used: national data set analysis	Method used: cost-benefit assessment
early progress towards outcomes in the ToC (All Cohorts)						

The national data set analysis and cost benefit assessment to be completed in year 2 will involve the following:

National data set analysis

The final report for this evaluation, along with the findings from the case studies and the next survey wave, will include an analysis of national data sets, linking information on CSC and post-16 EET outcomes. The analysis will focus on identifying any change at aggregate level in 3 longer-term outcomes from the ToC; numbers in EET; retention in EET; and educational attainment. These outcomes will be measured in the 2 years following the end of key stage 4 (i.e. year 12 and year 13, ages 16-18), for young people who are either in care or CLs.

There will be 3 groups for comparison as per the 3 cohorts of funded sites:

- Cohort 1 – received additional funding September 2021 to March 2022, then a 6-month break, then again since September 2022
- Cohort 2 – received additional funding since September 2022
- Cohort 3 – received additional funding from September 2023

The analysis will make comparisons both over time for the 3 cohorts, and between the 3 cohorts (which is important given start dates and differences in the funding). Baseline data will be taken from years 12 and 13 in 2017/18-2020/21. For Cohorts 1 and 2, this will be compared to outcomes from 2022/23. Since the ToC predicts that these longer-term outcomes will not be achieved in most local authorities in Cohorts 1 and 2 until the end of the 2025/26 academic year, the analysis will only be able to reveal whether there are any early signs of change in these outcomes. Cohort 3 will only have post-intervention data if the evaluation project funding is extended beyond its current period.

We will also look at the role of other factors (including demographic information as well as characteristics and experiences of children's social care) to identify what might contribute to differences in CLA's and CLs' outcomes.

Cost benefit assessment

The methodology includes a cost benefit assessment, which we expect to be closely linked to the impact assessment based on national data sets in year 2 of the evaluation. From what we know to date, we anticipate that the approach to cost benefit assessment will use modelling to provide an indication of what cost savings could reasonably be achieved, if any, based on a set of potential scenarios. Our approach is currently in development, and will be an area of focus as we move into year 2 of the evaluation.

Findings from the cost benefit assessment and national data set analysis will be reported in the final report for this evaluation.

Annex 3: Virtual School Head survey

Please note: At the beginning of the survey, VSHs were asked to indicate whether they started to receive PP+ Post-16 funding in 2021 (Cohort 1), 2022 (Cohort 2) or 2023 (Cohort 3). VSHs were then asked questions relevant to their Cohort. Survey questions for all 3 Cohorts are included in this Annex.

Pupil Premium Plus Post-16 Evaluation Survey for Virtual School Heads 2023

Introduction

About the survey

The Department for Education has commissioned the Rees Centre from the University of Oxford (see <https://www.education.ox.ac.uk/rees-centre/>) and Cordis Bright (see www.cordisbright.co.uk) to evaluate the extension of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding to support children looked after (CLA) and care leavers aged 16 to 18 years. This funding is referred to as PP+ post-16.

As part of this evaluation, we are conducting a national survey of Virtual Schools. We estimate that the survey will take up to 30-40 minutes to complete for local authorities that started receiving funding in 2021 and 2022. And up to 20 minutes for those who started receiving funding in 2023. We are interested in receiving one response per Virtual School, completed by an appropriate member of staff, likely to be the Virtual School Head.

This survey aims to understand the ways in which you are using, or plan to use, the PP+ post-16 funding; reflections since receiving the funding; and your views on outcomes for young people, post-16 settings, and joint working.

The responses to this survey, along with the other elements of the evaluation, will help to build an evidence base for the PP+ post-16 funding. We appreciate you taking time to provide your input.

Later in the survey, we would be very grateful if you could provide us with the following data:

- Number of age 16-18 CLA and care leavers in your local authority on 1 Oct 2023
- Average % attendance within this group between 1 Sept 2023 and 31 Oct 2023
- Percentage of this group not participating in any kind of education or training (NEET) on 1 Oct 2023

If any of the above data is not available, either in full or in part, please provide whatever data is available and move on to the next section of the survey. Please do not provide any data which identifies individual young people.

The survey will open at 00:01 on Friday 5th January 2024 and run until 23:59 on Friday

26th January 2024.

What will happen to my information?

By completing the survey and submitting the above data, you are agreeing that your response can be held and analysed by Cordis Bright and the Rees Centre. Individual responses will not be shared outside of the joint evaluation research team. In our reports any survey data will be presented in aggregated form and your responses will not be identifiable.

You have the option to save your progress and come back to the survey. This involves providing a name and email address so that a link to your partially completed survey can be emailed to you. This information will not be stored or recorded against your survey response.

If you have any questions about this survey or the evaluation more generally, please contact Georgia Hyde-Dryden, vs-p16@education.ox.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Q1. Please state your local authority.

Q2. Please state your role in the local authority.

Q3. Please indicate when you started receiving funding for the PP+ post-16 programme. *Please select one.*

☐ September 2021 (pilot)

☐ September 2022

☐ September 2023

Cohort 1. Programme details, funding and content

The grant determination letter for Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) post-16 for 2023-2024 states that the purpose of this grant is to provide additional funding for children looked after (CLA) and care leavers aged 16-18 to all local authorities. A supporting letter from DfE in June 2023 notes that Virtual School Heads (VSHs) will have the flexibility to use the funding as they see best to support this cohort of CLA and care leavers, including those in any post-16 education or training setting. The letter also encourages VSHs to consider how they can support young people who are particularly vulnerable, including looked-after children currently detained in or recently leaving Secure Children's Homes, Young Offenders' Institutions or Secure Training Centres; unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC); and those who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) or are at risk of becoming NEET.

Q4. What was your Virtual School's approach to post-16 provision for CLA and care leavers prior to receiving PP+ post-16 funding? *Please respond in up to 250 words. If you did not have a strategy prior to receiving the funding, please state 'None'.*

Q5. Which of the following statements most closely describes your virtual school. *Please select one.*

- ☐ PP+ post-16 funding has enabled the virtual school to implement a new offer for looked after children and care leavers post-16 where there previously was none
- ☐ PP+ post-16 funding has enabled the virtual school to enhance or expand on an existing offer for looked after children and care leavers post-16

Q6. Since you started receiving funding in 2021, has the PP+ post-16 been used to give extra focus to any of the following groups? *Please select all that apply.*

- ☐ Care leavers
- ☐ CLA and care leavers not in education, employment and training (NEET)
- ☐ Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) in care and care leavers
- ☐ CLA and care leavers in secure estates
- ☐ Not applicable – the funding has been used across CLA and care leavers more broadly
- ☐ Other (please specify):

Q7. Please briefly outline the rationale for the focus on the combination of groups of young people you have selected. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Q8a. Since you started receiving funding in 2021, which activities have you spent the PP+ post-16 funding on? *Please select all that apply.*

	Year 1 (2021-2022)	Year 2 (2022-2023)	Year 3 (2023-2024) so far
Activities targeting CLA and care leavers who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)	☐	☐	☐
Activities targeting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)	☐	☐	☐
Activities targeting CLA and care leavers in secure estates	☐	☐	☐
Activities aimed at supporting CLA and care leavers who attend post-16 settings out of area	☐	☐	☐
Activities aimed at providing CLA and care leavers with mental health/relationship support	☐	☐	☐
Surveys / consultations to collect views of	☐	☐	☐

	Year 1 (2021-2022)	Year 2 (2022-2023)	Year 3 (2023-2024) so far
CLA and care leavers			
Allocating Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) to individual CLA and care leavers to support personal education plan (PEP) targets	☐	☐	☐
Facilitating enrichment activities (e.g., sports clubs, cultural visits)	☐	☐	☐
Activities aimed at increasing CLA and care leavers academic skills/support	☐	☐	☐
Intervening to improve attendance of individual CLA and care leavers post-16	☐	☐	☐
Funding or part-funding new roles for post-16 education in the Virtual School	☐	☐	☐

	Year 1 (2021-2022)	Year 2 (2022-2023)	Year 3 (2023-2024) so far
Funding or part-funding new roles in post-16 settings (e.g., to monitor attendance, mentors)	☐	☐	☐
Activities aimed at increasing <u>existing</u> staff time and resource in post-16 settings	☐	☐	☐
Briefings on PP+ post-16 (e.g., bulletins, briefings, newsletters, social media, webinars)	☐	☐	☐
Activities aimed at awareness-raising in post-16 settings	☐	☐	☐
Accessing and analysing data on CLA and care leavers post-16	☐	☐	☐
Monitoring attendance of CLA and care leavers post-16	☐	☐	☐
Activities aimed at supporting the delivery of targets	☐	☐	☐

	Year 1 (2021-2022)	Year 2 (2022-2023)	Year 3 (2023-2024) so far
in PEPs, pathway plans or equivalent			
Panels and review meetings relating to CLA and care leavers	☐	☐	☐
Meetings with social workers about individual students outside of PEP meetings	☐	☐	☐
Training for professionals in order to enhance quality and educational focus of PEPs	☐	☐	☐
Facilitating/referring others to additional services for students (e.g., child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), youth offending teams (YOT), specific therapies, etc.)	☐	☐	☐
Network/forum meetings of post-16 education leads	☐	☐	☐

	Year 1 (2021-2022)	Year 2 (2022-2023)	Year 3 (2023-2024) so far
facilitated by the Virtual School			
Activities aiming to increase Virtual School capacity to focus on post-16	☐	☐	☐
Activities aimed at developing shared agreements for joint work	☐	☐	☐
Activities aimed at working across Virtual Schools (e.g., regional groups)	☐	☐	☐
Other activities, please specify below	☐	☐	☐
No activities delivered	☐	☐	☐

Q8b. If you selected ‘Activities targeting CLA and care leavers who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)’ please elaborate on

the types of work you are doing with this cohort. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Q8c. If you selected 'Other activities', please specify. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Q9. Please briefly outline the rationale for the focus on the combination of activities you have selected. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Q10. Since you started receiving funding in 2021, approximately what percentage of the PP+ post-16 funding has been spent on the following

types of activities each year? *If you are unsure, please select your best estimate.*

	Direct work with young people	Activities related to post-16 education and training settings	Activities related to joint working	Other activities
81%-100%	☐	☐	☐	☐
61%-80%	☐	☐	☐	☐
41%-60%	☐	☐	☐	☐
21%-40%	☐	☐	☐	☐
0%-20%	☐	☐	☐	☐
81%-100%	☐	☐	☐	☐
61%-80%	☐	☐	☐	☐
41%-60%	☐	☐	☐	☐
21%-40%	☐	☐	☐	☐
0%-20%	☐	☐	☐	☐
81%-100%	☐	☐	☐	☐
61%-80%	☐	☐	☐	☐
41%-60%	☐	☐	☐	☐
21%-40%	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Activities related to post-16			
	Direct work with young people	education and training settings	Activities related to joint working	Other activities
0%-20%	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q11a. Since you started receiving funding in 2021 what, if any, training have you delivered using the PP+ post-16 funding? *Please select all that apply.*

	Year 1 (2021-2022)	Year 2 (2022-2023)	Year 3 (2023-2024) so far
Training for staff in post-16 settings (including post-16 education leads and/or tutors)	☐	☐	☐
Training for social workers on understanding post-16 education for CLA and care leavers	☐	☐	☐
Any form of joint training	☐	☐	☐
Other training type	☐	☐	☐

	Year 1 (2021-2022)	Year 2 (2022-2023)	Year 3 (2023-2024) so far
No training has been delivered	☐	☐	☐

Q11b. If you have used PP+ post-16 for training, please specify the subject of training and if it was aimed at specific roles. *Please respond in up to 100 words.*

Q12a. Since you started receiving funding in 2021, has your Virtual School provided guidance about the funding and how it can be used for any of the following groups? *Please select all that apply.*

	Post-16 settings	Foster carers	Designated teachers
Yes	☐	☐	☐
No	☐	☐	☐

Q12b. If guidance has been provided for other groups, please specify. *Please respond in up to 100 words.*

Q13. The Virtual Schools that received pilot funding from September 2021 had a gap in PP+ post-16 funding for 6 months. Please explain how, if at all, this gap in funding was bridged. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Data availability

Q14. We know that Virtual Schools differ in whether and how easily they can access information about young people aged 16-18 who are CLA or care leavers. *Please select the options that most accurately describes your Virtual School.*

Definitions: Please note that we define "CLA and care leavers in your local authority" as young people who are the responsibility of your virtual school. In addition, we define young people aged 16 to 18 who are care leavers as the relevant children aged 16 and 17, and former relevant children aged 18. Please contact Georgia Hyde-Dryden on vs-p16@education.ox.ac.uk if you have any further questions on these definitions.

	A. Very easy (immediate access)	B. Easy (within two weeks)	C. Difficult (over two weeks)	D. Very difficult or impossible
Number of 16-18 CLA and care leavers in your local authority on 1 Oct 2023	☐	☐	☐	☐
Average % attendance within this group between 1 Sept 2023 and 31 Oct 2023	☐	☐	☐	☐
% of this group not participating in any kind of education or	☐	☐	☐	☐

A. Very easy
(immediate
access)

B. Easy (within
two weeks)

C. Difficult (over
two weeks)

D. Very difficult
or impossible

training (NEET)
on 1 Oct 2023

Q15. If you answered A or B to any of the questions above, please fill in the relevant information here. *If you do not have the data separated by CLA and care leavers then please complete the “total” column only.*

	CLA	Care Leavers	Total (CLA and care leavers combined)
Number of 16-18 CLA and care leavers in your local authority on 1 Oct 2023			
Average % attendance within this group between 1 Sept 2023 and 31 Oct 2023			
% of this group not participating in any kind of education or training (NEET) on 1 Oct 2023			

Q16. Please comment on any challenges in accessing or compiling this data on age 16-18 CLA and care leavers. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Q17. What steps have been taken, if any, towards improving the collection, access and use of data on 16-18-year olds who are CLA or care leavers, since you started receiving PP+ funding in 2021? *Please respond in up to 250 words. If no specific steps have been taken in this timeframe, please state 'None'.*

Reflections

Q18. We understand that your plans for how to use the PP+ post-16 funding may have changed over time.

Since you started receiving funding in 2021, to what extent have you been able to deliver activities as planned? *Please select the relevant answer.*

- ☐ To a full extent
- ☐ To a partial extent
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ To a limited extent
- ☐ To no extent

Q19. Since you started receiving funding in 2021, what are the most significant barriers/challenges you have encountered in putting your plan into practice? *Please select up to three answers.*

- ☐ Not receiving data on CLA and care leavers from post-16 education and training settings
- ☐ Difficulties recruiting staff/enhancing existing roles to cover CLA and care leavers post-16
- ☐ Lack of engagement from post-16 education and training settings
- ☐ Lack of engagement from CLA and care leavers
- ☐ Lack of support from senior managers in the LA
- ☐ Difficulties in relationship with social care

☐ Social worker turnover and/or vacancies

☐ Inadequate resources

Other, please specify:

Q20. Since you started receiving funding in 2021, what have been the most significant factors enabling the delivery of your plans for the use of PP+ post-16 funding? *Please select up to three answers.*

☐ Receiving data on CLA and care leavers from post-16 education or training settings

☐ New staff/enhancing existing roles enabling cover of CLA and care leavers post-16

☐ Adequate resources

☐ Good engagement/support from post-16 education or training settings

☐ Good engagement from CLA and care leavers

☐ Support from senior managers in the LA

☐ Established good relationship with social care post-16/leaving care team

Other, please specify:

Q21. Have there been any unexpected challenges in the delivery of the programme? *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Q22. Please describe succinctly any relevant examples of effective use of PP+ funding since you started receiving PP+ funding in 2021. Please state why you consider this/these to be effective practice. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Impacts and Outcomes

Outcomes for young people

Q23. Since you started receiving funding in 2021, to what extent do you agree that the following outcomes are starting to be seen? *Please select the option that most accurately describes your Virtual School. Please note that the interim and long-term outcomes are not expected to be seen at this stage, but we are interested to know if any are starting to be seen.*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
CLA and care leavers build trusting relationships with an adult	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CLA and care leavers see a positive role model	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CLA and care leavers have added skills to their CV	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CLA and care leavers have increased motivation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increased engagement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increased self-efficacy (belief in their own abilities)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CLA and care leavers feel empowered (have a say in	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
the decisions that affect them)					
Enrolled on appropriate course	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increased awareness of EET options	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CLA and care leavers have improved attendance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increased engagement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Retention in post-16 education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improved attainment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increase in EET: transition to HE	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increase in EET: in stable and appropriate employment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increase in EET: in apprenticeships	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increased retention in EET	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
More agency and voice in the decisions made	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q24. Please provide illustrative examples, if possible, of the outcomes you think are most apparent for young people. *Please respond in up to 250 words and please do not provide any detail that could identify any young person.*

Outcomes for post-16 settings

Q25. Please estimate the proportion of post-16 settings where the following outcomes are being achieved. If you don't know, please provide your best estimate. *Please select the option that most accurately describes your Virtual School. Please note that interim and long-term outcomes are not expected to be seen at this stage, but we are interested to know if any are starting to be seen.*

	None (0%)	A few (1% to 25%)	Some (26% to 50%)	Over half (51% to 75%)	Most (76% to 100%)	I don't know
Setting has a named person for this group in the SLT and/or a key person with	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	None (0%)	A few (1% to 25%)	Some (26% to 50%)	Over half (51% to 75%)	Most (76% to 100%)	I don't know
decision-making powers						
CLA and care leavers highlighted in prospectus	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Post-16 education or training settings understand corporate parent responsibility	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Clear policy and commitment to supporting CLA and care leavers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Post-16 settings demonstrate awareness of the needs of this cohort, reflected in their policies and practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q26. Please provide illustrative examples, if possible, of the outcomes you think are most apparent for post-16 education or training settings. Please respond in up to 250 words.

Joint working outcomes

Q27. Since you started receiving funding in 2021, how far would you agree that the following joint working outcomes are starting to be seen? Please select the option that most accurately describes your Virtual School. Please note that interim and long-term outcomes are not expected to be seen at this stage, but we are interested to know if any are starting to be seen.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Better understanding of CLA and care leavers needs by all stakeholders	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improved understanding of post-16 education landscape by Virtual Schools/Childrens Social Care	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Meaningful CLA and care leavers participation in PEP	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
PEP informs actions and support for CLA and care leavers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Strengthened close working relationships between Virtual Schools and post-16 education or training settings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
VS input recognised in 'preparation for adulthood' plan	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
More integrated support for transition to independence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tailored interventions in place to support attendance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Tailored interventions in place to support NEET young people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tailored interventions in place to support UASC	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tailored interventions in place to support young people in the secure estate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social care and education providers have a strengthened relationship	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increased capacity to deliver post-16 support	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Regional VSHs have greater consistency in PEP formats, procedures and eligibility	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Space exists for shared learning and good practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q28. Please provide illustrative examples, if possible, of the outcomes you think are most apparent in relation to joint working. Is further work needed in any specific types of settings to improve this? *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Q29. Is there anything else you would like to add in relation to the PP+ post-16 funding? *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Thank you for completing the survey.

Please select “next page” to submit your response. Alternatively, if you would like to re-visit your answers to previous questions at a later date, please click “save and continue”, and a link to your partial response will be emailed to you.

Cohort 2. Programme details, funding and content

The grant determination letter for Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) post-16 for 2023-2024 states that the purpose of this grant is to provide additional funding for children looked after (CLA) and care leavers aged 16-18 to all local authorities. A supporting letter from DfE in June 2023 notes that Virtual School Heads (VSHs) will have the flexibility to use the funding as they see best to support this cohort of CLA and care leavers, including those in any post-16 education or training setting. The letter also encourages VSHs to consider how they can support young people who are particularly vulnerable, including looked-after children currently detained in or recently leaving Secure Children's Homes, Young Offenders' Institutions or Secure Training Centres; unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC); and those who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) or are at risk of becoming NEET.

Q4. What was your Virtual School's approach to post-16 provision for CLA and care leavers prior to receiving PP+ post-16 funding? *Please respond in up to 250 words. If you did not have a strategy prior to receiving the funding, please state 'None'.*

Q5. Which of the following statements most closely describes your virtual school. *Please select one.*

- ☐ PP+ post-16 funding has enabled the virtual school to implement a new offer for looked after children and care leavers post-16 where there previously was none
- ☐ PP+ post-16 funding has enabled the virtual school to enhance or expand on an existing offer for looked after children and care leavers post-16

Q6. Since you started receiving funding in 2022, has the PP+ post-16 been used to give extra focus to any of the following groups? *Please select all that apply.*

- ☐ Care leavers
- ☐ CLA and care leavers not in education, employment and training (NEET)
- ☐ Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) in care and care leavers
- ☐ CLA and care leavers in secure estates
- ☐ Not applicable – the funding has been used across CLA and care leavers more broadly
- ☐ Other (please specify):

Q7. Please briefly outline the rationale for the focus on the combination of groups of young people you have selected. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Q8a. Since you started receiving funding in 2022, which activities have you spent the PP+ post-16 funding on? *Please select all that apply.*

Year 2 (2022-2023)

Year 3 (2023-2024) so far

Activities targeting
CLA and care

☐☐

	Year 2 (2022-2023)	Year 3 (2023-2024) so far
leavers who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)		
Activities targeting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)	☐	☐
Activities targeting CLA and care leavers in secure estates	☐	☐
Activities aimed at supporting CLA and care leavers who attend post-16 settings out of area	☐	☐
Activities aimed at providing CLA and care leavers with mental health/relationship support	☐	☐
Surveys / consultations to collect views of CLA and care leavers	☐	☐
Allocating Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) to individual	☐	☐

Year 2 (2022-2023)

Year 3 (2023-2024) so far

CLA and care
leavers to support
personal education
plan (PEP) targets

Facilitating
enrichment
activities (e.g.,
sports clubs,
cultural visits)

☐☐

Activities aimed at
increasing CLA and
care leavers
academic
skills/support

☐☐

Intervening to
improve attendance
of individual CLA
and care leavers
post-16

☐☐

Funding or part-
funding new roles
for post-16
education in the
Virtual School

☐☐

Funding or part-
funding new roles
in post-16 settings
(e.g., to monitor
attendance,
mentors)

☐☐

	Year 2 (2022-2023)	Year 3 (2023-2024) so far
Activities aimed at increasing <u>existing</u> staff time and resource in post-16 settings	☐	☐
Briefings on PP+ post-16 (e.g., bulletins, briefings, newsletters, social media, webinars)	☐	☐
Activities aimed at awareness-raising in post-16 settings	☐	☐
Accessing and analysing data on CLA and care leavers post-16	☐	☐
Monitoring attendance of CLA and care leavers post-16	☐	☐
Activities aimed at supporting the delivery of targets in PEPs, pathway plans or equivalent	☐	☐
Panels and review meetings relating to CLA and care leavers	☐	☐

	Year 2 (2022-2023)	Year 3 (2023-2024) so far
Meetings with social workers about individual students outside of PEP meetings	☐	☐
Training for professionals in order to enhance quality and educational focus of PEPs	☐	☐
Facilitating/referring others to additional services for students (e.g., child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), youth offending teams (YOT), specific therapies, etc.)	☐	☐
Network/forum meetings of post-16 education leads facilitated by the Virtual School	☐	☐
Activities aiming to increase Virtual School capacity to focus on post-16	☐	☐

	Year 2 (2022-2023)	Year 3 (2023-2024) so far
Activities aimed at developing shared agreements for joint work	☐	☐
Activities aimed at working across Virtual Schools (e.g., regional groups)	☐	☐
Other activities, please specify below	☐	☐
No activities delivered	☐	☐

Q8b. If you selected ‘Activities targeting CLA and care leavers who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)’ please elaborate on the types of work you are doing with this cohort. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Q8c. If you selected ‘Other activities’, please specify. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Q9. Please briefly outline the rationale for the focus on the combination of activities you have selected. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Q10. Since you started receiving funding in 2022, approximately what percentage of the PP+ post-16 funding has been spent on the following types of activities each year? *If you are unsure, please select your best estimate.*

	Activities related to post-16			
	Direct work with young people	education and training settings	Activities related to joint working	Other activities
81%-100%	☐	☐	☐	☐
61%-80%	☐	☐	☐	☐
41%-60%	☐	☐	☐	☐
21%-40%	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Activities related to post-16			
	Direct work with young people	education and training settings	Activities related to joint working	Other activities
0%-20%	☐	☐	☐	☐
81%-100%	☐	☐	☐	☐
61%-80%	☐	☐	☐	☐
41%-60%	☐	☐	☐	☐
21%-40%	☐	☐	☐	☐
0%-20%	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q11a. Since you started receiving funding in 2022 what, if any, training have you delivered using the PP+ post-16 funding? *Please select all that apply.*

	Year 2 (2022-2023)	Year 3 (2023-2024) so far
Training for staff in post-16 settings (including post-16 education leads and/or tutors)	☐	☐
Training for social workers on understanding post-16 education for	☐	☐

Year 2 (2022-2023)

Year 3 (2023-2024) so far

CLA and care
leavers

Any form of joint
training ☐

☐

Other training
type ☐

☐

No training has
been delivered ☐

☐

Q11b. If you have used PP+ post-16 for training, please specify the subject of training and if it was aimed at specific roles. *Please respond in up to 100 words.*

Q12a. Since you started receiving funding in 2022, has your Virtual School provided guidance about the funding and how it can be used for any of the following groups? *Please select all that apply.*

Post-16 settings

Foster carers

Designated teachers

Yes ☐

☐☐

No ☐

☐☐

Q12b. If guidance has been provided for other groups, please specify.
Please respond in up to 100 words.

Data availability

Q13. We know that Virtual Schools differ in whether and how easily they can access information about young people aged 16-18 who are CLA or care leavers. *Please select the options that most accurately describes your Virtual School.*

Definitions: Please note that we define "CLA and care leavers in your local authority" as young people who are the responsibility of your virtual school. In addition, we define young people aged 16 to 18 who are care leavers as the relevant children aged 16 and 17, and former relevant children aged 18. Please contact Georgia Hyde-Dryden on vs-p16@education.ox.ac.uk if you have any further questions on these definitions.

	A. Very easy (immediate access)	B. Easy (within two weeks)	C. Difficult (over two weeks)	D. Very difficult or impossible
Number of 16-18 CLA and care leavers in your local authority on 1 Oct 2023	☐	☐	☐	☐
Average % attendance within this group between 1 Sept 2023 and 31 Oct 2023	☐	☐	☐	☐
% of this group not participating in any kind of education or training (NEET) on 1 Oct 2023	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q14. If you answered A or B to any of the questions above, please fill in the relevant information here. *If you do not have the data separated by CLA and care leavers then please complete the “total” column only.*

	CLA	Care Leavers	Total (CLA and care leavers combined)
Number of 16-18 CLA and care leavers in your local authority on 1 Oct 2023			
Average % attendance within this group between 1 Sept 2023 and 31 Oct 2023			
% of this group not participating in any kind of education or training (NEET) on 1 Oct 2023			

Q15. Please comment on any challenges in accessing or compiling this data on age 16-18 CLA and care leavers. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Q16. What steps have been taken, if any, towards improving the collection, access and use of data on 16-18-year olds who are CLA or care leavers, since you started receiving PP+ funding in 2022? *Please respond in up to 250 words. If no specific steps have been taken in this timeframe, please state 'None'.*

Reflections

Q17. We understand that your plans for how to use the PP+ post-16 funding may have changed over time.

Since you started receiving funding in 2022, to what extent have you been able to deliver activities as planned? *Please select the relevant answer.*

- ☐ To a full extent
- ☐ To a partial extent
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ To a limited extent
- ☐ To no extent

Q18. Since you started receiving funding in 2022, what are the most significant barriers/challenges you have encountered in putting your plan into practice? *Please select up to three answers.*

- ☐ Not receiving data on CLA and care leavers from post-16 education and training settings
- ☐ Difficulties recruiting staff/enhancing existing roles to cover CLA and care leavers post-16
- ☐ Lack of engagement from post-16 education and training settings
- ☐ Lack of engagement from CLA and care leavers
- ☐ Lack of support from senior managers in the LA
- ☐ Difficulties in relationship with social care

☐ Social worker turnover and/or vacancies

☐ Inadequate resources

Other, please specify:

Q19. Since you started receiving funding in 2022, what have been the most significant factors enabling the delivery of your plans for the use of PP+ post-16 funding? *Please select up to three answers.*

☐ Receiving data on CLA and care leavers from post-16 education or training settings

☐ New staff/enhancing existing roles enabling cover of CLA and care leavers post-16

☐ Adequate resources

☐ Good engagement/support from post-16 education or training settings

☐ Good engagement from CLA and care leavers

☐ Support from senior managers in the LA

☐ Established good relationship with social care post-16/leaving care team

Other, please specify:

Q20. Have there been any unexpected challenges in the delivery of the programme? *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Q21. Please describe succinctly any relevant examples of effective use of PP+ funding since you started receiving PP+ funding in 2022. Please state why you consider this/these to be effective practice. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Impacts and Outcomes

Outcomes for young people

Q22. Since you started receiving funding in 2022, to what extent do you agree that the following outcomes are starting to be seen? *Please select the option that most accurately describes your Virtual School. Please note that the interim and long-term outcomes are not expected to be seen at this stage, but we are interested to know if any are starting to be seen.*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
CLA and care leavers build trusting relationships with an adult	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CLA and care leavers see a positive role model	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CLA and care leavers have added skills to their CV	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CLA and care leavers have increased motivation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increased engagement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increased self-efficacy (belief in their own abilities)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CLA and care leavers feel empowered (have a say in	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
the decisions that affect them)					
Enrolled on appropriate course	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increased awareness of EET options	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CLA and care leavers have improved attendance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increased engagement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Retention in post-16 education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improved attainment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increase in EET: transition to HE	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increase in EET: in stable and appropriate employment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increase in EET: in apprenticeships	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increased retention in EET	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
More agency and voice in the decisions made	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q23. Please provide illustrative examples, if possible, of the outcomes you think are most apparent for young people. *Please respond in up to 250 words and please do not provide any detail that could identify any young person.*

Outcomes for post-16 settings

Q24. Please estimate the proportion of post-16 settings where the following outcomes are being achieved. If you don't know, please provide your best estimate. *Please select the option that most accurately describes your Virtual School. Please note that interim and long-term outcomes are not expected to be seen at this stage, but we are interested to know if any are starting to be seen.*

	None (0%)	A few (1% to 25%)	Some (26% to 50%)	Over half (51% to 75%)	Most (76% to 100%)	I don't know
Setting has a named person for this group in the SLT and/or a key person with	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	None (0%)	A few (1% to 25%)	Some (26% to 50%)	Over half (51% to 75%)	Most (76% to 100%)	I don't know
decision-making powers						
CLA and care leavers highlighted in prospectus	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Post-16 education or training settings understand corporate parent responsibility	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Clear policy and commitment to supporting CLA and care leavers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Post-16 settings demonstrate awareness of the needs of this cohort, reflected in their policies and practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q25. Please provide illustrative examples, if possible, of the outcomes you think are most apparent for post-16 education or training settings. Please respond in up to 250 words.

Joint working outcomes

Q26. Since you started receiving funding in 2022, how far would you agree that the following joint working outcomes are starting to be seen? Please select the option that most accurately describes your Virtual School. Please note that interim and long-term outcomes are not expected to be seen at this stage, but we are interested to know if any are starting to be seen.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Better understanding of CLA and care leavers needs by all stakeholders	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improved understanding of post-16 education landscape by Virtual Schools/Childrens Social Care	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Meaningful CLA and care leavers participation in PEP	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
PEP informs actions and support for CLA and care leavers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Strengthened close working relationships between Virtual Schools and post-16 education or training settings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
VS input recognised in 'preparation for adulthood' plan	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
More integrated support for transition to independence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tailored interventions in place to support attendance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Tailored interventions in place to support NEET young people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tailored interventions in place to support UASC	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tailored interventions in place to support young people in the secure estate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social care and education providers have a strengthened relationship	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increased capacity to deliver post-16 support	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Regional VSHs have greater consistency in PEP formats, procedures and eligibility	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Space exists for shared learning and good practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q27. Please provide illustrative examples, if possible, of the outcomes you think are most apparent in relation to joint working. Is further work needed in any specific types of settings to improve this? *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Q28. Is there anything else you would like to add in relation to the PP+ post-16 funding? *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Thank you for completing the survey.

Please select “next page” to submit your response. Alternatively, if you would like to re-visit your answers to previous questions at a later date, please click “save and continue”, and a link to your partial response will be emailed to you.

Cohort 3. Programme details, funding and content

The grant determination letter for Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) post-16 for 2023-2024 states that the purpose of this grant is to provide additional funding for children looked after (CLA) and care leavers aged 16-18 to all local authorities. A supporting letter from DfE in June 2023 notes that Virtual School Heads (VSHs) will have the flexibility to use the funding as they see best to support this cohort of CLA and care leavers, including those in any post-16 education or training setting. The letter also encourages VSHs to consider how they can support young people who are particularly vulnerable, including looked-after children currently detained in or recently leaving Secure Children's Homes, Young Offenders' Institutions or Secure Training Centres; unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC); and those who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) or are at risk of becoming NEET.

Q4. What was your Virtual School's approach to post-16 provision for CLA and care leavers prior to receiving PP+ post-16 funding? *Please respond in up to 250 words. If you did not have a strategy prior to receiving the funding, please state 'None'.*

Q5. Which of the following statements most closely describes your virtual school. *Please select one.*

- ☐ PP+ post-16 funding will enable the virtual school to implement a new offer for looked after children and care leavers post-16 where there previously was none
- ☐ PP+ post-16 funding will enable the virtual school to enhance or expand on an existing offer for looked after children and care leavers post-16

Q6. Do you plan to use the PP+ post-16 funding to give extra focus to any of the following groups? *Please select all that apply.*

☐ Care leavers

☐ CLA and care leavers not in education, employment and training (NEET)

☐ Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) in care and care leavers

☐ CLA and care leavers in secure estates

☐ Not applicable – the funding will be used across CLA and care leavers more broadly

☐ Other (please specify):

Q7. Please briefly outline the rationale for the focus on the combination of groups of young people you have selected. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Q8a. Which activities are you planning to spend the PP+ post-16 funding on? Please select all that apply.

Year 3 (2023-2024)

Activities targeting ☐
CLA and care
leavers who are not

Year 3 (2023-2024)

in education,
employment or
training (NEET)

Activities targeting
unaccompanied
asylum-seeking
children (UASC) ☐

Activities targeting
CLA and care
leavers in secure
estates ☐

Activities aimed at
supporting CLA
and care leavers
who attend post-16
settings out of area ☐

Activities aimed at
providing CLA and
care leavers with
mental
health/relationship
support ☐

Surveys /
consultations to
collect views of
CLA and care
leavers ☐

Allocating Pupil
Premium Plus
(PP+) to individual
CLA and care ☐

leavers to support
personal education
plan (PEP) targets

Facilitating
enrichment
activities (e.g.,
sports clubs,
cultural visits) ☐

Activities aimed at
increasing CLA and
care leavers
academic
skills/support ☐

Intervening to
improve attendance
of individual CLA
and care leavers
post-16 ☐

Funding or part-
funding new roles
for post-16
education in the
Virtual School ☐

Funding or part-
funding new roles
in post-16 settings
(e.g., to monitor
attendance,
mentors) ☐

Activities aimed at
increasing existing ☐

staff time and
resource in post-16
settings

Briefings on PP+ ☐
post-16 (e.g.,
bulletins, briefings,
newsletters, social
media, webinars)

Activities aimed at ☐
awareness-raising
in post-16 settings

Accessing and ☐
analysing data on
CLA and care
leavers post-16

Monitoring ☐
attendance of CLA
and care leavers
post-16

Activities aimed at ☐
supporting the
delivery of targets
in PEPs, pathway
plans or equivalent

Panels and review ☐
meetings relating to
CLA and care
leavers

Year 3 (2023-2024)

Meetings with
social workers
about individual
students outside of
PEP meetings ☐

Training for
professionals in
order to enhance
quality and
educational focus
of PEPs ☐

Facilitating/referring ☐
others to additional
services for
students (e.g., child
and adolescent
mental health
services (CAMHS),
youth offending
teams (YOT),
specific therapies,
etc.)

Network/forum ☐
meetings of post-16
education leads
facilitated by the
Virtual School

Activities aiming to ☐
increase Virtual
School capacity to
focus on post-16

Year 3 (2023-2024)

Activities aimed at
developing shared
agreements for
joint work ☐

Activities aimed at
working across
Virtual Schools
(e.g., regional
groups) ☐

Other activities,
please specify
below ☐

No activities
delivered ☐

Q8b. If you selected 'Activities targeting CLA and care leavers who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)' please elaborate on the types of work you are planning to do with this cohort. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Q8c. If you selected 'Other activities', please specify. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Q9. Please briefly outline the rationale for the focus on the combination of activities you have selected. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Q10a. What training, if any, are you planning to deliver using the PP+ post-16 funding? *Please select all that apply.*

Year 3 (2023-2024)

Training for staff ☐
in post-16
settings
(including post-
16 education
leads and/or
tutors)

Training for ☐
social workers
on
understanding
post-16
education for

CLA and care
leavers

Any form of joint ☐
training

Other training ☐
type

No training is ☐
planned

☐

Q10b. If you are planning to use PP+ post-16 for training, specify the subject of training and if it will be aimed at specific roles. Please respond in up to 100 words.

Q11a. Has your Virtual School provided guidance about the funding and how it can be used for any of the following groups, or are you planning to do so? *Please select all that apply.*

	Post-16 settings	Foster carers	Designated teachers
Yes - provided	☐	☐	☐
Yes - planned	☐	☐	☐

	Post-16 settings	Foster carers	Designated teachers
No	☐	☐	☐

Q11b. If guidance has been provided for other groups, please specify.
Please respond in up to 100 words.

Data availability

Q12. We know that Virtual Schools differ in whether and how easily they can access information about young people aged 16-18 who are CLA or care leavers. *Please select the options that most accurately describes your Virtual School.*

Definitions: Please note that we define "CLA and care leavers in your local authority" as young people who are the responsibility of your virtual school. In addition, we define young people aged 16 to 18 who are care leavers as the relevant children aged 16 and 17, and former relevant children aged 18. Please contact Georgia Hyde-Dryden on vs-p16@education.ox.ac.uk if you have any further questions on these definitions.

	A. Very easy (immediate access)	B. Easy (within two weeks)	C. Difficult (over two weeks)	D. Very difficult or impossible
Number of 16-18 CLA and care leavers in your local authority on 1 Oct 2023	☐	☐	☐	☐
Average % attendance within this group between 1 Sept 2023 and 31 Oct 2023	☐	☐	☐	☐
% of this group not participating in any kind of education or training (NEET) on 1 Oct 2023	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q13. If you answered A or B to any of the questions above, please fill in the relevant information here. *If you do not have the data separated by CLA and care leavers then please complete the “total” column only.*

	CLA	Care Leavers	Total (CLA and care leavers combined)
Number of 16-18 CLA and care leavers in your local authority on 1 Oct 2023			
Average % attendance within this group between 1 Sept 2023 and 31 Oct 2023			
% of this group not participating in any kind of education or training (NEET) on 1 Oct 2023			

Q14. Please comment on any challenges in accessing or compiling this data on age 16-18 CLA and care leavers. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Q15. In the 2023/24 academic year, what, if any, are the main outcomes you're hoping to achieve from the PP+ post-16 funding? *Please respond in up to 250 words with reference to outcomes for young people, outcomes for post-16 settings, and outcomes for joint working.*

Q16. Is there anything else you would like to add in relation to the PP+ post-16 funding? *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

Thank you for completing the survey.

Please select "next page" to submit your response. Alternatively, if you would like to re-visit your answers to previous questions at a later date, please click "save and continue", and a link to your partial response will be emailed to you.

Annex 4: Year 1 case studies

Overview

These summaries provide a descriptive overview of each case study site and are intended to provide the reader with examples of how PP+ Post-16 is being used by VSs. These summaries will be further developed in year 2 of the evaluation to reflect progress in each site.

The case study sites have been given the following pseudonyms: Aldlake, Bridmarsh, Cartdale, Dorland, Esterford, and Foxbridge.

Case study: Aldlake

Characteristics of the local authority and its approach to post-16 prior to receiving Pupil Premium Plus Post-16

Aldlake is a geographically small urban local authority with between 250 and 500 CLA¹⁶. The site has received funding since 2021 (Cohort 1) as one of the pilot local authorities.

Prior to receiving PP+ Post-16, the VS tracked and monitored 16-18-year olds in a similar way to its pre-16s. Young people were allocated an advisory teacher to oversee their education and training who led on their PEP, although prior to having PP+ Post-16, the VS had less influence to persuade post-16 settings to accept its suggestions for interventions or support. There was a daily ESOL tuition group.

Interpretation of the cohort benefitting from Pupil Premium Plus Post-16

Aldlake interprets the cohort benefitting from the funding to include years 12 and 13 in post-16 education and young people who are NEET. Young people continue to benefit from the funding until the end of the school year in which they turn 18.

Use of the funding to date

- Since 2021/22, funding has been used to increase VS staffing capacity at post-16.
- Young people are allocated a worker in the VS with responsibility for overseeing that young person's educational progress, completing their PEP and liaising with the education provider about use of the funding.
- Needs-led allocation of funding based on the PEP process, rather than allocating a fixed sum to each young person. Funding should be used for interventions linked to PEP targets and be agreed at the PEP meeting.
- Development of PP+ policy and guidance providing examples of how the funding can be used.
- Provision of training for post-16 settings (on needs of CLA and CLs and effective interventions) and SWs (on understanding post-16 education).
- Development of a bespoke database for post-16 CLA and CLs.

¹⁶ Department for Education (2023) Children looked after in England including adoption: 2022 to 2023. Available at: [Children looked after in England including adoption: 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2022-to-2023)

- Funding used to focus on the UASC cohort (since 2021/22); the NEET cohort (since 2022/23); young people in the secure estate (since 2023/24).
- Engagement programmes for NEET young people in years 12 and 13 involving careers guidance, work and employability skills, and personal development. Provided in partnership with other organisations.
- A Level tuition.
- Combining PP+ Post-16 with other funding sources to purchase careers advice for years 11 and 12.

Enablers and barriers identified

Enablers:

- Having adequate resources.
- Good engagement from CLA and CLs.
- Support from senior managers in the local authority.
- Building relationships with post-16 providers and a culture of working together.
- Having flexibility in how PP+ is used.

Barriers:

- Lack of engagement from post-16 education and training settings.
- Not having an existing relationship with post-16 settings out of area and these settings having less awareness of the funding. The VSH anticipates that awareness will increase following the extension of the funding across England.
- A lack of awareness of CLA and CLs by post-16 settings, possibly due to post-16 not having a similar framework of requirements to schools.

Perceived progress towards Theory of Change outcomes

Post-16 settings

(N.B. The relevant outcome from the ToC is shown in brackets)

- (Setting has a named person for this group) An increase in post-16 settings having a named person for CLA and CLs.

- (CLS and CLs highlighted in the prospectus) Aware of increasing reference to CLA and CLs in prospectuses locally (where the colleges are run by the same provider).
- (Awareness of the needs of young people reflected in policies and practice) Local colleges have adopted resources, model policies and practice developed by the VS. The VSH acknowledges the difficulty in knowing whether policy change is leading to a cultural change in practice.

Young people

- (Young people have skills added to their CVs) Funding covers incidental work experience costs (e.g., footwear or lunch).
- (Increased self-efficacy) The VSH thinks that young people are increasingly aware of being able to ask for support, and have a better awareness of what support is available, even if they are unaware of what the funding is called.
- (Increased retention in EET) Careers advice for years 11 and 12, purchased through combining PP+ Post-16 and other funding, is described as having improved retention in the first term of year 12.
- (Increase in EET) The VSH views an improvement in the NEET to EET rate over the last two years as partly attributable to PP+ Post-16.

Joint working

- (PEP informs actions and support for young people) PEPs have become a high priority for Years 12 and 13 with their multi-agency structure viewed as a strength. The VSH assesses the quality of PEPs as high although believes more can be done, (e.g. increasing the focus on transition out of care and to post-18).

Planned future activity

VSs within the region have discussed the possibility of pooling funding to create a specific VS role focused on young people in the local secure estate.

Case study: Bridmarsh

Characteristics of the local authority and its approach to post-16 prior to receiving Pupil Premium Plus Post-16

Bridmarsh has received funding since 2021 (Cohort 1) as one of the pilot local authorities. It covers a large geographical area, which is a mix of rural and urban and has a large CLA cohort of over 1000 young people¹⁷.

Prior to receiving PP+ Post-16, there was already a small established post-16 team within the VS and infrastructure funded by the local authority. The team's primary focus was completion of termly PEPs, with some limited advice and guidance for young people who were NEET. Attendance monitoring and tracking was in place up to year 13 and there were quality assurance processes for PEPs. The local authority continues to fund this existing provision.

Interpretation of the cohort benefitting from Pupil Premium Plus Post-16

The VS defines eligibility by academic year, providing support to young people in years 12 and 13, and also providing light touch tracking and support in year 14 where required. Young people in all forms of EET are eligible for support, including those out of area. No groups of young people are excluded from eligibility for support, (e.g., NEET, UASC and young people in the secure estate), although in practice the funding is focused on certain areas and activities.

Use of the funding to date

- Expanding post-16 staffing in the VS, including embedding staff in teams within the wider local authority to focus on the VS's post-16 cohort (e.g., as part of wider local authority teams involved in careers guidance).
- Funding for an action learning project focused on a small group of young people who were at risk of remaining long-term NEET. Initially focused on 8 young people, the project made high levels of resource available to identify what needed to happen for change to occur for these individuals. The aim was that learning from the project would be scaled up to VS's the wider cohort. The project provided specialist career provision, which led to the development of an interactive career

¹⁷ Department for Education (2023) Children looked after in England including adoption: 2022 to 2023. Available at: [Children looked after in England including adoption: 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2022-to-2023)

guidance tool for lay people; mentoring from mature mentors (over 50s); and vocational tasters to UASC, alongside their ESOL courses.

- The action learning project focused on a small section of the cohort and was intended to build on existing provision, (e.g., work focused on improving attendance and looking at qualifications):

What we didn't have in place was [provision for] this group who had disengaged and were at risk of criminal justice system and all the rest of it. So that is what we've done. We've made a conscious decision to focus it in that way rather than on building stuff with the colleges. But that needs to come, yeah. – *VSH, interview*

- Funding used for specific groups within the wider cohort, including young people who are NEET (2021/22 and 2023/24); young people who are UASC (since 2022/23).
- The VS has registered as an exam centre for functional skills in maths and English to quickly engage those who do not pass exams in year 11.
- No training has been delivered using the funding as the VS already provides training to post-16 settings and other partners.
- Development of more granular data on the NEET cohort, updated on a monthly basis.

Enablers and barriers identified

Enablers:

- New staff or enhancing existing roles to support young people at post-16.
- Adequate resources.
- Established good relationship with social care teams.
- Being able to combine PP+ Post-16 with funding from other sources to include post-16 in their existing training offer for DTs.
- Having the flexibility to use the funding innovatively.

Barriers:

- Lack of engagement from CLA and CLs.
- A lack of guidance for post-16 settings on expectations for how the funding allocated to them is used and other requirements, (e.g., having a post-16 DT).

- Sharing learning from the VS's action learning project in a way that is replicable and also transferable to other cohorts (e.g., children in need).

Perceived progress towards Theory of Change outcomes

(N.B. The relevant outcome from the ToC is shown in brackets)

Young people

- (Building trusting relationships with adults) The VSH is very confident that use of the funding (e.g., providing mentoring with mature mentors) has increased trusting relationships with adults.
- (Increased self-efficacy) The VSH considers their approach to be improving young people's sense of self-efficacy.
- (Improved attainment) The number of young people leaving year 13 with a qualification is higher than the number in year 11. The VSH sees this as emerging evidence of improved attainment stemming from the careers guidance and mentoring work they have done using PP+ Post-16 to understand where young people's interests lie. However, the VSH acknowledges that they currently have no benchmark to confirm this.
- (Increase in EET) The average NEET rate has decreased by nearly 50% since 2021/22.

Joint working

- (Better understanding of young people's needs by all stakeholders) The VSH suggests that other stakeholders' understanding of the needs of the cohort may be improving due to the Corporate Parent Board's interest in learning from the project and the Board's links to other parts of the local authority and health.
- (Strengthened relationships between the VS and post-16 settings) The VSH identifies some strengthening of the relationship with post-16 settings through sharing the learning from their project using PP+ Post-16, but acknowledges there is more to do.
- (Tailored interventions) Tailored interventions for NEET (around careers guidance) and UASC (around aspiration raising).

Outcomes not identified in the Theory of Change

- Strengthened joint working between the VS and leaving care teams.

Planned future activity

- To extend the improvements they have seen in the NEET rate across into leaving care.
- Building on learning from the action learning project, introducing a number of dedicated personal coaches for CLA and CLs.
- Further developing post-16 settings' understanding of CLA and CLs and their needs.

Case study: Cartdale

Characteristics of the local authority and its approach to post-16 prior to receiving Pupil Premium Plus Post-16

Cartdale is a local authority covering a large geographical area incorporating a mix of urban and rural areas. The local authority has between 500 and 1000 CLA¹⁸. The VS started to receive PP+ Post-16 in 2021 (Cohort 1).

Prior to receiving the funding, one member of the VS was responsible for all post-16 PEPs and another staff member supported their NEET cohort.

Interpretation of the cohort benefitting from Pupil Premium Plus Post-16

Until recently, Cartdale focused funding on young people who were EET, but broadened this to include their NEET cohort after learning of other VSs using the funding in this way. Cartdale uses the funding to support young people up to the end of the academic year in which they turn 18 years old. PEPs do not continue beyond the young person's 18th birthday, although at the final PEP meeting, the VS can approve the use of funding for the remainder of that academic year.

Use of the funding to date

- Employing additional staff to increase VS capacity at post-16:
It's really changed the post-16 team here at [name of LA] VS. We've got staff, we're able to do training for [post-16 settings], we're able to do training for PEPs, we're able to support young people in the way that we've always wanted to. – *AVSH, interview*
- Allocating a named VS worker to every CLA and CL.
- Allocation of a set annual amount of funding to each young person to achieve their PEP targets (spending is dependent upon completion of a PEP), and retention of some funding to provide additional support to individuals where greater need is identified.
- Funding used to focus on the NEET cohort (since 2022/23); focus on the UASC cohort (since 2021/22).

¹⁸ Department for Education (2023) Children looked after in England including adoption: 2022 to 2023. Available at: [Children looked after in England including adoption: 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2022-to-2023)

- Training for leads in post-16 settings and SWs.
- Guidance about PP+ Post-16 and post-16 PEPs provided to post-16 settings, carers, DTs, independent reviewing officers (IROs), and leaving care workers.
- Quarterly regional network meetings attended by post-16 DTs, including DTs from out of area settings who are supporting young people from the authority.
- Online learning in functional skills maths and English for a group of year 13 students approaching their 18th birthdays.
- UASC are provided with one-to-one tuition, a laptop and access to an online language course.
- Careers advice and an online programme for functional skills maths and English are available to young people who are NEET.
- Funding items such as workwear and IT equipment for young people on apprenticeships.

Enablers and barriers identified

Enablers:

- New staff or enhancing existing roles to support CLA and CLs at post-16.
- Receiving data on CLA and CLs from post-16 settings.
- Adequate resources.
- Termly network meetings with DTs in post-16 settings.
- A policy of requiring a PEP to be completed before the VS approves spending of funding on individual young people is described by the AVSH as successfully increasing PEP completion rates.
- Completing PEPs for the most vulnerable young people early enough in the academic year to enable individuals to change course if necessary before the October half-term cut-off date.

Barriers:

- Social worker turnover or vacancies.
- There have been some instances where post-16 settings have struggled to identify potential uses for the funding. PEP meetings and the regional network of post-16 DTs have helped with this.

- Training providers are focused on courses for people aged 19 years or older making it increasingly difficult to identify courses (e.g., CSCS qualification for work in construction) for the 16 to 18 age group.

Perceived progress towards Theory of Change outcomes

Post-16 settings

(N.B. The relevant outcome from the ToC is shown in brackets)

- (Named person for this group) Post-16 settings have a DT.
- (Clear policy and commitment to supporting CLA and CLs) The AVSH is aware that some post-16 settings have developed transition policy documents setting out their offer for CLA and CLs (for year 11 to post-16 transition and for post-18 transition).
- (Post-16 settings understand corporate parent responsibility) The AVSH believes that post-16 settings have an improved understanding of corporate parenting responsibility. Although groundwork on improving understanding began prior to the introduction of PP+ Post-16, the AVSH concludes that the funding has helped.

Young people

- (Building trusting relationship with an adult) The VS has been able to allocate individual workers to young people:

And the [VS staff] just love building those relationships [with young people] and talking about them in one-to-one saying, "I've got this young person to visit a college". Whereas if you've got a young person with no allocation, and it tends to be me, I'm not going to get to know them in that way because I've got to manage the team as well. – AVSH, *interview*

- (Young people feel empowered and have more agency and voice in decisions made) The AVSH has found that in PEP meetings, young people feel more empowered to speak for themselves about the support they are receiving, rather than someone speaking on their behalf.
- (Enrolled on appropriate course) The AVSH sees the increased willingness of young people to speak in PEP meetings as helping to ensure that they are enrolled on an appropriate course.
- (Increase in EET) According to the AVSH, the VS's data and anecdotal evidence from colleagues suggests an improving NEET to EET rate.

Joint working

- (Improved understanding of post-16 landscape by VS/CSC) A greater number of leaving care workers are attending PEPs in the young person's last term before they turn 18.
- (Meaningful young person participation in PEP) The AVSH has seen increased participation by young people in PEP meetings, with young people attending and asking for support.
- (PEP informs actions and support for young people) No spending by post-16 settings is approved by the VS unless a PEP has been completed.
- (PEP informs actions and support for young people) The development of a network for DTs in post-16 settings, together with the provision of PEP training and post-16 PEP and PP+ Post-16 guidance, are all viewed as improving the quality of PEPs. The VS has received positive feedback from IROs and SWs about the perceived benefit for young people in response to the post-16 PEP guidance.
- (Strengthened close working relationship between VS and post-16 settings) The VS's quarterly network meetings for post-16 DTs provide a forum to discuss subjects, including PEP processes, the VS's expectations about how PP+ Post-16 should be spent, social and emotional behaviours and good practice.

Outcomes not identified in the Theory of Change

- The AVSH describes relationships with SWs as having improved.

Planned future activity

- Focusing on young people who are NEET, including identifying those in year 11 who are at risk of becoming NEET and offering functional skills:

I've had young people who've said, 'Well [name of AVSH], I've been looking at apprenticeship, but it's just disheartening when they're saying you've got to have maths and English.' And so, then they give up. –
AVSH, interview
- Offering PEP training for new SWs joining the authority.

Case study: Dorland

Characteristics of the local authority and its approach to post-16 prior to receiving Pupil Premium Plus Post-16

Dorland is a geographically small urban authority with between 250 and 500 CLA¹⁹. The site started to receive PP+ Post-16 funding in 2022 (Cohort 2).

A decision was made by VS's governing body several years prior to receiving PP+ Post-16 that support should continue beyond the end of year 11. Where possible, the VS made discretionary funding available within the terms of the pupil premium grant to support individual young people in years 12 and 13 (e.g., continuing ESOL provision for UASC and providing ongoing CAMHS services). Continuing to provide this support was becoming challenging, so the introduction of PP+ Post-16 was viewed as being timely.

The VS uses a learning pathway model involving a bespoke information management system to track young people's progress along different pathways (e.g. SEN, ESOL, HE, vocational and a pathway for those who are NEET). The framework enables the VS to identify interventions by pathway targeted to meet needs at an individual and cohort level.

Interpretation of the cohort benefitting from Pupil Premium Plus Post-16

The eligible cohort is interpreted as any child in years 12 and 13 whether or not they have reached their 18th birthday.

Use of the funding to date

- The majority of funding in 2022/23 and 2023/24 has been used for direct work with young people.
- Funding VS staff to visit UASC in colleges to discuss their options as they reach the end of their ESOL course.
- Providing staffing capacity in colleges to support PEP completion.
- Providing staffing capacity to support students who are most at risk of becoming NEET and may need to change college course mid-year.

¹⁹ Department for Education (2023) Children looked after in England including adoption: 2022 to 2023. Available at: [Children looked after in England including adoption: 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2022-to-2023)

- Providing equipment for apprenticeships that are not covered by other sources of funding (e.g., personal protective equipment).
- Since, 2022/23, funding has been used for activities targeting young people who are NEET and/or UASC.
- Employing a specialist staff member to provide direct support to young people on the 're-integration' pathway and those who are NEET, including provision of specialist mentoring, one-to-one tuition, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), speech and language therapy (SALT) and educational psychologist support.
- ESOL group tuition programme.
- Provision of training to staff in post-16 settings on attachment and trauma awareness, and training delivered by education psychologists on special educational needs (SEN) and educational approaches.
- An outreach and intervention programme in partnership with the voluntary sector.
- Activities aimed at developing shared agreements for joint working and undertaking joint working across VSs.

Enablers and barriers identified

Enablers:

- Adequate resources.
- Good engagement from CLA and CLs.
- Established good relationship with social care post-16 or leaving care teams.
- The VS having control over the use of PP+ Post-16.
- Ensuring that where available, other sources of funding are used before PP+ Post-16 (e.g., using some PP+ for key stage 4 in year 11 to pump-prime transition to post-16).
- Using the funding to broaden the focus for their cohort beyond achieving national standards.

Barriers:

- Lack of data from post-16 settings.
- Pressure to use the funding in ways that do not fulfil the fundamental purpose of PP+ Post-16, (e.g., to provide every young person with a laptop).

- The existence of multiple types of provider and routes through post-16 makes commissioning and developing policies a challenge. It can also be difficult when providing support, to establish what is and is not education related.
- Insufficient guidance on what post-16 providers should expect from VSs and vice versa, (e.g., related to the PEP process). Young people would also benefit from guidance setting out the support they should expect from the different routes through post-16 (e.g. what financial support they will receive if they go into HE):

So, if you're getting kids to buy into that journey really from key stage 4, what can they expect from us when they leave year 13? I'd like that to be stronger, I think central government needs to take more of a role there. –

VSH, interview

- Despite building good relationships with VSHs in neighbouring authorities, it is a challenge to create the same systems of support and have the same offer for young people educated out of area.
- Diversity of the post-16 ecosystem.
- Challenges in transferring approaches and concepts developed in a school context such as DTs into post-16.

Perceived progress towards Theory of Change outcomes

Post-16 settings

(N.B. The relevant outcome from the Theory of Change is shown in brackets)

- (Setting has a named person for this group) The DT role exists in post-16, but with limited capacity. The VS is trying to support Post-16 settings to make the role more effective.
- (Clear policy and commitment to supporting CLA and CLs) The VSH sees clear policy and commitment to supporting CLA and CLs starting to emerge:

I think we are going through a process with the FE College where they feel they have the capacity and we feel they're being supported and sort of guided by us to do all of that. We got no resistance to that, I mean, it's just capacity, so that is sort of happening as we speak. – *VSH, interview*

- (Awareness of the needs of CLA and CLs, reflected in policies and practice) The AVSH reports that most post-16 settings demonstrate and awareness of the needs of CLA and CLs.

Young people

- (Enrolled on appropriate course) The VSH thinks the funding is leading to more young people being enrolled on an appropriate course.
- (Increased awareness of EET options) Young people are moving more seamlessly from one course to another, (e.g., ESOL to vocational or A Levels).
- (Improved attendance) The VSH believes that they are starting to see evidence of improved attendance, as they have faster and more accurate tracking enabling them to provide earlier intervention.
- (Increased EET) The VS has seen the NEET rate reduce in year 12. The VSH describes NEET rates as having hugely improved.

Joint working

- (Improved understanding of post-16 landscape by VS and CSC) The VS has worked with CSC to change practice in relation to education – to see the importance of engaging with education and PEPs, to go to college open days. The VS has tried to demonstrate via the Corporate Parenting Board that their offering of additional capacity is to CSC, as much as it is to post-16 settings (e.g. the VS is very involved in year 13 Pathway Plans to support transition).
- (PEP informs actions and support for young people) PEP completion rates have increased.
- (Strengthened close working relationships between VS and colleges) The VS has strengthened relationships by providing additional capacity to post-16 settings (e.g., for PEPs and to support young people not yet on an appropriate course).

Planned future activity

- The VSH plans to continue developing the relationship with its post-16 settings, (e.g., upskilling post-16 staff and seeing post-16 settings adopt trauma-informed practice):

Now we're in a position where we can come up with a more definitive partnership offer with the FE College and that's where we see the future of post 16 funding, trying to put the Cinderella of the FE service sector on a more than equal footing with what we would offer schools. – *VSH, interview*

- Establish a more direct offer around trauma for UASC.
- To improve transition from year 11 to year 12.

- To increase focus on young people in the secure estate.

Case study: Esterford

Characteristics of the local authority and its approach to post-16 prior to receiving Pupil Premium Plus Post-16

Esterford covers a large geographical area incorporating a mix of urban and rural areas and has over 1000 CLA²⁰. The funding was introduced in 2022 (Cohort 2).

Prior to receiving PP+ Post-16 funding, Esterford's offer initially consisted of ad hoc advice and signposting. Using year 11 pupil premium and some top up funding, the VS was able to fund 2 post-16 posts who worked closely with the local authority's careers and participation service. A post-16 ePEP was introduced and the post-16 PEP became mandatory up until the end of year 13. There was a regional post-16 network and partnership agreements in place between VSs, social care and post-16 settings outlining joint working principles. However, prior to PP+ Post-16, there was no funding to offer to 'plug some of those gaps', particularly for late entrants to care (i.e., in key stage 4).

Interpretation of the cohort benefitting from Pupil Premium Plus Post-16

The cohort benefitting from the funding is interpreted broadly and is based on college year (i.e. year 12 and 13 and sometimes into year 14). Young people continue to benefit from funding throughout year 13 even once they turn 18. The VS's offer is also the same to all young people regardless of whether they are EET, NEET, UASC, in apprenticeships, or any type of post-16 setting. Year 14 young people included in the cohort are primarily UASC continuing ESOL, or young people remaining in specialist provision into year 14.

Use of the funding to date

- Used in combination with funding from a variety of sources to increase the VS's post-16 team, with half of those staff focused on UASC.
- The VS has used the majority of PP+ Post-16 funding since 2022 for direct work with young people.
- Focus on providing a highly individualised and tailored approach via the PEP process, with some central commissioning for cohorts of CLA and CLs where appropriate.

²⁰ Department for Education (2023) Children looked after in England including adoption: 2022 to 2023. Available at: [Children looked after in England including adoption: 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2022-to-2023)

- Development of a Power BI dashboard allowing improved filtering and exploration of post-16 data.
- Funding focused on activities to support NEET and UASC cohorts since 2022/23.
- Funding used to support academic work and skills and for enrichment activities.
- Funding centrally commissioned post-16 in-person and online tuition, with the aim of increasing aspiration and supporting young people required to resit maths and English.
- Extending the work of an existing relational practice team to incorporate work with post-16 providers and develop a tailored module for the post-16 cohort.
- Provision of training for post-16 settings (via the education psychology service) on relational and restorative practice with a specific focus on attachment and trauma awareness; provision of RADY (Raising Attainment of Disadvantaged Learners) training for CSC.
- Provision of guidance about PP+ Post-16 for post-16 settings, carers and DTs.

Enablers and barriers identified

Enablers:

- Receiving data on CLA and CLs from post-16 settings.
- New staffing - Having an established post-16 team, rather than post-16 being an add-on to people's roles, has allowed the VS to focus on developing practise.
- The VSH considers that a strong VS governing board has provided a good forum to move the work forwards.
- The original expression of interest submitted to DfE to be a pilot site was based on early discussions with partners about best use of PP+ Post-16.
- Using the funding only where alternative funding sources are unavailable.
- Having named staff members in post-16 settings supports engagement with that setting and can help young people, for instance, where they need to pick up a course mid-year.
- Strong relationships with post-16 settings have been beneficial in responding to increasing numbers of UASC:

So, we've got our unaccompanied asylum-seeking children [...] like they weren't having education provision, to fairly quickly we've got them all into a form of education. – *VSH, interview*

- Established good relationships with social care post-16 and leaving care teams.

Barriers:

- Social worker turnover or vacancies.
- Increase in number of post-16 UASC and its impact on the capacity of the VS's post-16 team.
- Unlike schools, colleges are not set up to receive funding from the VS, which has required a workaround where funding is passported to social care teams to purchase equipment or commission support.
- The amount of available funding relative to the amount of PP+ available pre-16 is viewed as a challenge. Once the funding has been top sliced, there is also a limited amount of funding left to cover support for individual young people:

If you're paying for your data, your ePEP system, your people, that funding is very little. – *VSH, interview*
- The VS has faced a cultural challenge of getting people to think about eligibility for support in terms of academic years rather than support ending on a young person's 18th birthday:

We've had a really clear message. If it was your own child doing A-levels and they were 18 in September, you wouldn't stop being interested. – *VSH, interview*
- There can be a lack of consistency in the quality of PEPs between local authority areas, (e.g., PEPs received for young people out of area).

Perceived progress towards Theory of Change outcomes

Post-16 settings

(N.B. The relevant outcome from the Theory of Change is shown in brackets)

- (Post-16 settings demonstrate awareness of the needs of CLA and CLs, reflected in their policies and practice) An increasing number of post-16 settings are approaching the VS seeking help to develop attachment and trauma informed approaches and the relational practice.
- (Clear policy and commitment to supporting CLA and CLs) All post-16 settings have entered into a partnership agreement around meeting the needs of CLA and CLs.

Young people

- (Young people have added skills to CV) The VS has been able to build 'cultural and sporting entitlement' into the PEP recognising wider lifelong learning interests and being part of the community.
- (Increased empowerment and motivation) The VSH reports an increase in young people requesting additional PEPs suggesting an increased sense of motivation and empowerment:

I'm starting to see more young people want to have PEPs in year 14. I'm starting to see it on the tracker [...] That was unheard of before. They're obviously valuing the process [...]. – *VSH, interview*
- (Increased engagement) The VSH describes tuition funded by PP+ Post-16 having a positive impact on young people's engagement:

... [the tuition has] helped to also re-engage NEET young people to have some tuition to build the confidence to get them back into college rather than just throw them back into a college and expect them to sink or swim. So that's been really useful and really well received. – *VSH, interview*
- (Increase in EET) The VS reports an increase in EET, highlighting a fairly strong pathway through to university despite challenges following COVID-19, and NEET rates are now better than the regional average.

Joint working

- (Strengthened close working relationships between VS and colleges) Post-16 settings are more willing to work with the VS, there is better communication, and the VSH feels that post-16 settings feel more supported to take decisions that better meet a young person's needs. The VSH describes the funding giving them the capacity to have 'more nuanced' discussions with post-16 settings.
- (Strengthened close working relationships between VS and colleges) The VSH perceives that being able to increase the size of the VS's post-16 team, so it is no longer "tokenistic" has strengthened joint working with post-16 settings.
- (Strengthened close working relationships between VS and colleges) Post-16 settings recognise that VS staff are knowledgeable about post-16.
- (Strengthened close working relationships between VS and colleges) Colleges are more likely to attend year 11 transition PEPs and be part of that conversation.
- (Meaningful YP participation in PEP) The young person's voice comes through more clearly now in PEP meetings and they have young person led targets.

Outcomes not identified in the Theory of Change

- The work that the VS has been able to do using PP+ Post-16 around its data has enabled them to better understand their NEET cohort, which they have shared and discussed with social care colleagues.
- PP+ Post-16 has enabled the VS to identify what is unique about post-16 and develop its practice accordingly (e.g., funding sporting and cultural activities and having attachment and trauma-informed practice focused on post-16).
- The work that has been made possible by PP+ Post-16 has put the local authority in a better position to access other additional funding:

That's been a direct link of having the knowledge, data and capacity to deliver it. – *VSH, interview*

Planned future activity

- Continuing to develop the current model of building practice and skills in social care and the VS team.
- Training post-16 settings.
- Looking at the increasing take-up of learning need assessments, educational psychologist involvement and dyslexia screenings, especially for late entrants to care.
- The VS's increased capacity to focus on 16-18-year olds has highlighted the gap in terms of CLs and onward planning.

Case study: Foxbridge

Characteristics of the local authority and its approach to post-16 prior to receiving Pupil Premium Plus Post-16

Foxbridge is a geographically small rural authority with fewer than 250 CLA²¹. Funding was introduced in 2022 (Cohort 2).

Prior to PP+ Post-16, the authority had ambitions to support young people at post-16, but not the resources to do it. They supported young people by challenging institutions, but found it difficult due to the number and size of post-16 settings. They were trying to improve the collection of attendance data at post-16 prior to PP+ Post-16.

Interpretation of the cohort benefitting from Pupil Premium Plus Post-16

The VS supports young people through years 12 and 13 and continues tracking them beyond that where necessary. They do not cease support when a young person reaches their 18th birthday.

Use of the funding to date

- The VS takes a needs-based approach and also retains funding rather than allocating it to post-16 settings as a way of ensuring that it is used in a way that has impact.
- Expanding staffing capacity in the VS to create two new roles, one with strategic overview of CLs and previously looked after children and one focused on post-16 more generally.
- Support to meet individual needs (e.g., targeted support).
- Providing capacity for VS staff to meet regularly with post-16 settings about individual young people, rather than only working at a strategic level:

I guess you could ignore me in a strategic sense, can't you? It's easy to do. Everyone can ignore their head, let's be honest. You know what that's like. But it's harder to ignore somebody who's sat at your thing saying, "Tell me about this child. Where are they today? What's happening?" And they're actually in the colleges then having that conversation. – *VSH, interview*

²¹ Department for Education (2023) Children looked after in England including adoption: 2022 to 2023. Available at: [Children looked after in England including adoption: 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2022-to-2023)

- A significant amount of the funding has been used to support UASC, which often requires a short period of intensive support rather than support for extended periods.
- Supporting young people in the secure estate, mainly in terms of their transition from an institution involving handover with the youth offending workers.

Enablers and barriers identified

Enablers:

- The VS's post-16 activity is also being funded by the local authority (e.g., through the special educational needs and disabilities budget) and staff roles are also part-funded through other sources.
- Having the additional staffing capacity to engage regularly with post-16 settings (e.g., at monthly meetings to review young people's progress):

Because we email, we ring, they don't answer, they don't come back to you, whereas actually somebody turning up there week in, week out, having a regular meeting. Huge, isn't it? – *VSH, interview*

Barriers:

- As a VS in a small authority, it is difficult to engage large post-16 settings that straddle the authority's boundaries.
- Smaller post-16 settings (e.g., training providers) have limited capacity to engage with the VS.
- Ensuring that post-16 settings, other than colleges, are accessing the bursary that young people are entitled to, even if the setting does not see a need for it.
- The length of time involved in recruiting staff.
- The short-term nature of the funding makes recruitment challenging:

So partly a problem is it's a project, not 'this is just our way of working going forward'. And I get that you've got to start somewhere. It's better than what we had before, isn't it, where it was nothing. [...] We've been lucky, I think, in a sense, because the two people we took on are really good and they were happy to take a risk at moving into a project team that they knew might disappear. – *VSH, interview*

Perceived progress towards Theory of Change outcomes

Post-16 settings

(N.B. The relevant outcome from the Theory of Change is shown in brackets)

- (Setting has a named person for this group) Settings have a named person.

Young people

- (Building trusting relationship with an adult) Very positive feedback from young people about the impact of having a VS worker.

Joint working

- (Improved understanding of post-16 landscape by VS and CSC) Building links to share information has helped to strengthen understanding of education by CSC:

The sharing of expertise to the social care team has been really helpful for them to understand what's happening, or be able to not have to understand what's happening and pass it back to us to be able to pick up. Whichever way round it is, it doesn't really matter. But yeah, the links between the teams has been really good. – *VSH, interview*

Outcomes not identified in the Theory of Change

- Strengthened transitions at year 11.



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