



Department  
for Education

# **Pupil Premium Plus Post-16 evaluation Final report**

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## Glossary

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

EHCP Education, Health and Care Plan

ESOL English for speakers of other languages

FE Further education

HE Higher education

ILR Individualised Learner Record

KS4 Key Stage 4

KS5 Key Stage 5

NCCIS National Client Caseload Information System

NAVSH National Association of Virtual School Heads

NEET Not in education, employment or training

NPD National Pupil Database

PA Personal adviser

PEP Personal education plan

PLAMS Post-16 Learning Aims

PP+ Post-16 Pupil Premium Plus Post-16

PMR Pupil Matching Reference number

RADY Raising Attainment of Disadvantaged Learners

SEMH Social emotional and mental health

SEN Special educational needs

SEND Special educational needs and disabilities

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

Pupil Premium Plus Post-16 (PP+ Post-16) was introduced in October 2021 as a pilot that aimed to address the gap in funding to support educational outcomes for children looked after (CLA) from the age of 16. Funding was provided to 30 pilot local authorities in 2021, before being extended to a further 28 local authorities in 2022 and rolled out nationally to all local authorities in England in September 2023. For the purposes of the evaluation, we refer to these three groups of local authorities as Cohort 1, Cohort 2 and Cohort 3 respectively.

The funding is managed by Virtual School Heads (VSHs) and can be used to provide individual or cohort level support to CLA and care leavers (CLs) at post-16. The funding aims to improve educational outcomes, in particular the attendance, retention, and attainment of this cohort, and enable them to have sustained involvement in education, employment and training (EET). VSHs should take account of the statutory guidance ‘Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children’<sup>1</sup> when using the funding.

Since its introduction in 2021, the purpose of PP+ Post-16 has widened from providing funding to CLA and CLs in general further education (FE) colleges, to providing funding for all CLA and CLs at post-16 including those in FE colleges, sixth forms, apprenticeships, secure estates, and those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). The funding calculation and allocation of PP+ Post-16 means that there are different levels of funding across the 3 Cohorts. Individual VSHs also have different levels of pre-existing post-16 staffing capacity and provision.

This evaluation consisted of an exploratory study of the use of the funding and considered early evidence about progress towards the outcomes in the Theory of Change (ToC). A full list of evaluation questions is set out in Annex 1 of the evaluation report.

## Methods

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach drawing on recommendations about future evaluation made in the pilot evaluation report.

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<sup>1</sup> Promoting the education of looked after and previously looked after children. Available at: [Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91242/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_and_previously_looked-after_children_-_GOV.UK.pdf)

## Overview of data collected across the evaluation

<b>Data collection method</b>	<b>Data collection overview</b>	<b>Reported in year 1 (interim report)</b>	<b>Reported in year 2 (final report)</b>
Survey of VSHs	An annual online survey circulated to all VSHs in England	120 surveys completed (81% response rate)	105 surveys completed (71% response rate)
Case studies <sup>2</sup>	Annual interviews with stakeholders in 6 local authorities and analysis of documents supplied by case study sites	Stakeholder interviews in 6 case study sites (3 sites from Cohorts 1 and 2)	Stakeholder interviews in 6 case study sites (2 sites from Cohorts 1, 2 and 3)
Cost analysis	Analysis of funding allocation and expenditure for the academic year 2023 to 2024 (the year that PP+ Post-16 was rolled out nationally) using data from the VSH survey and interviews with VSHs in case study sites	No cost analysis undertaken	Analysis of costs data in the survey and detailed expenditure collected via a data template and costs-focused interview with VSHs from 5 out of 6 case study sites
National data set analysis	Analysis of data sets specific to post-16 outcomes combined with CLA and Key Stage 4 National Pupil Database (KS4 NPD) data	No national data set analysis undertaken	Analysis of data for the 2018-2023 period capturing 6 school cohorts at year 11, along with their corresponding outcomes in years 12 and 13

<sup>2</sup> Two focus groups were planned with young people aged 16-18 in 2 case study sites to explore their views of support received with education and training at post-16. However, despite several case study sites attempting to arrange focus groups on our behalf, it has not been possible to complete these as planned.

## Findings

### Funding allocation across virtual schools in the 2023 to 2024 academic year

There was substantial variation in the amount of PP+ Post-16 received by virtual schools (VSs) in the 2023 to 2024 academic year, although the majority (64%) received between £25,000 and £74,999. VSs in Cohort 1 on average received a higher amount of funding (£94,706) compared to VSs in Cohort 2 (£57,505) and Cohort 3 (£57,539). This variation aligned with the funding calculation, which was partly based on VS size and Cohort (i.e., the point at which they began to receive PP+ Post-16).

Most VSs used school year milestones (for example CLAs and CLs in years 12 and 13) to define the cohort eligible for support using PP+ Post-16, although VSs frequently made exceptions to this general rule, for instance, extending eligibility to CLA and CLs in years 10 and 11 to support NEET prevention, or beyond year 13 to support course completion. This flexible application of eligibility between VSs created a potential postcode lottery in access to support.

Based on VSH survey findings, the average amount of PP+ Post-16 received per eligible CLA and CL on 1st October 2023 was £413. When calculated based on the total number of eligible CLA and CLs across the 2023 to 2024 academic year, the average amount per CLA and CL decreased by 14.1% to £355, influenced by fluctuations in numbers of eligible young people in-year. Beyond these averages, the amount of funding that individual VSs received per CLA and CL ranged: from £110 per CLA and CL in one VS to £1,257 in another (based on the total number of eligible CLA and CLs across the 2023 to 2024 academic year). This is despite DfE's attempts to make funding allocation equitable across VSs and again suggests a postcode lottery effect in real terms.

### Allocation of PP+ Post-16 to different activities in 2023 to 2024

The activities using the funding described by VSHs closely reflected the activities set out across the three categories in the ToC: direct work with young people; activities related to joint working and the VS; and activities related to post-16 settings. The evidence suggests that VSs prioritised funding for direct support for young people but also sought to retain some funding for activities relating to joint working and the VS and post-16 settings. Overall, VSs reported allocating funding in the following proportions:

- 53% to provide direct work with young people
- 23% on activities related to joint working and VS
- 21% on activities related to post-16 settings

- 3% on other activities

As described above, there was wide variation in the use of the funding depending on the amount received and any pre-existing post-16 staffing capacity and provision. Case study examples of this variation included small VSs lacking pre-existing staffing capacity (Greenhollow and Havenbarrow<sup>3</sup>) choosing to allocate all their PP+ Post-16 to fund or part-fund a post-16 role in the VS. Esterford, which had pre-existing staffing capacity and provision allocated all its PP+ Post-16 in 2023 to 2024 to direct support for CLA and CLs, and Dorland allocated funds across all 3 categories. VSHs in case study sites suggested ways to potentially adapt the funding model to address this variation between VSs, (for example setting a core amount for VS staffing, topped up with individual allocations per eligible young person).

## Direct work with young people

VSH survey respondents spent an average of £429 on direct support per CLA and CL in 2023 to 2024. The funding was used for a wide range of direct work with young people, including academic support (for example tuition, course equipment, laptops, financial incentives for attendance) and extra-curricular and wellbeing support (for example sports equipment, music lessons, enrichment activities). Ninety percent of VSs reported using PP+ Post-16 to focus on specific cohorts to maximise the impact of the funding, with NEET young people and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) most frequently identified due to the reported growth in these cohorts.

Examples of perceived effective practice with NEET young people included prevention (for example working with those in years 10 and 11 identified as at risk of becoming NEET) and work with those who are already NEET (for example developing NEET personal education plans (PEPs), one-to-one mentoring and careers guidance, providing functional skills). Examples of targeted work with UASC in response to reported low levels of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision and a lack of post-16 places, included funding of tuition and ESOL, sports and wellbeing activities and UASC summer schools.

The disparity between the cost of providing direct support and available levels of PP+ Post-16 required difficult prioritisation decisions. Examples provided by case study sites included tuition starting from £70 per session and a UASC summer school costing £242 per head compared with a reported average amount of PP+ Post-16 received per CLA or CL of £413. Restrictions on the use of the 16-19 bursary in some post-16 settings also pushed some VSHs to use PP+ Post-16 to fill the gaps, raising concerns about inconsistent support across local authorities.

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<sup>3</sup> To protect their anonymity, case study sites are identified using pseudonyms (see Table 6).

## Joint working and the VS

Activities most reported by VSH survey respondents under the theme of joint working included funding or part-funding new post-16 roles in VSs (75%), providing training on PEPs (70%), and meeting with social workers (SWs) outside of PEPs about individual CLA and CLs (62%). Funding roles in the VS was viewed as a particularly effective use of the funding, from which many other activities flowed. Staff in post-16 settings and SWs valued the knowledge of VS staff, who they viewed as responsive, solution focused and centred on the young person. VS staff were seen to provide an important bridge between education and social work, understanding the landscape and practice of both worlds. They provided support and constructive challenge to partners and advocated for young people. VSHs and other stakeholders provided examples of where successful joint working and awareness raising had led to young people being retained or re-engaged in learning where they would otherwise have been at risk of becoming or remaining NEET.

Specific post-16 capacity within the VS increased awareness of the cohort through training for post-16 settings and for SWs and carers. The topics covered fell broadly into two categories, those relating to processes and systems for supporting CLA and CLs (for example PEPs and SMART<sup>4</sup> targets; understanding the post-16 landscape) and those relating to understanding the needs of CLA and CLs (for example trauma and attachment or experiences and needs of UASC). The introduction of partnership agreements with post-16 settings was also given as an example of perceived effective practice linked to joint working borne out of VSs having additional post-16 staffing capacity.

In addition to funding roles within the VS, some case study sites (for example Bridmarsh and Dorland) used PP+ Post-16 to fund staff roles situated outside of the VS (for example in wider local authority teams focused on post-16 or within post-16 settings).

## Activities related to post-16 education and training settings

The most common activities reported by VSH survey respondents relating to post-16 education and training settings were supporting the delivery of targets in PEPs, pathway plans or equivalent (62%); awareness-raising on the needs of CLA and CLs in post-16 settings (54%); and monitoring attendance of CLA and CLs (51%). Most activities involved VSs working with post-16 settings (for example meeting with leads in post-16 settings to share transition information or delivering staff training), rather than allocating funding directly to the settings themselves to use. Within post-16 settings, having effective communication between welfare and curriculum staff was considered key to

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<sup>4</sup> SMART Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound

ensure that CLA and CLs were receiving support with agreed PEP targets, and VSs were viewed as having a valuable role in promoting this.

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

Flexibility was consistently identified as a key enabler to the effective use of PP+ Post-16. VSHs valued being able to use the funding in the way they believed would best meet local need. The flexibility also provided an opportunity to test innovative approaches. Other stakeholders welcomed VSs having funding to look beyond narrow educational needs and support CLA and CLs more holistically. The downside of this flexibility has been that each VS has its own parameters for use of the funding, creating a challenge for post-16 settings working with multiple VSs, and the possibility of CLA and CLs at the same post-16 setting receiving very different support from the funding. Increasing post-16 staffing capacity within VSs, which has already been discussed, was identified by VSHs and other stakeholders as a key enabler as the additional capacity allowed VS staff increased opportunity to meet with post-16 settings, SWs and young people, strengthening relationships between the VS and stakeholders and building trusting relationships with CLA and CLs. Throughout the evaluation, good use of the PEP system was reported as an enabler for the effective use of the funding, and particularly the PEP's role in supporting identification of individual need. VSHs also reported an increase in the meaningful participation of CLA and CLs in the PEP process.

Barriers identified included growing cohorts and increasing levels of need; uncertainty around PP+ Post-16 funding duration; a shortage of post-16 provision, particularly mid-year and for ESOL; previously undiagnosed levels of need amongst CLA and CL, particularly amongst NEET or UASC cohorts; and challenges engaging post-16 providers (often perceived as being due to the lack of statutory designated teacher (DT) role). A barrier which emerged during year 2 of the evaluation concerned changes to the way that post-16 settings were using the 16-19 bursary. The changes, including a perceived move away from bursary payments linked to attendance towards increased use of the funding to provide benefits in kind (for example travel, lunches, equipment and trips), meant that in some cases VSs used PP+ Post-16 to fill gaps in support rather than extend the support available.

VSHs in case study sites provided examples of progress in overcoming barriers over time, including post-16 settings becoming more familiar with permitted uses of the funding, and progress made in supporting CLA and CLs educated out of area.

## **Virtual School Head perspectives on funding levels and processes**

VSHs in case study sites supported increasing levels of PP+ Post-16 to closer to the statutory school-aged Pupil Premium Plus grant on the basis that the needs of young people do not diminish after age 16. They also highlighted the current disparity between amounts of funding received by VSs per CLA and CL, combined with differing levels of pre-existing post-16 staffing and provision. VSHs described the challenge of supporting young people and contracting staff by academic year when PP+ Post-16 is paid to VSs by financial year. The timing of announcements on the following year's PP+ Post-16 also made longer-term planning difficult and caused uncertainty for staff employed on fixed-term contracts using the funding.

## **Progress towards the outcomes set out in the Theory of Change**

Overall, the reported emerging outcomes were well aligned with the anticipated outcomes and timeframe set out in the ToC. This evaluation has focused on understanding what activities have been undertaken using the funding and stakeholders' perceptions of emerging outcomes. Within the current evaluation, we have not been able to take this further and test whether these perceptions hold and specific activities lead to specific outcomes. If following further testing, the evidence supports stakeholder perceptions about progress towards a range of outcomes, the ToC will provide a scaffold for the young person's journey into and through post-16 learning.

The perceived emerging outcomes relating to young people suggest that activities such as working with a tutor or receiving support to engage in sport or wellbeing activities, can help young people to develop trusting relationships with adults and provide them with role models. These in turn may support young people's engagement and a more meaningful understanding of the available EET options. Although long-term outcomes are not anticipated to emerge for Cohorts 1 and 2 until the end of 2025 to 2026 and for Cohort 3 by the end of 2026 to 2027, perceived emerging outcomes reported by VSHs including increased retention in post-16, more agency and voice in decisions made and retention in EET, are promising. VSHs in the survey and case studies reported that various activities aimed at NEET prevention were perceived to be helping young people make the transition into post-16 and remain on course, therefore helping to reduce NEET rates.

Having additional staffing capacity in the VS is perceived as supporting outcomes relating to joint working between the VS and other stakeholders. The reported improvement in VSs and Children's Social Care's (CSC) understanding of the post-16 landscape and an increase in the awareness by all stakeholders of the needs of CLA and CLs, are likely to

result in CLA and CLs receiving better advice about their EET options. VSHs reported strengthened relationships between VSs, post-16 settings and CSC, which was creating a space for shared learning and good practice (for example through regional networks and training). Together, these emerging outcomes should support the PEP quality and completion rates necessary to increase EET rates and attainment. These reported outcomes suggest that even relatively modest amounts of funding spent on increasing post-16 staffing capacity in the VS are starting to change the way stakeholders work together for and with young people. The perceived improvement in integration of support for transition to independence and recognition of VS input into 'preparation for adulthood' plans should also improve how educational pathways and aspirations are woven into wider planning for young people's transition to independence.

Some VSHs reported important outcomes in relation to post-16 settings such as having a named person for CLA and CLs; having a clear policy and commitment to supporting CLA and CLs; and better understanding of corporate parenting duties. However, survey findings show that fewer VSHs identified progress towards this set of outcomes than progress in relation to joint working and the VS. This may indicate that while there is effective joint working between the VS and middle leaders in post-16 settings, barriers remain to permanently embodying that joint working into settings' policy and practice. This presents the risk that the progress to date is based on effective individual relationships between staff in post-16 settings and the VS rather than system-level change within those settings.

## Conclusion

PP+ Post-16 is an evolving programme with light touch guidance for VSHs on use of the funding. There has been wide variation in the starting positions of VSs in terms of their post-16 staffing and existing provision. There have been changes to the cohort eligible to the funding, to the numbers of local authorities funded, and in levels of funding both per year and between Cohorts of local authorities. There has also been no national monitoring of the nature of spending to date, including recording the activities undertaken and the number of CLA and CLs reached. These and other factors limit our ability to draw conclusions about causality, which in turn meant that we did not have the data to conduct a meaningful costs-benefit assessment.

However, the VSH survey and case study interviews have identified emerging evidence of positive short-term and interim outcomes for young people, post-16 settings, and joint working, based on the views of VSHs and other stakeholders. These perceived emerging outcomes broadly align with the anticipated outcomes in the ToC. Although the timing of the evaluation meant that it is too early to see change in the national data sets, VSHs perceived there to be some emerging signs of change to longer-term outcomes in their

local data. Overall, VSHs and other stakeholders considered PP+ Post-16 to be making a significant difference to the support available to CLA and CLs, putting it on a firmer footing and reducing VSHs' reliance on repurposing funding from other sources and the goodwill of their staff.

Further evaluation of PP+ Post-16 should begin with a more clearly defined policy intent and set of objectives for the funding, with associated monitoring mechanisms. Evaluation can then take a more targeted focus, drawing on the existing evidence base and what we now know from this evaluation to evaluate specific interventions and the extent to which they lead to desired outcomes.

## Recommendations

This report makes recommendations for DfE, local authorities, VSs, the National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH), and post-16 settings to strengthen the design, delivery, and impact of PP+ Post-16.

At the national level, we recommend clarifying the policy intent for PP+ Post-16, revising funding allocation (including exploring parity with statutory school-age rates), and providing clearer guidance on the CLA and CLs in scope and the distinct roles of PP+ and the 16-19 bursary. We also propose developing a minimum dataset and refining the programme ToC to support accountability, consistency, and future evaluation, alongside piloting and evaluating innovative local approaches.

NAVSH is advised to support evidence-based practice through the development of toolkits.

Local authorities should enhance the role of SWs in post-16 education planning, promote stronger communication and joint working with VSs and post-16 settings, and minimise disruptions to young people's learning.

VSs are encouraged to undertake robust needs assessments to guide strategic and direct interventions, enhance use of PEPs both for individual planning and wider strategic decisions, and strengthen support for key transition points.

Post-16 settings should identify senior leads for CLA and CLs, embed awareness across curriculum teams, offer clear commitments to care-experienced learners, and improve information sharing with VSs.

Collectively, these recommendations aim to ensure that PP+ Post-16 funding and related efforts better address the needs of CLA and CLs, improve educational outcomes, and contribute to their longer-term life chances.

## Background

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

### The introduction of PP+ Post-16

Prior to the PP+ Post-16 funding pilot which began in 2021, Virtual School Heads (VSHs) received Pupil Premium Plus funding for children looked after (CLA) aged 4 to 15 only. That funding ceases when a child reaches 16, although VSH duties towards the educational attainment of CLA continue up to age 18. Funding to support CLA and care leavers (CLs) prior to introduction of PP+ Post-16 relied on repurposing funding not primarily intended for post-16 and the goodwill of VS staff. Therefore, PP+ Post-16 aims to address a gap in funding to support educational outcomes at post-16.

From October 2021, the government introduced the PP+ Post-16 pilot by providing funding to 30 local authorities to support 16-18-year-old CLA and CLs in general further education (FE) colleges. 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 Centre<sup>5</sup>. 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 to 2024 its purpose was widened to provide funding for all CLA and CLs at post-16 including those in FE colleges, sixth forms, apprenticeships, secure estates, and those not in education, employment or training (NEET). 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. The guidance from DfE on using this funding is broad and provides for a high level of flexibility<sup>6</sup>. 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). VSHs should take

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<sup>5</sup> Evaluation of the virtual school heads extension and the pupil premium plus post-16 pilot [Evaluation of virtual school heads \(VSHs\) and pupil premium - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>6</sup> Pupil Premium Plus post-16 programme: grant determination letter 2023/24. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64998da4831311000c296347/Post-16\\_PPP\\_Sec\\_31\\_Grant\\_determination\\_letter\\_23-24.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64998da4831311000c296347/Post-16_PPP_Sec_31_Grant_determination_letter_23-24.pdf)

account of the statutory guidance 'Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children' when using the funding<sup>7</sup>.

In recognition of the different 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 to 2022
- Cohort 2 sites (x28): Started receiving funding in 2022 to 2023
- Cohort 3 sites (x94): Started receiving funding in 2023 to 2024

The allocation of funding to local authorities by Cohort has varied each year. A breakdown of the funding calculations and allocation is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1: PP+ Post-16 funding allocations per year**

<b>PP+ post-16 funding</b>	<b>2021 to 2022 (6 months only)</b>	<b>2022 to 2023</b>	<b>2023 to 2024</b>	<b>2024 to 2025</b>
Number of local authorities receiving PP+ Post-16 funding	30	58	152	152
Total amount of PP+ Post-16 provided	£3 million	£5 million	£9.86 million	£15 million
CLA and CLs eligible for support using PP+ Post-16	CLA and CLs in FE colleges	CLA and CLs in FE colleges	All CLA and CLs at post-16	All CLA and CLs at post-16
Estimated amount of PP+ Post-16 funding per young person <sup>8</sup>	£900	£920	-	-

<sup>7</sup> Promoting the education of looked after and previously looked after children. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a9015d4e5274a5e67567fbe/Promoting\\_the\\_education\\_of\\_looked-after\\_children\\_and\\_previously\\_looked-after\\_children.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a9015d4e5274a5e67567fbe/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Per young person funding levels are only available for 2021 to 2022 and 2022 to 2023 based on the numbers in FE colleges. Estimated amounts were provided by DfE and it was unable to provide a per young person figure for 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025 due to the wider eligibility criteria and lack of available data.

<b>PP+ post-16 funding</b>	<b>2021 to 2022 (6 months only)</b>	<b>2022 to 2023</b>	<b>2023 to 2024</b>	<b>2024 to 2025</b>
Calculations used by DfE	Number of CLA and CLs in FE colleges	Number of CLA and CLs in FE colleges who claimed the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund for Vulnerable Students in 2020 to 2021	Based on proportion of the national number of CLAs and CLs in 2022 to 2023 for each virtual school (VS). Cap applied to Cohorts 1 and 2	Based on proportion of the national number of CLAs and CLs in each VS. No cap applied.
Evaluation activity	Pilot evaluation	This evaluation	This evaluation	This evaluation

## Objectives of the evaluation

Following the extension of PP+ Post-16 to all VSs in England, this evaluation is formative in intention and has consisted of an exploratory study of the use of the funding and considered early evidence about progress towards the outcomes in the Theory of Change (ToC).

The overarching evaluation questions about implementation of the funding include:

- How are local authorities, VSs and post-16 settings using the funding to support CLA and CLs aged 16 to 18 years and to what extent does this reflect the activities identified in the ToC?
- What are the enablers and barriers to delivery from the perspective of professional 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?

The overarching evaluation questions about progress towards outcomes include:

- How successful are the participating sites in delivering the intended longer-term outcomes for the cohort (attendance, engagement, retention, attainment and increased numbers in EET)?

- What are the short-term and interim outcomes for the cohort, post-16 education and training settings, and the wider stakeholders?
- Do outcomes vary by site and are there any elements of what each of the sites are delivering that lead to specific outcomes?
- Does the programme represent value for money? Do the likely benefits outweigh the costs?

A full list of evaluation questions is provided in Annex 1: Evaluation questions. These were developed collaboratively between Rees Centre, Cordis Bright and the DfE.

## Reading this report

This report presents the evaluation findings from two years of evaluation activity. The findings are structured as follows:

Chapter 2: ToC for the PP+ Post-16 funding, co-designed with VSHs.

Chapter 3: Methods used across the evaluation.

Chapter 4: Findings related to the allocation of funding per VS and per CLA and CL.

Chapter 5: Activity using PP+ Post-16. This presents the findings relating to the 3 key areas of activity in the ToC: direct work with young people, activities relating to the VS and joint working, and activities in post-16 education and training settings (for example FE colleges, sixth forms, training providers, apprenticeships).

Chapter 6: Perceived barriers and enablers to the effective use of PP+ Post-16.

Chapter 7: Emerging outcomes, organised by the 3 categories of outcomes in the ToC: for young people, for the VS and joint working, and for post-16 settings. Within each category, short-term, interim and long-term outcomes are presented separately, aligned with the ToC.

Chapter 8: Discussion and conclusions organised by evaluation question.

Chapter 9: Recommendations.

## Theory of Change

The ToC for PP+ Post-16 was co-developed with VSHs through a series of workshops held during the pilot evaluation, in the scoping phase of this evaluation, and at the start of year 2 of this evaluation. This approach means the ToC is grounded in the perspectives of VSHs and has been refined over time to ensure it remains up to date. The ToC contains 3 strands of activity leading to short-term, interim and long-term outcomes. The strands of activity are:

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

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<sup>9</sup>.

Further information about the ToC workshops in years 1 and 2 of the evaluation is set out in Annex 2: Further information about the wider evaluation methodology.

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<sup>9</sup> Tables 2, 3 and 4 include revisions made following feedback from VSHs in the year 2 ToC workshops. This included changing some short-term outcomes to interim outcomes and vice versa, and adding or refining outcomes. Please note that these revisions were made after the year 2 survey and interview schedules were developed, so these Tables differ slightly from the emerging outcomes reported in Chapter 7.

**Table 2: Theory of Change for PP+ Post-16: Virtual school and joint working**

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

**Table 3: Theory of Change for PP+ Post-16: Post-16 settings**

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

**Table 4: Theory of Change for PP+ Post-16: Young people**

<b>Inputs</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Short-term outcomes (Cohort 1 &amp; 2 by end of 2022/23 and Cohort 3 by end of 2023/24)</b>	<b>Interim outcomes (Cohorts 1 &amp; 2 by end of 2023/24 and Cohort 3 by end of 2024/25)</b>	<b>Long-term outcomes (Cohorts 1 &amp; 2 by end of 2025/26 and Cohort 3 by end of 2026/27)</b>
<p>Virtual School</p> <p>School and post-16 settings</p> <p>Extension of PP+ Post-16 funding</p>	<p>Academic / skills support</p> <p>Mental health / relationship support</p> <p>Extra-curricular activities and life skills support</p> <p>Targeted work with cohorts of focus</p>	<p>Build trusting relationship with an adult</p> <p>See positive role model</p> <p>Add skills to curriculum vitae (CV)</p> <p>Young person feels empowered</p>	<p>Increased motivation</p> <p>Increased engagement</p> <p>Increased self-efficacy</p> <p>Raised aspirations</p> <p>Young person on an appropriate course</p> <p>Increased awareness of EET options</p> <p>Improved progression for young people taking English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)</p> <p>Improved wellbeing / social emotional and mental health (SEMH)</p>	<p>Improved attendance</p> <p>Retention in post-16</p> <p>Improved attainment</p> <p>Increase in EET (stable/ appropriate employment, apprenticeships or HE)</p> <p>Increased retention in EET</p> <p>More agency and voice in the decisions made</p>

## Methods

### Overview of data collection methods used

This evaluation has used a mixed methods approach drawing on recommendations about future evaluation made in the pilot evaluation report. Table 5 provides an overview of data collection and the point at which findings relating to these methods have been reported. Further information about data collection methods is provided in Annex 2: Further information about the wider evaluation methodology and Annex 7: National data set analysis.

**Table 5: Overview of data collection and reporting points**

<b>Data collection method</b>	<b>Data collection overview</b>	<b>Reported in year 1 (interim report)</b>	<b>Reported in year 2 (final report)</b>
Survey of VSHs	An annual online survey circulated to all VSHs in England.	120 surveys completed (81% response rate).	105 surveys completed (71% response rate).

Data collection method	Data collection overview	Reported in year 1 (interim report)	Reported in year 2 (final report)
Case studies <sup>10</sup>	Annual interviews with stakeholders in 6 local authorities and analysis of documents supplied by case study sites.	Stakeholder interviews in 6 case study sites (3 sites from Cohorts 1 and 2) including: 7 VSHs (one interview involved a VSH and Assistant VSH in a site (AVSH)); 4 Directors of Children's Services (DCSs)/Assistant Directors (ADs); 8 PP+ Post-16 leads in post-16 settings; 11 social workers (SWs) or personal advisers (PAs); 7 designated teachers (DTs); 8 carers.	Stakeholder interviews in 6 case study sites (2 sites from Cohorts 1, 2 and 3) including: 7 VSHs (one interview involved a VSH and post-16 lead in a case study site); 1 DCS/AD; 8 SWs or PAs; 14 PP+ Post-16 leads in post-16 settings; 2 DTs; 4 carers.
Cost analysis	Analysis of funding allocation and expenditure using data from the VSH survey and interviews with VSHs in case study sites.	No cost analysis undertaken.	Analysis of costs data in the survey and detailed expenditure collected via a data template and costs-focused interviews with VSHs from 5 out of 6 case study sites.

<sup>10</sup> Two focus groups were planned with young people aged 16-18 in 2 case study sites to explore their views of support received with education and training at post-16. However, despite several case study sites attempting to arrange focus groups on our behalf, it has not been possible to complete these as planned.

<b>Data collection method</b>	<b>Data collection overview</b>	<b>Reported in year 1 (interim report)</b>	<b>Reported in year 2 (final report)</b>
National data set analysis	Analysis of data sets specific to post-16 outcomes combined with CLA and Key Stage 4 National Pupil Database (KS4 NPD) data.	No national data set analysis undertaken.	Analysis of data for the 2018-2023 period capturing 6 school cohorts at year 11, along with their corresponding outcomes in years 12 and 13.

The online survey of VSHs was circulated to all VSHs in England with the survey questions building on those in the survey of VSHs in year 1 of the evaluation. The survey explored:

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

A copy of the survey is provided in Annex 3: National online VSH survey.

Local authority case studies were used to build an in-depth understanding of use of the funding and emerging progress towards outcomes identified in the ToC.

Table 6 shows the characteristics of the year 1 and 2 case study sites, together with their pseudonyms. The case study sites were selected to provide examples of a broad range of uses of the funding and to represent local authorities encompassing a range of characteristics (for example size, urban/rural).

**Table 6: Characteristics of case study sites**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Cohort</b>	<b>Case study year</b>	<b>Geographic footprint</b>	<b>Urban/ rural/ mixed</b>
Aldlake	1	1	Small	Urban
Bridmarsh	1	1 and 2	Large	Mixed
Cartdale	1	1 and 2	Large	Mixed
Dorland	2	1 and 2	Small	Urban

Pseudonym	Cohort	Case study year	Geographic footprint	Urban/ rural/ mixed
Esterford	2	1 and 2	Large	Mixed
Foxbridge	2	1	Small	Rural
Greenhollow	3	2	Small	Urban
Havenbarrow	3	2	Small	Urban

The cost analysis aimed to establish what the funding amounted to per young person and what the funding was able to pay for.

National data set analysis aimed to observe any differences in the outcomes of CLA and CLs before and after the introduction of PP+ Post-16 within the national data.

## Limitations

The following are key limitations of the evaluation:

- Aspects of variation including differing funding levels by year and Cohort; limited guidance on use of the funding; how the cohort is defined in each site; differing pre-existing levels of post-16 staffing and provision in VSs; and differing local need resulted in variation in how PP+ Post-16 was used between VSs. Year 1 of the evaluation focused on understanding the range of approaches being taken, including exploring different forms of direct support for young people, activities relating to joint working and the VS, and activities relating to post-16 settings. Although there were some commonalities in how the funding was used, there is no single model that could be tested or a control group. This report therefore focuses on examples of effective practice using the funding as perceived by VSHs and other stakeholders.
- There is currently limited utility in completing national data set analysis at this time given the evolving nature of the funding, including differences in the amounts received by the 3 Cohorts of VSs over time, expansion of the CLA and CL cohort intended to benefit from the funding (for example expanding beyond those in general FE colleges), and the wide variation in uses of the funding. In addition, there is an absence of national monitoring data (for example the amounts spent on each activity and the number of young people benefitting in each local authority). These factors make attributing outcomes based on national data set analysis challenging as the causes of outcomes are unknown, particularly given other likely contextual factors changing over time.

- Although case study sites were selected to provide a broad range of activities using the funding and different characteristics (for example local authority size, rural/urban), involvement was also dependent upon their willingness to participate. Similarly, whilst the evaluation team supplied case study sites with an overview of the different categories of interviewee, VVs were ultimately responsible for identifying appropriate individuals to participate.
- It has not been possible to address the evaluation questions on CLA and CL views of the support available. Despite the efforts of VV staff in multiple case study sites, it was not possible to engage young people in focus groups, and in one case, focus groups were unable to proceed following an incident affecting some of the participants. We have also been unable to explore whether the programme represents value for money as the timing and roll out of PP+ Post-16 across the 3 Cohorts meant that it was not feasible to conduct a cost benefit assessment.

## Funding allocation across virtual schools

This chapter presents contextual findings to set out:

- the amount of funding received by VSs
- how the eligible cohort of young people was defined by VSs
- the amount of funding received by VSs as a per-young person figure

The findings in this chapter draw on our cost assessment work, including a review of the grant determination letters from DfE and primary cost-focused research with VSHs via the survey and case study sites. The cost assessment work focuses on the 2023 to 2024 academic year, which was the year that PP+ Post-16 was first rolled out nationally.

## Funding amounts allocated per virtual school

### Key messages

- There was substantial variation in the amount of PP+ Post-16 received by VSs in the 2023 to 2024 academic year, although the majority (64%) received between £25,000 and £74,999.
- In line with the funding calculation, based in part on VS size and the point at which they started to receive PP+ Post-16, VSs in Cohort 1 on average received a higher amount of funding (£94,706) compared to VSs in Cohort 2 (£57,505) and Cohort 3 (£57,539).

In 2023-24, a total of £9.86 million was allocated to PP+ Post-16 across 152 VSs. According to DfE's grant determination letter, the amount given to each VS was based on the number of eligible young people, averaging £64,868.41 but ranging from £5,792.00 to £301,000.<sup>11</sup> This section explores how PP+ Post-16 funding was allocated in the 2023-24 academic year.

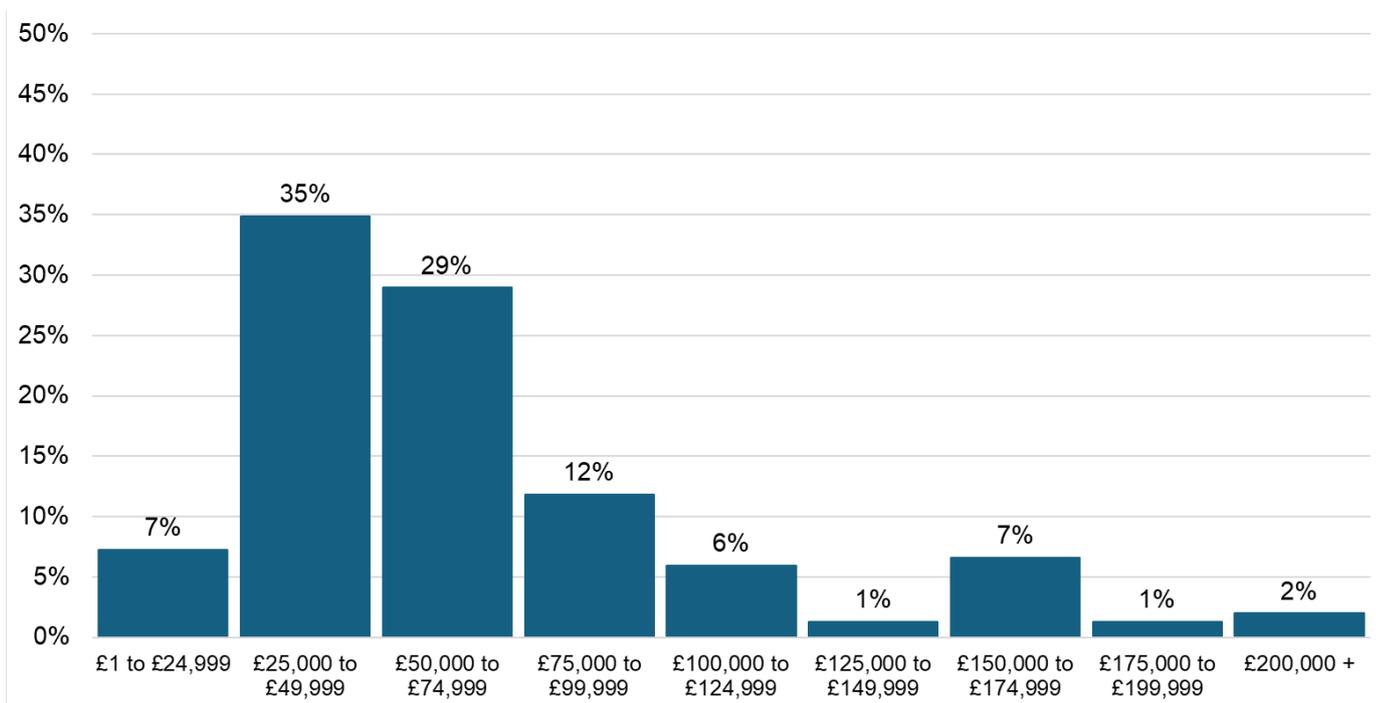
There was substantial variation in the amount of PP+ Post-16 funding received by VSs in 2023-24. Figure 1 shows that this distribution is positively skewed:

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<sup>11</sup> Grant determination letters are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-plus-post-16-pilot-submit-an-expression-of-interest#:~:text=show%20all%20updates-.22%20May%202024,1%20July%202021> [Last accessed 16/04/2025]

- The majority of VSs (64%) received between £25,000 and £74,999. Within this, 35% of VSs received between £25,000 and £49,999, and 29% received between £50,000 and £74,999.
- A small proportion of VSs received a much higher amount: 17% (26 VSs) received more than £100,000, with 3% (5 VSs) receiving between £175,000 and £305,000.
- A small minority received a much lower amount: 7% of VSs received between £5,000 and £25,000.

**Figure 1: Distribution of PP+ Post-16 funding allocation for 2023-24 academic year (n=152 virtual schools)**



In line with the funding calculations set out in The introduction of PP+ Post-16, part of this variation is linked to VS size, and part of this variation is linked to Cohort (i.e., the point at which they began to receive PP+ Post-16). Table 7 shows that:

- Virtual schools in Cohort 1 on average received a higher amount of funding than those in Cohorts 2 and 3: £94,706 for Cohort 1 compared to £57,505 and £57,539 in Cohorts 2 and 3 respectively.
- There was also variation in the absolute amounts received across Cohorts, and the minimum amount received by Cohort 3 was much lower than in Cohorts 2 and 1: £5,792 compared with £16,218 and £31,280 respectively.

**Table 7: The range and average amount of PP+ post-16 funding virtual schools received in 2023-24 (n=152).<sup>12</sup>**

Amount of PP+ post-16 funding	Cohort 1 (n=30)	Cohort 2 (n=28)	Cohort 3 (n=94)	All Cohorts (n=152)
Minimum	£31,280	£16,218	£5,792	£5,792
Maximum	£276,046	£129,030	£301,200	£301,200
Average	£94,706	£57,505	£57,539	£64,868
<b>Total amount</b>	<b>£2,841,173</b>	<b>£1,552,623</b>	<b>£5,466,202</b>	<b>£9,859,998</b>

## How was the eligible cohort defined by virtual schools?

### Key messages

- VSHs varied in how they interpreted when eligibility for PP+ Post-16 funding begins and ends, with most using school year milestones (for example CLA and CLs in years 12 and 13) but many applying a hybrid approach based on individual needs. A minority of VSHs reported that eligibility ends with a young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- VSHs frequently made exceptions to general rules, such as extending eligibility to support NEET prevention with CLA in years 10 and 11 identified as at risk of disengaging, or supporting young people beyond year 13 to support course completion, reflecting a focus on personalised, needs-led interventions.
- While structured procedures existed for approving exceptions, the flexible application of funding criteria could lead to inconsistencies across local authorities, creating a potential postcode lottery in access to support for CLA and CLs.

<sup>12</sup> Source: DfE grant determination letter <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-plus-post-16-pilot-submit-an-expression-of-interest#:~:text=show%20all%20updates-.22%20May%202024,1%20July%202021> [Last accessed 16/04/2025]

The DfE guidance<sup>13</sup> provides VSHs with a degree of flexibility in how they interpret the cohort of young people who are eligible for support using the PP+ post-16 funding, and findings in year 1 of the evaluation from case study sites suggested some variation in whether this was done based on age or school year. In year 2 of the evaluation, VSH survey respondents reported the following approaches to interpreting when eligibility for the PP+ post-16 funding starts and stops:

- When eligibility for the PP+ post-16 funding starts: The majority of respondents reported that eligibility starts based on school year. 58% of respondents (61 responses) reported that eligibility begins at the start of year 12, and 16% (17 responses) reported that eligibility begins at the end of year 11. Twenty-six percent (27 responses) reported taking a hybrid approach based on the needs of the individual young person or cohort of young people.
- When eligibility for the PP+ post-16 funding stops: Responses suggested that VSHs were taking a varied approach to when eligibility for the PP+ Post-16 funding stops, applying a degree of flexibility based on individual need. Forty-six percent of respondents (48 responses) reported that eligibility generally stops at the end of the academic year in which a young person turns 18, with 10% (11 responses) reporting that eligibility for the funding ends when a young person turns 18, and 5% (5 responses) reporting that they generally extend support using the funding beyond the academic year in which they turn 18. Thirty-nine percent of respondents (41 responses) reported generally taking a hybrid approach based on the needs of the individual young person.

When asked to elaborate on whether and why they might make exceptions to their general approach to PP+ Post-16 funding for individual young people, VSH survey respondents reported the following themes:

- Support for NEET prevention before post-16: A few VSH survey respondents described providing support to some CLA in years 10 and year 11 using the PP+ Post-16 funding, as part of early intervention initiatives which aimed to reduce NEET levels at post-16. Examples of this included mentoring support for CLA in years 10 and 11 and working closely with young people to support transition into post-16 education.
- Flexibility to extend support beyond year 13: The most reported exception was extending support to CLA and CLs after year 13, often for young people who required additional tuition, training, or transitional support to complete their

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<sup>13</sup> 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/614442/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/614442/pupil_premium_plus_post-16_programme_grant_determination_letters_-_gov_uk.pdf)

courses, or to progress towards HE. Several respondents also highlighted the use of structured processes for making exceptions. This could involve consulting professionals, submitting funding requests, or reviewing cases regularly to determine if support should be extended.

The evidence therefore suggests that VSHs are using the funding flexibly to address local needs and priorities. The existence of structured processes to apply for exceptions to a VS's general eligibility criteria provides some quality assurance to that decision making. However, this flexibility results in a potential variation where CLA and CLs attending the same post-16 setting but looked after by different local authorities, may be eligible to support using PP+ Post-16 at entirely different points.

## How much funding was received per CLA and CL?

### Key messages

- Based on survey findings, the average amount of PP+ Post-16 funding was £413 per CLA and CL using the number of eligible CLA and CL on 1 October 2023.
- When using the total number of eligible CLA and CLs across the whole 2023-24 academic year, this equated to an average of £355 per CLA and CL.
- Compared to DfE's initial funding calculations of £920 per pupil for 2022-2023, these per young person figures are substantially lower, due to the eligibility criteria widening to include all CLA and CLs at post-16 rather than only those in FE colleges.
- There was significant variation in the amount that individual VSs received per CLA and CL, with reported figures ranging from £110 per CLA and CL in one VS, to £1,257 per CLA and CL in another (based on the total number of eligible CLA and CLs across the whole 2023-24 academic year). This suggests a postcode lottery effect in real terms, despite attempts by DfE to make the funding allocations equitable across VSs.
- VSHs highlighted the challenges of cohort sizes increasing unexpectedly within-year (for example unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) numbers). The variation between VSs in the levels of funding received per CLA and CL and fluctuation in cohort size within-year will affect the range of spending options available to each VSH, leading to the support available to each CLA and CL being substantially different from one local authority to another.

VSHs were asked to provide two figures for the number of eligible CLA and CLs in their VS: the number on 1 October 2023 and the number across the whole of the 2023-24 academic year. This allowed us to calculate:

- how the funding allocation for each VS translated per CLA and CL on the basis of both a snapshot point in time and the maximum number of young people in the cohort across a single academic year
- how this compared to DfE's initial calculations (see The introduction of PP+ Post-16)
- to determine the extent to which there was variation in these figures between VSs, and within an academic year

The data for both sets of figures are presented below.

### **Reported numbers of eligible CLA and CLs on 1 October 2023**

Taking the reported figures for 1 October 2023, the average amount of PP+ Post-16 funding per CLA and CL, across 73 VSHs who provided a response to the survey question, was £413 per CLA and CL<sup>14</sup> (see Annex 4: Additional information from the cost analysis for further detail).

Table 8 shows that there was significant variation in the amount that VSs received per CLA and CL, with reported figures ranging from £112 per CLA and CL in one VS, to £1,257 per CLA and CL in another (n=73 survey respondents).

In line with the funding calculations set out in The introduction of PP+ Post-16, Table 8 also shows that the Cohorts 2 and 3 received less on average per eligible CLA and CL than Cohort 1, such that:

- the average in Cohort 1 was £522 per young person in each VS
- the average in Cohort 2 was £440 per young person in each VS
- the average in Cohort 3 was £361 per young person in each VS

Higher rates in Cohorts 1 and 2 are to be expected, given the cap to reductions experienced by these VSs in 2023-24 (see The introduction of PP+ Post-16 for more detail on how funding was calculated). However, findings indicate that both Cohorts 1 and 2 on average experienced a substantial decrease from the £920 they received per CLA and CL in FE colleges in 2022-23 (as estimated by DfE, see The introduction of PP+ Post-16).

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<sup>14</sup> This figure was calculated by dividing the total amount of funding received by VSH survey respondents (£5,301,108) by the total number of estimated CLA and CLs on 1 October (12,843).

**Table 8: Amount of PP+ Post-16 funding per CLA and CL in the 2023-24 academic year, as reported by VSH survey respondents (n=73)<sup>15</sup>**

<b>PP+ amount per eligible CLA and CLs on 1 October 2023</b>	<b>Cohort 1 (n=16)</b>	<b>Cohort 2 (n=18)</b>	<b>Cohort 3 (n=39)</b>	<b>All Cohorts (n=73)</b>
Minimum	£286	£296	£112	£112
Maximum	£1,167	£884	£1,257	£1,257
Average	£522	£440	£361	£413

Further detail including the average amount that VSH survey respondents received per CLA and CL distributed by Cohort is shown in Annex 4: Additional information from the cost analysis.

### **Reported numbers of eligible CLA and CLs at any point in the 2023-24 academic year**

Taking the reported figures for numbers of CLA and CLs eligible at any point in the 2023-24 academic year, the average amount of PP+ Post-16 funding per CLA and CL per VS decreased by 14.1%, from £413 to £355 per CLA and CL, compared with the figures for 1 October 2023. Table 9 sets out these figures considering the additional CLA and CLs who enter the cohort across the academic year. This reduced the average amount per young person by 13.9% in Cohort 1, 8.1% in Cohort 2, and 16.1% in Cohort 3, suggesting that, in practice, the average amount per CLA and CL ranged from £449 in Cohort 1 to £303 in Cohort 3.

**Table 9: Amount of PP+ Post-16 funding per eligible CLA and CL in the 2023-24 academic year, as reported by VSH survey respondents (n=73)**

<b>PP+ amount per CLA and CL eligible at any point across 2023-24 academic year</b>	<b>Cohort 1 (n=16)</b>	<b>Cohort 2 (n=18)</b>	<b>Cohort 3 (n=39)</b>	<b>All Cohorts (n=73)</b>
Minimum	£286	£296	£110	£110
Maximum	£911	£884	£1,257	£1,257

<sup>15</sup> Average amounts have been calculated as the total amount of funding received by all VSH survey respondents in each Cohort, divided by the total reported numbers of CLA and CLs.

<b>PP+ amount per CLA and CL eligible at any point across 2023-24 academic year</b>	<b>Cohort 1 (n=16)</b>	<b>Cohort 2 (n=18)</b>	<b>Cohort 3 (n=39)</b>	<b>All Cohorts (n=73)</b>
Average	£449	£404	£303	£355
Percentage difference in £ per young person across the 2023-24 academic year	-13.9%	-8.1%	-16.1%	-14.1%

Case study sites reflected on the challenges of cohort sizes increasing within-year, stating that this could be difficult to manage when funding had already been planned and allocated to individual CLAs and CLs. In particular, they explained that other funding streams were not sufficient to cover in-year increases in UASC, so PP+ Post-16 funding had to stretch further to account for a larger cohort than they had planned for at the start of the year. Ensuring that funding streams such as PP+ Post-16 are flexible enough to enable this is an important factor, according to VSHs.

The variation between VSs in levels of funding received per CLA and CL and fluctuations in cohort size within-year will therefore affect the range of spending options available to each VSH. This will in part influence whether VSs fund direct support for CLA and CLs; focus on more strategic spending such as increasing post-16 staffing capacity in the VS; or are able to fund a combination of direct and strategic activities.

The amount of PP+ Post-16 per CLA and CL allocated to VSs is also substantially lower than the Pupil Premium grant for CLA at pre-16 (£2,530 per pupil for the 2023 to 2024 academic year<sup>16</sup>), meaning that the funding does not enable VSHs to simply extend their pre-16 model into post-16.

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<sup>16</sup> Source: [\[Withdrawn\] Pupil premium 2023-24: technical note - GOV.UK](#)

## Activity using PP+ Post-16

This chapter presents the findings relating to the implementation of PP+ Post-16 funding, addressing the following overarching evaluation question:

- how are local authorities, VSs and post-16 settings using the funding to support CLA and CLs aged 16 to 18 years and to what extent do these reflect the activities identified in the ToC?

We organise the findings by the three key areas of activity in the ToC:

- direct work with young people
- activities relating to joint working and the VS
- activities related to post-16 education and training settings

Finally, we discuss the delivery of training by VSs to support joint working and improvements in support for CLA and CLs.

The findings in this chapter draw on data from the national VSH survey, the qualitative data from case study interviews, and data from the cost assessment. We include perspectives from VSHs, professional stakeholders in social care and education, and carers of CLA and CLs. Case study summaries are set out in Annex 5: Case study summaries.

## Decision making and allocation of PP+ Post-16 to different activities

### Key messages

- Across surveyed VSHs, PP+ Post-16 funding was allocated as follows:
  - 53% on direct work with young people (£2,851,521).
  - 23% on activities relating to joint working and the VS (£1,221,591).
  - 21% on activities relating to post-16 settings (£1,129,576).
  - 3% on other activities (£135,201).
- Decisions on how VSs allocated PP+ Post-16 funding were influenced not only by the amount received but also by the size of their existing post-16 teams. Case study VSs with larger, established post-16 teams focused more on direct support for young people, while those with smaller teams prioritised capacity building, leading to varying levels of direct support for CLA and CLs across local authorities.
- VSHs in case study sites suggested ways to potentially adapt the funding model to address this variation between VSs, (for example setting a core amount for VS staffing, topped up with individual allocations per eligible young person).

VSHs were asked to estimate the proportion of PP+ Post-16 funding that they had spent across direct work with young people, activities relating to joint working, and activities relating to post-16 settings in 2023-24. Survey respondents from 73 VSs reported allocating funding in the following ways:

- 53% was spent on direct work with young people, totalling £2,851,521
- 23% was spent on activities relating to joint working and the VS, totalling £1,221,591
- 21% was spent on activities relating to post-16 settings, totalling £1,129,576
- 3% was spent on other activities, totalling £135,201

Post-16 settings could refer to any form of training or education setting, although VSHs most frequently referred to post-16 colleges when discussing support, often as this was where the majority of their CLA and CLs attended. Table 10 provides a breakdown of the average allocation of funding by activity type and Cohort and shows that these proportions were relatively consistent across Cohorts. Cohort 2 reported spending a slightly smaller proportion of their PP+ Post-16 funding on direct work with young people

compared with Cohorts 1 and 3 (47% compared with 59% and 54% respectively), and slightly more on activities relating to joint working (29% compared with 20% and 22% respectively). However, survey findings did not suggest substantial differences across funding allocation based on Cohort.

**Table 10: Total amount (%) of the PP+ Post-16 funding spent on each category of activity in 2023-24, reported by VSH survey respondents (n=73)<sup>17</sup>**

Type of activity	Cohort 1 (n=16)	Cohort 2 (n=18)	Cohort 3 (n=39)	All Cohorts (n=73)
Direct work with young people	£860,104 (59%)	£553,904 (47%)	£1,437,514 (54%)	£2,851,521 (53%)
Activities relating to joint working	£288,955 (20%)	£351,033 (29%)	£581,603 (22%)	£1,221,591 (23%)
Activities relating to post-16 settings	£262,431 (18%)	£264,656 (22%)	£602,490 (22%)	£1,129,576 (21%)
Other activities	£52,949 (4%)	£21,149 (2%)	£61,103 (2%)	£135,201 (3%)
<b>Total spent</b>	<b>£1,464,438 (100%)</b>	<b>£1,190,741 (100%)</b>	<b>£2,682,710 (100%)</b>	<b>£5,337,889 (100%)</b>

VSHs in case study sites were asked how they had chosen to allocate the PP+ Post-16 funding in their VSs. Table 11 sets out the funding bracket, amount per eligible CLA and CL, and percentage allocations across each type of activity in these sites. Detailed analysis explaining variation is presented below the table.

**Table 11: How has the PP+ Post-16 funding been allocated in case study sites in the 2023-24 academic year?**

Case study site	PP+ Post-16 funding amount	Amount per eligible CLA and CL	% allocated to direct work with young people	% allocated to activities relating to joint working or the VS	% allocated to activities related to post-16 settings
Cartdale	£150,000 to £200,000	£622	75%	25%	0%
Dorland	£75,000 to £100,000	£480	44%	33%	23%

<sup>17</sup> Please note that proportions may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Case study site	PP+ Post-16 funding amount	Amount per eligible CLA and CL	% allocated to direct work with young people	% allocated to activities relating to joint working or the VS	% allocated to activities related to post-16 settings
Esterford	£100,000 to £150,000	£311	100%	0%	0%
Greenhollow	£25,000 to £50,000	£418	0%	100%	0%
Havenbarrow	£25,000 to £50,000	£443	0%	100%	0%

Interviews with VSHs in case study sites suggest that decisions around allocation were driven by seeking to improve capacity in VS post-16 teams, balanced against a desire to maximise the amount of funding that could directly benefit CLAs and CLs. This played out differently across sites, depending on the amount of funding they had received and the size of their pre-existing post-16 team. For example:

- Esterford (Cohort 2): The VS received between £100,000 and £150,000 and chose to allocate 100% of their funding on direct work with young people. The VSH stated that they had been keen to maximise the benefit of the funding for young people and therefore decided to spend it on activities such as tuition, ESOL support, IT equipment, and careers services. An important enabler of this, according to the VSH, had been an established pre-existing post-16 team in their VS, funded by their local authority and other grant streams. This meant that they already had the necessary strategic infrastructure in place and did not need to spend PP+ Post-16 funding on capacity building or joint working.
- Greenhollow and Havenbarrow (Cohort 3 sites): In contrast, both VSHs from these smaller case study sites that received between £25,000 and £50,000 each, reported that they had decided to put 100% of their funding towards part-funding a role in their VS, as a means of pooling the funding to benefit the whole cohort. They explained that, as smaller local authorities, they did not have the pre-existing post-16 capacity that larger VSs may have and therefore needed to focus on building capacity first. They also highlighted that the per young person formula had meant that the amount of funding did not cover an entire post, so they had needed to source funding from elsewhere to contribute towards these roles:

The funding formula seems logical, but I don't think it's been realised what that money actually equates to. Smaller VSs don't have the economies of scale that larger VSs do, so as a small authority what you can achieve is greatly diminished. – *VSH, Havenbarrow*

- Cartdale (Cohort 1): Although a larger VS receiving between £150,000 and £200,000 and with a more established post-16 team, the VSH reported high staff to CLA and CL ratios before the PP+ Post-16 funding. Consequently, they decided to split the allocation across two categories, allocating around 25% towards funding a role to support capacity in their post-16 team, and the rest (75%) going towards direct support for their UASC and NEET cohorts.
- Dorland (Cohort 2): Prior to PP+ Post-16, the VS made discretionary funding available where possible within the terms of the pupil premium grant to support individual young people in years 12 and 13 (for example continuing ESOL provision for UASC or providing ongoing child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)). The VS received between £75,000 and £100,000 PP+ Post-16 and the VSH decided to distribute the funding across all three categories of activities with the greatest share being allocated to direct work with young people.

The breakdown of spending by activity type in the case study sites provides examples of VSHs taking different approaches to the funding based on their pre-existing levels of post-16 staffing and provision, and current local need and priorities. These do not represent an exhaustive list of approaches to the funding but do provide examples of key differences in how the funding is being used in different contexts:

- spending entirely on direct support to young people (either targeted on specific cohorts or across all CLA and CLs)
- spending entirely on post-16 staffing within the VS
- spending split between direct support for CLA and CLs and other strategic activities

Several VSHs in case study sites stated that funding for post-16 roles in VSs is a postcode lottery and suggested that broader change needed to be enacted as to how VSs are funded:

Local authorities have different approaches as to whether VSs are funded via grant streams, whether the local authority contributes, or whether it's done via PP+. There is no core budget to support staffing in either early years or post-16 – that is madness as they are such important areas. So, some VSs will be entirely funded via PP+, which means less individualised funding gets to children. – *VSH, Cohort 2*

Some VSHs in case study sites suggested that a wider overhaul of funding for post-16 provision was required, to enable similar staffing ratios for post-16 in VSs to those found at statutory school age. One VSH suggested refining the purpose of the PP+ Post-16 funding as either being for strategic purposes or for direct support, and argued that a more meaningful calculation formula would involve introducing a minimum amount for each VS based on staffing ratios (to cover the necessary number of post-16 posts within each VS), and to then top this up with an allocated amount per individual CLA and CL.

The remainder of this chapter explores how VSs have used the funding across each of the three different activity types: direct work with young people; joint working and the VS; or activities related to post-16 settings.

## Direct work with young people

### Key messages

- Findings show a range of direct support provided to young people, including tuition and short courses; providing resources and equipment (for example laptops and course equipment); and financial incentives for attendance.
- Ninety percent of VSH survey respondents reported using the funding to place additional focus on specific cohorts, with UASC and NEET cohorts most likely to receive direct support. Examples of direct work with young people who are NEET included tuition, NEET PEPs, and career guidance, whilst work with UASC included summer schools, ESOL classes, tuition and provision of laptops.
- VSH survey respondents spent an average of £429 on direct support per CLA and CL in 2023 to 2024, although the spend ranged substantially from £65 to £4,333 per CLA and CL at a VS level.
- VSHs reported needing to make difficult prioritisation decisions due to disparity between levels of PP+ Post-16 funding and the cost of providing direct support (for example tuition starting from £70 per session and a UASC summer school costing £242 per head) compared with a reported average amount of PP+ Post-16 received per CLA or CL of £413 (see How was the eligible cohort defined by virtual schools?).
- Restrictions on the usage of the 16-19 bursary in some post-16 settings (for example reduced cash payments, limited laptop funding) pushed some VSHs to use PP+ Post-16 funds to fill the gaps, raising concerns about inconsistent support across local authorities.

## Average amount spent on direct support per CLA and CL

VSH survey respondents (n=73) reported spending a total of £2,851,521 (53% of their allocated PP+ post-16 funding) on direct work with 6,646 young people in the 2023-24 academic year. This equates to:

- 52% of the total eligible CLA and CLs in their VSs on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023
- 45% of the total number of CLA and CLs who were eligible for the funding at any point across the 2023-24 academic year

Taken together, the above findings suggest that, in 73 VSs, 6,646 young people received an average of £429 worth of direct support using the PP+ post-16 funding in 2023-24.

Table 12 shows how this varied across VSH survey respondents:

- at the cohort level, the average amount spent per young person was highest in Cohort 1 (£442), followed by Cohort 3 (£422), followed by Cohort 2 (£400)
- at the VS level, there was substantial variation in how much was spent per CLA and CL across all 3 Cohorts, with average amounts ranging from £65 to £4,333 per CLA and CL across VSH survey respondents

**Table 12: Average amount spent on direct work with young people per CLA and CL who received direct support in 2023-24, as reported by VSH survey respondents (n=73)<sup>18</sup>**

Amount spent per young person	Cohort 1 (n=16)	Cohort 2 (n=18)	Cohort 3 (n=39)	All cohorts (n=73)
£1 to £249	4 (25%)	7 (39%)	9 (23%)	20 (27%)
£250 to £499	4 (25%)	6 (33%)	11 (28%)	21 (29%)
£500 to £749	4 (25%)	2 (11%)	9 (23%)	15 (21%)
£750 to £999	1 (6%)	2 (11%)	7 (18%)	10 (14%)

<sup>18</sup> Please note that percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Average amounts have been calculated as the total amount spent on direct work with young people across the whole Cohort, divided by the total reported numbers of CLA and CLs who received direct support.

Amount spent per young person	Cohort 1 (n=16)	Cohort 2 (n=18)	Cohort 3 (n=39)	All cohorts (n=73)
£1,000+	3 (19%)	1 (6%)	3 (8%)	7 (10%)
Total	16 (100%)	18 (100%)	39 (100%)	73 (100%)
Average amount spent	£442	£400	£422	£429
Minimum	£65	£193	£113	£65
Maximum	£4,333	£1,952	£1,522	£4,333

### Examples of expenditure on direct work with young people

VSHs in Cartdale and Esterford provided examples of individual items of expenditure that had been purchased using the PP+ Post-16 funding in the 2023-24 academic year, including:

- Tuition for English and maths: VSHs reported that this costs between £70 to £85 per session per young person. VSHs agreed each young person should receive 10 sessions for this to be effective, meaning the total cost of between £700 and £850 per young person. Esterford reported spending an average of £858 per CLA and CL on tuition
- ESOL support: Esterford reported spending £988 per CLA and CL on ESOL sessions
- Direct allocation to meet financial needs: Cartdale allocated £400 to every CLA and CL in their VS, split across two academic terms. This was to fund items such as extra tuition, social emotional support, educational trips, or financial resources. However, they stated that £400 does not go very far, and ideally this would be £600 per young person so that the summer term could be covered as well
- UASC summer school: Cartdale provided a UASC summer school which provided ESOL support, sports and wellbeing activities, and cost £242 per UASC CLA and CL
- Emotional health and wellbeing support: costing £162 per CLA and CL in Esterford
- IT provision: costing £295 per CLA and CL in Esterford

This illustrates how the individual or combined costs of direct support exceeded the average spend figure of £429 in 2023 to 2024, requiring VSHs to prioritise spending based on individual need. It also highlights the importance of the post-16 PEP process as a way for a young person and the stakeholders working with them to consider that individual's needs in order to support their aspirations and how they can be most effectively met given the resources available.

## Types of direct work

The most commonly reported activities relating to direct work with young people across all VSH survey respondents (see Figure 2) were:

- one to one academic tuition for CLA and CLs (88 respondents, 85%)
- tutoring or courses in ESOL (84 respondents, 82%)
- allocating PP+ Post-16 funding to individual CLA and CLs to support PEP targets (71 respondents, 69%)<sup>19</sup>
- allocating PP+ Post-16 funding to individual CLA and CLs to meet financial needs (for example purchasing course equipment, IT equipment, travel expenses or uniform) (65 respondents, 63%)
- facilitating enrichment activities with a focus on health, wellbeing and life skills (for example sports clubs, cultural visits) (60 respondents, 58%)

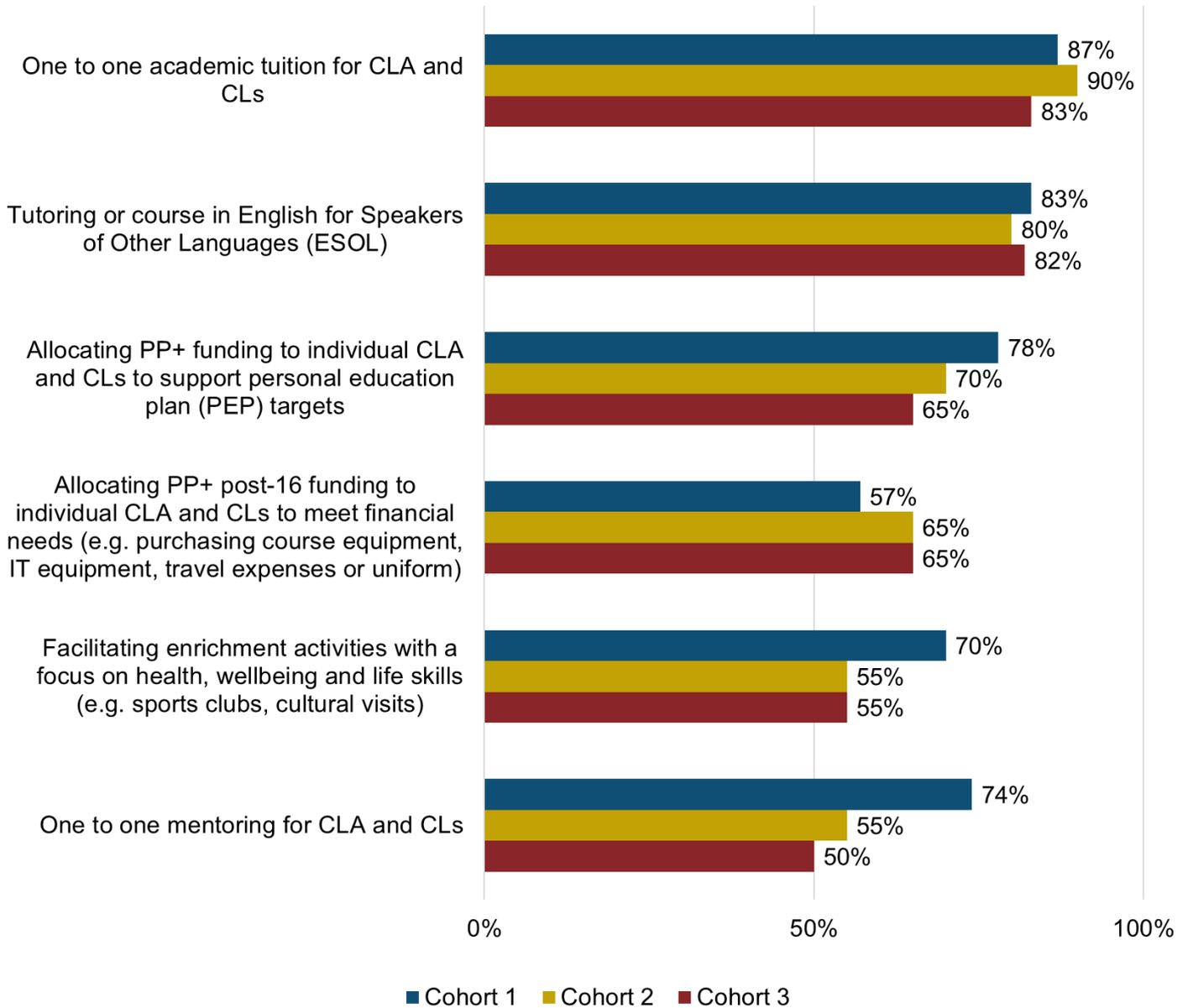
Figure 2 shows that the proportion of VSH survey respondents who reported delivering each type of activity is relatively consistent across Cohorts for most activities. However, there were differences between Cohorts for some types of activity, for example:

- a smaller proportion of VSHs in Cohort 3 reported allocating PP+ Post-16 funding directly to individual CLA and CLs to support PEP targets than in Cohorts 1 and 2 (65% of Cohort 3 compared with 78% of Cohort 1 and 70% of Cohort 2)
- a higher proportion of VSHs in Cohort 1 reported delivering enrichment activities (70% compared with 55% of those in both Cohort 2 and Cohort 3), and mentoring (74% compared with 55% of Cohort 2 and 50% of Cohort 3) than in other Cohorts

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<sup>19</sup> The VS may choose to provide funds to CSC or post-16 settings (for example to purchase certain equipment or resources required to meet PEP targets)

**Figure 2: In the 2023-24 academic year, which activities have you spent the PP+ Post-16 funding on? (n=103)**



Comparison with the most commonly reported activities from the year 1 VSH survey shows that these have remained consistent across both years, suggesting that VSHs have not made substantial changes to the types of work they have undertaken with young people over the last two years. A comparison of individual activities across both years of the VSH survey is shown in Annex 6: A comparison of the most commonly reported direct activities with young people in years 1 and 2 of the VSH survey.

VSH survey respondents provided the following examples of effective practice in direct work with young people.

## Tuition and short courses

Many respondents across all Cohorts reported the use of PP+ Post-16 funding for tuition and short courses (for example Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) cards or barista training) as examples of effective practice. They stated that this had provided a gateway enabling young people to pursue their chosen course or EET pathway:

Additional funding available for tuition - usually maths and English - has been a success and enabled more young people to gain qualifications in maths and English, thus being able to access higher level courses at college in a subject they enjoy and want to study rather than an entry level course. - *Post-16 Lead, survey, Cohort 3*

Several VSH survey respondents noted that they would like to provide additional tuition for CLAs and CLs but have had to prioritise who receives this given its cost and the level of available funding. Young people would ideally receive around 10 tuition sessions, meaning there is insufficient PP+ Post-16 funding to provide this for all young people.

- **A case study example: a resource to showcase the success of CLA and CLs and raise aspirations**
- Greenhollow VS (Cohort 3) developed a booklet for young people showcasing the pathways and successes of CLA and CLs in their authority as part of its aspiration raising work:
- I'm going to stick it under the nose of every social worker and every PA and every professional I can find to say, look what young people in care can achieve.[...] I'm going to use it and our staff and our social workers are going to use it with kids who are in primary school or who are in secondary school coming through just like you and I'm going to say to them, 'Look, this young person from a similar background to you has achieved this. There's no reason why you can't'. – *Post-16 Lead in VS, interview, Cohort 3*
- Interviews with SWs in Greenhollow suggest that the idea has been well received and is being shared with young people.

## Providing resources and equipment

Several VSH survey respondents highlighted the use of the PP+ Post-16 funding to provide resources and equipment, (for example laptops, transport, and other course-specific specialist equipment) as an example of effective practice. Several respondents

noted that they had collected feedback from SWs and young people through surveys on the use of the PP+ Post-16 funding and used this to inform their provision:

The most impactful element has been the ability to resource support to this growing cohort of young people. They have benefit [sic] from additional resource going directly to them to help and encourage them in their studies. - *VSH, survey, Cohort 1*

When asked to describe any changes in approach over time, many VSH survey respondents in Cohorts 1 and 2 suggested that providing resources and equipment had been an increased area of focus in 2023-2024 compared with previous years. In addition, some respondents in Cohort 3 described initially focusing primarily on academic support but subsequently adapting their approach part-way through the year after identifying unexpected levels of digital exclusion and financial hardship. A few respondents across different regions highlighted that the bursary was intended to meet these needs, but that post-16 settings had restricted access to bursary funds for laptops and other equipment. This resulted in VSs using PP+ Post-16 funding to fill this gap:

We wanted to prioritise funding to upskill our young people (for example CSCS cards and coaching badges). However, where some colleges are no longer permitting the vulnerable bursaries to fund laptops, some of the funding has been [used for] purchasing these instead. - *VSH, survey, Cohort 3*

### **Rewarding attendance with incentives**

Some VSH survey respondents identified financial incentives for attendance as an example of effective practice. They described seeing improvements in attendance following the introduction of incentives, and that CLA and CLs had given positive feedback about the indirect impact of receiving money on their wellbeing and ability to socialise with peers:

The attendance attainment incentive provides funding direct to the young people themselves, allowing them to utilise this on daily expenditure and on what they wish to themselves. Feedback from young people said this allowed them to be able to use it along with their peers on refreshments and activities outside of college unlike the limitations of bursaries, for example, so they felt less like they stood out from their friends. – *VSH, survey, Cohort 1*

## Changes to use of the 16-19 bursary: views from case study sites

Case study interviewees described recent changes to use of the 16-19 bursary, which VSHs believed were in response to changes to bursary guidance and financial pressures faced by post-16 education and training settings. The changes were viewed as having implications for the use of PP+ Post-16. Perceived changes to use of the bursary included a move away from cash payments linked to attendance towards increased use of the funding to provide benefits in kind (for example travel, lunches, equipment and trips). Some interviewees also described increased top slicing of the bursary rather than funding individual young people.

Virtual schools, SWs and carers suggested that cash payments incentivised attendance and were important for CLA and CLs with limited financial support.

Although one VSH described pushing back against changes to use of the bursary, leads in post-16 settings explained that they needed to follow their own finance team's interpretation of the bursary guidance even where it differed from that of their VS:

...there's a bit of disparity really between what the VS would like us to do and what we've all signed up to as a group of colleges and government guidance, they're not the same. I think in terms of the government guidance they don't want you to distribute the funds [as a cash payment]. – *Post-16 Lead, interview, Cohort 3*

Two VSHs were also aware of a post-16 setting interpreting recent changes to the guidance to mean that they did not necessarily need to pay the bursary to CLAs and CLs, suggesting some expenses (for example travel and lunches) should be paid for from other funds such as the fostering allowance. However, it is unclear from the case study interviews whether these are isolated incidents, or an interpretation being taken by multiple post-16 settings.

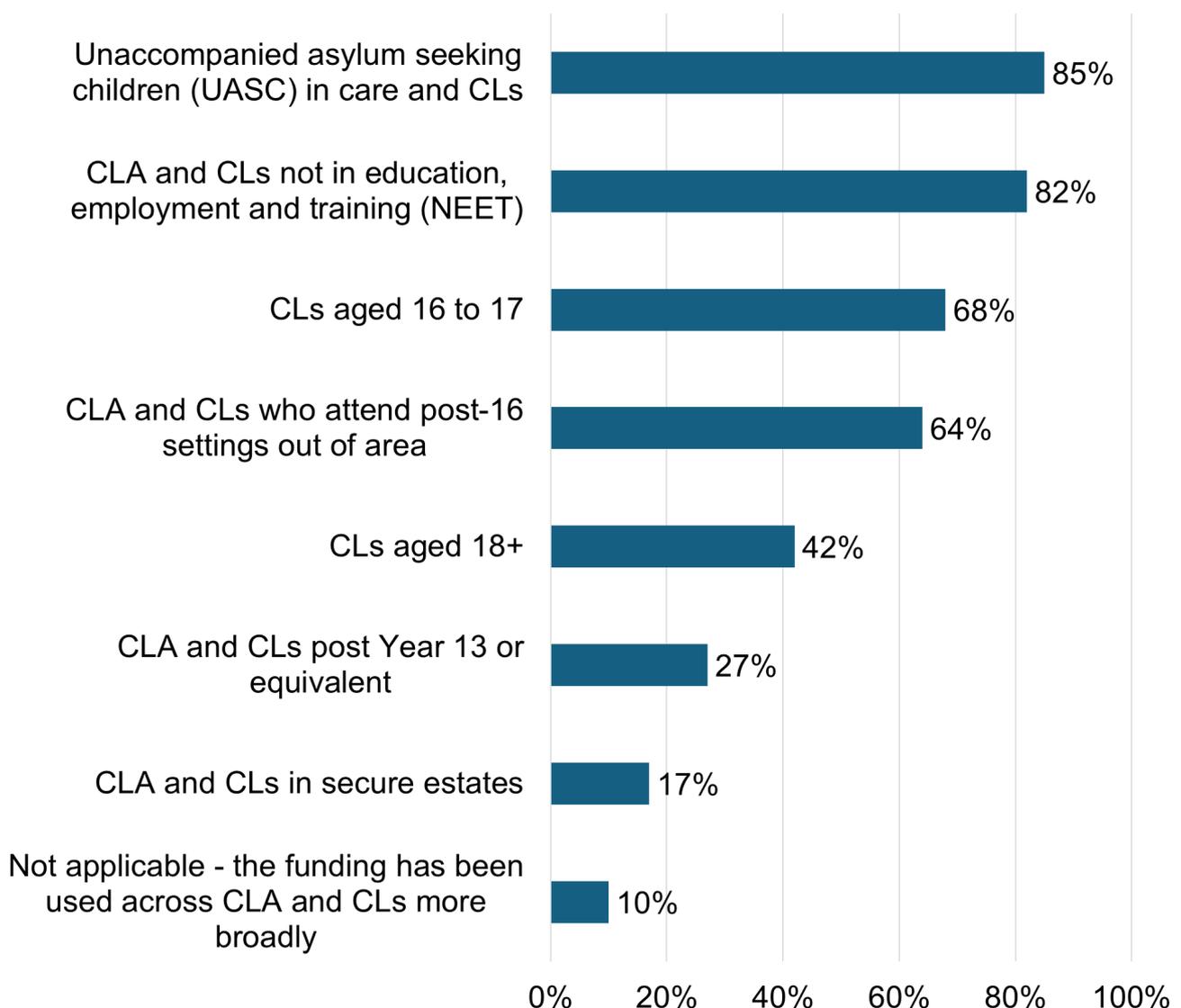
Several VSHs made suggestions for use of the bursary, including ringfencing for use with individual young people rather than top slicing; following the approach to statutory PP+ where VSHs can direct schools on how money is spent; or allowing VSHs to manage bursary funding alongside PP+ Post-16 funding:

So, if we felt it was useful to put all of the bursary and what we get from the post-16 into regular monthly or weekly tuition for a child to improve their grades, then we could set out and do that from the beginning. But at the moment we could afford four or five weeks of tuition, which goes nowhere really. - *VSH, interview, Cohort 2*

## Who are the cohorts of focus?

Ninety-four VSH survey respondents (90%) reported using PP+ Post-16 funding to place additional focus on certain cohorts of young people. The majority of respondents have focused on work with UASC (89 virtual schools, 85%), and NEET young people (86 virtual schools, 82%) (see Figure 3). This represents an increased focus on these two groups from year 1 of the evaluation, where 68% (82 virtual schools) and 69% (83 virtual schools) of VSH survey respondents (n=120) reported focussing on these two groups respectively.

**Figure 3: Thinking about the 2023-24 academic year, has your virtual school used the PP+ post-16 to give extra focus to any of the following groups? (n=105)**



As in year 1 of the evaluation, many VSH survey respondents commented that maximising the impact of the funding had been an important driver in their decision to focus on specific cohorts. 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:

If we focused on all children in care in the cohort then this would result in less impact – so we have had to focus on those who will most greatly benefit. – *VSH, survey, Cohort 2*

VSH survey respondents were asked to describe their rationale for using PP+ Post-16 to give extra focus to specific groups of CLA and CLs, and whether this had changed since they started receiving the funding. They gave the following rationales:

- UASC: Many VSH survey respondents reported an increased focus on UASC over time due to a year-on-year increase in the size of this cohort. They reported a range of challenges faced by UASC, including the limited availability of post-16 places for those arriving part-way through the academic year, and a shortage of existing ESOL provision in post-16 settings, making it harder for UASC to access mainstream education on arrival. Consequently, many VSHs reported using PP+ Post-16 as additional support to bridge this gap:

Since the pilot in 2021, the cohort of young people has changed significantly. There is now a high proportion of UASC. Subsequently, funding has been used to create a post (fixed for one year) to support these young people. – *VSH, survey, Cohort 1*

- CLA and CLs who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET: Several VSH survey respondents indicated that support for CLA and CLs who were NEET or at risk of becoming NEET had become a higher priority over time. They explained that this was due to growth in the size of their NEET cohorts, and recognition that existing support structures were insufficient to support this group of young people:

We have seen a higher number of young people not in education, employment, or training over the last two years, so we decided to focus mainly on this group. - *VSH, survey, Cohort 3*

- CLs aged 18-25: Some VSH survey respondents reported extending their focus to include CLs over the age of 18. Respondents recognised that CLs still faced significant barriers to education after the age of 18 and mentioned feedback from young people and professionals highlighting gaps in support for this age group. Several also stated that policy changes extending corporate parenting responsibilities up to age 25 had led to increased emphasis on the need for support for CLs aged 18+.

The changes to the care leavers' ages from 21 to 25 have added a further emphasis on care leavers being supported. - *Deputy VSH, survey, Cohort 1*

- CLA and CLs with mental health and wellbeing needs: Some respondents reported an increased focus on mental health and wellbeing. They explained that this was due to increased awareness of the links between care experience, trauma, mental health and educational engagement, and in response to the impact of COVID-19.
- CLA and CLs interested in HE: A few respondents from each Cohort described providing specific support to CLA and CLs who were interested in going to university. This included workshops and mentoring delivered in partnership with local universities.

While most VSH survey respondents described focusing the funding on specific cohorts of young people, several respondents emphasised that their spending was needs-led rather than prescriptive or restricted to certain cohorts. Several mentioned using the PEP process to identify and respond to these needs, and respondents across all Cohorts reported that PP+ Post-16 funding was most effective when spent flexibly according to individual needs identified through PEPs:

The ability to be needs led (albeit on a small budget) has meant the voice of the young person has been heard. – *VSH, survey, Cohort 3*

Nevertheless, many VSH survey respondents identified trends in the type of support offered to or requested by each cohort of focus, with particular emphasis placed on targeted interventions for UASC and NEET young people. These themes were consistent between the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 academic years and among all three Cohorts of VS.

## **Targeted interventions for NEET**

VSH survey respondents reported two areas of focus to reduce NEET rates:

- preventative work to improve retention and engagement among CLA and CLs at risk of disengagement from education or training
- work with NEET CLA and CLs to provide opportunities for re-engagement with EET

They described both areas as becoming increasingly important, and highlighted learning around the need for flexibility and provision based on individual needs, (for example considering the role of alternative as well as mainstream provision).

## Case studies: a carer's perspective on the VS role in supporting young people who are NEET

A carer in semi-independent accommodation (Cohort 1) viewed the role of the VS as a 'buffer' between a NEET young person and other agencies. They described the VS meeting with the young person to explore their aspirations, exploring options and funding with post-16 settings and establishing their expectations of the young person through a learning agreement. If a young person subsequently felt unhappy on their course, the carer would reinvolve the VS:

...because in terms of carrying the weight, [name of interviewer], I would expect [the VS], we'd share our concerns, and I'd share... I'd expect them to then have a meeting with the [post-16 setting], myself, and [the] young person, if need be, to thrash out what's not working. – *Carer, interview, Cohort 1*

### NEET prevention work

Case study interviews provided several examples of VSs promoting flexible and creative approaches to engage young people in EET. A post-16 lead in a Cohort 3 VS described working with post-16 settings to establish more responsive courses for young people who were at risk of disengaging from education:

So, ones that start every term rather than just September. Ones where young people, rather than us facing an exit strategy, we're facing more of a managed move within college strategy. So, 'OK you've not succeeded on this, and we've tried everything that we can to make that happen. It hasn't happened for whatever reason, but you're not leaving college, you're staying in college and we're going to manage a move on to something else'. So that 'something else' is where we've developed a flexibility. So, for some young people it's been online, we're... they're able to access maths and English online from home. It's more flexible, so a lower stakes, lower stress course. For others, it's a course with a bit more of a carousel option. So, 'OK, we realise you've made a choice that hasn't worked out for you and we're kind of moving back a step and we're going to expose you to three or four or five different options within the college with a view to then coming back round again'. – *Post-16 lead in VS, interview, Cohort 3*

SWs from two case study sites (Cohorts 2 and 3) described examples of VSs working to prevent young people being excluded from their post-16 settings and finding alternative provision where appropriate:

The one child that I'm thinking of, he went for one, two sessions and they were like, 'No, we can't manage this anymore.' It wasn't anything major... it wasn't ideal, but it was just kind of like back chatting, and he'd not done anything in kinds of a safeguarding respect, but they just didn't want him there. I think had we not had [name of post-16 contact in the VS] and him all go into a meeting together and say, 'Well actually, this is what the child's experienced, it's likely that he's going to show this behaviour, this is what we can offer to support, what can you do?', I think they would have had him out after those two sessions. – *SW, interview, Cohort 2*

In another case study site, a SW described how their VS arranged a work-based placement for a young person, after they were excluded from college, alongside maths and English tuition with the longer-term aim of doing an apprenticeship:

That acts as a bit of a carrot for that young person engaging within his maths and English qualification. And what we're seeing is, obviously we're not finished with that young person [...] but with that young person in particular, we're seeing a significant improvement in his presentation, in his own ambitions for the future and what he wants to achieve. And there is that plan, and that's all down to the VS's relationships with employers within the [name of] area, and their access to opportunities. – *SW, interview, Cohort 3*

## **Supporting young people who are already NEET**

Examples from the VSH survey and case studies of work to re-engage young people who were already NEET included:

Provision of tuition or short courses. These were identified in Tuition and short courses as a useful gateway for all CLA and CLs to get onto their chosen career pathway but were also identified as a useful way of supporting young people who were NEET. Many VSH survey respondents across all Cohorts reported providing tutoring for GCSE resits, functional skills courses, employability courses and short-term tuition to help young people transition back into education:

The ability to fund short courses which can represent a passport to employment, such as the CSCS card and barista training, has made a significant impact. We have also been able to provide intensive, one-to-

One-to-one mentoring. Many VSH survey respondents reported offering one-to-one support from mentors or career advisors, including support with identifying next steps, CV writing, job applications, and interview preparation. Some respondents provided longer-term mentoring with a focus on providing a consistent relationship as a basis for

supporting young people back into EET. They reported that this work was particularly effective at building trusting relationships, which enabled more detailed insights into the needs, interests, and barriers to education faced by some CLA and CLs. They said that, in turn, this enabled mentors to tailor suggestions around next steps for EET to each young person:

The Education Support Officers work with smaller cohorts of young people [and] has allowed for improved relationship building with the young people, which has enabled us to drill down into what specific barriers, interests and needs they have preventing them from engaging with EET. We are better informed on their barriers, interests and needs rather than making assumptions/blanket overview and can identify potential projects or education which they may choose to engage with. - *VSH, survey, Cohort 3*

The VSH in Bridmarsh (Cohort 1) reported using some of its early PP+ Post-16 to pilot the use of progression coaches with a small number of young people who were long-term NEET. Having identified the value of this approach, the VS has since employed further coaches to support more young people.

PEPs for NEET young people. Many VSH survey respondents reported that they now offer NEET PEPs, which were not previously available to their NEET cohort. These meetings focus on identifying and meeting individual practical needs to overcome barriers to EET. Types of support offered included providing funding for IT, course equipment or uniform, and support with travel or paperwork. Additional meetings separate from PEPs were sometimes held to identify aspirations and barriers:

All NEET YP continue to have PEPs with a focus on reintegration into EET. - *VSH, survey, Cohort 1*

## Case studies: developing functional skills provision

Providing functional skills was identified by case study sites in year 1 of the evaluation as a way of supporting young people who were NEET or at risk of becoming NEET, and case study sites described continuing to build on this provision.

In year 1 of the evaluation, the VSH in Bridmarsh (Cohort 1) decided to make the VS a registered centre for functional skills to remove the potential barrier to post-16 of resits for those who may not get their GCSEs in maths and English. The VS has continued to use this in a very targeted way in year 2, with the VS providing training to schools so they can support the approach and raising awareness of the approach regionally:

[The VS team] try and avoid at all costs, children or young people having to retake GCSEs, so where the Level 2 qualification is sufficient for their courses - *VSH, interview Cohort 2.*

In year 1 of the evaluation, Cartdale VS (Cohort 1) described planning to introduce functional skills for young people who were NEET or at risk of becoming NEET, something which has since come into effect. Feedback in PEPs from NEET young people highlighted a lack of self-confidence and the barrier of not having entry requirements for post-16 courses. The VS responded by offering to use young people's annual allocation of PP+ post-16 funding towards the cost of functional skills:

We had a look at the list of young people who hadn't received their maths or English qualifications in the year 11 say for example, and we looked first at the ones who just slightly were off - like they've got a grade 3 or they might have got a grade 3 in one and a grade 2 in the other. So specifically in those PEP meetings we said, 'Look, we've noticed you've got a grade 3 in English. You weren't far off so would you like to take your functional skills to make sure that you've got your qualifications so then, when you start to look for provision in September or whenever, you feel like you've got the entry requirements to do that.' A lot of them were saying yes so, that's what we did basically, we made it available. - *VSH, interview, Cohort 1*

### **Case studies: establishing processes and expectations around NEET PEPs**

The VS in Cartdale (Cohort 1) holds NEET PEPs every 3 months in addition to 6-weekly education meetings. SWs and leaving care workers are involved in both the NEET PEP and education meeting, with the VS providing the educational expertise and guidance normally provided by a post-16 setting where a young person is in education. The VS also takes responsibility for completing the PEP form where a young person is NEET.

Esterford VS (Cohort 2) used part of its PP+ Post-16 funding to improve their data collection and analysis. This revealed that young people living independently or who were NEET were least likely to have the best quality PEPs. Esterford has since set up a NEET multi-agency group, which the VSH described as really helping to drive up PEP quality and completion:

... so, my post-16 coordinator is on that group and she'll say, "Have you got a PEP? What's the PEP saying?" So now people are coming back going, "We've done the PEP." And it's a work in progress, but, again, it's back to that changing culture and expectations, isn't it? - *VSH, interview, Cohort 2*

Enrichment and activities to improve wellbeing. Building on the findings in year 1, several VSH survey respondents reported using sport, creative and wellbeing activities to support young people and help them develop soft skills and improve their wellbeing, to facilitate re-engagement with EET:

We offer wellbeing workshops, both one-to-one and in groups, focusing on mental health and emotional resilience. These sessions provide a safe space for young people to discuss their challenges and learn coping strategies. - *Post-16 service manager, survey, Cohort 3*

For some VSH survey respondents, enrichment and wellbeing was thought to be the area where PP+ Post-16 funding could make the most difference, with one VSH stating:

Our offer for NEET learners has been very effective - without this funding there would be nothing for them. We've seen some excellent examples of how our support has directly led to improved outcomes including young people accessing meaningful employment and training. – *VSH, survey, Cohort 3*

Careers events and college/employer engagement. A few VSH survey respondents across all Cohorts reported organising job fairs, careers days, and work experience initiatives to improve young people's access to work and training opportunities.

## Targeted interventions for UASC

Several VSH survey respondents explained that a significant reason for providing tailored support to the UASC cohort using PP+ Post-16 funding was to meet a gap in support caused by the low levels of ESOL provision, and a lack of post-16 availability part way through the academic year:

The additional funding to benefit the UASC cohort has been most effective as this has enabled the VS to provide further resources in a timely and flexible way to ensure these young people have been able to access some appropriate support with their language acquisition and pathways into college, as well as enhanced activities to support their wellbeing. This is needed as college ESOL courses reach capacity and our students are having to wait for places as well as age assessment issues causing access delays. Feedback from UASC has been very positive about the interventions provided though the PP+ Post-16 funding. – *VSH, survey, Cohort 1*

The types of support for UASC commonly reported by VSH survey respondents in year 2 reflected those identified in year 1 of the evaluation, including:

- ESOL provision to support language, resulting in better exam results
- tuition to improve English and maths
- providing laptops to mitigate digital exclusion
- sports and other wellbeing initiatives to boost a sense of sense of belonging and integration
- UASC summer school provision, which provides both language support and social activities

## **Case studies: an example of how support for UASC has continued to develop**

Activity in Esterford (Cohort 2) demonstrates how support for UASC has been further developed and become more ambitious since PP+ Post-16 funding was initially received.

Esterford's VSH chose to prioritise UASC provision using its 2022-23 funding due to the size of their UASC cohort. The VS combined its PP+ Post-16 with other funding sources to increase its post-16 team, many of whom worked with their UASC cohort. Esterford has further developed its approach by looking at the geographical spread of placements for UASC within the authority. Historically, their UASC cohort had tended to be placed in a single area of Esterford due to the level of support available in that location. However, the VSH described recent work at a more strategic level to encourage CSC to place UASC in other parts of the authority, enabling young people to attend another post-16 setting offering ESOL:

But it's quite a big culture shift, isn't it, trying to get placements because actually they've got a very comfortable offer in the [name of area], where they've got additional support around the children. [...]  
And I think it's about how do you develop that placement market? But we're having those conversations at the strategic level, and I think it's just really raising the profile, isn't it? - *VSH, interview, Cohort 2*

## Activities related to joint working and the virtual school

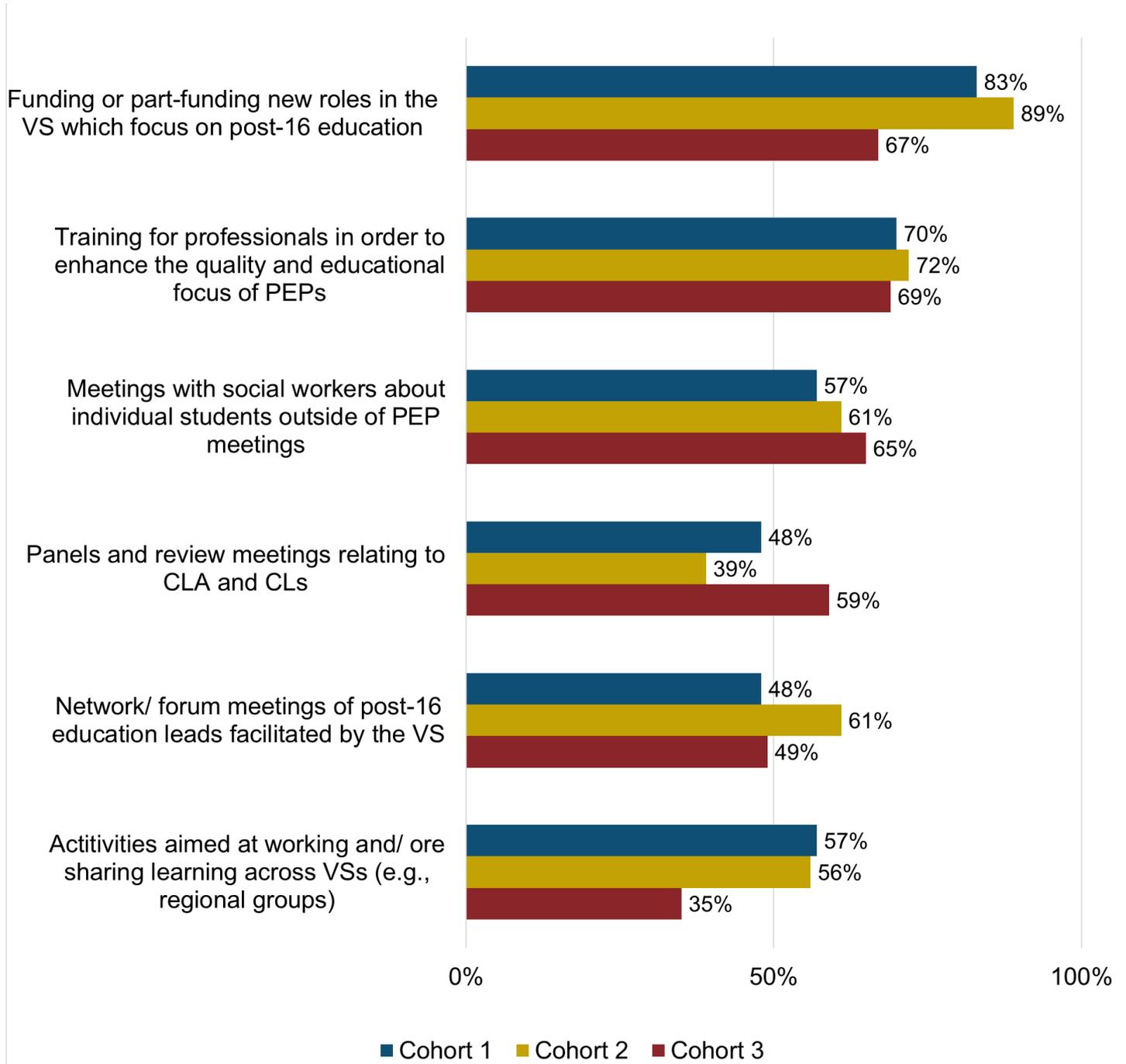
### Key messages

- Activities most commonly reported under the theme of joint working included funding or part-funding new post-16 roles in VSs, providing training on PEPs, and meeting with SWs outside of PEPs about individual CLA and CLs.
- Funding or part-funding of new roles within the VS was viewed as a particularly effective use of the funding, from which many other activities flowed. Post-16 roles in VSs were described as providing continuity to CLA and CLs, especially during transitions; bridging the gap between education and care; bringing different agencies together in a solution-focused way; providing challenge where necessary and advocating for the young person.
- Staff in VSs were described as having a key role in promoting communication; by directly engaging with post-16 education and training settings, SWs and young people, and encouraging other agencies to communicate with each other.
- Case study sites also provided examples of VSs' innovative use of funding for staffing roles outside of the VS (for example in wider local authority teams focused on post-16, or within post-16 settings to increase capacity focused on CLA and CLs).

Across all Cohorts, the activities relating to joint working most commonly reported by VSH survey respondents (see Figure 4) were:

- funding or part-funding new roles in the VS, which focus on post-16 education (69 responses, 75%)
- training for professionals to enhance the quality and educational focus of PEPs (64 responses, 70%)
- meeting with SWs about individual students outside of PEP meetings (57 responses, 62%)

**Figure 4: Thinking about the 2023-24 academic year, which activities related to joint working and the virtual school have you spent the PP+ Post-16 funding on? (n=103)**



Survey findings suggest that funding or part-funding new roles in the VS has been an increased area of focus for Cohorts 1 and 2 over the last two years, with 52% of VSHs

(n=48) reporting this in 2022-2023, compared with 85% of VSHs (n=41) reporting this in 2023-2024.<sup>20</sup>

In addition, survey and case study findings suggest that there has been an increased focus on activities aimed at sharing learning across VSs in Cohorts 1 and 2 over the last two years, with 35% of respondents (n=48) reporting this in 2022-2023, compared with 56% of respondents (n=41) in 2023-24. Given that 35% of Cohort 3 reported doing this in their first year of funding, this suggests that additional focus is placed on exchanging learning and best practice once approaches to using the PP+ Post-16 funding have been embedded, rather than in the first year of the funding.

### **Case studies: an increasing focus on sharing learning and networking at a regional level**

Cohort 1 and 2 case study sites that reported sharing learning or building networks with VSs or other partners at a regional level in year 1 describe continuing or further building on this approach.

Cartdale (Cohort 1) has continued its year 1 focus on using its increased staffing capacity at post-16 to strengthen joint working with other VSs and partners including post-16 settings. It continues to facilitate an online regional network for post-16 settings, which is very well attended and provides a forum for sharing of ideas and information by the VS and between settings themselves:

What I tend to do at these [network] meetings is get our established [leads in post-16 settings] to do a presentation, so [it] might be a presentation around transition and what model they use, or it might be a presentation around how they use the pupil premium within their provision, so the new [leads in post-16 settings] are getting that good practice. – *Assistant Virtual School Head (AVSH), Cohort 1*

As a result, the AVSH thinks that post-16 settings have a better understanding of their responsibilities and are more aware of the needs of the cohort.

Greenhollow (Cohort 3) has helped develop a regional network for VSs, building on pre-existing relationships with local VSHs. Working in this way has enabled VSs in the region to challenge post-16 settings as a group and promoted region-wide consistency in support for CLA and CLs.

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<sup>20</sup> Please note that in year 1 this activity was phrased as “Activities aimed at increasing capacity in the virtual school to focus on post-16”, and in year 2 as “Funding or part-funding new roles in the virtual school to focus on post-16”.

Survey respondents considered the following aspects of their joint working activities to have been particularly effective.

### **Funding or part-funding new roles in the virtual school**

Multiple VSH survey respondents across all Cohorts stated that funding or part-funding of new roles in the VS has been a particularly effective use of the PP+ Post-16 funding. Several respondents reported using these roles to provide direct support to young people, explaining that this had reduced the ratio of young people per member of staff in the VS, which in turn allowed them to provide more direct and tailored support, such as mentoring and attendance support. A few respondents explained that this had also ensured a consistent relationship for CLA and CLs as they navigated transitional stages (for example at the end of year 11 and the end of year 13 or equivalent):

Having a dedicated member of staff to support young people on a 1-to-1 basis has been instrumental. This approach allows us to tailor support to the specific needs of each cohort, ensuring that interventions are relevant and impactful. By focusing on individual needs, we can provide targeted assistance that helps young people transition smoothly from care into further education, employment, or training (EET)... The dedicated staff member plays a crucial role in maintaining continuity of support as young people transition out of care. This consistent support helps to build trust and provides a stable foundation for young people as they navigate this critical period. The staff member's involvement ensures that young people are less likely to become NEET by providing ongoing guidance and resources. – *Post-16 service manager, survey, Cohort 3*

Some respondents noted how increased staffing capacity in the VS had enabled them to improve working relationships with post-16 settings and CSC. This had provided them with a more comprehensive oversight of their CLA and CL cohorts at post-16.

## Case studies: partners' views on having dedicated post-16 staff within VSs

SWs, post-16 settings and carers in case study sites spoke very positively about having a single dedicated post-16 contact in VSs:

Historically before this post came in. [...] that one person seemed to be multiples of people linked to different learners and different things. And I did sometimes find that a bit higgledy-piggledy... - *Lead in post-16 setting, interview, Cohort 2*

Interviewees valued their VS contact's accessibility and responsiveness outside of PEP meetings:

We're in weekly sort of dialogue about young people. - *SW, interview, Cohort 2*

Interviewees described VS contacts as pivotal in bringing people together to find solutions. Their presence in meetings minimised 'drift and delay', which meant young people were more likely to remain engaged, and they provided consistency:

...because sometimes that child might go three or four different carers. And one [form of] stability is that virtual school, especially when they move to high school and move into further education. If they're going to supported lodgings or whatever, that virtual school representative could be the only stable point in that child's life. – *Carer, interview, Cohort 2*

VS contacts were viewed as advocating for young people and challenging and co-ordinating partners as necessary.

SWs also described appreciating the relationships that VS contacts built with individual CLA and CLs, which supported and complemented discussions that SWs may be having with young people:

One of my young people [...] He did not know what he wanted to do when he was leaving school [...], so [name of post-16 worker in VS] came out on a home visit with me, met with him and he was dead good with him because he was like 'Right, okay, let's put you on a hairdressing course' and the lad was like 'No', and he was like 'Right, so we've ruled that one out, let's start again'. So, he took it from a different approach than what I was trying and it did work. - *SW, interview, Cohort 3*

## Innovative uses of staffing

Case studies provide examples of VSHs using PP+ Post-16 to locate staff outside of the VS to strengthen joint working:

- Bridmarsh (Cohort 1): In their first year of receiving PP+ Post-16, the VSH embedded a progression coach in a local authority team involved in careers guidance to focus on the VS's post-16 cohort. The VSH described this as, "one of the most useful and impactful strategies to really try and do the NEET prevention". Bridmarsh has since expanded this approach by embedding further progression coaches into wider local authority teams:

...so that's a really nice way of working, because you get the cross-fertilisation of CPD knowledge, the working in the post-16 space, the influencing, but also, we have the flexibility then around which young people they're going to be working with. And we know that's an approach that really worked in the pilot, so that's hence the, it was a bit of a no brainer to invest in that kind of staffing. So that's how we've done it. – *VSH, interview, Cohort 1*

- Dorland (Cohort 2): The VS's initial approach to using PP+ Post-16 involved providing staffing capacity in a local post-16 setting to support PEP completion, to do specific work with UASC and those at risk of becoming NEET:

We perceived our post-16 pilot, both in terms of the funding and in terms of how we structure[d] the VS offer as being really based on the FE cohort. That where we were going to locate it, in the same way that it's fairly normal for [the] VS to locate its offer in the statutory sector within schools - you strengthen schools, you strengthen outcomes. – *VSH, interview, Cohort 2*

The VSH described how this approach had become more embedded over time, more money had been invested, and its scope had grown to include other post-16 settings in the locality.

## Multi-agency NEET panels

Many VSH survey respondents reported establishing or taking part in multi-agency NEET panels, which bring together social care, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities teams (SEND), careers services, Youth Justice Services, and other partners. Multi-agency data sharing arrangements have been used to understand causes of NEET and support coordinated responses. A few respondents described the complexities of the challenge of supporting CLA and CLs who are NEET, defining multi-agency working as a necessity for obtaining sufficient funds to carry out VS commitments:

A half-termly spreadsheet of all NEET 16-25 is shared across social care, health, SEND, and VS partners for updates, and the NEET Board meets to assign actions. There is a shared action plan for all NEET 16-25 which has worked well. – *VSH, survey, Cohort 2*

One respondent noted improvements to multi-agency working across post-16 settings and CSC to support CLA and CLs into education and training but stated that more could be done to support CLA and CLs into employment at post-18. Considering the extension of duties of care up to 25, they suggested a need for additional initiatives and support from other government departments to tackle youth unemployment and youth offending such as Department for Work and Pensions and the Ministry of Justice:

Older children need support for work. The virtual school is embedded within the DfE but is trying to work with other areas without guide rails or support. [...] we now need support and funding from the DWP, MOJ etc.  
- *VSH, survey, Cohort 3*

## **Using a flexible and creative approach to retain CLA and CLs in post-16**

Interviewees in case study sites described situations where the VS and post-16 settings worked jointly to find creative and flexible solutions to keep individual CLA and CLs in post-16 education, supported by PP+ Post-16 funding. For example, in one Cohort 3 site, multi-agency discussion led to one post-16 setting allowing a young person who had been excluded to return to a different course without waiting until the following academic year, whilst the VS arranged English and maths tuition in the intervening period:

There was a clear disciplinary message that was sent by all parties to the student. There was an interim period where that person still progressed within their education [...] and then they re-joined us [in name of month] and they are making great progress. [...] What happened was that the VS stepped in to provide support alongside a plan through which that person did not drop. They were still part of education that had been successful. – *Lead in post-16 setting, interview, Cohort 3*

## Activities related to post-16 education and training settings

### Key messages

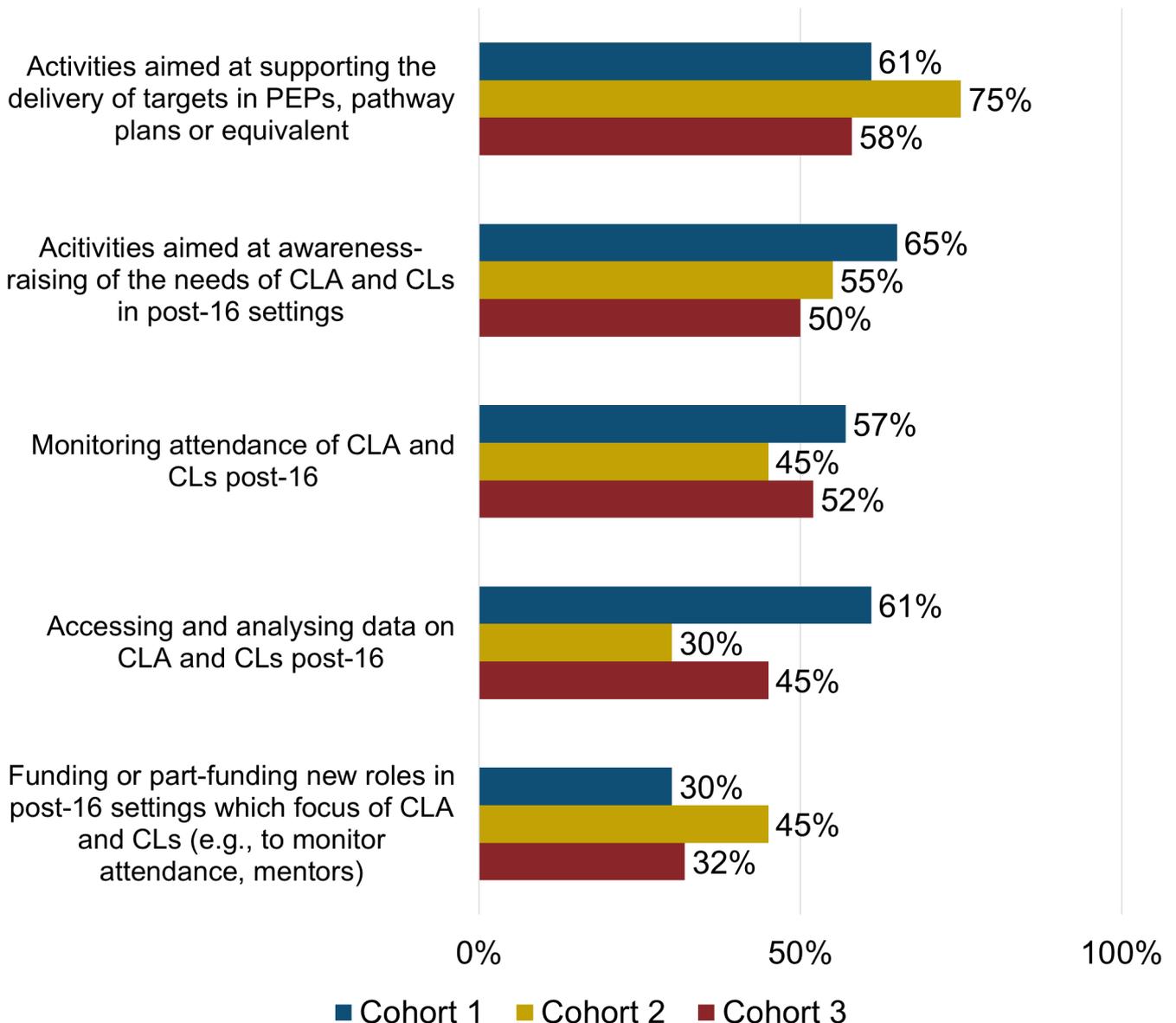
- The activities related to post-16 settings that survey respondents most commonly reported were those aimed at supporting the delivery of targets in PEPs, pathway plans or equivalent; activities aimed at awareness-raising of the needs of CLA and CLs in post-16 settings; and monitoring attendance of CLA and CLs post-16.
- Most activities involved VS staff working jointly with staff in post-16 settings rather than allocating PP+ Post-16 funding to the settings themselves to use (for example sharing transition information with post-16 settings or delivering staff training).
- Effective communication between welfare and curriculum staff in post-16 settings was viewed as important to establish support for CLA and CLs and achieve PEP targets, and case study interviewees described VSs as having a valuable role in promoting this.

Across all cohorts, the most commonly reported activities relating to post-16 settings (see Figure 5) in the 2023-2024 academic year were:

- activities aimed at supporting the delivery of targets in PEPs, pathway plans or equivalent (64 respondents, 62%)
- activities aimed at awareness-raising of the needs of CLA and CLs in post-16 settings (56 respondents, 54%)
- monitoring attendance of CLA and CLs at post-16 (53 respondents, 51%)

Reflecting the findings in Decision making and allocation of PP+ Post-16 to different activities and consistent with year 1 of the evaluation, fewer VSs reported using the PP+ Post-16 funding on activities related to post-16 settings than on direct work with young people.

**Figure 5: Thinking about the 2023-24 academic year, which activities related to post-16 settings have you spent the PP+ Post-16 funding on? (n=103)**



When asked to describe examples of effective practice in this area, VSH survey respondents gave the following examples.

### Training and support for staff and leaders in post-16 settings

A few respondents across all Cohorts used PP+ Post-16 funding to increase the knowledge and understanding of post-16 staff, from DTs through to more senior management roles. This was seen to be effective due to improvements in relationships between agencies and between staff and young people, and improved strategic focus.

Responses from Cohort 3 also included a greater focus on supporting post-16 settings to recruit new posts, such as mentors, as well as upskilling existing staff:

Investing in supporting our further education and training providers to support our young people and identify additional support the young people may need, raising these for discussion within PEP meetings, identifying training gaps within settings and offering workshops in understanding relational approaches and an offer of trauma informed training has been well received. – *VSH, survey, Cohort 3*

Few VSH survey respondents reported working directly with training providers, with most respondents working with individual sixth-forms, colleges and FE providers. However, one respondent described working closely with training providers to improve understanding of the needs of CLA and CLs surrounding trauma and attachment:

We are working with not only large settings but small, independent training providers on attachment/trauma understanding for our cohort and how this could impact young people accessing education. We are emphasising the importance of NEET, and appropriate courses for young people. – *Deputy VSH, survey, Cohort 3*

Further information about the training and guidance provided by the VS is set out in Training provided by virtual schools below.

## Case studies: the importance of involving post-16 curriculum staff

Both leads in post-16 settings and SWs acknowledged the importance and potential challenge of communication and joint working between welfare and curriculum staff in post-16 settings:

But when you then say, “No, this young person needs a chance,” when you've done that a long time and [you] know to trust your gut instinct, it makes it easier. But you can't do it, if you've got a curriculum that battle you on it. And it does. A lot of that is about proving if you do it like this curriculum, you won't get that battle. If you speak to them like this, then that won't happen. And a lot of it is getting all of your knowledge you can in roles like mine and then helping curriculum. – *Lead in a post-16 setting, Cohort 1*

SWs and carers described the impact on young people of joined up working between welfare and curriculum staff. One carer described contacting a college following a transition visit where welfare and curriculum staff had worked in a joined-up way:

She's buzzing about college now. She was scared earlier on. Can you please pass my thanks on to the tutor because she was given yellow paper 'cause she's got a [health condition]? She has to have coloured paper. Thanked her 'cause she was amazed that she got this yellow paper to read something off. – *Carer, Cohort 2*

Considering this, post-16 leads described introducing training and processes to ensure that information was shared effectively and to raise awareness amongst curriculum colleagues of the needs of CLA and CLs (for example ensuring staff had access to student profile information including an individual's triggers or anything staff should be aware of; sharing PEP targets and reminders; training to understand the impact of trauma):

So yeah, if a teacher contacts someone but they haven't told somebody else, and usually if they put in our tracking system, I can see that, and I'll pass it on and make sure everyone knows. So yeah, we try to involve people. It should be a collaborative effort. – *Lead in a post-16 setting, Cohort 2*

Interviewees suggested that VSs played a valuable role in ensuring that information about CLA and CL's needs, agreed support and PEP targets did not fall between the cracks.

## Sharing transition information

Interviews in case study sites suggest there has been an increased focus on meetings between the VS and post-16 settings to share transition information and review the needs and support for CLA and CLs, particularly around year 11 transition into post-16.

A recent development in Cartdale (Cohort 2) was the introduction of transition meetings with local post-16 settings, described as mirroring the process between primary and secondary school transition. The transition meetings are used to review progress of current students and discuss the transition of new students at year 11 or those transferring in from other provision in years 12 or 13:

There are the young people, these are their support needs if any and these are the ones with EHCPs (Education, Health and Care Plans). So [post-16 providers] have that information before September and they have really, really appreciated that. We've had a lot of positive feedback about that, the transition meetings, and we've said that they will continue.

– AVSH, *interview, Cohort 1*

The VS in Greenhollow (Cohort 3) had also done significant work to strengthen transition support for its CLA and CLs: ensuring that post-16 settings have timely information to support transition of young people with EHCPs; advocating on behalf of young people for settings to exercise some flexibility where they do not have the exact entry requirements for a course; and working with settings to identify year 10 and 11s in need of support:

I think also another thing you know, working backwards, you know, the earlier you prepare for leaving school the better – VSH, *interview, Cohort*

3

## Training provided by virtual schools

### Key messages

- The training offer from the majority of VSs has continued to evolve shaped by VSs' own increased understanding of CLA and CL needs, and in response to audience feedback.
- VSs most frequently provided training to post-16 education and training settings, followed by SWs, with the proportion of VSs delivering training to these audiences increasing since year 1 of the evaluation.
- PEPs and SMART targets, and trauma and attachment were the most frequently delivered training topics.
- A substantial number of VSs in Cohorts 1 and 2 reported that they increased their focus on training in 2023 to 2024 in response to: the changing needs of CLA and CLs (for example increased UASC or SEND cohorts); VSs' increased understanding of CLA and CLs' needs; and positive feedback to previous training.

As set out in the ToC in Theory of Change, the provision of training and guidance by VSs includes activities related to both joint working and post-16 settings. This section provides more detail on each.

VSH survey respondents who had used PP+ Post-16 funding to deliver training were asked to indicate which audiences they had delivered training to in 2023-2024. This showed that training was most frequently delivered to staff in post-16 settings, followed by SWs, VS staff and finally carers.

In comparison to year 1 of the evaluation, there has been an increase in the proportion of VSH survey respondents who had delivered training to staff in post-16 settings and SWs:

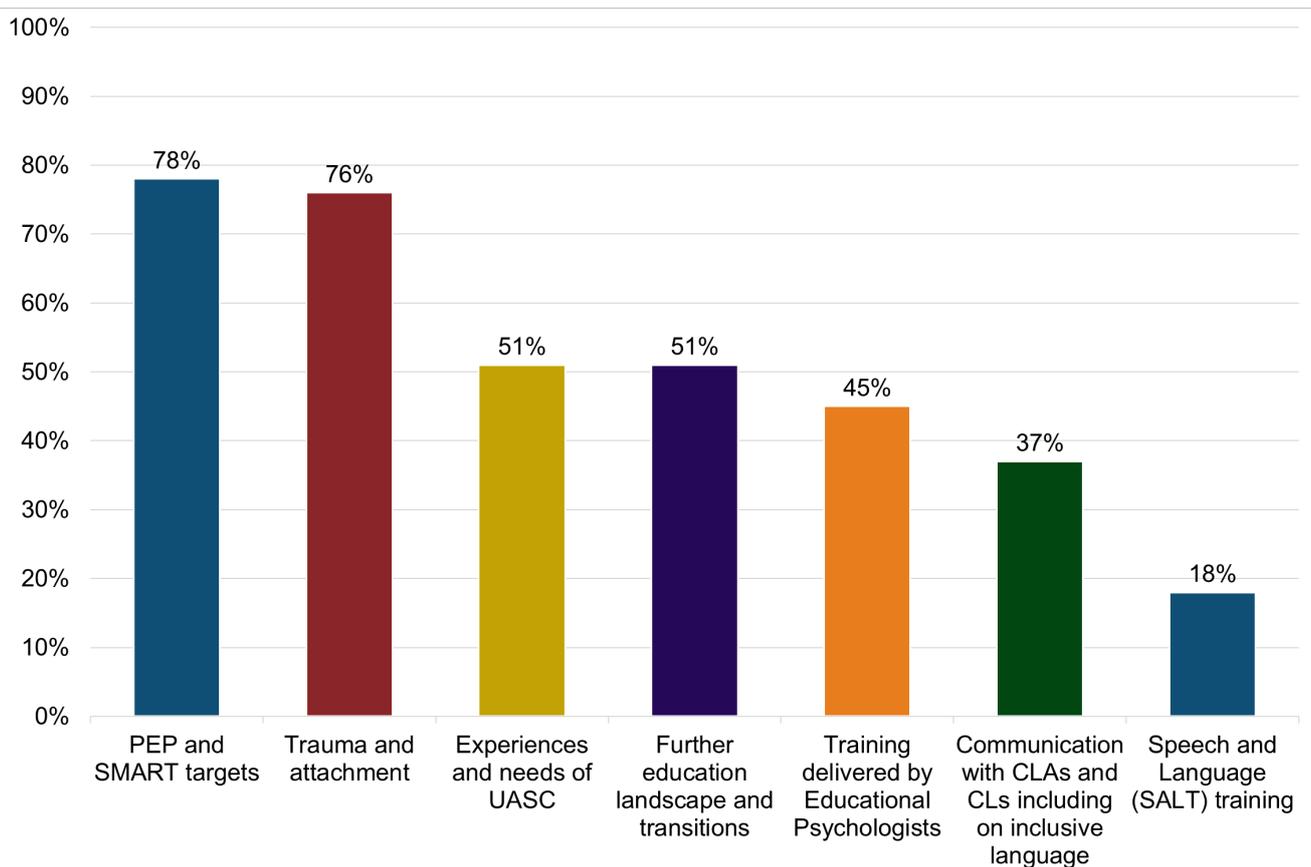
- delivery of training to staff in post-16 settings increased from 63% (n= 114) of VSH survey respondents in the 2022-2023 academic year compared to 86% (n=102) in 2023-24
- delivery of training to SWs increased from 54% (n= 114) of VSH survey respondents in 2022-2023 to 71% (n=102) in 2023-24

Training was most commonly delivered on the following topics, as reported by VSH survey respondents (see Figure 6):

- PEP and SMART targets (80 virtual schools, 78%)

- trauma and attachment (78 virtual schools, 76%)
- experiences and needs of UASC (52 virtual schools, 51%)
- FE landscape and transitions (52 virtual schools, 51%)

**Figure 6 A breakdown of categories that training was delivered on across the Cohorts (n=102)**



The topics covered by training fall broadly into two categories, those relating to processes and systems for supporting CLA and CLs (for example PEPs and SMART targets; understanding the post-16 landscape) and those that relate to understanding the needs of CLA and CLs (for example trauma and attachment or experiences and needs of UASC). This reflects some of the activities described earlier in this chapter around understanding the needs of different cohorts of focus and attempting to improve practice across the system.

Survey findings suggest that some VSs in Cohorts 1 and 2 increased their focus on delivering training using the PP+ Post-16 funding in 2023-2024 in comparison to previous years. 53% (10 responses) of Cohort 2 respondents, and 41% (9 responses) of Cohort 1 survey respondents reported that more training has been delivered.

VSH survey respondents who reported that their training provision had changed over time were asked to elaborate on the reasons for this, and highlighted the following themes:

Changing cohort. Many respondents reported that their training provision had changed in response to the changing needs of the CLA and CL cohort, particularly to the increased numbers of UASC in their VS. A few respondents reported reacting to an increase in SEND or mental health and wellbeing needs.

Improved understanding of CLA and CLs' needs. Several respondents across all Cohorts stated they had altered their training provision based on improvements in their understanding of CLA and CLs' needs. They explained that their training provision had been shaped by insights from PEPs, closer multi-agency working relationships, feedback from staff and foster carers, and efforts to incorporate the voice of post-16 CLA and CLs. This had resulted in increased training provision on educational transition points and trauma and attachment training.

Extending training reach. Many respondents highlighted expanding the number of staff receiving training compared to previous years. In Cohorts 1 and 2, this was commonly described as a response to positive feedback on the quality and impact of their training, resulting in a desire to roll this out further. Some respondents in Cohort 1 and 2 mentioned consolidating their previous offer through refresher training and expanding training to reach new staff:

We are also asking that the local authority makes trauma training part of the induction for all staff - a universal and targeted training approach. We have also introduced virtual reality (VR) units to help those attending our training to really have experience of how our children feel. It is one thing to say I understand and another to walk in their shoes. – *VSH, survey, Cohort 3*

Reduction in training. A few respondents in Cohorts 1 and 2 reported a reduction in the amount of training provided in comparison with previous years, due to staffing issues or EET providers being unable to provide time to engage with training.

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

This chapter presents the findings relating to the implementation of PP+ Post-16 funding, addressing the following overarching evaluation question:

- what are the enablers and barriers to delivery from the perspective of professional stakeholders for CLA and CLs?

The chapter first discusses the perceived enablers, then the barriers, and concludes by discussing VS perspectives on the funding levels and processes.

The findings in this chapter draw on data from the national VSH survey and the qualitative data from case study interviews. We include perspectives from VSHs, and professional stakeholders in CSC and education.

### Key messages

- The most frequently reported perceived enablers to the effective use of PP+ Post-16 include flexibility in how PP+ Post-16 can be spent; new staff to provide support to CLA and CLs at post-16; and good use of the PEP system.
- The most frequently reported barriers to the effective use of PP+ Post-16 include growing cohorts and increasing levels of need; and uncertainty around the PP+ Post-16 funding duration.
- Other examples of challenges identified by VSHs included insufficient funding levels; a shortage of post-16 provision, particularly mid-year and for ESOL; and unexpected levels of need amongst their CLA and CL cohorts.
- VSHs in case study sites gave examples of progress overcoming barriers, including post-16 settings becoming more familiar with permitted uses of the funding, and progress made in supporting CLA and CLs educated out of area.

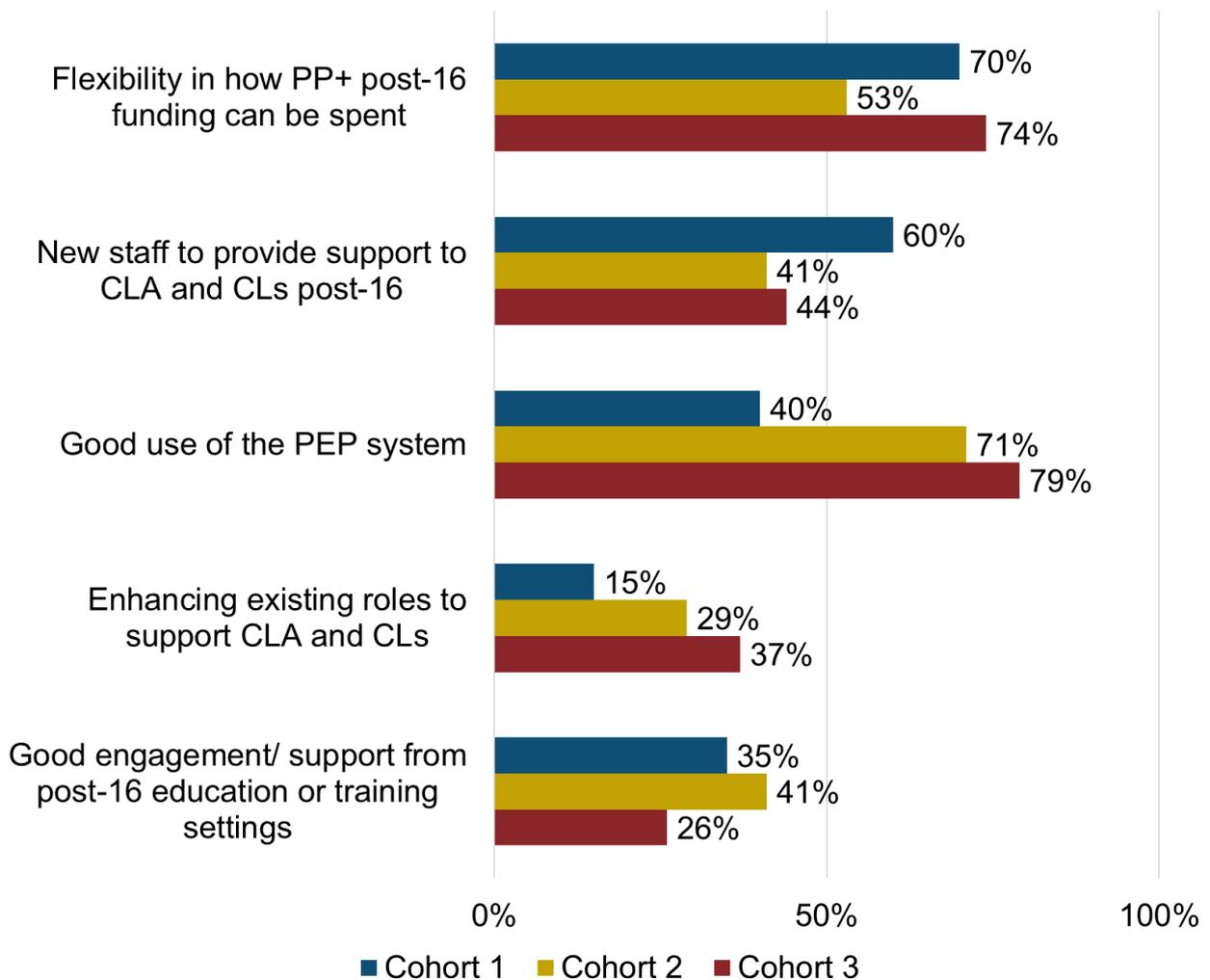
## Perceived enablers

Based on the VSH survey, the factors most frequently reported to enable VSs to deliver their plans for using PP+ Post-16 were (see Figure 7):

- flexibility in how PP+ Post-16 funding can be spent (63 responses, 69%)
- new staff to provide support to CLA and CLs at Post-16 (43 responses, 47%)

- good use of the PEP system (41 responses, 45%)

**Figure 7: In the 2023-24 academic year, what have been the three most significant factors enabling the delivery of your plans for the use of PP+ Post-16 funding? (n= 91)**



This largely reflects findings from year 1 of the evaluation,<sup>21</sup> where 64% of VSs stated that ‘new staff, or enhancing existing roles, enabling cover of CLA and CLs post-16’, had been a significant enabler of their plans. There has been a slight decrease over time in the number of VSs stating that ‘good engagement/ support from post-16 education or training settings’ has enabled their plans: in year 1 of the evaluation, this was the second

<sup>21</sup> Please note that “Flexibility in how PP+ Post-16 funding can be spent” was not provided as an option in the year 1 VSH survey but was incorporated in year 2 of the evaluation to reflect learning from the year 1 survey.

most frequently reported enabler, with 57% of respondents selecting this option. This reduced to 31% (28 out of 91 respondents) in year 2 of the evaluation.

### **Case studies: what flexibility means to case study sites**

Multiple interviewees welcomed having the ability to use PP+ Post-16 flexibly and gave very varied examples of its use. Consistent themes were the importance of responding to individual need and looking beyond narrow educational needs:

So, it's about having that holistic approach and looking at the big picture of what is right for that young person. – *DT, Cohort 1*

Reflecting the case study findings in year 1 of the evaluation, interviewees described the funding being used to support more holistic or wellbeing focused activities, seen as providing the foundation to engagement and learning. For example, one post-16 setting used some funding to provide health or wellbeing bags for students:

...it was basically a gift bag. And your fitness one had like a Fitbit and some gym stuff, and your resistance bands and all that kind of stuff, and then your wellbeing one had your fidget toys and your self-care, smellies and that kind of stuff. – *Lead in post-16 setting, Cohort 2*

One VSH described using PP+ Post-16 to ensure that CLA and CLs had course equipment in time for the start of their course in the same way as their peers:

So we've had young people come to us, and carers, and say they need all this equipment, they're doing a motor vehicle, they need the tool kit and the uniform and all that and the bursary's not going to be given to them until October because colleges don't give the bursary until four to six weeks after.... Now we can step in and say we can provide that funding for you so the young person is ready, it's a positive transition, they're not feeling like they're left out - everybody else has got their kit and they've got to wait until the end of October for theirs so there's a lot of things that are really positive about it. – *VSH, Cohort 1*

Flexibility also extended to being able to request use of the funding when need arose and not only during termly PEP meetings.

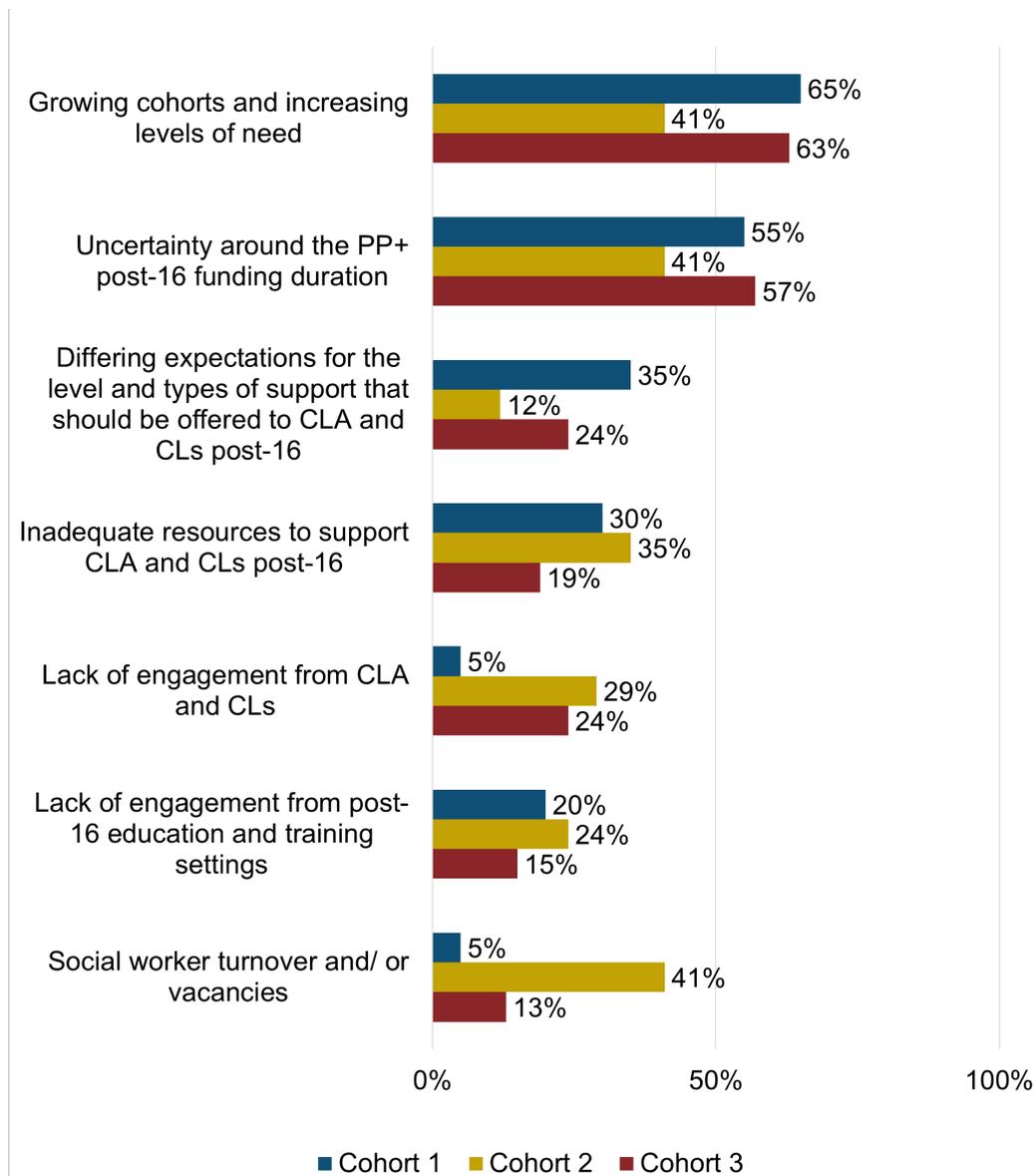
## Perceived barriers

Based on the VSH survey responses, the most commonly reported barriers to the use of PP+ Post-16 identified across all Cohorts were:

- growing cohorts and increasing levels of need (54 responses, 59%)
- uncertainty around the PP+ Post-16 funding duration (49 responses, 54%)

Figure 8 provides further detail, showing the seven largest perceived barriers (out of a possible 15 response options in the survey).

**Figure 8: In the 2023-24 academic year, what were the three most significant barriers or challenges you encountered in putting your plans for the use of PP+ Post-16 funding into practice? (n= 91)**



VSH survey respondents were asked to describe any challenges they encountered in the delivery of post-16 support in the 2023-24 academic year, and reported the following themes:

**Insufficient funding levels.** Insufficient funding levels was a common concern amongst respondents, who cited increases in the size of the post-16 CLA and CL cohort as a driver of this challenge. Some respondents in Cohorts 1 and 2 explained how their funding levels per young person had fallen since previous years, and those in Cohort 3 stated that they had hoped for a higher level of funding per young person. They explained that low funding levels limited what they were able to do and had forced them to prioritise providing support for some young people over others:

The ongoing challenge is funding. We are supporting [hundreds of] children with [very few] staff. We could do so much more with a better staff/pupil ratio. – *VSH, survey, Cohort 2*

The section below (Perspectives of virtual schools on funding levels and processes) provides further discussion of the impact of funding levels on case study sites.

**Uncertainty around funding duration.** Linked to funding levels, uncertainty over the duration of the funding was commonly mentioned as a barrier to implementing longer-term initiatives and support. Several VSH survey respondents reported that this complicated planning and that, while increasing VS capacity to support post-16 CLA and CLs had been a key priority for them, recruiting and retaining key members of staff was challenging without guaranteed funding year-on-year:

We have such a short time to utilise the funding and given how it's time limited, with no stability year-on-year, it's difficult for us to channel any long-term plans within the cohort. Our school improvement plan is centred around three-year goals in our journey - unfortunately the time limited element means many plans we have for post-16 have often been short notice or one-off projects, nor can we enhance our structure further with permanent or longer-term posts. – *Deputy VSH, survey, Cohort 3*

**Shortage of post-16 provision.** Several VSH survey respondents reported challenges resulting from a wider issue of a lack of EET places at post-16 level, particularly for young people seeking to enter education mid-year, and for young people with ESOL needs:

Lack of places in colleges/post-16 provision is having a significant impact on aspirations and self-efficacy - there are very limited opportunities. This in turn impacts on the move from NEET to EET. – *VSH, survey, Cohort 3*

Unexpected levels of need. Some respondents, particularly in Cohort 3, faced unexpected levels of need in their CLA and CL cohorts, especially amongst young people who were NEET or UASC. They highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic had led to increased levels of mental ill health and anxiety, which required additional, targeted and person-centred support to encourage participation in EET:

[Challenges have arisen due to the] complexities of the young people - particularly since COVID. We know they are capable but their anxieties, lack of confidence and wellbeing prevent them from accessing EET. - *Post-16 advisor in VS, survey, Cohort 3.*

Unclear expectations around the use of the PP+ Post-16 funding. Some respondents, particularly in Cohort 3, also said that challenges had arisen from unclear expectations about what PP+ Post-16 funding could or should be used for. A few respondents stated that they would welcome further guidance on this from DfE to pre-empt some of the challenges they have faced ringfencing the funding locally.

Challenges engaging post-16 providers. A few respondents reported challenges engaging with staff in post-16 settings. Examples included difficulties engaging EET provider staff in PEP meetings, which was perceived as being particularly due to the lack of a statutory DT role. Respondents also highlighted difficulties navigating college finance and inconsistent bursary systems between colleges:

Changes to the bursary and the way that settings are stopping the way it is paid is a huge challenge. Many of our young people rely on that funding to help them survive, and PP+ shouldn't be used for that. What we did notice is that when we gave out rewards vouchers, our young people chose supermarket vouchers to help them with their shopping. - *VSH, survey, Cohort 3*

Wider issues. A few respondents mentioned difficulties arising from wider issues such as social care placement turnover, out of area placements, housing and benefits:

Instability of social care placements and social worker changes have impacted consistency in education engagement. When young people are moved to different borough or cities during the academic year it can be difficult to get them onto a suitable course of their choosing. – *VSH, survey, Cohort 3*

## Case studies: examples of barriers changing over time

Some staff in post-16 settings and SWs in Cohorts 1 and 2 reported feeling less uncertain about the permitted uses of PP+ Post-16 as they have become more familiar with its use and VSs have developed or refined their guidance and processes. One lead in a post-16 setting described what had helped to overcome their initial nervousness about using the funding:

...so, I think part of it is the confidence of knowing, “So can we spend it on this?” “Yeah, fine.” And it's like, okay, so we've got in the flow of those things. So, some of that is sense checking it with [the] VS. Some of it is like the forums, like the DT forum where we can share together. I had a couple of those type meetings in the first year where it was actually other colleges saying, “Oh, well, we've spent a few [pounds] doing this trip to the museum,” or something, and I'd [be] like, “Have you? How have you done that?” So, a lot of it is confidence and practice using it, but then also sharing best practice and sharing ideas with other colleges or from the VS. – *Lead in post-16 setting, Cohort 1*

One VSH reported that linking PP+ Post-16 with PEP completion had helped encourage more SWs to follow the post-16 PEP guidance:

A lot of the resistant [SWs] have [become less so], mainly because of the funding and they know that unless the PEP is completed and they attend the PEP and they arrange the PEP, there is no funding because obviously the funding is linked to the PEP meeting being held and completed and they're very aware of that. – *VSH, Cohort 1*

VSHs in two case study sites (Cohorts 1 and 3) highlighted progress made in addressing the challenge of supporting CLA and CLs educated out of area, and the previous lack of parity with those ‘in area’. In both cases, VSHs had used some of their PP+ Post-16 to fund careers/progression coaches focused specifically on their out of area cohorts.

Case study sites did, however, also describe other barriers remaining (for example the challenge for post-16 settings of working with multiple VSs each with their own PEP templates, and administrative challenges of transferring sums of money to post-16 settings).

## Perspectives of virtual schools on funding levels and processes

### Key messages

- VSHs from the case study sites support increasing PP+ Post-16 to be closer to the statutory school-age Pupil Premium Plus grant. They emphasise that the needs of care-experienced young people do not diminish after age 16 and argue for a consistent per-pupil funding formula up to age 18.
- VSHs highlighted the inconsistency between local authorities in the levels of funding available for post-16 in VSs, creating disparity in levels of staffing and support.
- Suggestions on how to amend the funding model included setting a core amount for VS staffing, topped up with individual allocations per eligible young person.
- Financial-year payments and late funding announcements can make planning difficult and cause uncertainty for staff.

Case study interviews from years 1 and 2 of the evaluation highlight how levels of post-16 resource can vary between individual VSs. In addition to the amount of PP+ Post-16 allocated, the VSH's ability to support CLA and CLs at post-16 depends on whether they had a pre-existing post-16 offer and staffing; and what other funds or resources they can leverage or access to enhance their post-16 provision.

Previous sections have described how case study sites have approached post-16 provision in different ways depending upon their available funding, existing resources and local need, as well as how case study sites had used their PP+ Post-16 funding either entirely for direct support for CLA and CLs or VS staffing, or spread across several activities. The following section describes VSHs' perspectives on the level of PP+ Post-16 funding and some related operational factors affecting use of the funding.

### Funding levels

When asked about the ideal level of future PP+ Post-16 funding, VSHs in case study sites agreed that, given the cost of the activities (see Average amount spent on direct support per CLA and CL), the ideal rate for PP+ Post-16 would be closer to the statutory school-age Pupil Premium Plus grant: <sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> In 2024-25 this was £2,570 per CLA and previously looked after child <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium> [Last accessed 16/04/2025]

We need to make sure things are aligned and don't drop off at 16. We expect young people in EET up to 18 but their individual funding goes up to 16. Are children any less important when they turn 16? DfE needs more funding from the Treasury, with a consistent per pupil formula all the way up to 18. – *VSH, interview, Cohort 2*

## Funding processes

VSHs provided the following suggestions on funding processes and monitoring:

**Monitoring processes:** Generally, VSHs welcomed the fact that the DfE does not request reporting on how the funding is spent, stating that this was proportionate and reduced workload. However, they did reflect that this meant that it could be challenging to make the case within local authorities for ringfencing the funding (for example to avoid claw back or repurposing of funding at the end of the financial year), and that it also makes evidencing the use and impact of the funding difficult for the DfE. One VSH suggested a balance could be found by introducing non-onerous reporting requirements to protect use of the funding locally and provide evidence of use and impact nationally.

**Academic year vs financial year:** PP+ Post-16 funding was paid in two payments in line with the financial year: the first paid in September 2023, and the second paid in January 2024. VSHs described the challenge of then using the funding to pay for staff roles covering the academic year. While it is positive that the funding is Section 31 (and therefore can be carried over if needed), VSHs stated that whether they were able to do this was very much at the discretion of their local authority financial teams:

I think it should be academic year for the funding. VSs work the same as the schools; it should be September to July. You get emails that the funding should be spent by 31st April, but we're planning for spring/summer term together as that's all-around support for exams and transitions. If you're told you need to spend by April, how can you plan for most important terms? We had to beg our finance teams to let us carry over some of the PP+ funding, otherwise they'd have asked for it back. – *VSH, interview, Cohort 1*

**Notice on funding extensions:** VSHs agreed that it would help forward planning if the DfE were able to provide more advanced notice of extensions to PP+ Post-16 funding, as confirmation in May or June about funding to be paid in September created challenges and could preclude strategic, longer-term activities. In addition, it created uncertainty and anxiety for VS team members whose posts were funded using PP+ Post-16, as to whether their roles would continue to be funded. One VSH suggested that announcing funding in 3-year cycles would avoid this annual cliff edge.

## Emerging outcomes

This chapter sets out evidence of perceived progress against the outcomes in the ToC as reported by VSHs, addressing the following overarching evaluation questions:

- how successful are the participating sites in delivering the intended longer-term outcomes for the cohort (attendance, engagement, retention, attainment and increased numbers in EET)?
- what are the short-term and interim outcomes for the cohort, post-16 education and training settings, and the wider stakeholders?
- do apparent outcomes vary by site and are there any elements of what each of the sites are delivering that lead to specific outcomes?

We organise the findings by the three categories of outcomes in the ToC: for young people, for joint working, and for post-16 settings. Within each category, short-term, interim and long-term outcomes are presented separately, aligned with the ToC:

- direct work with young people
- activities relating to joint working and the VS
- activities related to post-16 education and training settings

The findings in this chapter draw on data from the national VSH survey<sup>23</sup> and the qualitative data from case study interviews. We include perspectives from VSHs, professional stakeholders in CSC and education, and carers of CLA and CLs.

## Anticipated timeline for outcomes

Please note that evidence relating to outcomes is emerging and preliminary. The short-term and interim outcomes set out in the ToC and described below should be considered mechanisms for achieving the long-term outcomes.

Table 13 sets out when each Cohort started to receive PP+ Post-16 funding, and the anticipated timeframe for outcomes to emerge for each Cohort. These timeframes were co-developed with VSHs during the ToC workshops over the course of the evaluation.

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<sup>23</sup> Please note that the survey findings relating to outcomes for young people are not directly comparable to year 1 of the evaluation, which asked VSHs the extent to which they agreed that outcomes are starting to be seen for CLA and CLs in their VS, i.e., using a Likert Scale that ranged from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. In year 2, VSH survey respondents were asked to estimate the proportion of young people for whom each outcome has been achieved, to provide a greater sense of scale.

**Table 13: Anticipated timeframe for outcomes (based on academic years)**

<b>Anticipated timeframe for outcomes</b>	<b>Cohort 1 (n=30)</b>	<b>Cohort 2 (n=28)</b>	<b>Cohort 3 (n=94)</b>
Date funding was first received	Autumn 2021	Autumn 2022	Autumn 2023
Anticipated timeframe for short-term outcomes	End of 2022 to 2023	End of 2022 to 2023	End of 2023 to 2024
Anticipated timeframe for interim outcomes	End of 2023 to 2024	End of 2023 to 2024	End of 2024 to 2025
Anticipated timeframe for long-term outcomes	End of 2025 to 2026	End of 2025 to 2026	End of 2026 to 2027

Data collection for the evaluation ended in spring 2025, and the VSH survey requested data relating to the academic year 2023-24. As such, we would expect to see short-term and interim outcomes for Cohorts 1 and 2, and short-term outcomes for Cohort 3.

## Outcomes for young people

### Key messages

- In the VSH survey, the 4 most commonly reported outcomes achieved for young people were: increased awareness of EET options (interim outcome); CLA and CLs build trusting relationships with an adult (short-term outcome); CLA and CLs are enrolled on an appropriate course (interim outcome); and CLA and CLs have a positive role model (short-term outcome).
- Findings from the VSH survey and case studies show that activities such as working with a tutor or receiving support to engage in sport or wellbeing activities are perceived as helping young people develop trusting relationships with adults and provide positive role models. This may provide a foundation to increase CLA and CLs' awareness of their EET options, helping to ensure they are enrolled on an appropriate course and in turn supporting their engagement in education.
- Analysis of national data sets for the 2018-2023 period, capturing data for children at year 11 and their corresponding outcomes in years 12 and 13, did not find any programme effects at a national level. However, this is not unexpected as data were only available up to the 2022 to 2023 academic year and the timeline in the ToC anticipates that longer-term outcomes will not emerge until 2025 to 2026 for Cohorts 1 and 2, and 2026 to 2027 for Cohort 3.
- Although the timeline in the ToC anticipates that the long-term outcomes will not yet have been achieved, VSHs perceived outcomes emerging. In particular, VSHs reported increased retention in EET and described a number of activities intended to support this (for example work with those identified as at risk of becoming NEET or who were already NEET).

### Short-term outcomes

The short-term outcomes for young people most frequently observed by VSH survey respondents were:

- CLA and CLs build trusting relationships with an adult
- CLA and CLs see a positive role model

Table 14 sets out the proportion of VSHs who have reported that each of the short-term outcomes for young people identified in the ToC are being achieved for 51% to 100% (i.e., more than half) of the young people in their VS in the 2023-2024 academic year. This shows that 73% of all respondents reported that CLA and CLs are building trusted relationships with an adult, and 64% reported that at least half of young people are

seeing positive role models. However, fewer respondents reported that this has translated to increased skills on their CVs, with only 44% of respondents reporting this to be true in their VS. In year 1 of the evaluation, more respondents agreed that they were starting to see CLA and CLs adding skills to their CV than agreed that they had seen either of the other two short-term outcomes, so it is possible that the relationship-based outcomes have taken slightly longer to emerge.

**Table 14: Proportion of VSHs who agreed that the following short-term outcomes have been achieved for 51% to 100% of CLAs and CLs in the 2023-24 academic year (n=81)<sup>24</sup>**

Outcome	Time-frame <sup>25</sup>	Cohort 1 (n=18)	Cohort 2 (n=15)	Cohort 3 (n=48)	Total (n=81)
CLA and CLs build trusting relationships with an adult	Short term	14 (78%)	15 (100%)	30 (63%)	59 (73%)
CLA and CLs see a positive role model	Short term	13 (72%)	12 (80%)	27 (56%)	52 (64%)
CLA and CLs have added skills to their CV	Short term	12 (67%)	6 (40%)	18 (38%)	36 (44%)

Building trusted relationships: The outcome most frequently mentioned by VSH survey respondents in open-text responses was building trusted and consistent relationships with adults, through activities such as mentoring, tuition, and sports and wellbeing support. VSHs and post-16 staff in VSs across all 3 Cohorts described how consistent relationships helped young people to be more open about their needs, challenges and interests:

Building trusting relationships with my team - we become the trusted adults who can support when all around them fails. This means they are more likely to engage in meaningful workshops, activities, tuition, trips etc where we are present, building on the 'family feeling' to secure engagement. – *Post-16 Lead in VS, survey, Cohort 3*

<sup>24</sup> Overall, 105 out of 148 VSHs responded to the survey. The figure shown in brackets represents the number of VSHs who answered this survey question.

<sup>25</sup> Short-term outcomes for Cohorts 1 and 2 were anticipated to emerge by the end of 2022 to 2023 and for Cohort 3 by the end of 2023 to 2024.

### **A case study example: empowering the network around a young person**

The VSH in Bridmarsh (Cohort 1) emphasised the importance of individual interactions with young people to build up trusting relationships and affect change:

...it's all about the individual person who does not go away, who will go the extra mile, and that in this climate where there's a squeeze on resources and all of that stuff, is more difficult than before, but it's what makes the difference. It's what has to happen. – *VSH, Cohort 1*

As part of this approach, the VSH highlighted the importance of supporting the adults in a young person's network:

...part of our wider approach, as you say actually, is to equip and resource and empower whoever it is that has the best relationship with the young person, to do that stuff. – *VSH, Cohort 1*

An example of how Bridmarsh VS has empowered the adults in young people's networks is their interactive career guidance tool for lay people, developed using learning from their early use of PP+ Post-16 with young people who were NEET.

CLA and CLs see a positive role model: Several VSH survey respondents gave examples of activities providing CLA and CLs with a positive role model, which they viewed as increasing young people's aspirations, goals and ambitions. In particular, VSH survey respondents linked having a positive role model with the new post-16 roles in VSs:

Each young person in KS5 now has an allocated Virtual School link as their first point of contact, a role model and advocate/champion. This supports aspirations, retention and earlier intervention with a range of options, such as mentoring or a[n] educational psychology assessment.  
– *VSH, survey, Cohort 3*

The survey and case studies suggest that activities using PP+ Post-16 relating to young people, including tuition, participation in wellbeing or sporting activities, and VS staff working directly with CLA and CLs, have helped build trusting relationships and provided positive role models. It is also possible that VS staff provide a consistent relationship with CLA and CLs at a time when they may be leaving school, changing SW or beginning to move towards independence.

### **Case study examples: SWs appreciating the commitment of VS staff**

SWs in several case study sites described the commitment towards young people of post-16 staff in VSs, including regularly checking in or taking calls from young people, taking them to interviews or college open days, getting to know young people's interests and aspirations, identifying suitable opportunities, and celebrating young people's achievements:

I feel like with my children she goes above and beyond. So, like I say I've got some quite complex teenagers and I don't know what [name of VS post-16 lead]'s expected to do in her job, but for me the fact that she will go out and sit with the children and drive them to an interview and make sure she's there, face to face. – SW, *Cohort 2*

One SW described VS staff continuing to engage with CLs post-18:

I would describe [name of VS post-16 lead] as a lot like a support network for a lot of our young people post-18. Even things like checking-ins, "How you doing?" But he checks in on all our young people. - SW, *Cohort 3*

### **Interim outcomes**

The interim outcomes for young people most frequently observed by VSH survey respondents were:

- increased awareness of EET options
- enrolled on appropriate course
- increased engagement

Table 15 sets out the proportion of VSHs who reported that each of the interim outcomes were achieved for 51% to 100% of the young people in their VS in 2023-2024. This shows that increased awareness of EET options and young people being enrolled on appropriate courses were the interim outcomes most frequently reported as being achieved.

**Table 15: Proportion of VSHs who agreed that the following interim outcomes have been achieved for 51% to 100% of CLAs and CLs in the 2023-24 academic year (n=81)**

Outcome	Time-frame <sup>26</sup>	Cohort 1 (n=18)	Cohort 2 (n=15)	Cohort 3 (n=48)	Total (n=81)
Increased awareness of EET options	Interim	15 (83%)	15 (100%)	33 (69%)	63 (78%)
Enrolled on appropriate course	Interim	14 (78%)	12 (80%)	29 (60%)	55 (68%)
Increased engagement	Interim	14 (78%)	12 (80%)	25 (52%)	51 (63%)
CLA and CLs feel empowered (have a say in the decisions that affect them)	Interim	14 (78%)	12 (80%)	25 (52%)	51 (63%)
CLA and CLs have increased motivation	Interim	11 (61%)	10 (67%)	18 (38%)	39 (48%)
Increased self-efficacy (belief in their own abilities)	Interim	12 (67%)	7 (47%)	13 (27%)	32 (40%)

In line with the timescales in the ToC, a higher proportion of respondents from Cohorts 1 and 2 reported that all interim outcomes were being achieved than respondents from Cohort 3 (for whom these outcomes are expected to emerge in the 2024-2025 academic year). However, these findings are promising and suggest that these outcomes are beginning to emerge for Cohort 3 as well. The first three outcomes in Table 15 were also those that VSHs in year 1 of the evaluation agreed were most commonly starting to be seen.

Staff in VSs gave the following examples of interim outcomes emerging:

Increased awareness of EET options: VSH survey respondents highlighted the VS's role in making CLA and CLs more aware of their EET options, building on the trusting relationships developed with young people:

<sup>26</sup> Interim outcomes for Cohorts 1 and 2 were anticipated to emerge by the end of 2023 to 2024 and interim outcomes for Cohort 3 by the end of 2024 to 2025.

Through the support of the post-16 adviser, the virtual school team have been able to make our young people and the adults who support them more aware of their options which has supported more of our children to access the right courses first time. – *VSH, survey, Cohort 1*

Enrolled on an appropriate course: It is anticipated that by becoming more aware of their EET options, CLA and CLs are more likely to be enrolled on an appropriate course, and survey respondents gave examples of CLA and CLs being enrolled in subjects or pathways that they enjoyed and were keen to pursue in future. One VSH survey respondent explained how a young person who was UASC was supported into an Engineering course despite GCSE English presenting a barrier:

He had his heart set on an academic route and was in danger of disengaging. We were able to support him to see that there are many pathways into engineering and how he could get there. We then got him into a general FE college on a Level 1 Engineering course with English and maths. Learning English and maths alongside other young people from his course helped him to engage better. He is now on a Level 2 Engineering course and studying for his English GCSE. He is happy and is focused on what he is doing and why. - *VSH, survey, Cohort 1*

Increased engagement: One VSH survey respondent described how boxing provision had encouraged a young person who was NEET to engage with professionals, leading to that young person re-engaging with education:

We offered them the option of twice-weekly 1-2-1 boxing sessions with a youth mentor in the community. The young person engaged in these sessions, which began to reveal some clear areas of interest. Alongside the boxing coach, our EET worker provided support not only with applying for apprenticeships but also with interview preparation and the logistics of arriving on time. The young person successfully secured an apprenticeship and continues to make significant progress. Both the youth worker and EET worker have gradually stepped back, ensuring the young person is settled into their training. - *VS team member, Cohort 3*

### **A case study example: CLA and CLs feel empowered**

In year 1 of the evaluation, the AVSH in Cartdale (Cohort 1) reported that young people felt more empowered to speak for themselves in PEP meetings. In their year 2 interview, the AVSH reflected that more young people were attending their post-16 PEPs, which they thought was in part down to the way that the VS team talked to young people about the PEP process:

I think some of them, you know when they finish year 11, they're like, "Oh my God, I've still got to do PEPs" and they're horrified. Then, when they come and then meet the post-16 team and we talk about PEPs at post-16 are about participation – it's not statutory school education anymore it's PEP - you've got to own it really. You know, your voice needs to run through it, we're trying to plan for your independence as well and it's more adult like. So, they have a different view about the PEP maybe because of the way that we sell it to them as well and we talk about pupil premium to them in their PEP.  
– AVSH, Cohort 1

### **Case study examples: SWs and post-16 settings' acknowledgement of work to increase young people's self-efficacy, engagement and motivation**

SWs described examples of the work of VSs to increase CLA and CLs' self-efficacy, engagement and motivation. SWs referred to staff in VSs building relationships with individual CLA and CLs and a combination of different types of support being made available to young people through the VS:

I was just hopeful that because she's wavering at the moment whether she's going to university or not [...] and I'm just hopeful with that experience [of going on a theatre trip with the VS] and other experiences and all the support that she's gathering and the creative mentor that she's getting, that it will enable her to believe in herself and think that she can do it. – *SW, Cohort 2*

Several SWs and leads in post-16 settings described how, although the ultimate aim was for CLA and CLs to achieve qualifications, PP+ Post-16 was often initially needed to increase a young person's motivation and self-efficacy to achieve more basic objectives (for example building and maintaining a routine). Multiple interviewees discussed the bespoke nature of work undertaken with CLA and CLs to achieve this and highlighted the significance for some young people of even small increases in engagement and motivation:

I think that even if they do an hour a day, it's that hour a day that they're doing something positive. [...] It might seem, like on a piece of paper, he's only doing an hour a day, but I think if you look at that and break that down and chat with these children about what that hour a day difference makes to them, it's so important. – *SW, Cohort 2*

Although it is not possible to establish causality, the reported outcomes and examples provided by VSs suggest that activities relating to young people using PP+ Post-16 are viewed as helping to build trusting relationships and provide role models. The findings suggest that this provides a foundation for supporting CLA and CLs to become more aware of their EET options and to ensure they are enrolled on an appropriate course, which in turn should support their engagement in education.

## Long-term outcomes

In addition to analysis of the VSH surveys and case study data, national datasets were analysed to look for any evidence of change in longer-term outcomes relating to young people.

**National dataset analysis:** This analysis involved datasets specific to post-16 outcomes combined with CLA, KS4 NPD and Individualised Learner Records (ILR) data. Data for the 2018-2023 period were analysed (i.e., up to the 2022 to 2023 academic year), capturing 6 school cohorts of young people at year 11, with their corresponding outcomes in both years 12 and 13. This provided a sample of 82,300 individuals.

Analysis focused on the following outcome measures: EET and EET retention into year 13; post-16 education and post-16 education retention into year 13; NEET at year 12 and 13; Level 3 attainment in year 13; passed A-levels in year 13; and completed any course in years 12 or 13. Outcomes data were compared between the 3 funding Cohorts and between CLA and CLs.

### **Summary of descriptive analysis undertaken**

Initial descriptives on the numbers and proportions of post-16 outcomes were generated for Cohorts 1 to 3 and care group. Statistical tests were conducted to observe any differences in the outcomes of care experienced young people before and after the introduction of PP+ Post-16. This compared the outcomes of Cohort 1 at years 12 and 13 in 2023 with the average outcomes across the 2018-2021 pre-introduction of PP+ Post-16. Pairwise comparisons were conducted between Cohort 1 (received funding) Cohort 3 (not yet received funding) in 2023. Comparisons were also made for the year 12 specific outcomes between Cohorts 2 and 3.

See Annex 7: National data set analysis for a full description of the analysis undertaken and results.

From the initial analysis for the post-16 outcomes, we did not observe any programme effects at the national level. Outcomes largely remained stable across the 2018-23 period. This is not unexpected as the ToC anticipates that longer-term outcomes will not emerge until 2025 to 2026 for Cohorts 1 and 2, and 2026 to 2027 for Cohort 3.

Some differences were found between CLA and CLs outcomes across all years. CLA were more likely to be recorded as EET and have higher retention rates. CLA were also more likely to have completed a course, along with A-levels and Level 3 attainment. CLs on the other hand were more likely to complete a level 2 qualification in a post-16 setting having not previously obtained a level 2 at KS4. CLs also report a higher proportion of

NEET in both years 12 and 13. This highlights the need for VSS to focus on young people leaving care to address issues that prevent their engagement and attainment at post-16.

VSH survey and case study analysis: Despite analysis of national datasets up to the 2022 to 2023 academic year finding no change in longer-term outcomes, and the timeline in the ToC anticipating that change will not be achieved until 2025 to 2026 for Cohorts 1 and 2, VSHs responding to the survey and in case study sites perceived that some long-term outcomes were already beginning to emerge. This suggests that, over time, these outcomes should also begin to emerge in the national datasets. The long-term outcomes for young people most frequently observed by VSH survey respondents were:

- retention in post-16 education
- more agency and voice in the decisions made
- increased retention in EET
- improved attainment

Table 16 sets out the proportion of VSHs who have reported that each of the long-term outcomes are being achieved for 51% to 100% of the young people in their VS in 2023-2024. This shows that retention in post-16 education, more agency and voice in decisions made and increased retention in EET were the most frequently reported outcomes. Although just over half of VSHs reported that increased retention in EET was being achieved, fewer reported an increase in EET in relation to specific destinations (i.e., employment; transition to HE; and apprenticeships). It is possible therefore that these destination outcomes may take longer to emerge than other long-term outcomes.

**Table 16: Proportion of VSHs who agreed that the following long-term outcomes have been achieved for 51% to 100% of CLAs and CLs in the 2023-24 academic year (n=81)**

Outcome	Time-frame <sup>27</sup>	Cohort 1 (n=18)	Cohort 2 (n=15)	Cohort 3 (n=48)	Total (n=81)
Retention in post-16 education	Long term	12 (67%)	12 (80%)	27 (56%)	51 (63%)
More agency and voice in the decisions made	Long term	12 (67%)	8 (53%)	23 (48%)	43 (53%)

<sup>27</sup> Long-term outcomes for Cohorts 1 and 2 are anticipated to emerge by the end of 2025 to 2026 and Cohort 3 by the end of 2026 to 2027.

Outcome	Time-frame <sup>27</sup>	Cohort 1 (n=18)	Cohort 2 (n=15)	Cohort 3 (n=48)	Total (n=81)
Increased retention in EET	Long term	12 (67%)	6 (40%)	24 (50%)	42 (52%)
Improved attainment	Long term	10 (56%)	10 (67%)	21 (44%)	41 (51%)
Improved attendance	Long term	8 (44%)	10 (67%)	20 (42%)	38 (47%)
Increase in EET: in stable and appropriate employment	Long term	6 (33%)	4 (27%)	14 (29%)	24 (30%)
Improved mental health and wellbeing	Long term	7 (39%)	4 (27%)	10 (21%)	21 (26%)
Increase in EET: transition to HE	Long term	2 (11%)	5 (33%)	11 (23%)	18 (22%)
Increase in EET: in apprenticeships	Long term	1 (6%)	1 (7%)	10 (21%)	12 (15%)

In line with the timescales in the ToC, a higher proportion of respondents from Cohorts 1 and 2 reported that long-term outcomes were starting to be seen than respondents from Cohort 3 (for whom these outcomes are expected to emerge in the 2026-2027 academic year). Although Cohort 3 VSs have had less time in receipt of the funding, these findings are promising and suggest that long-term outcomes are beginning to emerge for Cohort 3.

Retention in post-16 education or training: 63% of VSH survey respondents (51 VSs) reported an improvement in retention in post-16 education for 51% to 100% of CLA and CLs in their VS. When asked to provide examples in open text boxes, some survey respondents explained that they had seen reductions in the NEET rate in their VS, which they attributed to activities using the PP+ Post-16 funding:

Reducing NEET figures – these have dropped from 23% to 14% across the year 2023 to 2024 as a result of direct work with young people. –  
*VSH, survey, Cohort 3*

VSH survey respondents who had focused on year 11 transition to prevent CLA and CLs becoming NEET suggested that this had been effective in increasing retention in post-16 education for their current year 12 students:

Due to the early identification and robust transition programme, we have had no young people withdraw from their provision before the 5-week review which shows they were on the appropriate course. We only have [fewer than 10] NEET young people in the current year 12, this was due to the work carried out with each young person before and while they were in their provision. - *VSH, survey, Cohort 3*

In addition, several VSH survey respondents who reported defining eligibility for PP+ Post-16 funding up to the end of the academic year in which a young person turns 18 (i.e., continuing to offer PEPs and PP+ Post-16 funding after they turn 18 but are still in education) explained that this had been effective at encouraging young people to complete their course and support them with their next steps, with one VSH survey respondent stating:

Post 18 PEP and funding attached to this has enabled a team to continue to support the young person through to the end of the academic year and ensure they are well supported with their onwards pathway. - *Post-16 lead in VS, survey, Cohort 3*

One VSH survey respondent provided an example of PP+ Post-16 funding supporting a young person's retention in post-16 following a placement move out of area. The support provided helped the young person get onto an appropriate course and continue with their studies:

One young person's year 13 began with a placement move, which meant them leaving their course and college. Despite this, they positively engaged with tutoring until they were accepted at a local college to continue their studies. They were also supported by the Post-16 Learning Mentor, who ensured they had support in place for their medical needs and supported them with their anxiety in transitioning to a new college. They are now settled on to their new course and doing well. - *VSH, survey, Cohort 1*

### **Case study examples: retention in post-16**

VSHs in both Cohort 3 case study sites (Greenhollow and Havenbarrow) reported seeing improvements in retention in post-16 education.

In Greenhollow, this was perceived as being linked to the introduction of partnership agreements with local post-16 settings, improved transition planning, an ESOL summer school and a focus on careers.

Havenbarrow reported increased retention of young people with EHCPs perceived as being due to improvements in the VS's post-16 data and joint working with the SEND team, which ensured that all available support was in place.

### **A case study example: changes to the NEET rate since receiving PP+ Post-16 funding**

All 4 VSHs across the Cohort 1 and 2 case study sites reported seeing reductions in their NEET rates since receiving PP+ Post-16.

In year 1 of the evaluation, the VSH in Bridmarsh (Cohort 1) described their average NEET rate decreasing by nearly 50%. In their year 2 interview, the VSH confirmed that they had maintained that reduction:

...what's happened is it stayed really consistent. So, it withstands all the ups and downs of the year. And the other change I noticed, is that we used to have better education, employment and training participation in year 12, because we've managed to influence that. But now it's more stable in year 13 because it's kind of, it's all stabilised. And where we're focusing now is on trying to sustain that into leaving care. That's the next big thing that we're focusing on at the moment. – *VSH, Cohort 1*

The VSH also reported less fluctuation in their NEET rate over the course of the academic year:

And I think one of the surprises from everybody, is the outcomes have been sustained. – *VSH, Cohort 1*

Improved attainment and transition into HE: Some VSH survey respondents gave examples of improved attainment, which had enabled CLA and CLs to access HE and improved rates compared to previous years:

There is a significant increase and a three year upward trajectory, in our young people achieving Level 3 Awards. It has risen to [over 15%] of the cohort compared with [under 10%] last year and [under 5%] in 2021-2022. – VSH, survey, Cohort 2

These reported outcomes and examples of effective practice suggest that VSHs perceive activities, focused on preventing young people becoming NEET or helping to re-engage those who are already NEET, as having a positive impact. The short and interim outcomes (for example building trusting relationships, increased engagement and being enrolled on an appropriate course) also act as mechanisms to achieve these long-term outcomes.

## Outcomes for joint working and the virtual school

### Key messages

- The 3 most commonly reported outcomes achieved relating to joint working and the VS were all short-term outcomes: the PEP informs actions and support for CLA and CLs; improved understanding of the post-16 education landscape by VSs/CSC; and better understanding of CLA and CLs by all stakeholders.
- Additional staffing capacity in VSs, which has enabled VS teams to meet with staff in other agencies, is seen as driving much of the progress made in relation to joint working.
- Improvements in VSs and CSC's understanding of the post-16 landscape, and increased awareness of young people by all stakeholders should lead to CLA and CLs receiving better advice about their EET options.
- Improved staffing capacity in VSs is viewed as strengthening working relationships between VSs, post-16 settings and CSC and as supporting the creation of space for shared learning and good practice (for example through regional networks and training). Together, better working relationships between agencies and having the space to share learning should strengthen processes such as transition planning and PEPs, which are needed to achieve long-term outcomes such as increased EET rates and attainment.

## Short-term outcomes

Most VSH survey respondents reported that all 4 of the short-term outcomes for joint working were being achieved in the 2023-2024 academic year. The 4 short-term outcomes were:

- PEP informs actions and support for CLA and CLs
- improved understanding of post-16 education landscape by VSs/CSC
- better understanding of CLA and CLs by all stakeholders
- meaningful CLA and CLs participation in PEP processes

Table 17 shows the proportion of VSH survey respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that short-term outcomes relating to joint working were being achieved in the 2023-2024 academic year.

**Table 17: Proportion of VSHs who agreed or strongly agreed that the following short-term outcomes relating to joint working were achieved in the 2023-2024 academic year (n=90)**

Outcome	Time-frame <sup>28</sup>	Cohort 1 (n=19)	Cohort 2 (n=17)	Cohort 3 (n=54)	Total (n=90)
PEP informs actions and support for CLA and CLs	Short term	19 (100%)	17 (100%)	50 (93%)	86 (96%)
Improved understanding of post-16 education landscape by VSs/CSC	Short term	19 (100%)	17 (100%)	49 (91%)	85 (94%)
Better understanding of CLA and CLs by all stakeholders	Short term	19 (100%)	17 (100%)	48 (89%)	84 (93%)
Meaningful CLA and CLs participation in PEP processes	Short term	18 (95%)	17 (100%)	47 (87%)	82 (91%)

In line with the ToC, higher proportions of respondents in Cohorts 1 and 2 reported that these outcomes had been achieved than in Cohort 3, with 95% to 100% of all respondents in both Cohorts (n=36) agreeing that each short-term outcome relating to joint working had been achieved in their VS. This demonstrates an improvement since year 1 of the evaluation, when 77% to 91% of respondents (n=44) reported that these

<sup>28</sup> Short-term outcomes for Cohorts 1 and 2 were anticipated to emerge by the end of 2022 to 2023 and for Cohort 3 by the end of 2023 to 2024.

outcomes were starting to be seen. In particular, the number of respondents who reported seeing meaningful CLA and CLs' participation in the PEP process has increased from 77% (n=44) in year 1 of the evaluation, to 97% (n=36) in year 2.

Table 17 also shows that Cohort 3 sites have reported short-term outcomes relating to joint working at slightly higher rates than those reported by Cohorts 1 and 2 in year 1 of the evaluation. Between 87% and 93% of respondents (n=54) in Cohort 3 agreed that these outcomes were achieved in their first year of receiving funding, compared to 77% to 91% (n=44) of those in Cohorts 1 and 2 in year 1 of the evaluation.

Improved understanding of CLA and CLs' needs and the post-16 education landscape: Some VSH survey respondents observed that understanding had increased across agencies. Respondents reported that all stakeholders had increased awareness of the post-16 education landscape, their responsibilities to post-16 CLA and CLs, and of the needs of this cohort:

At placement and transitions panels, education is discussed and social care are very supportive of enabling the young people to continue in their current placement which provides stability and reassurance to the young person. For those who have aspirations for university, Staying Put agreements are put in place for these young people if requested. - *VSH, survey, Cohort 3*

Coupled with a reported increase in trusting relationships with young people (see Short-term outcomes), an improved understanding of young people's needs and the post-16 landscape should result in young people receiving better advice about their EET options.

## **Interim outcomes**

The interim outcomes for joint working most frequently reported by VSH survey respondents were:

- strengthened close working relationships between VSSs, post-16 education or training settings and CSC
- tailored interventions in place to support NEET young people
- tailored interventions in place to support UASC

Table 18 shows the proportion of VSH survey respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that interim outcomes relating to joint working were being achieved in the 2023-2024 academic year.

**Table 18: Proportion of VSHs who agreed or strongly agreed that the following interim outcomes relating to joint working were achieved in the 2023-2024 academic year (n=90)**

Outcome	Time-frame <sup>29</sup>	Cohort 1 (n=19)	Cohort 2 (n=17)	Cohort 3 (n=54)	Total (n=90)
Strengthened close working relationships between VSs, post-16 education or training settings and CSC	Interim	19 (100%)	17 (100%)	46 (85%)	82 (91%)
Tailored interventions in place to support NEET young people	Interim	17 (89%)	14 (82%)	51 (94%)	82 (91%)
Tailored interventions in place to support UASC	Interim	17 (89%)	14 (82%)	48 (89%)	79 (88%)
Space exists for shared learning and good practice	Interim	18 (95%)	14 (82%)	44 (81%)	76 (84%)
Increased capacity to deliver post-16 support	Interim	18 (95%)	16 (94%)	41 (76%)	75 (83%)
Tailored interventions in place to support attendance	Interim	16 (84%)	12 (71%)	44 (81%)	72 (80%)
CSC and education providers have a strengthened relationship	Interim	16 (84%)	12 (71%)	41 (76%)	69 (77%)
VS input recognised in 'preparation for adulthood' plan	Interim	12 (63%)	11 (65%)	36 (67%)	59 (66%)
More integrated support for transition to independence	Interim	12 (63%)	9 (53%)	32 (59%)	53 (59%)
Tailored interventions to support young people in secure estates	Interim	6 (32%)	3 (18%)	23 (43%)	32 (36%)

<sup>29</sup> Interim outcomes for Cohorts 1 and 2 were anticipated to emerge by the end of 2023 to 2024 and for Cohort 3 by the end of 2024 to 2025.

Outcome	Time-frame <sup>29</sup>	Cohort 1 (n=19)	Cohort 2 (n=17)	Cohort 3 (n=54)	Total (n=90)
Regional VSHs have greater consistency in PEP formats, procedures and eligibility	Interim	5 (26%)	4 (24%)	14 (26%)	23 (26%)

Unlike the short-term outcomes, where a higher proportion of respondents in Cohorts 1 and 2 reported outcomes being achieved compared with Cohort 3, the picture is more mixed in relation to the interim outcomes. A higher proportion of Cohort 3 respondents than Cohorts 1 or 2 reported achieving several outcomes, including tailored interventions for NEET and UASC, VS input recognised in 'preparation for adulthood plan', and tailored interventions to support young people in secure estates.

Areas where VSH survey respondents reported that less progress has been made (for example tailored interventions to support young people in the secure estate and regional VSHs having greater consistency in PEP formats, procedures and eligibility), were also reflected in the case studies where activity in these areas currently appeared to be less of a priority for VSHs.

Strengthened close working relationships between VSs, post-16 education or training settings and CSC: Most VSs reported that PP+ Post-16 funding has improved joint working between all sectors, but particularly between VSs and EET settings. VSHs highlighted benefits of improved oversight and coordination, enabling more preventative and early intervention work to support CLA and CLs:

Our working relationship and partnership with CLA and Leaving Care teams has been strengthened through our work on this project. We have increased PEP completion to 95% from a starting point of c.70% and there is a much stronger understanding of the work we do for young people who are post-16. Additionally, we have formed a close alliance with the independent reviewing service, foster carers group and support[ed] lodgings forum. – *VSH, survey, Cohort 1*

VSs reported that a key enabler of improved working relationships had been the additional capacity in the VS provided using PP+ Post-16, which had improved the frequency of communication between the VS, CSC and post-16 settings:

There is increased joint working across the sectors for Children in Care and Care Leavers in relation to EET, in particular with post-16 settings. PP+ has allowed us to build on these existing relationships by providing more capacity in the team. - *VSH, survey, Cohort 1*

In addition, one VS suggested that improved capacity has increased the visibility of the VS in a range of additional forums, which had contributed to improved awareness of the needs of CLA and CLs at post-16 by other local authority teams:

We have a strong NEET network within our local authority which includes VS post-16 NEET team, SEND teams, youth justice and NEET Support Service/Skills and Employability team. This network allows for early identification of additional provision which may become available and enhances VS visibility within the regional NEET network as we play an active part in meetings and discussions. Growth within the post-16 team has meant that we have become much more effective in networking and having a presence in differing forums i.e., NEET, employability, FE and HE. - *VSH, survey, Cohort 3*

Interviews with leads in post-16 settings and SWs in case study sites reinforced how important the role of the VS was in strengthening relationships between partners.

## Case study examples: post-16 settings and SWs' perspectives of strengthened joint working

Leads in post-16 settings and SWs expressed a similarly positive view that joint working had strengthened since the introduction of PP+ Post-16, viewed largely as the result of greater VS capacity to work with partners to support individual CLA and CLs:

[The post-16 lead in the VS] does know those young people, he knows them. You can see that he has got good relationships with the social workers and for me, I think it is that role of pulling everything together because it can be quite complex with some of our young people, particularly if it is cross-authority. I would say that is quite a significant role. – *Lead in post-16 setting, Cohort 3*

Interviewees described strengthened joint working enabling partners to get answers to questions or clarify information in a timelier manner, more in keeping with the timeframe expected by young people:

It avoids all the drift and delay. Quite a lot of our young people need instant reward. If they have not got that then they feel like everything is dragging on and going on and it might only be a week, but for them, that is a long period of time and sometimes they feel like they are being forgotten. – *SW, Cohort 3*

Interviewees also appreciated increased collaboration with other partners in addition to the VS, and suggested that the VS played a central role in bringing different professionals together:

I've rung [the college] before and I've gone; do you know about this? And they'll go, well, actually, I was going to contact you. And we've had more regular meetings with the college because the VS can be flexible. [...] So, they have kind of facilitated that. – *SW, Cohort 2*

## Case study examples: approaches to supporting transition into post-16

Interviews in case study sites suggested an increased emphasis on developing joint working and support around transition into post-16. Leads in post-16 settings noted that they were reliant on schools and VSs to share information and experiences were mixed as to the level of information they received. Interviewees identified the following as the main channels for information sharing:

- VSs meeting with post-16 settings to discuss young people expected to join in the coming academic year
- Staff from post-16 settings attending year 11 transition PEPs
- DTs attending the first post-16 PEP
- Requesting information as part of the PEP at year 11 (or earlier) to inform transition planning

Leads in post-16 settings suggested that it was often the information shared in discussion (rather than via PEP forms or other written documents) that was most valuable to them. For example, discussing a young person's triggers, the signs that school staff recognised as meaning a young person was struggling, and effective support strategies. Starting transition work early was important:

...because I think an awful lot of it is about, you know, relationships and mentoring and them being confident and being championed and being supported and feeling supported so we start all of that soon. –  
*Lead in post-16 setting, Cohort 3*

Interviewees in case study sites also described how strengthened close working relationships between partners could support effective practice around transition into post-16, and PEP practice.

Space exists for shared learning and good practice: Building on and contributing to improvements in joint working, many VSs reported an increase in the number and strength of regional and national networks for sharing learning, experiences and good practice. VSHs suggested that the PP+ Post-16 funding had improved the capacity of VSs in their region and acted as a catalyst for increased focus on CLAs and CLs at post-16. This meant meetings were held more regularly and were better attended, which has improved relationships and learning across VSs:

We are fully involved with the regional post-16 virtual school working group - we share good practice and are working on areas of joint concern in the region. Links are much stronger due to regular meetings, and all parties are now better involved. - *VSH, survey, Cohort 2*

Areas for improvement: A few VSH survey respondents felt that improvements to joint working were still needed. In particular, some respondents stated that coordination between VSs and CSC around the transition to adulthood could be improved to create more stability and support for CLs:

There is a much greater need for planning with social care for support post-18. – *VSH, survey, Cohort 3*

However, some case study sites provided examples of joint working increasing the focus on educational pathways and aspiration as part of transition to independence post 18.

### **Case studies: joint working around PEPs**

In year 1 of the evaluation, the VSH in Esterford (Cohort 2) described progress in joint working with post-16 settings around PEPs (for example post-16 settings being more likely to attend year 11 PEPs). More recently, the VSH has worked with CSC to change SWs' perceptions of the need for post-16 PEPs and considers this change to have become reasonably well embedded:

So, it's that cultural change, and we're starting to see that quality and completion rate go. But actually, what for me the really positive indicator is, we've got more and more children staying on in year 14, where they, or their SWs, are requesting PEPs. – *VSH, interview, Cohort 2*

The increase in PEP completion has enabled the VS to do more analysis of the data and feed that information back into discussions with partners to further support PEP quality and completion (for example for NEET young people).

## Case study examples: furthering joint work to support transition at post 18

VSHs in 3 case study sites described joint working to promote the education of young people post 18 as a work in progress, suggesting that CSC is becoming more focused on this area. The case studies point to activities funded by PP+ Post-16 helping to push back the 'cliff edge' of support for young people.

The VSH in Esterford (Cohort 2) described seeing a changing focus around education in care planning meetings:

Definitely that's raised the profile and at one point [CSC] wouldn't have been talking about...there was almost that kind of, let's get them through Key Stage 4, but now that the conversation is, okay, they're in two years of education, how do we start support stability there? Because that's then that pathway onto independence and adulthood, isn't it? – *VSH, Cohort 2*

Cartdale VS (Cohort 1) has established good relationships with leaving care colleagues: staff from leaving care attend PEPs, the VS shares the PEP document with leaving care colleagues, and the AVSH has seen some evidence that CSC staff are using this information. The AVSH now wants to further strengthen joint working at post 18 by promoting the idea of an action plan for use by leaving care colleagues at post-18 transition incorporating PEP targets as the foundation.

The VSH in Havenbarrow (Cohort 3) has also worked with CSC to strengthen the authority's focus on CLs wanting to enter HE, suggesting that more could be done to support the cohort for longer given the small number of young people involved:

I also think that, in terms of VSs, it would be really helpful if we had a pot of funds for those that are going off to university so that we can support them. You know, why can we not have once a semester a PEP? What do you need? Keeping in touch, making that belonging still part of... you know if a young person doesn't want to engage that's fine but I'm sure if you give them £1,000 funding at their semester whatever, I'm pretty sure that they'll engage. – *VSH, Cohort 3*

## Outcomes for post-16 education and training settings

### Key messages

- A lower proportion of VSHs reported that outcomes for post-16 settings had been achieved compared to the proportion reporting outcomes relating to joint working, although this may, in part, be due to VSHs having less direct oversight of outcomes in post-16 settings.
- The reported outcomes suggest that post-16 settings are starting to incorporate approaches to supporting CLA and CLs into their policy and practice. This is important as it reduces the risk of progress being based solely on individual relationships between staff in post-16 settings and the VS.
- The proportion of VSHs reporting that post-16 settings are highlighting CLA and CLs as a cohort in prospectuses is substantially lower than other outcomes. This may be due to post-16 settings prioritising the development and embedding of policy practice behind the scenes.

The outcomes for post-16 education and training settings most frequently reported by VSH survey respondents were:

- setting has a named person for this group in the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and/or a person with decision making powers (short-term outcome; with 69 respondents, 81%, agreeing this is true in 51% to 100% of post-16 settings)
- clear policy and commitment to supporting CLA and CLs (interim outcome; with 59 respondents, 69%, agreeing this is true in 51% to 100% of post-16 settings)
- post-16 education or training settings understand corporate parent responsibility (short-term outcome; with 54 respondents, 64%, agreeing this is true in 51% to 100% of post-16 settings)

Table 19 provides an overview of the proportion of VSH survey respondents who agreed that outcomes have been achieved for 51% to 100% of their post-16 settings in the 2023-24 academic year.

**Table 19: Proportion of VSHs who agreed that the following outcomes have been achieved for 51% to 100% of post-16 settings in the 2023-24 academic year (n=85)**

Outcome	Timeframe <sup>30</sup>	Cohort 1 (n=19)	Cohort 2 (n=17)	Cohort 3 (n=49)	Total (n=85)
Setting has named a person for this group in the SLT and/or a key person with decision-making powers	Short term	17 (89%)	13 (76%)	39 (80%)	69 (81%)
CLA and CLs highlighted in prospectus	Short term	8 (42%)	3 (18%)	15 (31%)	26 (31%)
Post-16 education or training settings understand corporate parent responsibility	Short term	13 (68%)	9 (53%)	32 (65%)	54 (64%)
Clear policy and commitment to supporting CLA and CLs	Interim	15 (79%)	12 (71%)	32 (65%)	59 (69%)
Post-16 settings demonstrate awareness of the needs of this cohort, reflected in their policies and practice	Long term	12 (63%)	9 (53%)	27 (55%)	48 (56%)

Despite Table 19 showing fewer VSHs reporting the emergence of outcomes relating to post-16 settings compared with the proportion of VSHs reporting outcomes relating to joint working, several VSHs offered positive examples of practice. It should also be noted that VS staff may not be directly involved in activities underpinning these outcomes, so VSHs will have less oversight of progress.

Post-16 education or training settings understand corporate parent responsibility: Several VSHs reported post-16 settings having improved awareness and understanding of corporate parenting responsibility. They considered that initiatives such as post-16 regional networks and training on the role of the VS had improved post-16 settings' understanding of corporate parenting responsibility and awareness of their own role as designated leads. In turn, this was viewed as improving completion rates and quality of PEPs:

<sup>30</sup> Short-term outcomes for Cohorts 1 and 2 were anticipated to emerge by the end of 2022 to 2023 and for Cohort 3 by the end of 2023 to 2024. Interim outcomes for Cohorts 1 and 2 were anticipated to emerge by the end of 2023 to 2024 and for Cohort 3 by the end of 2024 to 2025. Long-term outcomes for Cohorts 1 and 2 are anticipated to emerge by the end of 2025 to 2026 and for Cohort 3 by the end of 2026 to 2027.

We have consistent policies and procedures, the post-16 handbook is shared with all settings in and out of area. Training for the role of corporate parents is given to key stakeholders within the local authority. We have high expectations for DTs that they attend all PEPs. As a result, we now have 100% completion rate for PEPs and a rate of 90% good or better. – *Deputy VSH, survey, Cohort 1*

Post-16 settings demonstrate awareness of the needs of this cohort, reflected in their policies and practice: Several VSHs highlighted that over the last few years, they had seen an increase in the commitment and awareness of post-16 settings to supporting CLAs and CLs:

In the last two years, post-16 settings have considerably improved their commitment and awareness and support for CLA. There has been improvement in outcomes, attendance and retention since the 2021 to 2022 academic year. PEP completion and quality has improved beyond recognition. – *VSH, survey, Cohort 1*

VSHs also explained that closer working relationships had improved understanding of appropriate multi-agency channels and processes to support CLA and CLs at post-16, and that this was now being done more frequently and effectively:

Post-16 settings are now more aware of who to contact in the professional network - for example [CAMHS workers] and will invite them to support meetings for a multi-agency approach to supporting young people in education. - *VSH, survey, Cohort 2*

However, several respondents – particularly those in Cohort 3 – noted that variation remained within and between post-16 settings in their understanding of CLA and CLs' needs, and that there was scope for further improvement. A few respondents said that they intended to provide further training to address this in the future:

There has been some interest from colleges on trauma informed practice and ways of working, but it has been slow. Theory has not yet transformed into consistent practice for those who have had training. – *VSH, survey, Cohort 3*

### **Case study examples: the emerging change in approach by post-16 settings**

Case study interviewees across all 3 cohorts gave examples of PP+ Post-16 helping to raise awareness in post-16 settings about the needs of CLA and CLs. Interviewees also saw a change in the willingness of post-16 settings to provide additional flexibility to retain young people in education.

Part of the VS's approach to awareness raising in Cartdale (Cohort 1) was to facilitate regional network meetings of leads in post-16 settings. One post-16 lead described how these meetings had helped them consider factors that might prevent CLA and CLs from attending awards events alongside their peers:

And so what the Pupil Premium, and what these conversations mean is, it constantly brings us back to reality, of we can have high aspirations, we can push, we can say, "Yes, come on, you can win all these awards," and that's fantastic, but we still have to have that reality check of, it's not the same as me going, "Great, I'm going to the awards ceremony. What dress am I going to go and find in my wardrobe." – *Lead in post-16 setting, Cohort 1*

The VSH in Dorland (Cohort 2) acknowledged a change in how one of their post-16 settings viewed their corporate parenting role:

They've changed the way they look at it; they have a different understanding of what the PEP is for, their core structure has changed... - VSH, Cohort 2

A SW in Greenhollow (Cohort 3) described an example where they felt that using PP+ Post-16 funding to support a young person's reintegration into education, who would otherwise have been withdrawn from their college course, demonstrated how a college had been persuaded to change its usual policy and practice:

I don't think [the college] would do if we didn't have... that resource really. I don't think that [they] would be as flexible because they would have no evidence to say that this young person's going to come back. But if we are putting things in place via Pupil Premium to show them that, 'Look, we're building up', they need to go, 'Okay then, to be honest, they're trying. We'll just wait. Let's wait a little bit.' – *SW, Cohort 3*

The percentage of VSHs reporting that CLA and CLs are highlighted in prospectuses is noticeably lower than the other outcomes across all 3 Cohorts. This may be because

VSHs have not had sight of the prospectuses, or because at this stage, post-16 settings are focusing on making changes and embedding practice behind the scenes.

Achieving the outcomes set out in Table 19 relating to post-16 settings is likely to reduce the risk of approaches developing based purely on individual relationships between post-16 staff and the VS. By embedding approaches into post-16 policy and practice, they are less vulnerable to staff moving on to new roles and vital links between post-16 settings and VSs being severed.

## Discussion of the evaluation questions in light of the findings

This chapter discusses the findings in response to the evaluation questions on the implementation of PP+ Post-16 and outcomes.

The findings in this evaluation should be interpreted in the following context:

- PP+ Post-16 is an evolving programme: Over the course of the programme and the evaluation there have been changes in numbers of local authorities funded, in levels of funding both per year and between Cohorts of local authorities, and in the CLAs and CLs who were eligible for support using the funding (i.e., being widened from those in FE colleges to all CLA and CLs at post-16).
- The level of funding: This is relatively small when compared to the funding available to support CLA and CLs at pre-16. In addition, the amount of funding each VS received per young person in real terms varies substantially, creating a postcode lottery in terms of level of funding available.
- Guidance on how the funding should be spent: This is very light touch leading to VSs using it to fund a wide range of different activities. As such the evaluation is not evaluating a programme of interventions but is rather mapping how the funding is used and identifying perceived progress towards a wide range of outcomes.
- The funding's flexibility: This has been welcomed by VSHs but has created variation in terms of support as it is experienced by CLA and CLs.
- Eligibility of CLA and CLs for support using PP+ Post-16: This has been interpreted differently by different VSs and has evolved over time within those VSs.
- National monitoring of spending: There has been no monitoring of expenditure over the course of the programme at a national level, so there is no data on activities delivered and the number of CLA and CLs reached using the funding, other than data we have collected via the VSH survey.
- The influence of the wider system: The funding is operating in a complex system where other services, funding and contextual factors can influence educational outcomes for CLA and CLs, which makes attribution of impact challenging.

## Implementation of PP+ Post-16

### How are VSs using the funding to support CLA and CLs at post-16?

VSs have implemented a wide range of activities using the PP+ Post-16 funding to support CLA and CLs, either directly or indirectly, with substantial flexibility in choosing how to use the funding.

Across all surveyed VSHs, in the academic year 2023-24 the majority of funding (53%) has gone towards direct work with young people. Activities included tuition, provision of IT equipment, ESOL provision, mentoring, targeted NEET prevention work and enrichment activities, and were often determined by cohort needs such as UASC, NEET, CLs, or wellbeing and mental health. The remaining funds were directed toward joint working and the VS (23%) and support for post-16 settings (21%). However, these activities are not mutually exclusive. For instance, where VSHs have chosen to allocate all or most of their funding to create a dedicated post-16 role in the VS, other activities and outcomes are expected to flow from that role relating to all 3 types of activity identified in the ToC.

The flexibility of the funding has allowed VSs to tailor support to local needs. However, variation between levels of funding, what this equates to per young person in real terms, the level of the VS's pre-existing provision or staffing, and the variation in what the funding is used for creates a potential postcode lottery in terms of the level and type of support available to CLA and CLs.

### To what extent do these activities reflect those identified in the ToC?

Activities using the funding closely reflected those set out in the ToC, although individual VSs were not expected to undertake all of those activities using their PP+ Post-16.

Overall, 3 activities included in the ToC were slightly less prominent in the data, demonstrating where VSHs had prioritised certain activities and cohorts:

- Increasing capacity in post-16 settings: There was limited evidence of VSs using the funding to increase capacity in post-16 settings. One case study site had placed staff in local colleges (for example to provide mentoring and support work with UASC) and a lead in a post-16 setting described how this approach had helped with capacity challenges and involved less administration than receiving small amounts of funding to support individual young people.
- Young people in the secure estate: There was limited reference to targeted work with young people in the secure estate, with targeted work tending to focus on UASC and NEET young people due to reported growth in those cohorts. The case study data suggest that there could be challenges for VSs in supporting young people in the secure estate (for example because there was no requirement for

young offenders' institutions to undertake PEPs). This has implications for the ability of VSs to plan for and support young people upon release.

- Regional working: There was limited reference to working regionally across VSs, although it was happening in some regions. This has implications for VSs seeking to promote parity of support for young people in and out of area, with one VS explaining that regional working led to more consistent support across the area.

## **Are there any joint training and shared agreements across wider stakeholders?**

Training was primarily delivered by VSs for post-16 settings, but also for SWs and carers. The topics covered fell broadly into two categories, those relating to processes and systems for supporting CLA and CLs (for example PEPs and SMART targets; understanding the post-16 landscape) and those relating to understanding the needs of CLA and CLs (for example trauma and attachment or experiences and needs of UASC). Case studies highlight that this has been well received by post-16 settings and is beginning to embed consistent practice.

Partnership agreements with post-16 settings provide an example of an activity borne out of having additional staffing capacity in VSs. Partnership agreements were perceived as promoting joint working by establishing expectations and responsibilities for different stakeholders in relation to CLA and CLs. Extending partnership agreements to post-16 settings outside of the local authority was one way that VSs were addressing lack of parity for young people educated out of area.

## **What are sites doing to increase the understanding of, and elevate the profile of CLA and CLs in post-16 settings?**

In addition to delivering training to staff in post-16 settings, increased staffing capacity in VSs has enabled staff to meet colleagues from post-16 settings more regularly (for example to share transition information and have greater involvement in PEP meetings). Regular interaction has worked well to promote awareness of CLA and CLs as a cohort and as individuals.

A named contact for CLA and CLs within post-16 settings is considered useful, particularly in large multi-campus settings as it provides a single point of contact for the VS and other stakeholders. However, in addition to having a named contact for CLA and CLs, stakeholders also highlighted the importance of effective communication between welfare and curriculum staff within post-16 settings to ensure that CLA and CLs receive support with agreed PEP targets and ensure that the relevant people are involved in the event of any issues (for example around attendance or discipline). The significance of the relationship between welfare and curriculum staff in post-16 settings in terms of

supporting CLA and CLs has emerged during year 2 of the evaluation and was therefore not included within the ToC.

## **What are sites doing to engage the cohort in their PEPs or equivalent? What has worked well and less well?**

The post-16 PEP process was described as an important tool for assessing need and coordinating support at both an individual and cohort level (for example to understand need amongst local UASC or NEET cohorts). Its success depends on meaningful engagement from young people and stakeholders, as well as the quality and clarity of the plans themselves. VSHs have adopted various strategies to improve engagement of young people in the PEP process, including introducing NEET PEPs in some areas. A key success factor has been the development of trusted relationships between young people and professionals, particularly with the VS, which was reported to have helped foster a sense of trust and ownership over the planning process.

Some VSs have used the offer of PP+ Post-16 funding as an incentive to engage, framing the PEP as a means through which young people can access tailored support. However, sites acknowledge that this approach has mixed results, and that motivation is most effectively sustained when young people see real, timely action in response to their requests and needs. Emphasising young people's agency and voice in decision-making within the PEP process also helped foster participation in several areas.

Involving a broad network of stakeholders was reported to be a mechanism for ensuring PEP targets were meaningful and helped to avoid tokenistic completion. VSs played a central role in driving this collaboration and ensuring quality. Improvements in both PEP completion rates and quality suggest this approach is having a positive impact.

Overall, post-16 PEPs provide a critical structure to identify need and appropriate use of PP+ Post-16, but equally the introduction of PP+ Post-16 has strengthened the PEP process by increased VS capacity to be involved, and by enabling VSs to offer tangible, personalised support to young people.

## **What are the enablers and barriers to the effective use of PP+ Post-16?**

Key enablers:

- **Flexibility:** VSHs welcomed flexibility in the use of PP+ Post-16 and identified it as a key enabler in using the funding in a way that they perceived as being effective in their local context. It has enabled VSs to test out innovative approaches at small scale before applying learning to a wider cohort, enabled VSs to respond to diverse needs in their CLA and CL cohorts, and enabled them to look beyond narrow educational need and work more holistically. The downside of this flexibility has been that each VS has its own parameters for use of the funding, creating a

challenge for post-16 settings working with multiple VSs, and the possibility of CLA and CLs at the same post-16 setting receiving very different support from the funding. The flexibility also creates challenges for evaluation and development of the ToC as there are multiple potential uses of the funding and subsequent outcomes.

- Increased VS staffing capacity: Another reported enabler was using PP+ Post-16 to increase staffing capacity within the VS, as described above. VSHs and other stakeholders described this as providing increased capacity for tailored support and relationship-building with post-16 providers.
- Stronger partnerships and improved communication: Partnerships and communication, particularly through joint planning (for example NEET panels) and training on trauma and attachment, were also described as helping to enable more consistent delivery of support.

Key barriers:

- Defining what effective practice is: The first barrier to achieving effective use of PP+ Post-16 is that there is no clear consensus or guidance on what effective practice using the funding looks like. As a result, VSHs have been using their own considerable knowledge base to support their own post-16 cohorts but there is a lack of overall consensus on what works, or guidance about how PP+ Post-16 should be used effectively.
- Insufficient funding levels: VSHs identified the level of funding as a barrier, particularly when faced with an in-year increase in CLA and CL numbers, (partly reflecting increases in UASC), where the additional demand for direct support such as tuition or mentoring could be substantial. This required VSHs to decide who to prioritise for support using PP+ Post-16. The level of funding was a particular challenge for VSs without a pre-existing post-16 offer or staffing, where all or most of the funding needed to be invested into increased dedicated staffing, leaving nothing for direct support of young people.
- The short-term nature of the funding: This was highlighted as a barrier as it limited long-term planning and recruitment by VSs.
- Challenge of embedding PP+ Post-16 in a wider system where there are complex interdependencies: VSHs identified a shortage of post-16 provision, particularly mid-year and for ESOL; previously undiagnosed levels of need amongst CLA and CL, particularly in their NEET or UASC cohorts; and challenges engaging post-16 providers (often perceived as being due to the lack of statutory DT role). VSs also highlighted the impact of changes to the way that post-16 settings were using the 16-19 bursary. The changes, including a perceived move away attendance-linked payments to in-kind support (for example travel, lunches, equipment and trips)

meant that in some cases VSs used PP+ Post-16 to fill gaps in support rather than enhance the support available.

- Sequencing of decision making: Delays in funding announcements on PP+ Post-16 and annual allocations tied to the financial year were seen as barriers to effective planning and staff retention.

VSHs in case study sites did however provide examples of progress in overcoming barriers over time, including post-16 settings becoming more familiar with permitted uses of the PP+ Post-16 funding, and progress made in supporting CLA and CLs educated out of area.

### **Have there been any unintended or unexpected issues in the delivery of the programme?**

While the flexibility of how PP+ Post-16 can be used by VSs was broadly welcomed since it has enabled VSs to respond to local need and context, several disadvantages to this level of flexibility were also identified:

- substantial variation in terms of the scale and type of support that is available to individual young people in different local authorities (or even within local authorities if CLA are out of area)
- challenges for post-16 settings working with multiple VSs
- difficulties in ring-fencing the funding in some cases
- challenges in monitoring and evaluation of the funding overall due to inconsistency in both levels of funding and activities implemented

We had not envisaged that some VSs would need to spend all of their funding on post-16 staffing. In our case study sites where this was the case, this was driven by their relatively small size and the level of funding received. The significance of the post-16 focused post within VSs in raising awareness of the cohort, bringing stakeholders together and driving forward improvements in the support available to CLA and CLs at post-16 was also underestimated.

The fact that much of the work is heavily dependent on relationships being formed between the VS staff and other stakeholders including CLA and CLs, means that support at post-16 is potentially vulnerable to staff moving on and those personal relationships being lost. Equally, where individual staff in post-16 settings are very engaged with the VS and supporting the cohort, there is a risk that the approach is heavily reliant on the enthusiasm and good practice of individuals. This highlights the importance of incorporating support for CLA and CLs at post-16 into policy within post-16 settings, ensuring that there is oversight from senior management in post-16 settings, and also within CSC and the wider local authority.

## Outcomes

### **What appear to be the short-term, interim and longer-term outcomes for the cohort, post-16 settings, and the wider stakeholders? To what extent do these reflect the outcomes identified in the ToC?**

The evaluation found emerging evidence of positive short-term and interim outcomes for young people, post-16 settings, and joint working based on the views of VSHs, SWs and other stakeholders interviewed, whilst it is still early to assess long-term impact.

#### **Young people**

Based on the views of VSHs and other stakeholders, the programme improved access to targeted support such as tuition, mentoring, and ESOL provision, particularly targeting NEET young people and UASC.

Particular progress towards the following short-term outcomes was reported, although the variation in the levels and use of the funding by Cohort and VS mean that these outcomes will not have been consistently achieved:

- CLA and CLs build trusting relationships with an adult
- CLA and CLs see a positive role model

There was also reported evidence of progress towards interim outcomes, particularly in:

- increased awareness of EET options
- enrolled on appropriate course
- increased engagement

VSHs reported that some longer-term outcomes for CLA and CLs (attendance, retention, attainment and increased numbers in EET) are beginning to emerge, but these remain at early stages, consistent with the programme's timeline, and require continued monitoring and evaluation.

Analysis of the national datasets for 2022 to 2023 shows no change in the longer-term outcomes. However, if the timetable set out in the ToC, which was co-developed with VSHs, is correct, we would not expect to see any longer-term outcomes until 2025 to 2026 for Cohorts 1 and 2 and 2026 to 2027 for Cohort 3. Assuming that the ToC is correct in the stepping stones needed to achieve longer-term outcomes, we would expect these outcomes to emerge in time. However, there are limitations in the extent to which changes in the outcomes data can be attributed to PP+ Post-16 due to the funding being embedded in a complex system where other provision may also be seeking to achieve similar outcomes.

## Post-16 settings

There is evidence that post-16 settings are beginning to embed support for CLA and CLs into their policies and practices - an important step toward sustainable change that moves beyond reliance on individual staff relationships. Settings reported increased awareness of CLA and CL needs, with training and closer work with VSs helping embed more inclusive practices. In some areas, providers introduced new roles or systems to track and support the cohort more effectively. While fewer post-16 settings are visibly promoting the cohort (for example in prospectuses), this may reflect a current focus on building internal systems and inclusive practices behind the scenes.

## Joint working

Improved staffing capacity within VSs has been key to strengthening joint working. It has enabled more frequent engagement with other agencies, leading to better cross-sector understanding of the post-16 landscape and young people's needs. As a result, CLA and CLs may be receiving more informed EET advice. Enhanced collaboration, particularly between VSs, post-16 settings, and CSC, has also created space for shared learning and good practice, helping to improve transition planning and the effectiveness of PEPs, and laying the groundwork for longer-term outcomes such as improved EET and attainment.

## **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?**

Although the national data set analysis has not identified any change in outcomes, the survey and case study data suggest how certain activities are potentially leading to emerging short and interim outcomes (see above).

The outcomes achieved in each site are also influenced by factors such as:

- size and stability of post-16 teams in VSs
- interpretation of cohort eligibility
- use of PP+ Post-16 for staffing versus direct young person support
- the funding Cohort (length of time they have been in receipt of the funding)
- the level of funding received
- the numbers of eligible CLA and CLs and the extent to which they fluctuate in-year and between years

As discussed in 8.1, those VSs using the funding to increase their post-16 staffing, particularly those where previously there were no dedicated post-16 staff, reported that it increased their capacity to do direct work with young people and engage directly with other colleagues in post-16 settings and CSC. The evidence from the VSH survey and

case studies suggest that these roles supported a wide range of outcomes (for example building trusting relationships with adults; increased awareness of EET options; strengthening relationships between the VS and post-16 settings; more integrated support for transition to independence). Although less common, those sites investing in staffing located within post-16 settings or the wider local authority also reported strengthening relationships with other stakeholders and increasing stakeholders' understanding of CLA and CLs' needs.

Several VSs focused on targeted work with NEET and UASC due to the increasing size of these cohorts with the aim of increasing EET rates. This work included a wide range of potential activities, although some common themes emerged. Examples of NEET prevention work included, additional transition support, summer schools, offering functional skills maths and English, or working with post-16 settings to establish more responsive courses for those at risk of disengaging from education. Support for young people who were already NEET included short courses, mentoring, and NEET PEPs. VSHs reported seeing emerging change to their EET rates, although they acknowledged challenges in measuring change due to fluctuation of rates throughout the year. Work focused on the UASC cohort included providing ESOL courses, tuition, laptops, funding sports and other wellbeing activities, and running UASC summer schools.

### **Do the likely benefits outweigh the costs?**

Relatively speaking, the amount of PP+ Post-16 received by VSHs is small, particularly when compared with PP+ for statutory school age. However, the evaluation findings suggest that it has enabled VSHs to make significant changes to the support available to CLA and CLs at post-16 and the processes for assessing individual need. The funding has placed post-16 support for CLA and CLs on a much firmer footing, when previously it relied on repurposing funding not intended for post-16 and the goodwill of VS staff.

VS staff and other stakeholders are clear in their view that PP+ Post-16 funding is making a positive difference to the support available to CLA and CLs. VSHs value having the flexibility to use the funding innovatively in a way that they consider best meets local need and combine it with other funding sources to maximise impact. Stakeholders view being able to employ dedicated post-16 staff as particularly valuable.

Based on the available evidence, it is likely that the benefits outweigh the costs, but VSHs suggest that more could be done to increase the benefits and maximise the value of investing in support for CLA and CLs at post-16. VSHs expressed strong support for increasing the level of PP+ Post-16 to match the statutory school-age rate, arguing that care-experienced young people continue to face significant needs beyond age 16. They raised concerns about inconsistent funding for post-16 roles across local authorities, leading to uneven staffing and support. Suggestions to address this included introducing a core funding amount for VS staffing, with per-pupil top-ups.

## Implications of the programme for its evaluation

The current evaluation has identified the range of activities undertaken using PP+ Post-16; emerging short and interim outcomes as perceived by stakeholders; and has tested for changes to outcomes in the 2022 to 2023 national data sets. However, the findings are restricted to a certain extent by the nature of the PP+ Post-16 programme.

The minimal guidance on use of the funding gives VSHs substantial flexibility to use PP+ Post-16 for a wide range of activities to support CLA and CLs, which in turn could lead to a wide range of outcomes as illustrated by the ToC. Changes to the cohort benefitting from the funding (from CLA and CLs in general FE colleges to young people in all post-16 settings and NEET); different levels of funding across the 3 VS Cohorts; variation in levels of pre-existing VS staffing and provision at post-16; variation in what the funding amounts to per young person in each VS; variation in what activities are delivered using the funding; and lack of a control group since national roll out make identifying patterns or trends in use of the funding challenging. These factors also limit our ability to draw conclusions about causality, which in turn meant we did not have the data needed to conduct a meaningful cost-benefit assessment of the programme.

Further evaluation of the programme should therefore begin with a more clearly defined policy intent and set of objectives for the funding, with associated monitoring mechanisms. Evaluation can then take a more targeted focus, drawing on the existing evidence base and what we now know from this evaluation to evaluate specific interventions and the extent to which they lead to desired outcomes. We make some recommendations for this in the following chapter.

# Conclusion and recommendations

## Conclusion

PP+ Post-16 is an evolving programme with light touch guidance for VSHs on use of the funding. Despite a range of factors limiting our ability to draw conclusions about causality, which also prevented us conducting a meaningful costs-benefit assessment, we conclude that:

- the VSH survey and case study interviews point to emerging evidence of positive short-term and interim outcomes for young people, post-16 settings, and joint working, based on the views of VSHs and other stakeholders
- perceived emerging outcomes broadly align with the anticipated outcomes in the ToC
- although the timing of the evaluation meant that it is too early to observe change in the national data sets, VSHs perceived there to be emerging signs of change in longer-term outcomes in their local data
- overall, VSHs and other stakeholders consider PP+ Post-16 to be making a significant difference to the support available to CLA and CLs, putting it on a firmer footing and reducing VSHs' reliance on repurposing funding from other sources and the goodwill of their staff
- further evaluation of PP+ Post-16 should begin with a more clearly defined policy intent and set of objectives for the funding, with associated monitoring mechanisms

The following recommendations are made based on learning from this evaluation.

## Recommendations

### For the DfE: relating to the future design and implementation of PP+ Post-16

- Policy intent, funding level and allocation: Consider the feasibility of increasing PP+ Post-16 funding to match the rate per pupil for statutory school-age PP+ to ensure continuity of support and reduce the pressure on VSHs to choose between system-level change and shorter-term direct work. If continuity of funding is not possible, provide guidance for VSHs that makes the policy intent clearer, and allocate funding allocations to reflect that intent:

- system level change (for example building networks of stakeholders and PEP training and advice to providers), which requires a baseline of post-16 staffing capacity, largely independent of CLA and CL numbers, or
- direct work with individual or small groups of CLA and CLs (for example commissioned mentoring, tuition, wellbeing activities and relationship building), which requires a greater proportion of the funding to be based on the number of CLA and CLs
- CLA and CLs in scope: Revise the guidance on the CLA and CLs in scope for PP+ Post-16, so that it:
  - ensures that CLA and CLs remain in scope through to the end of the academic year in which they are 18
  - extends the scope to include CLA and CLs in year 14 to recognise the educational disruption many CLA suffer and provide consistent support to complete qualifications and/or transition to secure EET
- Support innovation: Consider a separate post-16 innovation fund, for local authorities to apply to pilot and evaluate new approaches to supporting educational outcomes at post-16. Applications for innovation funding should be accompanied by a clear local needs analysis; a costed plan to meet those needs; explicit measures of success and plans to monitor them; and a dissemination plan to share learning with stakeholders such as CLA/CLs, other VSs, and post-16 settings.
- Implications of changes to the 16-19 bursary guidance: Revisit the guidance for the use of the 16-19 bursary and clarify how this differs from PP+ Post-16 funding in the expectations for its use with CLA and CLs.

### **For the DfE: relating to future programme-level research, monitoring and evaluation of PP+ Post-16**

- Develop a minimum dataset for post-16: Work with VSHs to identify a minimum dataset that can be collected by VSs and used to track and understand activities and outcomes at post-16. This should incorporate data on use of PP+ Post-16 to support accountability, consistency, and future evaluation, including:
  - data on expenditure based on the categories of activity used in this evaluation
  - the number of eligible CLA and CLs in the cohort per year including both minimum and maximum numbers over the course of a year per VS
  - data on a limited number of key outcomes

- Refine the ToC: Further review and refine the ToC by reducing the number of activities and outcomes included and, where possible, include specific causal chains between activities and outcomes rooted in any available evidence. This process should be informed by a) the findings of this evaluation, b) further clarification of DfE's policy intent for the funding (see earlier recommendation on policy intent) and c) an evidence review. In the longer term, continue to further review and refine the ToC as further testing of specific activities/interventions using PP+ Post-16 is undertaken and longer-term outcomes data emerges.
- Evaluate specific interventions: Conduct further case study evaluation focused on specific activities/interventions relating to direct work with young people or strengthening joint working and the system around CLA and CLs. This could include analysis of secondary data relating to longer-term outcomes.
- Systems approach to future evaluation of the funding: Consider a systems approach to future evaluation of PP+ Post-16, recognising that VSs are using the funding to strengthen the support structure and processes around CLS and CLs in addition to providing direct support to young people.

## For NAVSH

- Support evidence-based practice: Develop a toolkit of evidence-based activities for VSs to consider implementing in response to identified local need at post-16.

## For local authorities

- Raise awareness of the SW's role in supporting education at post-16: Ensure that induction of SWs and post-16 workers new to the local authority (whether or not they are newly qualified) includes an opportunity for the VS to describe, first hand, how they can facilitate support for the education or training of CLA and CLs in years 12 and 13.
- Emphasise the role of post-16 education in CLA and CL life chances: Update practice guidance for SWs and post-16 workers to recognise the broader involvement of the VSH, the importance of PEPs, and the protective nature of post-16 EET.
- Encourage communication and information sharing: Actively facilitate communication and information exchange between CSC and relevant members of the VS, encouraging co-location or secondments between teams to support a broadening of knowledge and understanding alongside more integrated support for post-16 CLA and CLs.

- Support joint working with post-16 settings: Support the VSH to establish effective relationships with senior leaders of post-16 settings and encourage those settings to provide timely access to the data and information necessary to understand the progress in learning of CLA and CLs, and any concerns about their engagement with learning so that the VSH can offer practical pro-active support to the relevant SW, post-16 worker, post-16 provider and/or young person.
- Reduce disruption to a young person's education or training: Delay any placement changes when a young person reaches their 18th birthday until they have completed the education or training programme they are pursuing.

## For virtual schools

- Needs assessment: Conduct a needs assessment to inform local priorities for use of the funding at post-16. This could include:
  - understanding the prevalence and level of need across the cohort
  - understanding current local support provision at post-16 and gaps in support
  - mapping the VS's capacity to support CLA and CLs at post-16

Use this information to inform decisions on:

- the balance between local allocation of PP+ Post-16 to fund strategic activities vs. direct work with young people
  - the balance between delivery of targeted support for cohorts of focus (for example UASC and NEET) and support for the wider cohort
  - which types of interventions and services to commission to meet identified gaps in provision
- Consider examples of practice from this evaluation: Where cohort-level needs assessment highlights a particular priority, consider the following examples of practice:
    - provide mentoring and coaching to support the development of trusted relationships with adults and provide bespoke support through EET pathways
    - subsidised ESOL tuition for newly arrived UASC to support language acquisition
    - subsidised social and/or wellbeing activities to support relationship building both with peers and with professionals or volunteers

- work with post-16 providers to encourage more taster programmes throughout the year and to enable in-year starts on accredited programmes
- Assess, Plan, Do, Review: Establish a cycle to 'Assess, Plan, Do and Review' in designing and delivering support to individuals and cohorts of CLA and CLs to include a needs assessment; the design and delivery of support and interventions; and the review of the effectiveness of those activities.
- Using PEPs for strategic decision making: In addition to using PEPs to support targets for individual young people, consider their use to inform strategic decision making and prioritisation at a cohort or sub-cohort level. This could include regular review of aggregated data from PEPs to identify trends in identified support needs, preferences, and outcomes and inform the development of cost-effective support options.
- Continue to develop post-16 PEPs: Ensure post-16 PEPs are subject to the same scrutiny as statutory school-age PEPs and that NEET young people also have a PEP focused on reducing barriers to EET and a coordinated multi-agency response.
- Support transitions: Consider options to support post-16 transition including:
  - implementing a process early in KS4 for assessment of a young person's risk of becoming NEET
  - working closely with CSC, schools and post-16 settings to inform a transition needs assessment and associated support plan
  - consider whether a portion of statutory school-age PP+ funding could be deployed during the summer break to support the transition to post-16 EET
  - facilitate year 11 to year 12 transition meetings similar to the year 6 to year 7 transition processes already in place in many local authorities
- Communicate outcomes: Ensure that aggregated outcomes data by cohort and sub-cohort is shared with the relevant local colleagues, leaders and governors.
- Joint working between VSs: Work together with regional VS colleagues to:
  - consider coordinating use of funds, especially where young people from multiple local authorities attend the same post-16 setting to ensure greater equity of support for those young people irrespective of originating local authority
  - explore developing common core elements of a regional post-16 PEP template to reduce the burden and risk of confusion for post-16 settings
  - develop or strengthen regional VS networks to share learning and effective practice at post-16

## For post-16 education and training settings

- Single named contact: Identify a senior member of staff to act as the named contact for the VS and to take responsibility for post-16 PEP quality.
- Involvement of curriculum teams: Extend training beyond student support staff to include curriculum teams in post-16 settings to increase understanding of the barriers faced by CLA and CLs.
- A clear 'offer' for CLA and CLs: Include the setting's 'offer to care experienced learners' in prospectuses and/or programme outlines, and ensure policy and practice in curriculum teams, as well as learner support teams, embodies that offer.
- Information sharing with the VS: Proactively communicate any concerns about the attendance, engagement or progress of CLAs and CLs so the VS can support retention and progression.
- Alignment of the 16-19 bursary with PP+ Post-16: Ensure that deployment of the 16-19 bursary is discussed, and preferably agreed as part of a PEP, with the VS to ensure a more coordinated package of support can be offered.

## 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?
- Are 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

### Theory of Change workshops

During the evaluation scoping phase in autumn 2023, 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 VSHs 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

At the beginning of year 2 of the evaluation, a further round of ToC workshops was held with participants from VSs to:

- gather feedback on proposed refinements to the ToC based on the year 1 evaluation findings
- explore whether any further updates were needed based on VSs' current plans and experience of using PP+ post-16

A combined workshop was held for Cohorts 1 and 2 as the ToC workshop in the scoping phase showed that VSs in these Cohorts considered themselves to be at a similar stage in implementing or planning activities using PP+ Post-16. A separate workshop was held for Cohort 3 recognising that they were at a different stage in this process. Table 20 provides a breakdown of participants across both waves of ToC workshops.

**Table 20: Breakdown of ToC workshop participants**

<b>Participants in each workshop</b>	<b>Year 1: Cohort 1</b>	<b>Year 1: Cohort 2</b>	<b>Year 1: Cohort 3</b>	<b>Year 1: Total</b>
Regions	6	3	6	-
VSs	6	3	9	18
Individuals	6	5	11	22
<b>Participants in each workshop</b>	<b>Year 2: Cohort 1</b>	<b>Year 2: Cohort 2</b>	<b>Year 2: Cohort 3</b>	<b>Year 2: Total</b>
Regions	6	5	7	-
VSs	10	7	10	27
Individuals	12	7	11	30

## National online survey of VSHs

In January 2025, the evaluation team distributed a survey to all VSs in England via online software SmartSurvey. The survey was open for 4 weeks and closed in February 2025. A copy of the survey is provided in Annex 3: National online VSH survey.

The purpose of the survey was to collect activity data from VSs to triangulate with findings from the case studies and outcomes data. Survey questions built on those used in the surveys for the pilot evaluation and year 1 and were informed by the key findings from year 1 of the evaluation and the second round of ToC workshops held at the beginning of year 2.

Table 21 presents a breakdown of the response rate from each Cohort for the year 1 and 2 surveys. Overall, we received an excellent response rate in both years (year 1: 120 responses, 81% response rate; year 2: 105 responses, 71% response rate). Findings from the year 1 survey were presented in the year 1 interim report. This final report presents the year 2 survey responses and where appropriate, identifies how responses have changed between the two surveys.

**Table 21: Response rate for each Cohort by year<sup>31</sup>**

<b>Cohort (year PP+ Post-16 funding was first received)</b>	<b>Year 1 survey response rate</b>	<b>Year 2 survey response rate</b>
Cohort 1 (2021)	27 out of 30 (90%)	23 out of 30 (77%)
Cohort 2 (2022)	21 out of 25 (84%)	20 out of 25 (80%)
Cohort 3 (2023)	72 out of 93 (77%)	62 out of 93 (67%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>120 out of 148 (81%)</b>	<b>105 out of 148 (71%)</b>

## Case study interviews

Case studies interviews were conducted via MS Teams. In most cases, interviews were one-to-one, although where availability allowed, 2 stakeholders were interviewed jointly where they held a similar role within a case study site. Interviews were recorded with the interviewees' consent and transcribed. Transcripts were coded thematically and analysed using NVivo 14. Transcripts were initially coded 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. The evaluation team had planned to complete two focus groups with CLA and CLs in one of the case study sites (one for young people in EET and one for those who were NEET). However, despite VShs in multiple sites attempting to set up focus groups, we were unsuccessful in securing them and any further evaluation should consider alternative ways of capturing young peoples' views. In addition to undertaking interviews in case study sites, VShs were asked to share any available documents providing further detail about their approach to PP+ Post-16 (for example policy and guidance developed for local post-16 settings or SWs; audits; VSH reports) 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.

<sup>31</sup> 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.

# Annex 3: National online VSH survey

## PP+ Post-16 evaluation: VSH survey 2025

### Introduction

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](http://www.cordisbright.co.uk)) to evaluate the extension of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding to support children looked after (CLA) and care leavers aged 16-18. This funding is referred to as PP+ post-16.

As part of this evaluation, we are conducting a national survey of Virtual Schools. The survey should take between 30 and 40 minutes to complete. 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 the PP+ post-16 funding; how the PP+ post-16 funding is being spent; 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:

- Data on the number of young people who are eligible for the PP+ post-16 funding. This includes the number of young people were eligible for the PP+ post-16 funding on the 1st October in 2024, 2023 and 2022, as well as the number of young people who were eligible at any point across the relevant academic years, if you have this information available.
- Data on spend. This includes how much PP+ post-16 funding you received in the 2023-2024 and 2022-2023 academic years, and the proportion of PP+ post-16 funding that has been spent across activities relating to joint working, young people, and post-16 settings.
- Data on direct work you may have conducted with young people. This includes the number of CLA and care leavers who received direct support through the PP+ post-16 funding in the relevant academic year. We will also ask for the number of young people in specific groups who have received direct support, if you have this information available.

- Number of CLA and care leavers age 16-18 in your local authority on 1 Oct 2024.
- Average % attendance within this group between 1 Sept 2024 and 31 Oct 2024.
- Percentage of this group not participating in any kind of education or training (NEET) on 1 Oct 2024.

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 on 10th January and run until 31st January.

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 [name and email address]

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

## About your Virtual School

1. Please state your Virtual School.
2. Please state your role in the Virtual School.
3. Please indicate when you started receiving funding for the PP+ post-16 programme:

Year	
September 2021 (pilot)	
September 2022	
September 2023	

## Focus of the PP+ post-16 funding

The grant determination letter for Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) post-16 for 2024-2025 states that the purpose of this grant is to provide additional funding for children looked after (CLA) and care leavers at post-16 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.

4. Thinking about the 2023-24 academic year, has your virtual school used the PP+ post-16 to give extra focus to any of the following groups? *Please select all that apply.*

Cohort	
Care leavers aged 16 to 17	
Care leavers aged 18+	
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	
CLA and care leavers who attend post-16 settings out of area	
CLA and care leavers post Year 13 or equivalent	
Other (please specify below)	
Not applicable – the funding has been used across CLA and care leavers more broadly	

5. Please briefly outline the rationale for the focus on the combination of groups of young people you have selected. Has this focus changed since you first started receiving the funding? If so, why is this? *Please respond in up to 250 words.*
  
6. Please explain how your virtual school has interpreted the eligibility criteria for the young people supported using PP+ post-16 funding. Please select the option which best describes your typical approach or general rule-of-thumb for interpreting the criteria.  
 Which of the following statements applies to your virtual school?
  - a. Determining when eligibility for the PP+ post-16 funding starts:

Statement	
In my virtual school, PP+ post-16 funding eligibility is generally determined based on age. This means that the funding starts being used to support CLA and care leavers when they turn 16, whenever this is within the school year.	
In my virtual school, eligibility for PP+ post-16 funding eligibility is generally determined based on school year. This means that the funding starts being used to support CLA and care leavers at the end of Year 11 or equivalent, regardless of when they turn 16.	
In my virtual school, PP+ post-16 funding eligibility is generally determined based on school year. This means that the funding starts being used to support CLA and care leavers at the start of Year 12 or equivalent, regardless of when they turn 16.	
In my virtual school, we generally take a hybrid approach based on the needs of the individual young person or cohort of young people.	

b. Determining when eligibility for the PP+ post-16 funding stops:

Statement	
In my virtual school, eligibility for the PP+ post-16 funding is generally determined based on age. This means that the funding stops being used to support CLA and care leavers when they turn 18, whenever this is within the academic year.	
In my virtual school, eligibility for the PP+ post-16 funding is generally determined based on school year. This means that the funding stops being used to support CLA and care leavers at the end of academic year in which they turn 18.	
In my virtual school, we generally continue to use the PP+ post-16 funding to provide support to CLA and care leavers after the end of the academic year in which they turn 18.	
In my virtual school, we generally take a hybrid approach based on the needs of the individual young person or cohort of young people. This may mean that some young people will stop being supported using the funding at 18, some will stop at the end of the academic year in which they turn 18, and some will stop after this.	

- c. If you have selected that you take a hybrid approach based on the needs of the individual young person or particular cohort of young people, please elaborate on how this works in practice. If you have made exceptions to the general approach you have selected above for any reason, please give examples below. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

## Use of the PP+ post-16 funding

7.

- a. In the 2023-24 academic year, which activities related to young people have you spent the PP+ post-16 funding on? *Please select all that apply.*

Activities related to young people	
One to one mentoring for CLA and care leavers	
One to one academic tuition for CLA and care leavers	
Careers workshops, fairs or experiences to support CLA and care leavers to understand their post-16 options.	
Tutoring or courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)	
Life skills workshops for CLA and care leavers (for example employability, independent living skills, wellbeing)	
Mental health or wellbeing support for CLA and care leavers	
Surveys / consultations to collect views of CLA and care leavers	
Allocating PP+ funding to individual CLA and care leavers to support personal education plan (PEP) targets	
Allocating PP+ post-16 funding to individual CLA and care leavers to meet financial needs (for example purchasing course equipment, IT equipment, travel expenses or uniform)	
Facilitating enrichment activities with a focus on health, wellbeing and life skills (for example sports clubs, cultural visits)	
Intervening to improve attendance of individual CLA and care leavers post-16	
Other (please specify):	

- b. In the 2023-24 academic year, which activities related to post-16 education or training settings have you spent the PP+ post-16 funding on? *Please select all that apply.*

Activities related to post-16 settings	
Funding or part-funding new roles in post-16 settings which focus on CLA and care leavers (for example to monitor attendance, mentors)	
Activities aimed at increasing existing staff time and resource in post-16 settings	
Briefings on PP+ post-16 (for example bulletins, briefings, newsletters, social media, webinars)	
Activities aimed at awareness-raising of the needs of CLA and care leavers 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	
Activities aimed at strengthening links with out of area post-16 settings	
Other (please specify):	

- c. In the 2023-24 academic year, which activities related to joint working have you spent the PP+ post-16 funding on? *Please select all that apply.*

<b>Activities related to joint working between education, children's social care and the Virtual School</b>	
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 (for example 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	
Developing shared agreements for joint working across education, children's social care and the Virtual School	
Funding or part-funding new roles in the Virtual School which focus on post-16 education	
Activities aimed at increasing existing staff time and resource in the virtual school	
Activities aiming to increase Virtual School capacity to focus on post-16	
Activities aimed at working and/or sharing learning across Virtual Schools (for example regional groups)	
Other (please specify):	

8.

- a. Please briefly outline the rationale for the focus on the combination of activities you have selected across young people, joint working, and post-16 settings. Has the combination of activities changed over the last academic year? If so, please elaborate on what has changed and why. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*
- b. If you are placing focus on 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.*

9.

- a. In the 2023-24 academic year, what training, if any, have you delivered to the following groups using the PP+ post-16 funding? *Please select all that apply.*

Training type	Staff in post-16 settings	Social workers	Virtual school staff	Foster carers/ residential care staff	No training has been delivered on this topic
Trauma and attachment					
PEP and SMART targets					
Further education landscape and transitions					
Educational psychology					
Experiences and needs of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)					
Communication					
No training has been delivered for this group					

- b. If you have delivered training to other roles, or on other topics, please specify:
- c. Please indicate below whether your use of PP+ post-16 funding for training has changed this academic year (2023-24) in comparison to previous years. *Please select all that apply.*<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Please note that Cohort 3 were not asked this question due to their funding window.

Statement	
More training has been delivered in 2023-2024 compared to previous years	
Less training has been delivered in 2023-2024 compared to previous years	
There has been a change in the topic or target audience in 2023-2024 compared to previous years	
There has not been any change compared to previous years	
Not applicable – we did not receive PP+ post-16 funding before the 2023-2024 academic year.	

- d. If your training provision has changed over time, please elaborate on why these decisions have been made. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

## Data availability

This section asks about the number of CLA and care leavers who were eligible for the PP+ post-16 funding in your virtual school. This is to help us to understand how many young people the PP+ post-16 funding has covered in practice, how this might differ from initial estimations, and the extent to which these numbers vary across the academic year.

This section asks for this data for the 2024-25 academic year, the 2023-24 academic year, and the 2022-23 academic year.<sup>33</sup> We understand that you may not have this data readily available. If you can, please provide your best estimate. Otherwise, please leave these questions blank and move on to the next section.

10. 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. If you have access to the relevant data regarding the 2024 to 2025 academic year, please complete the table below.

*If you do not have the data separated by CLA and care leavers then please complete the “total” column only. If you cannot access this data easily (within two weeks) please leave this table blank. If zero, please enter this as “0”.*

<sup>33</sup> Please note that Cohort 3 were asked to provide data for the 2024-25 and 2023-24 academic years only.

Data type	CLA	Care leavers aged 16 to 17	Care leavers aged 18	Total (CLA and care leavers combined)
Number of 16-18 CLA and care leavers in your local authority on 1 Oct 2024				
Average % attendance within this group between 1 Sept 2024 and 31 Oct 2024				
Number of 16 to 18 CLA and care leavers not participating in any kind of education or training (NEET) on 1 Oct 2024				

11. The following questions are intended to help us understand the total number of young people who were eligible for the PP+ post-16 funding in your virtual school across the 2023-2024 academic year.

- a. How many CLA and care leavers were eligible for the PP+ post-16 funding on 1st October 2023 in your virtual school? *If you are unsure, please give your best estimate.*
- b. How many CLA and care leavers were eligible for the PP+ post-16 funding at any point over the 2023 to 2024 academic year in your virtual school? *If you are unsure, please give your best estimate.*
- c. If you experienced changes in numbers of CLA and care leavers who are eligible for PP+ post-16 funding across the 2023 to 2024 academic year, what have the drivers of this been? *For example, increases in unaccompanied asylum seeking children or changes due to interpretation of the eligibility criteria. Please respond in up to 250 words.*

12. The following questions are intended to help us understand the total number of young people who were eligible for the PP+ post-16 funding in your virtual school across the 2022-2023 academic year.

- a. How many CLA and care leavers were eligible for the PP+ post-16 funding on 1st October 2022 in your virtual school? *If you are unsure, please give your best estimate.*
- b. How many CLA and care leavers were eligible for the PP+ post-16 funding at any point over the 2022 to 2023 academic year in your virtual school? *If you are unsure, please give your best estimate.*

- c. If you experienced changes in the numbers of CLA and care leavers who were eligible for PP+ post-16 funding across the 2022 to 2023 academic year, what have the drivers of this been? *For example, increases in unaccompanied asylum seeking children or changes due to interpretation of the eligibility criteria. Please respond in up to 250 words.*
13. 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.*
14. What steps have been taken, if any, towards improving the collection, access and use of data on 16 to 18 year olds who are CLA or care leavers, since you started receiving PP+ post-16 funding?  
*Please respond in up to 250 words. If no specific steps have been taken in this timeframe, please state 'None'*

## **How the PP+ post-16 funding was spent in the 2023 to 2024 academic year**

The questions in this section aim to help us to understand how the funding was spent in the 2023-2024 academic year. In the following section we will ask the same questions about the 2022-2023 academic year.

- 15.
- a. How much PP+ post-16 funding did your virtual school receive for the 2023 to 2024 academic year? *Please respond to the nearest £.*
- b. Using your best estimate, what proportion of the PP+ post-16 funding was spent on each of the following activities in the 2023 to 2024 academic year? Please use the activities provided below as a guide to which activities should fall under which category.  
*Please provide your answer as a percentage, and ensure that percentages add up to 100%. If you are unsure, please provide your best estimate.*

Examples of activities that fall under each category:

### *Direct work with young people*

- One to one mentoring for CLA and care leavers
- One to one academic tuition for CLA and care leavers
- Careers workshops, fairs or experiences to support CLA and care leavers to understand their post-16 options.
- Tutoring or courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

### *Activities relating to joint working*

- 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 (for example 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
- Developing shared agreements for joint working across education, children's social care and the Virtual School
- Funding or part-funding new roles in the Virtual School which focus on post-16 education

### *Activities relating to post-16 settings*

- Funding or part-funding new roles in post-16 settings which focus on CLA and care leavers (for example to monitor attendance, mentors)
- Activities aimed at increasing existing staff time and resource in post-16 settings-
- Briefings on PP+ post-16 (for example bulletins, briefings, newsletters, social media, webinars)
- Activities aimed at awareness-raising of the needs of CLA and care leavers 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

Type of activity	Proportion of the PP+ post-16 funding (%)
Activities related to young people	
Activities related to joint working	
Activities related to post-16 settings	
Other activities	
Total:	100%

- c. If you have entered a proportion for “other activities”, please explain which activities fell under this category. *Please explain in up to 250 words.*

16. The next set of questions are intended to help us understand how the funding is being spent on direct work with young people. We understand that virtual schools are using the PP+ post-16 funding differently, and that some virtual schools are focussing primarily on strategic and joint-working activities, rather than on direct work with young people. If using the funding for direct work with young people has not been a focus for your virtual school, please respond accordingly and move on to the next questions.

- a. How many CLA and care leavers received direct support through the PP+ post-16 funding in the 2023 to 2024 academic year? *If you are unsure, please give your best estimate.*

By direct support we mean the funding has been used to provide specific support or resources to an individual young person, for example to pay for tuition, ESOL sessions, a laptop etc. rather than activities that benefit the cohort overall or indirectly.

- b. How many young people in the following groups received direct support through the PP+ post-16 funding in the 2023 to 2024 academic year?

By direct support we mean the funding was used to provide specific support or resources to an individual young person, for example to pay for tuition, ESOL sessions, a laptop etc. rather than activities that benefit the cohort overall or indirectly.

*Please provide your best estimate. If you do not know the answer, please leave this question blank. Please note that a young person may fall under multiple categories, in which case please count them under each relevant category.*

Cohort	Number of young people
Care leavers aged 16 to 17	
Care leavers aged 18+	
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	
CLA and care leavers who attend post-16 settings out of area	
Other (please specify below)	

- c. If there are any differences in the types of work that tend to be conducted with each cohort of young people, please elaborate here.
- d. If the number of young people who have received direct support is less than the total number of young people who were eligible, how were these decisions made? Please elaborate on decision making around the amount of funding that was spent directly on young people, how young people were prioritised, and whether there were any barriers limiting who could receive direct support. Please respond in up to 250 words.

## How the PP+ post-16 funding was spent in the 2022 to 2023 academic year<sup>34</sup>

The questions in this section aim to help us to understand how the funding was used in the 2022-2023 academic year.

17.

- a. How much PP+ post-16 funding did your virtual school receive for the 2022 to 2023 academic year? *Please respond to the nearest £.*
- b. Using your best estimate, what proportion of the PP+ post-16 funding was spent on each of the following activities in the 2022 to 2023 academic year?

*Please use the activities provided below as a guide to which activities should fall under which category. Please provide your answer as a percentage, and ensure that percentages add up to 100%. If you are unsure, please provide your best estimate.*

<sup>34</sup> The questions in this section were not asked to VSs in Cohort 3, as they had not started to receive PP+ post-16 funding at this time.

Examples of activities that fall under each category:

*Direct work with young people*

- One to one mentoring for CLA and care leavers
- One to one academic tuition for CLA and care leavers
- Careers workshops, fairs or experiences to support CLA and care leavers to understand their post-16 options.
- Tutoring or courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

*Activities relating to joint working*

- 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 (for example 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
- Developing shared agreements for joint working across education, children's social care and the Virtual School
- Funding or part-funding new roles in the Virtual School which focus on post-16 education

*Activities relating to post-16 settings*

- Funding or part-funding new roles in post-16 settings which focus on CLA and care leavers (for example to monitor attendance, mentors)
- Activities aimed at increasing existing staff time and resource in post-16 settings-
- Briefings on PP+ post-16 (for example bulletins, briefings, newsletters, social media, webinars)
- Activities aimed at awareness-raising of the needs of CLA and care leavers 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

Type of activity	Proportion of the PP+ post-16 funding (%)
Activities related to young people	
Activities related to joint working	
Activities related to post-16 settings	
Other activities	
Total:	100%

- c. If you have entered a proportion for “other activities”, please explain which activities fell under this category. *Please explain in up to 250 words.*

18. The next set of questions are intended to help us understand how the funding has been spent on direct work with young people. We understand that virtual schools are using the PP+ post-16 funding differently, and that some virtual schools are focussing primarily on strategic and joint-working activities, rather than on direct work with young people. If using the funding for direct work with young people has not been a focus for your virtual school, please respond accordingly and move on to the next questions.

- a. How many CLA and care leavers received direct support through the PP+ post-16 funding in the 2022 to 2023 academic year? *If you are unsure, please give your best estimate.*

By direct support we mean the funding has been used to provide specific support or resources to an individual young person, for example to pay for tuition, ESOL sessions, a laptop etc. rather than activities that benefit the cohort overall or indirectly.

- b. How many young people in the following groups received direct support through the PP+ post-16 funding in the 2022 to 2023 academic year?

By direct support we mean the funding has been used to provide specific support or resources to an individual young person, for example to pay for tuition, ESOL sessions, a laptop etc. rather than activities that benefit the cohort overall or indirectly.

*Please provide your best estimate. If you do not know the answer, please leave this question blank. Please note that a young person may fall under multiple categories, in which case please count them under each relevant category.*

Cohort	Number of young people
Care leavers aged 16 to 17	
Care leavers aged 18+	
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	
CLA and care leavers who attend post-16 settings out of area	
Other (please specify below)	

- If there are any differences in the types of work that tend to be conducted with each cohort of young people, please elaborate here.
- If the number of young people who have received direct support is less than the total number of young people who were eligible, how were these decisions made? Please elaborate on decision making around the amount of funding that was spent directly on young people, how young people were prioritised, and whether there were any barriers limiting who could receive direct support. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

## Reflections

19. In the 2023-24 academic year, what are the most significant barriers/challenges you have encountered in putting your plans for the use of PP+ post-16 funding into practice? *Please select up to three answers.*

Challenge/barrier	
Not receiving data on CLA and care leavers from post-16 education and training settings	
Difficulties recruiting staff to support CLA and care leavers post-16	
Difficulties enhancing existing roles to support CLA and care leavers post-16	
Lack of engagement from post-16 education and training settings	
Growing cohorts and increasing levels of need	
Uncertainty around the PP+ post-16 funding duration	
Size and complexity of post-16 education and training provision	
Differing expectations for the level and types of support that should be offered to CLA and care leavers post-16	
Insufficient guidance on the types of spending permitted using PP+ post-16	
Lack of engagement from CLA and care leavers	
Lack of support from senior managers in the local authority	
Difficulties in relationships with social care post-16/leaving care team	
Social worker turnover and/or vacancies	
Inadequate resources to support CLA and care leavers post-16	
Other, please specify:	

- In the 2023-24 academic year, 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.*

Enabler	
Receiving data on CLA and care leavers from post-16 education or training settings	
New staff to provide support to CLA and care leavers post-16	
Enhancing existing roles to support to CLA and care leavers	
Adequate resources to support CLA and care leavers post-16	
Flexibility in how PP+ post-16 funding can be spent	
Good use of the PEP system	
Good engagement/support from post-16 education or training settings	
Good engagement from CLA and care leavers	
Support from senior managers in the local authority	
Improved relationships with social care post-16/leaving care team	
Other, <i>please specify:</i>	

20. What aspects of your use of PP+ post-16 funding do you think have been particularly effective so far? Please state why you consider this/these to be examples of effective practice. *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

21. Have there been any unexpected challenges in the delivery of the programme in the 2023-24 academic year? *Please respond in up to 250 words.*

## Outcomes

### Outcomes for young people

22. Please estimate the proportion of CLA and care leavers for whom the following outcomes have been achieved in the 2023-24 academic year. *Please select the option that most accurately describes your Virtual School.*  
*Short term outcomes: Cohort 1&2 end of 2022 to 2023; Cohort 3 end of 2023 to 2024*  
*Interim outcomes: Cohort 1&2 end of 2023 to 2024; Cohort 3 end of 2024 to 2025*  
*Long-term outcomes: Cohort 1&2 end of 2025 to 2026; Cohort 3 end of 2026 to 2027*

	None (0%)	A few (1-25%)	Some (26-50%)	Over half (51-75%)	Most (76-100%)
<b>Short-term outcomes</b>					
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					
<b>Interim outcomes</b>					
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 the decisions that affect them)					
Enrolled on appropriate course					
Increased awareness of EET options					
Improved mental health and wellbeing					
<b>Long-term outcomes</b>					
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					
More agency and voice in the decisions made					

23. Please provide illustrative examples or evidence, if possible, of the outcomes you think are most apparent for young people. *Please respond in up to 300 words and please do not provide any detail that could identify any young person.*

### Outcomes for post-16 settings

24. 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.*

*Short term outcomes: Cohort 1&2 end of 2022 to 2023; Cohort 3 end of 2023 to 2024*

*Interim outcomes: Cohort 1&2 end of 2023 to 2024; Cohort 3 end of 2024 to 2025*

*Long-term outcomes: Cohort 1&2 end of 2025 to 2026; Cohort 3 end of 2026 to 2027*

	None (0%)	A few (1-25%)	Some (26-50%)	Over half (51-75%)	Most (76-100%)
<b>Short-term outcomes</b>					
Setting has a named person for this group in the SLT and/or a key person with decision-making powers					
CLA and care leavers highlighted in prospectus					
Post-16 education or training settings understand corporate parent responsibility					
<b>Interim outcome</b>					
Clear policy and commitment to supporting CLA and care leavers					
<b>Long-term outcome</b>					
Post-16 settings demonstrate awareness of the needs of this cohort, reflected in their policies and practice					

25. Please provide illustrative examples or evidence, if possible, of the outcomes you think are most apparent for post-16 education or training settings. *Please respond in up to 300 words.*

### Joint working outcomes

26. How far would you agree that the following joint working outcomes are being achieved? *Please select the option that most accurately describes your Virtual School.*  
*Short term outcomes: Cohort 1&2 end of 2022 to 2023; Cohort 3 end of 2023 to 2024*  
*Interim outcomes: Cohort 1&2 end of 2023 to 2024; Cohort 3 end of 2024 to 2025*  
*Long-term outcomes: Cohort 1&2 end of 2025 to 2026; Cohort 3 end of 2026 to 2027*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
<b>Short-term outcomes</b>					
Better understanding of CLA and care leavers needs by all stakeholders					
Improved understanding of post-16 education landscape by Virtual Schools /Children's Social Care					
Meaningful CLA and care leavers participation in PEP					
PEP informs actions and support for CLA and care leavers					
<b>Interim outcomes</b>					
Strengthened close working relationships between Virtual Schools, post-16 education or training settings and Children's Social Care					
VS input recognised in 'preparation for adulthood' plan					
More integrated support for transition to independence					
Tailored interventions in place to support attendance					
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					
Space exists for shared learning and good practice					

27. Please provide illustrative examples or evidence, 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 300 words.*

28. 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 taking the time to complete this survey, we really appreciate it.

## **Annex 4: Additional information from the cost analysis**

### **Funding amount per eligible CLA and CL**

#### **Number of eligible CLA and CLs on 1st October 2023**

Table 22 sets out the number of young people eligible for support from PP+ Post-16 funding on 1st October 2023, as reported by 73 VSH survey respondents. This shows that:

- on average, each VSH was responsible for 176 CLA and CLs on 1st October 2023
- VSHs in Cohort 3 reported the largest variation in size, ranging from 50 to 929 CLA and CLs
- in total, VSHs reported responsibility for a total of 12,843 CLA and CLs on 1st October 2023

Findings from year 1 of the evaluation suggested that cohort sizes are fluid and change in-year due to young people entering or leaving care, young people aging out of support as they turn 18, or additional UASC arrivals part-way through the year. Reflecting this, Table 22 shows that:

- the number of CLA and CLs eligible for support from the funding at any point across the academic year was 16.4% higher than the number eligible for support on 1st October 2023, reflecting the fluid and dynamic nature of the cohort
- VSHs in Cohort 3 and Cohort 1 reported higher average changes in cohort size (19% and 16% increases respectively) compared to Cohort 2 (8%)

In addition, findings suggest that changes in cohort size across the year were not experienced equally within or between Cohorts, with 23 VSHs reporting a 0% change in the size of their cohort, and 5 VSHs reported a 40% or higher increase across the 2023-24 academic year. The largest reported increase within-year by a VSH was 70%.

**Table 22: How many CLA and CLs in your VS were eligible for the PP+ Post-16 funding on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023? How many were eligible at any point across the 2023-24 academic year? (n=73)**

<b>Number of eligible CLAs and CLs</b>	<b>Cohort 1 (n=16)</b>	<b>Cohort 2 (n=18)</b>	<b>Cohort 3 (n=39)</b>	<b>All Cohorts (n=73)</b>
<b>Eligible on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023</b>				
Minimum	33	56	50	33
Maximum	430	312	929	929
Average	176	150	188	176
Total number of young people	2,808	2,707	7,328	12,843
<b>Eligible at any point across 2023-24 academic year</b>				
Minimum	44	60	50	44
Maximum	572	404	1,500	1,500
Average	204	164	224	205
Total number of young people	3,260	2,947	8,736	14,943
Percentage change in cohort size across the 2023-24 academic year	+16.1%	+8.9%	+19.2%	+16.4%

VSH survey respondents reported in-year increases in the number of CLA and CLs eligible for support from the PP+ Post-16 funding due to:

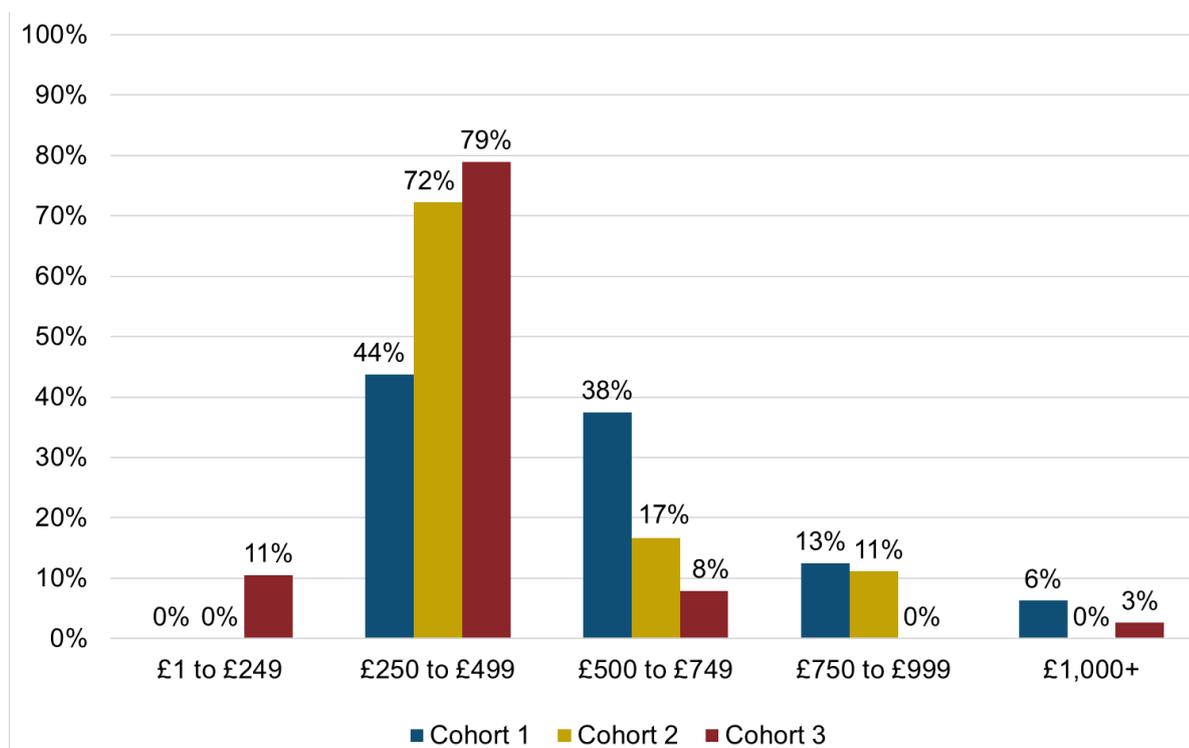
- Increases in UASC. The majority of VSHs reported that rising numbers of UASC, particularly those arriving through the National Transfer Scheme, had increased the numbers of young people who are eligible for PP+ Post-16 funding in their VS.
- Increase in number of young people entering care part way through the academic year. Many VSH survey respondents reported a rise in the number of 16- and 17-year-olds entering care part way through the academic year, in some cases under Section 20 arrangements due to family breakdown or adolescent safeguarding concerns.

## Funding amount per CLA and CL

Figure 9 shows how the average amount that survey respondents received per CLA and CL was distributed by Cohort. This shows that:

- over 70% of survey respondents in both Cohort 2 (72%, n=18) and Cohort 3 (79%, n=39) received between £250 and £499 per CLA and CL, compared with 44% (n=16) of those in Cohort 1
- over half of survey respondents in Cohort 1 (52%) received between £500 and £999, compared to 28% of those in Cohort 2 and 8% of those in Cohort 3

**Figure 9: Amount of PP+ Post-16 funding received for the 2023-24 academic year per eligible young person on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 (n=73)**



## **Annex 5: Case study summaries**

### **Case study: Bridmarsh**

#### **Characteristics of the local authority and its approach to post-16 prior to PP+ 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.

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 were in place up to year 13 and there were quality assurance processes for PEPs. The local authority continues to fund this existing provision.

#### **Delivery model used by Bridmarsh**

Bridmarsh used a distinct delivery model, with funding allocated to post-16 staffing in the VS and to intensive, targeted work with a small number of young people. This generated learning that the VS applied to delivery of targeted work with the wider cohort.

#### **Use of PP+ Post-16 funding over time**

Since first received in 2021:

- 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 (for example as part of wider local authority teams involved in careers guidance).
- Funding an action learning project focused on a small group of young people who were at risk of remaining long-term NEET. The project made high levels of resources available to identify what needed to happen for change to occur for these young people. The intention was to scale up learning from the project to the VS's wider cohort. The project provided specialist career provision, which led to the development of an interactive career guidance tool for lay people, mentoring from mature mentors (over 50s), and vocational tasters for UASC alongside their ESOL courses.
- The action learning project focused on a small section of the cohort and built on existing provision, (for example 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 to 2022 and 2023 to 2024); young people who are UASC (since 2022 to 2023).
- The VS registered as an exam centre for functional skills in maths and English to quickly engage those who do not pass exams in year 11.
- The VS delivered no training using the funding as it already provided training to post-16 settings and other stakeholders.
- Development of more granular data on the NEET cohort, updated monthly.

Use of the funding since 2023 to 2024:

- Expanding the number of VS staff embedded in wider local authority teams to support the VS's post-16 cohort, including those out of area.
- Continued to be an exam centre for functional skills, targeting those identified as at risk of not achieving their GCSEs.
- Increased focus on building relationships with post-16 settings.
- Contributing to the development of the local leaving care offer through closer joint working with leaving care colleagues and training delivery.
- Focused on tailored support, individual interactions and trust when working with young people.

## **Funding and expenditure in 2023-24**

We did not receive a breakdown of expenditure from Bridmarsh.

## **Perceived enablers and barriers**

Enablers:

- New staff or enhancing existing roles to support young people at post-16.
- Adequate resources.
- Established good relationships with social care teams, including leaving care.

- Combining PP+ Post-16 with funding from other sources to include post-16 in their existing training offer for DTs.
- Flexibility to use the funding innovatively and use learning generated from work with a small cohort.

#### Barriers:

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

## Perceived progress towards ToC 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 (for example providing mentoring with mature mentors) has increased trusting relationships with adults.
- (Increased self-efficacy) The VSH considers their approach is 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 undertaken 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 to 2022.

#### 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 relationships with post-16 settings through sharing the learning from their project using PP+ Post-16 but acknowledges there is more to do.

- (Strengthening relationships with post-16 settings and CSC) Using learning from the action learning project to empower the network around the young person:

So, you do something, you experiment with it to see if it works, and then you find some way to scale it up. That's the way we have to work in a...so it's good actually. It doesn't rely on the virtual school at all times. It's empowering the network. - *VSH*

- (Tailored interventions in place to support attendance and cohorts of focus)  
Interventions for NEET (around careers guidance) and UASC (around aspiration raising).

## Case study: Cartdale

### Characteristics of the local authority and its approach to post-16 prior to PP+ Post-16

Cartdale is a large local authority spanning urban and rural communities, which began receiving PP+ Post-16 funding in 2021 as part of Cohort 1.

Prior to receiving the funding, one member of the VS was responsible for all post-16 PEPs, and another staff member supported its NEET cohort. Initially, Cartdale directed funding only to young people who were in EET but expanded this to include their NEET cohort after learning about practice in other local authorities.

While PEPs do not continue beyond a young person's 18th birthday, the VS can approve funding at their final PEP meeting to continue through to the end of the academic year in which they turn 18.

### Delivery model used by Cartdale

Cartdale used a hybrid model with three quarters of their PP+ post-16 funding allocated to direct work with young people and one quarter towards staffing in the VS.

### Use of PP+ Post-16 funding over time

Use of the funding since it was first received in 2021:

- Support for cohorts with greater needs, including UASC (since 2021-22) and NEET CLA and CLs (since 2022-23).
- Expanding VS capacity through the recruitment of additional staff. This enabled the team to deliver training to post-16 settings and improve the support offered to young people:

It's really changed the post-16 team here at [name of local authority] 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

- Assigning each CLA and CL a named VS worker.
- CLA and CLs received an annual funding allocation, dependent on PEP completion, with additional support available where needed.
- Online functional skills learning in maths and English for year 13 students nearing age 18.
- One-to-one tuition, laptops, and language learning for UASC.

- Careers advice and online skills programmes for NEET young people.
- Workwear and IT equipment for apprentices.
- Training for post-16 DTs and SWs.
- Guidance on PP+ and PEPs for carers, DTs, IROs, and leaving care workers.
- Quarterly regional network meetings for post-16 DTs, including out-of-area providers.

Since 2023-24, this approach was retained and further developed:

- Termly allocations continued to be linked to PEP completion, which the VS reported improved compliance:
- Having the funding and linking it to PEP completion has resulted in more SWs following the local authority's established PEP processes. – *AVSH*
- Joint working was strengthened through the continuation of the regional post-16 DT network:

What I tend to do at these [network] meetings is get our established [leads in post-16 settings] to do a presentation... so the new [leads in post-16 settings] are getting that good practice. – *AVSH*

- Regular attendance at social work team meetings to discuss PEP processes, VS updates or specific issues.
- A new transition process with local post-16 providers was also introduced:
 

We've had a lot of positive feedback about that, the transition meetings, and we've said that they will continue. – *AVSH*
- In response to feedback from NEET young people, the VS offered functional skills courses in maths and English for those who had narrowly missed GCSEs.

## **Funding and expenditure in 2023-24**

For the 2023-24 academic year, Cartdale received PP+ Post-16 funding equating to £622 per eligible CLA and CL. Of the total funding, the VS spent 75% on direct support for young people, and 25% on employing a full-time member of staff within the VS focusing on their post-16 cohort.

The direct support included the following allocations:

- £1,000 per CLA/CL on a year 11 transition programme for those at risk of becoming NEET
- £500 per CLA/CL for functional skills maths and English tuition support

- £400 per CLA/CL via direct allocation through the PEP process
- £242 per CLA/CL for UASC summer school provision
- £112 per CLA/CL for careers advice

All eligible CLA and CLs received at least £400 of support funded by PP+ Post-16 through the PEP process. Taking into account the full range of direct support provided, the average total amount received per person was £512.

The majority of those supported with direct funding were UASC (44%), followed by NEET young people (27%) and CLA/CLs attending post-16 settings out of area (26%). There were no reported allocations for care leavers aged 16 to 17 years or 18+ during the period.

## Perceived enablers and barriers

Cartdale identified several enablers for effective delivery of PP+ Post-16 funding:

- Recruitment of new staff and enhancement of existing VS roles
- Access to timely and detailed data from post-16 settings
- Adequate overall resourcing
- Regular, termly network meetings with post-16 DTs
- A policy requiring PEPs to be completed before any funding is authorised, which has successfully increased completion rates
- Completing PEPs early in the academic year for the most vulnerable young people, allowing for course changes before the October half-term cut-off

Challenges encountered during implementation included:

- SW turnover and vacancies, which disrupted continuity
- Some post-16 settings initially struggled to identify appropriate uses for the funding
- Difficulty sourcing training courses for 16 to 18-year-olds, due to most providers focusing on learners aged 19 and over

## Perceived progress towards ToC outcomes

Cartdale VS reported evidence of progress across several ToC outcome areas (N.B. The relevant outcome from the ToC is shown in brackets).

Post-16 settings

- (Named person for this group) Post-16 settings have a named staff member for CLA and CLs.
- (Clear policy and commitment to supporting CLA and CLs) Some settings have developed transition policies outlining their offer for CLA and CLs, both at years 11 to 12 and years 13 to 14.
- (Post-16 settings understand corporate parenting responsibility) The AVSH believes understanding has improved since the introduction of PP+ Post-16, building on existing work.

#### Young people

- (Building trusting relationship with an adult) All young people are now allocated a VS worker.
- (Young people feel empowered and have more agency and voice in decisions made) The AVSH perceives young people as more confident in PEP meetings and more likely to speak on their own behalf.
- (Enrolled on appropriate course) Perceived increased engagement in PEPs seen as helping to ensure better course matching.
- (Increase in EET) The VS reports an improving NEET to EET rate, supported by local data and anecdotal evidence.

#### Joint working

- (Improved understanding of post-16 landscape by VS/CSC) More leaving care workers are attending final PEPs before CLA and CLs turn 18.
- (Meaningful young person participation in PEP) Participation by young people in PEPs has increased.
- (PEP informs actions and support for young people) No spending is authorised without a completed PEP.
- (PEP informs actions and support for young people) A post-16 DT network, together with guidance and training have helped improve PEP quality, with positive feedback from IROs and SWs.
- (Strengthened close working relationship between VS and post-16 settings) Quarterly post-16 DT meetings support collaboration and the sharing of good practice.
- (Strengthened close working relationship between VS and CSC) The AVSH reports improved relationships with SWs.

## **Case study: Dorland**

### **Characteristics of the local authority and its approach to post-16 prior to PP+ Post-16**

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

The VS's governing body decided several years prior to receiving PP+ Post-16 that support for CLA and CLs 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 (for example 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 considered timely.

The VS uses a learning pathway model involving a bespoke information management system to track young people's progress along different pathways (for example 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.

### **Delivery model used by Dorland**

Dorland used a hybrid model with half of their PP+ Post-16 funding allocated to direct work with young people, one third towards joint working activities and the remainder towards staffing in the VS.

### **Use of PP+ Post-16 funding over time**

Use of PP+ Post-16 funding since first received in 2022 to 2023:

- The VS used the majority of funding in 2022 to 2023 for direct work with young people, including activities targeted at young people who were NEET or UASC.
- Funding VS staff to visit a local college to discuss options with UASC students as they reached the end of their ESOL courses.
- Providing staffing capacity in a local college to support PEP completion.
- Providing staffing capacity in a local college to support students who were most at risk of becoming NEET and may need to change college course mid-year.
- Providing equipment for apprenticeships not covered by other sources of funding (for example personal protective equipment).

- 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.

Since 2023 to 2024:

- Continuing to use the majority of funding for direct work with young people.
- Expanding provision of staffing capacity into colleges outside the authority to support CLA and CLs out of area.
- Continuing to develop the strategic focus on supporting CLA and CLs at post-16.

## **Funding and expenditure in 2023-24**

For the 2023-24 academic year, Dorland received PP+ Post-16 funding equating to £480 per eligible CLA and CL. Of the total funding, the VS spent 44% on direct support for young people, 33% on activities relating to joint working and 23% to part-fund new roles in post-16 settings.

26% of eligible CLAs and CLs in Dorland received direct support funded by PP+ Post-16. The average total amount of direct support received per person was £819. Dorland did not provide further information on the characteristics of the young people who received direct support.

## **Perceived enablers and barriers**

Enablers:

- Adequate resources
- Good engagement from CLA and CLs
- Established good relationship with social care post-16 and 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 (for example using some statutory school-age Pupil Premium Plus 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, (for example to provide every young person with a laptop)
- The challenge of commissioning and developing policies in a diverse post-16 ecosystem. It can also be difficult when providing support, to establish what is and is not education related
- Insufficient guidance on what post-16 settings should expect from VSs and vice versa, (for example 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 (for example what financial support they will receive if they enter HE):

So, if you're getting kids to buy into that journey really from KS4, 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*

- Growing number of young people educated out of authority
- Challenges in transferring approaches and concepts developed in a school context such as DTs into post-16

## Perceived progress towards ToC outcomes

### Post-16 settings

(N.B. The relevant outcome from the ToC 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) Post-16 settings are viewed as having increased awareness of the needs of CLA and CLs demonstrated through changes in practice and also through some change to policy.

#### Young people

- (Enrolled on appropriate course) The VSH thinks the funding is leading to more young people being enrolled on an appropriate course.
- (Increased motivation) UASC thought to have a stronger sense of the VS's aspirations for them.
- (Increased awareness of EET options) Young people are more aware of the offer at post-16 through working with VS staff and are moving more seamlessly from one course to another, (for example ESOL to vocational or A Levels).
- (Improved attendance) The VSH believes that they are seeing 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 improved hugely.

#### 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 (for example the VS is very involved in year 13 Pathway Plans to support transition).
- (PEP informs actions and support for young people) PEP completion rates and quality have continued to increase, and more young people are involved in them.
- (Strengthened close working relationships between VS and post-16 settings) The VS has strengthened relationships by providing additional capacity to post-16 settings (for example for PEPs and to support young people not yet on an appropriate course).
- (Strengthened close working relationships between VS and post-16 settings) The VS has developed links with senior leaders in colleges.

- (Tailored interventions in place to support attendance, NEET young people, UASC, those in the secure estate) Targeted interventions aimed particularly at NEET and UASC cohorts on the reintegration and ESOL pathways.

## Case study: Esterford

### Characteristics of the local authority and its approach to post-16 prior to PP+ Post-16

Esterford covers a large geographical area incorporating a mix of urban and rural areas. 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 statutory school-age Pupil Premium Plus and some top up funding, the VS was able to fund 2 post-16 roles to work closely with the local authority's careers and participation service. The VS introduced a post-16 ePEP and the post-16 PEP became mandatory up until the end of year 13. There was a regional post-16 network and partnership agreement 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 KS4).

### Delivery model used by Esterford

Esterford allocated all PP+ Post-16 funding to direct support for young people.

### Use of PP+ Post-16 funding over time

Use of PP+ Post-16 funding since first received in 2022 to 2023:

- 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.
- Development of a Power BI dashboard allowing improved filtering and exploration of post-16 data.
- Funding initially focused on activities to support NEET and UASC cohorts.
- 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 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.

Since 2023 to 2024:

- Continuing to use PP+ Post-16 funding in combination with a variety of other funding sources.
- Developed a wider learning offer for post-16 (for example arts and sports) integrated into the PEP using a combination of PP+ Post-16 funding and other funding sources.
- Continued to focus on UASC cohort.
- Continuing to further develop their post-16 dashboard.

## **Funding and expenditure in 2023-24**

For the 2023-24 academic year, Esterford received PP+ Post-16 funding equating to £311 per eligible CLA and CL. The VS spent 100% of the funding on direct support for young people. Esterford's VSH explained that this was possible because, as a larger and more established VS, Esterford already had post-16 staffing in place.

The direct support included the following allocations:

- £988 per CLA/CL on ESOL maths and English lessons
- £858 per CLA/CL on one-to-one tuition sessions
- £295 per CLA/CL on IT provision
- £250 per CLA/CL on support for academic progress
- £162 per CLA/CL on emotional health and wellbeing support

70% of eligible CLA and CLs in Esterford received direct support in the 2023-24 academic year. The majority of young people who received support were UASC (72%), followed by NEET (25%) and CLAs and CLs who attend post-16 settings out of area (25%). There were no reported allocations for CLs aged 16 to 17 years or CLA/CLs in the secure estate during the period. Young people who received direct support received an average of £466 worth of support each.

## Perceived enablers and barriers

### Enablers:

- Receiving data on CLA and CLs from post-16 settings.
- 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 practice.
- 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 the 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.
- Named staff members in post-16 settings support engagement with those settings 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:

- SW 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 funding available at post-16 relative to the amount of statutory school-age Pupil Premium Plus is considered 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, (for example PEPs received for young people out of area).
- Limited data collected nationally at post-16 and particularly post 18.
- Changes in the use of the 16-19 bursary by post-16 settings.
- Risk of instability caused by placement change or transition to independence during post-16 education.

## Perceived progress towards ToC outcomes

### Post-16 settings

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

- (Setting has a named person for this group) Post-16 settings have a named person, and the VS matches a post-16 VS advisor with each one.
- (Post-16 settings understand corporate parenting responsibility) VSH perceives an increased understanding of corporate parenting responsibility but wants increased support to help post-16 settings understand how to meet that responsibility.
- (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.
- (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.

### 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.

- (Building trusting relationships and seeing positive role models) Extra-curricular events have allowed young people to build trusting relationships and have provided role models (for example through local sports clubs).
- (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, more young people progressing to year 14 and a reduced NEET rate.

#### Joint working

- (Strengthened close working relationships between VS and post-16 settings) Post-16 settings are more willing to work with the VS, there is better communication, and the VSH reports that post-16 settings feel more supported to take decisions that better meet young people'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 post-16 settings) 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 post-16 settings) Post-16 settings recognise that VS staff are knowledgeable about post-16.
- (Strengthened close working relationships between VS and post-16 settings) Colleges are more likely to attend year 11 transition PEPs and be part of that conversation.
- (Strengthened close working relationships between VS and post-16 settings) PP+ Post-16 has been a catalyst to arrange events raising the profile of the cohort with senior leaders in the local authority and education providers.

- (Meaningful YP participation in PEP) The young person's voice comes through more clearly now in PEP meetings and Esterford has young person led targets; more focus on developing a young person's wider talents and interests.
- (PEP informs actions and support for young people) Reported increase in PEP quality and completion rates, with a perceived culture change with more young people staying on in year 14 and they, or their PAs, requesting PEPs.
- (More integrated support for transition to independence) VS takes a more proactive role in supporting CLs onto the next stage of their education.
- (Tailored interventions in place to support attendance and cohorts of focus) Focus on wider learning offer for young people including UASC and NEET cohorts and focus on supporting post 18 with next steps.

#### Outcomes not identified in the ToC

- 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 (for example 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*

## Case study: Greenhollow

### Characteristics of the local authority and its approach to post-16 prior to PP+ Post-16

Greenhollow is a geographically small urban authority. The site started to receive PP+ Post-16 funding in 2023 (Cohort 3).

Prior to receiving PP+ Post-16 funding, the VS introduced ePEPs to help track and monitor CLA and CLs more closely and built up their connections with CSC to raise awareness of education. The VS initially funded a post-16 coordinator role using statutory school-age Pupil Premium Plus before funding it through PP+ Post-16:

...because we were very, very conscious that we were doing a lot of work up to 16 or up to leaving school and then, we weren't able to continue, and it was unjustifiable not to continue. – *VSH, interview*

The local authority has a careers service to support destinations work with young people within area, so part of the post-16 role in the VS was to strengthen destinations work with young people out of area and to bring NEET rates in line with those in area.

### Delivery model used by Greenhollow

Greenhollow allocated all its PP+ Post-16 to part-fund a post-16 role in the VS.

### Use of PP+ Post-16 funding since 2023

Greenhollow introduced a post-16 role to work directly with young people to reduce NEET and undertake developmental and partnership working (for example to improve progression and aspiration).

Through the new post-16 role, the VS:

- created a partnership agreement with post-16 settings both in and out of area, setting out roles and expectations in relation to CLA and CLs
- challenged post-16 settings on use of the 16-19 bursary
- was involved in developing a regional post-16 network for VSs promoting region-wide consistency and enabling coordinated challenge of post-16 settings
- created materials highlighting the achievements of CLA and CLs locally, to share with young people and stakeholders

- focused on careers guidance and coaching and placed increased focus on careers in PEPs
- established better year 11 transition support, including processes where young people have an EHCP; earlier identification of CLA and CL support needs and risk of becoming NEET; and advocating for young people where they lack required grades for post-16
- worked with post-16 settings to provide more responsive courses for NEET prevention
- provided PEP training for post-16 settings
- ran an intensive ESOL summer school

## **Funding and expenditure in 2023-24**

For the 2023-24 academic year, Greenhollow received PP+ Post-16 funding equating to £418 per eligible CLA and CL. The VS spent 100% of the funding on part-funding the post-16 role in the VS.

## **Perceived enablers and barriers**

Enablers:

- PP+ described as providing some headroom to be creative with the VS's approach.
- Working in a solution-focused way with post-16 settings.
- Post-16 settings have welcomed VS input as they look to strengthen their pastoral support and inclusivity.
- Better communication with post-16 settings regarding attendance enabling a more immediate response where there are concerns about a young person.

## **Perceived progress towards ToC outcomes**

Post-16 settings

- (Post-16 settings understand corporate parent responsibility) Stakeholders report the VS and post-16 settings working together to create more responsive options for NEET prevention.
- (Clear policy and commitment to supporting CLA and CLs) Demonstrated through the entering of partnership agreements and through working with the VS to create more responsive course options for NEET prevention.

## Young people

- (Building trusting relationships) Stakeholders described the VS building relationships with individual CLA and CLs.
- (Increased agency and voice) CLA and CLs have had more agency and voice through their work with the VS post-16 coordinator and their PEPs.
- (Improved progression and retention) The VS reports improved progression and retention (for example through improved transition planning, ESOL summer school, focus on careers).
- (Increased retention in post-16) The VS reports improved retention in local colleges since introduction of partnership agreements.
- (Improve attainment/progression) Reported improvement to progression/attainment through the focus on careers guidance and employment opportunities.

## Joint working

- (Strengthened relationships between the VS and post-16 settings) VS provides a single point of contact for post-16 settings.
- (Increased retention in EET) The VS reports reducing the NEET rate for CLA and CLs educated out of area:

So, it was essentially identifying that caseload individually and then meeting them, assessing need, identifying some options and then getting some momentum and some energy behind it. – *Post-16 coordinator in VS, interview*

- (Strengthened close working relationships between VS, post-16 settings and CSC) Better joint working with post-16 settings through introduction of a partnership agreement.
- (Strengthened close working relationships between VS, post-16 settings and CSC) Developing partnership working between regional VSs at post-16, enabling VSs to challenge post-16 settings as a group and promote regional consistency.
- (Tailored interventions in place to support attendance and cohorts of focus) Better support of ESOL students (for example ESOL summer school).

## Case study: Havenbarrow

### Characteristics of the local authority and its approach to post-16 prior to PP+ Post-16

Havenbarrow is a geographically small, urban authority. The site started to receive PP+ Post-16 funding in 2023 (Cohort 3).

The VS had no post-16 funding prior to PP+ Post-16, so relied upon the goodwill of VS staff and identifying funding from other sources to do post-16 work. The VS completed post-16 PEPs prior to receiving PP+ Post-16 funding.

### Delivery model used by Havenbarrow

Havenbarrow allocated all its PP+ Post-16 to fund a term-time post-16 role within the VS. However, the VSH sees the post-16 role as too much for one person, so in practice a small number of staff work with both the secondary and post-16 cohorts. PP+ Post-16 has enabled the VS to formalise its post-16 offer.

### Use of PP+ Post-16 funding since 2023

Increasing the VS's post-16 staffing capacity has enabled Havenbarrow to:

- provide PEPs to the end of the academic year in which a young person is 18
- provide NEET PEPs
- focus on qualifications/ taster courses for the NEET cohort, (for example by providing monthly sessions such as first aid and food hygiene)
- begin to extend some support (for example monthly courses for their NEET cohort) to care leavers post 18.
- better embed post-16 data within their strategic work. (for example being able to refer to very specific data in strategy meetings with CSC and other local authority teams)

### Funding and expenditure in 2023-24

For the 2023-24 academic year, Havenbarrow received PP+ Post-16 funding equating to £443 per eligible CLA and CL. The VS spent 100% of the funding on part-funding a role within the VS focused on the post-16 cohort.

## Perceived enablers and barriers

### Enablers:

- Goodwill of VS staff giving up their own time to support CLA and CLs.
- Better use of the post-16 data to support strategic work in the local authority.
- Good links with local post-16 settings.

### Barriers:

- Level of funding received coupled with no economy of scale.
- Lack of coordination between use of PP+ Post-16 and the 16-19 bursary.
- Staff turnover within CSC.

## Perceived progress towards ToC outcomes

### Young people

- (Building trusting relationships with adults and seeing a positive role model) VSH identified instances of CLA and CLs developing trusting relationships with adults supporting them in employment.
- (Young people feel empowered) VSH reported that some young people have felt more empowered by being made aware of and supported to access employment and education opportunities.
- (On appropriate course) VSH perceives more young people being on an appropriate course and therefore being less likely to become NEET.
- (Retention in post-16) The VSH perceives that improved post-16 data and joint working with the SEND team has ensured all available support is in place for young people, particularly for those without EHCPs, and this has resulted in better retention of this cohort.
- (Increased engagement) The VSH reports that they now have a steady group of young people participating in regular taster courses designed for their NEET cohort.

### Joint working

- (Better understanding of young people's needs by all stakeholders) VSH reports that PP+ Post-16 has allowed the VS to demonstrate its investment in the aspirations of young people at post-16 and post 18. The VSH expects this to positively influence the support provided to young people by other parts of the local authority.

- (More integrated support for transition into post-16 and to independence) The VSH identified employment support sessions attended by the VS and wider local authority colleagues as promoting employment opportunities for CLA and CLs.
- (Meaningful young person participation in the PEP) Use of post-16 PEPs and introduction of NEET PEPs viewed as improving young people's involvement in the process.
- (VS input recognised in preparation for adulthood plan) VSH reports that VS staff work very closely with PAs during transition to adulthood.

## Annex 6: A comparison of the most commonly reported direct activities with young people in years 1 and 2 of the VSH survey

During year 1 of the evaluation, a national survey of VSHs was conducted in January 2024, which asked about the direct work with young people undertaken by VSs in Cohorts 1 and 2 in 2022-2023. Table 23 compares the percentages of VSHs who reported conducting each type of activity across the year 1 and 2 surveys. This shows that the most commonly reported activities across both years have remained consistent, suggesting that VSs have not made substantial changes to the types of work they have conducted with young people over the last two years. However, please note that as sample sizes are small, significance testing has not been conducted. As such, differences in percentages between the two surveys should be interpreted with caution.

**Table 23: Comparison of most commonly reported activities relating to direct work with young people in the year 1 and year 2 VSH surveys**

Type of direct work with young people	Cohort 1, 2022-2023 (n=27)	Cohort 1, 2023-2024 (n=23)	Cohort 2, 2022-2023 (n=21)	Cohort 2, 2023-2024 (n=20)
One to one academic tuition for CLA and CLs	21 (78%)	20 (87%)	17 (81%)	18 (90%)
Tutoring or ESOL courses	23 (85%)	19 (83%)	15 (71%)	16 (80%)
Allocating PP+ Post-16 funding to individual CLA and CLs to support PEP targets	19 (70%)	18 (78%)	13 (62%)	14 (70%)
Intervening to improve attendance of individual CLA and CLs post-16	19 (70%)	13 (57%)	14 (67%)	13 (65%)
Mental health or wellbeing support for CLA and CLs	16 (59%)	11 (48%)	7 (33%)	5 (25%)
Facilitating enrichment activities with a focus on health, wellbeing and life skills (for example sports clubs, cultural visits)	20 (74%)	16 (70%)	8 (38%)	11 (55%)

## Annex 7: National data set analysis

### Summary

To observe any potential effects of the PP+ Post-16 funding within the national data, datasets specific to post-16 outcomes were combined with the CLA census and KS4 NPD data. Data provided over the 2018-2023 period, provided the opportunity to capture six school cohorts of young people at year 11, with their corresponding outcomes in both years 12 and 13. Three analytical groups, relating to VS Cohorts 1, 2 and 3 were created, and two further subgroups of CLA and CLs.

Initial descriptives on the numbers and proportions of post-16 outcomes were generated for the VS and care group over the 5-year period. Statistical tests were conducted to observe any differences in the outcomes of care-experienced young people before and after the introduction of PP+ Post-16. This compared the outcomes of Cohort 1 at years 12 and 13 in 2023 with the average outcomes across the 2018-2021 pre-introduction of PP+ Post-16 period. Pairwise comparisons were conducted between VS group Cohort 1 (received funding) and Cohort 3 (not yet received funding) in 2023. Comparisons were also made for the year 12 specific outcomes between Cohorts 2 and 3.

From the initial descriptives, we are unable to observe any programme effects at the national level at this stage in the evaluation. This does not mean there has not been progress at the individual level, only that we are unable to detect it at the national level. Outcomes largely remain stable across the 2018-23 period. However, we do notice some specific cohort effects for the year 11 2020 cohort, likely driven by COVID-19, with a drop in post-16 education retention, a decrease in NEET, and a decrease in level 2 qualification without prior level 2 attainment at KS4 in 2023.

### Data

- The CLA Census – Full care history identifying all young people recorded as being in care or CLs
- The National Pupil Database (NPD)
  - Key Stage 4 (2016 to 2017 to 2021 to 2022) for year 11
  - Key Stage 5 (2018 to 2019 to 2022 to 2023) for year 13
- The Post-16 Learning Aims (PLAMS) (2017 to 2018 to 2022 to 2023) for year 12
- The National Client Caseload Information System (NCCIS) (2017 to 2018 to 2022 to 2023) both year 12 and year 13

- The Individualised Learner Record (ILR) (2017 to 2018 to 2022 to 2023) both year 12 and year 13<sup>35</sup>.

## Sample

The sample draws on six cohorts of young people who were in the KS4 census year 11 from 2016 to 2017 to 2021 to 2022 and present in the CLA census. Individual datasets were aggregated on the unique anonymised Pupil Matching Reference number (PMR) to provide a single case ID for each student with all the relevant variables. All individual datasets were then linked via the PMR. For the analysis, all those who were in both the KS4 and CLA census were selected providing a total sample of 82,300 individuals.

## Measures

### Analytic groups

There are 3 analytic groups derived from the local authority that is responsible for the young person's care. These are based on the three cohort groups of VSs that received PP+ Post-16 in 2021 to 2022 (Cohort 1), 2022 to 2023 (Cohort 2), and 2023 to 2024 (Cohort 3). For clarity when presenting the entire care sample across all years we refer to these distinct groupings as VS groups and Cohorts when specifically testing the relationships at the specified Cohort timepoints when PP+ Post-16 was introduced. There are also 2 care-experienced subgroups – CLA and CLs. CLA are taken as any young person who is looked after for at least 24 hours and CLs are defined by the statutory definition (i.e. young people who had been looked after for at least 13 weeks which began after they reached the age of 14 and ended after they reached the age of 16, whether they left care at age 16, 17 or 18).

**Table 24: Care experienced sample by VS group**

Group	CLA	CL	Total
VS group 1	11,350	10,390	21,740
VS group 2	6,990	6,340	13,330
VS group 3	24,800	22,430	47,230
Total	43,140	39,170	82,300

<sup>35</sup> The ILR data refers to information relating to years 12 or 13 regardless of course type.

## Outcomes

EET combines those recorded in post-16 EET in years 12 or 13 following year 11 KS4. Year 12 captures those recorded in the PLAMS, the ILR and the NCCIS. Year 13 captures those in the KS5, the ILR and the NCISS.

EET retention measures those who were recorded in year 12 EET who also continue into year 13.

Post-16 education combines those recorded in post-16 education years 12 or 13 following year 11 KS4. Year 12 captures those recorded in the PLAMS, the ILR (not including apprenticeship) and the NCCIS (education only). Year 13 captures those in the KS5, the ILR (not including apprenticeship) and the NCISS (education only).

Post-16 education retention measures those who were recorded in year 12 post-16 education and who also continued into year 13.

NEET Y12 is those in year 12 following year 11 KS4 who were recorded as NEET in the NCCIS.

NEET Y13 is those in year 13 following year 11 KS4 who were recorded as NEET in the NCCIS.

Non-prior level 2 attainment captures those who did not achieve level 2 at KS4 and who then went on to obtain level 2 in years 12 or 13 observed in the PLAMS, ILR or KS5.

Level 3 attainment captures those who achieved a level 3 qualification in year 13 following year 11 KS4 recorded in either the ILR or KS5.

Passed A-levels are those in the ILR or KS5 who completed A-levels in year 13 following year 11 KS4

Completed a course measures those who completed any course in years 12 or 13 following KS4. This is a recorded completion of all learning activities in either the PLAMS, ILR or KS5, but does not necessarily mean they achieved the qualification.

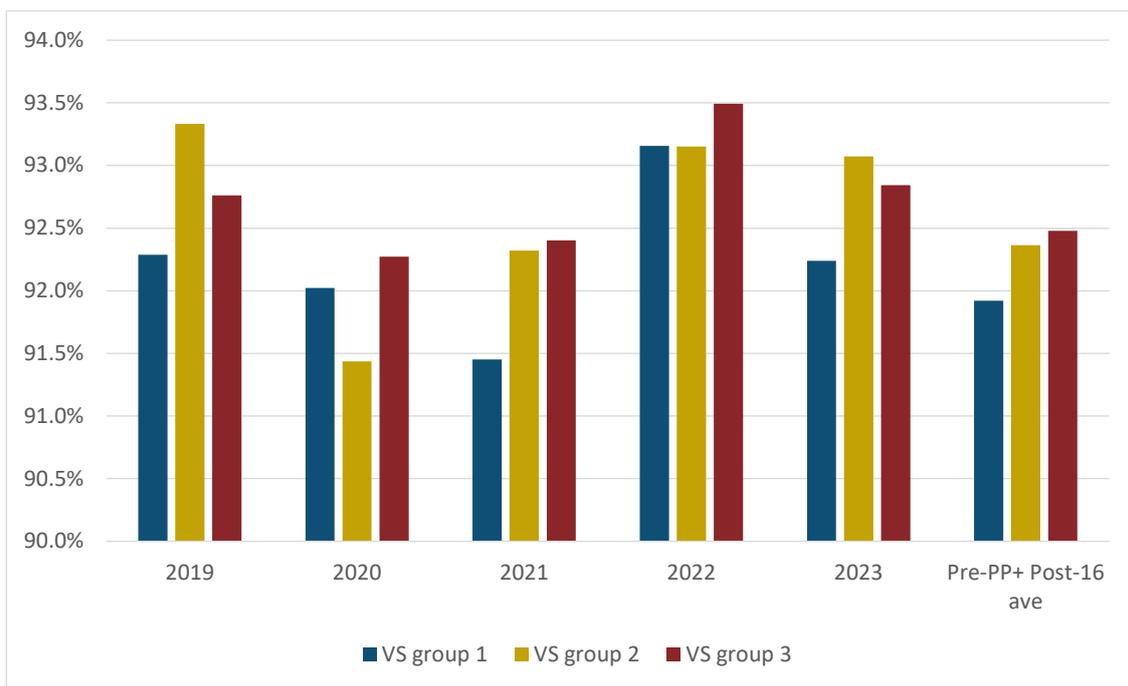
## Descriptives

The following section provides the descriptives for the post-16 outcomes. A detailed breakdown of the counts and proportions can be found in the additional tables section.

## EET

The proportion of care experienced young people in EET remains stable across the 2018 to 2019 to 2022 to 2023 period. On average around 93% were found to be in EET years 12 or 13 following KS4 year 11. There were no statistical differences between the numbers of EET in the pre-PP+ Post-16 average for Cohort 1 (91.9%) compared to the 2023 post-introduction of PP+ Post-16 (92.2%). There is also no statistical difference in the post-introduction of PP+ Post-16 proportion of EET between Cohorts 1 (92.2%) and Cohort 3 (92.8%).

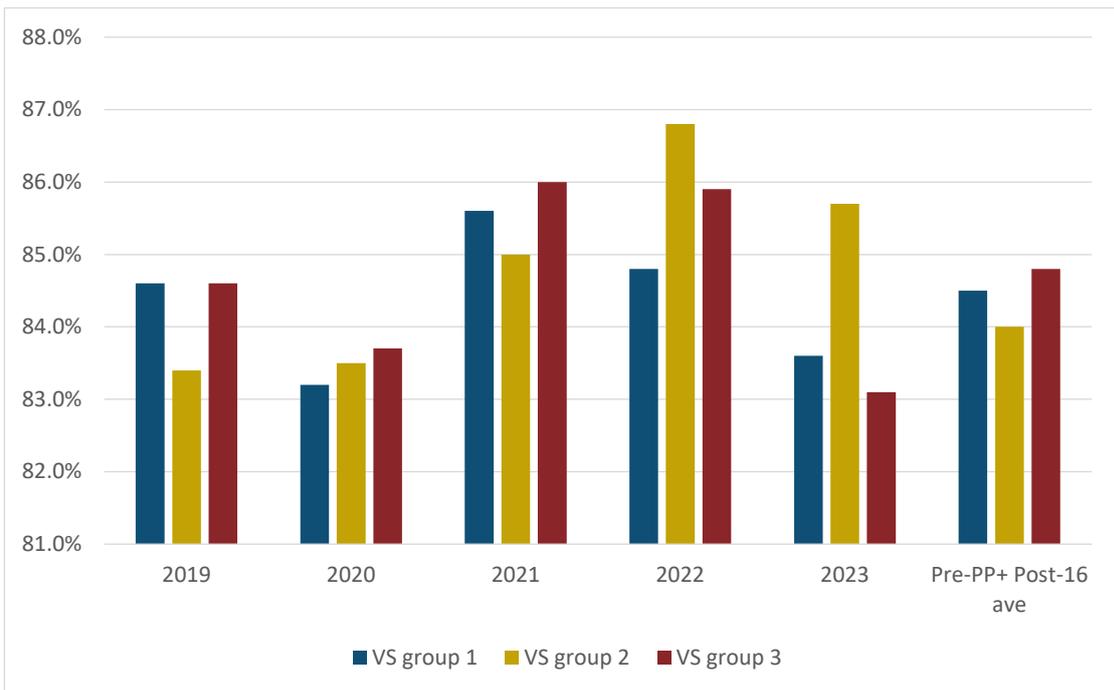
**Figure 10: Care population % in EET Y12 or Y13 (2018 to 2019-2022 to 2023), by VS group**



## EET retention

On average around 85% of care experienced young people who entered year 12 following KS4 continued into year 13. There is a slight drop in the 2023 retention rate with the Pre-PP+ Post-16 average dropping from 84.5% to 83.6% for Cohort 1 though it is not statistically significant. There is also no statistical difference in the 2023 post-introduction of PP+ Post-16 proportion of EET retention between Cohort 1 (83.6%) and Cohort 3 (83.1%).

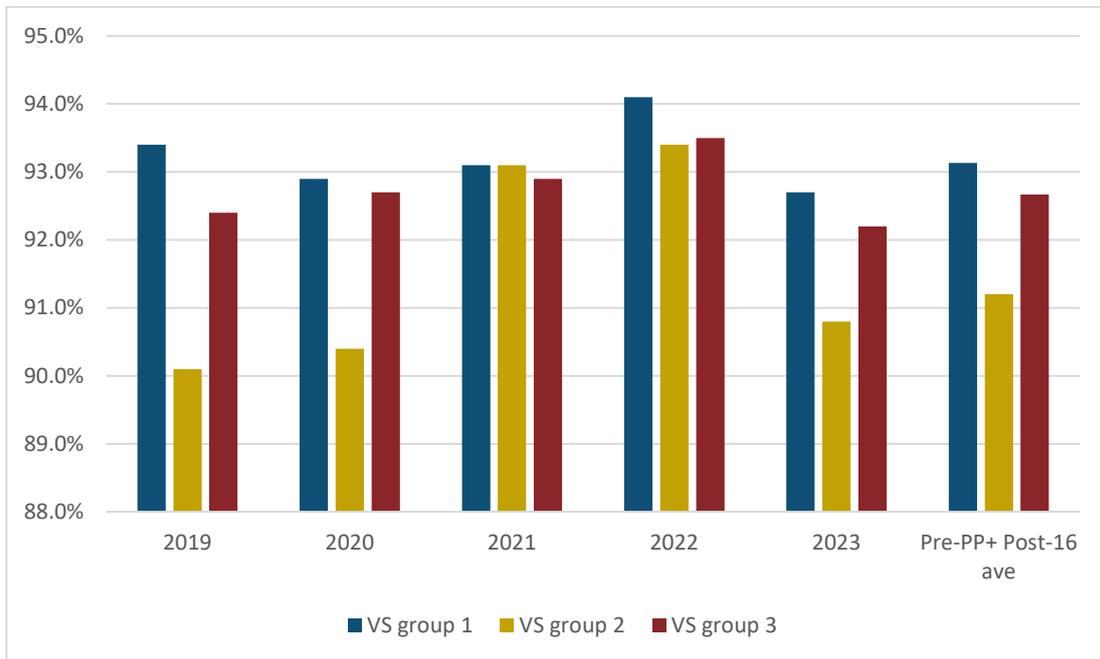
**Figure 11: Proportion of EET Y12 in Y13 (2018 to 2019-2022 to 2023), by VS group**



**Post-16 education**

For those young people in years 12 or 13, around 92% on average were found to be in post-16 education during the 2018-2023 period. No statistical differences were observed between Cohorts 1 (92.7.9%) and Cohort 3 (92.2%) in the 2023 PP+ Post-16, nor the rates between pre-PP+ Post-16 average for Cohort 1 (93.1%) and 2023 post introduction of PP+ Post-16 (92.7%).

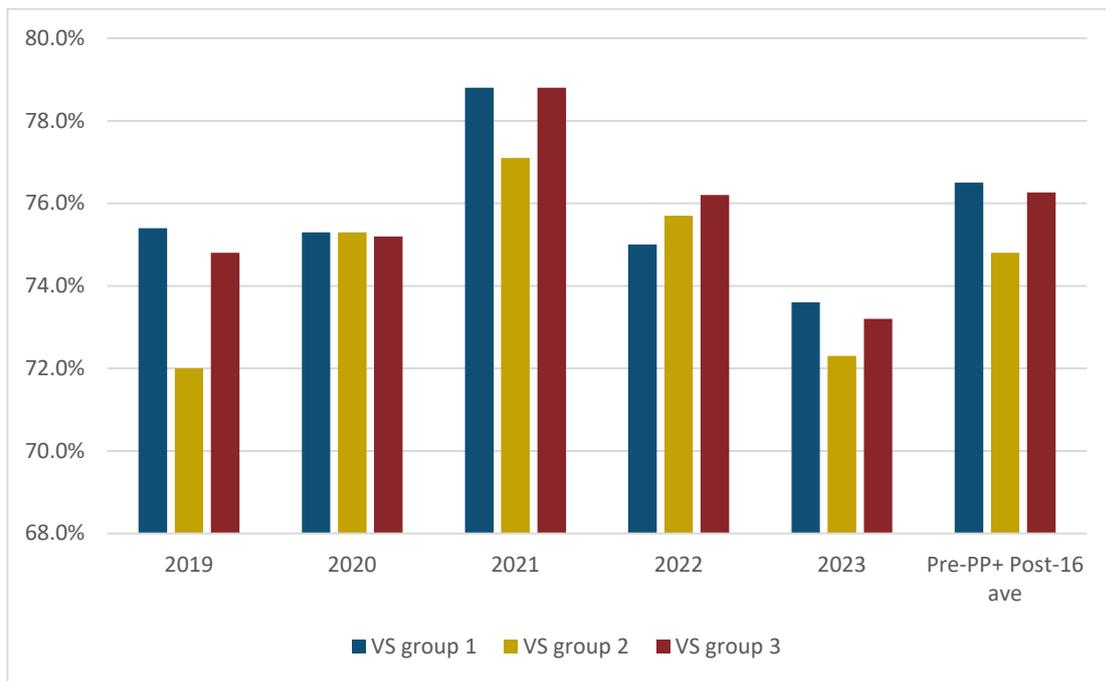
**Figure 12: Care population % in post-16 education year 12 or 13 (2018 to 2019-2022 to 2023), by VS group**



**Post-16 education retention**

Of those young people who were in post-16 education in year 12 and who continued into year 13, we observe a slight drop in the retention rate in 2023, although not significantly less than the pre-PP+ Post-16 average, Cohort 1 rate dropping from 76.5% to 73.6%. There was no observed difference in the PP+ Post-16 2023 outcome between Cohort 1 73.6% and Cohort 3 73.2%.

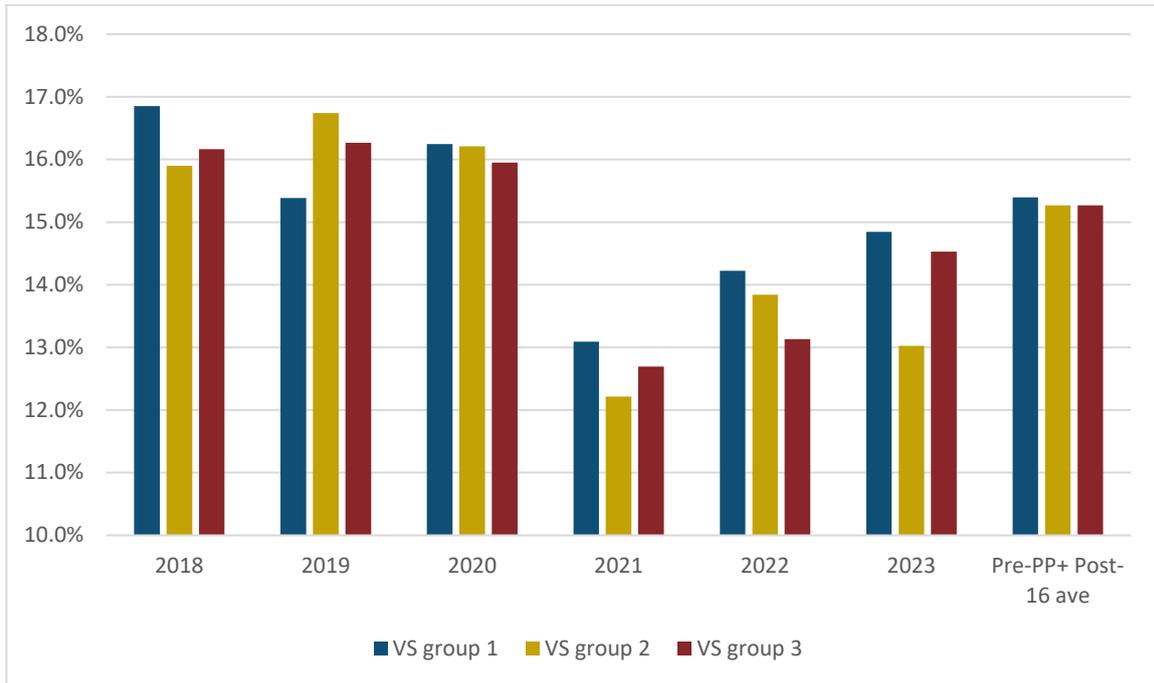
**Figure 13: Proportion of post-16 education Y12 in Y13 (2018 to 2019-2022 to 2023), by VS group**



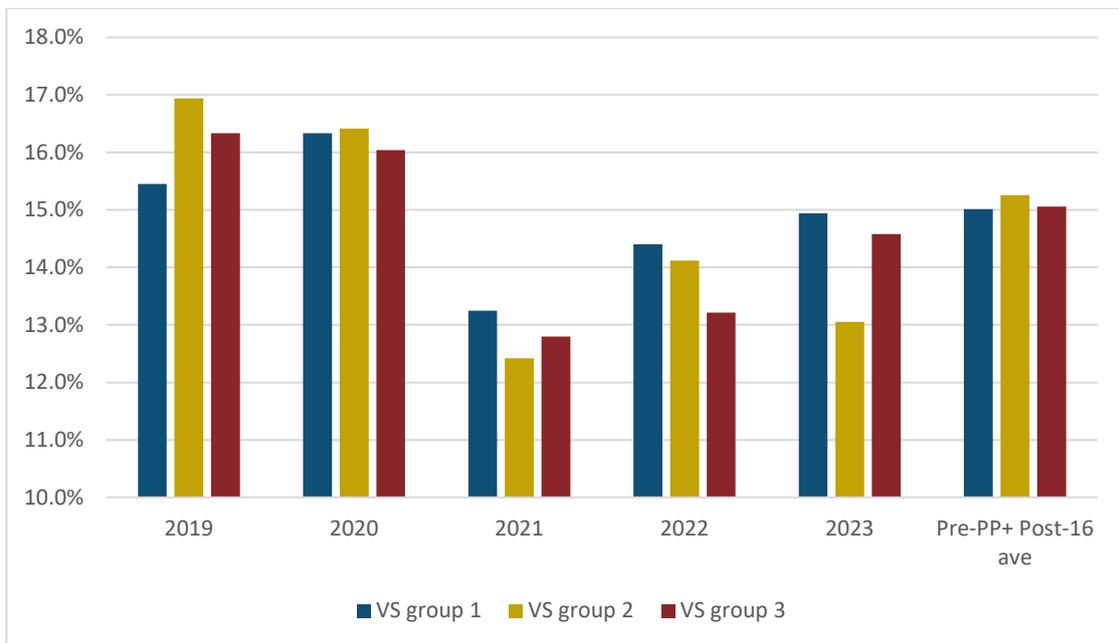
## NEET

Although the average year 12 and 13 NEET rates are around 15% for the 2018-2023 period there is a noticeable 3.5% drop in 2021 that increases in the following two years. There are no statistical differences between Cohorts or between pre- and post-introduction of PP+ Post-16.

**Figure 14: Percentage of care population recorded as NEET in year 12 (2018-2023), by VS group**



**Figure 15: Percentage of care population recorded as NEET in year 13 (2019-2023), by VS group**

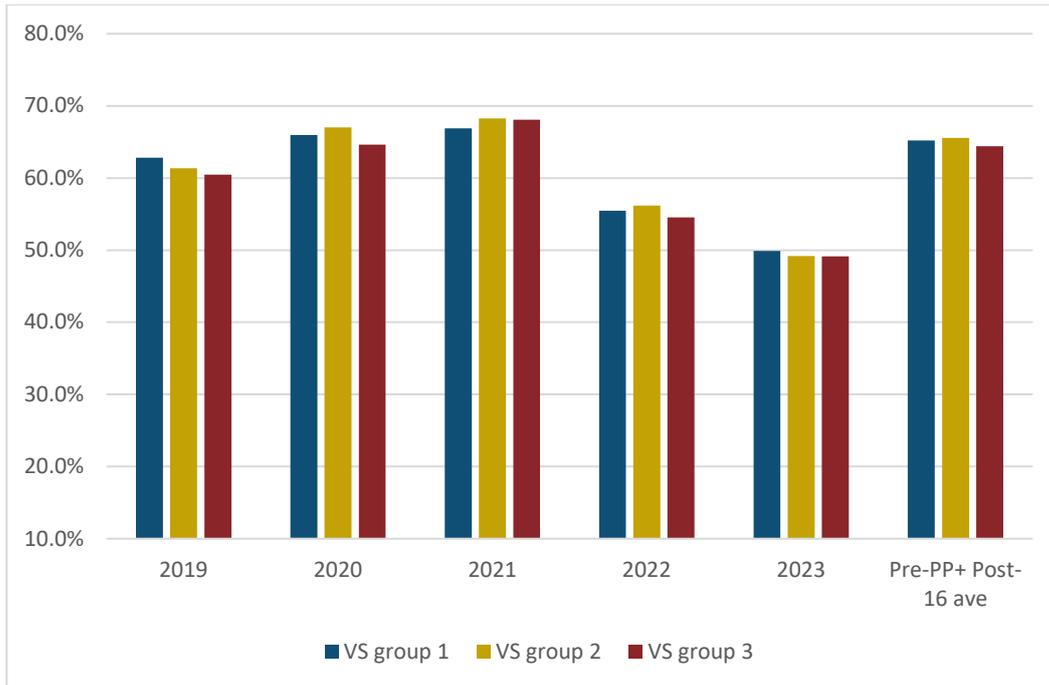


### Attainment

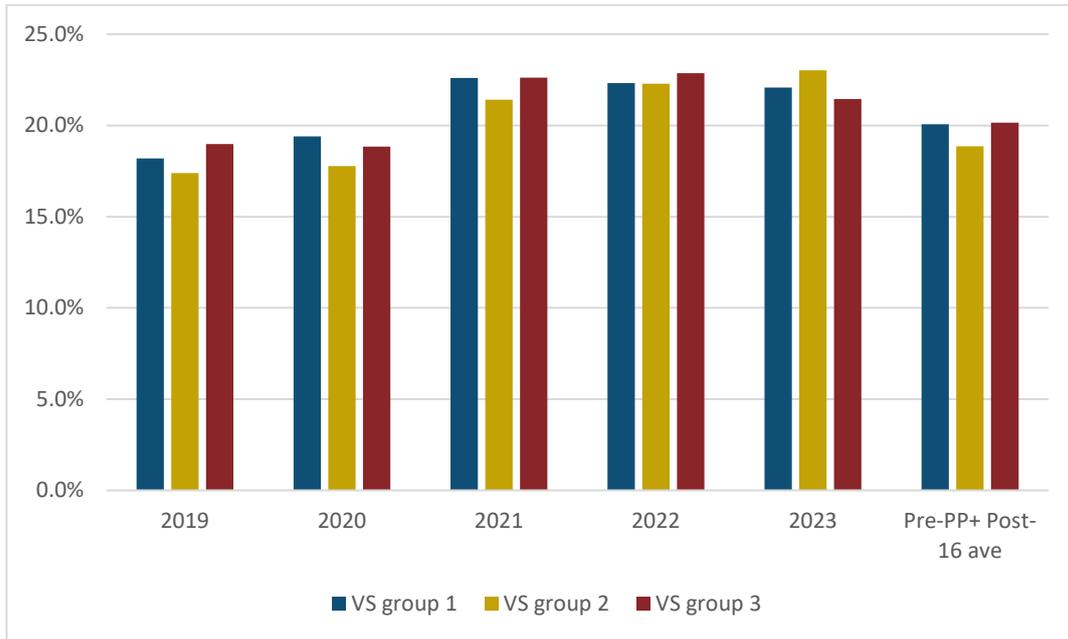
The proportion of CLA and CLs who achieved a level 2 qualification without prior level 2 attainment at KS4 decreased in 2022 and 2023 and is significantly less than the pre-PP+

Post-16 2019-2021 average. This corresponds with an increase in level 2 attainment at KS4 for the 2020 and 2021 cohorts. There was a slight increase in those who achieved a level 3 qualification (from 20 to 22%), though not significantly different from the pre-PP+ Post-16 average. Of those young people who had A-level aims, around 54% on average received a pass by year 13. There were no statistical differences found between Cohorts or between the post and pre-introduction of PP+ Post-16 average.

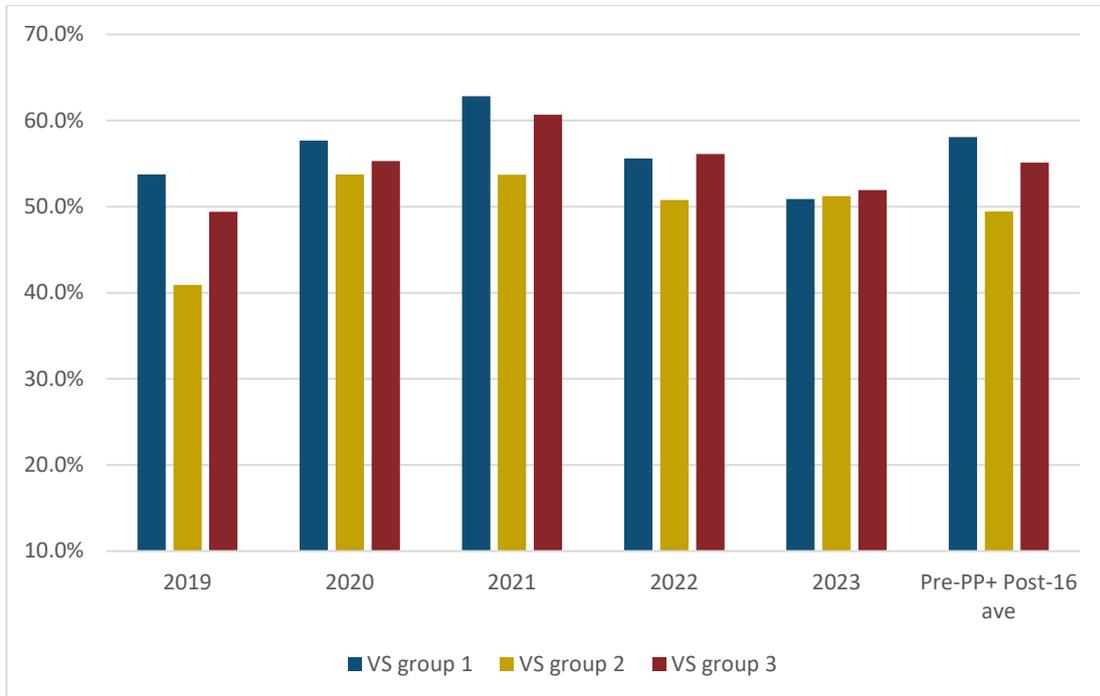
**Figure 16: Percentage of care population who completed level 2 qualification at post-16 and not previously at KS4 (2018-2023), by VS group**



**Figure 17: Percentage of care population who completed level 3 qualification (2019-2023), by VS group**



**Figure 18: Care population A-level % pass rate (2019-2023), by VS group**



## Care group descriptives

When comparing the course aims of CLA and CLs we find that CLA are more likely than CLs to enrol on A-levels in both year 12 and 13. While CLs are more likely to be following a vocational pathway. These differences between care groups are significant across all years. On average CLA were twice as likely to enrol in A-levels in year 12 (20.1% compared to 10.6%) while there was a 10% difference in vocational entries between CLA (40.6%) and CL (50.3%). Over the 5-year period, there has been a slight decline in those undertaking A-levels and an increase in more vocational work-based routes for CLs in particular.

**Table 25: Year 12 course aim group by care group (2018-2022)**

Year	A-level: CLA	A-level: CL	GCSE: CLA	GCSE: CL	Vocational: CLA	Vocational: CL	Apprenticeship : CLA	Apprenticeship : CL
2018	24.9%	14.7%	29.0%	27.3%	39.7%	50.5%	6.4%	7.5%
2019	20.6%	11.6%	32.5%	29.6%	37.8%	48.8%	9.2%	10.0%
2020	18.3%	11.0%	33.6%	31.9%	38.9%	47.1%	9.2%	9.9%
2021	18.3%	9.3%	29.0%	29.3%	43.5%	50.8%	9.1%	10.5%
2022	18.5%	6.6%	26.7%	24.7%	43.3%	54.3%	11.4%	14.4%

**Table 26: Year 13 course aim group by care group (2019-2023)**

Year	A-level: CLA	A-level: CL	GCSE: CLA	GCSE: CL	Vocational: CLA	Vocational: CL	Apprenticeship : CLA	Apprenticeship : CL
2019	12.8%	6.8%	33.4%	29.4%	43.0%	52.8%	10.7%	11.0%
2020	12.0%	6.5%	33.6%	31.6%	43.4%	50.6%	10.9%	11.3%
2021	10.8%	6.1%	30.1%	29.5%	48.3%	53.0%	10.8%	11.5%
2022	10.6%	6.5%	27.6%	23.9%	48.5%	55.0%	13.3%	14.7%
2023	10.3%	5.2%	31.2%	17.8%	44.6%	58.2%	13.8%	18.8%

Post-16 outcomes are consistently different for CL and CLA across all years. CLA are more likely to be recorded as EET and have higher retention rates. CLA also are more likely to have completed a course, along with A-levels and level 3 attainment. CLs on the other hand were more likely to complete a level 2 qualification in a post-16 setting having

not previously obtained a level 2 at KS4. CLs also report a higher proportion of NEET in both years 12 and 13. The counts for CLA and CL outcomes for each year (2019-2023) can be found in the additional tables.

**Table 27: Post-16 outcomes, by CLA and CL (2018 2019 to 2022 to 2023)**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Pre-PP+- Post-16 average</b>
<b>EET Y12 or Y13 entry</b>						
CLA	94.0%	94.1%	94.0%	95.3%	94.0%	94.0%
CL	91.9%	90.9%	91.0%	92.1%	90.5%	91.3%
Overall	92.7%	92.1%	92.1%	93.3%	92.7%	92.3%
<b>EET Retention Y12 and Y13</b>						
CLA	78.9%	79.6%	80.7%	82.7%	78.3%	79.7%
CL	71.9%	70.5%	71.6%	73.0%	69.0%	71.3%
Overall	74.5%	73.8%	75.0%	76.7%	74.8%	74.5%
<b>NEET Y12</b>						
CLA	11.5%	11.4%	8.9%	11.4%	14.3%	10.6%
CL	18.9%	18.9%	15.1%	17.2%	17.8%	17.6%
Overall	16.1%	16.1%	12.7%	13.5%	14.4%	15.0%
<b>NEET Y13</b>						
CLA	11.6%	11.4%	9.1%	11.5%	14.3%	10.7%
CL	19.0%	19.1%	15.3%	17.3%	18.0%	17.8%
Overall	16.2%	16.2%	12.9%	13.7%	14.4%	15.1%
<b>Post-16 Education Y12 or Y13 entry</b>						
CLA	87.8%	88.6%	89.4%	89.0%	87.3%	88.6%
CL	86.8%	86.0%	87.2%	87.5%	85.8%	86.7%

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Pre-PP+- Post-16 average</b>
Overall	87.2%	86.9%	88.0%	88.1%	86.7%	87.4%
<b>Post-16 Education retention Y12 and Y13</b>						
CLA	78.0%	78.9%	80.4%	77.3%	76.7%	79.1%
CL	77.5%	79.4%	79.9%	76.5%	72.2%	78.9%
Overall	77.7%	79.2%	80.1%	76.8%	75.1%	79.0%

**Table 28: Post-16 attainment outcomes, by CLA and CL (2018 to 2019 to 2022 to 2023)**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Pre-PP+- Post-16 average</b>
<b>Level 2 qualifica- tion not prior to post-16</b>						
CLA	56.5%	59.9%	61.9%	49.3%	48.5%	59.4%
CL	65.1%	69.8%	72.3%	59.6%	51.3%	69.1%
Overall	61.2%	65.4%	67.8%	55.0%	49.4%	64.8%
<b>Achieved Level 3 qualifica- tion Y13</b>						
CLA	24.9%	26.2%	30.5%	30.2%	25.3%	27.2%
CL	14.6%	14.3%	17.4%	17.8%	15.9%	15.4%
Overall	18.5%	18.8%	22.4%	22.6%	21.9%	19.9%
<b>Passed A-levels Y13</b>						
CLA	55.3%	60.4%	65.4%	59.7%	55.5%	60.4%

Outcome	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Pre-PP+- Post-16 average
CL	42.9%	50.1%	54.6%	50.0%	42.1%	49.2%
Overall	49.2%	55.7%	60.1%	55.1%	51.5%	55.0%
<b>Any completed course Y12 or Y13</b>						
CLA	81.9%	80.6%	82.2%	81.5%	75.9%	81.6%
CL	77.1%	74.6%	75.1%	75.6%	67.1%	75.6%
Overall	78.9%	76.9%	77.8%	77.9%	72.7%	77.9%

Table 29 provides a breakdown of post-16 outcomes for care specific variables. Those young people with socially unacceptable behaviour as their primary need of care entry report the lowest EET entry (83%) and retention rates (61%), the lowest education entry (86%) and retention (50%) and have the highest level of NEET (29%). Young people on remand have the lowest EET entry (81%) and retention rates (61%), the lowest education entry (86%) and retention rates (50%) and the highest level of NEET (29%). Young people in residential care have the lowest reported EET entry (80%) and retention rates (63%), and one of the lowest education retention rates (59%), while those in semi-independent accommodation have the highest reported NEET (37%). There is little difference in the rates for placement location, though those within the local authority are slightly higher. Those who entered care during secondary school (11+) reported lower EET/education entry and retention rates and a higher level of NEET.

**Table 29: Post-16 outcomes 2023, by care variables**

Care variable	EET	EET retention	Post-16 education	Post-16 education retention	NEET Y13
<b>Category of need</b>					
Abuse/neglect	94%	84%	92%	74%	14%
Child disability	87%	88%	95%	87%	10%
Parental disability	98%	91%	94%	81%	7%
Acute stress	92%	80%	91%	70%	19%
Family dysfunction	91%	83%	91%	69%	16%

Care variable	EET	EET retention	Post-16 education	Post-16 education retention	NEET Y13
Socially unacceptable behaviour	83%	61%	86%	50%	29%
Low income	94%	94%	c	c	c
Absent parenting	96%	87%	96%	82%	8%
<b>Legal status</b>					
Interim care order	94%	88%	93%	78%	12%
Full care order	94%	84%	92%	73%	15%
Placement order	98%	96%	95%	86%	3%
Remand	81%	61%	86%	50%	29%
Protection order	91%	90%	95%	84%	7%
S20	92%	81%	92%	70%	16%
<b>Last placement type</b>					
Adoption	99%	94%	95%	86%	3%
Foster with foster carer	97%	92%	95%	83%	7%
Semi-independent	88%	69%	89%	56%	37%
Childrens home	87%	83%	92%	78%	16%
Independent	90%	78%	90%	65%	21%
Residential	80%	63%	90%	59%	20%
Foster with friends or relatives	96%	89%	92%	77%	11%
Other	88%	73%	90%	56%	33%
<b>Placement location</b>					
Placement in local authority	93%	84%	92%	72%	15%
Placement outside local authority	91%	81%	93%	73%	14%
Unknown	98%	95%	95%	87%	3%

Care variable	EET	EET retention	Post-16 education	Post-16 education retention	NEET Y13
<b>Care entry</b>					
Under 11	95%	88%	94%	78%	10%
11+	90%	79%	90%	68%	19%
<b>Total</b>	13,530	10,910	12,450	8,690	1,930

Table 30 provides a breakdown of the attainment outcomes for care specific variables. Young people with disability and socially unacceptable behaviour have the lowest level 3 attainment outcomes, both at 9%. There is little difference in the A-level pass rate for the primary type of need. Those on remand have the highest non-prior level 2 attainment (60%), while those on section 20 have the lowest reported level 3 (19%) and A-level attainment (45%). Young people in residential care report the lowest A-level pass rate (20%), while those in children's homes have the highest non-prior level 2 attainment (78%) and lowest level 3 attainment (5%). There is little difference in attainment outcomes between placement location. Young people who entered care at 11+ report lower level 3 attainment (50%) than those who entered care before secondary school age (59%).

**Table 30: Attainment outcomes 2023, by care variables**

Care variable	Non-prior level 2 attainment	Level 3 attainment	Passed A-levels
<b>Category of need</b>			
Abuse/neglect	50%	24%	52%
Child disability	50%	9%	50%
Parental disability	34%	35%	50%
Acute stress	51%	18%	48%
Family dysfunction	50%	19%	48%
Socially unacceptable behaviour	58%	9%	50%
Low income	54%	29%	c
Absent parenting	52%	19%	50%
<b>Legal status</b>			

Care variable	Non-prior level 2 attainment	Level 3 attainment	Passed A-levels
Interim care order	49%	30%	59%
Full care order	54%	21%	51%
Placement order	43%	35%	58%
Remand	60%	c	c
Protection order	36%	41%	67%
S20	47%	19%	46%
<b>Last placement type</b>			
Adoption	43%	36%	66%
Foster with foster carer	46%	32%	60%
Semi-independent	54%	7%	31%
Childrens home	78%	5%	29%
Independent	52%	16%	50%
Residential	57%	c	20%
Foster with friends or relatives	48%	29%	59%
Other	71%	13%	c
<b>Placement location</b>			
Placement in local authority	49%	22%	55%
Placement outside local authority	50%	21%	54%
Unknown	45%	32%	62%
<b>Care entry</b>			
Under 11	48%	27%	59%
11+	51%	17%	50%
<b>Total</b>	3,810	2,960	1,120

## Regression analysis

Following on from the descriptive analysis that shows there are some differences between our care-related groups and their outcomes, regression analysis provides the opportunity to assess what factors have a significant effect on predicting our chosen outcomes when controlling for variables known to explain variation in outcomes. As our outcome variables of interest are binary in nature, we can apply logistic regression to understand what factors are associated with the likelihood the outcome occurs.

Table 42 in the additional tables section reports the odds ratios for 4 separate logistic regression models that test the association between Cohorts and post-16 outcomes and confirms there is no statistical difference between the post-PP+ outcomes of Cohort 1 (received funding) and Cohort 3 (not yet received funding) in 2023. Table 31 below is a panel logit regression of the same separate 4 models that takes into account the outcomes at each time point and includes a year and local authority variable. Odds ratios (OR) represent the association between the predictor variable and outcome. An OR equal to 1 implies no association, an OR greater than 1 indicates an increase in the odds or greater likelihood and an OR less than 1 indicates a reduced likelihood of the event occurring in one group compared to another.

In the panel data, sex and ethnicity are both significant predictors within the regression models. Compared to females, males are less likely to enter or remain in EET, have reduced odds of obtaining level 3 attainment and are more likely to be NEET. Compared to White British all other ethnicities (except Mixed Asian young people) have an increased odds of obtaining a level 3 qualification and the majority have a greater likelihood of EET retention and lower odds of NEET. Compared to those with no identified SEN, young people with an SEN statement/plan were more likely to enter and remain in EET, and less likely to be NEET, but were also less likely to achieve a Level 3 attainment. Young people with SEN who did not have a statement/plan were, however, more likely than young people with no SEN to be NEET after controlling for the other factors in the regression, and were less likely to remain in EET or to achieve a Level 3 attainment. Compared to those who entered care before secondary school, those who entered later report reduced odds of EET, retention and level 3 attainment, along with an increased likelihood of NEET. CLs also have reduced odds of level 3 attainment. UASC are more likely to enter EET, have an increased odds of EET retention and a lower odds of NEET and level 3 attainment. The type of placement is also a significant predictor of our outcomes. With the exception of those placed in adoption, all placement types report reduced odds of EET, retention and level 3 attainment compared to those placed with foster carers and a greater likelihood of NEET. KS4 attainment is the largest predictor in the model with those who achieve 5 A-Cs reporting a greater likelihood of better outcomes across all reported measures.

**Table 31: Logit panel regression outcome models (odds ratios)**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>EET</b>	<b>EET retention</b>	<b>NEET Y13</b>	<b>Level 3 attainment</b>
<b>VS group (3)</b>				
VS group 1	0.697	0.576	0.164	0.458
VS group 2	0.584	0.597	0.214	0.335

Variable	EET	EET retention	NEET Y13	Level 3 attainment
<b>Sex (female)</b>				
Male	0.746***	0.952*	1.081**	0.692***
<b>Ethnic group (White British)</b>				
Bangladeshi	2.144***	2.014***	0.480***	2.273***
Indian	2.231**	1.955***	0.688*	2.524***
Pakastani	1.317*	1.587***	0.652***	1.799***
Other Asian	1.234	1.339*	0.723*	1.886***
African	2.223***	2.024***	0.378***	3.271***
Caribbean	1.279*	1.305***	0.765**	2.050***
Other Black	1.720***	1.336**	0.711**	2.230***
Mixed Asian	1.389*	1.329*	0.926	1.117
Mixed African	1.062	1.173	1.006	1.557***
Mixed Caribbean	1.071	0.998	1.028	1.226**
Other Mixed	1.242*	1.256**	0.780**	1.589***
Other White	0.847*	0.993	0.984	1.398***
White European	0.930	1.101	0.659***	1.485***
Other ethnic group	0.767***	0.950	1.048	1.306***
<b>SEN (No identified SEN)</b>				
SEN with statement/plan	1.370***	1.201***	0.891**	0.296***
SEN No statement/plan	1.056	0.916**	1.178***	0.665***
<b>School type (non-mainstream)</b>				
Mainstream	0.998	1.000	1.001	0.992**
<b>5 A-C inc EM</b>	13.127***	3.997***	0.197***	9.851***
<b>Care group (CLA)</b>				

Variable	EET	EET retention	NEET Y13	Level 3 attainment
Care Leaver	0.975	0.978	1.051	0.816***
<b>Age care entry (&lt;11)</b>				
11+	0.725***	0.797***	1.427***	0.828***
<b>Primary need (abuse/neglect)</b>				
Child disability	0.799**	1.510***	0.374***	0.782*
Parental disability	1.110	1.294**	0.819*	1.280***
Acute stress	0.972	0.914*	1.029	0.971
Family dysfunction	0.848***	0.928*	1.163***	0.982
Socially unacceptable behaviour	0.863*	0.760***	1.260***	0.641***
Low Income	-	1.525	1.167	1.057
Absent parenting	1.222	1.034	0.842*	1.045
<b>Placement (foster with carer)</b>				
Adoption	1.470	1.826*	0.734	1.057
Semi-independent	0.369***	0.305***	3.794***	0.260***
Childrens home	0.337***	0.535***	1.668***	0.275***
Independent	0.406***	0.389***	3.051***	0.439***
Residential	0.239***	0.254***	2.403***	0.141***
Foster with friends or relatives	0.772***	0.751***	1.390***	0.843***
Other	0.315***	0.298***	3.172***	0.420***
<b>Legal status (interim care order)</b>				
Full care order	0.915	0.832***	1.319***	1.004

Variable	EET	EET retention	NEET Y13	Level 3 attainment
Placement order	1.256	0.789	0.950	1.012
Remand	0.757**	0.540***	2.036***	0.320***
Protection order	0.484***	0.562***	1.911***	0.715***
S20	0.816**	0.646***	1.790***	0.629***
UASC	3.838***	2.948***	0.241***	0.717**
<b>Year (2018 to 2019)</b>				
2019 to 2020	0.923	0.954	0.985	1.036
2020 to 2021	0.931	1.152***	0.786***	1.453***
2021 to 2022	1.030	1.065	0.886**	1.050
2022 to 2023	0.880*	0.853***	1.138**	0.859***
<b>r2_p</b>	0.116	0.111	0.141	0.302
<b>bic</b>	33925	48290	49222	47394
<b>N</b>	68100	60380	65780	63110

Note: Model controls for local authority, although coefficients not reported.

## Descriptive summary

Although we are unable to observe any difference between Cohorts in the outcomes with the introduction of PP+ Post-16, the descriptive and regression results do indicate the potential variation in outcomes between various groups. Those young people with socially unacceptable behaviour, on remand, in residential care or entering care later, all reported lower rates of EET entry and retention, level 3 attainment and high NEET. These groups were also found to have significant differences within the regression model and were less likely than some groups to achieve the outcomes after controlling for other socio-demographic variables. This suggests that individual circumstances are likely to be important when trying to improve outcomes.

## Limitations

During the current evaluation window, national data was only available up until the 2022 to 2023 academic year, providing a very limited timeframe within which to measure impact. Cohort 2 only has 1 year of data since receiving funding and post-16 outcomes

typically require 2 years of data (i.e., years 12 and 13). Cohort 1 has 2 years of data but had a 6-month break in funding making an assessment of programme outcomes problematic. The ability to assess improvements in PP+ Post-16 outcomes may also be hindered by COVID-19 which can influence the pre-PP+ Post-16 average comparison.

## Additional tables

**Table 32: Care experienced post-16 outcomes, by VS group (2018 to 2019 to 2022 to 2023)**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Pre-PP+ Post-16 average</b>
<b>EET Y12 or Y13 entry</b>						
VS group 1	92.3%	92.0%	91.5%	93.2%	92.2%	91.9%
VS group 2	93.3%	91.4%	92.3%	93.2%	93.1%	92.4%
VS group 3	92.8%	92.3%	92.4%	93.5%	92.8%	92.5%
<b>EET retention Y12 and Y13</b>						
VS group 1	84.6%	83.2%	85.6%	84.8%	83.6%	84.5%
VS group 2	83.4%	83.5%	85.0%	86.8%	85.7%	84.0%
VS group 3	84.6%	83.7%	86.0%	85.9%	83.1%	84.8%
<b>NEET Y12</b>						
VS group 1	15.4%	16.2%	13.1%	14.2%	14.8%	15.4%
VS group 2	16.7%	16.2%	12.2%	13.8%	13.0%	15.3%
VS group 3	16.3%	15.9%	12.7%	13.1%	14.5%	15.3%
<b>NEET Y13</b>						
VS group 1	15.5%	16.3%	13.2%	14.4%	14.9%	15.0%
VS group 2	16.9%	16.4%	12.4%	14.1%	13.1%	15.3%
VS group 3	16.3%	16.0%	12.8%	13.2%	14.6%	15.1%

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Pre-PP+- Post-16 average</b>
<b>Post-16 education Y12 or Y13 entry</b>						
VS group 1	93.4%	92.9%	93.1%	94.1%	92.7%	93.1%
VS group 2	90.1%	90.4%	93.1%	93.4%	90.8%	91.2%
VS group 3	92.4%	92.7%	92.9%	93.5%	92.2%	92.7%
<b>Post-16 education retention Y12 and Y13</b>						
VS group 1	75.4%	75.3%	78.8%	75.0%	73.6%	76.5%
VS group 2	72.0%	75.3%	77.1%	75.7%	72.3%	74.8%
VS group 3	74.8%	75.2%	78.8%	76.2%	73.2%	76.3%

**Table 33: Care experienced post-16 attainment outcomes, by VS group (2018 to 2019 to 2022 to 2023)**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Pre-PP+- Post-16 average</b>
<b>Level 2 qualification not prior to post-16</b>						
VS group 1	62.8%	66.0%	66.9%	55.5%	49.9%	65.2%
VS group 2	61.4%	67.0%	68.3%	56.2%	49.2%	65.5%
VS group 3	60.5%	64.6%	68.1%	54.5%	49.2%	64.4%
<b>Achieved level 3 qualification Y13</b>						
VS group 1	18.2%	19.4%	22.6%	22.3%	22.1%	20.1%

Outcome	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Pre-PP+- Post-16 average
VS group 2	17.4%	17.8%	21.4%	22.3%	23.0%	18.9%
VS group 3	19.0%	18.8%	22.6%	22.9%	21.5%	20.2%
<b>Passed A- levels Y13</b>						
VS group 1	53.7%	57.7%	62.8%	55.6%	50.9%	58.1%
VS group 2	40.9%	53.8%	53.7%	50.8%	51.2%	49.5%
VS group 3	49.4%	55.3%	60.7%	56.1%	51.9%	55.1%
<b>Completed a course aim Y12 or Y13</b>						
VS group 1	74.7%	73.7%	71.9%	70.2%	67.4%	73.4%
VS group 2	72.4%	71.9%	70.7%	71.3%	65.7%	71.7%
VS group 3	74.4%	72.9%	72.0%	70.8%	67.2%	73.1%

**Table 34: Numbers in EET in Y12/Y13, by VS group (2018 to 2019 to 2022 to 2023)**

Year	VS group 1: No	VS group 1: Yes	VS group 2: No	VS group 2: Yes	VS group 3: No	VS group 3: Yes	Total
<b>EET</b>							
2019	260	3,160	130	1,830	530	6,820	12,740
2020	270	3,150	180	1,890	580	6,880	12,940
2021	310	3,270	170	2,070	590	7,150	13,560
2022	260	3,570	160	2,110	540	7,690	14,310
2023	290	3,470	170	2,280	600	7,770	14,590
<b>EET retention</b>							
2019	460	2,550	290	1,450	1,000	5,490	11,250
2020	510	2,530	300	1,510	1,080	5,520	11,450
2021	450	2,660	290	1,660	950	5,840	11,860
2022	520	2,890	270	1,770	1,040	6,320	12,810

Year	VS group 1: No	VS group 1: Yes	VS group 2: No	VS group 2: Yes	VS group 3: No	VS group 3: Yes	Total
2023	550	2,800	310	1,870	1,270	6,240	13,040

**Table 35: Numbers in NEET Y12/Y13, by VS group (2018 to 2019 to 2022 to 2023)**

Year	VS group 1: No	VS group 1: Yes	VS group 2: No	VS group 2: Yes	VS group 3: No	VS group 3: Yes	Total
<b>NEET Y12</b>							
2018	2,690	550	1,570	300	5,870	1,130	12,100
2019	2,690	550	1,570	300	5,870	1,130	12,100
2020	2,750	500	1,640	330	5,960	1,160	12,330
2021	2,830	550	1,780	340	6,210	1,180	12,880
2022	3,170	480	1,900	260	6,870	1,000	13,680
2023	3,070	510	2,000	320	6,970	1,050	13,920
<b>NEET Y13</b>							
2019	2,740	500	1,620	330	5,930	1,160	12,270
2020	2,810	550	1,750	340	6,170	1,180	12,800
2021	3,120	480	1,860	260	6,810	1,000	13,530
2022	3,030	510	1,960	320	6,920	1,050	13,790
2023	2,990	530	1,930	290	6,540	1,120	13,400

**Table 36: Numbers in post-16 education Y12/Y13, by VS group (2018 to 2019 to 2022 to 2023)**

Year	VS group 1: No	VS group 1: Yes	VS group 2: No	VS group 2: Yes	VS group 3: No	VS group 3: Yes	Total
<b>Post-16 education</b>							

Year	VS group 1: No	VS group 1: Yes	VS group 2: No	VS group 2: Yes	VS group 3: No	VS group 3: Yes	Total
2019	210	2,950	180	1,650	520	6,300	11,810
2020	220	2,930	180	1,710	500	6,380	11,920
2021	230	3,050	140	1,930	510	6,650	12,490
2022	210	3,350	140	1,970	500	7,190	13,360
2023	250	3,220	210	2,070	610	7,160	13,530
<b>Post-16 education retention</b>							
2019	680	2,100	430	1,120	1,490	4,410	10,230
2020	690	2,090	400	1,210	1,490	4,540	10,040
2021	610	2,250	420	1,400	1,330	4,490	10,930
2022	800	2,410	460	1,420	1,640	5,240	11,960
2023	810	2,250	550	1,420	1,830	5,010	11,870

**Table 37: Attainment outcome numbers, by VS group (2018 to 2019 to 2022 to 2023)**

Year	VS group 1: No	VS group 1: Yes	VS group 2: No	VS group 2: Yes	VS group 3: No	VS group 3: Yes	Total
<b>Level 2 qualification not prior to post-16</b>							
2019	630	1,060	360	570	1,420	2,180	6,210
2020	580	1,120	340	690	1,300	2,380	6,410
2021	610	1,240	370	790	1,270	2,720	6,990
2022	930	1,160	570	730	2,070	2,480	7,930
2023	1,000	1,000	670	650	2,240	2,160	7,710
<b>Achieved level 3 qualification Y13</b>							

Year	VS group 1: No	VS group 1: Yes	VS group 2: No	VS group 2: Yes	VS group 3: No	VS group 3: Yes	Total
2019	2,580	580	1,520	320	5,520	1,290	11,810
2020	2,540	610	1,550	340	5,580	1,300	11,920
2021	2,530	740	1,630	440	5,530	1,620	12,490
2022	2,770	800	1,640	470	5,930	1,760	13,360
2023	2,700	770	1,760	530	6,100	1,670	13,530
<b>Passed A-levels Y13</b>							
2019	190	220	140	100	480	470	1,600
2020	190	250	120	140	430	530	1,640
2021	170	280	130	150	380	580	1,670
2022	240	300	160	160	520	670	2,040
2023	270	280	180	190	600	650	2,180

**Table 38: Numbers in EET Y12/Y13, by CLA and CL (2018 to 2019 to 2022 to 2023)**

Year	CLA: No	CLA: Yes	CL: No	CL: Yes	Total
<b>EET</b>					
2019	290	4,550	640	7,260	12,740
2020	280	4,500	740	7,420	12,940
2021	300	4,760	760	7,730	13,560
2022	260	5,200	700	8,160	14,310
2023	550	8,600	520	4,930	14,590
<b>EET retention</b>					
2019	1,020	3,820	2,220	5,680	12,740
2020	980	3,810	2,410	5,750	12,940
2021	980	4,090	2,420	6,080	13,560
2022	950	4,510	2,390	6,470	14,310
2023	1,990	7,160	1,690	3,750	14,590

**Table 39: Numbers in NEET Y12 and Y13, by CLA and CL (2017 to 2018 to 2022 to 2023)**

Year	CLA: No	CLA: Yes	CL: No	CL: Yes	Total
<b>NEET Y12</b>					
2018	4,100	550	6,030	1,420	12,100
2019	4,100	530	6,250	1,450	12,330
2020	4,330	550	6,480	1,520	12,880
2021	4,830	470	7,110	1,270	13,680
2022	7,790	1,000	4,250	880	13,920
2023	11,270	1,880	250	50	13,450
<b>NEET Y13</b>					
2019	4,070	530	6,210	1,450	12,270
2020	4,300	550	6,430	1,520	12,800
2021	4,760	470	7,030	1,270	13,530
2022	7,700	1,000	4,200	880	13,790
2023	11,220	1,880	240	50	13,400

**Table 40: Numbers in post-16 education Y12/Y13, by CLA and CL (2018 to 2019 to 2022 to 2023)**

Year	CLA: No	CLA: Yes	CL: No	CL: Yes	Total
<b>Post-16 education</b>					
2019	360	4,200	550	6,710	11,810
2020	320	4,180	590	6,830	11,920
2021	300	4,460	570	7,160	12,490
2022	300	4,900	550	7,610	13,360
2023	590	8,010	480	4,450	13,530
<b>Post-16 education retention</b>					

Year	CLA: No	CLA: Yes	CL: No	CL: Yes	Total
2019	890	3,120	1,710	4,510	10,230
2020	860	3,170	1,720	4,680	10,420
2021	790	3,480	1,560	5,100	10,930
2022	980	3,770	1,920	5,300	11,960
2023	1850	5,920	1,330	2,970	11,870

**Table 41: Attainment outcome numbers, by CLA and CL (2018 to 2019 to 2022 to 2023)**

Year	CLA: No	CLA: Yes	CL: No	CL: Yes	Total
<b>Level 2 qualification not prior to post-16</b>					
2019	1,220	1,580	1,190	2,220	6,210
2020	1,150	1,720	1,070	2,470	6,410
2021	1,160	1,890	1,090	2,850	6,990
2022	1,790	1,750	1,770	2,620	7,930
2023	2,720	2,560	1,180	1,250	7,710
<b>Achieved level 3 qualification Y13</b>					
2019	3,420	1,130	6,200	1,060	11,810
2020	3,320	1,180	6,360	1,060	11,920
2021	3,310	1,450	6,380	1,350	12,490
2022	3,630	1,570	6,710	1,450	13,360
2023	6,420	2,170	4,140	790	13,530
<b>Passed A-levels Y13</b>					
2019	370	450	450	340	1,600
2020	350	540	370	380	1,640
2021	300	560	370	450	1,670
2022	440	650	480	480	2,040
2023	690	850	370	270	2,180

**Table 42: Logistic regression outcome models (odds ratios)**

Variable	EET	EET retention	NEET Y13	Level 3 attainment
<b>Cohort (Cohort 3)</b>				
Cohort 1	0.949	1.027	1.011	1.066
<b>Sex (female)</b>				
Male	0.755***	1.018	1.017	0.716***
<b>Ethnic group (White British)</b>				
Bangladeshi	-	-	-	1.975**
Indian	-	-	-	2.757***
Pakistani	1.244	1.544	0.633	2.405***
Other Asian	-	1.423	0.511	2.573***
African	2.538***	2.234***	0.417***	3.870***
Caribbean	1.664*	1.262	0.851	2.141***
Other Black	1.806	1.604*	0.564*	2.051***
Mixed Asian	0.715	0.881	0.888	1.554*
Mixed African	-	1.331	0.856	1.707*
Mixed Caribbean	1.550	1.065	1.076	1.103
Other Mixed	2.296**	1.546*	0.667*	1.676***
Other White	0.721	0.794	1.012	1.106
White European	-	1.071	0.712	1.252
Other ethnic group	0.707*	1.089	1.003	1.486**
<b>SEN (No identified SEN)</b>				
SEN with statement/plan	1.641***	1.316***	0.893	0.377***
SEN No statement/plan	1.288**	1.036	1.180*	0.773***
<b>School type (non-mainstream)</b>				
Mainstream school	0.993*	1.005	0.999	0.993

Variable	EET	EET retention	NEET Y13	Level 3 attainment
<b>5 A-C inc EM</b>	12.466***	4.352***	0.181***	8.941***
<b>Care group (CLA)</b>				
Care leaver	0.830*	0.893	0.956	0.780***
<b>Age care entry (&lt;11)</b>				
11+	0.667***	0.853*	1.427***	0.915
Need (abuse/neglect)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Child disability	0.865	2.189***	0.461***	1.233
Parental disability	1.505	1.486*	0.490**	1.202
Acute stress	1.074	0.922	1.136	0.813*
Family dysfunction	0.881	1.060	0.992	0.960
Socially unacceptable behaviour	0.643**	0.603***	1.172	0.680
Low income	-	-	-	1.288
Absent parenting	0.953	0.917	0.787	0.741
<b>Placement (foster with carer)</b>				
Adoption	-	4.147*	0.670	1.271
Semi-independent	0.424***	0.268***	5.502***	0.203***
Childrens home	0.426***	0.565***	1.951***	0.297***
Independent	0.433***	0.346***	3.291***	0.433***
Residential	0.330***	0.337***	2.064***	-
Foster with friends or relatives	0.872	0.687***	1.573***	0.802**
Other	0.491*	0.280***	4.655***	0.462*

Variable	EET	EET retention	NEET Y13	Level 3 attainment
<b>Legal status (interim care order)</b>				
Full care order	1.033	0.782*	1.382***	0.849
Placement order	-	0.324	1.109	0.692
Remand	0.804	0.389***	1.969**	-
Protection order	0.324***	0.633	1.128	0.720
S20	0.847	0.630***	1.527***	0.599***
UASC	-	3.290***	0.217***	0.993
<b>Pseudo r2</b>	0.127	0.128	0.144	0.300
<b>BIC</b>	5975	8970	8393	8633
<b>N</b>	12130	10860	11180	11240

Note '- ' suppressed cell count



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