



**LOOKED AFTER PROJECT**

**MAY 2020**



**sport aberdeen**

Charity no SC040973

## VISION:

Creating opportunities, inspiring people and changing lives through sport and physical activity.

## PROJECT OUTCOMES:

- To improve outcomes for CECYP who have Aberdeen City Council as their Corporate Parent
- To improve health and wellbeing, both physical and mental
- Reduction in exclusions and increase attendance
- Impact on pupil attainment to close the attainment gap

## PROJECT APPROACH/AIMS

- Support Bespoke 1-2-1 and small group interventions
- Opportunities to achieve SQA accreditation
- Work in partnership with the Virtual School and Social Work
- Support access to physical activity for ACC looked after CECYP who are placed in another local authority
- Engage in Child Protection and Corporate Training delivered by ACC
- Develop partnerships with leisure and activity providers to enable a varied provision of physical activity
- Support parent/carer engagement in physical activity

## PROJECT PRINCIPLES

- A child centred approach, with the needs and views of CECYP at its core
- Bespoke interventions for each individual CECYP to achieve positive results
- Helping to remove barriers faced by CECYP
- A partnership approach to develop and grow new and existing opportunities for CECYP

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## INTRODUCTION

Sport Aberdeen has a proven track record of supporting Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP) who have Aberdeen City Council as their corporate parent. Its mission statement is “creating opportunities, inspiring people and changing lives through sport and physical activity” and strives to continue to bring this commitment to supporting Care Experienced Young People through Sport. Its experience, skills and resources working with sport and young people is extensive, highly regarded by **sportscotland** and well established. Each year it delivers more than 278,000 Participant Sessions to over 8500 children and young people and has recently secured **sportscotland** funding to develop this work further over the next three years. Over the last four years it has developed a robust, innovative approach, achieving positive outcomes for individual young people, securing additional funding and expanded support in a highly effective model. A child centred approach is at the core, resulting in bespoke methods of intervention based on the needs and views of the CECYP. Throughout the 2019-20 Academic year, this has involved arranging 1-2-1 support, small group sessions, helping remove barriers faced by CECYP & providing support during the Covid-19 crisis. A partnership approach has been key to this success, maximising the outcomes for the CECYP.

## SPORT ABERDEEN – CORPORATE PARENT

Sport Aberdeen is very much the “Leisure Parent” for CECYP in the city. With its range of services and sporting facilities, spread right across the city. It has an unparalleled platform to support Care Experienced Children & Young People (CECYP) through Sport. It aims to build on the success of previous years and use sport to improve outcomes for CECYP who have Aberdeen City Council as their corporate parent. It is also represented on the Children’s Champions Board and the Head of Sport & Active Communities is involved in the development of Corporate Parent Training to be rolled out across the City. Furthermore, Sport Aberdeen is an active contributor to Community Planning Aberdeen, with representation on the Outcome Improvement Groups and Locality Partnerships. Representation of Senior Leadership Team in these working groups ensures that Sport Aberdeen is focused on positive improvement, also contributing to the 15 Stretch Outcomes that have been identified through the Local Outcome Improvement Plan. This specifically includes

- Stretch Outcome 4: 90% of Children will report they feel mentally well by 2026

and

- Stretch Outcome 5: 95% of care experienced children and young people will have the same levels of attainment in education, emotional wellbeing, and positive destinations as their peers by 2026.

Sport Aberdeen in their role as a Corporate Parent offers a diverse range of opportunities for Care Experienced Young People and those at risk of becoming Looked After. Utilising the different facets of our organisation we were able to offer over 250 free memberships, 50 free swimming lessons per week and free access to holiday camps for CECYP. These opportunities are not limited to the CECYP themselves, but is extended to siblings, parents, carers and professional staff, further removing barriers associated with accessing physical activity. For example, offering Kinship Carers swimming lessons has a wider impact as the family can all use their free Sport Aberdeen memberships to access public swimming, improving physical and mental wellbeing of the household, as well as building positive relationships. This is only one of many examples where the LAP has taken what could be described as a bigger picture approach and not solely focussed on the CECYP but looked beyond at the environment they are living in and what interventions and support will produce the greatest positive outcome.

Working with the Active Schools Team also promotes opportunities for physical activity, volunteering, building and developing transferable skills. At the beginning of 2020, the project became integrated into the wider Active Schools Team as a result of the project’s Development Officer returning to a career in Social Work. This provided an opportunity to review the current structure and implement change to maximise support for the CECYP, resulting in the introduction of an Inclusion Manager and Lead Active Schools Coordinator for the Virtual School ASG. Becoming part of the wider Active Schools Team creates a better reach of the project as CECYP are supported to access physical activity within their local area, enhancing inclusion and relationships with peers. This change also saw capacity of the Looked After Project increase from 2 to 4 x 0.5 FTE Project Activators (PAs) & 1 x assistant providing more opportunities for direct support. This is in addition to the 1 x FTE PA working with Priority Families through Changing Lives Through Sport funding.

From the beginning, a partnership approach has been recognised as being crucial, shaping the approach and outcomes. The Looked After Project has continued to develop relationships with the Virtual School, with regular meetings becoming standard practice. Positive relationships have also formed with the social work department including the Team Leader of the Kinship Care team, the Children’s Rights Officer, staff within Children’s Homes and individual social workers. Alongside these we have cultivated positive relationships with other charities that provide support to CECYP such as Aberdeen Foyer and Includem. These relationships have led to referrals for support, in addition to Sport Aberdeen memberships being provided to staff to encourage increased usage by the CECYP. Underlining a commitment to partnership and development, Sport Aberdeen received two substantial additional funding awards, which continued into this year:

- The first award, from the Life Changes Trust has allowed the recruitment of two 0.5FTE posts, greatly enhancing the capacity of the project, increasing the number of CECYP that it can work with and allowed it to offer personal achievement awards.
- The second award, from the Changing Lives Through Sport enables the LAP to work with Action for Children and the City Council’s Priority Family Project. Now, an additional 1.0FTE position, is able to use the successful LAP model to support families at risk of formal intervention by social work agencies.

These awards will be referred to in more detail throughout the report. The above summarises Sport Aberdeen’s commitment to its role as Corporate Parent, maximising opportunities for CECYP, their support networks and those at risk of becoming Looked After. The range of bespoke interventions offered throughout 2019-20 will be discussed in more detail throughout the remainder of this report.

## 1:1 INTERVENTION

As a result of the change in staffing structure, the ACC funding was able to be re-distributed creating the additional 2 x 0.5 FTE Project Activators (PAs), to complement the existing 2 x 0.5 PAs funded through the Life Changes Trust. The role of PA has remained consistent, providing a focused and appropriate level of support based on the views and needs of each CECYP and not influenced by the length of time they have been part of the project or a set number of weekly sessions. The support offered has primarily been during curricular time, providing positive experiences, opportunities for success and confidence building. The focus is on improving outcomes for CECYP, increasing physical and mental wellbeing, alongside seeing an increase in attainment. Ultimately sport is the tool used to achieve key outcomes. A wide range of sporting and physical activity opportunities, both within and out with the school setting are offered, capitalising on the strong network of contacts and positive relationships Sport Aberdeen has across the City. Relationships with Transition Extreme, Hayfield Riding Centre and Aberdeen Riding Centre have been key in offering a varied provision of physical activity. Aligning with the Active Schools team this year has laid the foundations for additional links with community organisations, in addition to enhancing the network of support across the Country resulting from the wider network gained by being funded through SportScotland.

Sport Aberdeen strives to ensure the needs of the CECYP remain at the heart of the approach and support offered. This has been further enhanced this year by building on the positive relationship developed with the Head Teacher of the Virtual School. The referral system has recently improved as Social Work and Education liaise directly with the Virtual School HT, who is then in a position to recommend the most appropriate level of support ensuring the physical, mental, emotional and educational needs of each CECYP are considered. The Lead ASC (Virtual School ASG) then follows up with key professionals to finalise the support available to the CECYP. Although a recent change, this is being viewed as an improvement, particularly with regards to how best to reach educational needs, support re-engagement with education and bridging the attainment gap. Fortnightly meetings between the Lead ASC and Virtual School HT ensure a high level of communication is maintained, helping develop our approach and maximise the quality of support offered.

The professional relationships developed throughout the year have been important however the strength of the relationship between PA and the CECYP remains imperative in the success of the intervention. This is emphasised throughout the PAs induction process and reiterated within weekly meetings. A positive example of the value of the relationships built from the LAP can be seen when considering the support offered to a young person who was supported by the Development Officer from 2018. The initial aims were to offer a nurturing environment, increase resilience and provide opportunities for success. Horse-riding was arranged in the first instance, which saw an increased sense of achievement and confidence to try new things. The routine, trust and consistency of support was a positive for this young person, however in 2019 a foster placement was arranged out with the local authority. During this time of unpredictability and instability, the young person's social worker had also changed. The Sport Aberdeen Development Officer was a constant support for this child and as such, she supported the transition, travelling to the foster parent's house with the young person and continuing to offer post-transition support and arranging activities in the new community. This highlights the dedication and strength of relationship between the young person and Development Officer, identifying an unexpected outcome of the project. Further to this, the project was able to continue to support the child despite moving out with the local authority and the intervention was withdrawn only once it was considered to be in the child's best interests.

In total, the project has supported 12 CECYP with 1-2-1 sessions throughout this Academic Year, in addition to 8 new referrals during Covid-19 lockdown. Examples of activities which have been popular this year include horse riding, BMX, skateboarding, swimming and traditional multi sport activities. The duration and frequency of support is based on the needs of each individual and can change to reflect changing circumstances in their lives. An example of this is seen by the support of a young person increasing from weekly to 3 times per week during lockdown, as further outlined in the Covid-19 section below. In addition to this, as the CECYP grow and develop, so do their needs and subsequently the approach towards support offered. This adapts based on the views and needs of the CYP and feedback from other professionals, particularly discussed within multi-agency meetings. An example of this can be depicted by referring to the support offered to a young person who started with the project in 2016, in order to help engage with education, build relationships, transferable skills and provide feelings of success. Initially, this young person was supported to attend weekly sport-based activities such as skateboarding, however as the support progressed a need was identified to help this young person better regulate behaviours within school and a volunteering role ensued. Working with the Active Schools team resulted in opportunities to volunteer within a local primary school, providing a sense of responsibility, helping him better manage behaviours, reduce anxiety and increase resilience, seeing an increase in time spent within mainstream schooling and reduced rates of exclusions. His positive attitude and aptitude for leading sessions resulted in him undertaking work experience with Sport Aberdeen, completing an "I can lead" course and achieving a Saltire Award this year for completing more than 100 hours of volunteering. Building these skills and providing this opportunity has resulted in this young person gaining official employment within Sport Aberdeen, enhancing the likelihood of future positive destinations. The following feedback from the Young Person & Education highlights how life changing this has been for this young person:

*Young Person: "This opportunity has been great for me and I am so thankful for the experience"*

*Education: "The impact that this work has had...is PHENOMENAL! Throughout the journey he has become very clear in his long-term focus and this is down to the work he does with Sport Aberdeen and his mentoring from the Looked After Project coordinator. We are seeing a young man who now has clear goals and aspirations and a drive to achieve in order to get the career that he knows that he wants. A huge part of this is down to the network of people around him both in and out of school..."*

What makes this situation even more positive is the effect this young person has had on his peers, ultimately becoming a positive role model. Seeing how this young person has embraced the opportunities available to him has resulted in another YP from within the Children's home also commence volunteering with Active Schools. He has also shown a strong natural ability to lead groups of children and will be supported to reach his full potential with this. During Covid-19, these YP have been encouraged to remain engaged and have helped create socially distanced activities and session plans to be used by professionals within the Childcare hubs.

Supporting CECYP to gain formal qualifications is a key aspect of the project. Young People are encouraged to undertake qualifications, including Leadership courses such as Sports Coaching UK courses, joining the Active Schools Leadership Programme and also undertaking SQA accredited Personal Achievement Awards (PAA) in Partnership with Foyer Futures. This year saw 1 Young Person fully complete their PAA, with another 2 YP's progress being hindered by Covid-19. For this YP, volunteering and undertaking the PAA has provided a positive focus, developing skills required for future employment, which has been important as he was a school leaver. He had to deliver 2 presentations to other adults, which provided a positive sense of self, in addition to going on to pass a first aid course. Attending this course saw this YP overcome many challenges which would have been too overwhelming in previous years, such as anxiety of going into groups of new people and low confidence and self-esteem associated with literacy levels. This YP wants a career in coaching, therefore the volunteering and leadership this year has helped develop these skills required for future employment. The support of the PA gave the young person a sense of purpose, raised self-esteem and helped with mental wellbeing throughout periods of change, particularly experienced by no longer having the security provided by being part of the Education system.

Taking into account the importance of an equitable approach and the negative attainment gap experienced by many CECYP, this year has seen Sport Aberdeen reach an access agreement with NESCOL to further support young people with access to further education and therefore a positive destination. This agreement aligns with the Active Schools Leadership Programme, in which achieving Bronze, Silver & Gold awards within this programme can be used to in place of the traditional SQA qualification entry requirements on the Sport & Fitness courses. With there being a well-documented attainment gap for CECYP, this development removes one of the many barriers faced on route to reaching a positive destination. Once on this course there are opportunities and an existing pathway for the CECYP to move onto HND in Sports Coaching and then onto a degree at RGU in Applied Sport and Exercise Science, should this be their aspirations. Throughout both of these further education destinations Active Schools provides support and placement opportunities, along with employment opportunities.

Sport Aberdeen value the importance of building relationships and taking a child-centred approach. This has been paramount through the work undertaken by the team within the Looked After Project and has started to cascade into the approach of the wider Active Schools team and other aspects of Sport Aberdeen.

## SUPPORT PARTNERS & SMALL GROUP INTERVENTIONS

The reach of the project has been far greater than the 1-2-1 work of the Project Activators. The LAP has worked closely and developed strong partnerships with schools and social work support teams (such as Craigielea & Westburn) to provide activities for individuals or small groups of young people. The project has funded activities for these services to support CECYP who may struggle with new people or where the project does not have capacity to provide direct support.

The desired outcome for many is to increase positive relationships with school and re-engagement with education. 1-2-1's have shown that they can support increased confidence and resilience and, as such, can be a stepping stone to participation in a school setting or to community sports clubs. Many of the young people supported in this way are not within mainstream education, therefore the support is offered as part of their alternative curriculum, in addition to providing physical activity which is often not available due to their part-time timetables. Working with partners has enabled an additional 16 young people to take part in a variety of sport activities this academic year, including horse-riding, BMXing and rock climbing.

Engaging with the project has seen improvements in both the physical and mental wellbeing for these young people. Activities have helped build confidence & self-esteem, better regulate emotions and provided positive experiences in the community. One example is a young person who prior to the project commencing had not left her house for 2-3 years. It was hoped that starting horse-riding lessons would help her re-engage with the outside world and increase overall mental wellbeing. Horse-riding has provided opportunities to be active, feelings of success, increased self-worth and overall confidence. This young person attends 100% of activities and has subsequently increased her time at the stables from once per week to volunteering on a daily basis. In addition to this, she is now part of Pony Club, achieving badges, giving her a sense of achievement, alongside professionals commenting on the direct impact the project has had on her overall wellbeing.

The approach of the LAP recognises that 1-2-1 interventions are suitable for some but not all our CECYP and moving on to small groups may be an appropriate pathway, enhancing social skills and peer interaction. Two group horse riding sessions have continued this year, a legacy of the Changing Lives Through Horses funding. Not with-standing the individual needs of each person, the reasons for referral shared common themes. It was thought that working with animals would help these young people develop skills, having a positive effect on their confidence, self-esteem and overall mental wellbeing, alongside the social benefits which group settings can provide. The horse-riding sessions have helped these young people achieve key outcomes, alongside building positive peer relationships. Two of the participants are not care experienced, however were identified as being key in supporting the care experienced young person to attend and to enhance the outcomes for the CECYP. The aim of these sessions was also to support re-engagement with education and one young person's school attendance increased from 86% to 98% between terms 1-3 this year.

Feedback from one of the team Managers within Integrated Children & Family services summarises the impact they have seen within the young people they support to attend activities:

*“I cannot stress enough how vital these sessions are to the young people we work with and to see their progress into volunteering or using the facilities in their own time is fantastic. We have also on some occasions paired up young people to attend the gym sessions together which is vital for their socialisation skills and future development.”*

Further to this, the Looked After Project has piloted a transition group within a local primary school, due to a gap for vulnerable young people being identified. This was made up of 8 young people who were either Looked After, edge of care or had other additional support needs. Owing to the power of peer support, the group also included a child who was not considered to be vulnerable as it was felt that he would be a positive role model, complementing the group dynamics. This was very much delivered in partnership with the DHT and a forest school approach was taken to develop team building and relationships as they transition to Secondary School. On one occasion, the children built a shelter, which enabled them to put these skills into practice and understand each other’s strengths and weaknesses. The shelter became their safe space and they were able to identify and discuss their anxieties about the transition, enabling the adults to shape their involvement over the remainder of the sessions. The PA was able to reassure the children and express having had similar fears at that age. This provided a connection and reassurance that it is okay to discuss feelings, emotions and anxieties. The group built connections with each other and have formed relationships which they can take to Academy. The group also undertook some team activities at the Academy, however these were hindered by Covid-19 restrictions.

The final group of Care Experienced Young People supported this year, involved partnership working with the Development Officer of Who Cares? Scotland and the A.C.E group. Throughout the past 2 years, Sport Aberdeen have provided sport activities for the A.C.E group, however attendance was sporadic and the multi-sport approach didn’t seem to be in the CECYP’s interests. In the October holidays, the group went a walk up Bennachie, which was the first hill-walk for most and a sense of achievement and pride radiated from them. They were supportive of each other, changing the pace when necessary and encouraging their peers to continue with the challenge. The group expressed a desire to undertake hill-walks more often and the consensus was that this was their preferred activity for the A.C.E group. From there, the group decided on an aim of walking up Ben Nevis, Summer 2020. The plan was to undertake a walk each month, building distance and altitude. Since October, the group have undertaken a walk together around Kincorth Hill, which had positive feedback and it was evident that they felt a sense of pride, motivation and determination. Hill-walking also enables peer support and encouragement and although Covid-19 put a stop to their initial plans, the group are still aiming to meet their aims, albeit in 2021. To support the group through lockdown, a PA has developed an individual walking challenge which the YP can choose to take part in. This is a group challenge, further encouraging teamwork and peer interaction. The plans have had to change, but walking has been found to be an important activity for physical and mental wellbeing at this time.

## ADDITIONAL SPORT ABERDEEN INPUT

The reach of the project has been far greater than the direct funding received for the Looked After Project. By embracing the role of Corporate Parent, there is increased awareness of the needs of CECYP across the organisation, which shapes policies and procedures. For example, within Active Schools, it has been made clear that CECYP are to have access and support to attend activities free of charge. This involves high levels of communication with the schools designated manager for Looked After Children, which can sometimes result in further barriers for the child. To remove any stigma associated with free activities and to ensure an equitable approach, Active Schools are aiming to have 100% free activities from the 2020 academic year, ensuring activities are accessible for all.

The Active Schools team has also grown over the past 2 years, with the introduction of 5 x Pupil Equity Funded Active Schools Assistants (ASAs). The role of the ASA is tailored towards the needs of each school and has also provided additional support for CECYP. Within one local primary school, 3 x CECYP were supported within small groups during curricular time throughout the year. This mirrored the approach described previously as the aims were to increase positive peer interaction and improve attainment. The benefits of an ASA are that they are based within a school and therefore are able to provide continuous support throughout the school day. Further to this, they deliver extra-curricular activities, ensuring sport and physical activity is accessible for all. In the school mentioned above, all 3 CECYP also regularly participated in extra-curricular activities, an outcome which reflects the strength of relationships.

In another local primary school, a CECYP was supported to take part in extra-curricular clubs. This YP has additional support needs and attended the support for learning base, however due to them being accommodated out with the city appropriate after school activities were hard to find. This YP was supported to attend yoga and tennis activities 2 x per week at lunchtimes, which saw his fine and gross motor skills greatly improve. He expressed great delight in achieving new skills and his teacher commented on how he would ask every day "is it tennis/yoga today?". Working with a group of 9 other boys saw his social skills improve and confidence grow resulting in him actively participating in mainstream activities for a period of time. This young person regularly attended Breakfast club sport activities when he was originally placed with his Kinship carer and this provided support for the carer, in addition to helping him use his energy in a positive way and improving attention in the classroom. Support was offered to the kinship carer to access club opportunities in their local area and connections made for the wider family.

Further to this, the Changing Lives Through Sport funding has seen the Priority Family's Project Activator provide a broad range of support to families at risk of formal intervention by social work. All referrals to the Priority Families Service must identify anti-social behaviour (ASB) concerns, although there are generally multiple issues affecting families, not limited to: ASB, offending and crime, school attendance, child wellbeing, adult wellbeing, out of work/financial exclusion. The project is part of a team approach working in partnership with Action for Children and the Police, as a result, the intervention can be flexible and tailored to the needs of the whole family. The integrated PA offers families the opportunity to engage in sport and physical activities, helping to improve their health and wellbeing through these positive behaviours. Building relationships continues to be key with

families and professionals alike, enabling barriers for physical activity and positive experiences to be removed. Activities offered echoes the approach of the wider Looked After Project, with family participation being encouraged. This has shown to have a positive impact on the overall mental health and wellbeing of the whole household. An example of this is a parent who had experienced childhood trauma, anxiety and agoraphobia. This parent struggled to leave the house, even to walk the family dog. The PA was able to build a positive relationship, identify her aims and support her to gradually increase activity levels. This primarily focused on using a Fitbit to track progress, building up distances and developing resilience to keep going even on days with less motivation. This parent now regularly achieves her step target and enjoys the feeling of success this brings, informing the PA with pride: “...*thought I'd send my step award to you lol I actually walked 13181 steps yesterday and got my 'beating personal best' achievement*”. This support has directly impacted on the wellbeing of the children within the household, removing the need for social work involvement.

In addition to this, the PA supports another young person who has a history of self-harming, aggressive tendencies and allegations of assault towards family members. This support has seen improved confidence, self-esteem & peer relationships, developing leadership skills and positive behaviours, stopping the antisocial behaviour previously displayed.

A Police Scotland Officer describes the intervention as follows: “*Having already worked with the family for in excess of 6 months prior to (PA's) appointment in her role, we struggled to get the boy to take part in any activities either in school or out of school. (PA) built a relationship with the young person and over a period of time and after trying various activities, enrolled the young person in a Dodgeball club where he now plays regularly. The young person in question had previously lived a sedentary lifestyle and frequently self-harmed. The increase in physical activity as well as the social side of being involved with others clearly benefitted the young person.*”

The above illustrates how seriously Sport Aberdeen takes its role as a Corporate Parent, emphasising the importance of partnership working and how supporting CECYP is embedded within its culture.

## COVID-19

As evidenced throughout this report, the support of the Looked After Project and additional Sport Aberdeen input have been instrumental in the routines, stability and positive outcomes for our CECYP. Covid-19 has had a drastic effect on the lives of many across the world and our CECYP are not without exception. This has been a period of uncertainty, causing anxiety and frustration for many and due to the country going into lockdown. The tools these young people developed to help cope and opportunities for positive experiences have been challenged. Covid-19 has presented numerous challenges in maintaining continuity in supporting families to engage in physical activity. Families are now at home all together often with limited space to move around. Everyday routines have been harder to keep with schools being shut and households are faced with additional pressures. It has been important to continue to support families as best as possible at this time and we have stressed the importance of sticking to normal week day routines and engaging in some form of physical activity for both their physical and mental wellbeing. Sport Aberdeen have strived to continue to provide support for our most vulnerable individuals, offering to provide virtual activities, in addition to continuing to offer face to face contact where appropriate.

The Project Activators have been an integral part of the City-based education hubs, established to support vulnerable children at this time. The initial expectation was for the project activators to provide physical activity for the children, however due to the strengths of relationships formed with the children, their role is far more varied and includes supporting the young people with their wider learning and wellbeing. An example of this involves a care experienced child struggling to engage in his school work. Through sport, the Project Activator has been able to establish a positive rapport with this child and they have since been accessing school work together. The school stated that he does not engage with the wider school activities, however whilst working with this PA, he has chosen to engage in a school-based PE challenge, enhancing his sense of achievement and feelings of inclusion. This has also resulted in a referral for Sport Aberdeen to support this young person's transition to secondary school, owing to the power of sport and the strength of relationships. To reduce change and the number of professionals involved, the Active Schools Assistant will be the person working with the YP out with the hubs as he will be a consistent factor when starting secondary school.

As many of the children are Looked After at home, it is evident that Covid-19 has added additional pressures for the families. For one family, accessing the hubs raised anxiety levels for the parent and child, therefore the PA was asked to continue offering support on a 1-2-1 basis. This has primarily been via phone calls, with the aim of building trust and confidence to work with the PA as per current guidelines. This has required trust and high levels of communication between the parent and PA, which has taken time to build. It was evident within a recent core group meeting that the parent is refusing to allow social work within her property, however the PA has been able to engage with the family via the window. These weekly sessions are fluid, often lacking structure and are very much led by the child. With this family, the PA has had a wider impact by supporting the parent and encouraging them to take part in daily exercise, often resulting in walks, helping manage the parent's mental wellbeing as much as the child's. The child has flourished through these interactions and has developed the ability to speak on the phone, apparently with more confidence than many adults.

The PAs are continuing to support another young person whose relationship with the PA was considered to be greater than what the hub could provide at that point. At the start of lockdown, due to being in Kinship care with an older adult, this child had very limited opportunities to leave the house, resulting in tension and a lack of opportunity to express himself and use energy in a positive manner. This child has experienced loss and bereavement from an early age and the project has aimed to increase resilience, provide new opportunities and experiences of success. Initially weekly activities were arranged on a 1-2-1 basis, often including walks and fitness exercises outside. However, a further bereavement of a close family member resulted in the support increasing to 3 times per week, giving both the child & kinship carer space to grieve, helping ensure a positive home environment is maintained. This child has taken to running and cycling with the PA, which has also seen them develop their ability to discuss emotions and regulate behaviours whilst in our care. He has been able to openly discuss feelings and emotions with the PA, something which he has historically found challenging. The PA has been able to reassure that it's okay to feel these emotions, but they needed to work together to identify strategies to express emotions in a safe manner. Both activities involved accessing green, open spaces and are something which this child can continue in their own time once lockdown restrictions are lifted. The Kinship carer is extremely grateful for the respite, whilst seeing the importance of this for the child's wellbeing providing some positive competition and feelings of success for the child. The PA has also proven a good support for the kinship carer as she has limited interaction with other adults and therefore their conversations provide an opportunity for her to express her feelings, maintaining positive mental wellbeing.

Despite the positive work of the 1:1s, it has been harder to maintain the support to our partners such as Craigelea and Westburn, primarily due to there not being pre-established relationships between the CECYP and our PAs. This has resulted in them opting not to engage in virtual activities, however as lockdown restrictions start to lift, we are exploring ways to support in a face to face capacity. This has also been a challenge within the Children's homes, particularly for 1 young person who associated virtual activities with his mum's contact. This has been a concern as they were fully engaged and flourishing prior to Covid-19, however we have strived to maintain a level of interaction based on the views of the CECYP, particularly as we aim to reduce the pressures on them at this time. As 3 of these young people were undertaking volunteering prior to Covid-19, we have been creative and developed alternative methods for them to continue to "coach" by asking them to create session plans for the hubs. This suggestion has helped maintain the relationship between PA and child, whilst continuing to provide a sense of purpose, developing their coaching knowledge and creative thinking. Overall the benefits have been vast and are helping maintain relationships at this time.

The relationships developed with both Education and Social Work throughout the hubs has resulted in increased awareness of the project and subsequent referrals for support. It has also raised awareness for the benefits of sport and physical activity and with funding donated to these hubs, the children are due to receive "physical activity packs" to increase activity levels at home. The hubs have delivered Sports Days, which many of the children would not have take part in within their typical school setting. For those who would ordinarily take part, it was noticed that they didn't have access to their school's virtual sports day, therefore by hosting one within the hubs, everyone has had the opportunity to engage.

## SUMMARY

As evidenced throughout this report, Sport Aberdeen is committed to its role as Corporate Parent and strives to lead the way in ensuring the opportunities for CECYP are maximised. Being a member of Community Leisure UK allows for easily accessible communication and provides a forum for sharing good practise on a national level. The staffing structure within Sport Aberdeen also means that the project forms part of the wider Active Schools team, which is beneficial on both a local and national level. Active Schools is represented across all 32 local authorities in Scotland, which sees the benefit of local links and relationships, enhancing the support for CECYP to access physical activity in another local authority. The Head of Sport & Active Communities is also in a position to share good practice at Regional and National SportScotland meetings, providing a voice for CECYP across the Country. The expansive reach of the project is testament to the work of the Looked After Project team & Sport Aberdeen Leadership, as an equitable approach to supporting vulnerable children has embedded into the culture.

The work undertaken throughout the 2019-20 Academic year has built on the successes of previous years, with the project striving to ensure the voice of the children is heard and support is tailored to their needs. A partnership approach is imperative and has seen the project develop to changing needs. The strength of the team and dedication to enhancing support during Covid-19 has shown the power of the work undertaken and it is hoped that the above information highlights the importance of the project for CECYP who have Aberdeen City Council as their Corporate Parent.

Feedback from a Head Teacher summarises the impact that PAs and the overall project can have:

*(PA) has worked with individual children under legal measures, vulnerable pupils during COVID 19 and as part of a team supporting pupils with transition to Secondary. During her time with us she built up incredibly positive relationships which supported the wellbeing of some of our most vulnerable children. Her work saw them able to focus on their mental and emotional wellbeing as well as physically and this supported them to feel confidence, relaxed and happy. They have learned new skills including riding bikes, leadership (sharing their skills with younger pupils and new games which supports them with their social skills and the ability to work with others. Many of our children come from larger families and they struggle to find their place, or some time where they are the priority. With (PA), they were given time that was exclusively for them; a time to breathe, positivity and to just be themselves. Her skills and child-centred focus means that every individual child is a priority and most importantly they know this.*