

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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| COMMITTEE | Public Protection Committee |
| DATE | 23 February 2022 |
| EXEMPT | No |
| CONFIDENTIAL | No |
| REPORT TITLE | Corporate Parenting Annual Report |
| REPORT NUMBER | OPE/22/042 |
| DIRECTOR | Rob Polkinghorne |
| CHIEF OFFICER | Graeme Simpson |
| REPORT AUTHOR | Amy Evans |
| TERMS OF REFERENCE | 1.2 |

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to respond to the Committee's request for an annual report on the progress of our Corporate Parenting responsibilities outlined in part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that Committee:

- 2.1. Note and endorse progress and activities against key Corporate Parenting duties.
- 2.2. Note the Corporate Parenting Policy and Plan 2021-2023 (Appendix 1).
- 2.3. Note the Champions Board Plan 2021-2023 (Appendix 2).
- 2.4. Note the Aberdeen Care Experienced Participation Report June–December 2021 (Appendix 3).
- 2.5. Note the progress update from Care Experienced Young People on delivery of the Corporate Parenting and Champions Board Action Plans at paragraph 3.16. Further opportunities for care experienced young people to share their experiences of Corporate Parenting activity will be explored, in collaboration with our young people, for future Committee.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. This is the sixth annual report to Committee providing a progress update and overview of key Corporate Parenting duties. At the Committee's request, the updated Corporate Parenting Plan 2021-2023 (Appendix 1) was presented to them for consultation and approved in April 2021.
- 3.2. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 defines Corporate Parenting and places a number of duties on public sector organisations to uphold

the rights and safeguard the wellbeing of looked after children, young people and care leavers.

3.3. Corporate Parenting responsibilities are set out in section 58, Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 as the following six duties:

- To be alert to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and young people and care leavers,
- To assess the needs of care experienced children and young people for services and support provided,
- To promote the interests of care experienced children and young people,
- To provide opportunities for care experienced children and young people to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing,
- To make sure care experienced children and young people can access opportunities and make use of services and support,
- To strive to improve the way our organisation functions in relation to care experienced children and young people.

3.4. Our Corporate Parenting responsibilities are reflected in our Local Outcome Improvement Plan (2019-2026) where the following objectives are set for Corporate Parenting under stretch outcome 6:

“As corporate parents we will ensure 95% of care experienced children and young people will have the same levels of attainment in education, health and emotional wellbeing, and positive destinations as their peers by 2026”.

3.5. The conclusions of the Independent Care Review articulated in [The Promise](#), set out the transformational change required by 2030. The Promise makes clear what those working with children and families in Scotland must do to make sure our children feel loved, safe and have the childhood they deserve. Children and families and most importantly, those with lived experience, must be at the heart of all our work to ensure that the work we do is meaningful, accessible and impactful. The Promise Scotland published [Plan 21-24](#) in March 2021, outlining the priorities for the next 3 years, and [Change Programme One](#) in June 2021, which outlines and assesses the work in progress to deliver these priorities.

3.6. The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out specific rights that all children have to help fulfil their potential. In March 2021, the Scottish Parliament passed the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill, to incorporate the UNCRC into Scots law. The Supreme Court determined that certain parts of the Bill fall outwith the competence of the Scottish Parliament. It is anticipated that the Scottish Parliament will reconsider the Bill. Respecting, protecting and fulfilling children’s rights is central to [#KeepThePromise](#) and the [Getting It Right For Every Child](#) (GIRFEC) which continue to underpin how we love, care for and support all children and young people in Scotland.

3.7. Our duties as Corporate Parents, local priorities and the principles of The Promise are reflected within our local Corporate Parenting Plan 2021-2023 (Appendix 1) and Champions Board Plan 2021-2023 (Appendix 2).

3.8. **Corporate Parenting Plan**

The overarching aims of our Corporate Parenting Plan 2021-2023 are:

- Improve education outcomes for care experienced children and young people.
- Improve the knowledge and skills of the workforce in relation to their Corporate Parenting duties and responsibilities and by doing so highlight the pervasive impact of care experience on opportunities and life chances.
- Feature and promote the recommendations of The Independent Care Review across key systems, processes, and partnership practice.
- To work in ways which recognise the life-long impact of trauma, placing recovery principles at the forefront of Corporate Parenting planning.
- Continue to develop participation and engagement opportunities with and for our children and young people.
- Seek creative ways to listen to and capture children and young people's voices and views, building on the strong foundations we have developed to expand the impact of the Champions Board and the role of Corporate Parents in Aberdeen.

3.9. **Champions Board Plan**

The vision of our Champions Board Plan 2021-2023 is that:

'Our care experienced children, young people and care leavers have a right to participate in decision-making about their own lives and have their voices heard'.

To achieve this, we have identified the following priorities:

- Champions will listen to and learn from the voice and experience of our children and young people,
- Champions will seek and promote opportunities to enable our children and young people to have the same life opportunities as their peers,
- Embedding a children's and young person's rights approach into services, focusing on embedding *participation, protection and provision* of children and young people's rights,

3.10. **Update from Care Experienced Young People on delivery of the Corporate Parenting and Champions Board Action Plans**

3.11. Fundamental to Plan 21-24 is ensuring the **voice** of those with lived experience is listened to and learned from:

“At all stages in the process of change, what matters to children and families must be the focus. Organisations will be able to demonstrate that they are operating from their perspective rather than the perspective internal to the ‘system’” Plan 21-24, page 14.

3.12. The Corporate Parenting Plan 2021-2023 was presented to Committee in April 2021 as a draft document to allow time before finalising to seek the views of care experienced young people.

3.13. The refreshed Corporate Parenting Plan and Champions Board Plan were shared with 19 care experienced young people aged between 16-26 years old. The young people were asked to consider six key themes that overarch the two plans. Feedback and recommendations from the consultation with care experienced young people was supported by the Youth Team, Children’s Residential and Young Person’s Rights Service.

3.14. Key feedback for each of the themes were shared as direct quotes from the young people consulted and demonstrate why our Corporate Parenting and Champions Board plans remain crucial. We recognise that the experiences shared are from a small sample of individual young people with their own unique experiences, however, their comments are considered illustrative of wider care experienced voices:

3.15. Stigma

Our young people were able to share their experiences of what it is like to be labelled as looked-after and the enduring stigma around care experience. Some identified the positive difference recognising care experience can make and others were explicit in defining the negative consequence of care-experience stigma:

- *“I do get a LAC bursary at college so that’s positive.”*
- *“I’m a parent and it was just expected I’d fail. I felt like I was being judged throughout my pregnancy and it was a case of when my baby would be taken not if. Lots of questions asked about my current relationship by strangers (maternity sw) and I felt judged.”*
- *“Yes, in high-school. The teachers treated me differently because I was looked after. I felt they were more aggressive in the way they spoke to me and they were stricter with me.”*

3.16. Digital Connection

Young people were asked how Corporate Parents can improve how young people who leave care can have digital devices and connections:

- *“Feel that there has been significant support with these aspects”*
- *[Without devices it is...] “Difficult to keep in touch with people or to feel safe”*
- *“Difficult to apply for jobs, do college work, keep in touch with people.”*

3.17. Listened and Heard

Young people were asked what could help them share their experiences with Corporate Parents and how they thought they could be listened to and heard:

- *“My worker listens to me, but she often has to support me to get other people to listen to me such as court, college, police, prison.”*
- *“I feel I have always been listened to but not always actions done from what I have said. Some SW push what they want but not what I have said or want.”*
- *“I feel it may be appropriate to mention the LAC review form foster children fill out before the meeting. In my experience and of the other foster child living with me at the time, this form was not confidential (in our case, maybe not others) and never really felt it could be by my carers. Particularly for the other child living with me at the placement, if she put a ‘sad/unsure face’ down as a response to ‘do you feel happy in this home?’ It would have been questioned in a negative way. I personally think these forms should be done completely out with the placement and of the carers to get a valid response.”*

3.18. Listen and Learn

How do we ensure when children and young people make their contribution to champions they will be listened to, understood and be able to hold champions to account to follow up their actions?

- *“My social worker and I have worked together very well. When something is bothering me, I seek advice from my social worker who is supportive and works things out alongside me.”*
- *“Views need to be listened to about where people live.”*
- *“Sometimes things change for a while if my worker contacts someone for me but not for long. College understood I needed extra support with stuff but then they stopped helping and I have to ask again.”*

3.19. Same Opportunities

Care experienced young people have been impacted upon by COVID-19 in particular ways which reflect their, at times, social and emotional connections and networks How can our children and young people have the same life opportunities as their peers?

- *“I feel I have more opportunities because I have been so well supported.”*
- *“In some cases, I believe I’ve had even more opportunities! For example, bursaries, accommodation provided by the council, technology, consistent meetings with guidance teachers to check on my progress, Foyer counselling, check up from social worker, etc.”*

- *“I was in prison/homeless from a young age. Some my fault but most to do with lack of stability growing up in SW care so now I have no job prospects and use substances to cope.”*

3.20. Rights Approach

Policy and procedure updates will be compliant with and informed by children’s rights in realising our Corporate Parenting responsibilities. How do we embed children’s and young people’s rights approach into services?

- *“No, because of the way the Police have never treated me well, even when I was younger. It’s not uncommon for me to leave the cells with bruising even if I don’t get charged with anything.”*
- *“Generally, I think my rights have been respected, but if I’m honest I probably don’t know all my rights.”*
- *“Did not always feel connected to Aberdeen and definitely not at first...[I]...had to ask for home leave at a Hearing and it took six months...earlier would have helped.”*

3.21. **Corporate Parenting Performance and Improvement Group**

The Corporate Parenting Performance and Improvement Group has responsibility for the delivery of the Corporate Parenting Improvement Plan, collation and monitoring of data and quality assurance in relation to care experienced children and young people, delivering on identified aims set out in the LOIP and driving the implementation of The Promise across the Partnership. The Group engages with care experienced children and young people and seeks to ensure all improvement activity takes full account of their views and lived experiences.

3.22. In June 2021, the Corporate Parenting Performance and Improvement Group recruited a group member with care experience in our efforts to improve representation from the care experienced community.

3.23. Specifically, the group has oversight of the refreshed LOIP Improvement Project Stretch Aim 6; *“95% of care experienced children and young people will have the same levels of attainment in education, health and emotional wellbeing, and positive destinations as their peers by 2026”* and the following improvement projects:

- Increase the number of care experienced young people accessing a positive and sustained destination by 25% by 2022
- Increase to 43% by 2023 the proportion of children and young people who are supported to live in kinship care or are looked after at home by 2023

- Increase by 20% the number of children and young people remaining in a placement looked after at home/kinship between 16-18 years old by 2023
- Increase the number of care experienced young people by 10% receiving multi-agency throughcare/aftercare support by 2023

3.24. The number of children and young people who are looked after by Aberdeen City Council has decreased slightly from 566 in 2019/20 to 516 in 2020/21. There is a nominal positive trend in the numbers of children and young people being looked after at home versus away from home in comparison to 2019/20 data, however, multi-agency efforts on shifting the balance of care toward recognising how we can safely care for children and young people at home or in kinship arrangements is still crucial if we are to #keepthepromise and meet our own local targets of increasing the percentage of children and young people looked after at home or in kinship arrangements.

3.25. **Key challenges in 2021:**

3.26. Impact of COVID-19

The virus and public health measures to suppress it had, and continue to have, a significant impact on organisations and individuals, impacting upon the availability of corporate parents and on how participation and improvement activities can be run.

3.27. Funding Promise improvement activity

Financial support to local delivery of the Promise from the Scottish Government's Promise Partnership is currently being administered by CORRA. To access funding, specifically themed bids are required, however, there has been little advanced oversight given of the funding criteria and what future tranches of funding may cover, making it challenging to plan for and respond timeously to funding opportunities. This funding is non-recurring and is aimed at promoting and enable the development of change ideas.

3.28. Data collection and monitoring

Corporate parenting responsibilities span a large number of agencies with varied approaches to what and how data is collected. This can make it challenging to establish baseline data and monitor improvement. The development of an integrated data repository for children and family services is a key priority over the coming year. Colleagues from Data & Insights are leading on this work across the partnership.

3.29. **Key highlights and learning from 2021**

3.30. Opportunities, Participation and Engagement

In June 2021, a new Development Officer, Tracy Maxwell, from Who Cares? Scotland was appointed to support the engagement and participation of our care experienced children and young people. As a result, the number of care

experienced children and young people getting involved and attending Aberdeen Care Experienced (ACE) activities has increased. The ACE Participation Report (Appendix 3) provides further details of their activities between June-December 2021.

- 3.31. Aberdeen's first Lead Officer for Corporate Parenting was created, and Amy Evans was appointed to post, in September 2021. This post sits within the wider Improvement and Development Team in Children's Social Work and has responsibility for the strategic direction of Corporate Parenting improvement work across the partnership. The post is also closely aligned with the Champions Board in relation to the delivery of strategic aspects of their agenda.
- 3.32. Despite the continued challenges of the pandemic, the Champions Board continued to meet regularly in 2021 with 3 Champions Boards taking place across the year utilising an online platform.
- 3.33. Where possible, in-person activities bringing together our care experienced children, young people and Champions have taken place, including an Innoflate session, Halloween Disco and regular Supper Clubs, to name but a few. Since taking up the post, our Development Officer has also facilitated a Mini-Champs network which caters to our younger care experienced children.
- 3.34. Opportunity Grants were developed to replace the grant funding previously provided by Life Changes Trust. Individual grants of up to £500 for young people ages 12-25 who are either currently Looked After at Home or in Kinship Care or are a Care Leaver. The grants support the development of skills, hobbies and ambitions and for some enhance skills which could afford them wider access to job opportunities.

3.35. Improving Education Outcomes

The Youth Team has continued to see an increase in the number of care experienced young people they support accessing further and higher education options. This is considered to be indicative of the positive impact partnership activity to promote access to the Care Experienced Grant, student support with rent and accommodation costs and continued digital connectivity support, has had.

- 3.36. The [Virtual School](#) continues to support improvements in the educational progress and attainment/achievement of all children Looked After by the local authority, including those that are educated in schools in other authorities.
- 3.37. Additional resource through Scottish Attainment Challenge funding and the national increase in teacher numbers will support expansion of the Virtual School in the coming year to have more of a focus on those Looked After at home and support transitions for those care experienced children and young people who may require a bridge back into full time education in Aberdeen City.
- 3.38. An overview of the attainment of care experienced children and young people in Aberdeen City schools was shared with the Education Operational Delivery Committee in November 2021. The following key points from this report are

relevant to report on in respect of our wider corporate parenting progress and activities:

- The percentage of Looked After Young people achieving National 3 (SCQF 3) literacy and Numeracy combined has remained in line with the Virtual comparator for the 2nd year with those achieving National 4 only marginally below (4%). 100% of those Looked After Away from Home achieved a National 3 in Literacy / Numeracy combined.
- The percentage of Looked After young people leaving school with 4 or more qualifications at level 3 and 4 reflects the trend seen in the National Comparator, however, the percentages in Aberdeen City are lower. It is important to note that the small numbers of young people can lead to a large shift in percentages but this is an area for improvement and will be addressed in part by extending the reach of the Virtual School in the delivery of courses for young people.
- In the National Benchmarking data for 2019/20 33% of Looked After Young People moved on to further education with an increase in those going on to training. For the first time in 5 years the Percentage of looked after away from home entering a positive destination was at the same level as those looked after at home.
- Overall, the attendance for Looked After children in secondary has increased over the last 3 years with the trend continuing this academic session. There is also an increase in attendance for those in our Primary schools.
- There has been a significant reduction in exclusions over the last 3 years.
- The MCR Pathways programme was rolled out to 6 of the 11 academies in the city, supporting 217 young people in S1-6 to develop relationships, increase confidence and self-esteem. Current data shows that there is an increase in overall attendance and decrease in exclusions for secondary age pupils over a 3-year period and this is thought to be partially attributable to the programme. MCR-mentored young people in Aberdeen had a higher staying-on rate (100%) in 2020/21 compared to their peers (87.6%).

3.39. Improving the knowledge and skills of the workforce

The Corporate Parenting mandatory workforce training was finalised and as of September 2021, 10% of all council employees had completed the training. Data will continue to be monitored carefully and a communication and engagement plan is in place, to further raise awareness of our collective corporate parenting responsibilities in 2022.

3.40. Corporate Parenting representation on the new [Aberdeen Protects](#) website is planned for February 2022. The Corporate Parenting content on the site will seek to increase understanding and awareness of Corporate Parenting with our

workforce and the wider public, as well as provide a platform for routine and accessible reporting on improvement activity.

3.41. Keeping the Promise

As outlined in the *#KeepingThePromise – Plan 21-24* report to Committee in December 2021, a self-evaluation of our current improvement activity against the recommendations set out in Plan 21-24 has set the scene for establishing a baseline and focus on local delivery of The Promise across the partnership. This work will continue to be implemented and monitored by the Corporate Parenting Performance and Improvement Group and it is anticipated that in 2022 a Single Point of Contact from the Scottish Government's Promise Team will be appointed to support our reporting of Promise improvement activity and learning from other areas in Scotland.

3.42. The Write Right About Me (WRAM) Records Improvement Project is an integral piece of improvement work which aims to ensure that all records are written in a way that respects and upholds the rights of those we support, reducing stigma and the likelihood of harm that may come from the way a record is written. Care experienced young people involved in WRAM tell us that their records should reflect their voice and to achieve this they need to be more involved in the creation of their records. Similar messages have also come out of our local findings from the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry Team, where it is evident that the way records have been written historically has contributed to distress. This improvement project is reflective of national and international work on social care records and aligns with the recommendations from the Independent Care Review.

3.43. Trauma and Recovery

All of our local residential staff continue to be trained in trauma-recovery principles and ensuring our workforce is trauma-informed and where necessary, trauma-skilled, is a priority of our Corporate Parenting Plan in 2022.

3.44. Young people living in alternatives to family care have continued to be encouraged to stay put in care placements on a Continuing Care basis.

3.45. Police Scotland are currently undertaking 'Trauma Informed' sessions with key Officers alongside staff from Gilbert Road Children's Home. Once trained these Officers will become Link Officers with our local children's homes to build positive relationships between Police and children and young people. The partnership approach between Police Scotland and local residential Children's Homes continues to contribute to a reduction in the criminalisation of our care experienced children and young people as supported by the data gathered by Police Scotland Youth Justice Management Unit, Comparative Report on Juvenile Offenders 2020/21, which continues to show a reduction in crime files recorded against local children's homes reducing from 122 in 2014/15 to 2 in 2020/21.

3.46. The Throughcare Housing Protocol recognises the statutory duties toward care experienced young people and the requirement to support access to housing

resource, reducing the risk of homelessness and associated vulnerabilities which can be of lifelong duration.

3.47. In April 2021, a Housing Support Officer became co-located with the Youth Team. This post supports our care experienced young people to navigate Housing systems from a relational approach and aims to make sure that transitions from care into their first tenancy are as coordinated and transparent as possible. For 2022, the focus will be on developing more resources to support young people and staff manage these transitions and systems.

3.48. Throughout 2021, we continued to see a positive trend in care experienced young people accessing and sustaining tenancies and of those that did terminate their tenancy within 365 days of securing a property, all went on to secure other forms of accommodation.

3.49. In 2021, Aberdeen City Council's Repairs and Maintenance Team responded to a request of our care experienced young people and produced video tutorials focusing on basic property-maintenance tasks for first-time tenancy holders.

3.50. Voice and Rights

The MOMO app supports our children and young people to have a voice and for their views to be recorded accurately. It is the only digital tool that comprehensively supports Article 12 of the UNCRC. In 2021 we saw an increase to 221 Young Person Accounts and 417 Worker Accounts. The main themes young people used the app for in 2021 were when they wished to discuss their worker's visits, when they wanted to prepare for meetings/conferences and when they had good news and wished to share it.

3.51. The Aberdeen Young Person's Rights Service remains a key supporter of those with care experience in the promoting and upholding of their rights, participation and in their relationships with corporate parents and the Champions Board. The Rights Service, through its expanded remit, provides advocacy, guidance and support to Aberdeen's children, young people and young adults aged 0-26, who are care experienced or have been involved in child protection processes.

3.52. The Service continues to be well utilised, with an increase of around 40% in referrals/re-referrals in 2020/21 from the previous year. This growth includes its intended percentage increase, in line with Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) 'Balance of Care' priorities, to offer support more proactively to children and young people who are looked after at home or in kinship care and to those young adults living in their own/supported tenancy.

3.53. Environments for linking in and meeting with children, young people and young adults continue to be affected by Covid19, but the Service has developed creative ways to build relationships. In 2020/21, the Service became more adept at using social media and digital technology but has not lost sight of the importance of face-to-face contact.

3.54. The Service is involved in a range of single and multi-agency improvement charters and associated activity, with focus on rights and participation.

3.55. Safeguarding rights and wellbeing are not an exclusive obligation of the Service; rather this requires a whole workforce approach. Many children, young people and young adults will not need or wish to access the Service and those professionals with whom they have relationships are best placed to advocate for and support them. This is something that the Service actively promotes through its digital information, its quarterly participation and rights-related bulletin, and through activity such as its established monthly virtual rights and participation awareness raising drop-in sessions. These ‘drop ins’ meet, in part, the objective, noted in the Corporate Parenting Plan, about the Service providing workforce skill development sessions each year of the plan. Specific sessions have not progressed in 2021 but it is intended to look at how these can be offered in 2022.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1. The Corporate Parenting duties included in Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 are designed to ensure that the attention and resources of various organisations are explicitly focussed on the task of safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of looked after children and young people, and care leavers. This part extends the duties of corporate parents and the reporting responsibilities of local authorities.

5.2. Aberdeen City Council has a duty to report to Scottish Government Ministers every three years on how it is meeting its corporate parenting responsibilities as detailed in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The second submission to the Scottish Government was provided in March 2021.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

| Category | Risk | Low (L) Medium (M) High (H) | Mitigation |
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| Strategic Risk | That the multi-agency workforce training delivery plan is insufficiently supported | M | There is a robust delivery plan and support at a senior level |
| Compliance | The Council has responsibility to comply with its statutory corporate parenting responsibilities | L | The Corporate Parenting Performance and Improvement Group has responsibility for the delivery of the Corporate Parenting Improvement Plan and will continue to provide an annual report on Corporate Parenting to ensure the |

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| | | | Council complies with the law |
| Operational | Care experienced children and young people are a vulnerable cohort whose needs require to be recognised and met. Competing resource demands may have an impact | L | These are duties which have been incorporated across existing structures and will be consolidated in practice |
| Financial | N/A | | |
| Reputational | A failure of Aberdeen City Council to comply and meet its Corporate Parenting responsibilities would reflect negatively on the Council | L | There is a strong legacy of positive practice and sharing of success in this area |
| Environment / Climate | N/A | | |

7. OUTCOMES

| <u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u> | |
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| Impact of Report | |
| Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement | The proposals in this report have no impact on the Council Delivery Plan. |
| Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan | |
| Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes | <p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 6 – 95% of care experienced children and young people will have the same levels of attainment in education, health and emotional wellbeing, and positive destinations as their peers by 2026.</p> <p>The report seeks to provide an annual update on Corporate Parenting progress and activities, including the following improvement projects within the LOIP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of care experienced young people accessing a positive and sustained destination by 25% by 2022 • Increase to 43% by 2023 the proportion of children and young people who are supported to live in kinship care or are looked after at home by 2023 • Increase by 20% the number of children and young people remaining in a placement looked after at home/kinship between 16-18 years old by 2023 • Increase the number of care experienced young people by 10% receiving multi-agency throughcare/aftercare support by 2023 |
| UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes | <p>This report takes into account the local authority's legal obligations in respect of the legislation and policy outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 • UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill 2021 • The Promise • Plan 21-24 • GIRFEC <p>Delivery of recommendations of The Promise/Plan 21-24 will require new legislation to be brought forward by the Scottish Government. Our local partnership is well placed to respond to these changes.</p> |

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

| Assessment | Outcome |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Impact Assessment | Not required |
| Data Protection Impact Assessment | Not required |

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

https://www.carereview.scot/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/The-Promise_v7.pdf

<https://thepromise.scot/plan-21-24-pdf-standard.pdf>

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/statutory-guidance-part-9-corporate-parenting-children-young-people-scotland/documents/>

10. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Corporate Parenting Plan 2021-2023

Appendix 2 Champions Board Plan 2021-2023

Appendix 3 Aberdeen Care Experienced Participation Report June-December 2021

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

| | |
|----------------------|--|
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APPENDIX 1

GETTING IT RIGHT FOR ABERDEEN'S CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Aberdeen City **#KeepThePromise** Corporate Parenting Plan
2021-2023



The best Corporate Parents we can be

The impact of Covid-19 on the wellbeing and welfare of our care experienced children and young people has served to emphasise the vital role that we have as corporate parents, which extends beyond our quarterly participation at Champions Boards. We have an active group of care experienced young people (ACE) in Aberdeen and they have ensured regular meetings of Champions have taken place despite challenges. They have supported us as champions to fully embrace digital technology as the main means of sharing connection and taking the time to keep in touch. The list below represents the least we can and will do, to support our care experienced children and young people, and over the life of this plan we will have their voice at the centre of our actions.

- *Considering their wellbeing, and being alert to anything which might affect this;*
- *Assessing their need for services and support;*
- *Promoting their interests;*
- *Making sure their voices and opinions are heard;*
- *Providing opportunities for them to promote their wellbeing, and taking action to help them access those opportunities;*
- *Providing advice and assistance when they're needed;*
- *Making sure services are easy to access for them.*

Angela Scott
Chief Executive Officer



Corporate Parenting: Our Vision

Aberdeen City Integrated Children’s Services Plan (ICSP) has a clear vision, role and partner remit for the development and improvement of planning for children’s services. Within our Local Outcome Improvement Plan (2019-2026) we have set the following objectives for Corporate Parenting:

“All 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.”

To achieve this, Corporate Parents will evidence improvement by progressing the following areas in our refreshed plan for 2021-2023:

How will we monitor our progress?

The Corporate Parenting Plan activities for 2021-2023 will be reviewed quarterly by the multi-agency Corporate Parenting Performance and Improvement group which has a specific governance, oversight, and monitoring role in relation to this plan. It is planned to seek representation from the care experienced community in terms of group membership. This will be in place by May 2021.

| <i>What are our aims?</i> | <i>What will we do?</i> |
|---|---|
| Improve education outcomes for care experienced children and young people. | Increase number of corporate parent mentors to support engagement with MCR Pathways. This has been commissioned across six secondary schools. This approach will support us in the implementation of the Promise with one of the 5 key foundations stating: ‘ <i>The children that Scotland cares for must be actively supported to develop relationships with people in the workforce and wider community, who in turn must be supported to listen and be compassionate in their decision-making and care.</i> ’ |
| Improve the knowledge and skills of the workforce in relation to their Corporate Parenting duties and responsibilities and by doing so highlight the pervasive impact of care experience on opportunities and life chances. | Promote the uptake of mandatory online Corporate Parent training. Develop with partners, targeted approaches to this training, dependent on status and role, which is supported by a series of webinars. |
| Feature and promote the recommendations of The Independent Care Review across key systems, processes, and partnership practice. | Promote and support attainment of #KeepThePromise |

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| <p>To work in ways which recognise the life- long impact of trauma, placing recovery principles at the forefront of Corporate Parenting planning.</p> | <p>Support care experienced young people in accessing supports which enable and offer them physical and emotional wellbeing benefits. Support work force awareness and partner recognition that those with care experience can be overrepresented in criminal justice systems and seek to reverse this trend. 'Write Right About Me' will be supported as a multi themed approach to improving how we narrate the experiences of those who are care experienced in the reduction of stigma.</p> |
| <p>Continue to develop participation and engagement opportunities with and for our children and young people.</p> | <p>Expand digital connection opportunities for care experienced young people in line with peers, by developing a local approach and access scheme as well as e.g. building on Phase Two of Connecting Scotland which has provided 110 devices, (Chromebooks; iPads and MiFi connectivity) to care leavers. Enabling them to stay connected to key relationships and wider social and employment inclusion. Continue our partnership with Who Cares? Scotland in the delivery of participatory opportunities which seek to build the capacity of care experienced young people to share their views.</p> |
| <p>Seek creative ways to listen to and capture children and young people's voices and views. Build on the strong foundations we have developed to expand the impact of the Champions Board and the role of Corporate Parents in Aberdeen.</p> | <p>Seek to use earlier and broaden the application of the Mind of My Own App to extend the reach to those with care experience who are part of protection processes. Seek to celebrate Care Day and Care experienced week with twice per year workshop and themed events.</p> |

Who is the Plan for?

This Plan is both our commitment to children and young people who are care experienced and for our partners in Aberdeen City who, along with ourselves, have corporate parenting responsibilities. Collaboration and participation both with care experienced young people and partners are at the core of our actions if our vision for Corporate Parenting is to be realised.

There are 24 organisations who can be identified in the [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014 Section 56](#) as having "Corporate Parent" status. In Aberdeen City, our representative members include:

Aberdeen City Council, NHS Grampian, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, North East Scotland College (NESCOL), Robert Gordon University and University of Aberdeen, Sport Aberdeen, Children’s Hearings Scotland, the Scottish Children’s Reporters Administration (SCRA) and third sector partners, represented by Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations (ACVO).



Why do we have a Plan?

The [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#) came into force on 1 April 2015. The duties in [Part 9](#) of the Act legally embed the concept of corporate parenting and collectively are '*designed to ensure that the attention and resources of various publicly funded organisations are explicitly focused on the task of safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers*' ([CEL CIS, Corporate Parenting Implementation Notes, 2016](#)).

The concept of Corporate Parenting is not new. These duties build upon previous commitments such '[These Are Our Bairns: A Guide for Community Planning Partnerships on Being a Good Corporate Parent](#)' (Scottish Government, 2008).

In looking at what a Corporate Parent is, the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland states that '*in simple terms, a corporate parent is intended to carry out many of the roles a loving parent should. While they may not be able to provide everything a parent can, but they should still be able to provide the children and young people they're responsible for with the best possible support and care*'.



Corporate Parenting Duties

The Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland sets out that *'corporate parent responsibilities are intended to encourage people and organizations to do as much as they can towards improving the lives of care experienced and looked after children, so that they feel in control of their lives, and are able to overcome the barriers they face'*.

Our Refreshed Plan, in summary

This is the refreshed Corporate Parenting Plan for 2021-2023, with our Champions Board Action Plan running alongside. The period since March 2020 has been challenging for care experienced young people and their families and as Corporate Parents, we have been very mindful of the impact of isolation and disconnection experienced by many of them. Positively, the support networks offering support to care experienced young people unified quickly in introducing digital ways of keeping in touch. With care leavers **Youth Team** increasing the use of the team Facebook page by over 400% and in the distribution of over 250



resource provisions to care experienced young people through welfare packages and direct contact. We can also report on our success in accessing digital devices in phase two of Connecting Scotland and in our commitment to ongoing improvement of digital access for care experienced young people in Aberdeen City, recently supported as part of our future budget commitments in 2021. **We will develop an access scheme for the promotion of digital inclusion for care leavers in 2021.**

The Virtual School ensured **all** Looked After Children in Aberdeen City had access to digital technology which supported them to continue with their learning throughout lockdown restrictions, including video links with key members of staff to support connection. **MCR Pathways** had commenced in 2 city academies prior to lockdown, digital devices and connectivity in place ensured that mentor support could be continued virtually. This support is now in **6 academies across Aberdeen City**. All Looked After Children who are educated outside of Aberdeen City were also able to access digital technology through the Virtual School.

From June 2020, our **Champions Board** has moved to a digital forum. Feedback from Aberdeen Care Experience (ACE) advisors has been positive. Digital connection can be focused on maintaining contact with young people, many of whom are placed at some distance from their local areas. Our refreshed plan **shares positive** examples of our **progress** as Corporate Parents, we will expand and replicate these in 2021-2023. This includes focusing on how Corporate Parents will support the local **#KeepThePromise** commitment.



How good are we as Corporate Parents?

What have Care experienced young people told us about Corporate Parenting?

Participation and Champions Board

"I really feel like we are making progress now, big decisions and working with Corporate Parents better says one of the young people about our Champion care experienced young people and continues to reflect the themes we intend to advance in this planning period". (ACE advisor)



Mind Of My Own

Since March 2019 we have received 885 statements from young people either independently or supported by their worker.

199 young people have their own accounts which they can use in their own time. The three most popular scenarios are:

- My Worker is Visiting
- Share My Good News
- Prepare for a meeting

The box below captures activities the participation officer has co-produced with care experienced young people and continues to reflect the themes we intend to develop.

Participation Activities 2021-2023

| Our core activities and outcomes | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Activity | Outcome |
| 1 | Youth engagement and participation | Care experienced young people will have opportunities to share their views across a range of media. |
| 2 | Young people development | There will be examples of young people making contributions to Aberdeen City Champions Board. |
| 3 | Partnership working | Core partners will engage in Champions Board and each will demonstrate and impact. |
| 4 | Information, awareness-raising, and promotion | Co-produce events which highlight corporate parenting role. |
| 5 | Monitoring and evaluation | Gather, hold evaluate information concerning core activities impact on young people and investment in exit planning strategies. |

Supporting Care Experience Participation

The Aberdeen Care Experienced Group (ACE) have been supported to grow and build their capacity and voice, there have been great examples of collaboration,

“It’s going well but we will always need support from (the Development Officer) to make sure we get our voice heard and don’t become a ‘decoration”.

This was what one young person said in reference to her voice and the use of the Participation ladder at a Champions board meeting. The reference to ‘*decoration*’ refers to the stage on the ladder (see previous page) and the risk she feels will always exist of young people “*being seen and not heard*”.

How Corporate Parents have actively engaged and listened to young people’s voice

| |
|---|
| Monthly Cooking together with Champs as part of the activity calendar |
| Phone bank which has redistributed redundant devices from ACC to care experienced young people |
| Celebrating Success awards held annually to celebrate achievements with and for young people |
| ACE and Saltire Awards presented to group members annually in light of their volunteering hours in support of ACE |
| Champs Camp as part of Life Changes Trust |
| Promoting uptake of the Council Tax exemption for care leavers |
| Introducing a rent support scheme for students who are ACC tenants |
| Being successful in our Connecting Scotland bid for digital devices and connection for over 100 young care leavers |
| Renewing our partnership with Who Cares? Scotland to work together to support opportunities for lived experience to be better represented across systems and services which impact on them |
| Multi-agency Corporate Parent Training |
| Write Right about Me and the prominence of voice |

Key Successes and Going Forward

Education

The Virtual School has supported our looked after young people, targets for 2021-2023

- The program with partners **Sport Aberdeen** is being further developed to support key transitions and build relationships. This forms part of the wider achievement program which is being expanded as a means by which the local authority can seek to fulfil Corporate Parent duties.
- In order to support learning and continued engagement throughout lockdown, a number of Looked After children identified by social work and education accessed the Hub provision.

- Young people **looked after at home** had priority placements in hub provision, **70%** of those who attended were Looked After at home and overall, there was a **>90% attendance rate**.
- MCR Pathways has been commissioned to support Looked After Children in secondary with a key measure being attendance. There will be a focus on those who are Looked After at home who have the lowest attendance rates and also the key transition stages where attendance falls.
- Overall numbers of **exclusion incidents have continued to fall since 2019**, the projections for 2021-23 suggest that this trend will continue.
- The local authority **Exclusion Policy** and guidance has been refreshed reflecting recommendations within **The Promise**.
- The Virtual School Education Support Officer will continue to co-work alongside schools and partner agencies including No one left behind and SDS to **ensure planning for all senior pupils** who are Looked After Children is robust.
- The new program to support planning for positive destinations was developed in partnership with the Virtual School to ensure cognisance was taken of the specific needs of Care Experienced Young People and Corporate Parent duties were delivered on, this will be further developed and linked to locally targeted employability options for care leavers

Balance of Care

- Data from 2016-2020, at chart 1 below suggests that numbers of Looked After Children in Aberdeen City remains relatively stable ranging from 590 to 543. As Corporate Parents are responsible for alternative family care planning, we will take effect to the **foundations** identified by the Independent Care review which will influence how we offer support:
- **Voice:** Children must be listened to and meaningfully and appropriately involved in decision-making about their care, with all those involved properly listening and responding to what children want and need. There must be a compassionate, caring, decision-making culture focussed on children and those they trust.
- **Family:** Where children are safe in their families and feel loved they must stay – and families must be given support together to nurture that love and overcome the difficulties which get in the way.
- **Care:** Where living with their family is not possible, children must stay with their brothers and sisters where safe to do so and belong to a loving home, staying there for as long as needed
- The goal for 2021-23 is to **increase by 3%** the number of children and young people who can be looked after at home and looked after within Kinship networks, shifting our use of resource where from where we are (majority of Aberdeen looked after young people are placed in foster care (Q3 of 2020)) 46.7% of our total number of looked after children are accommodated in foster care.

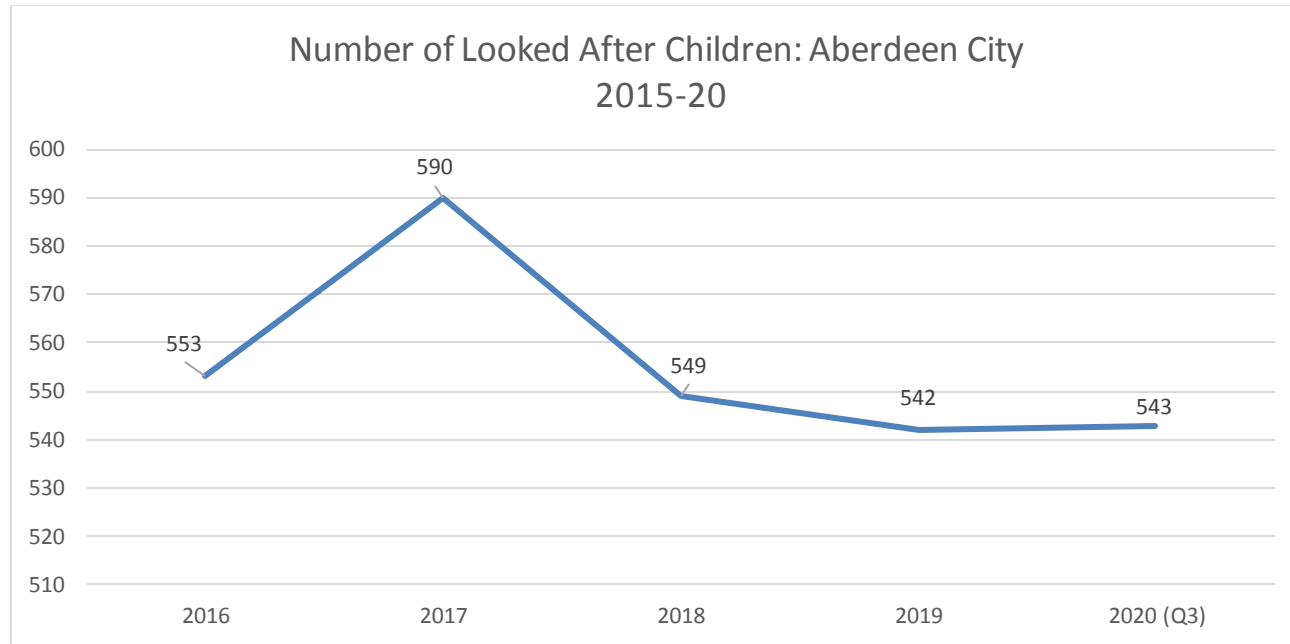


Chart 1.

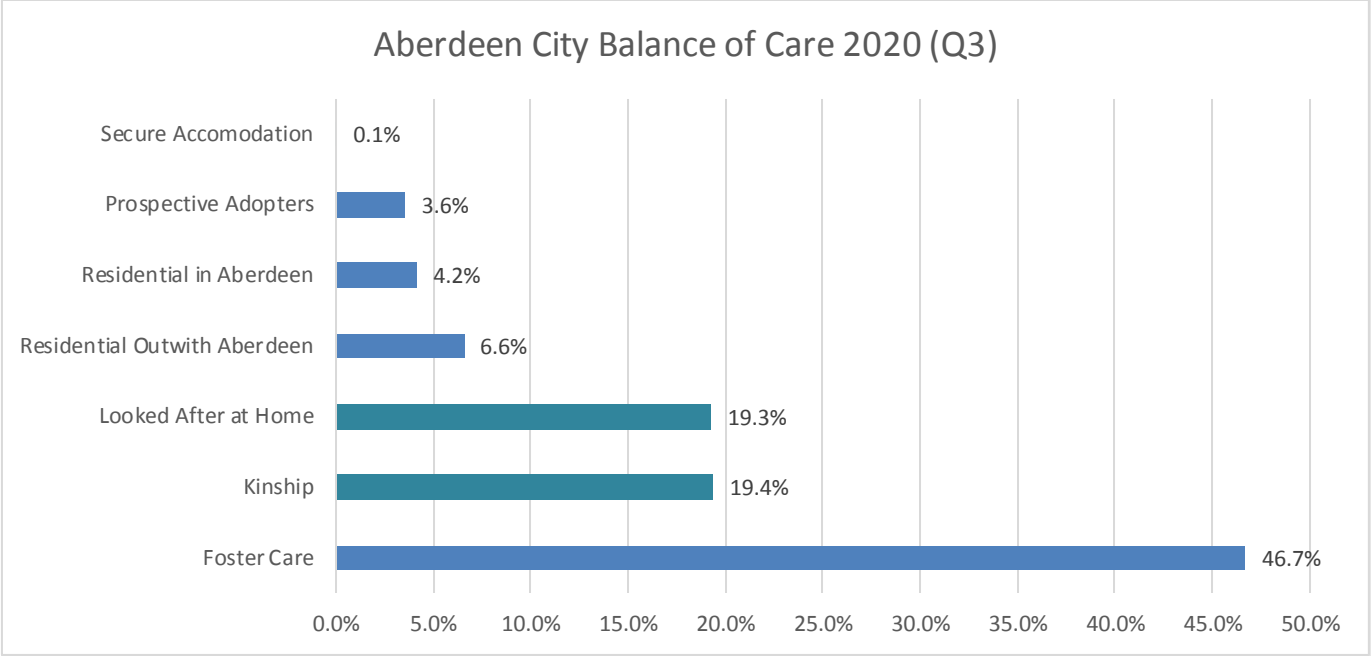


Chart 2

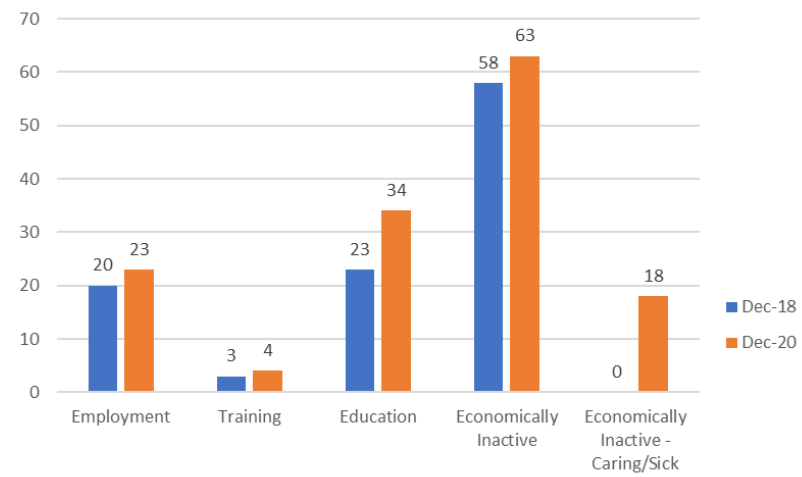
The chart above provides the % of looked after young people based on placement type, shift in the balance of care is a local priority within our Local Outcome Improvement Plan (2019-2026)

Our care leavers

Employability and Education:

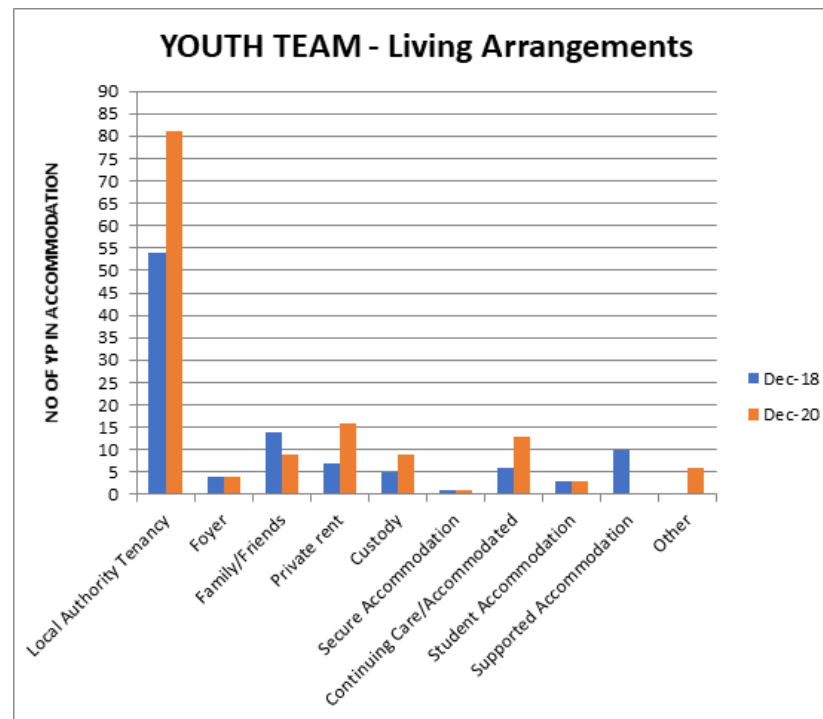
- Improved partnership working is supporting improvements in care leavers accessing **No One Left Behind** and Skills Development Scotland, **16 care experienced young people were** referred in 20/21.
- Six care experienced young people are engaging with providers Working Rite in 20/21, there will be 12 spaces available for care experienced young people with this provider.
- The process of guaranteed interviews for ACC roles, for care experienced young people has been introduced and a system where **apprenticeship opportunities** are shared and highlighted with Youth Team continues to be developed.
- Numbers of care leavers engaging with the Youth Team who are considered economically inactive has **reduced** from 56% in 2018 to 44% in 2021.
- There has been a **47% increase** in those supported in further education and taken up college or university places from 2018-2020.
- The introduction in 2020 of the supported rent scheme for care experienced young people who are students and ACC tenants is being accessed by approx. 14 young people across further and higher education options, with anticipated increases of around 20% in each year until 2023.

YOUTH TEAM Employability, Education & Training



Care Leavers Living Arrangements

- The **Throughcare Housing Protocol** recognises the statutory duties toward care experienced young people and the requirement to support access to housing resource, reducing the risk of homelessness and associated vulnerabilities which can be of lifelong duration.
- The post of **Housing Support Officer** will be co-located in the Youth Team from **April 2021** and seek to offer earlier and preventative supports, the success of the role will be evaluated in **2023**.
- Since 2018/19, increasing numbers of young people have been able to move on to positive sustainable living destinations when they have left care, with increasing numbers **sustaining a permanent tenancy** and decreased use of temporary accommodation arrangements.
- The comparative information below also indicates the growing numbers of looked after young people remaining in placement on a Continuing Care basis, thus promoting their opportunities for successful transition.



Digital Connection

- From March 2020 to date there has been an over 400% increase in followers on the **Youth Team Facebook** page, this will be further developed in light of new and emerging technology during the period of this plan.
- Online activities which young people have attended including **cooking, movie nights and crafts** will continue, supporting the young people to continue to feel connected to others and reduce periods of isolation.
- In February 2021 **Connecting Scotland provided 100 of our care leavers with either an iPad, Chromebook or 2-year MiFi device.**
- **Digital connection** for care leavers scheme will be developed in 2021.

Aftercare support and keeping connected

- There has been an increase of 52% of numbers of young people receiving Aftercare Support from the Youth Team, increasing from approx. 70 in 2018 to **152** young people receiving **Aftercare Support**.
- Duration of contact and **maintenance of relationships** between care experienced young people and the workforce has also positively increased.
- This is now a planned and structured local residential **aftercare** programme delivered as part of core local residential children's home support.
- The local residential aftercare provision supports **20 young people** in the community with the same relationships utilised in their aftercare supports based in the children's home they lived in.
- 180 support hours per month has been allocated across local children's homes to support their sustainment of moving on options delivered to young people by those with whom they have **existing trusting relationships**.



The **Aberdeen Young Person's Rights Service**, previously known as the Children's Rights Service, actively promotes a rights-respecting and trauma-informed stance in the delivery of children's social work with colleagues and partners. Voice and participation are core to the ethos of the Service. A **functional review** of the Rights Service was undertaken during 2019. The review was underpinned by a clear set of objectives, including ensuring 'best fit' with wider strategic priorities and alignment with the UNCRC and its incorporation into domestic law. The service is underpinned by **'three P's of Children's Rights'**:

- **P**articipation – to have your say and be listened to.
- **P**rotection – to be safe.
- **P**rovision – to be well looked after.

Another **'P'** - in the context of (Corporate) Parenting- represents the cultural backbone of the Service.

Young People's Rights Service - Participation in practice:

- **Expanded** its care experienced remit to include children and young people who are or have been involved in child protection processes which may lead or have led to Child Protection Registration. This was in response to review feedback and to findings within the Aberdeen City joint inspection on services for children and young people in need of care and protection (2019) to **seek to increase** these referred by 10% from 2021-2023.
- Consulted with young people to 'vote' on the **new Service name** to better reflect the 0-26 age range and the characteristics, circumstances and needs of those it should be accessible to.
- Co-produced a new [Service Leaflet](#) showing that the Service is available to a large number of children, young people and young adults in need of care and protection.
- Seek to support greater numbers of **care experienced young people in conflict with the law** during the period of this plan.
- The Service has contributed to a range of single and multi-agency training/development activity related to rights and participation e.g. multi-agency **corporate parenting training**, training for newly qualified social workers, the provision of regular 'bulletins' focusing on rights and participation related issues and 'drop-in' information sessions for workers and carers. **Offer 4 work force skills development** sessions each year of this plan.
- This runs alongside commitment to **supporting participation** through, e.g., the Champions Board and Mind of My Own. The Service is also working on developing a more human approach to data in keeping with key messages reflected within **#KeepThePromise**.
- The impact and challenges presented by Covid-19 has essentially affirmed the functional review findings and sharpened focus moving forward. This is well represented by this [Visual](#), pulled together during the summer of 2020, highlighted what our young people told the Service, what the Service did and how this is informing planning for the future.

Summary

Our Corporate Parenting Plan for 2021-2023 will be developed from a position of strength, building on our capacities for engagement and participation, we will do so by continuing the investment in our partnership with Who Cares? Scotland in seeking to expand opportunities for collaboration and co-production in our role as Corporate Parents. We will do this while being mindful that in their evidence to the Independent Care Review, many of those with lived experience shared their experiences of being parented in the care system which was without the investment and love they required. The recommendations of **The Promise** seek to activate cultural, systems and service shifts to create care experiences which provide more opportunities for compassion and recovery to be voiced. This is at the heart of our role as Corporate Parents. To be effective Corporate Parents we must seek opportunities to make these changes and to shift away from a term which fails to properly describe relational commitment. ('corporate parent' reported in ICR as a term that feels demeaning and an example of cold, process driven relationships)


We must ensure in its delivery our Corporate Parenting practices reflect compassion and love in how children and young people experience the care which we provide for them.

APPENDIX 2



Champions Board
#KeepThePromise Plan 2021-23

| No. | Corporate Parenting Objectives |
|-----|--|
| 1. | Providing safe, secure, stable, and nurturing homes for looked after children and care leavers. |
| 2. | Enabling looked after children and care leavers to develop or maintain positive relationships with their family, friends, professionals, and other trusted adults. |
| 3. | Upholding and promoting children's rights. |
| 4. | Securing positive educational outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. |
| 5. | Ensuring 'care' is an experience in which children are valued as individuals, and where support addresses their strengths as well as their needs. |
| 6. | Ensuring physical or mental health concerns are identified early and addressed quickly. |
| 7. | Increasing the number of care leavers in education, training, and employment. |
| 8. | Reducing the number of looked after children and care leavers who enter the youth and criminal justice systems. |

| No. |  The Promise Foundations |
|-----|--|
| 1. | Voice - Children must be listened to and meaningfully and appropriately involved in decision-making about their care, with all those involved properly listening and responding to what children want and need. There must be a compassionate, caring, decision-making culture focussed on children and those they trust. |
| 2. | Family - Where children are safe in their families and feel loved they must stay – and families must be given support together to nurture that love and overcome the difficulties which get in the way. |
| 3. | Care - Where living with their family is not possible, children must stay with their brothers and sisters where safe to do so and belong to a loving home, staying there for as long as needed. |
| 4. | People - The children that Scotland cares for must be actively supported to develop relationships with people in the workforce and wider community, who in turn must be supported to listen and be compassionate in their decision-making and care. |
| 5. | Scaffolding - Children, families and the workforce must be supported by a system that is there when it is needed. The scaffolding of help, support and accountability must be ready and responsive when it is required. |

OUR CHAMPIONS BOARD:

VISION:

Our care experienced children and young people have a right to participate in decision-making about their own lives and have their voices heard.

Participation = consulting together, acting together, deciding together, learning better together.
Trust and positive relationships between children/young people and adults are key to effective participation.

APPROACH:

- Build a culture which demands and values participation, using **co-production**.
- Strengthen practice by improving ways of engaging children and young people to support their participation individually and as a group.
 - Develop structures to make sure that planning and service delivery takes account of children and young people's views
- Review these structures to evaluate the impact of children and young people's participation on decision-making and outcomes.

STANDARDS:

- Our children and young people are listened to and free to express their views on all matters that affect them.
 - These views directly influence decision-making at all levels.
- **Our children and young people are diverse and are given equal opportunities to be involved in participation activities.**
 - We make sure adults are trained to effectively listen to and support them using a range of different participation methods.
- Our children and young people are safeguarded within all participation activities and experience participation as positive and empowering.

Participation approaches will reflect a range of capacity building opportunities alongside opportunities to play, have fun and feel connected.

OUTCOMES

Participation = improved individual outcomes for children and young people alongside improved services, now and into the future.

Champions Board - Delivery Plan 2021-2023

Champions Board Plan and Commitment

| Outcome | Actions | Timescale |
|--|--|--|
| <p><u>As Champions we will act:</u></p> <p><u>LISTEN TO AND LEARN FROM THE VOICE AND EXPERIENCE OF OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE</u></p> <p>When children and young people make their contribution to champions they will be listened to, understood and be able to hold champions to account for their follow up actions.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The MOMO App (https://mindofmyown.org.uk/) has been effective in gaining the views of our children and young people. This is one example of how we are developing our creative connections. <p><i>Champions will have a quarterly report on the themes raised by young people who are using Mind of My Own App. The use of this App will be targeted to those young people looked after at home, kinship, and those for who we have child protection concerns.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. We provide a model of engagement which young people agree meets their needs for a forum. Learning from COVID 19 has demonstrated the positive options afforded by digital technology. We will be mindful that not all care experienced young people can access devices or connections. <p><i>The Champions Board will be operating as a digital platform and will seek to secure reliable connectivity and devices for care experienced young people.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Digital platforms will be fully used to keep in touch and better progress actions. It is hoped that there will be capacity for one physical Champion Board session in support of a larger co-production session. | <p><i>April 2021-April 2022</i></p> <p><i>April 2021-April 2022</i></p> <p><i>By June 2021</i></p> |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| | <p><i>Direct connection sought for care experienced young people with Champions Board supporters and allies.</i></p> <p>4. In partnership with Who Cares? Scotland we will seek to recruit a Participation Officer who will take forward and co-produce Champions Board engagement and activities which can be accessed by Aberdeen care experienced young people.</p> <p><i>Activities and planning engagement actions will take account of the range of placement options from Aberdeen live in. Reaching out to such a dispersed group and capturing their voice will be a priority. Audit activity will be undertaken by WCS post holder to establish the baseline for approaches.</i></p> <p>5. Promotion and awareness raising around Corporate Parenting duties is fundamental to the role of Champions Board members. Each member should represent their own organisation's training plan around Corporate Parenting and able to report back on levels of uptake and impact.</p> <p><i>The Champions Board planning group which is supported by care experienced young people will request twice yearly information from Champions on their plans for the above, and in the adoption of the multi-agency Corporate Parenting training launched in Oct 2020. The rate of change toward an equitable position between those who are care experienced and peers remains high. Rates of prosecution and involvement in criminal justice systems are high.</i></p> | <p><i>April 2021-Dec 2021</i></p> <p><i>April 2021</i></p> <p><i>April 2021-Sept 2021</i></p> |
|--|---|---|

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| <p><u>As Champions it is our aim to seek and promote opportunities which bridge the gap:</u></p> <p><u>OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE THE SAME LIFE OPPORTUNITIES AS THEIR PEERS</u></p> <p>Care Exp young people have been impacted on by COVID 19 in particular ways which reflect their, at times, social and emotional connections, and networks (any ask of CB around this?)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Champions will contribute their information to a baseline dataset which allows comparisons to be made regarding the outcomes for care experienced children and young people with their peers. <p><i>Each champion will be accountable for how their service, area or ward promotes our children and young peoples' access to and understanding of 'what's out there'.</i></p> <p><i>The Corporate Parenting performance and Improvement Group will share information provided by Champions to create a data set which monitors this performance.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. We will establish a range of participatory and engagement opportunities for our children and young people of all ages and stages. <p><i>Regardless of age or stage there will be opportunities for all care experienced young people to have their views shared and expressed. MOMO and digital connection is available to all care experienced young people and care leavers.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Accommodation and housing resources which support young people to access good quality accommodation and sustain relationships will be promoted. <p><i>The Care Leavers Housing Procedure will be adopted and supported in its delivery by co located Housing role within Care Leavers service.</i></p> | <p><i>April 2021-April 2023</i></p> <p><i>May 2021-April 2023</i></p> |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p><u>As Champions our behaviours and decision seek to:</u></p> <p><u>EMBED A CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PERSON RIGHTS APPROACH INTO SERVICES</u></p> <p>Policy and procedures update will be compliant with and informed by children's rights in realising our Corporate Parenting responsibilities.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Policy and Procedures being updated will reflect and be influenced by both international and national convention. <p><i>Champions Board members will be Promise Keepers acting with the intention of supporting the Transformational Change activities being developed by the local Promise Implementation Plan.</i></p> <p><i>The principles and support intentions of the Children (Scotland) Act 2020 will be carried out with children's views foremost in mind.</i></p> <p><i>Each Champion will support the adoption of the Incorporation of the UNCRC into practice within their own areas of responsibility.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Support the three P's, <i>Participation, Protection and Provision</i> of Children's Rights in our engagement opportunities with children and young people. <p><i>Aberdeen Young Person's Rights Service will facilitate awareness raising session around key themes of children's rights.</i></p> <p><i>We will join with colleagues to create a unified approach to children and young peoples' participation in Aberdeen which is mindful of their needs in their communities of origin.</i></p> | <p><i>June 2021-April 2023</i></p> <p><i>April 2021-April 2022</i></p> |
|---|---|--|

APPENDIX 3



Aberdeen Care Experienced (ACE)

Annual Report: June 2021 to December 2021

In Brief

The latter part of 2021 continued to present some challenges and difficulties for Aberdeen's Care Experienced Young People (CEYP). Initially, as Covid 19 restrictions began to lift and various services and organisations across the city begin to offer face-to-face sessions and activities. While this was welcomed by many of the young people, it also brought with it, a strong sense of uncertainty and heightened feelings of anxiety for many others. Managing the 'footfall' in Westburn Resource Centre also presented some challenges in that, we had to remain mindful of the amount of young people we could safely have in the building at any given time. Therefore, we endeavoured to continue offering as many participation opportunities as we could, using both digital and in person approaches.

However, and despite meeting these challenges we continued to achieve some amazing things. We've held a focus on the needs of the young people and utilised the creative and highly responsive approaches already in place to respond to the emerging crises which have continually impacted on them since March 2020. As a result, we have been able to maintain and steady level participation and influencing opportunities among the ACE Advisors and other Care Experienced young people in Aberdeen.

ACE Update

| Our Core Activities and Outcomes | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| | Activity | Outcome |
| 1 | Youth engagement and participation | Care experienced young people will have opportunities to share their views across a range of media. |
| 2 | Young people development | There will be examples of young people making contributions to Aberdeen City Champions Board. |
| 3 | Partnership working | Core partners will engage in Champions Board and each will demonstrate and impact. |
| 4 | Information, awareness-raising, and promotion | Co-produce events which highlight corporate parenting role. |
| 5 | Monitoring and evaluation | Gather, hold evaluate information concerning core activities impact on young people and investment in exit planning strategies. |

Our Life Changes Trust (LCT) funding came to an end in March, but Aberdeen City Council have shown their commitment to ongoing 'participation' and 'voice' and secured funding for the Development Officer (DO) post until 2024. Additionally, there is potential for this to be extended by a further 2 years beyond then.

We were without our DO between March and June as Peter Melrose made the difficult decision to leave his post and returned home to Australia after a considerable period of Covid related illness. Many of our ACE Advisors and other young people hold some fond memories of his time in post and are keen to hold on to their connections with him.

Our new DO, Tracy Maxwell, came into post on May 31st, 2021, and a large part of her role includes extending the reach of the ACE Advisors Network to include children and young people with a more

varied range of care experience and, those who are still in care. This would include those who are in Kinship Care, accommodated away from the city, looked after at home and young people who are currently looked after in Children's Residential Homes. She has been working hard to reconnect us with ACE Advisors who had perhaps become less involved with our participatory sessions and events, many of which were offered digitally due to Covid restrictions. In addition to this, she has been reaching out to the various social work teams across the city which has resulted in the number of ACE Advisors extending by 15 (aged 16+) and the formation of the 'Mini Champs' Network. (30 new young people in total)

Champions Boards Themes

At the beginning of 2021, the young people identified 5 key themes, they would like our Corporate Parents to focus on and address. These are listed as follows:

- Education
- Relationships with the Police
- Mental Health
- Making a House a Home and,
- Employability

However, due to Covid restrictions and meetings moving to online, these themes weren't progressed as quickly as they may have been had there been no pandemic.

Since coming into post our DO, ACE Advisors and Champions have returned our focus to the asks of the young people and have started moving two of these forwards. The following is a brief update on the details of each project and how it is progressing.

Education

The young people highlighted that they wanted to raise awareness among fellow pupils and teachers, of what it feels like to be a CEYP in education by exploring some of their experiences and challenging stereotypes. They are hoping to do this by producing some short educational workshops/talks which can then be presented in schools. To date, 4 young people (all ACE Advisors) and our DO have joined a colleague from Education for two sessions, where they discussed relevant points and shared some experiences before making some suggestions as to how we can move this forward. We are hoping that some of our Mini Champs will be keen to get involved with this.

Relationships with the Police

The young people wanted to raise awareness of CEYP and their experiences among local Police officers. Again, they wanted to challenge stereotypes and, by exploring some of our young people's experiences of interactions with them, they are hoping that together we can influence changes in how CEYP are viewed by officers. Further to this, they are keen to explore ways in which we can build better relationships as well as create new/different strategies relating to how local officers manage their interactions with young people. To date, our DO has held one participation session with local Police officers in preparation for meeting the young people. We plan to offer another session with the

police and a preparation session with the young participants before bringing the two groups together for the first time.

Data for June 2021 to December 2021

The following data has been collected from a combination of the Who Cares? Scotland database where our ACE and helpline activities are recorded and local data collection by the DO.

ACE Meetings, Events, Sessions and One-to-One chats

Number of activities – 42 (the table below indicates the number and ages of young people involved)

| Age | Total |
|--------------|-----------|
| 0-5 | 0 |
| 5-12 | 3 |
| 12-16 | 13 |
| 16 - 19 | 9 |
| 19 + | 16 |
| TOTAL | 41 |

This consists of:

2 Champion's Board Meetings (online)

28 ACE meetings, participation sessions (Including national) , online workshops and social events attended by more than 2 young people, and

12 one to one sessions with individual young people including introductory meetings, supporting young person engagement with other services and welfare and advice catch ups

Who Cares? Scotland Helpline (Aberdeen only)

Number of activities – 1

| Age | Total |
|--------------|----------|
| 0-5 | 0 |
| 5-12 | 0 |
| 12-16 | 0 |
| 16 - 19 | 4 |
| 19 + | 2 |
| TOTAL | 6 |

These figures represent the numbers of care experienced young people from Aberdeen who contacted the National Helpline out of hours. This includes 1 young person living outside of the city due to the location of their college/university. The issues raised were related to finance and legal matters.

One individual was offered emotional and practical support from the DO

Wi-Fi Fund: Spent £530

Number of young people receiving funds – 5

| Age | Total |
|--------------|----------|
| 0-5 | 0 |
| 5-12 | 0 |
| 12-16 | 0 |
| 16 - 19 | 0 |
| 19 + | 5 |
| TOTAL | 5 |

These figures represent the amount of young people who contacted the Youth Team seeking some support with connection bills. Initially paid by them and reimbursed with monies from the fund.

Who Cares? Scotland Winter Wishes (Aberdeen only)

Number of activities – 8

| Age | Total |
|--------------|----------|
| 0-5 | 0 |
| 5-12 | 0 |
| 12-16 | 0 |
| 16 - 19 | 0 |
| 19 + | 9 |
| TOTAL | 9 |

These figures represent the number of young people from Aberdeen who applied for our Winter Wishes and, includes ACE Advisors along with young people who are known to us but not currently engaging in participatory events.

Data Summary

A total of 167 young people aged between 10 and 26+ years have engaged in some of the 53 various events /activities during the past 6 months. This includes sessions and events not arranged by our DO but where young people were encouraged or supported to participate. Who Cares? Scotland data notes that the core group of 18 young people remains steady and is largely comprised of ACE Advisors and a few who engage in some activities. However, we have also welcomed a total of 30 new young people to the ACE Network, and it may take a few months to gain an accurate figure in terms of our core group activity, and the impact it has on voice, participation and engagement moving forward.

The Challenges

2021 has brought many variations in guidelines and restrictions which at times, has caused a sense of uncertainty for both professionals and CEYP. One example being, attempting to return our Champions Boards back to physical gatherings at the request of the young people, but 'spikes' in Covid cases influenced changes in guidance which in turn, meant that they were promptly return to an online platform at short notice. Although the young people understood the necessity for the last-minute change and continued to engage, some were showing signs of feeling frustrated with the constant changes in advice.

The Achievements

The latter half of 2021 has brought some notable achievements to follow those of 2020. That's not to say that last year's achievements are insignificant but suggests that they are fundamental to influencing what we have achieved throughout 2021. The previously noted advance in practice in general, use of technology and, newly developed rapid responses to emerging needs by rallying partner agencies combined with the skills and approaches we used pre-pandemic, has enabled us to continue meeting needs and increasing participation in a range of areas using a blended approach.

Additional Support

Due to the increase in numbers within the ACE Advisors Network in general, the need for additional support has remained at a similar level as previous months. As a result, we continue to remain mindful of the support issues that impact on our CEYP daily and, have continued to be available during the evenings and at weekends. This has resulted in an increase in the use of our social media and chat platforms, as well as continuing to offer one-to-one chats.



Sessions & Events

As Covid restrictions began to lift, our CEYP indicated that they would like our sessions and participation opportunities to return to physical gatherings. This would enable them to re-establish the connections impacted by 'Lockdowns' with the friends, peers and professionals and, to develop new relationships with the increasing number of young people joining the ACE Network. As a result, we held several fun social events and a few focussed sessions, some of which will occur regularly and some according to the asks of the young people as they will be focussed pieces of participation work.

ACE Supper Club

By sitting down to a meal prepared by the professionals rarely seen by young people in care but, who often have a role in influencing decisions which may in turn impact on the outcomes for them and their families, we hope to break down barriers often inadvertently created on both sides for various reasons. We also hope this enables our CEYP to see the people behind the job titles and offers opportunities to explore things such as likes/dislikes, interests, hopes, fears, and aspirations in a relaxed and safe environment. In turn, the Corporate Parents are afforded the opportunity to build trust and improve relationships with the young people and can gather the views of the young people in 'real time', enabling them to make plans relating to moving current issues forward. This group is regularly attended by around 12 young people but numbers are on the increase.

Additionally, a number of young people been coming along early, rolling up their sleeves and helping our Corporate Parents with the preparation and cooking, which offers them opportunities to increase their nutritional awareness and expand their creative cookery skills. As a result they are also becoming more adventurous in their exploration of different foods from all over the world, for example, we are hoping to hold Eastern European and Korean themed Supper Clubs.

Summer Activities

Who Cares? Scotland had access to funding aimed at encouraging our young people back out into the community as the Covid restrictions eased. However, the North-East Team discussed and agreed that due to the limits placed on gatherings of larger numbers, we would not plan a large event but instead, offer the money to our young people for activities of their choice. Examples of chosen activities, included family visits to Innoflate, small group visits to Codonas, Cinema and food dates with friends, appointments with hairdressers, family trips to Edinburgh Zoo and one small group day out at Dynamic Earth. In total, 39 young people accessed this money to participate in 14 different activities.

Care Week

The theme for Care Week 2021 was Celebrating Success and Connection. Unfortunately due to Covid restrictions we were unable to organise a large gathering. However, we wanted to ensure young people were able to celebrate their individual achievements and success in some way. The Youth Team and the Young Person's Rights Service made that happen and put together some '**wee sit back and relax**' packs which were filled with sweet treats, relaxing bath/shower products and skin pampering products. 120 young people received one of these packs.

Mini Champs

Since facilitating an Introductory Participation session in August, our focus has been to continue reaching out to and connecting with more children & young people from a more varied range of care settings whilst establishing trusting relationships with the founding Network members. We have done this by hosting some fun get-togethers with a little piece of Aberdeen's Core Activities and Outcomes 'thrown in'.

However, this part of the ACE Network is still in the early stages of development as Tracy and the children and young people are getting to know each other better. That said, there are plans to introduce them to some focussed pieces of work early in 2022.



Mini Champs Movie Night



Mini Champs Halloween Party

We had lots of fun getting dressed up, 'dooking' for apples, showing of our best dance moves, playing spooky party games, and eating the party food the adults and carers made for us.



Champions Board Celebratory Event @ Innoflate

The ACE Advisors felt that having the Mini Champs on board was our biggest achievement in 2021, and therefore, wanted to include them in the event and make it a celebration of the start new era or 'old and new' coming together. It was fun to see the older Advisors and professionals releasing their 'inner Tigger' along with the energetic Mini Champs on the inflatable play area. Many of our younger members were 'super impressed' that the Chief Social Worker and other Corporate Parents took time to come along and have fun with them. And of course everyone went home with an Advent Calendar.



December

Christmas 2021 remained much the same as 2020 due to the constantly changing restrictions around Covid. As the footfall in many ACC buildings remained limited, we made the decision not to go ahead with our Christmas Party for the second year.

However, we did manage to organise some smaller face-to-face and some online activities for our young people. These were arranged in collaboration with other individuals and organisations who provided things such materials and ingredients and, included an online including craft making session, a supper and movie night, our visit to the Lynx Ice Arena and our Christmas Tree Lights event.

Aberdeen University donated our outdoor Christmas Tree and lights this year. Cllr Lesley Dunbar donated a 'Mini Tree' to the 'Mini Champs' which we hope to plant in the grounds of Westburn in January. A small number of smaller artificial trees were purchased for and kept in the building for young people and families who requested one.

We wanted to ensure our young people and their families had festive food and gifts on Christmas Day thus, we worked alongside ACC staff and volunteers to deliver Christmas Dinner to around 80 families.

Some of our Favourite Photos

Just us being young people



The impact of global warming ☹️



Us older kids like choccy too ☺️



And Finally

Mini Champs @ Halloween



December Supper Club

