

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	31 August 2022
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Children's Social Work Statistics, Scotland 2020-21 and an Aberdeen comparison.
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/22/157
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Graeme Simpson
REPORT AUTHOR	Graeme Simpson
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.3 and 1.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To share the Children's Social Work Statistics, Scotland 2020-21 and to provide a comparison with performance in Aberdeen City.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Note that care experienced children and those children who need protection in Aberdeen City, are, predominantly, receiving care and protection either in line with, or better than, national averages;
- 2.2 Note that where performance differs from national averages, there are improvement plans in place; and
- 2.3 Instructs the Chief Officer – Integrated Children's and Family Services, to report annually to the relevant Committee, sharing the published Children's Social Work Statistics, Scotland and providing a comparison with performance in Aberdeen City.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 Aberdeen City stands up positively with comparative authorities and the national picture reported in the National [Children's Social Work Statistics, Scotland 2020-21](#) report ("the report").
- 3.2 The report contains extensive statistical information from which we have identified the following areas of interest:

Where Aberdeen City is in-line with or better than the national average:

- Number of children on the child protection register
- Proportion of children re-registered on the child protection register
- Reducing numbers of looked after children and young people
- Proportion of looked after children in secure care
- Majority of looked after children are placed in the community

Where Aberdeen City differs from the national average:

- Proportion of children looked after at home or with kin
- Percentage of purchased foster care placements from independent fostering providers

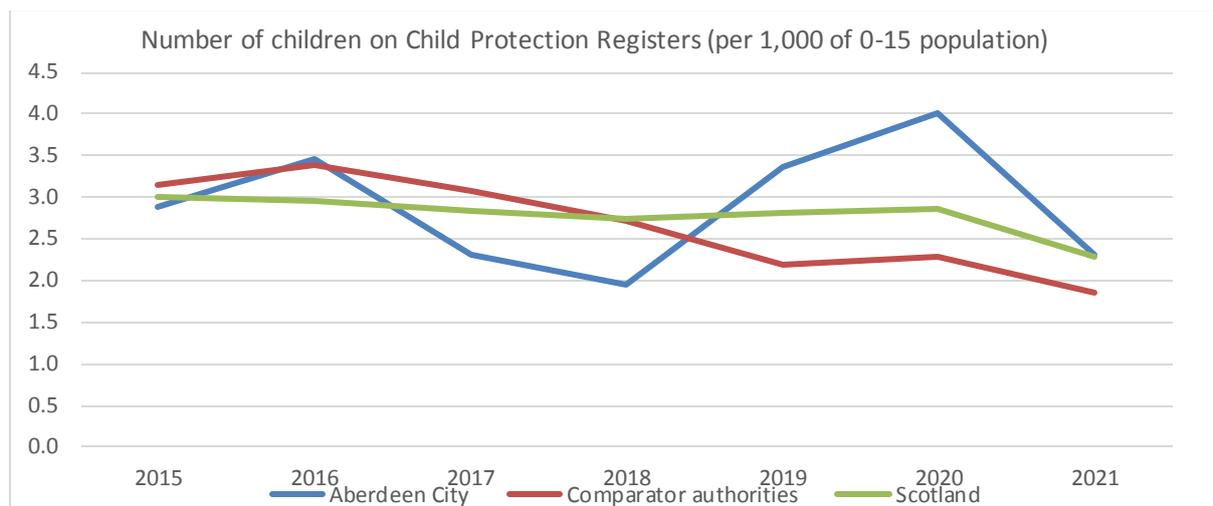
3.3 In the following graphs where comparator Authorities data is reported, our comparator Local Authority areas are randomly selected by the Scottish Government and do not necessarily share characteristics with ourselves either in terms of size or demographics. They are; Argyll & Bute, Renfrew, Dundee, South Ayrshire and Edinburgh.

3.4 Child protection

3.4.1 It is reported (page 16 of the report) that the number of children on the Child Protection Register has decreased by 20% since the previous year in Scotland. Looking at published Local Authority Child Protection Statistics [benchmarking tool](#). The number of children (a snapshot at July 2021) in Aberdeen City in 2021 was 83, a decrease of 41.5% from 142 in 2020. The 2020 figure was an inflated figure due to our decision to suspend Review Child Protection Case Conferences and retain children on the Child Protection Register in the initial weeks of the pandemic. This impacted later on numbers of de-registrations (see para 3.3.3 below).

3.4.2 The rate (per 1,000 pop 0-15) of children on the Child Protection Register is 2.3. This is exactly in accordance with the Scotland average rate of 2.3. See Figure 1.

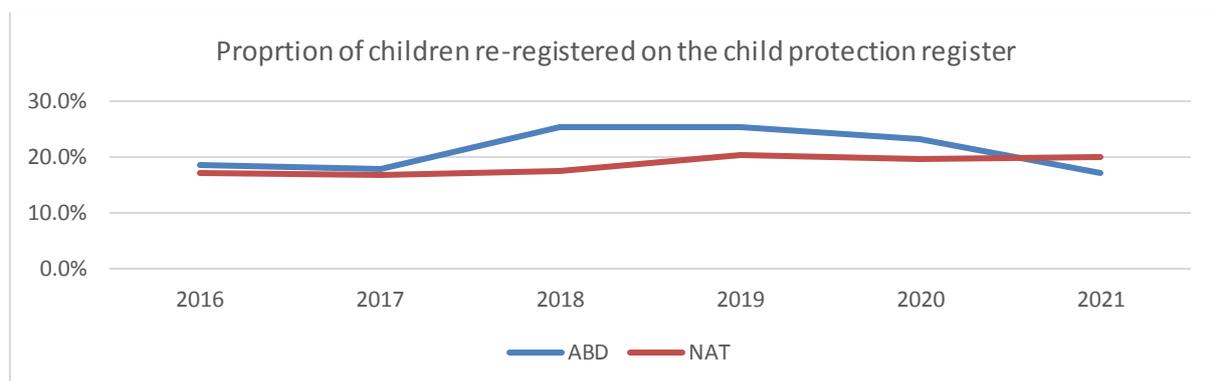
Figure 1



3.4.3 The number of de-registrations in Aberdeen City in 2021 is 200 (an increase of 37.9% from 145 in 2020). The comparator authorities show an increase of 19.6%, while the estimated Scotland figures show an increase of 2.1%.

3.4.4 The number of re-registrations has decreased in 2021. In July 2021 ACC had 14 re-registrations, compared with 35 in July 2020. Looking at trend data from our internal systems and comparing with National data reported on page 18 of the report, the proportion of children on the CPR who had been registered previously (for any reason) has decreased from 25.3% in 2018 to 17.1% in 2021. This is smaller proportion and larger decrease than increase from 17.3% in 2018 to the 20% reported for 2021 in the national comparison data (see Figure 2) Note, no comparator Authorities data is available.

Figure 2

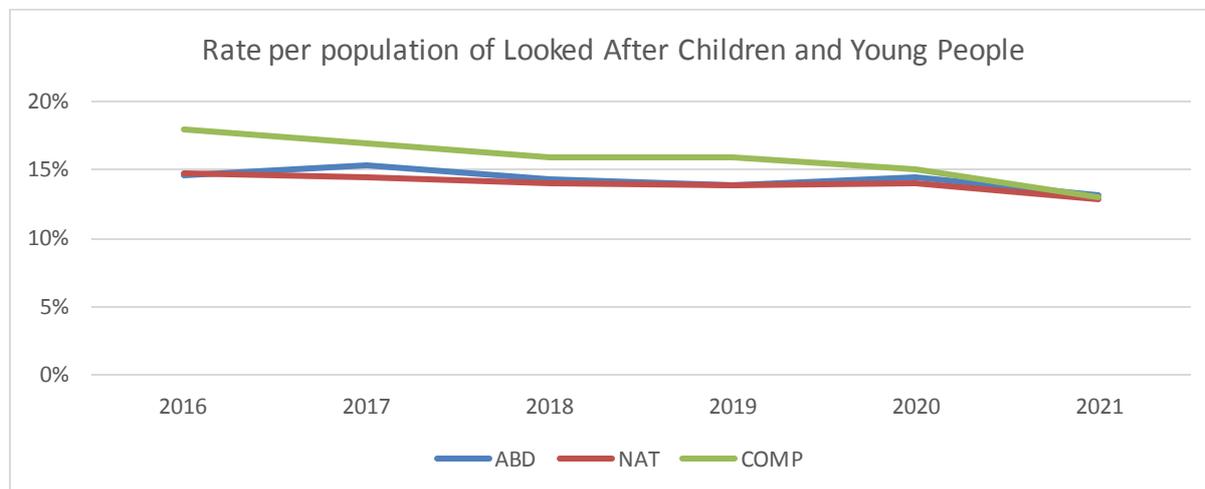


3.5 Looked after Children

3.5.1 On page 5 of the report, it is reported that in the national data there has been an 8% decrease in the number of Looked After Children in Scotland from 2020, to 2021. The decrease is higher for ACC at 9% during that same period (566 in 2020 July snapshot to 515 in July 2021).

3.5.2 The number of Looked After children in Scotland has reduced by around 3,000 in a ten year period, this reduction is also true of Aberdeen City. ACC averaged around 738 Looked after children in 2011/12 and this decreased to averaging 523 by 2021/22. Figure 3 illustrates that the rate per population (0-17 years) is steadily reducing both nationally, in comparator Authorities and locally.

Figure 3



3.5.3 The report also identifies the proportion of children remaining in the community (page 5).

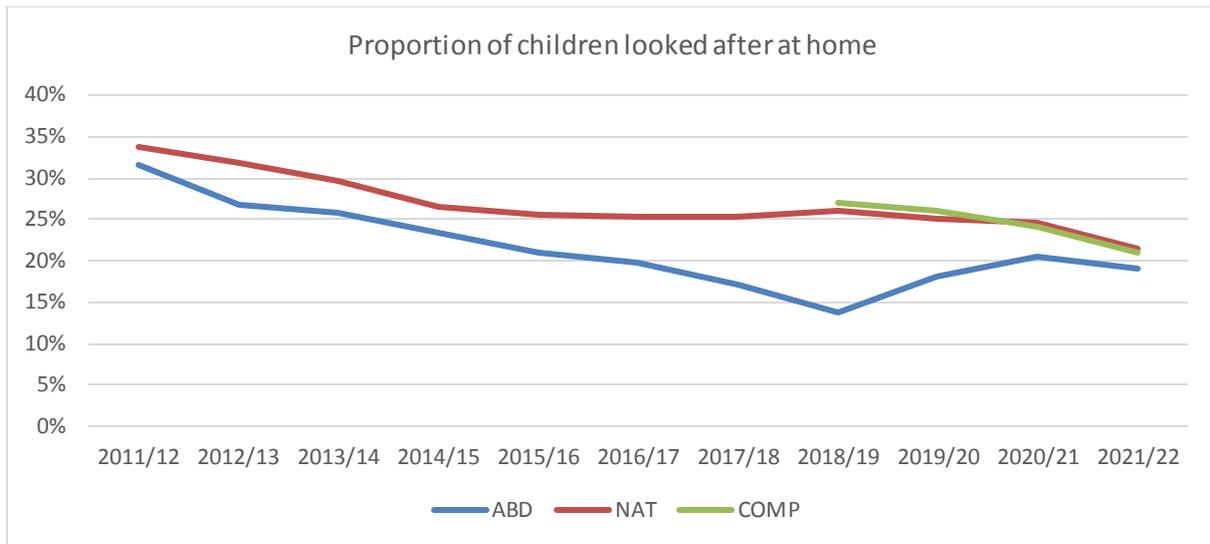
“In 2021, the majority of Looked After Children (90%) were placed in the community. This included 33% of children and young people who were placed with Kinship Carers, 24% placed with Foster Carers provided by local authorities, and 22% were looked after at home. In addition to this, 10% of Looked After Children were placed with Foster Carers purchased by local authorities.

A smaller proportion of Looked After Children (10%) were placed in residential accommodation, including 4% placed in a local authority home.”

3.5.4 In ACC, looking at Local Authority Looked After Children Statistics [benchmarking tool](#), the proportion of all Looked after Children placed in the community in 2021 at the snapshot time was 89%, this included 20% in kinship care, 15% in foster carer provided by ACC and 18% looked after at home. There were 32% of children looked after by foster carer’s purchased by ACC. A balance of 11% are in residential settings within and external to ACC.

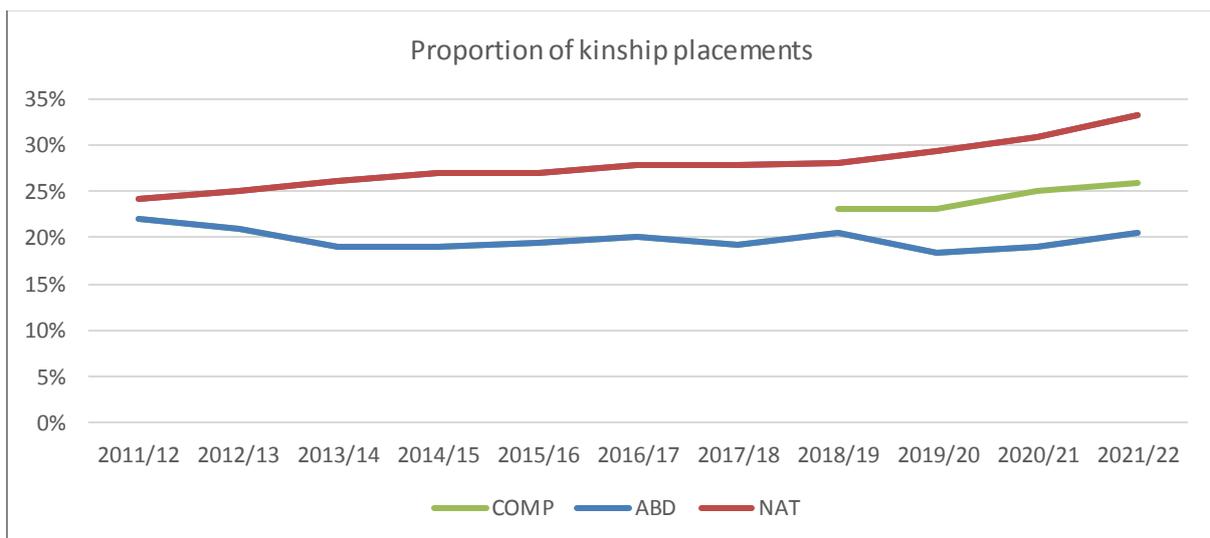
3.5.5 As the national trends have decreased in the proportion of children remaining at home, trends in the City have mirrored this recently. However, as can be seen in Figure 4, there was a fairly significant gap in 2018/19 which has improved over the past two years. Comparator Authority data is only available for the last 4 years but mirrors the National trend.

Figure 4



3.5.6 The proportion of Kinship placements has increased over the past ten years nationally, whereas the proportion of children looked after by friends or relatives remains fairly static across ACC, although it has increased by 3% from 18% since 2018/19 to 21% in 2020/21 as seen on Figure 5 (using local average data). This is broadly in line with the target set in the Corporate Parenting improvement plan. It is also moving in the right direction for the target set in the LOIP where there is an ambition that 43% of looked after children should be at home or with family and friends by 2023. This is at 40% currently and therefore on target with the strategic plans. Comparator Authority data is only available for the last four years and sits between ACC and National trends.

Figure 5



3.5.7 Comparing ACC with comparator authorities and national data for in house and external fostering ([using CLAS data](#)) it can be seen that ACC has a lower proportion of internally provided foster care arrangements. (Figure 6) and in

Figure 7, there is a high proportion of fostering placements purchased by ACC compared with the national and comparator Authorities data.

Figure 6

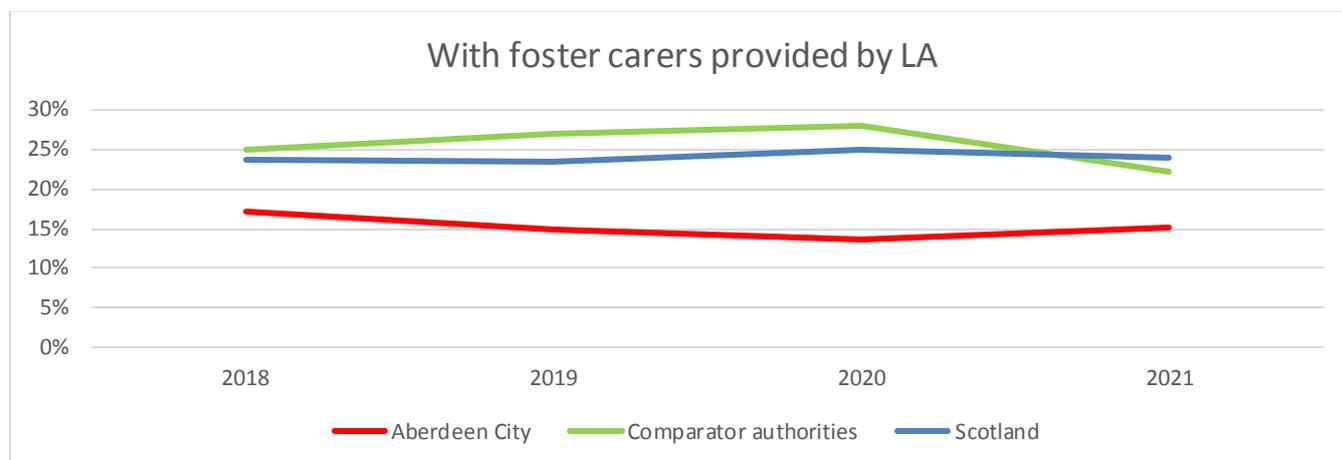
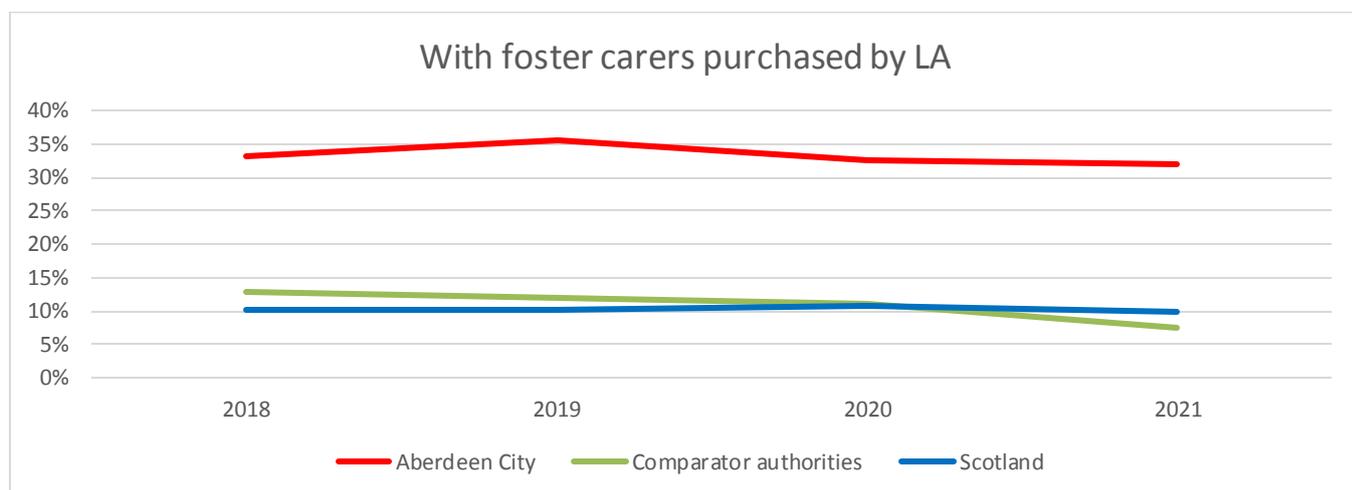


Figure 7

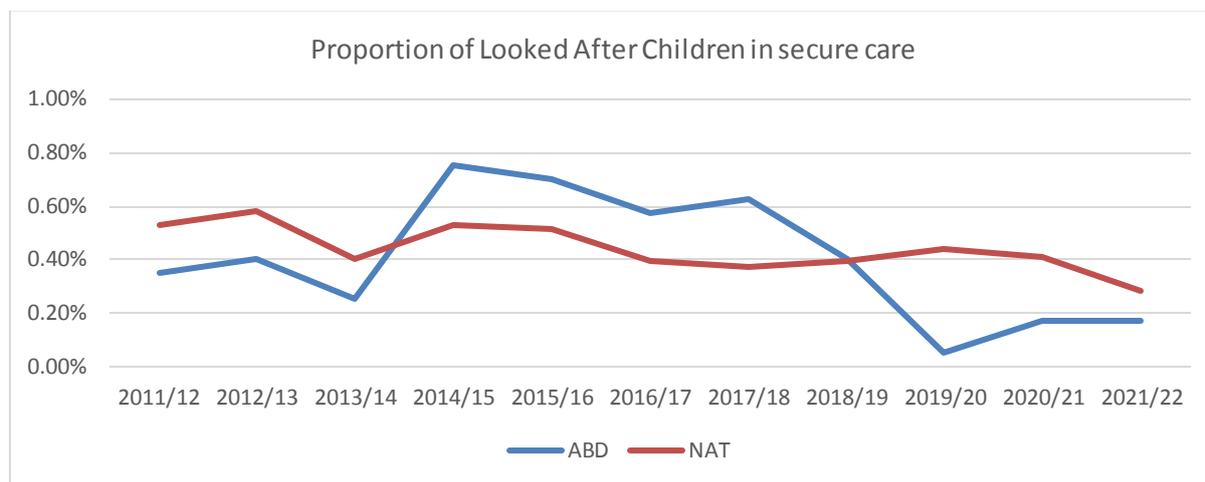


3.5.8 Plans for improvement are within our strategic plans including the LOIP, Corporate Parenting Plan, Child Protection Programme and the implementation of Plan 21-24. The annual reports on these plans will be presented to a committee in the coming months (noting the Committee structure is changing). These updates will provide members with additional information on actions and progress to support change.

3.5.9 Addressing the balance of care is challenging across the North East of Scotland and is a challenge we share with our neighbouring Local Authorities. Strategic plans seek to make inroads into this. We have reduced the numbers of children in Residential Homes in Aberdeen City and are in line with the National data. We are committed to returning looked after children and young people to placements in the City where it is in their best interests to do so. In line with The Promise, we are endeavouring to keep brothers and sisters either together or located near each other.

3.5.10 The number of children in secure care is very low and is less than 1% of the Looked after population and has been for 10 years. ACC has risen above and is now below the average National percentage for the past three years. See Figure 8. A national review of secure care is to be conducted by the Care Inspectorate in 2022-23. We are yet to be advised if any of our cases are to be included in that review. No comparator Authority data is available.

Figure 8



4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising from this report, the costs associated with increasing the proportion of children being looked after at home and the associated reduction in costs of looking after children in out of authority foster and residential placements will be positively significant.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications from this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account	*Does Target Risk Level Match

			controls/control actions	Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Many of the improvements required to support more children to be looked after at home or kinship as part of the requirements of Plan 21-24. These are already built into a variety of strategic plans. It is expected that gaps will emerge as the Council and partners scrutinise the requirements of Plan 21-24 in detail.	The Child Protection Committee, Children's Services Board and Community Planning Management Group have oversight of the delivery of the relevant aspects of strategic plans in this respect. They are ensuring that the terms of Plan 21-24 are incorporated into current and future strategic planning.	M	Yes
Compliance	No significant related risks.	Services across all multi-agency partners are aware of legislative requirements and ensure compliance	L	Yes
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	These are duties which have been incorporated across existing structures and will be consolidated in practice	L	Yes
Financial	That the number of	Plan 21-24 and various strategic	L	Yes

	children having to be looked after away from home continues to remain high leading to poorer outcomes and higher resource costs.	plans are in place to address these issues		
Reputational	Organisational failings in relation to child protection can bring significant media interest and scrutiny of services delivered to children and young people.	The public can be assured that: the Council ensures compliance with legal requirements, national standards and guidance; partners respond to self and external scrutiny; and identified areas for improvement are addressed.	M	Yes
Environment / Climate	Not applicable for this report			

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
	The information in this report has no impact on the Council Delivery Plan.
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	<p>The report seeks to provide an update on how ACC compares with National 'performance' in Child Protection and Care Experience children. This links with Corporate Parenting activities, including the following improvement projects within the LOIP:</p> <p>6.2 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</p>

	<p>For the Child Protection programme, in particular stretch outcomes 4, 5, and 8 with the following key drivers:</p> <p>4.1 Ensuring that families receive the parenting and family support they need</p> <p>4.2 Keeping young children safe</p> <p>5.2 Increasing children’s knowledge and understanding of their own physical and mental wellbeing and take an early intervention and prevention approach</p> <p>8.2 Ensuring that children and young people receive accessible information and opportunities to engage and participate in decision making</p>
--	---

9 IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	Not required

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 [Children's Social Work Statistics, Scotland 2020-21 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

10.2  Corporate-Parenting-Plan-April-2021.pdf

10.3  [Child Protection Programme 2021-20:](#)

11 APPENDICES - NONE

12 REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Name	Graeme Simpson
Title	Chief Officer/CSWO

Email Address	GSimpson@Aberdeencity.gov.uk
Tel	01224 523496