

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

---

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education Operational Delivery Committee
<b>DATE</b>	25 November 2021
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Care Experienced Children and Young People
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	OPE/21/274
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Rob Polkinghorne
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Eleanor Sheppard
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Larissa Gordon / Amy Evans
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	1.1

---

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 to provide Members with an overview of the attainment of care experienced children and young people which takes account of the individual and often complex needs of the group and consider next steps.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Committee:

- 2.1 note the approach taken to evaluating the extent to which we meet the needs of care experienced children and young people outlined in this report;
- 2.2 note the evaluation of the range of interventions put in place over 2020/2021 in response to on-going assessment of the identified barriers to achieving successful outcomes;
- 2.3 note the commentary on the key measures which provide an overview of the current performance of care experienced children and young people;
- 2.4 note the extent of the work currently being undertaken across the Council and wider partnership to support care experienced children and young people;
- 2.5 instruct the Chief Education Officer to continue to take an agile approach to the identification of any barriers to care experienced children and young people achieving successful outcomes and take swift action to address them;
- 2.6 instruct the Chief Education Officer to implement plans to align further resource to the Virtual School to support those returning from Out of Authority placements; and
- 2.7 instruct the Chief Education Officer to present an annual report on the progress of care experienced children and young people to the Committee, commencing in September 2022.

### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At the Education Operational Delivery Committee of 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021, members asked that an evaluation of the performance of care experienced children and young people be presented to committee to help identify any further action that could be taken to improve the outcomes of this group.

Members asked that the report take account of the individual and often complex needs of the group.

## **3.2 OUR EVALUATION PROCESS**

- 3.2.1 Good mechanisms are in place to evaluate the attainment and achievement of individual children and young people who are care experienced with tracking and monitoring arrangements in place at individual school and Local Authority level through the Virtual School. The service continues to improve their approach to using both quantitative and qualitative data to inform decision making. This individualised approach enables the service to swiftly identify and address any barriers to care experienced children and young people achieving successful outcomes and amend plans at pace.
- 3.2.2 Careful tracking of individuals allows the service to identify broad improvement themes for inclusion within the National Improvement Framework Plan to complement the work being progressed through the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP). This approach also enables the service to identify if any additional services require to be commissioned. Progress against Plans and contract monitoring is routine practice.
- 3.2.3 Evaluation is undertaken over the year as different data sets become available, this means that evaluation is an on-going and agile process and draws on a range of evidence to support the service, cluster, organisation and wider partnership to draw accurate conclusions and take action. The service is now starting to use live data more effectively to help inform more immediate responses to presenting issues.
- 3.2.4 Some children require intensive support from the Virtual School due to their often complex needs and any barriers to achieving positive outcomes are carefully identified to help inform our work. Of the children and young people who required a more intensive and extended level of support from the Virtual School (97), 39% were looked after at home, 48% were looked after away from home and 10% had no legal order (informal kinship, previously looked after or care leavers). 3% of those supported were also looked after by another local authority. All children who receive intensive support are making good progress due to the flexibility in approaches being taken and consideration of individual circumstances. The Virtual School continues to work to ensure that robust education protocols are in place for all groups with a significant focus on supporting successful transitions.
- 3.2.5 The service anticipates that a few children and young people who are currently being supported in specialist out of authority placements will need a very high level of support to transition back into local schools. The service is currently working to realign resource to the Virtual School to focus on this small group to ensure an effective transition in the coming months.
- 3.2.5 The Education Service continues to collaborate with a range of partners to consider the needs of care experienced children and young people when new developments are initiated to ensure that the needs of the group are prioritised, understood and considered in all we do.

### **3.3 KEY SUCCESSES OVER 2020/2021**

- 3.3.1 Despite the challenges over the last 12 months considerable work has been undertaken by the service to support our care experienced children and young people. Given the well documented benefits of accessing quality Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) provision, there has been extensive work undertaken to promote the uptake of the 1140 hours with eligible 2s. 50% of our Looked After 2 year olds are accessing their entitlement already with 36% ready to start and 14% awaiting a placement following their 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday. 100% of children aged 3 and 4 (living in Aberdeen City and other local authorities) are accessing anti-preschool and preschool places. (October 2021). We continue to work with colleagues in Children's Social Work and Health to ensure care experienced parents are aware of their entitlement to provision of ELC from 2 years of age.
- 3.3.2 The Local Authority continues to roll out 'The Compassionate and Connected Classroom (CCC)'. We currently have 60 CCC trainers trained across the city from a range of sectors and disciplines as well as all Central Education Staff. This professional learning offer is helping to ensure that our workforce is trauma informed.
- 3.3.3 Previous data evidenced that consideration of the need for a CSP (Co-ordinated Support Plan) was low across the city and new procedures were introduced to address this in April 2021. A CSP is a statutory document drawn up for children and young people with the most complex and enduring additional support needs, where there is a high degree of co-ordination of support required from education service agencies and other agencies outwith education. This new procedure has seen an increase from 3% of the Looked After population in the city being considered for a CSP to 20% in September 2021. This data will continue to be monitored carefully.
- 3.3.4 All employees of the Council have a responsibility as Corporate Parents and it is important that everyone understands their duties. The Corporate Parenting mandatory workforce training digital module has been finalised and a roll out plan is in place. As of September 2021, 10%, of all council employees had completed the training. This data will continue to be monitored carefully.
- 3.3.5 Access to performance data by groups is of critical importance as we start to explore more fully differences in the performance of those who are looked after at home and those accommodated. New Power BI School and Virtual School Profiles will help to inform quality improvement activity over academic session 2021/22 as live data on groups is included in the dashboard. These tools will allow more in depth analysis.
- 3.3.6 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%).

- 3.3.7 The Sport Aberdeen SPACE programme supports transitions within and beyond school. The programme continued to provide direct 1:1 support and virtual support during lockdown. 31 children were supported to engage in physical activities over the summer holiday period with a focus on sibling relationships, outdoor play and improving wellbeing.
- 3.3.9 The programme also supported 19 children at Manor Park School (1:1 direct work/small group work/P.7 transition group) as a pilot intervention to see if the benefits could be extended beyond the priority group by locating a Project Activator on site. The approach has helped remove stigma. The learning from the pilot has been used to inform the Project Activator model within the Priority Families Team in Aberdeen City where 73 individuals have been supported by the project, with 29 routinely engaging for 3 months or longer. Key successes include having contributed to improved access to employment, increased confidence and self-esteem levels and a reduction in anti-social behaviour reports.
- 3.3.10 250 memberships to Sport Aberdeen facilities were given to care experienced young people and their families. This supports us to deliver on our Corporate Parent responsibilities of “promoting interests” and “seeking to provide opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing”. It has also been evidenced within Child’s plans and review meetings that it helps to build relationships as well as positively impacting on mental and physical health.
- 3.3.11 As a result of the pandemic, our annual Celebration of Success had been hosted on an online platform in September 2020, however a hybrid event took place in 2021 with some children and families able to join in person while others tuned in online via our live stream.

### **3.4 WHAT THE DATA TELLS US**

- 3.4.1 Given that the cohort of children and young people deemed to be ‘Looked After’ changes regularly the trend data can be of limited value. However, comparison with our virtual comparator can give us a sense of performance compared to others.
- 3.4.2 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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. Work to further improve literacy and numeracy attainment is being driven through the National Improvement Framework Plan.
- 3.4.3 The percentage of Looked After young people leaving school with 4 or more qualifications at level 3 and 4 or more at level 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.

- 3.4.4 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.
- 3.4.5 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.
- 3.4.6 Those children who are Looked After at Home have a poorer rate of attendance . Attendance is reported nationally on a biannual basis and in the June 2020 report, pupils looked after at home and those in local authority homes had the lowest attendance rates. This gap between those at home and those who have been accommodated is also reflected in the attainment results both locally and nationally. The improved accessibility of live data will help the service to better understand any trends within each group to enable more focused supports and interventions to be put in place. The additional resource being provided to expand the Virtual School will have a focus on those Looked After at home.
- 3.4.7 There has been a significant reduction in exclusions over the last 3 years due to a refresh of the Minimising Exclusion Policy, better quality assurance and monitoring of data and a wider range of wellbeing supports available in our schools. Data for this academic session indicates that there continues to be a fall in exclusion incidents.

### **3.5 WORK ACROSS THE COUNCIL TO IMPROVE DESTINATIONS**

- 3.5.1 As Corporate Parents considerable work is undertaken across the organisation to improve the employment opportunities for Care Experienced Young People. The guaranteed interview scheme within the Council is open to any Looked After young person, those that are in continuing care or are a care leaver age 16-29 seeking to gain employment with the Council for all vacancies.
- 3.5.2 The Talent Team within People & Organisational Development support Care Experienced Young people by providing information about employment opportunities within the Council, career advice and apprenticeship programmes. ABZWorks provides a range of employability programmes, signposts opportunities and helps young people to develop CVs, complete application forms and learn more about interview skills.
- 3.5.3 An internship programme is in place which provides ring-fenced opportunities for Care Experienced Young People to undertake periods of supported paid work experience within identified areas across the Council.
- 3.5.4 The Council is supporting the UK Government's Kickstart Scheme in conjunction with the Scottish Government's Young Persons Guarantee. To date, the Council has employed 31 young people aged 16-24 at risk of long-term unemployment on Kickstart Internships. The recruitment of the second cohort of interns is ongoing at the time of writing. We know that two of these young people are care experienced and one has been working hard to promote

the Council as an employer of choice while speaking frankly about her background and the support she has received.

- 3.5.5 The Council has an established apprenticeship programme. In addition for young people still attending school, the Council supports Foundation Apprenticeships by providing work placements. 13 applicants for the Modern Apprenticeship programme in 2019 declared that they were care experienced. Of those 13 applications, 3 were successful in securing an apprenticeship and remain in our employment.
- 3.5.6 City Growth's ABZWorks team has used Young Person Guarantee funding to commission Working Rite to deliver a pilot programme, RiteWorks, providing intensive employability support to Care Experienced Young People. To date, 9 young people (7 care experienced) have joined the programme.
- 3.5.7 Young Person Guarantee funding has also been used to create business seed funds for young people. 3 Care Experienced Young People, including one who is being looked after outwith the city, are receiving support.
- 3.5.8 Volunteering Matters, a UK volunteering charity has agreed to focus its efforts in the city primarily on Care Experienced Young People through a programme of mentoring, confidence building, volunteering, and steps towards employment or further/higher education.
- 3.5.9 As a result of these interventions, positive destinations look to remain positive but this position will be clarified in the coming days.

### **3.6 WORK ACROSS THE COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP**

- 3.6.1 Aberdeen's summer of play ensured that our Care Experienced Children and Young People, were given priority access, to take up places and participate in activities. 249 Care Experienced Children and Young people took part in activities delivered through Sport Aberdeen with 237 taking part in activities delivered by colleagues in Aberdeen City Council.
- 3.6.2 The one-stop-shop website, known as [ABZ Works](#) developed with partners provides local accessible information and was co-produced with Care Experienced young people.
- 3.6.3 The establishment of a 16+ strategic group with a focus on planning for positive destinations for Care Experienced Young people, has meant that opportunities for young people have been shared in a timely manner with any potential barriers to engagement being identified. This included the provision of 9 additional devices being issued to young people to enable access to the 'Lift off' programme for senior phase pupils as well as ongoing access to the ABZ works website.
- 3.6.4 Within our Local Outcome Improvement Plan (2019-2026) we have set the stretch outcome "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". As well as the collaborative improvement activity undertaken as a

Community Planning Partnership much of our work driven by the National Improvement Plan supports this ambition.

- 3.6.5 The key drivers within the LOIP are; improving education outcomes for care experienced children and young people; improving physical and emotional health outcomes for care experienced young people; improving pathways to education, employment and training for identified groups (including Care Experienced Young People and those with Additional Support Needs; Supporting young people, families, carers and communities to better understand the opportunities available to their children upon leaving school; Ensuring children, young people and families understand the pathways available to them and skills required for future. Members will note that much of the work reported in this report and in Appendix A are fully aligned with the LOIP.

### **3.7 NATIONAL DIRECTION OF TRAVEL**

- 3.7.1 All head teachers have engaged in professional learning on The Promise, Children's Rights and Angela Morgan's review of additional support for learning which has also supported an understanding of the role of Corporate Parents. School improvement plans contain appropriate reference to these critical policy documents and staff in schools and ELC provision are being guided to plan for their successful implementation.
- 3.7.2 Involvement of the Virtual School Head Teacher on the Corporate Parent Performance and Improvement group ensures Education are part of the multi-agency approach to delivering on the Promise across the partnership.
- 3.7.3 As the National Advisor to the Virtual School Network hosted by CELCIS (Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection), the Virtual School head Teacher is involved in collaborating and sharing of good practice with oversight from Education Scotland and Scottish Government at a national level.
- 3.7.4 Connections made in other local authorities have resulted in smoother, more timely transitions for our young people between schools and education provisions.

### **3.8 WHAT DO WE NEED TO IMPROVE NOW?**

- 3.8.1 There are a number of actions identified that we need to undertake in order to ensure that we are getting it right for children and families and delivering on The Promise.
- Continuing to increase the knowledge and skills of the workforce in relation to their Corporate parent duties to support them to value and recognise the needs of their Care Experienced learners
  - Continuing to build on robust tracking of attendance and attainment enabling early intervention and being more sophisticated in our analysis of different groups.
  - Providing the necessary scaffolding for the workforce, families and children and young people to support engagement in education including active participation in all subjects and extracurricular activities in schools.

- Working collectively to support and ensure care experienced young people go on to genuinely positive destinations, such as further education or employment

### **3.9 FURTHER IMPROVING OUR WORK TO SUPPORT CARE EXPERIENCED**

- 3.9.1 The Virtual School continues to support children and young people well but as the cluster works with others to reduce the number of out of authority placements we require to rethink our approach and bolster the individualised interventions that can be accessed through the Virtual School. In order to achieve this the Virtual School will be allocated additional resource through Scottish Attainment Challenge funding and the national increase in teacher numbers to enable the design and delivery of bespoke interventions for Care Experienced Children and Young People who may require a bridge back into full time education in Aberdeen City.
- 3.9.2 As part of the expansion, the Virtual School will work alongside City Growth who have secured £112,000 from the North East Economic Recovery Fund to provide a programme of activity for young people of school age who have disengaged from education, or who are at risk of doing so, and are too young to leave the school roll. It is hoped that this work will help further increase the number of care experienced young people who secure a positive destination and improve the number of qualifications achieved.
- 3.9.3 The use of live data which distinguishes between those who are Looked After at Home and those Looked After Away from Home will continue to be developed in order to provide access to live trend data to support schools and services to take informed decisions more timeously. This will help schools and services better test how to improve attainment and attendance for those who are Looked After at Home.
- 3.9.4 ABZWorks will be subject to on-going review to ensure that the platform meets the needs of young people who are Care Experienced.
- 3.9.5 The Education Service are keenly aware that children and young people (and particularly those who are Care Experienced) are likely to require significant additional support to thrive in school. Youth workers have been employed to work in our secondary schools for session 2021/22.
- 3.9.6 Family Learning workers have been employed to support families in predominantly, but not exclusively, primary schools. This resource will help build on the universal roll out of PEEP(Parents as Early Education Partners) across ELCs and will help to support families at an early stage and may reduce the number of children who require to be looked after by the Local Authority. These supports will target those who are looked after at home and on the edge of care, with the aim of reducing the risk of not attending, as well as supporting attendance.

3.9.7 MCR Pathways co-ordinators will continue to form part of the support network for children and families in 202/22 in order to maintain the positive attendance, reduced exclusion and staying on rates.

3.9.8 Quality assurance procedures have been introduced to ensure a shared understanding across Quality Improvement Officers (QIO) and the Virtual School. This focus on reviewing the Looked After population within city schools with a key focus on attendance, exclusions and consideration for a CSP as well as sharing of good practice to support school improvement will help support our delivery of The Promise.

3.9.10 The addition of a QIO with a focus on Additional Support Needs will also support a review of provision for Looked After Children in out of authority Residential Schools with a view to measuring impact alongside the Virtual School. This will help ensure that an appropriate curriculum is being delivered, including provision of wider achievement opportunities and planning for positive destinations. It also provides an ongoing additional layer of quality assurance and scrutiny alongside the Virtual School, so that we can be confident that the support is equitable to that being provided for our Looked After and Care Experienced Children and Young People within the city.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report. Recommendations in the plan will make use of existing budgets.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The Local Authority has many legal duties including those of:

- The Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc. Act 2000
- The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004
- The Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

The approach outlined in this Report will assist the Council to fulfil these duties more effectively and improve long term outcomes for Care Experienced children and young people.

#### **6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Risk</b>	<b>Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	N/A		
<b>Compliance</b>	Non-compliance with legislation, and legal challenge (reference to Appeals Committee, Disability	M	Mitigated by services developing understanding to better meet the needs of our Care Experienced Children and Young people in

	Discrimination, reference to ASN Tribunal)		Aberdeen City working in partnership with learners and families.
<b>Operational</b>	Staff are overwhelmed as staff feel unable to meet the needs of Care Experienced children and young people.	L	Mitigated by offering high quality professional learning for staff to ensure that they meet their statutory duties under The Children and young People (Scotland) Act 2014 Expansion of the Virtual School with additional support for transitions
<b>Financial</b>	Risk of impact of not resourcing at earliest opportunity	L	Planning and implementation of expansion of Virtual School within relevant timeframe
<b>Reputational</b>	Risk of not achieving positive outcomes for Care Experienced children and young people and their parents and carers  Risk of not delivering on The Promise and our duties as Corporate Parents	L	Implementation of the Corporate Parent plan, Champions Board plan, Virtual School Improvement plan and the national Improvement framework will reduce potential risk
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	N/A		

## 7. OUTCOMES

<u><a href="#">COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</a></u>	
<b>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</b>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	Children who have their learning and wellbeing needs well met are more able to contribute to a prosperous economy. This requires schools to be supported to understand the needs of Care experienced Children and Young people and be supported to improve outcomes for them.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The information provided in this report outlines the current picture and planned next steps across the partnership to seek to ensure the best use of resource in the system, promoting an understanding of the circumstances of individual children and young

	<p>people to ensure that appropriate and timely personalised support is available to them.  Child Friendly City which supports all children to prosper and engage actively with their communities by 2026.</p>
<p>Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>Underpinning the work of all schools in Aberdeen City is achieving excellence and equity for all. This includes undertaking duties as Corporate Parents and delivering on The Promise through the National Improvement Framework</p>
<p>UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes</p>	<p>This report takes into account the local authority's legal obligations in respect of the legislation below:</p> <p><b>The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duties with regard to meeting the needs of children and young people with additional support needs.</li> </ul> <p><b>The Equality Act 2010</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duty to ensure we are not discriminating disabled learners directly or indirectly.</li> </ul> <p><b>The Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duty of education authority in improving school education</li> <li>• Raising standards</li> <li>• Requirement that education be provided in mainstream schools</li> </ul> <p><b>The National Improvement Framework</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education Authorities are under a duty to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of education of school education which is provided in the schools managed by them and to carry out the duty with a view to achieving the strategic priorities set out in the National Improvement Framework.</li> </ul> <p><b>The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 58: Corporate Parenting Responsibilities</li> </ul>

## 8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Not Required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

## 9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None

## 10. APPENDICES

- Appendix A - Overview of the attainment of Care Experienced Children and Young People in Aberdeen City Schools

## 11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

<b>Name</b>	Larissa Gordon / Amy Evans
<b>Title</b>	Virtual School Head Teacher/ Corporate Parent Lead
<b>Email Address</b>	<a href="mailto:Lagordon@aberdeencity.gov.uk">Lagordon@aberdeencity.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:AmEvans@aberdeencity.gov.uk">AmEvans@aberdeencity.gov.uk</a>
<b>Tel</b>	01224 522027