

SUPPORTING THE EDUCATION OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of the paper is to advise Elected Members of the actions taken by Education Services to ensure that all looked after children in Argyll and Bute education establishments reach their fullest educational potential and considers a number of additional actions to improve the educational support for looked after children.

1.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:

- (a) Note the content of this paper and the actions already taken to ensure that the support needs of looked after children are assessed and addressed in an effective and timely manner.
- (b) Note the additional actions to support schools to meet the educational needs of looked after children.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This paper outlines the range of actions taken by Education Services to ensure that all looked after children in Argyll and Bute education establishments reach their fullest educational potential and considers a number of additional actions to improve the educational support for looked after children.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

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4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 The Education (Additional Support for Learning) Scotland Act 2009 identified that all looked after children, whether looked after at home or away from home, should automatically be deemed to have additional support needs (ASN) unless the education authority assessed that they do not require additional support to benefit from school education. Over the academic session 2015/16 there were 202 looked after children in Argyll and Bute educational establishments. This total includes any child who was formally looked after at any point during that academic session.

Stage	Looked After Children	Looked after by Argyll and Bute	Looked after by another Local Authority	Looked after at home	Looked after away from home
Primary	114	82%	18%	39%	61%
Secondary	88	85%	15%	34%	66%

4.2 Actions by Education Service to date

Community Services: Education has developed a range of measures to support the educational needs of looked after children in schools. In line with legislation, support to looked after children is needs based, through appropriate assessment being carried out with evidence based interventions then implemented. The GIRFEC practice model is the principal vehicle to assess needs and devise appropriate outcomes. There are procedures in place to ensure that looked after children have:

- An identified named person;
- A designated senior manager with whole school responsibility for looked after children;
- Screening using the Wellbeing indicators to identify whether the child or young person has additional support needs;
- Procedures in place to ensure that the individual educational needs will be known to their respective teachers;
- A support plan or Child's Plan, if required, with appropriate educational outcomes;
- Regular progress reviews with support plans updated accordingly, and
- Their looked after status recorded appropriately in SEEMIS.

- 4.3 The Authority Staged Intervention procedures have been reviewed and updated to address the requirements of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. Staged Intervention allows head teachers to allocate support according to need.

SEEMIS contains a Risk Matrix which identifies vulnerable children in schools (including looked after children) based on a number of risk factors and recorded on a red/amber/green basis. The Risk Matrix is being reviewed by the Administrative and Management Information Officer to ensure risks are weighted appropriately to highlight the most vulnerable of children.

4.4 Data Sharing

The Statutory Guidance on Part 9 of the Children And Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 states;

Effective collaboration will depend, in part, on the sharing of information. In most cases it should be possible to share relevant information without requiring the disclosure of personal information. When corporate parents wish to disseminate information about the activities and support they provide, for example, they should collaborate with those corporate parents (such as local authorities) who have direct contact with children and young people, and can distribute information on their behalf. Where the sharing of personal information is required in order to safeguard or promote the wellbeing of a child or young person, this should be done proportionately, in compliance with the principles and provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

With the above in mind it is essential that educational establishments receive timely updates to ensure the accuracy of information relating to looked after children for the purposes of tracking and monitoring. A key challenge is to ensure that we are targeting support and intervention to the right children and young people at the right time and this requires the alignment of data currently held in Care First and SEEMIS Click and Go. A system has been put in place to ensure that the information from the Social Work Looked After list is updated centrally in Click and Go and that, at the same time, changes to a pupil's looked after status will be notified to the Head Teacher by email. However, the system relies on the accuracy of the information from Children and Families and requires monitoring by both services.

4.5 All but one area of the action points identified in the internal audit (Looked After Children and Equality of Education conducted September 2015) have been overtaken. The outstanding action relates to the Scottish Government delay on the implementation of Named Person and will be addressed in line with revised dates for statutory implementation.

4.6 Effective support for looked after children and young people is focused on reporting on 4 key areas. These are;

- Attainment;
- Exclusions;
- Attendance, and
- Positive Destinations.

4.7 **Attainment**

The key drivers to raise attainment for looked after children within each individual education establishment is to ensure that each looked after child and young person has their own;

- Needs assessed and identified;
- Appropriate planning and individualised outcomes, and
- That there is rigorous tracking and monitoring of the child's or young person's progress.

4.8 **Primary**

Detailed information on literacy attainment for children who were looked after

last session was presented at the January meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

4.9 Secondary

The tables below illustrates the attainment of looked after children and young people in Insight.

(Insight data – Local Benchmarking data for Looked After Children and young people at home (LA) and Looked after away from home (LAAC))

S4 pupils - Performance in Literacy and Numeracy for the last three years compared with the virtual comparator and national data:

S4	Year	% Level 4 Literacy and Numeracy		% Level 5 Literacy and Numeracy		Cohort numbers	
		LA	LAAC	LA	LAAC	LA	LAAC
Argyll & Bute	2014	27	44	9	11	11	9
Virtual Comp	2014	68	68	18	21	110	90
National	2014	29	45	4	7	554	563
Argyll & Bute	2015	33	28.6	0	0	3	7
Virtual Comp	2015	78	68.6	16.7	20	30	70
National	2015	37	53	5.6	8	500	619
Argyll & Bute	2016	50	38.5	37.5	7.7	8	13
Virtual Comp	2016	74	62	44	26	80	130
National	2016	39	55	6.8	10	514	653

Summary:

At SCQF level 4 the performance of Looked after at home pupils in Argyll and Bute was close to the national average in 2014 and 2015 and significantly higher in 2016. Looked after away from home pupils performed much better in 2014 than those at home but then fell below in 2015 and well below in 2016.

At SCQF Level 5 the performance of looked after at home pupils in Argyll and Bute was much higher than the national average in 2016 but a little lower than the virtual comparator. In 2016 the performance of looked after away from home pupils was much lower than those looked after at home and below the national.

S5 pupils - performance in Literacy and Numeracy for the last three years compared with the virtual comparator and national data

S5	Year	% Level 4 Literacy and Numeracy		% Level 5 Literacy and Numeracy		Cohort numbers	
		LA	LAAC	LA	LAAC	LA	LAAC
Argyll & Bute	2014	82	67	18	50	11	6
Virtual C	2014	85	62	48	43	110	60
National	2014	36	53.5	13	18	333	381
Argyll & Bute	2015	67	25	17	12.5	6	8
Virtual C	2015	82	76	42	49	60	80
National	2015	50	62.5	13.7	23.5	285	374
Argyll & Bute	2016	50	50	0	0	2	6
Virtual C	2016	90	80	40	48	20	60
National	2016	51.6	65.6	16	24	283	453

Summary:

At level 4 and 5 over the last three years the performance of pupils in Argyll and Bute for both looked after away from home and at home has declined and was lower than the national average and significantly lower than virtual comparator at SCQF in 2016.

IMPORTANT NOTE 1: It is very important to note the very small numbers of pupils as this can lead to large fluctuations in percentage figures.

IMPORTANT NOTE 2: When the looked after filters are used within the insight tool the virtual comparator is not one of the variables that determine pupil selection so the pupils who are looked after in Argyll and Bute are not being compared with other looked after children across Scotland in the VC data.

The only comparator data is age, gender, ASN and SIMD rank. Therefore it is much fairer to look at the national data as this is only composed of pupils who are looked after and therefore does offer a like for like comparison.

General educational attainment June 2015 for looked after leavers:

	Argyll & Bute (2015)		Virtual comp (2015)	
	LA	LAAC	LA	LAAC
1 or more qualification at SCQF Level 3 or better	87%(of 8)	100% (of 9)	94.12%	89% (of 90)
1 or more qualification at SCQF Level 4 or better	87.5%	78%	91.76%	84%
1 or more qualification at SCQF Level 5 or better	75%	33%	73.53%	64%
1 or more qualification at SCQF Level 6 or better	37.5%	11%	37.65%	29%
1 or more qualification at SCQF Level 7 or better	12.5%	0%	8.82%	6%

Overall the performance of looked after away pupils in Argyll and Bute is significantly lower than the pupils who are looked after at home whose performance is broadly in line with the virtual comparator.

2016 leavers data is not available until the February Insight update as this data is based on the December 2016 leavers census.

4.10 Planning/Review meetings

Every looked after child should be assigned a Lead Professional who is responsible for co-ordinating the work of different agencies involved with the child and managing the Child's Plan. The Lead Professional for a looked after child is a social worker.

In order that planned support is effective, it is critical for establishments to take an active part in review processes for looked after children. This will include where appropriate;

- Educational outcomes are included in looked after children plans;
- Key Education staff attend looked after children Planning/Review meetings;
- An education report is written and submitted to looked after children Planning/Review meetings, and
- At each review meeting reports from schools will include, where appropriate, attainment information and progress towards identified educational outcomes.

4.11 The Educational Psychology Service continues to support schools to assess the reading and spelling skills of primary age children. Appropriate assessment

material has been provided to all schools with results collated and analysed centrally. While results are collected centrally annually, there is an expectation that all schools will use this information to monitor and review progress on an ongoing basis. The assessment includes a self report scale to gauge looked after children's views of themselves as learners.

- 4.12 In August of each year, Education Officers have initial discussions with senior leadership teams in secondary schools regarding the outcome of the most recent certificate examinations. The SQA results for looked after children will be a specific item on the agenda for this discussion, to be considered alongside their other achievements and the individual narrative for each young person.

4.13 **Positive Destinations**

The Education Service endorses the principles of the Care Leavers Covenant and is committed to working for real change in the lives of care experienced young people to improve their support, opportunities and outcomes.

Looked after Young People in Argyll and Bute that leave school are increasingly entering positive destinations (education, employment or training). In 2014, **68.4% (cohort 19)** of looked after young people who left school entered a positive destination. In 2015 the figure was **88.24% (cohort 17)**.

Argyll and Bute Council offers our S4 – S6 Looked After and Accommodated Children (LAAC) the opportunity to gain that first taste of employment through a summer internship placement with the Council. The LAAC young persons attend the summer placement for four days a week over a five week period and completed an identified project on behalf of a council department. During the placement the young person would be paid the national minimum wage.

4.14 **Attendance and Exclusions**

Primary

Overall attendance for primary aged pupils in Argyll and Bute and nationally is increasing slightly. The average total absence from school for all primary age children is 4.48% and for looked after children is 4.92%. No primary age looked after children were excluded from primary school last session.

Secondary

The average total absence from school for all secondary age children is 8.20% and for looked after children is 14.52%. Further analysis demonstrates that this average figure is inflated by a smaller number of young people who have a significant difficulty with school attendance. Exclusions openings account for 0.07% of the absences for looked after children, with the overall secondary school population figure for exclusion being 0.04%. There requires to be a

continued focus on ensuring children and young people at the secondary stage are meaningfully engaged with the life of the school and sustain positive attendance.

For the past two full school sessions looked after pupils account for between 9-10% of the total number of pupils excluded. The cohort of 202 looked after pupils in session 2015-2016 forms just 2% of the overall school population of 10,445.

For looked after pupils the number of days absent due to exclusion reduced by over 40% from session 2014-2015 to 2015-2016. This compares to a 33% reduction for the whole school population. The number of looked after pupils being excluded reduced by 21% compared to a 30% reduction for the whole school population.

There is a downward trend for all pupils over the past two full school sessions with Exclusion Incidents per 1000 pupils reducing from 20.53 to 15.08 in session 2015-2016. This is below the national average which was reported as 27.2 in session 2014-2015. Figures obtained from the Summary Statistics for Schools No.6 2015 Edition.

This correlates with the introduction of the revised Exclusion policy.

4.15 Future Education actions

The low numbers of looked after children within the authority area who sit national qualifications can mean that percentage attainment rates can vary widely from year to year. For some looked after children and young people attainment may have to be considered a longer term outcome whilst more immediate wellbeing outcomes are addressed in the first instance. The low level of attainment as reported in the recent Scottish Government publication 'Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2014 / 15' has informed specific actions to further build the capacity to support and improve outcomes for looked after children at all levels within the Education service. These are;

- Supporting looked after children is a key priority within the Education Service Plan 2017-18;
- The looked after children framework for education introduced which ensures that head teachers understand their roles as corporate parents;
- Progress of looked after children towards their educational outcomes should be part of regular tracking and monitoring dialogue between line manager and class teacher in every education establishment;
- Looked after children attainment is a specific area of discussion between members of the senior leadership team and principal teachers in secondary establishments;
- Looked after children attainment and wellbeing is a specific area of discussion between head teachers and educational psychologists at the primary stage;

- Headteacher representation on the Corporate Parenting Board;
- Looked after children support systems in educational establishments to be included in Quality Assurance visits;
- Support for children with ASN to be included in revised model of school reviews, and
- Area Principal Teachers will be given a strategic responsibility to support the transitional arrangements for looked after and accommodated children to ensure that the receiving educational establishment obtains all the appropriate educational information and that all arrangements for support are in place.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 An annual performance report will be provided in FQ4 of each year to both Community Services Committee and the Corporate Parenting Board that incorporates performance information for looked after children i.e. attainment in Literacy and Numeracy; attainment in national qualifications, wider achievement and positive destinations.
- 5.2 More rigorously applied approaches to assessment, intervention, tracking, monitoring and reporting on the needs of looked after children within education will be supported by the central education team.
- 5.3 There is a need for the appropriate officers and managers from both Education and Social work to continue to meet on a regular basis to ensure that database information is entered and updated consistently to generate an agreed list of children and young people whose progress will be tracked and monitored to improve outcomes.
- 5.4 Following implementation, there will be an evaluation of the impact of the guidance to support schools to meet the educational needs of looked after children.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

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| 6.1 | Policy | The support for looked after children is consistent with the council's corporate parenting role.
Guidance to support schools to meet the educational needs of Looked After children. |
| 6.2 | Financial | None |
| 6.3 | Legal | Compliance with the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009 and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. |

6.4	HR	None
6.5	Equalities	There is a requirement for the Council to ensure children who are looked after are given equality of opportunity.
6.6	Risk	Failure to adequately support the educational needs of looked after children with the potential for reputational damage to the Council.
6.7	Customer Service	None

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