

CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The main purpose of this report is to update members of the Community Services Committee with information about interventions being taken within Education Services to ensure that Care Experienced Children and Young People achieve the best possible educational outcomes.
- 1.2 The report also details the expenditure against the grant allocated by Scottish Government to Argyll and Bute for session 2020/21 from the Scottish Attainment Challenge Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund.
- 1.3 Recommendations
- It is recommended that Community Services Committee:
- a) Continues to endorse the work undertaken by Argyll and Bute Education Services as part of the Corporate Parenting Board to improve the educational attainment and life chances of Care Experienced Children and Young People.
 - b) Notes that the spending plan for the grant allocated by Scottish Government to Argyll and Bute for session 2020/21 from the Scottish Attainment Challenge Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund has been produced and monitored by the Education Lead (Principal Teacher) for Care Experienced Children and Young People, in consultation with key partners and specifically the Social Work Lead for Care Experience, the Chief Education Officer and Chief Social Worker.
 - c) Agrees the attainment funding for Care Experienced Children and Young People will support the continued input from the Principal Teacher (PT) for Care Experienced Children and Young People role and roles of the Care Experience Health and Wellbeing Liaison Officers.
 - d) Agrees that the Head of Education: Lifelong Learning and Support continues to provide updates on the improved outcomes for Care Experienced Children and Young People to Corporate Parenting Board and Community Services Committee.

CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Corporate Parenting is the responsibility that councils have for children and young people who are Looked After under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and are known as Care Experienced Children and Young People.
- 2.2 The establishment of Argyll and Bute Corporate Parenting Board was central to the Council response to improving outcomes for Looked After children and young people and care leavers. It was also a key element of the Getting it Right for our Looked After Children's Improvement Plan.
- 2.3 As employees of the local authority, education staff are corporate parents and have a clearly defined role to play alongside the other 23 corporate parents defined in Schedule 4 of the Act. However staff working in education need to be aware of the unique role that they play in ensuring that looked after children and young people experience a positive learning environment, strong, nurturing relationships, encouragement and protection against poor outcomes in adulthood. Managers need to ensure support and ongoing professional learning opportunities for education staff to allow them to fulfil this crucial role. This is clearly stated in the Framework on Supporting Looked After Children in Education settings in Argyll and Bute that was produced during 2016, presented to the Corporate Parenting Board on 1st July 2016 and launched in schools during session 2016/17 – January 2017 (Appendix 1). The Framework was created following work by a multi-agency working group and after partnership working with CELCIS. It draws heavily on the national best practice guidance: https://www.celcis.org/files/3615/0721/5871/Looked_After_and_Learning.pdf
- 2.4 During session 2020/21 there have been significant developments in supporting the educational experiences and outcomes for our children and young people in Argyll and Bute.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Community Services Committee:

- a) Continues to endorse the work undertaken by Argyll and Bute Education Services as part of the Corporate Parenting Board to improve the educational attainment and life chances of Care Experienced Children and Young People.
- b) Notes that the spending plan for the grant allocated by Scottish Government to Argyll and Bute for session 2020/21 from the Scottish Attainment Challenge Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund has been produced and monitored by the Principal Teacher for Care Experienced Children and Young People, in consultation with key partners and specifically the Social Work Lead for Care Experienced Children, the Chief Education Officer and Chief Social Worker.
- c) Agrees the attainment funding for Care Experienced Children and Young People will support the continued input from the Principal Teacher (PT) for Care Experienced Children and Young People role and roles of the Care Experience Health and Wellbeing Liaison Officers.
- d) Agrees that the Head of Education: Lifelong Learning and Support continues to provide updates on the improved outcomes for Care Experienced Children and Young People to Corporate Parenting Board and Community Services Committee.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 In 2018, as part of the National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education and Attainment Scotland Fund (a targeted initiative focused on supporting young people affected by poverty and deprivation across Scotland), specific funding was directed towards supporting Care Experienced Children and Young People. The term 'care experience' is now a widely used term within the sector to describe any person who has experience of being in care, regardless of their placement length, type or age; this term is used (as opposed to the statutory term 'Looked After Children') to ensure that our practice is inclusive and provides for all groups of young people who experience care.
- 4.2 In Spring 2021 we have 266 Care Experienced pupils in our Education Settings. 143 are "Currently Looked After". Of those, 103 are looked after by Argyll and Bute and 38 children have been placed in Argyll and Bute from other Authorities. The additional 123 Care Experienced children and young people in our settings have a status of "Previously Looked After". These figures refer to pupils in Early Years, Primary and Secondary settings. Argyll

and Bute also looks after 25 children who are placed in other authorities through residential, kinship or foster placements.

- 4.3 Argyll and Bute Council was awarded a grant of up to £122,400.00, payable over the current academic year 2020/2021. An evaluation of spend for financial year 20/21 was submitted and approved by Scottish Government in January. The spend evaluation submitted to Scottish Government was as follows:

Item (e.g. staffing, resources, training, intervention etc)	Amount (£)	Additional detail
Staffing	66,941.21	Education Lead post Looked After Health and Wellbeing Liaison Officers
Activities	5,000.00	Enhanced Curriculum activities for our Children's Houses
Transport	4,258.79	Transport to allow extended curriculum provision for pupils on flexible learning plans.
Emotional/Wellbeing Support	2,000.00	Cool2Talk contribution.
Training	1,000.00	Staff training in nurturing and trauma-responsive family support.
TOTAL	79,200.00	

The spend plan for the uncommitted remainder of the fund, to cover the period until June 2020, was as follows:

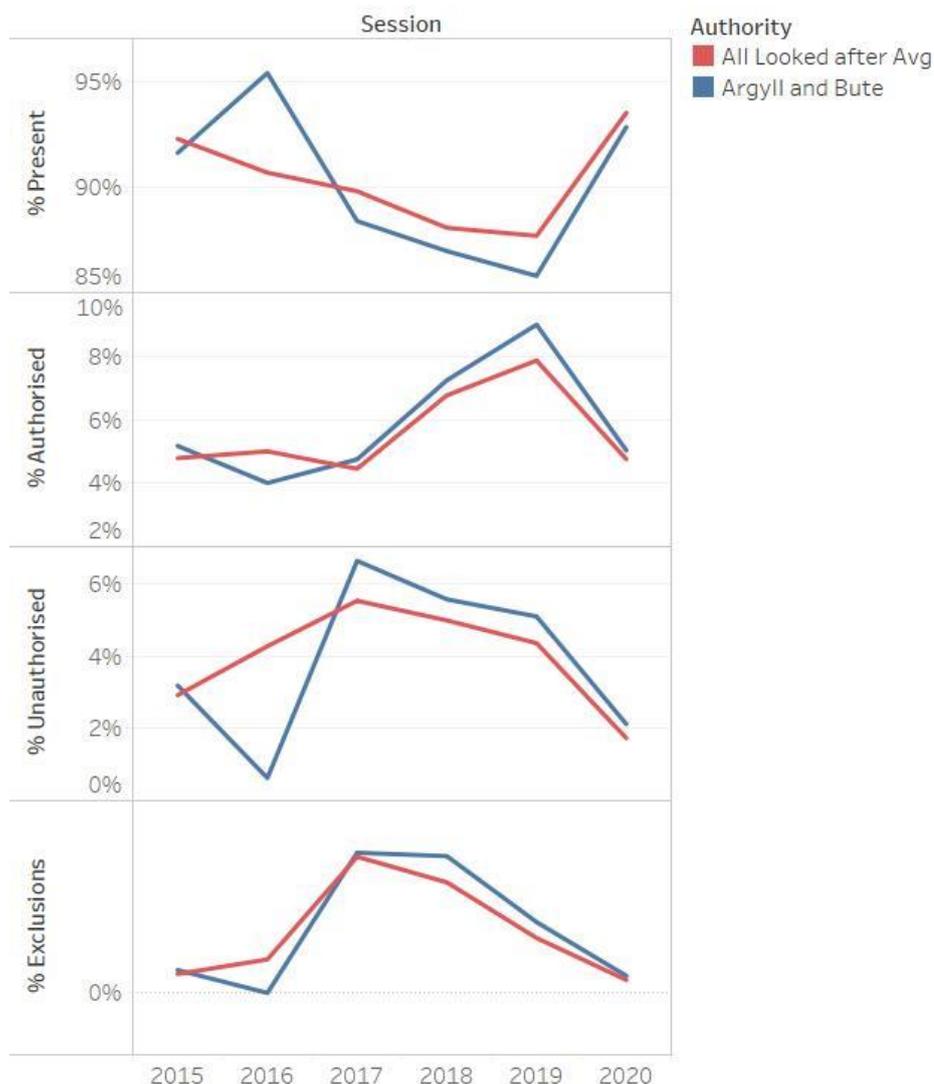
Item (e.g. staffing, resources, training, intervention etc)	Additional detail
Staffing	Education Lead post Looked After Health and Wellbeing Liaison Officers
Activities	Small test of change trial for development of Inspiring Internships Programme to allow pupils under 16 to access nurturing work experience placements.
Transport	Transport to allow extended curriculum provision for pupils on flexible learning plans.

The spend plan for the remainder of the grant had also been approved but due to COVID 19, an update was issued from Government at the end of March, stating that flexibility will be offered in the use of this funding to address changing needs. A further update on this was due from Scottish Government in the week beginning 8.5.20.

4.4 Data on attendance, exclusions and attainment has been provided throughout the last session to the Corporate Parenting Board and to the Community Services Committee. Both qualitative and quantitative data has shown significant improvements in relation to education provision for our Care Experienced Children and Young People, increased scrutiny and tracking of progress, reduced exclusions, increased use of flexible approaches to learning and increased understanding of the impact of trauma amongst staff. Capacity has also been increased to support this cohort through the creation of a new casual Looked After Health and Wellbeing Liaison Officer Post. 12 casual Health and Wellbeing Officers were recruited in Spring 2020. At present (May 2021), 19 children and young people (aged between 5 and 18) are being supported, either in school or in the community.

The following tables (produced in April 2021) show continued improvements in attendance and exclusions data:

Attendance



Data from the February 2021 Insight update showed that positive destinations for our Care Experienced School Leavers in session 2019/2020 were as follows:

Establishment	Year of Session	% Activity Agreement	% Employed	% Further Education	% Higher Education	% Not known	% Personal Skills Development	% Training	% Unemployed Not Seeking	% Unemployed Seeking	% Voluntary Work
Argyll & Bute	2017		23.53%	35.29%	23.53%			5.88%			11.76%
	2018		13.33%	53.33%				13.33%	13.33%		6.67%
	2019		11.11%	33.33%	5.56%			16.67%	27.78%	5.56%	
The National Establishment	2017	9.00%	15.53%	39.56%	6.63%	1.19%		8.01%	6.23%	12.17%	1.68%
	2018		15.38%	43.65%	6.59%	0.76%	3.06%	12.89%	6.11%	10.70%	0.86%
	2019		8.70%	49.36%	7.91%	1.19%	2.18%	12.96%	8.51%	8.90%	0.30%
The Northern Alliance	2017	9.76%	21.34%	33.54%	7.32%	3.66%		8.54%	4.88%	9.76%	1.22%
	2018		17.93%	40.00%	6.21%	4.14%	5.52%	8.97%	6.90%	7.59%	2.76%
	2019		9.92%	46.56%	8.40%	1.53%	2.29%	11.45%	12.21%	7.63%	
Virtual Comparator	2017	1.76%	24.71%	27.06%	30.00%		0.59%	4.12%	2.94%	8.24%	0.59%
	2018		27.33%	37.33%	16.00%	2.00%	0.67%	5.33%	4.00%	4.67%	2.67%
	2019		17.78%	50.56%	9.44%	1.67%	1.67%	7.78%	3.89%	7.22%	

Although our destinations in Argyll and Bute are below the National Average, we note that when working with such small numbers, a change in circumstance for one or two young people can negatively impact the percentage figures. The PT for Care Experienced Children and Young People has tracked the leavers to discover that there are a number of reasons for high unemployment figures. Some of these are related to the impact of COVID and ill-health.

- 4.5 The PT continues to facilitate the following areas to support the educational opportunities and achievements of our care experienced young people:
- Supporting establishments to improve learning for care experienced young people;
 - Working with partner agencies to support the Corporate Parenting Board plan;
 - Ensuring care experienced children and young people have a robust, personalised and achievable individualised learning plan;
 - Supporting our care experienced children and young people to gain accredited qualifications and awards;
 - Supporting the timeous implementation of appropriate interventions, where needed, to ensure the best possible attainment outcomes;
 - Tracking and monitoring the attainment of looked after children and young people, including those attending specialist placements outwith Argyll and Bute;

- Providing termly updates on the progress of looked after children and young people through tracking and monitoring their progress and attendance;
- Championing the needs of care experienced children and young people across the authority;
- Liaising with educational establishments, Additional Support Needs Education Support Officers and pupil support teachers to ensure additional teaching input is provided when required to reduce the impact of interrupted learning;
- Liaising with establishments to collate a range of appropriate teaching resources in a central space to allow pupil access for those who may be unable to attend school for short periods of time;
- Working strategically across the authority to promote the rights of care experienced children and young people, working within the Rights Respecting Schools framework, and
- Working closely with colleagues in Children and Families Social Work to enhance effective multiagency working to improve outcomes for care experienced children and young people.

4.6 The impact and benefit of having a dedicated post-holder who has a close focus on the educational attainment and experience of Care Experienced Children and Young People is evidenced in all of the reporting and evaluation provided to the Corporate Parenting Board and Community Services Committee since the post was created in January 2019. There is an early indication from national evaluation work around the use of the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund that this impact is replicated across Scotland where such a post has been created. There is funding within the allocated grant to continue current position of PT Care Experienced Children and Young People.

4.7 In January 2021 the original PT for Looked After Children and Young People returned to her substantive post and her replacement was employed as the PT for Care Experienced Children and Young People to reflect the change in language that we now use. The recruitment panel for this position were: the Inclusion and Equality Education Manager, Principal Educational Psychologist and Children and Families Social Work Manager.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 Significant improvements were made in relation to scrutiny, audit and outcomes for Care Experienced Children and Young People during Sessions 2018/19 and 2019/2020. These have been sustained into Session 2020/21. This work will continue to address raising attainment and closing the gap for Care Experienced Children and Young People in session 21/22 and support additional challenges related to the impact of Covid 19.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy – None
- 6.2 Financial – Appropriate allocation of the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund Grant
- 6.3 Legal – The statutory duties of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and all previous relevant acts will be met.
- 6.4 HR – None
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty: Providing equity and inclusion to meet the needs of all young people.
 - 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – All legislative requirements will be met
 - 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – N/A
 - 6.5.3 Islands – No differentiated impact.
- 6.6 Risk – Ongoing scrutiny and audit will provide better outcomes for Care Experience Children and Young People. Sustainability- and future-planning will mitigate future risk.
- 6.7 Customer Service – Improvements in service to meet individual needs are being sought

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