

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, as agreed at the Community Services Committee on 10 June 2021.

1.2 The report also details the expenditure against the grant allocated by Scottish Government to Argyll and Bute for session 2021/22 from the Scottish Attainment Challenge Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund.

1.3 Recommendations

It is recommended that Community Services Committee notes:

- a) 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) That the spending plan for the grant allocated by Scottish Government to Argyll and Bute for session 2021/22 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) That the attainment funding for Care Experienced Children and Young People will support the continued input from a centralised post holder (Currently the Principal Teacher for Care Experienced Children and Young People) and roles of the Care Experienced Health and Wellbeing Liaison Officers.
- d) That through the coming session the support for care experienced children and young people will continue from a specific post holder, however, the title will be amended to Virtual Head Teacher to bring Argyll and Bute in line with the national trend across other local authorities and to increase the credibility and scope of this post.
- e) That the Chief Education Officer continues to provide updates on the improved outcomes for Care Experienced Children and Young People to the 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 Care experienced 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 Care experienced children and young people and care leavers. It was also a key element of the Getting it Right for our Care experienced 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 care experienced 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 Care Experienced 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 The Centre For Excellence for Children’s Care and Protection (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 2021/22 there have been significant developments in supporting the educational experiences and outcomes for our children and young people in Argyll and Bute.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Community Services Committee notes:

- a) 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) That the spending plan for the grant allocated by Scottish Government to Argyll and Bute for session 2021/22 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) That the attainment funding for Care Experienced Children and Young People will support the continued input from a centralised post holder (currently the Principal Teacher for Care Experienced Children and Young People) and roles of the Care Experienced Health and Wellbeing Liaison Officers.
- d) That through the coming session the support for care experienced children and young people will continue from a specific post holder, however, the title will be amended to Virtual Head Teacher to bring Argyll and Bute in line with the national

trend across other local authorities and to increase the credibility and scope of this post.

- e) That the Chief Education Officer continues to provide updates on the improved outcomes for Care Experienced Children and Young People to the 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 experienced' 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 or type, or their 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 2022 we have 283 Care Experienced pupils in our education settings (2-18). 148 are "Currently Looked After". Of those, 108 are looked after by Argyll and Bute and 38 children have been placed in Argyll and Bute from other Authorities. The additional 135 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 19 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 £129,600, payable over the current academic year 2021/2022.

Below is a breakdown of the projected spend from the beginning of the session:

| ITEM | AMOUNT |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Staffing | 119,246 |
| Support Activities/Resources | 4,608 |
| Travel and Subsistence | 3,546 |
| Cool2Talk Contribution | 2,000 |
| Staff Training | 200 |
| Total projected expenditure | 129,600 |
| MONIES AVAILABLE | 129, 600 |

There is currently a balance within earmarked reserves resulting from an underspend of the 2020/21 academic year's grant funding. Several factors contributed to this underspend but primarily the restrictions imposed due to Covid. It had been anticipated that the funding would be used to augment the Health and Wellbeing Liaison Officers in 2021/22 but a delay in the recruitment of the new Health and Wellbeing Liaison Officers and a limit to the number of pupils that the Liaison Officers can support each day has meant that this was not possible.

The PT for Care Experienced Children and Young People has advised the Scottish Government of this underspend and requested that the monies be carried forward to the next academic session. It is proposed that the Health and Wellbeing Liaison Officers continue to work with some of our Care Experienced Children and Young People over the summer break, to ensure visibility and maintain relationships over the long holiday period, especially to support those at key transition stages.

- 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 that there has been a drop in attendance figures. There have been 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 continued role of the Care Experience Health and Wellbeing Liaison Officer Post. 5 additional temporary Health and Wellbeing Officers were recruited in November 2021. At present (June 2022), 35 children and young people (aged between 5 and 18) are being supported by these workers, either in school or in the community.

ATTENDANCE AND EXCLUSIONS

The attendance of our Care Experienced Pupils on 31st May was 87.5%. Primary attendance is 90.3% and Secondary is 85.01%. The targets as specified in the Corporate Parenting Board Plan were 94.5% for Primary and 89.5% for Secondary. The PT has been monitoring this attendance and supporting schools, where necessary. The attendance figures across all cohorts have fallen. COVID has had a significant impact on attendance, not only through illness and the isolation that was necessary but also through anxiety related to the Pandemic.

The PT is a member of the multi-agency Maximising Attendance working group and is working with one of our Secondary Schools in the concurrent Addressing Non-Attendance Project. It is expected that the learning through this will inform practice and the PT's ability to support similar attendance concerns in other schools.

We have met our target to have <5 exclusions this year. The exclusion guidance for care experienced children has been revised and there has been a particular focus on sharing and embedding these protocols and inform and decisions being made regarding Care Experienced CYP who may be displaying dysregulated behaviour.

DESTINATIONS

Data from the February 2022 showed that initial destinations for our Care Experienced School Leavers in session 2020/2021 were as follows:



52% went on to Further Education, 4% went on to Higher Education, 9% are Economically Inactive, meaning that they are unable to work at the moment and 35% of young people went into employment.

This is a positive picture and exceeds our Year 1 target in the Corporate Parenting Plan, which was to increase the number of young people moving on to a positive destination to 85%. 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 and can identify the reasons for the 9% who are economically inactive. The PT works with school colleagues and partners from SDS to ensure that this small number of young people are aware of their options for further education and employment and that they have the appropriate contact information in order to be able to progress this when they are ready.

4.5 Strong inter-agency links exist between between Social Work, Health and Education.

Many working groups and panels have been established with representatives from various agencies. The PT is a member of a number of these on a number of them:

- Maximising Attendance Group
- Addressing Non-Attendance Strategy group
- Joint Resource Group
- Kinship Panel
- Trauma Strategy Group

The PT has been invited be part of the recruitment panel for new Social Workers on a number of occasions, highlighting the partnership working across agencies. This allows the newly recruited Social Workers to experience this link and paves the way for open communication when they are in post.

The PT has attended a team meeting of the Family Placement Team to share information about the role of the Care Experience Team and to find out more about the team. This has led to increased communication between the two teams and several referrals for Health and Wellbeing Liaison Support have come through the Family Placement Team.

The PT and one of the Social Work area teams are planning to jointly host a multi-agency “get together”, inviting colleagues across Education, Social Work, Health and other agencies involved with children and families across the locality to share information about their services and help put faces to names, after two years of mainly online meetings. This foster positive relations and allow people to reach out to colleagues for advice or support.

The PT works closely with the Participation and Engagement Officer to provide and promote opportunities to encourage children’s participation and the development of their wellbeing. When recruiting new Health and Wellbeing Liaison Officers, the Participation and Engagement Officer was part of the recruitment process, bringing questions from the children to ask at interview. The children’s questions were very insightful and demonstrated what was important to them. They covered topics such as confidentiality and bringing the relational work to a close.

4.6 There is evidence that creative steps are being taken in our schools to improve engagement and also promote home-school links. The creation of a “learning hub”, a less formal learning space in a secondary school has encouraged many

reluctant senior phase pupils to attend school. Another secondary school is using an “intensive support” class to provide a nurturing classroom where pupils are supported to achieve National Qualifications in Literacy and Numeracy. The Nurturing approach used in a number of our schools is helping to support Care Experienced pupils.

- 4.7 There has been an increase in the capacity of the Care Experience Team, therefore an increase in the numbers of children working with Health and Wellbeing Liaison Officers. In June 2022, the 9 available Health and Wellbeing Liaison Officers are supporting 35 children and young people.

Two of the Officers were available to work with a number of young people over the summer break 2021 to maintain continuity or to establish a link over a transition period. This work supported not only the children but also their families. Similar work will continue over the 2022 summer break.

- 4.8 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. The Care Experience team have strong links with the CELCIS (Centre for Excellence in Children’s Care and Protection) network of Virtual Head Teachers and Care Experience Teams. The purpose of the Network is to:

- Share practice
- Improve education
- Influence nationally
- Measure impact

Benefits of membership of this Network are: peer support, making links with Scottish Government colleagues, having connections with identified contacts for information sharing, being able to respond to and shape national policy areas, raising awareness of issues of equity for children and young people with care experience, and developing the credibility of the role. An evaluation of the work

of the Network can be found here:
https://www.celcis.org/application/files/9516/3540/8809/VSHT_Summary_Evaluation_September_2021_FINAL.pdf

There is funding within the allocated grant to continue with having a dedicated post-holder to maintain a close focus on Care Experienced Children and Young People. In order to bring provision in line with that of other local authorities, this role will be taken forward as a Virtual Head Teacher in order to develop credibility and scope for increased impact.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 Significant improvements have been made in relation to scrutiny, audit and outcomes for Care Experienced Children and Young People during previous sessions. 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 2022/23.

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 (Scotland) Act 2020 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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