

CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The main purpose of this report is to provide the Community Services Committee with an update on actions being taken within the Education Service to support Care Experienced Children and Young People to 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 2022/23 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 2022/23 from the Scottish Attainment Challenge Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund has been produced and monitored by the Education Lead 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) Agree the attainment funding for Care Experienced Children and Young People will support the continued input from the Care Experienced Education Team (Virtual Head Teacher and Health and Wellbeing Liaison Officers).
- d) Agree 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/Community Services Committee.

CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Corporate Parenting is the responsibility that all local authority bodies in Scotland have for children and young people who are Care experienced under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and this cohort are known as Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP).
- 2.2 The establishment of Argyll and Bute's 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 alongside our Education Strategic Plan 2022-2024.
- 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. Staff working in education require to be aware of the unique role which they play in ensuring that care experienced children and young people experience a positive learning environment, strong, nurturing relationships and are supported to achieve positive destinations as they move into adulthood. Senior leaders require 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 which launched in January 2017.
- 2.4 During session 2022/23 we have continued to build on the significant developments during the previous sessions to further support the educational experiences and outcomes for our children and young people in Argyll and Bute. A Virtual Head Teacher for CECYP was appointed on 17th April 2023, replacing the post of Principal Teacher for CECYP, demonstrating the ongoing commitment from Education Services to 'Keep the Promise.' ([Keeping the Promise implementation plan - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/keeping-the-promise-implementation-plan-2022-2023/pages/11/index.aspx))

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the 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 2022/23 from the Scottish Attainment Challenge Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund has been produced and monitored by the Education Lead 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) Agree the attainment funding for Care Experienced Children and Young People will support the continued input from the Care Experienced Education Team (Virtual Head Teacher and Health and Wellbeing Liaison Officers).
- d) Agree 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/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 (CECYP). 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 As at October 2023, we have 265 Care Experienced pupils in our education settings (2-18). 136 are "Currently Looked After". Of those, 103 are looked after by Argyll and Bute and 33 children have been placed in Argyll and Bute from other Authorities. The additional 129 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, Special and Secondary settings. Argyll and Bute also looks after 26 children who are placed in other authorities through residential, kinship or foster placements.
- 4.3 Argyll and Bute Council was awarded a specific grant of up to £127,400, payable over the current academic year 2022/23. As previously agreed with the Scottish Government, the Council has used earmarked reserves containing underspends from the Care Experienced grant to supplement the 2022/23 specific grant.

Below is a breakdown of the projected spend for session 2022/23:

ITEM	AMOUNT
Staffing	£151,488
Support Activities/Resources	£2,121

Travel and Subsistence	£6,184
Cool2Talk Contribution	£2,000
Staff Training	0
Total projected expenditure	£161,793
Funded by:	
2022/23 Scottish Government grant	£127,400
Earmarked Reserves	£34,393

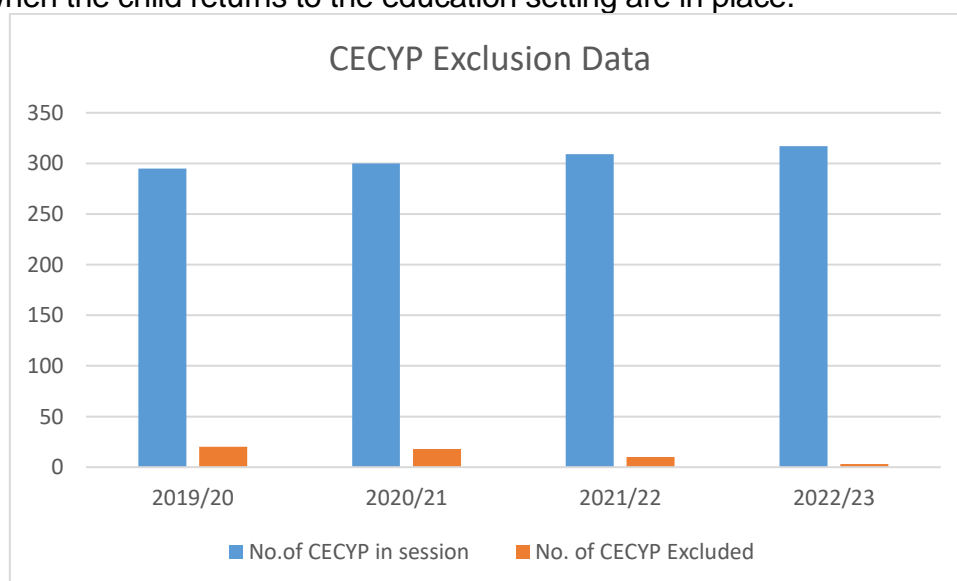
Staff Training shows '0.' However, it should be noted that the Care Experienced Education Team continue to access a variety of training including Argyll and Bute online learning, school based training and from external providers such as Each and Every Child, The Promise and Who Cares Scotland.

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 and a summary outline is found below:

4.4.1 EXCLUSIONS

In December 2022 the Education Service updated the management circular in relation to Managing Exclusions in Schools. This updated guidance includes a comprehensive checklist which considers individual circumstances and additional considerations for care experienced children if a school exclusion is being considered for them. When an exclusion is being considered for a care experienced pupil, the Head Teacher/Campus Principal must discuss the reasons for this consideration with the Head of Service for Education and outline clearly how an exclusion will support improvements in their agreed education targets.

We have met our target to have less than 5 care experienced children and young people excluded during the 2022-23 session. The updated guidance continues to ensure any CECYP who has been excluded is listened to and supported during this time. It also ensures that schools have planned appropriately for increased support post-exclusion, and that arrangements for regular monitoring and review when the child returns to the education setting are in place.



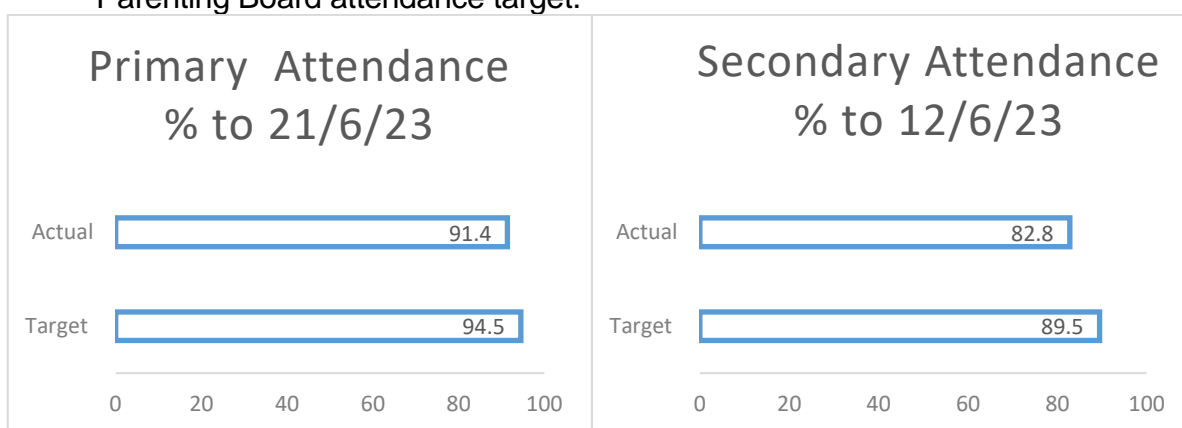
The target for 2023-24 is to have less than 3 care experienced children and young people excluded. We remain committed to finding alternative solutions to exclusion and aim to ensure our CECYP feel included.

4.4.2 ATTENDANCE

The total average attendance figure across primary and secondary schools of our CECYP at 12th June 2023 was 87.44%. Primary attendance is 91.4% and Secondary is 82.8%.

Nationally, attendance continues to be an area of focus. Scottish Government school attendance and absence statistics are collected every two years and the 2020/21 figure of 92% attendance is down from 93% in 2018/19. Our attendance data reflects this, but with a sharper focus given the circumstances of this cohort.

The tables below compares our target attendance figure to our Corporate Parenting Board attendance target.



Please note these figures are subject to change due to the Attendance, Absence and Exclusions census.

The Virtual Head Teacher (VHT) has updated the attendance monitoring system to provide weekly comparison data for each pupil. This has facilitated dialogue between the VHT and individual schools for 75 individual CECYP, leading to greater scrutiny around absence and targeted interventions, providing an extra layer of support for our CECYP. Qualitative data behind the percentage figures has led to a range of supports include links with the Care Experience Educations Team (CEET), linking to Educational Psychology colleagues and wider partner agencies to provide whole family support.

The VHT is a member of the multi-agency Maximising Attendance working group and liaises with colleagues across these agencies to ensure all attendance supports are considered. Education staff across the authority have the opportunity to take part in Addressing Non-Attendance training. To ensure consistency of approach, the VHT is undertaking this training.

The VHT tracks and monitors our CECYP as if they attended one school and is currently developing a tracking and monitoring system specifically for this cohort. The medium term intended outcome is to have breadth and depth of data for each

learner as they progress through their educational journey, leading to early intervention. The long term intended impact is to identify and address themes, ensuring required interventions are specific and personalised to individual children and young people.

4.4.3 PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT DATA 2022 - 23

CECYP, P1 – S3, BROAD GENERAL EDUCATION

The following attainment data relates to care experienced learners across Argyll and Bute. This data demonstrates the attainment picture for care experienced learners across all stages. Progress and Achievement Data in Literacy and Numeracy at June 2023 for 207 pupils between P1 and S3 was as follows:

Stage	LT %	Read %	Write %	Numeracy %
P1 achieved early (AE)	44	33	33	40
P2 (AE) working towards first	74	63	47	63
P3 (AE) working towards first	100	100	100	100
P4 achieved first (AF)	59	35*	24**	29***
P5 (AF) working towards second	75	72	69	69
P6 (AF) working towards second	91	86	82	86
P7 achieved second (AS)	83	74	52	57
S1 (AS) working towards third	72	67	56	72
S2 (AS) working in third and fourth	69	62	65	50
S3 achieved third level	67	67	67	63
S3 achieved fourth level	30	33	30	13

For information: to achieve the level in Literacy 3 components must be achieved at that level – listening and talking/reading/writing.

Achievement of a level information:

For information:

- Early level – by end of P1
- First level - by end of P4
- Second level - by end of P7
- Third/Fourth level - end of S3
-

These levels can be achieved earlier or later for some learners. Learners with complex needs can follow individual milestones, and are not included in this data due to small numbers.

It is worth noting the percentage of children in P4 are on the cusp of achieving first level:

- * 40% on cusp
- ** 47% on cusp
- *** 47% on cusp

SCOTTISH QUALIFICATION AUTHORITY ATTAINMENT DATA 2022-23

ALL COURSES

Please note this attainment data is prior to the appeals process and to full attainment data being published by Insight.

	A	B	C	Pass	D
National 4	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
National 5	8.99%	25.84%	25.84%	n/a	22.47%
New Higher	4.55%	4.55%	22.73%	n/a	31.82%
New Advanced Higher	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	n/a	0.00%

Authority National 4 results for all learners are above the national average by 12% and we have maintained a 100% pass rate for this session. Scottish wide provisional attainment statistics available here: [Attainment Statistics - SQA](#)

5.8% of pupils between S4-S6 were not presented for exams, this is less than 4 learners. There are specific reasons for this which include obtaining qualifications at an appropriate level and following a personalised curriculum.

LITERACY

Level 4	100% pass rate	
Level 5	A – C pass rate	85.7%
	A – D pass rate	100%

Combined Level 4 and 5 (A-C) pass rate = 91.7%. Our target was 65%.

NUMERACY

Level 4	Application of Mathematics	100%
	Mathematics	100%
Level 5	Application of Mathematics	50% B – C pass rate
	Mathematics	66% C – D pass rate

Combined Level 4 and 5 (B-C) pass rate = 69%. Our target was 60%.

It should be noted that a small number of CECYP achieved National 3 levels qualifications in literacy and numeracy. 61.5% of learners who were presented for New Higher/New Advanced Higher achieved grades A – D, 31% achieved grades A – C.

Positive feedback has been shared with our CECYP from the VHT as appropriate. This includes learners who may not have achieved the results they hoped for, but were recognised for their determination and offered support to identify next steps.

ACIEVEMENT IN LITERACY / NUMERACY PROGRESS OVER TIME, S4 – S6

For the following graphs, it should be noted that 2019 is the most comparable year due to the pandemic and the way in which examinations were undertaken and coursework delivered. SCQF levels 4 and 5 Literacy and Numeracy are achieved via the passing of National 4 or 5 English or Mathematics, or through the completion of separate Literacy and Numeracy units at levels 4 and 5 which do not require an examination.

CECYP in S4 who have attained literacy and numeracy qualifications at SCQF level 4/5.



CECYP in S5 who have attained literacy and numeracy qualifications at SCQF level 4/5. (Cumulative attainment by the end of S5 based on original S4 roll).



CECYP in S6 who have attained literacy and numeracy qualifications at SCQF level 4/5. (Cumulative attainment by the end of S5 based on original S4 roll).



Summary

Although attainment levels in S4 are below the Virtual Comparator level, there is a gradual increase each year since 2019. For 2023, it is notable that pupils progressed on to achieving SCQF 5 level.

In S6, Argyll and Bute figures are comparable with the Virtual Comparator for SCQF level 5 qualifications and exceed the Virtual Comparator for SCQF level 4 qualifications.

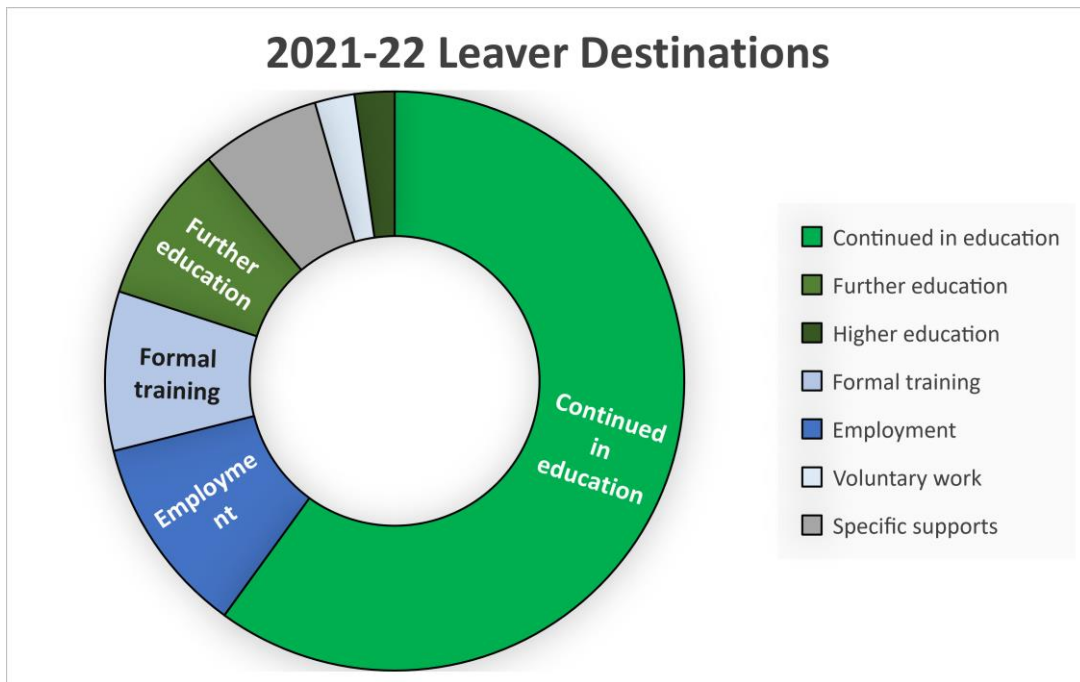
These graphs evidence that by engaging with school beyond school leaver age, pupils can be supported to achieve national qualifications. Due to cohort numbers and specific variations, caution should be exercised when comparing cohorts. Alongside authority attainment meetings, Designated Managers across our schools are scheduled to meet with the VHT across the school year. These data driven meets focus on wellbeing, progress and achievement and aim to ensure each CECYP has personalised interventions to support their inclusion and attainment.

The VHT is engaging in a cycle of visits to external education providers who support Argyll and Bute care experienced children to scrutinise provision and ensure the education needs of our young people are being met.

DESTINATIONS

Data collated at May 2023 has evidenced that 94% of our CECYP have achieved a positive destination. The remaining 6% have specific circumstances and are being supported and signposted in relation to their needs.

Leaver destinations as at May 2023 can be categorised as follows:



60% continued in school education, 11.5% went on to Further Education and Higher Education. 13.5% are in employment (paid and voluntary) with 9% undertaking formal training.

This is an extremely positive outcome with 94% of CECYP going on to achieve positive destinations. Our Year 2 target in the Corporate Parenting Plan was for 88% of leavers to move on to a positive destination.

Scottish wide education outcome data for care experienced young people 2021 – 22 notes that 84.8% of care experienced young people went on to a positive initial destination, compared to 95.7% of all children. 70.4% were in a positive follow-up destination, compared to 93.5% of all children. Our authority data for CECYP achieving a positive follow up destination exceeds the national percentage for both care experienced and non-care experienced learners.

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 VHT for Care Experienced Children and Young People has detailed information in relation to the small percentage of individuals who continue to be supported to achieve a positive destination. For some, this is directly related to health issues and partner agencies are making every effort to offer tailored support.

The VHT works alongside school colleagues and partners from Skills Development Scotland to ensure that each and every care experienced young person is aware of their options for further education and employment and is supported to access the required information through this transition period.

Positive destination data for 2022 – 23 is currently being compiled and will be reported on in 2024.

- 4.5 Inter-agency links continue to be developed and strengthened between Social Work, Health and Education. This facilitates a solution focused partnership approach which aims to ensure each young person, their needs and circumstances are considered during the support planning process. It should be noted that the child/young person's views and that of their family/carer/guardian are essential and considered during any planning process.

The Virtual Head Teacher represents the Education Service by reporting and participating in working groups directly related to CECYP or the services around them, including:

- Joint Resource Group
- Corporate Parenting Group and associated Sub Group
- Maximising Attendance Group
- Kinship Panel
- Learning Reviews
- Trauma Strategy Group
- Universal Free School Meals
- Work Experience Group – VHT chairs
- Transition Focus Group – VHT Chairs
- Northern Alliance – Argyll and Bute link for CECYP

These forums facilitate analysis of data, consultation, identification of areas for improvement and best practice, ultimately leading to positive change for our CECYP.

To support the understanding around the role of the VHT, a briefing document was shared with Health and Social Work and a meeting held with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health team for CECYP. This has increased the visibility of the VHT role and provided opportunities for further collaboration. The VHT has also presented at a Child Health Development Day to share CECYP priorities within education.

Recent feedback gathered from a survey shared with our partners evidences that they have clear understanding of the role of the VHT and interactions have been positive and helpful. The VHT has been contacted directly by colleagues in health and social work to support in individual cases, resulting in positive transitions, inclusion and attainment for CECYP across the authority.

The VHT has continued to build on the work undertaken by the previous post holder to maintain and strengthen communication to make a difference for our CECYP. Improved communication links between education and partner agencies has resulted in positive support for our CECYP, who feel heard when action happens. This has included support with medication, school transitions, settling into new accommodation and working alongside chosen key adults.

Future projects include a working group focusing on reducing stigma, linking with the Participation Officer and our care experienced young people alongside wider agency collaboration for a 'Care Experienced Focus Week.' This work is being

actioned as a direct result of CECYP sharing their views at the Corporate Parenting Board in May 2023.

Through attendance at nationwide conferences –in person and online – the VHT is highlighting the importance of CECYP and our aspirations for them within Argyll and Bute.

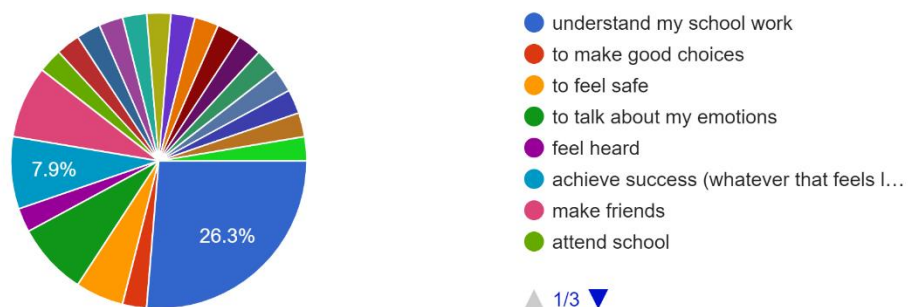
- 4.6 The Care Experienced Education Team currently consists of the VHT and four Health and Wellbeing Liaison Officers. This was complemented by three Lead Additional Support Needs Assistants posts from January – October 2023. The team supports operationally across Argyll and Bute, working directly with our CECYP. Interventions are personalised to each child and their context. Interventions include maintaining communication links between home and school, supporting attendance, wellbeing and emotional regulation and targeted learning support. The VHT has committed to additional training and will share this with the Care Experienced Education Team as appropriate to ensure consistency of approach.

During the course of this academic year over 40 CECYP have benefitted from the Care Experienced Education Team input. Following a timetable review in April, part of the team were redeployed and in May 2023 we piloted early intervention support in one of our Early Learning and Childcare settings. Qualitative feedback from the setting practitioners has evidenced the positive impact on educational attainment, particularly literacy and numeracy. One child in particular has grown in confidence, leading to higher engagement and increased skills development.

Learner feedback remains essential to informing our approach. Throughout May and June we have surveyed our CECYP as part of our self-evaluation process. A range of questions in relation to the support received from the Care Experienced Education Team were asked. This feedback supports identification of the type of support important to our children and young people and allows us to plan to meet these needs. It also informs individual support, Care Experienced Education Team staff training needs, evidences the impact of the interventions and continues to feed in to our improvement journey. Thirty eight learners completed our ‘Learner Voice’ survey. Below is a sample of responses in relation to how our CECYP feel they are being supported by our operational team.

This adult helps me:

38 responses



- understand my school work, to make...
- I like it when we play with the playdough and my spiderman toys.
- And school work
- understand my school work, to make good choices, to feel safe, feel heard,...
- Understand my school work and to m...
- Just to talk to someone
- time out of the classroom to think
- All of these things in the list
- all of them
- Play with me
- art projects
- to make good choices, feel heard and...

Qualitative data shows that after working with a team member, learners felt more confident in their ability and felt higher levels of happiness than prior to working with the team member.

The Care Experienced Education Team have completed progress reports for each child and young person they have supported. These reports, learner voice and practitioner feedback inform our next steps and intervention timetable to ensure children and young people continue to feel heard and supported and make progress in their learning.

- 4.7 Argyll and Bute Education Service have demonstrated their continued commitment to our CECYP by creating the senior leadership role of VHT from April 2023. This supersedes the post of Principal Teacher, bringing further credibility to this leadership role. The VHT works at a strategic level with a focus on improving the educational outcomes for all CECYP across the authority.

Current research evidences that having an additional layer of support with a specific focus on care experienced children and young people has positive impacts. Advocating for the needs and rights of these children, leads to greater attainment and achievement. There are now 17 authorities in Scotland with VHTs in post. The VHT regularly links with the CELCIS (Centre for Excellence for Children’s Care and Protection) network of Virtual Head Teachers. The network is a catalyst for action and since being in post the VHT has connected to share practice and linked to support across authority transitions, leading to greater information sharing and preparation for learners who have a need to transfer across authorities. Opportunities to connect with VHTs out-with Scotland have also been explored and a partnership link established with a Virtual School in England where VHTs are a statutory requirement.

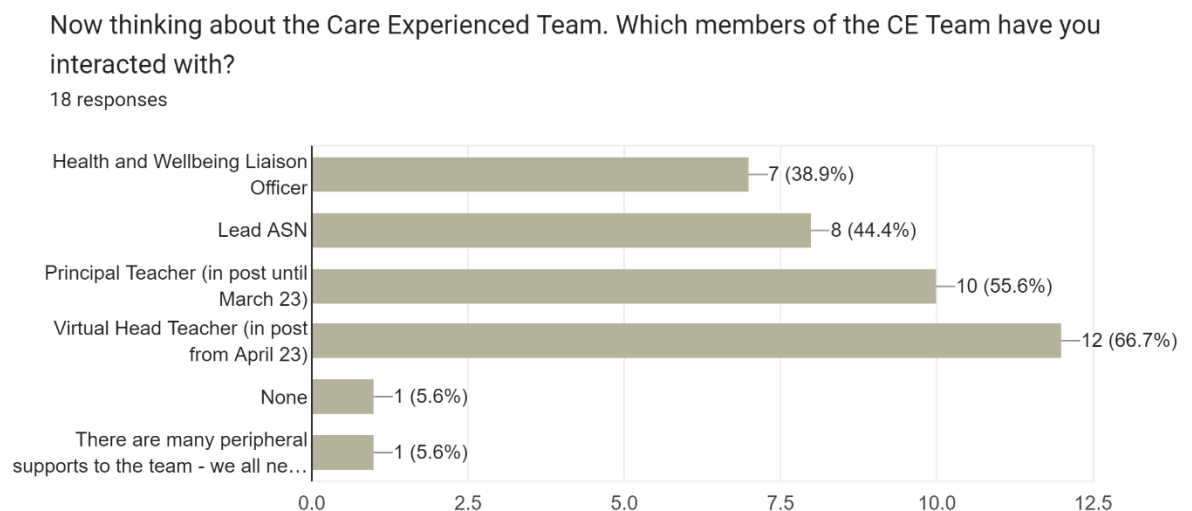
There is agreement across the VHT network that collating data needs to be explored further. The VHT participated in discussion recently that has led to this topic being placed on a future agenda. The VHT continues to develop a system to support tracking and monitoring and works closely with education colleagues to analyse data across key areas.

To raise the profile of CECYP, the VHT:

- Attended all Argyll and Bute Head Teacher meetings.
- Met with key partners to highlight the role and how the Care Experienced Education Team can support operationally and strategically.

- Issued a briefing note to Parent Council Chairs on the VHT role to ensure clarity around the remit.
- Created training slides that all staff engaged with during the August 2023 in-service mandatory training.
- Will meet with student teachers training with The University of the Highland and Islands to highlight our Corporate Parenting responsibilities and The Promise.
- Explore creation an 'X' (Twitter) profile to share information, best practice and signpost to services.
- Ongoing physical school visits by the VHT – both in Argyll and Bute and specialist partner providers across other authorities to ensure the education needs of our CECYP are being met.
- Working with another local authority to design Designated Manager training.
- Deliver training across the academic year to encourage schools to participate in the Education Scotland 'Keeping the Promise Award Programme.'

Survey results evidence that colleagues in educational establishments have interacted with the CE Team, positively, a majority note interaction with the VHT since mid-April:



Contact from educational settings across the authority with the VHT has increased significantly. This includes seeking clarity on children who may have been previously care experienced alongside requests for whole family support. This increased communication evidences that the profile of our care experienced children and young people and the role of VHT continues to be raised.

Across our primary and secondary settings, improvements to the in class registration process are phasing in. Learners who are care experienced will be discreetly identified ensuring teaching staff have the required information to tailor support and build positive relationships.

In November 2023, our senior leaders and Head Teachers from the across the authority meet at conference where the focus is Inclusion and Wellbeing. Information sharing and care experienced learner voice will form an integral part of the day. Care experienced young people from Argyll and Bute will have the opportunity to speak directly with the Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland.

Going forwards, self-evaluation exercises alongside the collation of survey data will be undertaken to inform the next steps of the improvement journey to support our CECYP. The VHT has identified areas for review and is being supported by Heads of Service and Education Managers to explore these further.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 The Education Service continues to maintain momentum and make significant improvements for our Care Experienced Children and Young People across Argyll and Bute in line with our Corporate Parenting Board and Education Service targets. Our commitment to ensuring all our CECYP have what they need to thrive is unwavering. We will continue to address raising attainment and closing the gap for Care Experienced Children and Young People in session 2023/24.

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. Climate Change – None

6.7 Risk – Ongoing scrutiny and audit will provide better outcomes for Care Experience Children and Young People. Sustainability and future-planning will mitigate future risk.

6.8 Customer Service – Improvements in service to meet individual needs are being sought

Douglas Hendry, Executive Director with responsibility for Education

Councillor Yvonne McNeilly, Policy Lead for Education

Jen Crocket, Head of Education: Wellbeing, Inclusion and Achievement (Chief Education Officer)

For further information contact:

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