

EDUCATION: Additional Learning Support for Looked after Children

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 A paper to note the additional learning support provided to Looked after Children in Argyll and Bute.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 (a) The Community Services Committee are asked to note the contents of this report.
(b) Note the report has been considered by the Corporate Parenting Board at its meeting of 3rd April 2014.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 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 determine that they do not require additional support in order to benefit from school education. In addition, it should be determined, for all looked after children, whether a coordinated support plan is required.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 Community Services; Education has developed a range of measures to support looked after children in schools. At present support to looked after children is needs based through appropriate assessment processes and using evidence based interventions to meet their needs. Schools have 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 to identify whether the child or young person has additional support needs.
 - Procedures in place to ensure that the individual educational needs of looked after children will be known to their respective teachers.
 - A support plan or equivalent if required with appropriate educational outcomes.

- A progress review on a single agency and multi-agency basis as appropriate and support plans updated accordingly.
- 4.2 The level of support offered to pupils is dependent on individual need. This process is known as staged intervention. At the initial stages of support, individual pupil need may be met from existing school resources including classroom based support such as differentiation of materials. If this level of support is insufficient then additional resources in the form of support assistants or support teachers may be employed. Support teachers may be used in a number of roles. This can include short or long term individual tuition or group support. Students may receive special arrangements, such as extra time, reader or scribe to allow them to access assessments and examinations appropriately.
 - 4.3 At this stage, a child or young person will have their needs and educational outcomes recorded in a universal child's plan. If an individual requires more intense support then this may necessitate intervention involving authority resources, Education Psychology or support from other external services. Again, a universal child's plan will be opened identifying the child/young person's needs, appropriate outcomes and the actions required to meet these outcomes.
 - 4.4 A centrally funded pool of support staff is employed to provide additional support to pupils with additional support needs. These include both ASN assistants and teachers. Both groups of staff are under the management of head teachers. These groups of staff are deployed on an area basis. Area support teachers are allocated to school clusters and deployment is based on an assessment of local need within each cluster. ASN assistants are allocated to schools based on the outcome of a needs-based central allocation process. For academic year 2014-15 schools have been specifically asked to identify Looked After Children as part of this allocation process.
 - 4.5 Seven Area Principal Teachers provide an overview of pupils with additional support needs in Lorn and Tiree, Mull, Islay, Kintyre, Mid Argyll, Helensburgh and Lomond plus Bute and Cowal. Currently, the Area Principal Teachers are training to become GIRFEC advisors for their respective areas. This will provide valuable support to schools around GIRFEC procedures and practices and in pupil planning. An Education Support Officer provides advice and support to school staff on pupils who display challenging behaviours and alternatives to exclusion
 - 4.6 Since November 2011 the Education Service has implemented a brief screening tool that is used with each child or young person who is looked after to identify whether they have additional support needs and whether formal support planning is required, including whether the eligibility criteria for a coordinated support plan (CSP) are met. This screening helps school staff and parents / carers consider all available assessment information using the wellbeing indicators, based on GIRFEC principles.
 - 4.7 The Educational Psychology Service is working along with primary schools to administer word, reading and spelling assessments with all looked after children in addition to considering the child or young person's view of themselves as a learner. This information will help schools plan to meet individual needs and will also provide a profile of need across Argyll and Bute to help with strategic planning at a school and authority level. Where needs are identified, training is also offered to school staff on issues such as nurture and attachment to increase the skills and confidence of teaching and support staff when meeting the needs of looked after children.

- 4.8 It is proposed to utilise monies within the Youth Employment Opportunities Fund to promote the use of Flexible Learning Plans for Looked After Children. Flexible Learning Plans allow students to have a senior phase curriculum which offers a wider range of experiences. This might include periods of work-experience with local employers or study at a further education provider in addition to school-based learning.
- 4.9 At present support for LAC is included into the generic staged intervention process for all children with ASN. However, there are some supports which are being developed by individual educational establishments which directly target LAC or other vulnerable children. In the Cowal area, a Primary School runs a Breakfast Club for pupils from vulnerable backgrounds, targeted at LAC. This allows attendees a chance to have a healthy and positive start to the day and for staff to observe pupil appearance, hygiene and behaviour. The school also runs an Atmosphere Group where a small group of LAC pupils and others from vulnerable backgrounds can take part in 'circle time' activities to learn to talk about their feelings.
- 4.10 Dunoon Grammar School works closely with the local Dunclutha children's unit to offer a weekly study group to LAC to assist with study skills and exam preparation. It is also developing a Promise for Looked after Learners to be in place in August 2014. The school will make a promise to LAC which will guarantee actions to raise attainment and achievement opportunities, improve attendance, reduce exclusion, ensure a positive destination and promote health and well-being.
- 4.11 Oban High School has developed an intensive support facility which is used to offer flexible and individualised timetables for pupils with health, social, emotional or behavioural difficulties offering a wide range of activities to enhance the experience of the pupils. Students are also offered a broad range of qualifications and awards. Staff work with colleagues from other services to target support to LAC and other vulnerable pupils. This has resulted in a higher rate of re- engagement and ultimately higher achievement and attainment.
- 4.12 In Hermitage Academy, LAC pupils progress and support provision is an item that is discussed on the SLT agenda every month, where their needs are discussed and supported appropriately through the staged intervention model. LAC pupils are amongst a number of vulnerable pupils who are supported through lunch time and after school homework sessions delivered in school by both Academy staff and external partners. This support input is acknowledged by the staff at East King Street children's unit.

5. CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

- 5.1 The educational support and achievement of looked after children continues to be a priority for Community Services: Education.
- 5.2 Community Services: Education will continue to work closely with partner agencies to ensure that the appropriate supports are in place to provide early intervention to effectively meet the needs of all Looked After Children.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

Legal – none

Financial – none

Personnel – none

Policy – Argyll and Bute Corporate parenting policy

Equal Opportunities – ensuring children who are looked after are given equality of opportunity.

Risk – failure to adequately support the educational needs of LAC.

Customer Services - none

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