

The Highland Council

Education, Children's and Adult Services Committee 17 March 2016

Agenda Item	13.
Report No	ECAS 26/16

Employment of Care Experienced Young People

Report by Director of Care and Learning

Summary

This report provides an update on the employment and training opportunities for care experienced young people.

1. Background

- 1.1 The term 'looked after child', is a legal definition for children who are subject to formal supervision requirements, or accommodated by the local authority, or subject of a permanence order.
- 1.2 Councils, supported by their partner organisations have statutory responsibilities as the 'Corporate Parent' for all children who are looked after. These responsibilities have been extended now by The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 until the young person reaches 26 years of age.
- 1.3 The outcomes for this group of young people have always been well below their peers nationally.
- 1.4 Highland Council, supported by its corporate parent partners, has several schemes in place to help improve outcomes for this group of young people and there is renewed focus through the establishment of the Champions Board.

2. Number of Care Leavers

- 2.1 From 01 Jan – 26 Feb 2016, there are 127 care experienced young people in receipt of support from Aftercare Services. Many of these services are provided by Barnardo's Scotland.
- 2.2 94 of these young people are seen on a regular basis with 33 being seen on a duty basis, which may reflect their wishes in terms of not requiring very regular contact or may be because they are living out with Highland.
- 2.3 The age range of the 94 that receive regular support is:

Age Range 01 Jan-26 Feb 2016

15 yrs	16 yrs	17 yrs	18 yrs	19 yrs	20 yrs	21 yrs	22 yrs	23 yrs	24 yrs	25 yrs	Total
1	11	19	16	22	9	6	2	3	3	2	94

- 2.4 We have started to track care experienced young people up until their 26th birthday in line with the Children and Young People's Act 2014.

Economic Status

	employed f/t		employed p/t		unemployed		y parent/pregnant	
	Open	Duty	Open	Duty	Open	Duty	Open	Duty
2016								
01 Jan- 26 Feb	8	4	2	2	32	12	11	4

Education/Training

	apprentice/ training		school		further ed f/t		further ed p/t	
	Open	Duty	Open	Duty	Open	Duty	Open	Duty
2016								
01 Jan- 26 Feb	15	0	10	0	16	11	0	0

- 2.5 The following information has been taken from the Datahub, which is a system being introduced to schools for this purpose. At present, this information is in the process of being validated and if it proves accurate it may provide a more comprehensive way of tracking destinations of care experienced young people. On 24 February 2016, there were 260 young people registered as LAC on the Datahub. Post-school information will be provided by partner agencies. See **Appendix 1**.
- 2.6 Skills Development Scotland (SDS) update the Datahub on a daily basis. Colleges, SAAS, Department for Work and Pensions, and the council update either on a monthly or fortnightly basis – depending on the month.
- 2.7 The current recorded destinations from the Data Hub of 260 care experienced young people who have left school are:
- Full-time – 34
 - Part-time – 13
 - Modern Apprenticeships – 10
 - Higher Education – 11
 - Further Education – 57
 - Activity Agreements – 18
 - Employability Fund training - 5
 - Personal Skills Development – 5
 - Unemployed – 20
 - Unknown – 49
 - Economically inactive – 27
 - In Custody – 6
 - Moved out with Scotland – 2
 - Ill-health - 3

- 2.8 Young people are reported as unknown on the SDS system if they have had 8 weeks of being out of contact. SDS follow up on the ones that are not recorded as positively participating. However, young people may choose not to keep agencies informed of their current circumstances. They may be working or undertaking some sort of training that is out with the main frameworks, or they may have moved from

the area. There is currently no way to obtain information about individuals who are working unless they confirm this personally.

- 2.9 There are on-going negotiations with HMRC to flag up young people who are registered with PAYE/NI, but it looks unlikely that this will be disclosed at individual level, so we may only receive a report stating the numbers of young people contributing to HMRC.
- 2.10 Clearly it is preferable to work with young people on a voluntary basis to track their progress, but because of the statutory responsibility for this group of young people, further work is planned to analyse existing records, for example on Care First.

3. Developing the Young Workforce

- 3.1 While the Wood Report recommendations for developing the young workforce cover all children, there are three specific recommendations to support care experienced young people, who are more at risk of being unable to secure or sustain a positive destination. These are:
- 3.2 **Recommendation 37:** Educational and employment transition planning for young people in care should start early with sustained support from public and third sector bodies and employers available throughout their journey toward and into employment as is deemed necessary.
- 3.3 **Recommendation 38:** Across vocational education and training, age restrictions should be relaxed for those care leavers whose transition takes longer.
- 3.4 **Recommendation 39:** In partnership with the third sector, the Scottish Government should consider developing a programme which offers supported employment opportunities lasting up to a year for care leavers.
- 3.5 We are working more closely with partners as we take forward the recommendations in Developing the Young Workforce and delivering against the Youth Employment Strategy. It is essential for partners to work together to share resources, planning, information and to avoid duplication (or omission) of activities that best meet the needs of our young people.
- 3.6 A partnership group is already in existence to look at employment in Highland, called Highland Works. Highland Works includes representatives from Highland Council, HIE, Skills Development Scotland, Colleges, Employers and the third sector. It was decided that this would be the overarching multi-agency planning group that would oversee and co-ordinate developments.
- 3.7 An Equalities Working Group has been formed as part of the Highland Works Strategy Group to ensure pathways and progression are identified for young people with additional barriers.
- 3.8 There are supported employment opportunities available in the third sector, including opportunities through Community Jobs Scotland. A mapping exercise is currently underway. Links and support for employers are being further developed to encourage more opportunities for care experienced young people through the Regional Groups.
- 3.9 Training resources for front-line staff on equalities are being developed to improve

opportunities for all young people and reduce negative stereotypes.

4. Planning for Leaving School

4.1 Planning for school leaving is essential for all young people including those who face additional barriers. Due attention should be given to the following groups of young people who are most at risk of disengagement, many of whom will have clearly identifiable additional support needs:

- Looked after children, young people and care leavers
- Young carers
- Young parents
- Young offenders, including those in custody
- Young people with low attainment in school
- Young people on a school roll who persistently truant
- Young people with physical or mental health problems or disabilities
- Young people involved in alcohol or drug misuse
- Young people with behavioural issues
- Young people for whom English is an additional language
- Winter leavers
- Young people leaving special schools
- Young people who are homeless
- Young people who are a risk to themselves or others
- Young people who have interrupted learning, including as a result of transient lifestyles
- Young people who do not sustain an initial progression path on leaving school
- Young people with other identified additional support needs

4.2 Care-experienced young people could be included under any of these categories. Issues are being addressed in schools via their 16+ Meetings and from invited partners who can support our young people and offer positive experiences for them, as well as aiding the school to consider solution-focused outcomes. Many care experienced young people are thriving in spite of often experiencing multiple barriers to success.

4.3 When all young people are in the senior phase of their education, planning for positive destinations begins. Schools are now gathering data on young peoples preferred routes, preferred occupation and intended leaving date. The capture of this information supports 16+ planning.

4.4 Schools should be facilitating 16+ meetings with wider partnerships for the most at risk young people, involving Social Workers; Key Adults; Skills Development Scotland, Colleges; Education team and Youth Workers.

4.5 All young people leaving school must have had an offer of work related learning. This can be achieved through a block of work experience, extended work experience, through undertaking a work based qualification, through volunteering or through programmes and events such as Bridge to Employment or Health Careers Days.

4.6 Young people have the opportunity to undertake vocational programmes in partnership with the colleges. This helps prepare them for employment by developing skills and knowledge. The opportunities include the Vocational

Pathways Programme which offers courses in mechanics, construction and early education.

4.7 Foundation apprenticeships are being developed with Colleges and SDS. Including Engineering and ICT, these options are preparing young people with access to a vocational pathway into a Modern Apprenticeship or work.

4.8 The Hi-Hope Directory (hi-hope-org) was created in association with NHS Highland and CHiP+ to provide an information portal detailing opportunities for all young people to support future learning, training and work. Some of the opportunities are specifically aimed at care experienced young people. Providers have given details about each opportunity.

5. Activity Agreements

5.1 An activity agreement is a plan of learning and activity which a trusted professional will help a young person put together, so when they are ready they can move on from this to further education, training or employment. It can include volunteering, short courses, supported learning and practical experiences. Each agreement is individually tailored to the person.

5.2 To be eligible for an activity agreement, a young person must be unable or not ready to access other post school options, because of problems such as prolonged absence from school, disabilities or learning difficulties.

5.3 In Highland, activity agreements are targeted at young people who may need extra support to find work, training or further education. This includes young people who:

- Have additional support needs
- Skipped school or were excluded
- Have been in care or had support from a social worker
- Look after someone else at home
- Tried college or a job, and didn't manage to keep going
- Have other problems that make it difficult

6. Family Firm and Breakthrough Achievement for the Highland CPP 2015/16

6.1 The Highland Community Planning Partnership has agreed a proposal that every care experienced young person in Highland should be given at least one job offer from a CPP partner or an organisation within the partners' networks.

6.2 This is a unique and very positive development, and staff are working to ensure that our young people are prepared for taking up employment, to maximise this opportunity. Planning and support in the initial stages is essential.

6.3 There are lots of reasons why some care experienced young people find it difficult to gain and or sustain employment. With the new legislation we would hope that young people would be more secure, settled and mature before they have to live independently, giving them more time to concentrate on employment.

6.4 We have positive training schemes to prepare young people for employment depending on their learning needs, and these range from 6 weeks to a full year. It is vital that we use these schemes to ensure young people are ready for the work force.

- 6.5 Support staff, mentors and the young person meet to discuss the employment and expectations on both sides. Any support requirements are put in place and communication requirements are agreed.
- 6.6 These schemes including Family Firm (where young people are employed by Highland Council), also provide continuing support to young people and employers during the initial employment stage. This can help to discuss and resolve any issues before it leads to employment breakdown. This support network would be provided for any young person employment offer.
- 6.7 At present, Highland Council has a Family Firm Scheme that offers work experience and training to all care experienced young people. There is a recently appointed full time co-ordinator for the scheme, which has led to improved support and placements, and this post holder can support this new initiative – along with the wider youth employment service. In the last year 29 young people have been or are being assisted through the Family Firm process and a further 9 young people will be recruited in April.
- 6.8 The Council also provides funding for Face to Face and Barnardo's Works to train care experienced young people to be ready for employment. These courses can also include SVQ and certificate of work readiness qualifications.
- 6.9 Young people are at different levels of work readiness when they become eligible for employment options. For some it will be a straight forward request and discussion of what type of employment they are looking for, as they have evidenced by previous employment and or study that they are ready and understand the commitment to working.
- 6.10 We have written to all care experienced young people who could receive an offer of employment and have posted information on our Closed Facebook pages and web site pages. This is also discussed regularly with them by the worker.
- 6.11 We are at present looking for work experience for 6 young people, and work placements for 3 young people.
- 6.12 In April 2015, the Council employed 11 Care Experienced Development Assistants to work with their corporate parents to improve outcomes for care experienced young people in Highland. We have 7 Development Assistants still employed and working with us, and we are advertising for a further nine.
- 6.13 Two of the original group are on full time modern apprentice positions and one is working full time.
- 6.14 Two of our Development Assistants will take on full time Trainee positions in the Council for a year, continuing to work with us on improving outcomes for Care Experienced Young People.
- 6.15 Employing the Care Experienced Development Assistants has been held up as a model of good practice across Scotland. The personal development of the individuals involved is extremely positive. The skills they are learning will assist them in their future careers. Most continue to study in school, college or open university. We are also negotiating SVQ qualifications linked to the scheme.

7. Implications

- 7.1 **Resources:** There are no new resource implications arising from this report.
- 7.2 **Legal and Equalities:** The Council and partner agencies have key legal responsibilities for looked after children and care leavers as Corporate Parents.
- 7.3 **Rural:** The Council endeavours to ensure equality of service provision to all care experienced children, wherever they live, but there are inevitable challenges getting some services, especially specialist services, to children who live in remote and rural areas. Most care experienced children in after care settings tend to live in more urban areas. We are however planning all new resources across Highland, and in close location to where children are living.
- 7.4 **Gaelic and Climate Change/Carbon Clever:** There are no implications arising from this report.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 Members are invited to consider and scrutinise progress on the issues raised in this report.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

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Datahub reporting

