

Agenda Item	13.
Report No	PEO 35/17

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** People Committee

**Date:** 19 October 2017

**Report Title:** Education of Looked After Children

**Report By:** Director of Care and Learning

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report was requested by Committee and aims to provide a summary of the issues which are pertinent to the education outcomes for the group of children and young people for whom the Highland Council has corporate parenting responsibility. The report highlights some of the current issues and challenges and sets out a strategy for endorsement and to contribute to the ongoing improvement plan.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i. Endorse the strategy described in the report.
  - ii. Agree that an updated improvement plan should be prepared for the next meeting of the People Committee.

### 3. Definition of Looked After Children

3.1 Under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, 'looked after children' are defined as those in the care of their local authority – sometimes referred to as a 'corporate parent'. There are many reasons children may become looked after, including:

- they face abuse or neglect at home
- they have disabilities that require special care
- they are unaccompanied minors seeking asylum, or who have been illegally trafficked into the UK
- they have been involved in the youth justice system

3.2 Children may become Looked After through various routes. Most looked after children fall into two categories:

- Looked after at home – where the child or young person has been through the Children's Hearings system and is subject to a Supervision Requirement (regular contact with social services) with no condition of residence.

or

- Looked after away from home – where the child or young person has either:
  - been through the Children's Hearings system and is subject to a Supervision Requirement with a condition of residence
  - is subject to an order made or authorisation or warrant granted by virtue of chapter 2, 3 or 4 of Part 2 of the 1995 Act
  - is being provided with accommodation under Section 25 (a voluntary agreement)
  - is placed by a local authority which has made a permanence order under section 80 of the Adoption and Children Act 2007

3.3 Looked After Children may live with their parents, with wider family members or friends under a kinship arrangement or may be accommodated in foster care or residential care. Children who are placed for adoption, but have not yet been legally adopted, are also Looked After.

3.4 From this, it can be appreciated that there is no single homogenous group of Looked After Children. Some children may be Looked After for most of their childhood and others for only short periods. Accordingly, the composition of the group is constantly changing and support provided to children who are not Looked After but are experiencing multiple disadvantages is equally vital to improving outcomes.

### 4. Current numbers and composition

4.1 For the past few years the overall number of Looked After Children (LAC) in Highland has been around 450. In recent months there has been an increase, and currently the number is around 500.

4.2 The age breakdown is as follows:

Age	Number
<1	8
1-4	104
5-11	177
12+	214

4.3 There are 287 boys and 216 girls. 441 are placed within Highland and 92 outwith the

authority in a variety of settings including foster care and residential care.

- 4.4 The home area for the children is shown below but this may not reflect their current placement.

Home area	Number of children
Caithness	67
East Ross	71
Lochaber	50
Mid Ross	35
Skye and Lochalsh	33
South Area	198
Sutherland	22
Cases held by Youth Action Team	27

## 5. Factors which affect the attainment of Looked After Children

- 5.1 Children who become looked after are likely to have had significant adverse experiences in their lives. These 'adverse childhood experiences' (ACEs) refer to events or conditions that have caused chronic stress which can continue to impact in poorer outcomes throughout life. This might include separation from care-providers or abuse and neglect, as well exposure to domestic violence, substance misuse, or parental ill health.
- 5.2 Studies show that the more such experiences a child has, the more likely they are to experience difficulties in school, as well as early initiation of substance use and sexual activity, and poor physical and mental health. Accordingly, it is critical that practitioners understand the impact of such experiences when seeking to support and plan interventions with children, and to support them to address the disadvantages they have already experienced in their lives.
- 5.3 There are many other factors which can limit looked after children from achieving their full educational potential. For a full account of this, see the paper from Oxford University which can be found at [http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/EducationalProgressLookedAfterChildrenOverviewReport\\_No v2015.pdf](http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/EducationalProgressLookedAfterChildrenOverviewReport_No v2015.pdf) Whilst this is an English study the conclusions are also relevant in Scotland.
- 5.4 Some of these findings can be summarised as follows:
- Children who are admitted to care early and spend longer in care, benefit educationally as long as they don't have many placement moves.
  - School and placement moves have a negative impact.
  - Children in care are more likely to have Additional Support Needs.
  - Absences, exclusions and changes of school have a significant impact and unauthorised absences were a major predictor of poorer outcomes.
  - Teachers and school staff were identified by young people as the main determinants of educational progress, having a bigger impact than foster carers.
  - Boys had poorer outcomes than girls.

## 6. Highland Education Data

- 6.1 Any analysis of the data for looked after children needs to take account of the fact that the numbers are relatively low in each year group, making it difficult to establish trends.

- 6.2 Also, the identification of LAC within SEEMIS has improved year by year, meaning that this group of children is now more explicit, as part of the overall child population.
- 6.3 The following table shows outcomes over the last 3 years for children who are looked after at home. This group of children, both locally and nationally, do less well on most outcomes than those who are looked after away from home.

	Year	% Level 4 Literacy and Numeracy	% Level 5 Literacy and Numeracy	Number in Cohort
<b>Highland</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>
Virtual Comparator	2014	47.14	12.14	140
National	2014	28.51	10.33	484
<b>Highland</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>
Virtual Comparator	2015	66	4	100
National	2015	33.81	7.86	420
<b>Highland</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>20</b>
Virtual Comparator	2016	56.5	10.5	200
National	2016	41.63	11.54	442

- 6.4 This table shows performance for children looked after away from home.

	Year	% Level 4 Literacy and Numeracy	% Level 5 Literacy and Numeracy	Number in Cohort
<b>Highland</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>39.13</b>	<b>17.39</b>	<b>23</b>
Virtual Comparator	2014	57.83	23.91	230
National	2014	44.23	12.64	459
<b>Highland</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>31.58</b>	<b>5.26</b>	<b>19</b>
Virtual Comparator	2015	63.16	20.53	190
National	2015	54.86	15.99	494
<b>Highland</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>24</b>
Virtual Comparator	2016	62.08	32.92	240
National	2016	58.85	22.43	593

- 6.5 **Appendix 1** provides further information regarding Highland's looked after children, confirming that they generally have higher levels of Additional Support Needs.
- 6.6 While Highland compares well with other authorities regarding exclusion rates, and there has been continuing improvement across the child population in recent years, the data indicates that this improvement has not been achieved for looked after children. This could, at least in part, be explainable by improved recording of exclusions over the period.
- 6.7 **Appendix 2** shows performance information over the last nine years, for children who are looked after at home and away from home. The following table shows the aggregate figures.

year	Total No.	English & Maths		any SCQF 3+	
		No.	%	No.	%
2016/17	60	25	41.67%	38	63.3%
2015/16	46	14	30.43%	26	56.5%
2014/15	60	28	46.67%	42	70.0%
2013/14	74	44	59.5%	53	71.6%
2012/13	55	26	47.3%	32	58.2%
2011/12	44	21	47.7%	27	61.4%
2010/11	66	32	48.5%	41	62.1%
2009/10	56	22	39.3%	28	50.0%
2008/09	62	22	35.5%	38	61.3%

6.8 Looked after children leave school at a younger age and less likely to have a positive post-school destination than their peers.

<u>Looked after at home</u>	Year	% of Schools Leavers in a Positive Destination	Number in Cohort
<b>Highland</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>57.14</b>	<b>14</b>
Virtual Comparator	2013/14	76.43	140
National	2013/14	70.66	484
<b>Highland</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>10</b>
Virtual Comparator	2014/15	74	100
National	2014/15	72.14	420
<b>Highland</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>20</b>
Virtual Comparator	2015/16	81	200
National	2015/16	67.65	442

<u>Looked after Away from Home</u>	Year	% of Schools Leavers in a Positive Destination	Number in Cohort
<b>Highland</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>69.57</b>	<b>23</b>
Virtual Comparator	2013/14	86.52	230
National	2013/14	76.03	459
<b>Highland</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>68.42</b>	<b>19</b>
Virtual Comparator	2014/15	87.37	190
National	2014/15	76.72	494
<b>Highland</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>91.67</b>	<b>24</b>
Virtual Comparator	2015/16	87.08	240
National	2015/16	78.08	593

6.9 These population-wide figures, should not of course mask the fact that many looked after children go on to positive destinations after school, in employment, and further or higher education. Indeed, Committee has been informed of the success of a number of care experienced young people at university.

## **7. Young People who are placed outwith Highland**

- 7.1 There are currently a small group of young people who cannot be safely and effectively managed in Highland Schools. This can often lead to their care placements being disrupted and can result in these children being placed outwith Highland. Although the numbers are small, the cost of meeting their needs is disproportionately very high. For example, of the 31 LAC excluded from Highland schools in 2013/14, a third subsequently went into residential care (11 young people). At an average cost of £220k per year this may have cost Highland Council up to £2.4m per year, which might have been avoided were the children able to be educated in area.
- 7.2 Experience has shown that even very expensive specialist residential schools are not always providing high quality education packages, and this money could be better invested in developing local provision. A successful example of this is the development of a small-scale care provision in Ross-shire, which enabled two young people to return from a residential school. The savings from the placement costs have paid for two Pupil Support Assistants, a 0.5 teacher and 7 care staff, enabling the children to benefit from a high level of bespoke support whilst attending local schools. This is still saving £60k per year per child and more importantly local education staff have already identified that one boy is significantly more able than had previously been recognised.
- 7.3 Whilst considerable effort has gone into enabling young people to return to Highland, it has proved very difficult to reduce the numbers requiring Out of Authority placements. Analysis has shown that whilst their care needs can often be met, they cannot access some specialist support services and they have not been able to sustain a positive education placement. There are two main groups for whom this applies. The first is young people on the Autistic Spectrum, and the other group involves children whose behaviour is challenging, often referred to as having social, educational and behavioural needs (SEBN).

## **8. Looked after Children Improvement Plan**

- 8.1 The Looked after Children Improvement Group oversees the Improvement Plan. Inevitably though, close links are necessary with planning for schools and additional support needs, and the Heads of Service work closely regarding this.
- 8.2 Indeed, any successful strategy to support looked after children requires cross-service co-operation and multi-professional input. The Care and Learning service is uniquely positioned to develop this and a Directorate workshop was recently held to begin to review the approach, and to refresh the strategy regarding the education of looked after children.
- 8.3 The first element of this is to reaffirm the focus on educational outcomes for LAC by tracking and monitoring available data and setting performance measures. To maximise the effectiveness of this, it may be necessary to create a post to lead on educational outcomes and specific strategies for LAC. The responsibilities would include the further analysis of data to enable differential strategies to be developed, and to champion the needs of LAC.
- 8.4 These strategies would be informed by refreshed training for school-based staff and others, drawing on the ACEs research.
- 8.5 The second strand would be to consider the devolution and pooling of budgets at an

area level, so that they might be used more imaginatively, across services. This could for example, enable placement budgets to combine with ASN and school budgets.

- 8.6 Whilst there are some off-site specialist resources in Highland, there may be a need to develop a wider range of resources, possibly based in schools but with enhanced staffing, where some of the successful approaches currently used e.g. at the Bridge in Inverness, could be replicated. This would include prioritising placements for LAC and young people returning from out of area, working with parents and may require an extension of some successful programmes currently commissioned from Third Sector providers.
- 8.7 The current policy is that there is no full-time alternative education provision. Given the cost of purchasing education placements outwith Highland with mixed success, this policy should be reviewed.
- 8.8 The focus on returning young people from residential school placements should continue as it frees up funding to develop new resources, but there does need to be a bigger focus on avoiding the need for young people to be placed outwith Highland in the first instance. It can be disruptive for young people to move placement once they are settled elsewhere.

## **9. Implications**

### **9.1 Resources**

There is scope to use current resources more effectively and potentially to achieve savings, if budgets are used more flexibly across Care and Learning.

### **9.2 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)**

The issues covered in this report impact across all areas of Highland but may be more acute in areas of deprivation. The proposed strategy would be aimed at improving positive outcomes for children who are impacted by poverty therefore their life chances would be improved.

### **9.3 Gaelic**

There are no specific implications.

### **9.4 Legal**

There are no specific implications.

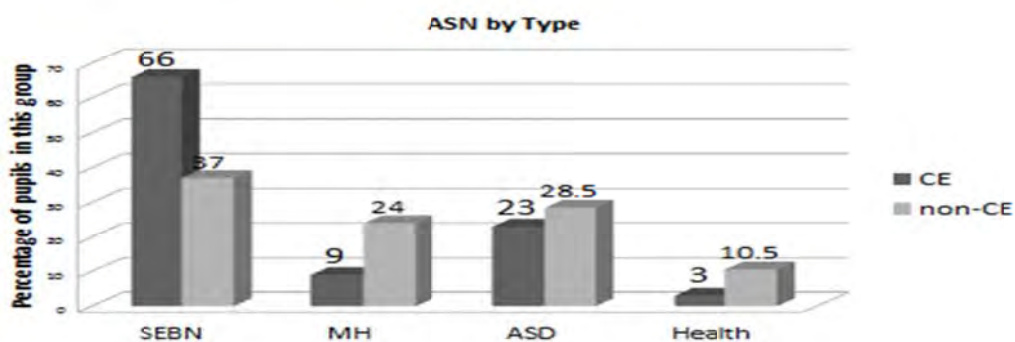
### **9.5 Change/carbon clever**

If young people were supported in their home communities, this would have a positive impact on carbon reduction due to a reduction in travel.

**Date** 9 October 2017

**Author** Sandra Campbell, Head of Children's Services

## LAC and ASN



CE= Care Experienced

SEBN = Social, emotional and behavioural needs

MH = Mental health needs

ASD = Autistic Spectrum Disorder

Health = other health needs

## ASN and LAC – Feb 2017

ASN Level blank	21
ASN Level 1	29
ASN Level 2	58
ASN Level 3	75
ASN Level 4	62

## LAC Exclusions

	Number of Exclusions	Number of pupils excluded	Number of LAC exclusions	LAC as % of exclusions
2015-16	658	434	54 (39 pupils)	8.2
2014-15	628	354	49	7.8
2013-14	615	245	46	7.5
2012-13	697	392	34	4.9
2011-12	702	405	30	4.3

LAC = 1.3% of the school population



### Age of school leavers

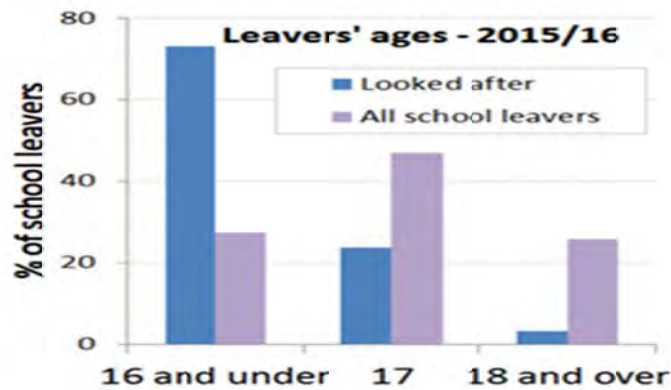


Table 1.1: Percentage of all looked after school leavers by their highest level of attainment 2015/16

	Looked after leavers	All school leavers
1 or more qualification at SCQF level 3 or better	87	98
1 or more qualification at SCQF level 4 or better	77	96
1 or more qualification at SCQF level 5 or better	40	86
1 or more qualification at SCQF level 6 or better	15	62
1 or more qualification at SCQF level 7	1	19
No qualifications at SCQF level 3 or better	13	2

## Comparative Destination Data

Overall cohort	
Positive	87%
Negative	8%
Out-with Control	5%

ASN cohort	
Positive	86%
Negative	10%
Out-with Control	4%

Young Carer cohort	
Positive	82%
Negative	15%
Out-with Control	3%

LAC cohort	
Positive	69%
Negative	25%
Out-with Control	6%

Our PT Timetable cohort are currently on a par with our LAC cohort.

- N.B  
These figures were extracted directly from the Datahub on 21/09/17.
- It covers the destinations of Highland Young People up to their 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday.
- These figures are likely to increase due to the part populated nature of the system during September. Higher/Further Education data will not update fully until October.

**Appendix 2**

**LAC attainment totals (SCQF level 3+)**

LAC aged 15+

year	LAC at home					LAC away from home					All LAC				
	Total No.	English & Maths		any SCQF 3+		Total No.	English & Maths		any SCQF 3+		Total No.	English & Maths		any SCQF 3+	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
2016/17	21	8	38.10%	13	61.90%	39	17	43.59%	25	64.10%	60	25	41.67%	38	63.33%
2015/16	15	2	14.3%	7	26.9%	31	12	85.7%	19	73.1%	46	14	30.43%	26	56.52%
2014/15	20	7	25%	14	33.3%	40	21	75%	28	66.7%	60	28	46.67%	42	70.00%
2013/14	26	14	53.8%	18	69.2%	48	30	62.5%	35	72.9%	<b>74</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>59.5%</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>71.6%</b>
2012/13	22	12	54.5%	13	59.1%	33	14	42.4%	19	57.6%	<b>55</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>47.3%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>58.2%</b>
2011/12	19	7	36.8%	11	57.9%	25	14	56.0%	16	64.0%	<b>44</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>47.7%</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>61.4%</b>
2010/11	33	19	57.6%	25	75.8%	33	13	39.4%	16	48.5%	<b>66</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>48.5%</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>62.1%</b>
2009/10	17	10	58.8%	14	82.4%	39	12	30.8%	14	35.9%	<b>56</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>39.3%</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>50.0%</b>
2008/09	38	12	31.6%	23	60.5%	24	10	41.7%	15	62.5%	<b>62</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>35.5%</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>61.3%</b>