

REPORT TO EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE – 29 AUGUST 2019

CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT

1 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Note and acknowledge the update contained within the Corporate Parenting Annual Report.
- 1.2 Continue to support the Council's corporate parent duties by listening to the needs, fears and wishes of children and young people, and being proactive and determined in our collective efforts to address these.

2 Background / Discussion

- 2.1 Corporate Parenting is the responsibility Aberdeenshire Council has for children and young people who are, or have been, 'looked after' by definition of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.
- 2.2 The Corporate Parenting Leads Group, chaired by the Interim Head of Service for Children's Services, is a thematic group of the GIRFEC Management Group and is responsible for continuously improving the service experience of looked after children, young people and care leavers, care experienced young people (CEYP).
- 2.3 The Group is committed to responding to the challenges faced by care experienced young people to improve outcomes for this particular group. The work is underpinned by the priorities of Getting it Right for Every Child.
- 2.4 Being a good Corporate Parent means that the Council will accept and embrace the responsibility for Aberdeenshire's care experienced young people, make their needs a priority, and seek for them the same outcomes as any good parent would want for their own children.
- 2.5 In January, 2017, the Corporate Parenting Leads Group launched a three-year [Corporate Parenting Action Plan \(2017-2020\)](#) which contains both the promises made to our CEYP following consultation on what they needed from their Corporate Parents. Appendix One reflects on the progress made in year two.
- 2.6 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and had no comments to make. They are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

3 Scheme of Governance

- 3.1 The Committee is able to consider this item in terms of Section E.1.1 (a) of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as the matter relates to Children's Services.

4 Implications and Risk

- 4.1 An equality impact assessment is not required because the report is an annual report and does not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics.
- 4.2 There are no staffing and financial implications.
- 4.3 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level

ACORP005 - Working with other organisations
ACORP006 – Reputation management
[Corporate Risk Register.](#)

The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level:

- ECSSR003 – Embedding GIRFEC; and
- ECSSR004 – Support inclusive, vibrant and healthy communities.
[Directorate Risk Registers.](#)

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Date 01 08 2019



Appendix One

Corporate Parenting Leads Group Annual Report for 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Corporate Parenting is the responsibility Aberdeenshire Council has for children and young people who are or have been Looked After by definition of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.
- 1.2 The Corporate Parenting Leads Group, chaired by the Interim Head of Service for Children's Services, is a thematic group of the GIRFEC Management Group and is responsible for continuously improving the service experience of looked after children, young people and care leavers, care experienced young people (CEYP). The Leads Group consists of representatives from:
- Health
 - Education & Children's Services (including Children's Rights, Social Work, Education, Educational Psychology & Sport & Leisure)
 - SCRA
 - NESCOL
 - Police Scotland
 - Skills Development Scotland
 - Housing
 - Aberdeen Children's Panel
 - Grampian Fire & Rescue Service
- 1.3 The group is committed to responding to the challenges faced by care experienced young people to improve outcomes for this particular group. The work is underpinned by the priorities of Getting it Right for Every Child.
- 1.4 Being a good Corporate Parent means that the Council will; accept and embrace the responsibility for Aberdeenshire's care experienced young people, make their needs a priority, and seek for them the same outcomes as any good parent would want for their own children.

2.0 Key Legislation/Policy/National Strategy Updates

- 2.1 On 27 March 2014, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (the Act) became law. Part 9 of the Act outlines a range of duties for corporate parents across Scotland.
- 2.2 The duties signify that corporate parents should **listen to the needs, fears and wishes** of children and young people, and **be proactive and determined** in their collective efforts to address these.

2.3 These duties are annotated to the actions within the Corporate Parenting Action Plan.

3.0 Children's Rights, Engagement & Participation

3.1 Children's Rights, Engagement & Participation themes are woven throughout this report.

3.2 Our care experienced young people told us that a good corporate parent is:

"When Aberdeenshire Council and people who work there act as our parent and take responsibility for doing everything that a good parent should do, for looked after children and care leavers"

3.3 This forms the focus and vision of the Corporate Parenting Leads Group and in line with the indicators of wellbeing, the Leads group work together to achieve the promises Aberdeenshire Council have made to our young people.

3.4 In January 2017, the Corporate Parenting Leads Group launched a three-year [Corporate Parenting Action Plan \(2017 -2020\)](#) which contains both the promises made to our CEYP following consultation on what they needed from their Corporate Parents. [This report reflects on the progress made in year two.](#)

3.5 In 2018/19, meaningful engagement has been further enhanced with our CEYP through Twilight Sessions whereby CEYP and Corporate Parenting Leads meet to discuss and identify 'what works well' and 'even better if...'. These discussions inform the direction and priority setting in developing Aberdeenshire's' Corporate Parenting Plan. The Corporate Parenting Leads Group have listened, responded to and made pledges to our CEYP. Our young people then hold the leads accountable for their actions and they are required to report back progress at subsequent meetings.

4.0 Aberdeenshire Context – Understanding the data

4.1 How Good Are We Now and How Do We Know?

4.2 The work of the Corporate Parenting Leads group is informed by our own data (qualitative and quantitative) alongside nationally collected data to understand the needs of our CEYP and identify strengths and weaknesses in our partnership approach to meeting our corporate parenting responsibilities.

4.3 The Leads Group have developed a RAG report (Red, Amber Green) to set targets and measure performance against the target. This then informs work stream priorities for the group. The use of this data has informed workstreams on Continuing Care, a Housing Forum for CEYP, a celebration event, training and the very recent application for funding for a Virtual Head Teacher for Aberdeenshire's Looked After young people.

4.4 Understanding and benchmarking our data is key to understanding need and capacity. At 31 December 2018, records indicate that there were 432 looked after children. This is a significant increase (of 38 young people) in the number

of looked after children over the last year Local Government Benchmarking Framework the rate for 2018 (per 1000 pop 0-17) was 7.2 for Aberdeenshire. This remains significantly less than the comparator average of 11, and less than the Scotland average of 14.3*

* Scottish Government CLAS Returns

Breakdown by type of placement at 31 March 2019 – Table 1

Type of placement	2016	2017	2018	Qtr. 4 2018/19
In the community: -				
At home with parents	98	73	82	83
With friends/relatives	64	65	81	78
With foster carers	181	177	180	178
With prospective adopters	11	12	14	14
In other community	3	5	4	3
Residential Accommodation:				
In local authority home	13	16	18	16
In voluntary home	12	11	17	15
In residential school	32	36	35	38
In secure accommodation	2	-	1	0
Total looked after children	416	394	432	425

Our CLAS return (2018) indicates that in the community, 20% of looked after children in Aberdeenshire were living at home with parents. An increase of 0.2%-points over the previous year. The percentage of children living at home with parents (20%) is less than the comparator average (30%), and the estimated Scotland average (26%).

A significant rise was noted in relation to the number of young people in kinship care. The Kinship Team have seen a steady rise in requests for kinship support throughout 2018 which may be attributed to greater promotion of the support available following the Children & Young People's (Scotland) Act 2014 and a focus by the Service on promoting family-based solutions for children on the edge of care.

Further work is being undertaken to understand the needs of Looked After Children at home with the view to developing a specific improvement workstream in this area.

Looked After children with Positive destinations post Aberdeenshire School

Over 10% more CEYP went on to positive destinations in 2017-18 compared to 2016-17, although this is not statistically significant due to relatively small numbers of pupils. The proportion of CEYP going on to positive destinations in Aberdeenshire is very similar to the National Figure as per Table 2.

Table 2

Looked After Children with positive destinations post Aberdeenshire school	2016/17	2017/18
No. of LAC who left school with positive destination	41	47
% of LAC who left school with positive destination	70.7%	80.9%
% of all pupils who left school with a positive destination	95.5%	96.3%
% of LAC who left school with positive destination <u>National</u> figure	76.4%	80.4%
% of all pupils who left school with positive destination <u>National</u> figure	93.7%	94.4%

Source - [ECS Cttee paper 'Analysis of Initial school leavers destination 2017/18 report'. 2018/19 leavers data due to become available in Insight February 2020. National all pupils taken from ScotXed Attainment & Initial Leavers 2017/18 Supplementary Data: <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/leavedestla>](#)

Looked After Children Attendance & Absence in Aberdeenshire Schools

As per Table 3, attendance figures for Looked After children attending Aberdeenshire Schools, in 2016/17 compared well to all pupil attendance. Whilst the figures have dropped slightly for 2017/18 (by 3%), this relates to a very small number of looked after children. All looked after children have a care plan where education is a key feature including attendance.

Table 3

Attendance and absence of Looked After Children attending Aberdeenshire schools	2016/17	2017/18
% LAC Attendance	93.12%	90.38%
% LAC Unauthorised Absence	2.35%	3.51%
% All pupils Attendance - Aberdeenshire	94.86%	94.44%
% All pupils Attendance - <u>National</u>	93.30%	TBC

*Source - Education Outcomes for LAC (Tables 3.4 for 2016/17 attendance figure). 2017/18 due to be published June 2019.

ScotXed AAE Return completed biennially does not include LAC separately - figures based on internal data. 2016/17 and 2017/18 figures taken from ECS Committee paper 'Attendance and Absence in Aberdeenshire Schools 2017-18'

Looked After Children in Foster Care

Over the past three years, the Service has been working hard to reduce the number of children becoming accommodated on an emergency basis and has reduced the percentage from **48 % to 29% in 2018**. The momentum to drive this change was firmly based on children's feedback that the emergency had led to increased trauma and anxiety.

We have a good understanding on the composition of new children requiring foster placements as follows which supports recruitment campaigns:

Table 4

Age at 31/01/2019	Under 1	1-4	5-11	12-15	16-17	18	19-21	Total
Boys	6	37	79	75	35	4	3	239
Girls	4	41	75	54	18	1	0	193
Total	10	78	154	129	53	5	3	432

Looked After Children with a Disability

In 2018, the percentage of looked after children recorded with a disability in Aberdeenshire was 21%, an increase of 2%-points over the previous year.

The percentage looked after children with a disability (21%) is greater than the comparator average (12%), and greater than the estimated Scotland average (11%).

The recording of ASN/Disability across local authorities and across our authority is not consistent. What we do know is that around 50% of our looked after young people in residential schools are children with complex health and care needs. This equates to around 4.5% of our looked after population. Children and Young people are reported as having an additional support need for a number of reasons as per table 5 below:

Table 5

Classification	Count of Person ID
No Disability	266
Not Known	62
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	31
Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties	22
Other Chronic Illness/Disabilities	18
Significant learning disabilities	12
Affected by disability of family members	11
Specific Learning Difficulties e.g. Dyslexia	7
Significant physical disabilities/motor impairment	4
Significant hearing impairment	3
Significant language/communication disorder	3
Mental health problem (Mental Health (Scot) Act84)	1
Grand Total	440**

**NB some children are reported under more than one classification therefore the total numbers do not match the number of Looked After Children.

Further work is required in this area. The introduction of a Virtual School and Head Teacher for Looked After Children will enable us to explore and respond to this need in a more meaningful manner.

5.0 Progress of Multi Agency Action Plan

The progress outlined below correlates to the aims and performance measures as outlined in the action plan.

5.1 Safe and Nurtured (1.0)

5.1.2 Aim (1.1) Looked After young people will have a safe place to live

How Good Are We Now and How Do We Know?

Aberdeenshire's Looked After Children are provided with a very safe and supportive place to live. We know this because our young people and their families tell us.

Children's Homes regularly seek feedback from young people, families and professionals whilst the young person is living with them and after they leave. They also work with the young people in relation to a 'Wellbeing Survey' which enables young people to rate how they are feeling against the wellbeing indicators.

Across the three Children's Homes, the average of 88% of young people living there reported to feeling safe. Of the 12% who did not report to feeling safe, this reported to their experiences in the community.

Across all three Children’s Homes, the quality of care and support has consistently been graded as ‘Very Good’ by the Care Inspectorate. Our young people and their families have commented as follows:

Parent’s comments:

Safe *‘I have no concerns’*

Nurtured *‘We know that staff work hard to support (our child)’*

Do you feel actively involved in the care of your child?

‘Yes, J (keyworker) updates me regularly, no concerns’

‘Yes’

What do you feel about the levels of communication with yourself and staff?

‘No concerns, (key worker) updates me regularly’

‘Very good’

Young People’s comments

‘I feel like I get treated very well and people treat me as my age and i respect that and therefore I am the same back.’

‘I get on well with the other kids and staff, which helps to build up relationship skills and opening up to staff about if there is something that I feel uneasy about.’

All looked After Young people over the last few years have been asked to comment on how safe they feel where they live through the My Voice Tool prior to

Pathway Reviews, Looked After Child Reviews and Children’s Hearings as per Table 6.

Children’s views are used to inform the Children & Young Person’s Assessment Report and Child’s Plan and appropriate action is taken to address any concerns. We have been unable to collect meaningful data for 2018/19 as usage of ‘My Voice’ has rapidly dropped which provided the data. CEYP’s views are still collected and inform their plan but the means to collect this is not sophisticated enough at this time to report on. Further work is required to find alternative ways to capture this information.

Table 6

Key performance measure	Achieved 2015/16	Achieved 2016/17	Achieved 2017/18	Achieved 2018/19
1a) Percentage of children who said they felt safe where they live (My Voice)	97% (294)	96% (149)	96% (45)	N/A

Foster Carers, Adopters and Kinship Carers are all rigorously assessed in line with legislative requirements. Our Permanence Panel and Fostering, Supported Lodgings and Kinship Panel have independent chairs who provide scrutiny to our assessments and processes.

Foster Carers and approved Kinship Carers are also subject to annual reviews and the views of looked after children, their families and the professionals supporting them are gathered to inform the review and identify both strengths of the placement and areas for improvement.

Feedback from Foster Carer Reviews also indicate our young people in foster care feel safe and cared for.

A suite of accommodation options has been developed to support care leavers in collaboration with their views and assessed needs. This will be further explored in the next section.

5.1.3 Aim (1.2) Young people will be supported to move on from care at the right time to appropriate accommodation which will reduce homelessness and offending behaviour and improve opportunities for employment and better health and well-being.

How Good Are We Now and How Do We Know?

Young people are very well supported to move on from care. We know this because our young people tell us and we have seen a consistent level of engagement with our Through Care Team and an increase in the number of young people coming back to our Service for help or support when they need it. A Pathways assessment is undertaken with everyone young person to identify their appropriate care plan and support.

31 March 2019, 80% of young people actively engaged with the Through Care Service and working towards independence had Pathways Plans and reviews in place. Of the 20% who did not have a Pathways Plan, a small number are supported by Adult Services as the lead agency and have a different type of review; other young people choose to dip in and out of the service on a discretionary basis. This flexibility is positive for young people who wish to manage their own lives but recognise that there are times when they do need some support.

When a young person is ready to think about leaving care, we provide safe and supportive accommodation and support for young people making the transition from Care to Independence which is a particularly vulnerable time for CEYP.

One of the ways we support CEYP with independent living skills is through the Through Care Service Taster flat in Peterhead which our young people have found to be very helpful and that we have replicated the project in Inverurie.

Aberdeenshire Council Housing Service prioritise care leavers for accommodation allocating them the maximum number of points. The Youth Housing Forum to prevent homelessness for care leavers is highly successful and has resulted in careful planning and accommodation allocation. Since 2017, no care leavers have been required to register as homeless in order to access accommodation.

We have developed a suite of accommodation and support options which include Langstane Supported Tenancies, Supported Lodgings and Taizali, a resource developed in the Fraserburgh area where many of our young people have significant relationships and attachments. The data below confirms that 31% of our CEYP open

to the Through Care Team are being supported to manage to a permanent tenancy (table 7). We have also completely eradicated CEYP leaving care and moving into B&B or homeless accommodation in 2018 (in 2017, we had 2 CEYP in B&B accommodation).

When a young person leaves care and makes a choice not to be supported by the Through Care Service, the Through Care Team send a 6 monthly letter reminding them of the Service and support available. This includes details of contact numbers, Facebook details and signposts young people to Skills Development Scotland.

Table 7

Type of Accommodation	No. of YP at 31/3/19	Percentage of CEYP open to T/C Team
Foster Care/Kinship	25	23%
Continuing Care	7	6%
Supported Lodgings	5	4%
Family	14	13%
Supported Tenancies	5	4%
Supported Acomm*	9	8%
Permanent Tenancies	34	31%
Temp Accommodation	6	5%
B&B	0	0
YOI	2	2%
Student Halls	1	1%
Sofa Surfing	2	2%
Total	110	110%

*Supported Accommodation includes Taizali and Foyer accommodation.

Taizali opened in March 2016 and offers accommodation and support to young people leaving care between the ages of 16-18 with a view to supporting their transition into independence. The accommodation is offered with the expectation that young people will actively participate in an independent living programme.

To date, the staff at Taizali have supported 24 young people to access the right supports and move on to independence. (10 in 2016, 8 in 2017 and 6 in 2018/19).

An example of success relates to M who came to Taizali from foster care keen to begin living independently but was at risk of a negative destination. M has been supported to undertake an Activity Agreement with a local work placement which led to her securing paid employment and is now ready to be supported into a supported tenancy feeling much more ready and equipped to manage this next stage.

Another young person with low confidence, poor health and education outcomes have undertaken a college course, improved their health and grown significantly in confidence to point where they are ready to begin planning for their future.

We currently have 8 Supported Lodgings providers and over the course of 2018, 5 (5 in 2017) care leavers accessed the Supported Lodgings Scheme prior to moving to live more independently. There is an ongoing challenge to recruit providers within the major settlements as many of our providers are more rural which influences a young person's choice to take up this option. Ongoing recruitment continues.

5.3 Aim (1.3) Young people will be cared for by competent, confident skilled carers who are able to meet their needs.

Children's Services is committed to Safe Recruitment policies and our residential Children's Homes, Fostering Service and Adoption Service are also regulated Services regularly inspected by the Scottish Care Inspectorate. Our staff are competent, confident and skilled to meet the needs of our CEYP and a rolling training program ensures continuous learning for carers and staff.

Excellent recruitment strategy and process is essential to being able to ensure young people are care for by competent, confident skilled carers who are able to meet their needs.

Across the Children's Homes, the workforce is stable, and our staff remain in the Service for significant periods of time which provides consistency and a skilled and experienced workforce to meet the needs of some of Aberdeenshire's most vulnerable young people. The Children's Homes actively involve their young people and ex residents in recruitment and their insight and views have been invaluable to the process.

Between 1st January 2018 and 31st December 2018, 23 prospective households attended Skills to Foster Training. 20 families proceeded to assessment following the training and applying to foster for Aberdeenshire. These figures reflect the national picture across the UK.

Aberdeenshire's Fostering Panel made recommendations on **15** new applications for approval as foster carers from 1 January to 31 December 2018. (9 in 2017)

All Fostering households are required to complete 30 hours of learning and development annually. This also encompasses e-learning. 100 e-learning modules were completed by Aberdeenshire Foster Carers during 2018 which includes reflection on what they have learnt and how this will be put into practice.

Six Skills uplifts were presented to and recommended by the Fostering Panel during the year. **5** fostering households moved from Skills Level 1 to Skills Level 2 and **1** fostering household moved from Skills Level 2 to Skills Level 3 demonstrating further our commitment to growing foster carers to meet at times the very complex needs of the CEYP they care for.

Peer support is strongly encouraged and in 2018, 233 Foster carers attended these groups across the year.

Feedback from CEYP is integral to evaluating our service. Some examples are:

'I want to continue living with my foster carer because I am part of that family.'
(12-year-old)

'I am Cared about, looked after properly, rules are reasonable. Plenty freedom.' (17-year-old)

"I feel that my relationship with my foster carers is fully natural. I have enjoyed every second with them as they have provided a safe and stable environment for me over the years. They have never failed to meet my needs as they have ensured that I have had a decent education and a good social life. They have encouraged me to reach the best of my ability." (17 year old)

"I have a good relationship with my foster carers and like living there because I can tell them about things that worry me." (14 year old)

'She (foster carer) believed in me when no one did, not even myself.' (15 year old)

Until around 2015, Aberdeenshire's Adoption Service received a very high level of interest in Adoption. However, since 2015, the Service has seen a significant drop with 2017 seeing the lowest level of interest in adoption to date. In 2015 we successfully recruited and assessed **13** families, in 2017 **4**, however we saw an increase in 2018 to **8** families, following a concerted and targeted campaign of recruitment through the media and social media online.

Between January and December 2018, **9** couples participated in and completed the preparation courses and **4** progressed onto full assessment and approval. The remaining families withdrew for varying personal reasons.

In 2018 the Permanence Panel made recommendations for Adoption Plans in relation to **16** children and 15 children were matched with adoptive families.

Adopters are also supported to continue to grow and develop their skills recognising that the needs of a CEYP change throughout the age and stages of their lives. A rolling programme of workshops and learning opportunities for adoptive parents continues and the service has taken positive steps forward in 2018 to engage with online media and workshops that adoptive parents can join in with either individually at home or with a group of other parents in a local venue.

In 2018 the Service received 76 referrals for a range of aspects of Adoption Support. Requests included birth records access and counselling from adopted adults, tracing and reunion support with birth family members, adoption support for families with children of all ages, supporting teenagers, assisting birth family member's with Letterbox Scheme letters and stepparent adoptions. (2017 – **49**).

Feedback collated from Looked After Child reviews confirmed that throughout 2018/19, 99 % of placements were agreed to be meeting the child's individual needs. (An increase of 2 % from 2017/18). Where the placement was not meeting the child's needs, alternative plans were being explored

AIM 1.4 All looked after children and young people will have access to someone they trust, children's rights, social worker, teacher etc.

All CEYP have access to someone they trust. We know this because during 2018/19, 98% of looked after children had an allocated worker. The 1.5% who didn't (5 children) were allocated to a Local Area Coordinator/Family Support Worker due to their worker leaving and whilst a recruitment process was underway. Further work is required to evaluate the quality of the relationship between a CEYP and their worker/key professional.

Aberdeenshire Council continue to offer a Children's Rights Service to care experienced young people via our own Children's Rights Officers and Who Cares? Scotland.

In 2018/19, 100 (an increase of 6 from 2017/18) children have used the CR Service (age 5+). Of that 100, 45 new children accessed the service from Jan 2018 to 31st March 2019 (45% of all individual children receiving a service) All children receive information about the Service when initially accommodated.

CEYP told us in a survey undertaken by the Children's Rights' Service in March 2019:

How easy was it to get in contact with the Children's Rights Officer?

- Very easy ✓✓✓ ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
- Quite easy ✓✓✓✓✓
- Quite hard
- Very hard

And,

1. What kind of help did you get? (please tick all the help you got)

- Help to give my views at meetings ✓ ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
- Help to write down my views ✓ ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
- Help to sort out a worry or concern ✓✓✓✓✓✓
- Help to sort out a problem ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
- Advice on my rights ✓✓✓✓✓✓

A trusting relationship is vital to a young person being able to share their views. Information is collated from Looked After Child Reviews as per table 8.

Table 8

Child's Views clearly available to the Review Manager	Count	%
Yes	228	80%
No, child too young (under 5)	40	12%
No, other reason	17	7%
Total	285	100%

Where views are not available and the child was over 5 years of age, the main reasons related to the child having complex health/disabilities. However, an audit (July 2018) of Children & Young Person's Reports indicated that in the sample of cases audited, any issue of disability was considered, and reference made to appropriate materials to gain further understanding of a young person's views. For example, this included direct reference to communication tools including My Life workbooks to enable the young person to share their views in a more appropriate manner.

5.6 AIM (1.6) to enable young people to remain in continuing care arrangements up until 21 years of age.

We have been successful in promoting and enabling our young people to remain in continuing care in Aberdeenshire. In 2017, 23 young people were eligible for continuing care and of those 23, 14 remained in their placement i.e. have taken up this option. However, in 2018, we have seen a significant increase to 25 young people remaining in placement over 17 years of age and a further 11 over 18 years of age.

The main reason for leaving the placement is the young person's personal choice and whilst Aberdeenshire has always been committed to the 'Staying Put Agenda', the introduction of continuing care has clearly had a positive impact on our young people and their carers.

A significant number of young people over the age of 16 years, do return to their families. Where they don't, we have developed a suite of accommodation and support options already highlighted in this report and have in 2018 eradicated young people leaving care and ending up in homeless or B&B accommodation.

5.7 AIM (1.7) Care leavers will know how to access support and what will be available to them particularly where they have disengaged from services.

We proactively write out to all non-engaged CEYP who have left care every 6 months to 'keep in touch' and signpost them to support as required and reminding of the service available, providing our Facebook Page/Duty Telephone number, together with SDS contact details.

During 2018/19, 31 (17 in 2017) young people who had left care and had previously disengaged from the Service re-engaged following the receipt of their letter informing them that the service remains available to them.

5.8 AIM (1.8) Care leavers will have access to After Care support up until 26 years of age

Care leavers are and offered and access support up until 26 years of age. We know this through tracking the profile of young people open to the service and those returning. During 2018, the Through Care and After Care Team were supporting 110 (120 in 2017) young people. In the first quarter of 2018/19, this has increased to 114: 83 between the ages of 15-19 years and 31(26 in 2017) young people between 20-26 years of age.

6.0 Healthy

AIM (2.1) Health needs of looked after children and young people are prioritised

In 2018, 141 referrals were made to the Looked After Children’s NHS Service. We know the health needs of looked after children are prioritised because 94% of those children received an initial health assessment as a result of becoming looked after which informed their care plan. Of those 135 children, 47% received an initial health assessment within 8 weeks. This compares to 40% in 2016 and 42% in 2017 – a rise of 7% over the past 2 years. The setting up of a small working group to improve this process has begun to see improvement in this area.

The reasons for the delay are mixed across both Health and Social Work Services as per table 9 below.

Table 9

Reasons for delay in completion	Aberdeenshire in 2018 (2017)
Paperwork - SW	6% (10%)
Paperwork - NHS	16% (13%)
Paperwork - NHS & SW	8% (14%)
LAC (NHS) Team	2% (8%)
Moved Placement	4% (0%)
Out of Area	11% (4%)
Reasons for non-assessment	
Non-engagement (NHS)	1% (2%)
No Consent	4% (2%)
Discharged	1% (4%)

Table 9 indicates that there was a 7% increase in the number of children being placed out with the Grampian area during 2018 which impacts on timescales as the Looked After Children Health team are required to locate professionals out-with Grampian to complete the health assessment (who may also have different processes).

Of the 6% of Looked After Children who were not assessed (9 out of 141) the main reasons cited were non engagement, non-consent and discharged before assessment was progressed. Whilst 6% equates to a small number of children, this is an area for improvement, and it is anticipated that development of the School Nurse Pathway (CEL 13) in Aberdeenshire may improve opportunities to better engage families in this process.

In January 2018, Trakcare was introduced to NHS Grampian to enable the Looked After Child Status to be flagged on hospital health records to ensure medical practitioners are better informed of a young person's circumstances.

Within Aberdeenshire the health visitor/school nurse teams are being encouraged to register with Trakcare and a briefing for Health will be circulated to practitioners informing them of the processes to be followed when Looked After Children/Young People do not attend health appointments.

The Aberdeenshire Audit of Child Protection in General Practice report Jan 19 showed that 90% (28 out of 31) of GP practices use Read coding for LAC.

Dental services are changing their registration forms to ensure Looked After Children/Care Experienced details are added.

All school aged children who become Looked After are offered a mental health assessment (SDQ); this is completed with consent. During 2018, 72 % of Aberdeenshire's looked after children completed the assessment. Of the 28% of Aberdeenshire's Looked After Children who did not have an SDQ completed, the reasons included:

- child moved out of area*
- refusal
- discharge prior to completion
- Seven were not returned from school nurses.

The potential to develop the School Nurse Pathway (CEL 13) in Aberdeenshire may again improve the figures for those SDQs not completed. Some health boards across Scotland are not using SDQ assessments at all.

12% (11) of the SDQs completed were already attending CAMHS and 6% (5) were referred to CAMHS as a result of the SDQ assessment.

*14 children were not offered the opportunity to participate in the SDQ because they had moved out with the area. This requires further exploration.

7.0 Achieving

AIM 3.1 Looked After Children and Young People will have one key adult in school who will protect, promote and safeguard their needs

All CEYP can identify their key contact in school and are offered ring-fenced time with that adult in school to build a trusting relationship and ensure that cognisance is taken of their needs and circumstances in care planning.

Further work is required to promote specific induction for CEYP.

AIM 3.2 Looked After Children and Young People are aware of the supports accessible through school in their local area.

We have been unable to collate specific data on this area and the PI requires reviewing.

AIM 3.3 Regular planning takes place for care experienced young people to determine whether a CSP is required, and to ensure that their educational needs are being met.

In 2019/19, 92% of our looked after children has a plan, that was regularly reviewed that confirmed their education needs were currently being met. Plans to address the disparity were in place for the 8% of CEYP whose education plan did not meet their needs which included the facilitation of a Flexible Pathway or for some children the identification of education plan as part of a residential school provision or alternative day school provision for some of our children with complex additional support needs.

AIM 3.4 Key information is prepared and shared at times of transition between schools for all care experienced young people.

Transitions checklists are not being used consistently across schools. At times of transition, we know that partners are committed to facilitating formal and informal meetings with the young people/parents/carers/partners to ensure best practice and a young person and their carers are supported with the transition. Further work is required to bring consistency to this approach.

AIM 3.5 High expectation of attendance rates of Looked After Children and Young people is promoted and safeguarded.

As noted in section 4.4 of this report, Aberdeenshire overall attendance rates for looked after children compares well to the national picture. Attendance rates for children who are looked after at home are more concerning and are being addressed through a particular workstream focusing on improving outcomes for looked after children at home.

AIM 3.6 Attainment data of care experienced young people is not significantly different to that of their peers.

Table 10

Looked After Children School Leavers Highest Level of Attainment	2016/17
No. of LAC school leavers (looked after for the full year by LA)	11
% of LAC school leavers (looked after for the full year by LA) with 1+ awards at SCQF level 3	81.82% (98.81% for non LAC in Aberdeenshire)
% of LAC school leavers (looked after for the full year by LA) with 1+ awards at SCQF level 4	81.82% (98.28% for non LAC in Aberdeenshire)
% of <u>National</u> LAC school leavers (looked after for the full year by LA) with 1+ awards at SCQF level 3	86.17%
% of <u>National</u> LAC school leavers (looked after for the full year by LA) with 1+ awards at SCQF level 4	78.06%

Since 2013/14, leavers have been classified by identifying the highest Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level at which they achieved one or more passes by the time they leave school. This includes SQA attainment at SCQF levels 3 to 7.

As per Table 10, 81.8% of CEYP (who were looked after for the full year by the LA) who left school during session 2016/17, achieved one or more qualifications at SCQF level 4, compared to 78.1% across Scotland and so whilst Aberdeenshire compares well with national LAC School leavers, they are still behind their peers in Aberdeenshire.

8.0 Active

AIM 4.1 Looked after children and care leavers have access to leisure activities, promoting wellbeing and good physical health up until 21 years of age.

All Looked after children and young people, including those looked after at home, and are eligible to access free sporting activities across all of the local authority's sport centres. This includes swimming lessons and Active Aberdeenshire Sports Team.

In terms of establishing participation levels of looked after young people in active school activities, we are able to report that in 2018/19, 57 looked after children attended Active School Activities. CEYP currently make up around 23% of those attending such activities which is 10% up from the previous year.

Over the reporting period, we have also noted an increase in the number of CEYP volunteering with Active Schools from 2 in 2017/18 to 5 in 2018/19. This equates to 0.02% of the total CEYP population in secondary schools whereas the total percentage of secondary pupils volunteering sits at 0.07%

Through information collated at Looked After Child Reviews, 98% of our young people identified that they were regularly participating in hobbies and interests including active activities.

In 2018, we also successfully secured free access to Sport & Leisure Facilities for care leavers for up to one year between leaving care and the age of 26 years. Whilst it is too early to collect data on usage, this is something we will use to track the effectiveness of project and report on in future reports.

9.0 Respected and Responsible

9.1 AIM 5.1 Looked after children and care leavers will have their successes celebrated and promoted

Our Corporate Parenting Website was launched spring 2016. The website is available to the public via the GIRFEC webpage and provides further opportunity to raise awareness of corporate parenting duties and responsibilities and celebrate success.

Our care experienced young people told us that they wanted their achievement stories acknowledged and celebrated. An 'Achievement Wall' has been included in the website containing anonymous success stories directly from our care experienced young people who have been delighted with the outcome. The wall is updated quarterly with new stories.

Data is also collected from Looked After Child Reviews to inform as to whether reports contain information relating to a looked after young person's achievement. We collect this on a quarterly basis and over the last year have seen a steady increase following promotion of this across services from 82% in quarter one to 99% in quarter three.

In September 2018, Aberdeenshire held its first ever bespoke Awards evening for care experienced young people. This event provided young people with an opportunity to be nominated for a number of categories including:

- Aberdeenshire Volunteering Award
- Academic Achievement Award (primary & secondary categories)
- Cultural & Sporting Achievement Award
- Making a difference for care experienced young people
- Personal Development Award
- Inspirational Young Person Award

The evening was a resounding success, hosted by Olympic gold Medallist Hannah Miley and attended by our nominated young people, their friends, family, social workers and teachers.

Our CEYP told us:

"I really liked it and it was exciting but part of me wanted one of the other nominees to win. I really like her and she's been doing really well."

Winner of the Academic Achievement Award, Primary.

"It is important to give care experienced young people the opportunity to attend an event like this because they may not get the opportunity otherwise. It's also very important to care experienced young people for our corporate parents to recognise us

and be proud! The night was amazing....to be a winner also felt very rewarding as if felt like people recognised what I do and how passionate I am about making a difference.”

Winner of Inspirational Young Person Award.

Being nominated for the award was great even though I was surprised. We were all treated as though we were really special. There was a piper to welcome us and a photographer - it was a bit like being at a wedding. Everybody was nice and I met lots of new people. The meal was pretty cool too, little burgers and mini macaroni pies. I will never forget meeting Hannah Miley, she was so nice and not at all what I expected.

Young Person Nominated for Volunteering Award

Our intention is run this event every 3 years to continue to value and nurture our young people, eradicate stigma and promote our CEYP and their amazing achievements.

9.2 AIM 5.2 Looked after children & care leavers will be supported in their communities by corporate parents who understand their duties and responsibilities as well as the needs of looked after children.

9.2.1 Our Corporate Parenting Website was launched spring 2016. The website is available to the public via the GIRFEC webpage and provides further opportunity to raise awareness of corporate parenting duties and responsibilities and celebrate success. Further work is required on the website to ensure it contains the right information and this will be progressed over 2019.

[Corporate Parenting Page](#)

Some examples of how we have raised awareness of responsibilities and duties are: Aberdeenshire Council has now introduced an introduction to Corporate Parenting into the Council's generic induction programme and is currently developing e-training which will be able to be accessed by all council employees. The Robert Gordon University are also supporting to develop a short video clip being created by students as part of their project work on a Media Degree.

Police Scotland have recently recruited three Corporate Parenting 'Champions' across NE Division who are in the process of compiling a local Corporate Parenting Plan for NE Division, to tie in at local level with delivery of Police Scotland's National Corporate Parenting Plan. They are awaiting national training, which it is hoped will roll out later this year to all Officers.

However, meantime, they are continuing to roll out introductory face-to-face briefings to front-line Officers about Corporate Parenting across the Division to raise awareness about Corporate Parenting. To date the local NE Division Command Team (approximately 20 Officers) have received formal multi-agency training. All officers have received an electronic briefing and Face to face briefings have been carried out with a further 104 Officers and 6 civilian members of staff.

We believe that by being proactive in delivering corporate parenting training, we will increase awareness and will further aid signposting and support should partners come into contact with CEYP.

The Young People's Organising & Campaigning Group (YPOC) now have a number of resources which are all available via the Corporate parenting webpage. These include:

- 'We are the Bairns' – guide to corporate parenting
- The Meetings guide
- 'Don't Judge - We are no different from you' – guide for education.

These documents are designed to challenge corporate parents to do the best they can to improve outcomes for CEYP.

[Link to YPOC materials](#)

10.0 Included

AIM 6.1 Children and young people help to design services by sharing their own experiences of being looked after and what could have been better to ensure they achieved better outcomes for all looked after children and young people in Aberdeenshire

The YPOC Group has continues to meet. The young people are looking at innovative ways to recruit to the group. The group is facilitated by two Children's Rights Officer and the Who Cares? Scotland young person's worker.

The group, having spent 2016/17 working on their campaign 'Don't judge, we're no different from you' which was launched in early 2017 were asked to present a workshop at the 'Children in Scotland' Conference in Edinburgh on 7 November 2018. The workshop, led by two of our CEYP and supported by Children's Rights Officers, was well attended the girls were able to answer many questions from the audience.

Members of the YPOC group also gave a presentation on 18 September 2018 to Children's Panel members where an audience of 40 panel members watched their campaign 'Don't judge, we're no different from you' DVD and asked lots of questions about their experiences at school and at Children's Hearings. Panel member feedback was very positive, and they reported that their input made them as Panel Members reflect on how they might do things differently to support CEYP.

The YPOC group's next campaign is focussing on what happens when young people first come into care.

In October 2018, some members of the YPOC group met with colleagues from HR who facilitated interview training with them which included assistance with interview skills and some mock interviews which will help the young people develop skills for their own lives but also provided them with the skills to recruit Aberdeenshire's new Looked After Children Champion. Cllr Anouk Kloppert was successfully recruited to join Cllr Anne Stirling as Looked After Champion following Cllr Evison's successful period in this role.

The development of Twilight sessions with the Corporate Parenting Leads group has been a key milestone in direct engagement between CEYP and the leads across partnership organisations. This has resulted in a number of pledges being made which will inform the next steps in reviewing the Corporate Parenting Plan.

Some of the pledges are as follows:

'I pledge to be available, accessible and approachable to the young folk and keep my fellow Councillors informed and involved.

Cllr Anouk Kloppert & Looked After Children Champion

'To work to eliminate the attainment gap between Care Experienced & non- Care Experienced students at NESCoL'

Robin McGregor, NESCOL

'To continue to raise the profile of our family firm and create interesting work experience and opportunities.'

Jacqueline Dinnes, SDO, Our Family Firm

'To ensure NHS Grampian employees know what Corporate Parenting is and what being Looked After or Care Experienced means'

Linda Gray, LAC Nurse

'I pledge to do all that I and my school can to prevent changes of school unless this is what the young person wants.'

Dawn Lynch, Depute Head Teacher

I will raise awareness about the work within North East division of Police Scotland about Police Officers' responsibilities and the need to listen to and engage with CEYP.'

Sheila McDermott, Police Scotland

10.1 AIM 6.2, 6.3 & 6.4 Key, skilled Champions will promote, advocate for and support workplace opportunities within the council enabling young people to access support and flexibility in bespoke placements.

Launched by the Scottish Government in January 2011 the intention of 'Our Family Firm' is to provide experience of the "workplace" in order to help ensure that care leavers are better equipped for adulthood. Our Family Firm works closely with the Employability Partnership and DYW.

Our Family Firm currently has eleven service champions in the following areas: Business services (4), Infrastructure services (2), Education and Children's services (3) Health and Social Care services (2) and is in the process of sourcing 2 further Champions within Education and Children's Services.

Referrals to this service have significantly increased since our relaunch in 2016 rising from 5 in 2015 to 73 in 2018. Of the 73 referrals, to date 71% have progressed to

actual work experience which varies from one a day to full weeks for a mutually agreed period of time based on the needs and circumstances of the CEYP. Placements include mechanical engineering, admin, catering, Care, pharmacy, landscape services, beauty therapy, animal care, facilities, ICT, construction, nursing, sport and leisure and Media.

Towards the end of 2016, Aberdeenshire Council funded a pilot project offering two care experienced young people paid work experience and support with navigating the workplace and applying for jobs. The pilot came to an end in March 2017 and was reported to have been successful with one young person being offered further work and the other feeling confident enough to go on and apply for college.

In October 2017 the programme, now named “WorkPlus”, ran again with five young people. It ended in December 2017 and once again was reported as successful with three of the young people achieving offers of employment and going on to further education. Unfortunately, further funding has not been secured to continue this project.

Our CEYP have told us that their Family Firm work experience has significantly increased their confidence and supported them to apply for both part-time and full time employment.

11.0 Good Practice & Achievements

11.1 The body of this report highlights the work and progress of Aberdeenshire’s corporate parenting plan. There are many successes including:

- Young people’s participation in service improvement, recruitment and training.
- National recognition for YPOC materials
- Twilight Sessions involving CEYP and Corporate parenting leads.
- Highly successful Awards evening – Celebrating Success’ for CEYP
- Good inspection outcomes for our residential and fostering services
- No young people leaving care were placed in a B&B accommodation
- Increase in number of young people sustaining their own tenancies
- Increase choice through a suite of supportive accommodation for care leavers
- Increase in the number of care leavers returning to the Service at times they most need support.
- Greater awareness and good up take of continuing care options
- Significant increase in Our Family Firm placements
- Strong collaboration between partners to secure improved outcomes for CEYP

11.2 Celebrating successes is a key role for corporate parents and whilst some of the success stories are woven into this report, feedback from young people in particular is vital in evaluating our impact. The following are quotes collated from some of our care experienced young people:

‘I am an ambassador for The Year of Young People 2018 for Young Scot.’

‘I have gained confidence to consider my own issues with mental health and have undertaken an additional online course exploring mental health issues with an aim to supporting other young people in the future.’

'I presented the DVD 'Don't judge – we're no different from you' to Second year up to Sixth year of Meldrum Academy in assemblies with the help of Children's Rights Officers.'

'I took part in giving a workshop in Glasgow to CELCIS- a conference for residential staff and showed the YPOC's DVD.'

'It helped visiting the place before moving there, knowing who you're staying with, understanding what is going on, having people to support you.'
It helped having met my Social Worker before the move, having my own room, having my teddies, having my own clothes.'

'I was asked to be involved in the 1000 voices campaign. I wanted to do it because I want things to change. It was hard to tell my story but for people to understand what needs to change I had to. It's not my fault I ended up in care and I understand that now but all that happened made it difficult for me to behave in a way other people understand. I always found school or activities or holidays and even having friends difficult. Being in care doesn't mean I don't want to be like everybody else, I do! I have done lots of presentations for school year groups and parents and teachers and social workers and cadets to help tell my story and I went to Edinburgh and Glasgow to meet Nicola Sturgeon and John Swinney, I even spoke on a massive stage in front of hundreds of people, which was terrifying!'

[Achievements Wall](#) – further examples can be found here.

12.0 Conclusion

The Corporate Parenting Leads group are a highly committed group of service representatives who have created an aspirational plan and have been dedicated in enabling their services to contribute towards the aims and ambitions which have been reported on within this report.

This report highlights key achievements and challenges for corporate parents throughout the past three years. Of significant importance is the day to day work all partners undertake to build relationships with, support and enhance opportunities for looked after children and young people across Aberdeenshire. It is this commitment that makes a direct difference to children's lives.

13.0 Next Steps

2018 was year two of a three-year plan. Whilst embedding the progress we have made, we have identified with our CEYP the following areas for further improvement:

1. Improve regularity of Twilight Sessions
2. Embed some of the pledges into specific improvement actions
3. Recruit a Virtual Head Teacher for CEYP in education in Aberdeenshire to improve outcomes in education and help us understand better our CEYP with Additional Support Needs
4. Adopt key priorities as agreed by our CEYP from the Stop/Go research undertaken by the Care Review
5. Understand what is working well alongside the barriers to CEYP accessing mental health support.
6. Engage with our CEYP to identify whether relationships with their key professionals are nurturing and helpful.

Leigh Jolly (on behalf of the Corporate Parenting Leads Group.)
Social Work Manager, Corporate Parenting
31 May 2019