

## **REPORT TO BUCHAN AREA COMMITTEE – 06 OCTOBER 2020**

### **CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT**

#### **1 Reason for Report / Summary**

Aberdeenshire Council are required to produce and report annually on their Corporate Parenting Plan. This report presents the progress made by Aberdeenshire Council and Partners who work collaboratively to improve outcomes for Care Experienced young people in the form of an annual report.

The report also serves to demonstrate ongoing commitment to listening to Care Experienced young people (CEYP) to ensure that lived experience directs and influences service design and provision.

#### **2 Recommendations**

**The Committee is recommended to:**

- 2.1 Acknowledge and provide feedback to the Service on the update contained within the Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2019/20 as per Appendix 1**
- 2.2 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.**

#### **3 Purpose and Decision-Making Route**

- 3.1 This matter is being brought before all six Area Committees following this recommendation made by the Education and Children's Services Committee on 20 August 2020 in order that all Elected Members might recognise and reaffirm their corporate parenting responsibilities.**
- 3.2 Aberdeenshire's Children's Services Plan 2020-2023 will be presented to the Education and Children's Services Committee in October 2020 and will include the new Corporate Parenting Action Plan for the same period.**

#### **4 Discussion**

- 4.1 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.**

- 4.2 The Corporate Parenting Leads Group, chaired by the Interim Head of Service for Children’s Services, is a thematic group of the Getting It Right For Every Child (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.
- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 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 the overall progress but with a focus on year three.

## 5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

- 5.1 This report helps deliver Council Priorities: Our People: Education and Health & Wellbeing.
- 5.2 This report also helps to deliver against [Aberdeenshire’s Children’s Services Plan](#) Priority – ‘Corporate Parenting’.
- 5.3 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial		x	
Staffing		x	
Equalities		x	
Fairer Scotland Duty		x	
Town Centre First		x	
Sustainability		x	
Children and Young People’s Rights and Wellbeing	x		

- 5.4 By supporting the recommendations in this report, which includes listening to the needs, fears and wishes of children and young people, and being proactive and determined in our collective efforts to address these, the Council will have a positive impact on the rights and wellbeing of our Care Experienced children and young people.
- 5.5 An equality impact assessment is not required because the report is an annual report and recommendations do not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics.
- 5.6 There are no staffing and financial implications resulting from the annual report.
- 5.7 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level

ACORP005 - Working with other organisations

ACORP007 – Social Risk

[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.](#)

## **6 Scheme of Governance**

- 6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 6.2 The Committee is able to consider this item in terms of Section B1.2 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance, as the Committee is being asked to consider and comment on a matter or policy which impacts its Area.

**Laurence Findlay**  
**Director of Education & Children's Services**

Report prepared by Leigh Jolly, Head of Children's Services  
Date 10 09 2020

**List of Appendices** – Appendix 1 – Corporate Parenting Annual Report for 2019/20

## APPENDIX 1

### Corporate Parenting Thematic Group Annual Report for 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020

#### 1.0 Introduction

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.

The Corporate Parenting Leads Group, chaired by the Interim Head of Service for Children's Services, is a thematic group of the GIRFEC Strategic Group and is responsible for continuously improving the service experience of Care Experienced young people which incorporates looked after children, young people and care leavers. 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
- Grampian Fire & Rescue Service
- Children's Hearing Scotland
- Aberdeen University

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.

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 National Context

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.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 detailed which public bodies are considered to be [Corporate Parents](#) and defined Corporate Parenting as:

*"The formal and local partnerships between all services responsible for working together to meet the needs of looked after children, young people and care leavers".*

The duties (Part 9 of the Act) 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.

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

In October 2016, Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, promised Care Experienced people that Scotland would do better. She said Scotland would come together and love its most vulnerable children and give them the childhood they deserve.

On 5 February 2020, the [Care Review](#) published its findings and recommendations including seven main reports.

#### The Promise (and the Pinky Promise for younger readers)

- ❖ **The Promise** reflects what over 5,500 Care Experienced children and adults, families and the paid and unpaid workforce told the Care Review in the hope that Scotland is listening.
- ❖ It tells Scotland what it must do to make sure its most vulnerable children feel loved and have the childhood they deserve.



- **The Plan** explains how this change must happen.
- **The Money** and **Follow the Money** explain how Scotland can invest better in its children and families.
- **The Rules** demonstrates the current legislative framework and how it must change to achieve **The Promise**.

The Care Review took everything it heard and organised it into different groups (Foundations) and each Group sets out how Scotland can better care for children

#### The Five Foundations are:

**Voice** - Children must be listened to and meaningfully and appropriately involved in decision-making about their care, with all those involved properly listening and responding to what children want and need. There must be a compassionate, caring, decision-making culture focused on children and those they trust.

**Family** - Where children are safe in their families and feel loved they must stay – and families must be given support together to nurture that love and overcome the difficulties which get in the way.

**Care** - Where living with their family is not possible, children must stay with their brothers and sisters where safe to do so and belong to a loving home, staying there for as long as needed.

**People** - The children that Scotland cares for must be actively supported to develop relationships with people in the workforce and wider community, who in turn must be supported to listen and be compassionate in their decision-making and care.

**Scaffolding** - Children, families and the workforce must be supported by a system that is there when it is needed. The scaffolding of help, support and accountability must be ready and responsive when it is required.

The Care Review have set out clear timescales with associated milestones starting in April 2020 culminating in March 2030.

The Care Review reports have been shared with the Corporate Parenting Leads Group and the subsequent agencies represented on the group. A presentation is also planned for the Council's Senior Leadership Team.

Many of the key themes from the Review are highlighted in the Corporate Parenting Leads Group new three-year Plan (2020-2023) alongside the Stop/Go Priorities that have been shared by the Care Review as part of the journey to empower partners to begin making changes now.

### **3.0 Children's Rights, Engagement & Participation**

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

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.

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 Care Experienced Young People following consultation on what they needed from their Corporate Parents. [This report reflects on the progress made in year three and overall progress across the span of the 2017-2020 Plan. This report also sets out our plan and ambitions for 2020-2023 which will be incorporated into the Aberdeenshire Children's Services Plan as an ongoing identified priority for 2020-2023.](#)



Over the past three years, meaningful engagement has been further enhanced with our Care Experienced Young People through Twilight Sessions whereby Care Experienced Young People 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 Care Experienced Young People.

Our young people then hold the leads accountable for their actions and they are required to report back progress at subsequent meetings. Throughout 2019/20, discussion has included housing for care leavers, role of the Virtual Head Teacher, role of Skills Development Scotland and young people's experience of 'coming into care.'

On 27 February, our Care Experienced young people and corporate parenting leads, had the privilege of meeting directly with colleagues from the Care Review. Aberdeenshire Care Experienced Young People had contributed to the Review in many different ways and hearing that many of their views and thoughts had been considered, further enhanced our ambition to ensure that our young people have a voice and are taken seriously.

#### **4.0 Aberdeenshire Context – Understanding the data**

##### **How Good Are We Now and How Do We Know?**

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 Care Experienced Young People and identify strengths and weaknesses in our partnership approach to meeting our corporate parenting responsibilities.

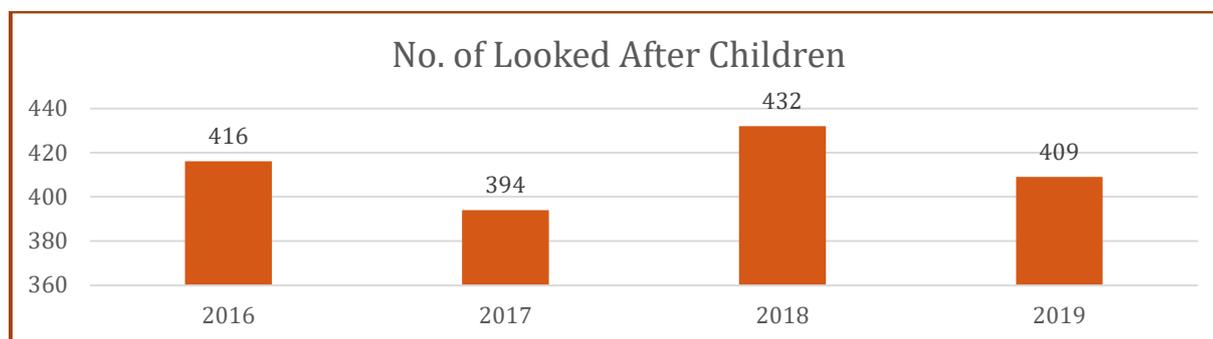
The Leads Group have developed a RAG report (Red, Amber Green) to set targets and measure performance against the target. This then informs work stream priorities for the group.

##### **Data on Looked After Children**

Understanding and benchmarking our data is key to understanding need and capacity. At 31 December 2019, records indicate that there were 409 looked after children. Whilst we saw a spike in 2018, the number has fallen again by 23 young people. 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\* At the time of publishing, no further data is available from the Scottish Government.

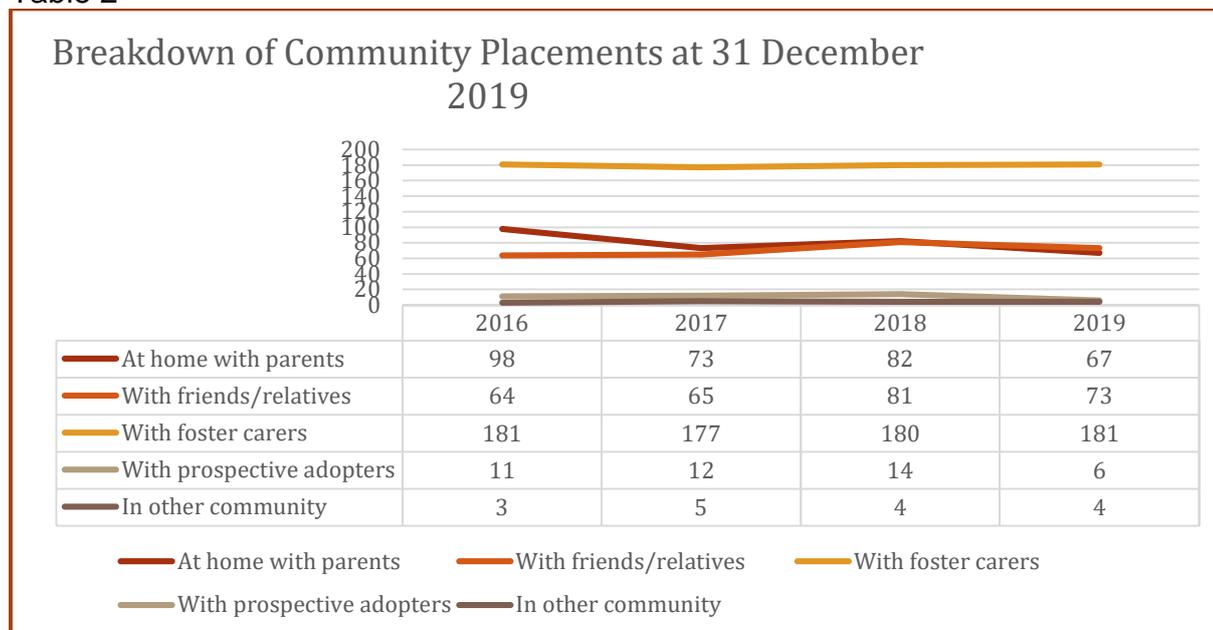
\* Scottish Government CLAS Returns

Table 1 Looked After Children numbers per year



We also need to understand the profile of our Care Experienced Young People in terms of the types of family placements they live in as per table 2 and residential placements as per table 3.

Table 2

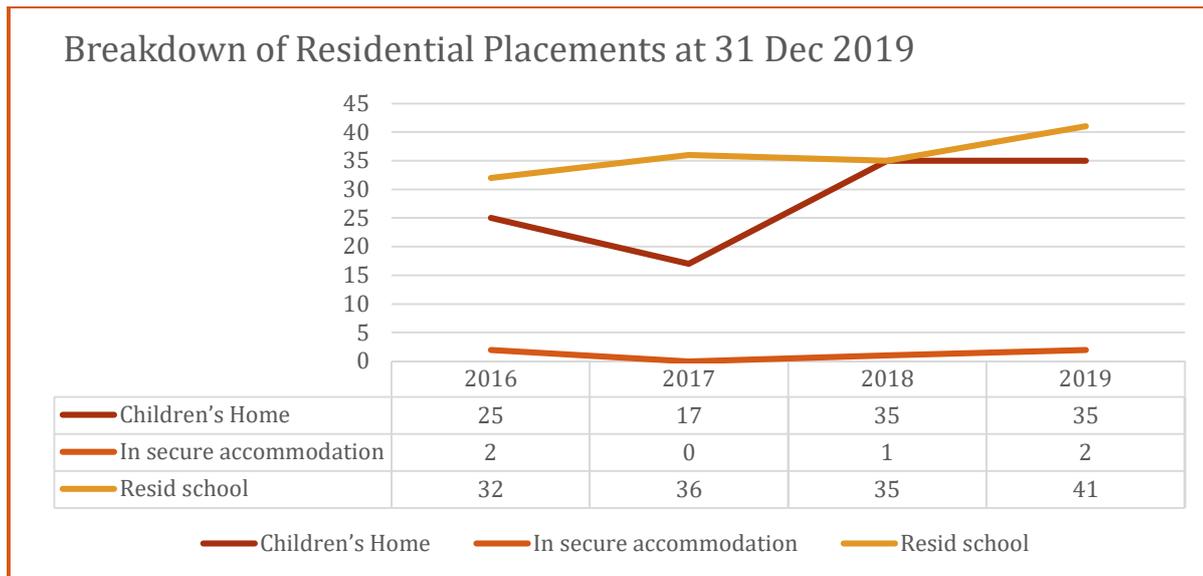


A small improvement project has been focusing on the lived experience of children and young people who are Looked After at Home, initially within Children’s services and SCRA. Structured on the Model for Improvement, the first aim was to ensure set timescales for referral to the Reporter following this being agreed at a multi-agency meeting. Gathering and measuring data over 2018 -19 has informed the setting of a 10-working day performance measure. The second aim of reviewing the Child’s Plan to reduce drift and progress actions before and after the Hearing is being progressed. This ensures a streamlined process to reduce drift in progressing actions for children and their families. Work continues to develop staff competence and confidence in attending Hearings and supporting the child and their family throughout the process.

In 2018, 20% of our looked after children population lived at home compared to 16% in 2019. Whilst in 2018, this was below Scotland average at 26%, data is not available for 2019.

The number of young people in residential school placements has seen an increase over the last year some of which can be attributed to an increase in county line activities which placed a cohort of young people at significant risk of harm and a breakdown in community and school relationships.

Table 3



### Looked After Children with a Disability

The Scottish Government CLAS data is not yet available for 2019.

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%).

### 5.0 Year 3 Progress against the Corporate Parenting Multi Agency Action Plan

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

Corporate Parenting – Safe & Nurtured		
No.	Aim	UNCRC Articles
1.1	Looked After Young People will have a safe place to live	19
1.2	Young people will be supported to move on from care at the right 19, 27 time to appropriate accommodation which will reduce homelessness and offending behaviour and improve opportunities for employment and better health and well-being	

- 1.3 Young people will be cared for by competent, confident skilled carers who are able to meet their needs 3, 5, 18, 19
- 1.4 All looked after children and young people will have access to someone they trust, children's rights, social worker, teacher etc. 1, 3, 4, 12
- 1.5 Reduce the number of care leavers experiencing homelessness, poor health and substance misuse 3, 19, 27
- 1.6 To enable young people to remain in continuing care arrangements up until 21 years of age 4, 5, 19, 27
- 1.7 Care leavers will know how to access support and what will be available to them particularly when they have disengaged from services 3, 4, 17, 18
- 1.8 Care leavers will have access to After Care support up until 26 years of age 4, 18

### **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 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:**

- 'They Keep him safe and make sure his health needs are met.'*
- 'They encourage him to be active and take part even though he doesn't want to.'*
- 'They are committed to the welfare of all children. It's a safe and caring environment where welfare and safety is a priority. They try to give sound advice.'*
- 'You can tell almost immediately when you walk in and speak to staff and observe the relaxed atmosphere that this is a safe place.'*

#### **Young People's comments**

- 'They always made sure I was safe.'*
- 'They make sure we are safe and well fed.'*
- 'They supported me with my feelings, family issues and friendships.'*
- 'When I was getting into trouble, they made sure I saw what the issue was and what I did was wrong.'*
- 'Helped with schoolwork and home schooling.'*

*'Helped when I was stressed, made sure I was feeling ok. Comforted me when I needed it.'*

*'If it was a good choice, then they supported me. If it was a bad choice, they taught me why.'*

Each Looked After Child Review is asked to consider whether a placement is meeting the needs of each young person. Throughout 2019/20, 98% of placements reported this positively. Of the 2%, plans were in place to assess and identify whether something needed to change within the placement or whether a different type of placement was required.

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.

**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 every young person to identify their appropriate care plan and support.

On 31 March 2020, 100% (80% in 2018/19) of young people actively engaged with the Through Care Service and working towards independence had Pathways Plans and reviews in place.

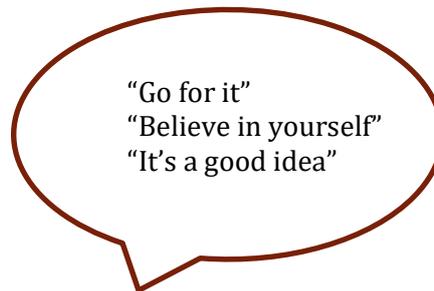
When a young person is ready to think about leaving care, we provide safe and supportive accommodation and support for young people making the transition from Care to Independence which is a particularly vulnerable time for Care Experienced Young People.

One of the ways we support Care Experienced Young People 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. Throughout 2019/20, 17 young people have accessed the flat and reported to have found it immensely beneficial.

**Quotes from Young people include:**

*“The freedom at doing things by myself”*  
*“I enjoyed being on my own”*  
*“I felt safe and secure”*  
*“It let me have a feel at being on my own”*

**What our Young People would say to another who was considering a stay**

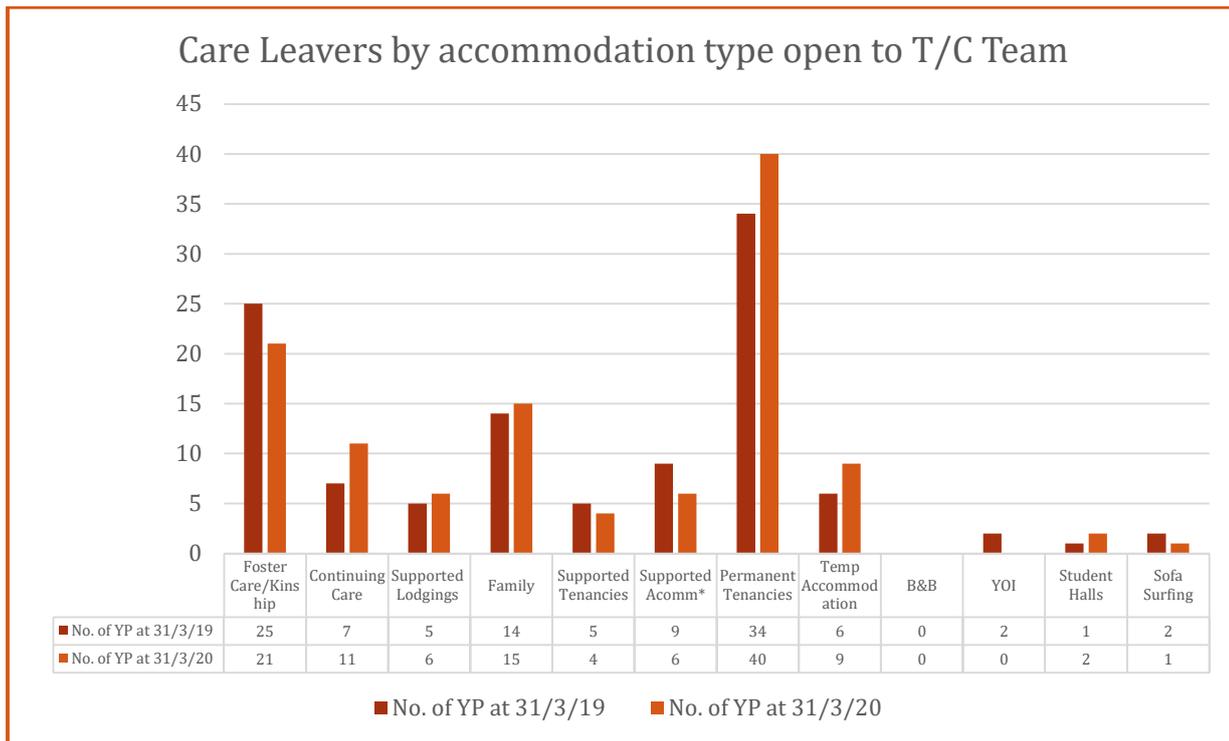


Aberdeenshire Council Housing Service prioritise care leavers for accommodation allocating them the maximum number of points. The Youth Housing Forum to prevent homelessness for care leavers is highly successful and has resulted in careful planning and accommodation allocation. Since 2017, no care leavers 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 43% (31% in 2018/19) of our Care Experienced Young People open to the Through Care Team who have left care are being supported to manage a permanent tenancy (table 4). We have also completely eradicated Care Experienced Young People leaving care and moving directly into B&B or homeless accommodation and whilst in 2018 we had no care leavers at all in B&B accommodation ( 2 in 2017), we have had to place two young people this year into B&B accommodation. These young people have not been placed directly from care, their situations are exceptional and support plans reviewed and progressed.

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. The includes details of contact numbers, Facebook details and signposts young people to Skills Development Scotland.

Table 4



\* 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 C moved from a residential school to Taizali and initially secured a place at a college with the ambition of becoming a support worker. C also decided to work with a personal tutor to help develop literacy skills. C moved on positively to stay with family having got the right support to begin the journey into adulthood.

D who had been previously looked after but returned home, approached his key worker for help when things were not going as well as D had hoped. D moved into Taizali and now works full time as a joiner and has passed his driving test. He owns his own car and has a normal social life.

We currently have 11 Supported Lodgings providers and over the course of 2019/20, 8 in 2018/19, 5 in 2017/18) 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.

Aberdeenshire Council's Guidance states: -

*“The supported lodgings scheme offers young people the opportunity to move to independent living while remaining within a safe nurturing environment. Lodgings hosts are expected to provide the support, advice and guidance to the young person to enable them to build confidence and skills required to move to independence. “*

In terms of host recruitment, three new hosts/host families were recruited in 2019. These hosts are located in areas of Aberdeenshire which have better transport links and busier nearby communities of Kingswells, Macduff and Mintlaw.

This was something that we had aimed to provide following feedback from young people who wanted to be closer to amenities and therefore employment and education opportunities. Each of these newly approved hosts have already been matched to young people with 2 placements currently underway.

Over the last year there have been 16 enquiries/referrals to the Supported Lodgings Scheme. This resulted in 8 matches being made to potential hosts and 4 new placements going ahead. 5 Supported Lodgings placements are ongoing at the time of writing and this is the highest number of concurrent placements that the scheme has had to date.



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

#### **How Good Are We Now and How Do We Know?**

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 Care Experienced Young People 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.

Aberdeenshire's Fostering Panel made recommendations on 15 new applications for approval as foster carers from 1 January to 31 December 2019 (same as 2018, 9 in 2017)

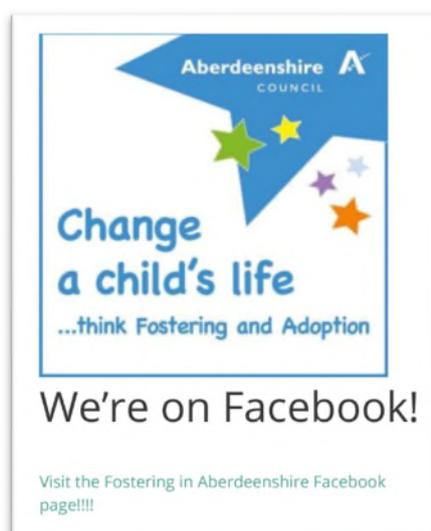
All Fostering households are required to complete 30 hours of learning and development annually. This also encompasses e-learning. 100 e-learning modules were completed by Aberdeenshire Foster Carers during 2018 and a further 100 in 2019/20 which includes reflection on what they have learnt and how this will be put into practice. This includes '**Caring for Vulnerable Children online course provided by CELCIS and Strathclyde University,**' **GIRFEC online training calendar, Skills Network Scotland training, and training provided by the Foster Carer Resource Centre.**

Ten (6 in 2018/19) Skills uplifts were presented to and recommended by the Fostering Panel during the year 2019/20. **8** fostering households moved from Skills Level 1 to Skills Level 2 and **1** fostering household moved from Skills Level 2 to Skills Level 3 and **1** household moved from Skills Level 3 to Skills Level 4 demonstrating further our commitment to growing foster carers to meet at times the very complex needs of the Care Experienced Young People they care for.

Peer support is strongly encouraged and in 2019/20 288 (233 in 2018/19) Foster carers attended Support Groups across the year.

Feedback from Care Experienced Young People is integral to evaluating our service. Some examples are:

*'My foster carer is an amazing person and has done so much for me... They listen to my problems, are always there and are so understanding. They never let me down. I have a very stable support network and placement, and I wouldn't change a thing for the world.'* (17-year old in a long term/permanent placement)



*'Mum and dad (foster carers) are supportive, they are really nice. They want me to do well and make the right decisions. They include me in everything. They do everything you would expect nice families would do'.* (12-year-old in long term foster placement)

*"They help me try something new every day like new food"*  
(10-year-old in short term foster placement)

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 approved 13 families, in 2017, 4, however we saw an increase in 2018 to 8 families and 10 in 2019 following a concerted and targeted campaign of recruitment through the media and social media online.

In 2019 the Permanence Panel made recommendations for Adoption Plans in relation to 10 (16 in 2018) children and 11 (15 in 2018) children were matched with adoptive families.

Adopters are also supported to continue to grow and develop their skills recognising that the needs of a Care Experienced Young People change throughout the age and stages of their lives. A rolling programme of workshops and learning opportunities for adoptive parents continues and the service continues to take positive steps 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 2019, the Service received 54 referrals (76 in 2018, 49 in 2017) 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.

Feedback collated from Looked After Child reviews confirmed that throughout 2019/20, 99 % of placements were agreed to be meeting the child's individual needs. (an increase of 2 % from 2017/18 remaining steady in 2019/19). Where the placement was not meeting the child's needs, alternative plans were progressed.

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

##### **How Good Are We Now and How Do We Know?**

All Care Experienced Young People have access to someone they trust. We know this because during 2019/20, 100% (98% in 2018/19) of looked after children had an allocated worker.

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 2019-20 we had 169 referrals (100 in 2018/19) to the children's rights service relating to 77 individual children and young people. Of that number 32 were young people who had not previously accessed the service which is around 42% of the individual children receiving a service. All children receive information about the Service when initially accommodated.

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 5.

Table 5

Child's Views clearly available to the Manager 2019/20	Count	%
Yes	167	70%
No, child too young (under 5)	53	22%
No, other reason	21	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>100%</b>

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.

Child participation is an action on the Aberdeenshire Child Protection Improvement Plan and has been part of Continuous Improvement audits for the Committee. These include the recent Child Protection Case Conference Audit (June 2019) which looked at the participation of both children and their families in our Protection Process from initial case conference to review/de-registration.

Work has also been undertaken by the Children with Disabilities GIRFEC Thematic Group in promoting the participation of children who have additional support needs in the child protection investigation. This has included work with Speech and Language colleagues and use of social stories to prepare children for a joint interview. This also included creating leaflets for children and their parents/carers in easy read format to promote understanding of the process.

Current workstreams around participation:

- A **multi-agency audit** of the child's journey through our Protection Process, following the experiences of children from Initial Referral Discussion is planned for September 2020.
- A **working group of Children's Social Work Practitioners** has been established (December 2019) to review Child participation in Child Protection processes and support practitioners to obtain the views of children under 5 by understanding communication in its widest form.
- **Core Groups** – Work is underway to review Core Group guidance which reflects the participation of children and their families. This is connected to wider work undertaken on Child's Plans as identified in the Case Conference Audit.

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

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

We have been successful in promoting and enabling our young people to remain in continuing care in Aberdeenshire. Since 2017, we have seen a steady increase in the number of young people remaining in placement over 17 years of age:

Table 6

Year	No. of YP over 17 remaining in placement	No. of YP over 18 remaining in placement
2017/18	14	Not counted
2018/19	25	11
2019/20	38	22

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 straight from care.

### 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.

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



We proactively write out to all non-engaged Care Experienced Young People 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.

This has been enormously successful, and we have seen a steady rise in the number of young people re-engaging:

Table 7

Year	No. of YP re-engaging
2017/18	17
2018/19	31
2019/20	55

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

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

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

Corporate Parenting – Healthy		
No.	Aim	UNCRC Articles
2.1	Health needs of looked after children and young people are prioritised.	3,6,24
2.2	Mental health needs of LAC are identified and prioritised	3,6,24

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

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

In 2019 (Jan-Sept) 107 referrals were made to the Looked After Children's NHS Service. We know that the health needs of looked after children are prioritised because 93% of those children received an initial health assessment as a result of becoming looked after. These assessments informed their care plans. Of these 100 children and young people 55% received an initial health assessment within 8 weeks. This compares to 43% within the same time period of 2018.

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

Table 8

Reason for delays in completion	Aberdeenshire in 2019 (2018) Q1-Q3
Paperwork - SW	7% (8%)
Paperwork - NHS	10% (28%)
Paperwork - NHS & SW	4% (4%)
LAC (NHS) Team	1% (0%)
Moved Placement	3% (2%)
Out of Area	5% (9%)
<b>Reason for non-assessment</b>	
Non engagement with the NHS	0 (0%)

No Consent	4% (4%)
Discharged	3% (0%)

Table 8 indicates an 18% decrease in NHS paperwork being the reason for delays in the completion of Looked After Children assessments indicating that the process has improved within health. Compared to last year the number of children being placed out with the Grampian area has dropped from 9% to 5%. Reducing delays further. It is encouraging to note that non engagement was not a reason for non-engagement with NHS and this was also the case for 2018 data.

Of the 8% of Looked After Children who were not assessed (9 out of 107) the reasons cited were young people not consenting and discharged prior to health assessment being progressed. Eight percent (8%) is a small number but it is hoped that this can be improved upon by ensuring that young people are giving informed consent. A leaflet describing the health assessment will be designed in conjunction with Looked After Children and Young People.

As previously reported, it is anticipated that future development of the School Nurse Pathway (CEL 13) in Aberdeenshire may improve opportunities to engage with families within this process.

In February 2019, a decision was taken to change the way health assessments are completed. If a child/young person is looked after at home the paperwork will be sent out informing the health professional that consent has not yet been sought. The consent can then be signed at the arranged health assessment appointment with the Health Visitor/School Nurse. Similarly, young people who attend academies will be asked to sign their consent with their School Nurse at their arranged appointment. It is hoped this will reduce the timescales for health assessments to be carried out and that parents/young people will be better informed regards to their health assessments.

Within Aberdeenshire the Health Visitor/School Nurse teams have been encouraged to register with Trakcare; an electronic recording system used mainly within the acute sector. A briefing for Health will inform them of the processes to be followed when Looked After Children/Young People do not attend health appointments.

Dental services have updated their registration forms to ensure Care Experienced Young People's details are included.

## **AIM (2.2) Mental health needs of LAC are identified and prioritised**

### **How Good Are We Now and How Do We Know?**

All school aged children who become Looked After are offered a mental health assessment (SDQ); this is completed with consent. From January to September 2019 46% of Aberdeenshire's Looked After Children completed the SDQ assessment. Of the 54% of Aberdeenshire's Looked After Children who did not have an SDQ completed, the reasons included:

- The child moved out of area- the SDQ is not utilised uniformly across Scotland
- Refusal
- Discharge prior to completion

11% (5) of the SDQs completed were already attending CAMHS and 9% (4) 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 of the area; some health boards across Scotland are not using SDQ assessments. The potential to develop the School Nurse Pathway (CEL 13) in Aberdeenshire is expected to improve the figures for SDQs not completed.

### Work Placements

Work experience is offered to all looked after children across Grampian through the respective local authority's 'Family Firm' arrangements in liaison with NHS Grampians learning & development team. Four placements took place in 2018/19 for Care Experienced young people from Aberdeenshire:

- Nursing
- Doctor at Work
- Dentistry
- Facilities



Feedback from the young people was very positive:

*“This whole experience was very rewarding for me as it has improved my confidence and made me realise how much I want to be a nurse”.*

*“In January 2019 I had 3 days’ work experience in the Emergency Department at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary which is one of the most positive experiences I have ever had”.*

## 7.0 Achieving

### Corporate Parenting – Achieving

No.	Aim	UNCRC Articles
3.1	Looked After Children and Young People will have one key adult in school who will protect, promote and safeguard their needs	4,18,28,29
3.2	Looked After Children and Young People are aware of the supports accessible through school in their local area.	4,18,28,29
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.	4,18,28,29
3.4	Key information is prepared and shared at times of transition between schools for all Care Experienced young people.	4,18,28,29
3.5	High expectation of attendance rates of Looked After Children and Young people is promoted and safeguarded.	4,18,28,29
3.6	Attainment data of Care Experienced young people is not significantly different to that of their peers.	4,18,28,29

## Recruitment of a Virtual Head Teacher for Care Experienced Young People



In June 2019, we successfully recruited Emma Allen to the post of Virtual Head Teacher for Aberdeenshire's Care Experienced Young People.

The role of the Virtual School Head Teacher is to drive improvement in relation to educational outcomes for our Care Experienced Young People in Aberdeenshire. To do this Emma works with the young people, families, carers, services and partner agencies to ensure the needs of our Care Experienced Young People are better understood and met.

Part of Emma's work includes tracking attainment, attendance, exclusion, ASN and Wellbeing across schools to identify where more intensive support is required:

*"My first mission was to develop relationships with people and seek out the areas that created a challenge and where additional support was required from myself and other services.*

*Meeting young people on the YPOC group has enabled me to understand some of the key areas our young people identify that they need support with. My role can be very varied, I might be involved in advocating for some of our young people to ensure the needs of the young person are at the centre of all decisions about their education. I also discuss action plans with education professionals to identify and implement support. I also take part in Permanence Panels where I am learning the complexities of family life and how as a council, we support children to thrive and reach their full potential. There are many other aspects to the work I am involved with which centres around relationships, communication and collaboration with all stakeholders which will ultimately raise attainment, and which will always evolve according to the needs of the young people."*

The early stages of tracking Care Experienced Young People against a number of indicators has confirmed a strong correlation between wellbeing, behaviour and attainment which has strongly influenced how Aberdeenshire are promoting the use of the Scottish Attainment Challenge Funding for Care Experienced Young People. Emma has been pivotal in supporting the use of this funding by inviting bids and monitoring the impact of funding as part of Funding Panel.

To date applications have included a focus on wellbeing and mental health as we know that a child is more likely to engage in education if they are feeling 'well' in themselves alongside more traditional education resources. We have seen young people engage in Yoga, music, dance, leisure, horse riding, theatre skills, leadership skills and outdoor learning. Funding has also enabled the MCR Pathways Program to be rolled out across an additional two Academies. The program currently runs across 5 Academies and supports around 200 young people who are matched with mentors to support their journey into adult life.

Inverurie Academy were one of the first Academies to roll out this program and are passionate about positive impact this has had on both the young people, the school as well as the mentors themselves.

Quotes from young people involved with MCR Pathways at Inverurie Academy:



*'The best part about mentoring is just having someone to talk to who isn't a friend or family member, someone who won't judge me for whatever I say, and someone who will have the advice without pushing me too far.'*

- *'I feel less nervous than I used to be. I feel more confident speaking about my problems, and how to fix them. I enjoy it. I get to talk about things I struggle with, what I'm achieving, and not achieving. It's a trusting relationship. My mentor is caring, kind, she listens, and has a good sense of humour. She gets me!'*
- *'My mentor has been beside me the whole way. He has made school better. He's helped me with my work, especially Modern Studies and English. He's helped me focus and figure out what I really want to do, and how to get there. I am going to go to college after school. I never thought I would make it through school, but I have with his support.'*
- *'A mentor gives you someone to speak to. It's someone out with school who you can get to know. I'd say to my mentor, thanks for being the best mentor!'*
- *'\* Says her mentor is someone she can relax and chat with. She really enjoys when they play board games together, and \* says she feels like she could tell her anything. \* describes her mentor as 'Funny, nice, and someone I can trust'. \* says the best bit about mentoring is 'the games we play, we have a laugh!'*
- *My mentor is... 'A cool guy. He writes and performs too. He is very supportive, he's a friend. With him I can truly be myself. We chat about all sorts, anything really. He keeps a nice beard too!'*

Quote from the Inverurie Academy MCR Pathways Coordinator

*'I love being able to deliver the MCR Pathways programme within Inverurie Academy. I receive amazing support from the staff, students and the mentors. From the S1/2 groupwork, to the mentoring from S3 onwards and the Talent Taster programme we are supporting our young people to grow in confidence, recognise their strengths and encourage them to aspire and achieve.*

*It's heart-warming to see the relationship develop between a young person and their mentor. It's these trusting connections that our more vulnerable young people may not have experienced in other areas of their lives, therefore, to see the young people thrive and flourish with the support of their mentors, as well as the wider school staff team, is exciting and uplifting.'* **(Shona Lees Pathway Coordinator)**

And from the school perspective...

*'As our school community grows, we are becoming ever more diverse. Our team recognise the range of vulnerabilities that some of our young people face and know that these are becoming ever more complex. The MCR programme in our school continues to grow and evolve with us and is now a key part of our support system.*

*Our PC Shona is the heart and soul of our version of the MCR programme in our school. She is a fully embedded member of staff, and a very skilled professional. She works hard to gain the trust of each young person through their initial group work and knows them very well before they are matched with a mentor. She also does a grand job in gaining the trust of mentors, who need to step away from their professional character, and allow their 'real' personality to come to the fore. This is a really personal process!*

*From the outset, Shona nurtures each mentoring relationship, and it is amazing to see these grow into secure and trusting bonds. Our young people gain a huge amount from their MCR programme, and each of our mentors add a new and exciting dynamic to 'Team Inverurie'. We're really grateful that they are all part of our journey.'* **(Dawn Lynch, Depute Head Teacher Inverurie Academy)**

### **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 Care Experienced Young People can identify their key contact in school and are offered ringfenced 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.

Regular consultation led by the Virtual Head Teacher with Care Experienced Young People and schools will provide opportunity for any concerns to be addressed and learning to be shared.

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

The use of A GLOW tile is being explored by the Virtual Head Teacher for Care Experienced Young People and corporate parents who would be able to access this for news, updates, essential information etc.... Care Experienced Young People would be involved in designing/influencing the content.

### **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 2019/20, 96% (92% in 2018/19) of our looked after children had 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 4% of Care Experienced Young People whose education plan did not meet their needs which included the facilitation of a Flexible Pathway or for some children the identification of an education plan as part of a residential school provision or alternative day school provision for some of our children with complex additional support needs.

Further work is being progressed in relation to CSPs to ensure that schools and Care Experienced Young People are supported appropriately.

**AIM 3.4 Key information is prepared and shared at times of transition between schools for all Care Experienced young people.**

No transition is the same. Each young person has a different life story and context. Each school and new home is also different. However, we must all strive to meet the needs of the young people and focus on maintaining their rights. Work is being undertaken by the Virtual Head Teacher alongside a Depute Head Teacher from one of our Academies are currently working on guidelines to support schools with the process when a Care Experienced Young People is required to transition between schools out with the normal P7-S1 transition. This will support good, consistent information sharing between schools and those caring for the young person and reduce any drift and delay in both planning and providing education.

Care Experienced Young People should be involved in the information sharing process where possible and appropriate.

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

Whilst Scottish Government data is not currently available for this reporting period, 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.

Attendance and exclusion rates are recorded centrally and reported annually on a Shire wide and individual school basis. These rates are also recorded on the tracking system, to enable discussion around the stories behind low attendance. Schools are being supported to revise their approach to attendance management and in the long term in partnership with the team around the child to improve attendance figures. This is a complex area and reasons for nonattendance need to be explored and understood.

**AIM 3.6 Attainment data of Care Experienced young people is not significantly different to that of their peers.**

**Looked After children with Positive destinations post Aberdeenshire School**

Between 2016/17 and 2018/19, we have seen 15% more Care Experienced Young People move on to positive destinations and is very similar to the to the National Figure as per Table 9

Table 9

<b>Looked After Children with positive destinations 2016/17 post Aberdeenshire school</b>			
No. of LAC who left school with positive destination	41	47	39
% of LAC who left school with positive destination	70.7%	80.9%	94.9%
% of all pupils who left school with a positive destination	95.5%	96.3%	96.4%
% of LAC who left school with positive destination	76.4%	80.4%	82.4%
<u>National figure</u>			
% of all pupils who left school with positive destination	93.7%	94.4%	95.1%
<u>National figure</u>			

During 2019-20, 5 unemployed CEYP engaged in an Activity Agreement (AA -Stage 1 Employability Provision), all were supported by TCAC team throughout their agreement. Four (80%) completed their AA and moved into an initial positive destination, including 2 moved into Employment and 2 went onto Further Education, with continued support being offered by TCAC team.

There is a significant increase in positive destination rate for Care Experienced Young People than previous years due to a range of Council initiatives including an increase in Family Firm placements, focused outcome delivery by Aberdeenshire Throughcare, Aftercare (TCAC) team and a range of partners contributing to Corporate Parenting key indicators, including improved joint-working between Skills Development Scotland (SDS), Social Work, Education and Opportunities for All (OfA) Officer. Over half of Care Experienced Young People went into Further Education, an opportunity now financially viable as a result of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) continue to support Care Experienced Young People across Aberdeenshire schools. Throughout 2019/20, SDS confirmed that out of 104 Care Experienced Young People in S4-S6, 83 were identified in consultation with schools, as requiring support from an SDS Adviser. Of the 83, 96.4% have received 1 or more coaching guidance/CMS Assessments in last academic year. Advisors continue to work to engage with young people who have not yet utilised this support

In 2019/20, the Through Care Team supported 21 young people to successfully complete a further education course which included both college and university. The team are currently supporting 5 young people continuing to attend University.

## 8.0 Active

<b>Corporate Parenting – Active</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Aim</b>	<b>UNCRC Articles</b>
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.	3,23,51

**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.**

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

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 2019/20 71 (57 in 2018/19) looked after children attended Active School Activities. Care Experienced Young People currently make up around 23% of those attending such activities which is 10% up from the previous year.

Over the reporting period, the number of Care Experienced Young People volunteering with Active Schools has remained static at 5 having increased from 2- 5 last year. This equates to 0.015% of the total Care Experienced Young People population in secondary schools whereas the total percentage of secondary pupils volunteering sits at 0.013%

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. Data on uptake is being progressed.

**9.0 Respected and Responsible**

<b>Corporate Parenting – Respected &amp; Responsible</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Aim</b>	<b>UNCRC Articles</b>
5.1	Looked after children and care leavers will have their successes celebrated and promoted	3,12
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.	3,4,5,12,18,19

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

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

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 whilst the last year have saw a steady increase following promotion of this across services from 82% in quarter one to 99%, 2019/20 has remained steady at around 85%. This is shared with teams, Review Managers and Children's Right's Officer to ensure that we specifically share the right information and ask the right questions.

### Extract from our Achievements Wall:



*'I am a Committee member for my local Club and helping to decide on social events'*

*'My little one has chronic fatigue and Epilepsy, she never lets it get her down and always has a smile for everyone...she's recently started back to school full time and was very brave last year in hospital for a weeklong stay...we're very proud of her as she never gives up!' (foster carer)*

*Members of the YPOC group presented a workshop at Children in Scotland's conference in Edinburgh using the 'Don't Judge – we are no different from you' DVD and they got some fantastic feedback and were great at sharing their work and ideas.*

*'I am playing for 2 football teams and sticking in at school too.'*

*'I passed my driving test at the age of 17.'*

*'I applied for the Rotary Youth Leadership Award and was accepted. There are only two places from each school and is it a week of outdoor leadership at Abernethy in the summer holidays and is an internationally recognised award.'*

*'I have my Bronze award for the Duke of Edinburgh and now working towards my Silver award.'*

*'I have an internship in the summer holidays with Morrison construction which I am excited about.*

*'Has had a successful work placement with Elliots construction company in Inverurie and was highly thought of by the owners.'* (social worker)

*'I wrote the script for the next YPOC's campaign 'Coming into care and moving placements'*

**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.**

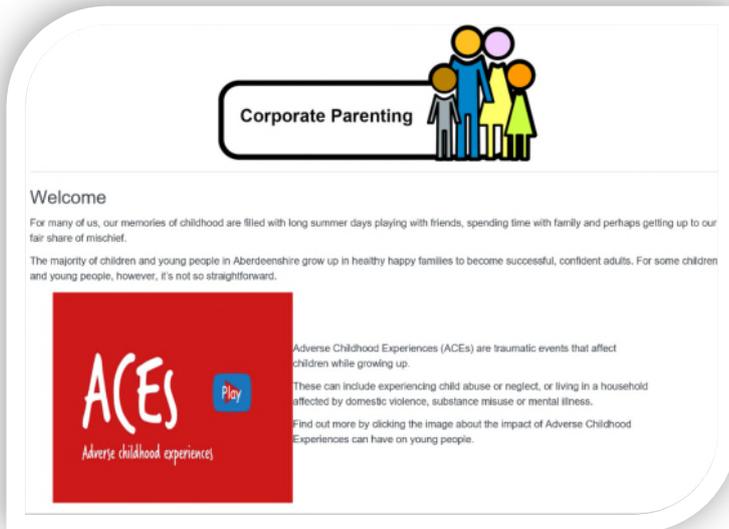
### **How Good Are We Now and How Do We Know?**

The Corporate Parenting Website provides further opportunity to raise awareness of corporate parenting duties and responsibilities and celebrate success. A full review of the website is required to ensure it contains the right information and this will form a new action in our next Corporate Parenting Plan.

### 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
- ❖ The Robert Gordon University are also us supporting to develop a short video clip being created by students (some of with care experience) as part of their Degree.
- ❖ The YPOC Group have attended a meeting with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) colleagues to share their experiences and to promote a greater awareness of their corporate parenting responsibilities and the kind of support Care Experienced Young People might need from SDS.
- ❖ The YPOC Group have developed new resources driving good practice when supporting a young person coming into care or moving placements.
- ❖ Our Virtual Head Teacher has been visiting schools to talk about our duties and how we understand the needs and profile of Care Experienced Young People to improve attainment.
- ❖ The Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership invited a few members of the Corporate Parenting Leads Group to facilitate a presentation and discussion on corporate parenting roles and responsibilities.
- ❖ The Aberdeenshire Corporate Parenting Annual report was presented to the Aberdeenshire Full Council providing an opportunity to raise the profile of corporate parenting across our elected members and council leaders and the public.
- ❖ The membership of the Corporate Parenting Leads Group has also extended over the last year to include Fire and Rescue Services and Aberdeen University.



A brand-new Corporate Parenting e-learning module has been created for use by Aberdeenshire colleagues and partners has been accessed by over 300 people in the last year.

Police Scotland in particular have continued to be proactive in delivering corporate parenting training and increasing awareness to further aid signposting and support should colleagues come into contact with Care Experienced Young People. In particular, Police Scotland have:

- Provided briefings about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma-informed practice, particularly in relation to looked after and care-experienced children and young people.
- Raised specific awareness around ACEs has taken place with staff from the Partnership Co-ordination Unit and Youth Justice Management Unit. All School Liaison and School Based Officers, PSYV Co-ordinators, and Crime Reduction Officers have received awareness-raising training around ACEs and trauma-informed practice. This included NHS teaching aids (videos).
- In May 2018, the North Aberdeenshire School Liaison Officer participated in a multi-agency 'Resilience' film event at Banff Academy, which included awareness-raising around ACEs and trauma-informed practice.
- Further awareness-raising work on ACEs and trauma-informed practice has been facilitated across NE Division via GIRFEC groups.
- A number of Officers from the Safer Communities team attended trauma awareness training at Scottish Police College in December 2018.
- Sexual Offence Liaison Officers (SOLOs) within NE Division received a short input on trauma during their SOLO course.



## 10.0 Included

Corporate Parenting – Included	
Aim	UNCRC Articles
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	3,4,5,12,18,19
6.2 Key, skilled Champions will promote, advocate for and support workplace opportunities within the council	3,4,6,18
6.3 Young people will access support and flexibility in bespoke placements.	3,4,6,18

**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**

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

The YPOC Group has continued to meet monthly over the past year. 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 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.
- ‘Coming into Care and Moving Placements – Get it Right’\*

## Coming into Care & Moving Placements



These documents are designed to challenge corporate parents to do the best they can to improve outcomes for Care Experienced Young People.

They have also just completed their fourth campaign\* focussing on how to improve the experience of ‘coming into care.’ A launch of this campaign will take place later in 2020 and includes a good guidance document and a DVD. The group have worked hard with the Media Unit to plan the content of the DVD.

Within the YPOC Group the young people came up with the story of Emily and Ben, and their experiences of coming into care, highlighting poor practice and its impact on the children and identifying what should have happened. One of the group members, produced the story board and has worked with illustrator Penny Downes to illustrate this story.

Filming began in October and the young people were back in the studio for post-production work in November and January. The DVD and Guide is now complete and on the GIRFEC website.

The YPOC Group also contributed to the Independent Care Review, submitting their Guide “Coming into care and moving placements – Getting it right” to the review. One member of the group also attended a Care Review roadshow in Dundee.

The YPOC Group has also continued to promote the use of their last campaign Guide and DVD - “Don’t judge – we’re no different from you” in schools to which focusses on supporting Care Experienced young people in education. Laurence Findlay, Director of Education and Children’s Services attended the YPOC Group in August and the young people spoke to him about the campaign and other school related issues.

As a result, the Director emailed all schools to remind them of the DVD and Guide. Since then a number of schools have watched the DVD and submitted evaluation forms to the YPOC Group. Our new Virtual Head Teacher, Emma Allen has also reminded school of this resource, and encourages its use.

In addition, members of the YPOC Group presented the DVD and Guide at a training event for Skills Development Scotland, which was very well received.

In September 2019, members of the YPOC Group took part in interviews for our new Children’s Rights Officer.

The development of Twilight sessions with the Corporate Parenting Leads group has been a key milestone in direct engagement between Care Experienced Young People and the leads across partnership organisations. This has resulted in a number of pledges being made which has supported all partners to consider and act to improve their corporate parenting duties and responsibilities.

Throughout the year, the twilight sessions have had an opportunity to continue to build relationships, reflect on experiences and pledges made previously and focus on Housing options and support for care leavers. The YPOC group also kept the Corporate Parents Leads group up to date with their campaign work and used the opportunity to begin to explore some of the themes and areas for improvement.

*\*Getting to know each other at the Twilight Sessions – Hands across the water*



- The placement format was adapted to include more taster opportunities, visits and short-term placements.
- Introduction of employability qualification 'Introduction to Workplace Skills' agreed and funded.
- New Feedback form introduced to support evaluation.
- Digital works programme was introduced as a follow on to Work Plus (2 applicants put forward)

The Digital Works programme is in part a follow on from WorkPlus and offers a paid work experience programme. It aims to provide digital skills and opportunities for up to 10 Care Experienced young people per year through a pathway of core employability skills learning, work placement and future employment. The Digital Works programme is led and delivered by HR and the Employability Team with input from Our Family Firm and the Through Care Team. The programme currently supports three young people and a further four young people have been identified as possible future applicants.

## **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:

- We have recruited a Virtual Head Teacher to support attainment in education for Care Experienced Young People
- Care Experienced Young People have been consistently involved in service improvement, recruitment and training.
- Young people's voices are heard individually in relation to their own lives and collectively in relation to service planning and improvement
- National recognition for YPOC materials
- Twilight Sessions involving Care Experienced Young People and Corporate parenting leads.
- We have achieved very good inspection outcomes for our residential and fostering services
- No young people at the point of leaving care have been placed in a B&B accommodation
- We have supported an increased number of care leavers to sustain their own tenancies
- We have increased choice for care leavers through a suite of supportive accommodation for care leavers
- We have worked with our care leavers to support a return to the Service at times they most need support and have seen an increased up take in this offer.
- We have increased the number of young people being supported to remain in their placements under continuing care beyond 18 years of age
- We have provided bespoke work experience opportunities for Care Experienced Young People to increase their confidence and skills in the workplace
- We have strengthened our collaboration between partners to secure improved outcomes for Care Experienced Young People

- We have engaged positive with the Care Review to ensure Aberdeenshire's Care Experienced Young People voices are heard.
- We have developed training for anyone working with Care Experienced Young People to enable a better understanding of the challenges they face and how we work together to support and improve outcomes
- We have invested in mentoring for Care Experienced Young People through MCR Pathways with positive feedback on direct impact on wellbeing.
- We are prioritising mental health screening and support for Care Experienced Young People when first accommodated resulting in earlier intervention and support
- Expansion of membership to include Fire & Rescue Service and Aberdeen University
- Positive engagement with the Care Review

## 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 and over 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

For the past three years, the Corporate Parenting Leads group have worked alongside Care Experienced Young People to drive improvement as per the action plan and take cognisance of new and emerging need which we have responded to and which will also form the next iteration of the Aberdeenshire Corporate Parenting Plan for 2020-2023 which will form part of Aberdeenshire's new Children's Services Plan 2020-2023.

Our next plan will be built on the 5 foundations of the Care Review: Voice, Family, Care, People and Scaffolding and as actions emerge from the Care Review, the plan will be reviewed and updated to ensure that we as corporate parents are on track to embrace the change to the care system.

Our future annual reports will report directly on the progress against the new plan, but we do not wish to lose some of the data we are currently tracking to help us understand trends and areas of need. This data will therefore be incorporated as an appendix and used to inform service planning.



**Leigh Jolly, Chair on behalf of Corporate Parenting Leads Group**