

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE
14 January 2010

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Achievement of Looked After Children
Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport Service

SUMMARY

This report informs members of some of the many achievements of Looked After Children. It is complimentary to update reports on the education of Looked After Children presented to the Joint Committee for Children and Young People (JCCYP).

It contributes to the following outcomes in ***Strengthening the Highlands***:

- Be a better corporate parent of Highland's Looked After Children and, by working with our partners, help them to reach their full potential as they move into adulthood. This will be done by improving their educational outcomes, reducing reliance on out-of-authority placements and supporting them as they move into appropriate accommodation and into further or higher education, training or employment.
- Achieve full implementation of "Getting it Right for Every Child".
- Improve the quality of learning, teaching and leadership capacity in our schools and communities.

It also relates directly to the Single Outcome Agreement 2 objectives of:

- We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation
- Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens

1. Introduction

1.1 The difficult circumstances surrounding our Looked After Children include trauma, separation and loss. Some live at home in conditions that require a great deal of resilience to cope on a day-to-day basis. Others don't have anyone in the immediate family who is able to support them and are Looked After and Accommodated by the Council. Some have significant Additional Support Needs and others have disabilities. Some are in mainstream, some are in Special Schools. Given that parental circumstances and support are amongst the main factors in achievement, children who are Looked After have greater barriers to overcome.

1.2 The evidence summarised in the key findings of the national research in 18 Scottish local authorities carried out between 2006 and 2008 is that Looked After Children and young people face significant cultural and institutional barriers which impede their success in education. Some of these barriers relate to narrow definitions of what constitutes success for our young people. We need to encourage achievement in its broadest sense as being more important than a narrow focus on educational attainment.

- 1.3 The experience of our work in Highland shows that providing targeted additional support can help to improve educational attainment and achievement substantially. Having high but realistic expectations, and providing support for the child or young person and the other significant people in the wider system around the child, are crucial factors for success.
- 1.4 At present we have a small, multi-agency team who work in partnership to provide important short term support to children who are Looked After, in particular during periods of transition. The team have been able to use their inter agency position to develop and promote flexible, tailored solutions through supportive interventions and allocation of dedicated resources. Through liaison with Lead Professionals, they contribute to the co-ordination of support through the Child's Plan
- 1.5 The Team has been enhanced during the present year by the secondment of an additional Education Link Worker. In particular, this is to ensure a focus on children who are Looked After at home.
- 1.6 Within our schools there is a great deal invested in support for the achievement of our Looked After Children through effective learning and teaching and support for pupils. Partnership working with other statutory, private and voluntary organisations contributes to the achievement profile of each young person.

2. The range of achievements

- 2.1 It is essential that we recognise and value the achievement that each young person makes in stepping forward to an improved position. This is much more important than arbitrary standards that can be of less relevance and sometimes add to difficulties. Services were therefore requested to provide a sample of notable achievements of our Looked After Children. As a result of this, the successes of 85 young people of all ages were submitted as a snapshot. There are as broad a range of achievements as there are young people and the classification below is purely arbitrary.
- 2.2 28 young people in the sample gained significant achievement in the ***physical or sporting*** area. Successes included representing the school, area, and Scotland in local, national and international events. Activities recognised were badminton, basketball, cycling proficiency, off-road motorcycling, football, kayaking, horse riding, judo, shinty, skiing, swimming and snorkelling.
- 2.3 22 young people gained significant achievement in ***performance and music***. School choirs and productions such as plays, shows and pantos were very popular. A number of individuals achieved success in cheerleading and dance and in playing instruments such as accordion, chanter, violin and trumpet.
- 2.4 26 individuals gained ***awards and commendations*** from bodies to recognise their achievement. These have included Army Cadets Awards, ASDAN Bronze Awards, Cheerleading, Cycling Proficiency, Dancing trophies, Health and Wellbeing, 'Project X' Awards for reading, off road Motorcycling Award. There are many School Awards for achievement, attendance and good conduct. Finally a range of Sports Awards has been achieved including national awards for excellence.
- 2.5 12 in our sample successfully worked with the ***statutory, private and voluntary sector***. Our partners in this area have been army cadets, Eden Court, Cairngorm Outdoors, Glachbeg Croft, Girl Guides, the John Muir Trust, Ross County football club and SNAP (Special Needs Action Project). Local sports and drama clubs

have also contributed to the achievement of particular young people. Out of Authority Centres are making a significant contribution to the achievement of our young people in their care.

- 2.6 20 in our group successfully managed **transitions** from pre-school to primary and to secondary. Transitions have also been from one school to another and between mainstream and alternative provision.
- 2.7 11 of our senior group have been successfully involved in **College Courses** in agriculture, childcare, construction, cookery, sports coaching and development and uniformed services.
- 2.8 Individual achievements beyond these categories have been in Christmas card design, citizenship and friendship groups, comic production, fostering video, ICT and web skills, 'the move' programme, reading, work experience, and work with individual tutors.

3. Attainment Information

- 3.1 In previous reports to the JCCYP, percentages of young people gaining particular levels of award have been accompanied by a qualification that small variations in numbers can lead to larger percentage changes.
- 3.2 In 5-14 the proportion of looked after children achieving the expected levels at Primary 3,4,6,7 and Secondary 2 has increased from 32% to 46% this year. In Writing the increase has been from 24% to 30% and in Mathematics from 33% to 49%.
- 3.3 Reporting in this way has a limited lifespan given that 5-14 is in the process of being replaced by the Curriculum for Excellence and its welcome emphasis on the centrality of individual learner progress to targets.
- 3.4 In S4, the ECS Performance Management Unit were asked to track the individual attainments of children who had a LAC legal status on or before 12 Aug 2009 and who were born between 01.05.1993 and 01.05 1994. Attainment in each subject area was recorded and overall results are described below.
- 3.5 There were 44 pupils in the sample and 11 of them were not yet sitting SQA exams but would sit them next year. Of the 33 remaining pupils:
- 28 of them gained Level 3 or better in English, 24 in Mathematics and 22 gained both subjects.
 - 13 pupils gained five or more awards at level 3 with the majority of pupils gaining 3 or 4 awards.
 - 7 pupils gained five or more awards at level 4.
 - 1 pupil gained five or more awards at level 5.

Many of the young people picked a small number of subjects and combined this work with other activities. There is a need to further record the totality of these achievements accurately.

- 3.6 As previously reported to Committee, it is consistently the case that children who are looked after at home, attain significantly less than their peers who are accommodated by the Local Authority.

- 3.7 The Scottish Government have been working in partnership with ourselves and all other local authorities to develop a system which will allow for the collection of the Children's Looked After Statistics (CLAS) to be done on an individual basis instead of the present aggregated return. In this respect individual details were collated by the Performance Management Unit and submitted in the CLAS return for 2008-09.
- 3.8 A complete picture of the educational outcomes of Scotland's Looked After Children will not be available until the data for 2009/10 is submitted, linked and analysed. Hence the first full national publication about the educational outcomes of Scotland's Looked After Children using the new framework is not anticipated until April 2011 at the earliest.
- 3.9 The Committee has previously welcomed the Scottish Government's move to essential skills in Literacy and Numeracy for all. This will be more relevant to many of our young people than their performances in English and Mathematics.

4. Actions for the Service

- 4.1 As stated in the Validated Self Evaluation paper for consideration today, the ECS cross cutting theme has been agreed as ***Improving outcomes for those children and young people who are vulnerable and/or underachieve***. It is clear that the educational outcomes for Looked After Children will play a significant part in our evaluation and planning for improvement. Actions resulting from this will feature in our next update of the ECS Service Plan.
- 4.2 In relation to this, there is a need for the Service and its partners to accurately record and share the achievements of each Looked After Child across all areas.
- 4.3 Such achievement information can contribute to a fuller picture of each young person in their Child's Plan and could assist in our promotion of deeper awareness of each person's needs.
- 4.4 In the meantime, it is proposed that funding is identified from within present budgets to make substantive the second post of Education Link Worker, which has been created on a temporary basis in the current year.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 The committee is invited to:
- (i) consider and comment on the achievements of Looked After Children to date.
 - (ii) agree that the Service's work with Looked After Children be a key part within the Service's Self-evaluation and improvement planning.
 - (iii) Agree that funding is identified from within present budgets to make substantive the second post of Education Link Worker.
 - (iv) Call for further reports as necessary.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Date: 18 December 2009

Ref: TM