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**To:** **Social Work, Health and Well-Being Policy Board**

**On:** **13 January 2015**

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**Report by:** **Director of Social Work and Director of Education and Leisure**

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**Heading:** **Education Outcomes and Destinations for Looked After Children**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1. The Policy Board considered a report on Education Outcomes for Looked After Children at its meeting on 4 November 2014. That report noted that Renfrewshire's looked after school leavers had achieved higher average tariff scores in 2012/13 compared to their peers across Scotland, had the same attendance level as their peers and had fewer exclusions than their peers.
  - 1.2. The report on 4 November 2014 identified a concern in relation to the positive destination performance for looked after school leavers. It was noted that Renfrewshire's looked after school leavers in positive destinations was significantly poorer than the Scottish level for their peers. The report also noted that work was being taken forward with education, economic development, social work and Skills Development Scotland to secure improvements in respect of positive destinations.
  - 1.3. At the meeting on 4 November 2014 the Convener indicated concern over the position on positive destinations and requested an update for this meeting. This report provides the Board with an update on the work undertaken to date on the improvement agenda and highlights the actions being taken forward over the next few months.
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## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. The Social Work, Health and Well-being Policy Board is asked to note:
  - [a] the action taken to date in identifying the issues around positive destinations;
  - [b] the planned actions over the next six months to improve positive destinations; and

[c] that a further report on progress will be provided to a future meeting of this Board.

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### **3. Background**

- 3.1. The definition for looked after children is contained in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. Children can be looked after at home or looked after away from home. Children looked after at home includes placements with kinship carers and those looked after away from home includes foster care, pre-adoptive placements and residential placements.
- 3.2. Research has shown that looked after children often experience poorer outcomes than those achieved by the general population. One of the areas where the outcomes for looked after children is significantly poorer than the general population is in relation to educational attainment.
- 3.3. The main reasons children become looked after relate to care and protection concerns. Care and protection concerns include children who have experienced neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse or suffered negative impact as a consequence of their parent's substance misuse. A small number of children become looked after as a result of challenges they face including poor school attendance or their involvement in offending. Research has shown that looked after children often experience poorer outcomes, including educational attainment, than those achieved by the general population.
- 3.4. Services in Renfrewshire are committed to improving outcomes for looked after children and have developed a Corporate Parenting Action Plan. It is recognised that looked after children often have complex difficulties or challenges which have a negative impact on their education attainment and on them moving into positive destinations post school.
- 3.5. Members will be aware of the specific responsibilities local authorities have as corporate parents in respect of looked after children. The report presented to the Board on 4 November 2014 highlighted the work with Who Cares? Scotland to develop the corporate parenting approach in Renfrewshire. It should be noted that the work with Who Cares? Scotland is unique in Scotland.
- 3.6. Agencies in Renfrewshire continue to provide a range of additional services aimed at improving the education outcomes for looked after children. These services include specialist Looked After Children teachers, dedicated home support for looked after children, links to the children's houses and mentoring support for children who are looked after at home. Education and Leisure provides support and training for Renfrewshire's foster carers and staff in the children's houses to assist them to ensure the best education outcomes for the children they care for.
- 3.7. Since the last Board staff from social work have liaised with the Scottish Government's statistical section to assist in a deeper dive into the outcomes for Renfrewshire's looked after school leavers. During these discussions it became clear that the information published by the Scottish Government does not cover all looked after school leavers but only those for whom Skills Development Scotland manage to contact.

- 3.8. Skills Development Scotland is responsible for providing the information on positive destinations. The process for gathering and reporting the information is as follows:
- school leavers are identified by Skills Development Scotland
  - Skills Development Scotland then make contact with the school leavers 3 months and 9 months after they leave school
  - Skills Development Scotland report only on those school leavers for whom they manage to contact.
- 3.9. The Scottish Government publication presents information on positive destinations for looked after school leavers for all local authority areas in Scotland. When this is examined more closely it appears that this information relates only to those young people with whom Skills Development Scotland manage to make contact. The presentation of the information as percentages for use as a comparison across local authorities is therefore not sound.
- 3.10. An example of this is Glasgow City has the highest number of looked after children in Scotland (3674) but is only reporting 36 who are school leavers. This compares to the Renfrewshire number of 56. This suggests that Skills Development Scotland is more successful in contacting looked after school leavers in Renfrewshire than in Glasgow.
- 3.11. Whilst this makes the national average figure less robust it does not reduce the focus in Renfrewshire on attempting to improve the educational attainment and positive destinations of looked after school leavers.
- 3.12. Upon receipt of the data for the 56 Renfrewshire looked after school leavers reported to Board in November a drill down indicates the following;
- 7 were in foster care and all are in positive destinations (2 at university, 4 in further education and 1 on a training scheme);
  - 6 were in residential children's houses with 5 in positive destinations (2 in further education, 2 on a training scheme, 1 with an activity agreement and 1 actively seeking employment);
  - 39 looked after at home with 20 in positive destinations (1 at university, 12 in further education, 5 on a training scheme, 1 with an activity agreement, 14 actively seeking employment and 5 not actively seeking employment); and
  - 4 looked after in kinship placements with 1 in a positive destination (1 in an activity agreement and 3 actively seeking employment);
  - In total 59% of the 56 children are in a positive destination.
- 3.13. The drill down on the data confirmed that the area where poorest progress is being made is in respect of those who are looked after at home. An interagency working group has been established to develop the action plan to give additional impetus to attempts to improve outcomes.
- 3.14. Work is progressing in schools to identify and address the educational needs of children who are looked after at home and to ensure that they all have a clear support plan which will assist them achieve a positive destination in the future. Development and Housing staff are working closely with social work and education staff to improve access to positive destinations.
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## Implications of this report

### 1. Financial Implications

None.

### 2. HR and Organisational Development Implications

None.

### 3. Community Plan/Council Plan Implications

Children and Young  
People

- The focus on improving educational outcomes for looked after children contributes to the delivery of the community plan outcomes.

Jobs and the Economy

- Work on supporting looked after children into education, training or employment and achieving their long term success in the workforce contributes to the delivery of the community plan outcomes.

### 4. Legal Implications

None.

### 5. Property/Assets Implications

None.

### 6. Information Technology Implications

None.

### 7. Equality and Human Rights Implications

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only.

### 8. Health and Safety Implications

None.

### 9. Procurement Implications

None.

### 10. Risk Implications

None.

### 11. Privacy Impact

None.

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**List of Background Papers:     None**

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