

To: Education and Children Policy Board

On: Thursday 24 August 2023

Report by: Chief Social Work Officer

Heading: Children's Looked After Statistics - 2022

1. Summary

- 1.1. Each year on 31 July the Scottish Government conducts a census of the number of children who are looked after and the number of children on the child protection register. The information gathered during the census is analysed by the Scottish Government and an annual report published. The annual report is generally published in late March, however this year it was delayed until late April. The annual report and data tables can be accessed via this link <https://www.gov.scot/publications/childrens-social-work-statistics-scotland-2021-22/documents/>
 - 1.2. The 2022 report provides members with information on the numbers of looked after children and the number of children on the child protection register on 31 July 2022. Whilst there was a census on 31 July 2023 the results from that will not be available until March 2024.
 - 1.3. On 31 July 2022 there were 12,596 looked after children in Scotland, a 5% reduction from the previous year. The number of looked after children in Renfrewshire on 31 July 2022 was 592 compared to 587 on 31 July 2021. This represented an increase of just under 1%.
 - 1.4. The number of children on the child protection register across Scotland on 31 July 2022 was 2,031, a reduction of 4% from the previous year. 78 children were on the Renfrewshire child protection register on 31 July 2022 compared to 71 the previous year. This represents an increase of 10%.
-

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the education and children policy board notes the content of this report and agrees that a report on the 2023 census will be presented to a future meeting.

3. Background

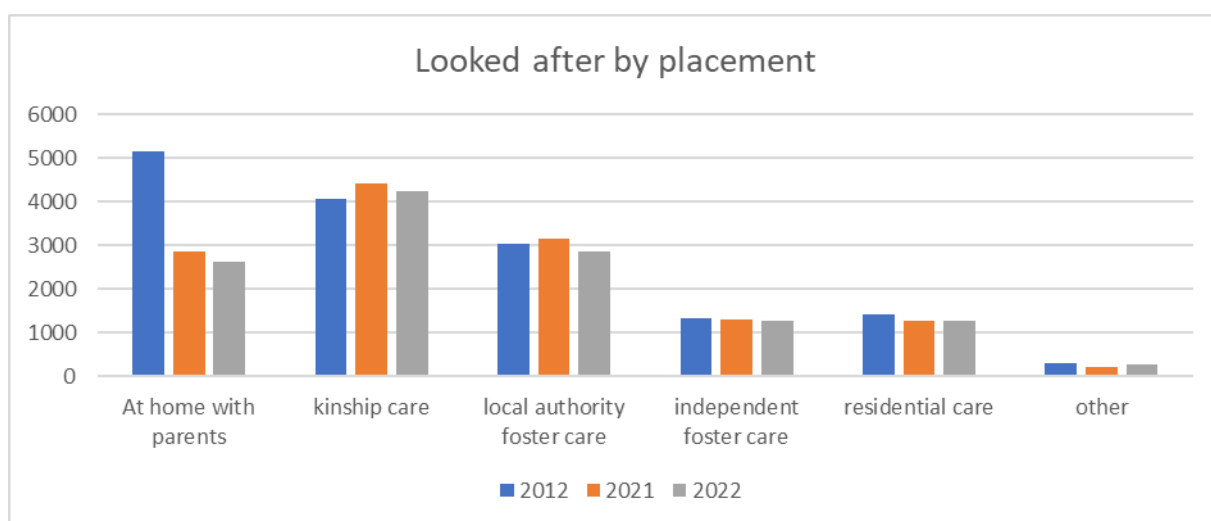
- 3.1. On 31 July each year, local authorities complete a census for the Scottish Government in relation to the number of children who are looked after and those who's names are on the child protection register. Whilst the census is conducted in July the report on the data is generally not available until late the following March. The 2022 data report from the Scottish Government wasn't published until 25 April 2023.
- 3.2. Renfrewshire adopted a strategy to reduce the number of looked after children in 2012. This report will provide an update on the progress in reducing the numbers of looked after children.
- 3.3. It should be noted that social work operates under the minimum necessary intervention principle and the "no-order" principle. This means that a significant number of children and families being supported by social work aren't reported in national statistics. The minimum necessary intervention principle requires social work to provide support and intervention at the right level at the right time to allow children and families to move out of the system quickly when challenges are addressed and resolved. The "no-order" principle means that a children's hearing or court should only impose a compulsory order on a child where it is better for the child to do so than not have the order in place.

Looked after children - Scotland

- 3.4. On 31 July 2022 there were 12,596 looked after children in Scotland. This was a reduction of 5% from the previous census. The trend over the past 10 years has been a reducing number of looked children after children across Scotland. On 31 July 2022, the rate per 1000 children (aged birth – 17) of looked after children in Scotland was 12.3 down from 12.9 in July 2021 and 15.7 in 2012. The rates vary significantly across Scotland from 4.3 per 1000 in East Renfrewshire to 26.9 per 1000 in West Dunbartonshire.
- 3.5. In the 2022 census 55% of Scotland's looked after children were in the care of their own parents or birth family through a kinship care arrangement. The breakdown of that figure is those cared for at home 21% and 34% cared for by kinship carers. Nationally the percentage of children in foster care is 33%. The breakdown for foster care is 23% of looked after children in foster care provided by the local authority and 10% in foster care in the independent sector. 10% of Scotland's looked after children are in residential care.

- 3.6. The number of looked after at home with their own parents has reduced by 49% compared to the 2012 position. The number of children looked after in kinship care arrangements has increased by just over 4% in the same period. The reduction in children placed with foster carers from the 2012 position to 2022 is just over 21%. The number of children in residential care fell by just over 3.5% from 2012 to 2022.
- 3.7. Chart 1 shows where Scotland's looked after children live by care placement type at the census point in 2022, 2021 and 2012.

Chart 1



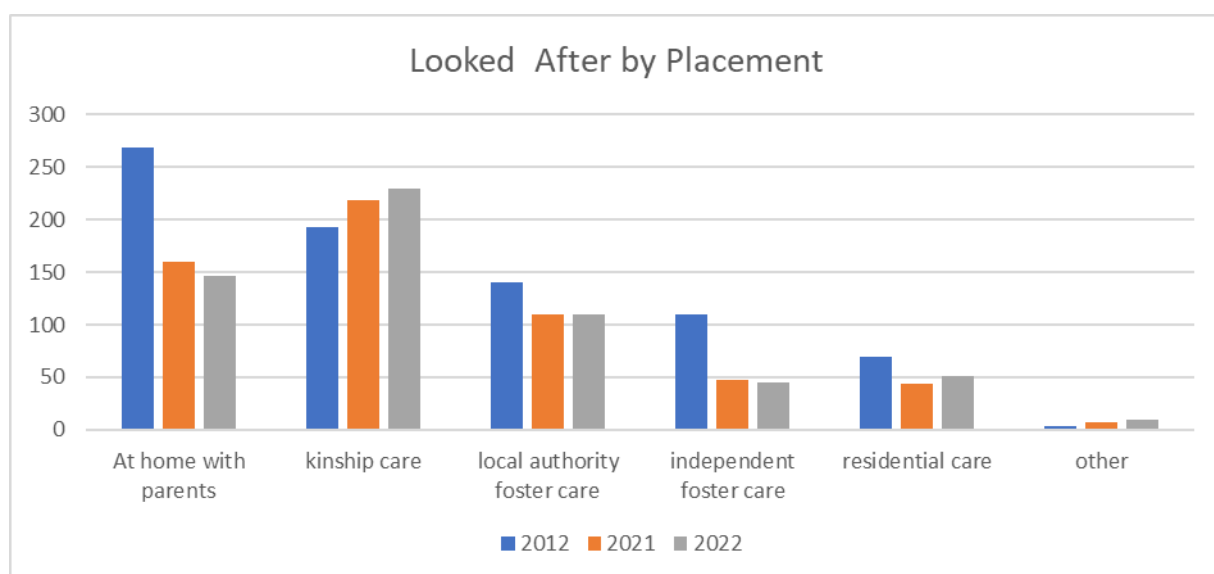
Looked after children - Renfrewshire

- 3.8. On 31 July 2022 there were 592 looked after children in Renfrewshire. This was an increase of 5 children from the previous year (increase of just under 1%). The trend within Renfrewshire over the past 10 years has been a reducing number of looked children after children. At the census in 2012 Renfrewshire had 786 looked after children. Over the past 10 years the number of looked after children in Renfrewshire has reduced by just under 25%.
- 3.9. At the 2022 census Renfrewshire had the 6th highest number of looked after children in Scotland. In 2012, Renfrewshire had the 4th highest number of looked after children in Scotland.
- 3.10. In the 2022 census 63.5% of Renfrewshire's looked after children were in the care of their own parents or birth family through a kinship care arrangement. Just under 25% of Renfrewshire looked after children are cared for at home with their parent(s). This is a higher proportion than the Scottish position. Just under 39% of Renfrewshire's looked after children are cared for in a kinship arrangement. This is the highest looked after group in Renfrewshire and again a higher percentage than the national figure.
- 3.11. Looked after children placed with internal foster carers account for just over 18.5% of the looked after population. Just over 7.5% of Renfrewshire's looked

after children are placed in external foster care. This means that 26% of Renfrewshire's looked after children are in foster care compared to 33% of the looked after population at a national level. Renfrewshire has a lower use of external foster care than the Scottish percentage.

- 3.12. 5.7% of Renfrewshire's looked after children are in external residential provision with just under 3% in our internal houses. This give a total of 8.7% of Renfrewshire's looked after children being in residential care compared to 10% at a national level.
- 3.13. The number of looked after children in Renfrewshire cared for at home by their parents at 31 July 2022 has reduced by just over 45% compared to the 2012 census. Over the same period kinship numbers have increased by 19%. The 2022 census shows there were just under 21% fewer children looked after in internal foster care compared to the 2012 census. There were almost 60% fewer looked after children in external foster care at the 2022 census compared with the 2012 census.
- 3.14. 8.7% of Renfrewshire's looked after children in cared for in a residential house or residential school. 33% of those looked after in a residential setting are placed within a Renfrewshire children's house. There has been a 27% reduction in the number of children in residential settings compared to the 2012 figure.
- 3.15. On 31 July 2022, the rate per 1000 children of looked after children in Renfrewshire was 17.6, similar to the rate in 2021. This is higher than the national rate per 1000. The 2012 rate was 23.3 per 1000 in Renfrewshire. The Renfrewshire rate is in the middle of the range for the 6 local authorities within the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board.
- 3.16. Chart 2 shows the breakdown of where Renfrewshire's looked after children live by care placement type.

Chart 2



Child Protection - Scotland

- 3.17. The number of children on the child protection register across Scotland on 31 July 2022 was 2,031. This is a reduction from the 2021 figure of 2119, a 4% decrease. The rate per 1000 population (aged birth – 15 years) on the child protection register on 31 July 2022 was 2.2. This is a significant reduction from the 2012 position when 2,698 children were on the child protection register (a rate of 2.9 per 1000).
- 3.18. During the period 1 August 2021 to 31 July 2022, across Scotland there were 11,473 child protection investigations in 2022, a rate of 12.6 per 1000 children. The rate varies across Scotland from 1.3 per 1000 in East Renfrewshire to 31.9 in Midlothian.
- 3.19. During the above timeframe, child protection case conferences were held in relation to 4,058 children, a rate of 4.5 per 1000 children. The rate across Scotland varies from 1.3 per 1000 children in East Renfrewshire to 10 in North Ayrshire.
- 3.20. The main areas of concern identified at child protection case conferences across Scotland are domestic abuse, neglect, parental mental health problems, parental substance misuse and emotional abuse.

Child Protection - Renfrewshire

- 3.21. On 31 July 2022, there were 78 children on Renfrewshire's child protection register. This was an increase of 7 from the previous year. At the census in 2012 the number of children on Renfrewshire's child protection register was 86. The rate per 1000 population (aged birth – 15 years) on Renfrewshire's child protection register on 31 July 2022 was 2.6. This is a reduction from the 2012 position when the rate was 2.8 per 1000).
 - 3.22. Between 1 August 2021 and 31 July 2022, a child protection investigation was carried out in relation to 382 children. This was a rate of 12.8 per 1000 of the child population.
 - 3.23. 197 child protection case conferences were held in the 2021/22 reporting year, a rate of 6.6 per 1000 of the child population.
 - 3.24. The main areas of concern identified at child protection case conferences in Renfrewshire were similar to those reported across Scotland.
 - 3.25. It should be noted that Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee receives regular reports on and scrutinises the child protection activity within the authority.
-

Implications of this report

1. Financial Implications

The current number of children looked after in external residential provision is at a higher level than for a number of years. The service is working to ensure that children's needs are met by placements and where possible they can return to Renfrewshire to mitigate demand on budgets.

2. HR and Organisational Development Implications

None

3. Community Plan/Council Plan Implications

Community Care, Health and Well-being - Children and families are supported to address the challenges they face.

Safer and Stronger - Children and families receive the right support to ensure they are safe at home and in the community.

4. Legal Implications

The authority works within the legal framework to discharge its duties to looked after children and those involved in the child protection system.

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.

12. COSLA Policy Position

None.

13. Climate Risk

None.

List of Background Papers

None

Children's Services

JCTLG

25 July 2023

Author: John Trainer, Head of Child Care and Criminal Justice/Chief Social Work Officer

0141 6218 6860

john.trainer@renfrewshire.gov.uk