

To: **Education and Children's Services Policy Board**

On: **27 October 2022**

Report by: **Director of Children's Services**

Heading: **Looked After Children and Child Protection Update**

1. Summary

- 1.1 At the Education and Children's Services Policy Board on 9 June 2022, members considered a report on the annual census of looked after children and child protection. Members were advised that on 31 July each year, the Scottish Government carries out a census in relation to looked after children and children on the child protection register. The results of the census are published in the annual Children's Social Work Statistics Report which provides information on the overall Scottish position and a breakdown of information by each of the 32 local authority areas.
 - 1.2 Elected members agreed that information on Renfrewshire's looked after children and child protection work would be brought to Board on a regular basis. This report provides information on the number of looked after children in Renfrewshire on 30 September 2022. The report also provides information on the number of children on the Renfrewshire Child Protection Register on 30 September 2022.
 - 1.3 This report doesn't allow comparison with other local authority areas as that information is only available when the annual Children's Social Work Statistics Report is published. The annual report is normally published in the March following the census.
 - 1.4 The report provides trend analysis over the last three census periods and offers comments on the long-term trends in relation to looked after children and child protection in Renfrewshire since 2012 when the council adopted the following strategic aims: to reduce the number of looked after children, reduce the number of children in external foster care and support kinship care where it is the best care option for children. The most up to date information for 30 September 2022 is provided to allow members to consider the current data.
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2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Education and Children's Services Policy Board:

- [a] notes the number of looked after children in Renfrewshire on 30 September 2022:
 - [b] notes the number of children on the Renfrewshire child protection register on 30 September 2022: and
 - [c] requests that the information relating to Renfrewshire's looked after children and child protection is presented to the board after 31 March 2023.
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3. Background

3.1 A child is looked after if:

- they are provided with accommodation by a local authority under section 25 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995;
- subject to a compulsory supervision order or an interim compulsory supervision order made by a children's hearing; or
- subject to a Permanence Order under Section 80 of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007.

3.2 Children who are looked after can be looked after at home with their parent(s) or looked after in kinship, foster or residential care.

3.3 Each year the Scottish Government conducts a census in relation to the number of children who are looked after by local authorities and children involved in child protection processes. The information for the census is gathered from individual local authorities and aggregated to a national level. The Scottish Government publishes a summary report and associated tables in respect of the data gathered.

3.4 The census is conducted on 31 July each year and the Scottish Government publishes its report around March the following year. The most recent annual census was conducted on 31 July 2022 and the annual report is expected to be published by the end of March 2023. The information in this report is on the number of looked after children on 30 September 2022 and therefore doesn't allow any comparison with other local authorities.

3.5 Throughout this report the terms "child" and "children" are used to describe someone who has not yet attained the age of 16 or is over the age of 16 but under the age of 18 and is still subject to a statutory supervision order.

- 3.6 In 2012 Renfrewshire set a strategic objective to reduce the number of children who are looked after. In addition, Renfrewshire set a strategic objective to support children who couldn't be cared for by their parents to remain with their extended family under kinship care arrangements as an alternative to foster care. The final strategic objective set in 2012 was to reduce the use of external foster care and increase the internal Renfrewshire foster care provision.
- 3.7 In this report the data in relation to Renfrewshire's looked after children and child protection is presented as at 30 September 2022 and has information from the last three published annual census shown to demonstrate trend.

Looked After Children Renfrewshire

On 30 September 2022, 579 children in Renfrewshire were looked after. Table 1 contains details of the number and percentage of children looked after at 2012, the last three annual census dates and on 30 September 2022.

Table 1

31/07/2012	31/07/2019	31/07/2020	31/07/2021	30/09/2022
786 (2.2%)	629 (1.9%)	642 (1.9%)	587 (1.7%)	579 (1.7%)

- 3.8 Table 2 shows where Renfrewshire's looked after children were living at each of the census points over the last three years and at the census point in 2012 when the strategic aims referred to in paragraph 1.4 were agreed.

Table 2

	31/07/2012	31/07/2019	31/07/2020	31/07/2021	30/09/2022
At home with parents	269	190	197	160	145
Kinship care	193	190	212	218	227
Local authority foster care	140	127	125	110	110
Independent sector foster care	110	61	60	48	40
Internal residential children's houses	46	29	16	17	17
Independent residential children's houses	24	19	20	27	32
Other	4	13	12	7	8
Total	786	629	642	587	579

- 3.9 During the period 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022, a total of 38 children and young people were accommodated by Renfrewshire. Table 3 shows the placements by number of children during this period.

Table 3

Placement	Number of children
Internal residential children's house	2
Local authority foster care	18
Kinship care	12
Independent foster care	1
Independent residential children's house	1
Secure care	4

Child Protection - Renfrewshire

- 3.10 Each local authority maintains a child protection register. The child protection register is used to record the names of those children in each authority area who are deemed to be in need of protection.
- 3.11 On 31 July 2021 there were 71 children on the Renfrewshire child protection register. This equates to 2.4 per 1000 children, just slightly higher than the national rate at that time.
- 3.12 Table 4 provides information on the number of children on the child protection register at the census date on 31 July 2012, 2019, 2020 and 2021. The table also shows the rate per 1000 children for the same periods. The information for 30 September 2022 is also shown on the table.

Table 4

31/07/2012	31/07/2019	31/07/2020	31/07/2021	30/09/2022
Number (rate per 1000)	Number (rate per 1000)	Number (rate per 1000)	Number (rate per 1000)	Number (rate per 1000)
86 (2.8)	83 (2.7)	98 (3.2)	71 (2.4)	78 (2.5)

- 3.16 During the period 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022, 40 children had their name placed on the Renfrewshire Child Protection Register. The main areas of concern in relation to new child protection registrations continue to be parental substance use; mental health and gender-based violence.

Implications of this report

1. **Financial**
None.

2. **HR and Organisational Development**
None.
 3. **Community/Council Planning**
None.
 4. **Legal**
None.
 5. **Property/Assets**
None.
 6. **Information Technology**
None.
 7. **Equality and Human Rights**
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. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
 8. **Health and Safety**
None.
 9. **Procurement**
None.
 10. **Risk**
Risks related to the delivery and management of services are regularly monitored and included in Renfrewshire Council's Corporate and Strategic Risk Registers.
 11. **Privacy Impact**
None.
 12. **Cosla Policy Position**
None.
 13. **Climate Risk**
None.
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List of Background Papers

Children's Services
JT/KO 21/09/22

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