

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

**On:** **9 June 2022**

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

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**Heading:** **Looked After Children and Child Protection Annual Census 2021**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 Each year on 31 July, 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. The report provides information on the overall Scottish position and a breakdown of information by each of the 32 local authority areas.
  - 1.2 The most recent Children's Social Work Statistics Report was published by the Scottish Government on 29 March 2022 and provides information as at 31 July 2021.
  - 1.3 This report contains an analysis of the data in respect of looked after children and child protection in Renfrewshire on 31 July 2021. The report provides comparison of the Renfrewshire information with the national position and with local authorities in Clyde Valley area.
  - 1.4 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 parent 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.
  - 1.5 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.
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## **2. Recommendations**

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

- [a] The publication of the annual census in relation to looked after children and child protection dated 29 March 2022.
  - [b] The reduction in the number of looked after children in Renfrewshire over the period 2012 to 2022.
  - [c] The information in relation to children on the Renfrewshire child protection register on 31 July 2021. and
  - [b] requests that the information relating to Renfrewshire's looked after children and child protection is presented to the board on a six-monthly basis.
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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;
- or 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 2021 and the report published on 28 March 2022.

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 parent 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 alongside the Scottish data and with the data for the local authorities in the Clyde Valley.

### **Annual Census 2021 – Looked After Children**

- 3.8 13,255 children were looked after across Scotland on 31 July 2021. This means that 1.3% of the population of 0 -17 were looked after. In Renfrewshire, 587 children were looked after (1.7% of the 0 – 17 population). Table 1 contains details of the number and percentage of children looked after for the last three years and the position at 2012 when the current strategy to reduce the number of looked after children was adopted.

**Table 1**

	31/07/2012	31/07/2019	31/07/2020	31/07/2021
Scotland	16,248 (1.5%)	14,262 (1.4%)	14,458 (1.4%)	13,255 (1.3%)
Renfrewshire	786 (2.2%)	629 (1.9%)	642 (1.9%)	587 (1.7%)
Glasgow	3,740 (3.2%)	2,523 (2.3%)	2,544 (2.3%)	2,303 (2.1%)
North Lanarkshire	730 (1.0%)	850 (1.2%)	832 (1.2%)	733 (1.0%)
South Lanarkshire	617 (0.9%)	725 (1.2%)	786 (1.3%)	752 (1.2%)
West Dunbartonshire	369 (1.9%)	505 (2.9%)	506 (2.9%)	465 (2.7%)
Inverclyde	299 (1.8%)	205 (1.5%)	223 (1.6%)	222 (1.6%)
East Dunbartonshire	162 (0.7%)	149 (0.7%)	155 (0.7%)	164 (0.7%)
East Renfrewshire	174 (0.8%)	102 (0.5%)	117 (0.5%)	90 (0.4%)

- 3.9 Renfrewshire had the 6th highest number of looked after children in Scotland at the 2021 census. In 2014, Renfrewshire had the 4<sup>th</sup> highest number of looked after children in Scotland. At that time only Glasgow, Edinburgh City and Fife had higher numbers of looked after children. At the 2021 census these three areas continued to have higher numbers of looked after children than Renfrewshire. North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire also had higher number of looked after children than Renfrewshire in the 2021 census.
- 3.10 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 2014 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
At home with parents	269	190	197	160
Kinship care	193	190	212	218
Local authority foster care	140	127	125	110
Independent sector foster care	110	61	60	48
Internal residential children's houses	46	29	16	17
Independent residential children's houses	24	19	20	27
Other	4	13	12	7
Total	786	629	642	587

- 3.11 Renfrewshire is making progress in reducing the number of looked after children. The service has reduced the number of children looked after in foster care and in residential provision. Whilst the total number of children in residential children's houses over the 10-year period has reduced the pandemic has mean that more children are placed in external houses. There has been an increase in children who can't be cared for by their birth parent(s) being cared for in kinship care.

- 3.12 Overall, the number of looked after children in Renfrewshire who are cared for in kinship, foster or residential care has reduced from 517 in 2012 to 427. The most significant reduction has been in children placed in independent sector foster care. The number of children in independent sector foster care has reduced by 56.3% over the ten-year period. Internal foster care numbers have reduced by 21.4% over the same time period. Kinship care has increased by 12.9% over the ten-year period.

### **Annual Census 2021 – Child Protection**

- 3.13 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. The total number of children on the 32 local authority child protection registers in Scotland on 31 July 2021 was 2,104. This equates to 2.3 children per 1000 in the age range 0 – 15.
- 3.14 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.
- 3.15 Table 3 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.

**Table 3**

	31/07/2012 Number (rate per 1000)	31/07/2019 Number (rate per 1000)	31/07/2020 Number (rate per 1000)	31/07/2021 Number (rate per 1000)
Scotland	2,706 (3.0)	2,580 (2.8)	2,654 (2.9)	2,104 (2.3)
Renfrewshire	86 (2.8)	83 (2.7)	98 (3.2)	71 (2.4)
Glasgow	436 (4.4)	415 (4.1)	420 (4.2)	282 (2.8)
North Lanarkshire	79 (1.3)	162 (2.6)	118 (1.9)	117 (1.9)
South Lanarkshire	165 (2.9)	116 (2.1)	160 (2.9)	116 (2.1)
West Dunbartonshire	35 (2.2)	44 (2.8)	66 (4.2)	57 (3.7)
Inverclyde	33 (2.4)	47 (3.7)	61 (4.8)	31 (2.5)
East Dunbartonshire	23 (1.2)	55 (2.8)	37 (1.9)	23 (1.2)
East Renfrewshire	34 (1.9)	15 (0.8)	9 (0.5)	8 (0.4)

- 3.16 The number of children on the Renfrewshire child protection register at the census dates is broadly in line with the national rate.
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## **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**

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***Children's Services***  
*JT/KO 19/05/22*

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