



**REPORT TO: EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE ON 26 MAY 2021**

SUBJECT: CORPORATE PARENTING

BY: CHIEF OFFICER, HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of data and service activities relating to corporate parenting in Moray.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to the Education, Communities and Organisational Development Committee following a decision of Moray Council on 17 June 2020 to agree a simplified committee structure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the case of this committee the combining of the delegated responsibilities of Children and Young People Services, Governance, Strategy and Performance, (para 9 of the minute refers).

2. RECOMMENDATION

- i) **It is recommended that Committee considers and notes the content of the report.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Corporate Parenting Strategy for Moray 2017 – 2020 was approved by the Community Planning Partnership in October 2017 and was launched at the Champions Board which was held that month. The next strategy will be coproduced with our children, young people and their families. Consistent with the Promise, family will be defined by our children and young people.

- 3.2 This report will explore the following: -

- i) A brief overview of what is meant by looked after child
- ii) Numbers, rate (per 1,000 of the 0-18 population) and placement type
- iii) Focus on assessments, planning and reviews
- iv) Systems in place with education for tracking attainment and attendance
- v) Pathway planning for independence, from a basis of continuing care and being better equipped to leave care
- vi) Future activities to implement the Promise.

Taking each of these in turn.

- 3.3 Children are looked after when they: -
- (a) Are provided with accommodation out with the care of their parent/s. The child may be looked after, and therefore cared for, in kinship care, foster care or residential care, including residential school or secure care.
 - (b) Remain living in the care of their parent/s but are subject to a Supervision Order under Section 83 of the Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011 without condition of residence.
- 3.4 More usually the basis for becoming looked after is to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.
- 3.5 There is always a legal basis for a child being looked after, either the child's parent/s have given legal consent for the child to be looked after or there is an order in place, through a Children's Hearing or court.
- 3.6 The language around looked after children, care leavers and care experienced children/young people can be confusing. Children and young people have said that they dislike the wording of 'looked after' and that they prefer the phrase care experienced. Care experienced applies for children who are or who have been looked after. A care leaver is used to describe a young person who ceased being looked on or after their 16th birthday and who is eligible for after care advice and assistance.

Numbers, Percentage and Placement Type

- 3.7 The Children's Social Work Statistics Scotland, published at the end of March every year, report on the period ending 31 July of the previous year. The statistics for 2019- 2020 are attached (**Appendix 1**). They reflect an increase in the number of looked after children in Scotland for the first time in 7 years. The reason for the increase in number in Scotland is because fewer children were leaving care, rather than there being an increase in the number of children becoming looked after. The numbers for looked after children in Moray have reduced for the following reasons: -
- (a) Fewer children are becoming looked after.
 - (b) When they are becoming looked after, given change in practice following our engagement with the Permanence and Care Excellence (PACE) programme in 2018, they return to paternal care more quickly, when safe to do so.

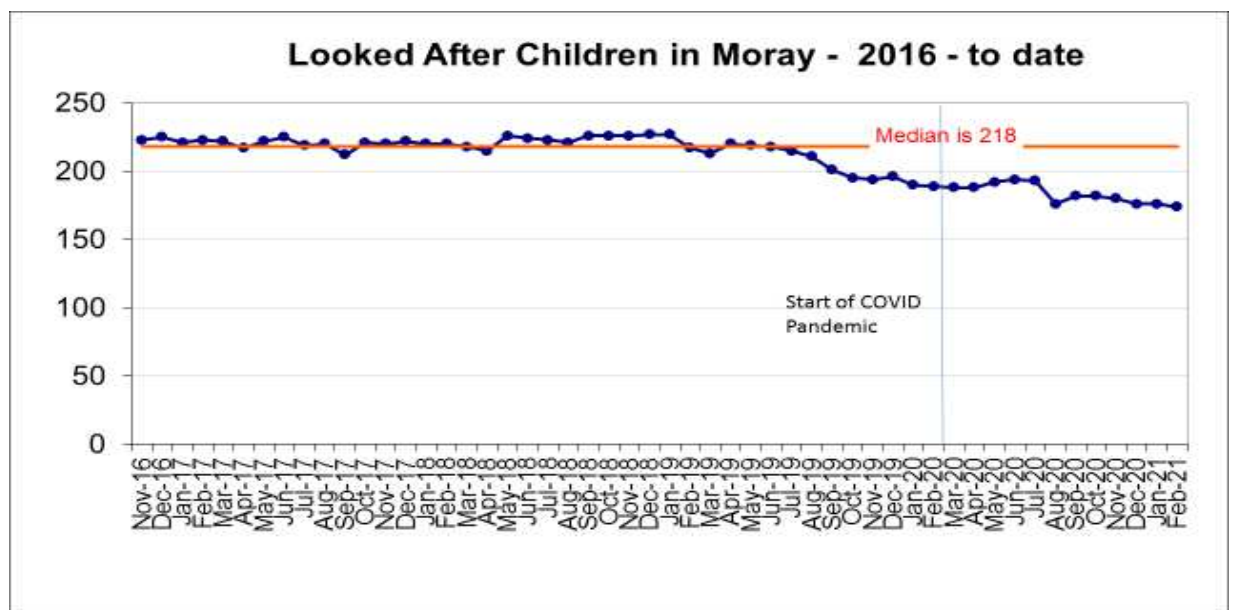
The Permanence and Care Excellence (PACE) programme was run jointly by the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS) and the Scottish Government: it began in Scotland in 2014. The aim of the programme was to enable more looked after children to experience permanence without drift and delay in their care planning. The programme applied an improvement methodology from the basis that delay in care planning for children and young people was not the responsibility of any one agency. All local authorities had the opportunity

to engage with the programme between 2014 and December 2018. The project closed during 2020, however working practices in Moray will continue to work with the Quality Improvement methodology principles applied within PACE, reflected in the Children’s Services Plan.

- (c) Increasingly when cared for in kinship care often their carer seeks an alternative order through court, to secure the child permanently in the kinship household, thus removing the child from the legal definition of being ‘in care’.

3.8 The following graphs and table are considered to be helpful for an overview of Moray’s care experienced young people. The onset of Covid is marked, given its impact. Weekly data, monitoring the impact of covid on vulnerable children and families and how services have been responding, is published by the Scottish Government. The focus of this report is the general context for looked after children and service developments in Moray. Figure 1 shows the numbers of young people looked after November 2016 – Feb 2021

Figure 1



The graph reflects that fewer children are looked after in Moray, especially since the onset on covid and that the reducing trend had started before covid for the reasons noted above.

3.9 Reporting numbers needs to be in context therefore rate per 1,000 of the 0-18 population is used. Table 1 details the numbers, rate and placement types for Moray’s looked after children in the periods 31st July 2018; 2019 and 2020.

Table 1 -

	2018	2019	2020
Number of looked after children Moray	222	210	188
Shown as a % of the 0-18 years population in	12.1%	11.5%	10.3%

Moray			
Consistent with the graph above, the number and rate, per 1,000 of the 0-18 population, of looked after children has reduced.			
Care Placement	2018	2019	2020
Looked after at home Number	46	44	40
%	21%	21%	21%
<p>While the number of Moray's looked after children who are on home supervision orders through the children's hearing system are reducing, the % rate has remained constant. At 21% of our population of looked after children, this reflects far fewer looked after children living at home in Moray, compared with our benchmarking comparator authorities whose % is reported between 30-33%. The PACE steering group is going to audit the needs and nature of intervention that is in place for children in need, prior to the child becoming looked after. There is some evidence that children are supported as children in need, prior to becoming looked after and that when they become looked after they are looked after and accommodated in a care placement, rather than being cared for as looked after children at home.</p> <p>Consistent with the Promise (the Scottish Government's Independent Care Review 2020) "where children are safe in their families and feel loved they must stay - Scotland must provide families with support that lasts as long as required, with the collective acceptance that for some families this will be a long-term commitment", we continue to develop our focussed family work to support our children to safely remain living in the care of their families.</p>			
Placement type Foster care	2018	2019	2020
Number	82	67	60
Rate	37%	32%	32%
<p>The number and rate reported above is for children who are looked after in foster care, either by Moray foster carers or by independent foster agencies.</p> <p>The number of children who are looked after in foster care is reducing but the % rate for the last 2 years has remained at 32%. Our benchmarking comparator authorities have a similar rate for their foster care placements.</p> <p>To offer a choice of placement and alternatives to residential care, we have worked hard to improve our ability to offer family based placements to children. The strategy that has been developed is for targeted recruitment of placements for children who we have previously found it challenging to find the correct foster families for.</p>			
Placement type Residential Care	2018	2019	2020
Total residential care Number	48	44	35
Rate	22%	21%	19%

The rate for residential placements in Moray	8%	10%	9%
The rate for out of area residential placements	14%	11%	10%
<p>The total number reported above is for children who are looked after in residential care, this includes care in Moray and residential homes, schools and secure care, out of the Moray area.</p> <p>The rate of children who are looked after in residential care out of the Moray area is reducing, due to a focus of our workforce in returning children and young people back to Moray where that was appropriate, however compared with our benchmarking comparator authorities our use of residential care in total remains exceptionally high and this is one of our priorities for the coming year. Our comparators rate for total residential care for each of those years is 13%: 12% and 13%: the total for Moray for each of those years is 22%; 21% and 19%. We will continue to develop our workforce in relational and family based interventions that support children to remain with their parents wherever possible.</p> <p>The Education, Communities and Organisational Development Committee in February 2021 approved the reduction of 2 bed spaces in Moray which have been used by children whose need for care was on the basis of social or emotional needs, instead focussing our resources on our work within families.</p>			
Placement type	2018	2019	2020
Kinship care			
Number	39	47	48
Rate	17%	22%	26%
<p>The number and rate for children who are looked after in kinship care in Moray is increasing. Our comparator authorities' rates for each of these three years are 21%, 23% and 22%.</p> <p>In Moray following the initial formal kinship care scheme in 2009 the number and rate of kinship placements was fairly constant. Since our engagement with the PACE programme, from 2018, there has been change in practice which is evidenced through these figures. We recognise that children do best when they are living with their parents, however, where that is not possible young people are best placed (where that can happen safely) with other family members.</p>			

Figure 2 reflects the increase in kinship care for looked after children

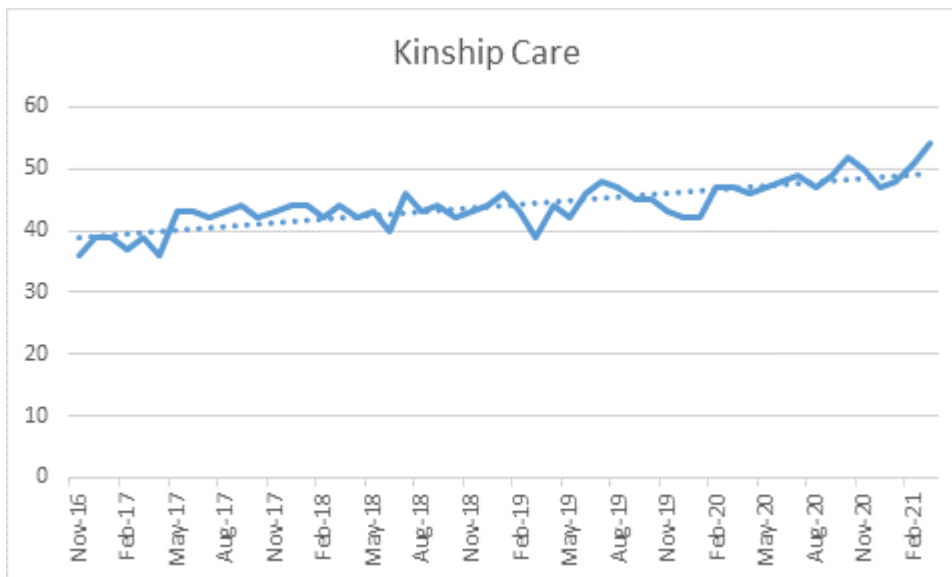
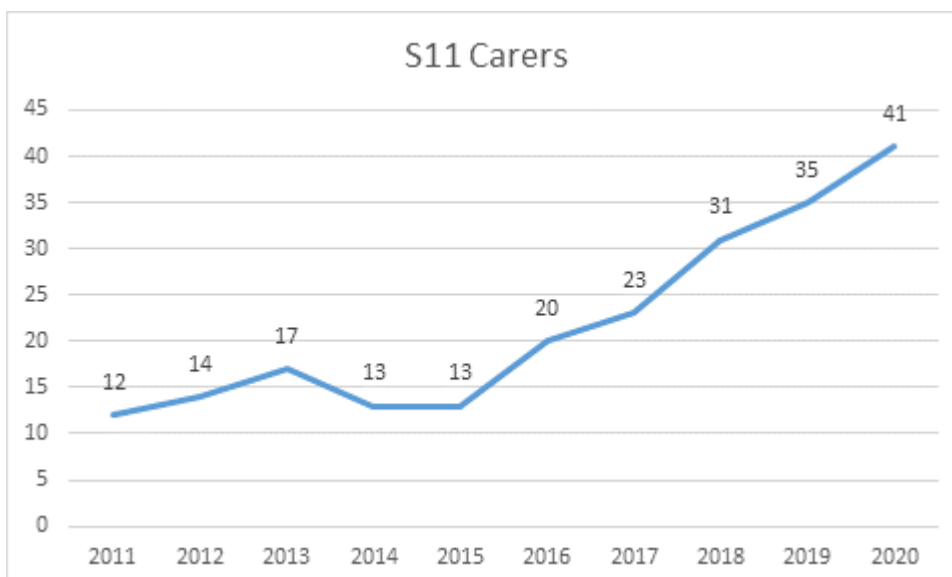


Figure 3 shows the increase in the number of children for whom their kinship carers are seeking alternative orders through court, removing the child from public care and making the child’s care permanent in the kinship family.

Figure 3



Assessments, planning and reviews

- 3.10 The processes for assessing and reviewing, the needs and placements of our looked after children are based in legislation and are informed by emerging guidance and practice.
- 3.11 An audit of our placements of children in foster care indicated that our social workers have identified a need to ensure that children are cared for together with their brothers/ sisters. A number of the placements made with independent foster agencies have been made on the basis of need for children to be together, so placements made with independent foster agencies have been resource based, when we have not had placement options for children to be living with their brothers and sisters with Moray

foster carers. The renewed recruitment strategy for fostering has a focus on placing children together.

- 3.12 The timing and content of formal reviews for our children is consistent with legislation. However there is no set format in legislation about how and where reviews should be held. We welcome the findings of The Promise that will support us to look at how review meetings are conducted based on what children and their families tell us. We are currently in the process of a consultation to establish families' views around this.
- 3.13 Work on the issues of how and where reviews and meetings might be held has been progressed through the Better Meetings project, which started in 2019. The work of the group has created a trilogy of films, the third being made in February this year, the first was shown at the Champions' Board meeting in February 2020. This project has involved 21 children and young people across Moray and been led by Who Cares? Scotland working together with members of Children's Hearing Scotland and social workers. The work of the Better Meetings project offers practice guidance that will be rolled out across Moray given the focus is all meetings and not just Children's Hearing and Looked after Child reviews.
- 3.14 Auditing and monitoring of reviews has been developed because of need to ensure our meetings are robust and meet children's needs and takes cognisance of a recommendation made to us by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). Systems for the administration and business support for reviews have also been developed.
- 3.15 Engagement with the PACE programme resulted in the introduction of what is called the 2 week planning meeting. This meeting was a systems change to which improvement methodology was applied, it is not based in legislation, but we do recognise it better meets children's needs. Consistent with other local authorities that introduced this meeting, our tests of change found that the meeting helped parents and workers to focus on what are key issues; what needs to change; what supports are needed to help make that change. Audit has found that when safe to do so children are returning to parental care quicker and families are keen to maintain changes made so that their children remaining living at home.

Education systems

- 3.16 To raise awareness about corporate parenting and of the issues that matter to our children who are looked after, there have been briefing sessions at head teachers meetings and designated teacher training has been developed and delivered. The most recent session for designated teachers was February 2020 at a session called "the Voice of the Child". This session was designed by and delivered not only to designated teachers but to social workers and children hearing members. Key to the session were the voices of our children who had been involved in a specific consultation project.
- 3.17 In the summer of 2019 a senior social worker and the teacher for children who are looked after spoke to 26 of our children who were either placed out of Moray at that time, or who had returned from having been cared for out of

Moray. The children and young people were asked to talk through their views and wishes. What we were told by our young people was that relational and person-centred planning is needed. They want us to support them to hold on to the things that are working well in their lives to avoid unnecessary disruptions and moves. Our young people were craving a commitment from all our Care and Education staff to get to know them beyond the reports and paperwork. We have kept this on our agenda and continue to work in a way that reduces moves of placement for young people where we can.

3.18 On 5 May 2021 the Education and Employability pillar group of Corporate Parenting and the Champions Board, held a development session which was previously planned for January but due to COVID had to be rescheduled. The session included all key partners within the Education and Employability pillar area. The session looked at data in relation to attainment, exclusions and attendance both in Moray and nationally, as well as the “asks” of the Promise in education. Projects including Mentoring Young Talent, Advocacy, Youth Engagement and the Young Persons Guarantee were highlighted as areas of good practice. There was a sharp focus on what education need to do to ensure they deliver the “asks” of The Promise and next steps suggested. The Pillar group will meet to develop an action plan to support all partners to fully embed the “asks” of the Promise in practice in education.

3.19 Within the Children’s Social Work Statistics Scotland 2019- 2020, there is a link to the Education Outcomes for Looked After Children for the period 2018-19: often the reporting of statistics is out of sync.

- i) Attainment for care experienced school leavers at levels 4 and 5 numeracy and literacy, has remained inconsistent in Moray. This will be planned for within the action plan that will be developed and referred to at 3.19. Nationally it is noted that improvement in narrowing the gap between the attainment levels for looked after young people compared with all school leavers has stalled over the last four years.
- ii) In terms of positive leaver destinations there is an increase for children who are looked after away from home. This reflects that increased support is needed for children who are looked after at home.
- iii) The attendance rate for pupils looked after nationally has fallen over the last six years, decreasing from 89% in 2012-13 to 87% in 2018-19. For Moray the % rate for Moray has been constant at 89%, however in 2012/13 the % rate was higher at 91%.
- iv) The rate of exclusion for looked after pupils nationally has fallen from 280 per 1,000 pupils in 2012-13 to 152 per 1,000 pupils in 2018-19. For Moray this change has been from 254 per 1000 pupils in 2012-13 to 180 per 1000 pupils in 2018 - 19. Exclusions will feature on the action plan moving forward.

Preparation for Independence

3.20 Pathway planning remains central to planning for young people planning to leave care and preparing for independence. The policies to pathway

planning, transitions and continuing care have been revised and improved over the last year. Implementation groups are being set up for both transitions and continuing care practice within the social work department.

- 3.21 There are a number of accommodation options for young people developing independent living skills or leaving care.
- (i) Supported lodgings – are provided either by foster carers who convert to become supported lodgings providers or by people who have not previously been foster carers but who have the skills and interest to support our young people to grow towards independent living.
 - (ii) Continuing care – is available up to the age of 21 years for young people who want this form of support and for whom it is assessed continuing care will meet their support needs. Continuing care is based on maintaining caring relationships.
 - (iii) Scatter flat initiative - The Scatter flat initiative, supports our young people to become more confident in managing their tenancy. The support is flexible and able to respond to changing needs for support, over time.
 - (iv) The accommodation pillar group of Corporate Parenting and the Champions Board, held a development session on 9 March 2021. Consistent with the education and employment pillar referred to above, this pillar group will develop their action plan to address issues raised by the young people in Moray and consider the “asks” in the Promise.

Future activities

- 3.22 The Promise is the outcome of the Scottish Government’s Independent Care Review, February 2020. Following the launch of The Promise, the Plan 21-24, was published in April this year. Between them these publications advise of a 10 year journey of culture and systems change. Moray made successful application for funding to support the implementation of The Promise. Two part time posts will be appointed; one focussed on the engagement of children and their families and the other focussed on strategies, policies and systems. This funding and those posts are for 12 months.
- 3.23 We are planning a significant change within our children’s services social work department including:
- (i) Increased advocacy - provided by someone of the child’s choosing
 - (ii) Family Group Decision Making – staff are being trained in this method of working with families to put families at the centre of decision making and planning for a child or young person.
 - (iii) Safe and together – an evidence based model of working with families where domestic violence is a feature, as we recognise the damaging environment this creates for children. It focusses on offender behaviours as a target for change and takes the blame and weight of

responsibility away from the non-offending parent. We have committed to training staff across the partnership and within social work, we are currently training staff within social work as trained trainers, to ensure sustainability of the rollout of this model, as part of a wider culture change within Moray.

- (iv) A dedicated, temporary, senior commissioning officer and, permanent commissioning coordinator have been appointed to support the element in The Promise that relates to commissioning: “Follow the Money”. This will enable commissioning and service design with families, to develop community based resources, so when children are loved and it is safe for the child to remain in their family, they are supported and able to.
- (v) Consistent with the action plans being developed in the pillar groups above indicated at paragraphs 3.19 and 3.21(iv) above, the youth and criminal justice pillar group are undertaking an engagement survey with young people to help understand the experiences of care experienced young or people who are/ who have been involved in youth or justice processes and to hear what worked well and what did not work within the system. By working with the information offered by the young people and identifying areas for improvement, the pillar group intends to develop an action plan based on co-production with the young people.

4 SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The Children’s Services plan 2020/23 identifies improving outcomes for looked after children as a key priority the Children and Families and Justice Social Work service improvement plan identifies actions to be taken to support these improvements the Corporate plan (2020 update) identifies the following priorities:

Work with families as partners to give their children the kind of lives they want them to lead so that children grow up to be strong and resilient;
Improve the life chances and outcomes for care experienced children and young people
Improvement in children and young people’s health and well-being

(b) Policy and Legal

The relevant legislation and policies are detailed within the report.

(c) Financial implications

There are no specific financial implications associated with this report.

(d) Risk Implications

The risks associated with this report is the extent to which we engage with and deliver on our duties as corporate parents.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no direct staffing implications associated with this report.

(f) Property

There are no direct property implications associated with this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

There are no equality implications as the purpose of the report is to inform committee of progress.

(h) Consultations

Chief Executive, Moray Council; Chief Social Work Officer; Head of Service, Children and Families and Criminal Justice Services; Head of HR, ICT, and Organisational Development: Senior Human Resources Adviser; Principal Accountant; Legal Services Manager; Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer and the Equal Opportunities Officer have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are in agreement with the content relating to their areas of responsibility.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 It is recommended that Committee considers and notes the content of this report.

Author of Report: JG – Corporate Parent & Commissioning Manager
Background Papers:
Ref: