



THE PROMISE AND CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT

- APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022





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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

‘In Scottish Borders, the effective assurance of the wellbeing and protection; listening to and, upholding the rights of looked after children, young people and care leavers is one of our most important responsibilities. We will strive to intervene early to prevent children from becoming looked after. Where children are looked after, we will provide high quality services for each child and young person. In doing so, we strive to reduce the inequalities experienced by them.’
Scottish Borders Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-24

This is the seventh Scottish Borders Corporate Parenting Annual Report and is the first report on progress made under the Scottish Borders Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021 – 24. This strategy and ambition provide a framework for planning and service development to improve the lifelong outcomes for looked after children and care experienced young people.

The Promise, published in February 2020, is the key national policy driver for looked after and care experienced children and young people with five clear foundations. The Plan 21-24 (published on 31st March 2021) mapped and sequenced the 80+ calls to action outlined in The Promise, identifying the five priority areas for the next three years. (More detail provided below.)

This provides a clear strategic direction for the development of corporate parenting in the Scottish Borders, and it was agreed by the Corporate Parenting Operations Group in March 2022 that going forwards the Scottish Borders Corporate Parenting and Scottish Borders Promise annual reports will be merged.

Language and Terminology within the annual report

‘The Care Review heard from children that the words used by the workforce to describe their lives, like ‘unit’ and ‘placement’ and ‘contact’ and ‘respite’ and ‘LAC’ (looked after child), are not the same as those used by their non-care experienced peers. They told the Care Review that this language compounds a sense of being different, can exacerbate low self-esteem and is stigmatising.’

One of the Independent Care Review’s findings was around the importance of using non-stigmatising language when describing the lives of looked after and care experienced children and young people. We have been very mindful of this when completing this report. The use of ‘corporate parent’ as a term was specifically highlighted in The Promise as a term which is potentially demeaning and an example of cold, process-driven relationships. The Promise avoided use of ‘corporate parent’ and emphasised the importance of Scotland being a ‘good parent’ for those it is responsible for.



Corporate parent is the term used in Scotland to refer to organisations (and individuals who work for them) who have a legal duty to respond to and support the care and protection needs of all children and young people. Their duties are laid out in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. In Scotland the definition of corporate parents and their duties are set out in legislation. We have therefore continued to use the term corporate parent in this report, given its statutory nature. However, we will be reviewing the use of the terminology going forwards.

Looked after and looked after child are the terms used in current legislation to refer to a child or young person with care and protection needs who is cared for under a formal arrangement with a local authority. Children who are looked after are either 'looked after at home' (living with a parent in their home) or 'looked after away from home', for example, by kinship carers, foster carers or in residential care. Again, the Promise highlighted that when shortened to the acronym 'LAC' this language can feel depersonalised and lead to some young people querying whether they themselves are 'lacking.' We have ensured that we do not use the acronym within this report.

Siblings is the word used in the **Children (Scotland) Act 2020** and the relevant Regulations this guidance refers to. It refers to the relationship where two or more children have one or both parents in common, or where they have lived together and have an ongoing relationship which is like this. This is also referred to in the guidance as sibling-like. The terminology of brothers and/or sisters was identified as part of the Independent Care Review as being preferable to siblings. It should also be noted however that children and young people should be asked how they wish to be referred to. They may wish to use the word sibling as a non gender-specific word.

A care leaver is a young person who ceased to be looked after on, or at any time after, their sixteenth birthday. Through recent partnership work with Who Cares? Scotland we have become aware that the term 'Care Leaver' can feel reductive to some young people, as it fails to capture the lifelong impact of having been in care. Some young care experienced people have shared the sentiment that, "We might leave care, but care doesn't leave us".

In this report we will generally refer to children and young people as "**care experienced**" unless we are using 'looked after child(ren) or 'care leaver' to identify a child or young person's legal status. 'Care experienced' is an inclusive term which many people in the care experienced community have indicated they prefer as it speaks to the diverse range of experiences and the lifelong impact of care experience.

"We use the term care experienced to include anyone who has been or is currently in care or from a looked-after background at any stage of their life, no matter how short. This care may have been provided in one of many different settings such as in residential care, foster care, kinship care or looked after at home with a supervision requirement." (**Scottish Funding Council 2019**)

As Corporate Parents in Scottish Borders we are committed to ensuring that we are embedding destigmatising language and practices across the way we work. We recognise that the use of language is constantly evolving and we will therefore strive to listen to the care experienced community, reflect on our language and adapt our practice accordingly.

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CORPORATE PARENTING IN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS

This is the seventh Scottish Borders Corporate Parenting Annual Report. The first report covered the period 2015-2016.

What is Corporate Parenting?

Responsible parents fulfil all those activities associated with bringing up children. These include providing for their basic needs, planning for the future, being a resource to turn to, providing positive experiences, hopes and dreams and acting as advocate and mentor. Their legal responsibilities include taking decisions on where children live, what education they receive and when medical treatment is required. As a corporate parent we need to know that we are making the same decisions for looked after children as we would make for our own children.

Corporate parenting is defined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and places a number of duties on public sector organisations to uphold the rights and safeguard the wellbeing of looked after children, young people and care leavers. The term refers to an organisation's performance of actions necessary to uphold the rights and secure the wellbeing of a looked after child or care leaver, through which physical, emotional, spiritual, social and educational development is promoted, from infancy through to adulthood.



Part 9 of the Act places explicit statutory duties and responsibilities on corporate parents (Section 58). These include:

- to be alert to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and young people (and those in Continuing Care and Aftercare)
- to assess the needs of those looked after children and young people for services and support it provides
- to promote the interests of looked after children and young people
- to seek to provide looked after children and young people with opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing
- working collaboratively: corporate parents must, in so far as reasonably practicable, collaborate with each other when exercising their corporate parenting responsibilities where they consider that doing so would safeguard or promote the wellbeing of children or young people to whom this Part applies (Section 60).

Other key aspects of corporate parenting duties include the duty to plan and report to the Scottish Government on how corporate parents exercise their responsibilities.

The list of who is a corporate parent was expanded under the Act. The Act names 26 public bodies but all 32 local authorities, 14 NHS Scotland Health Boards and 7 National Special Health Boards. All colleges and universities in Scotland are corporate parents in terms of the Act.



*THIS IS THE CATEGORY THAT INCLUDES ACCOUNTANT IN BANKRUPTCY; DISCLOSURE SCOTLAND; EDUCATION SCOTLAND; THE SCOTTISH PRISON SERVICE; THE SCOTTISH PUBLIC PENSIONS AGENCY; STUDENT AWARDS AGENCY FOR SCOTLAND; AND TRANSPORT SCOTLAND)

The Promise

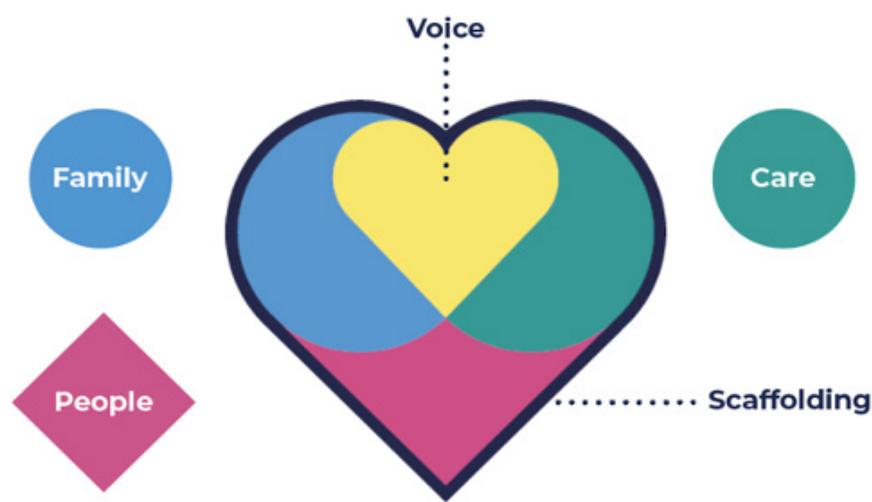
In October 2016, after meeting with, and listening to children and young people in care, Scotland's First Minister announced, "an independent, root and branch review of the care system" to look at "the underpinning legislation, practices, culture and ethos" of that system.

The Independent Care Review began its work in February 2017, concluded its research in February 2020 and produced seven reports. These cover their findings, financial implications and a 10-year plan going forward. The overall finding was that the care system was broken and required a radical change to make sure our care experienced children and young people enjoy the same opportunities and rights as every other child.



One of the reports the review produced is called 'The Promise' and sets out an overall view of what the new approach should be around 5 foundation principles they identified which are highlighted below. As a local authority and Community Planning Partnership we have been asked to sign up to the 'Promise' and the associated findings.

The review identified five foundations for change, with over 80 specific changes that must be made to transform how Scotland cares for children and families as well as the unpaid and paid workforce by 2030. These foundations must be at the heart of any re-organisation of how Scottish Border thinks, plans and prioritises for children, young people and their families.



The five foundations are:

Voice: When children speak, adults must really listen to them. Adults must make sure that children are included in decisions about their lives.

Family: If children are living with their family and are safe and feel loved, they should stay there. Their family should be given all the help they need to stay together. If they need extra help when things get difficult, they should get it.

Care: If children cannot stay with the adults in their family, they will stay with their brothers and sisters. The home they live in together will be a place where they feel safe and loved. It should be their home for as long as they want and need it to be.

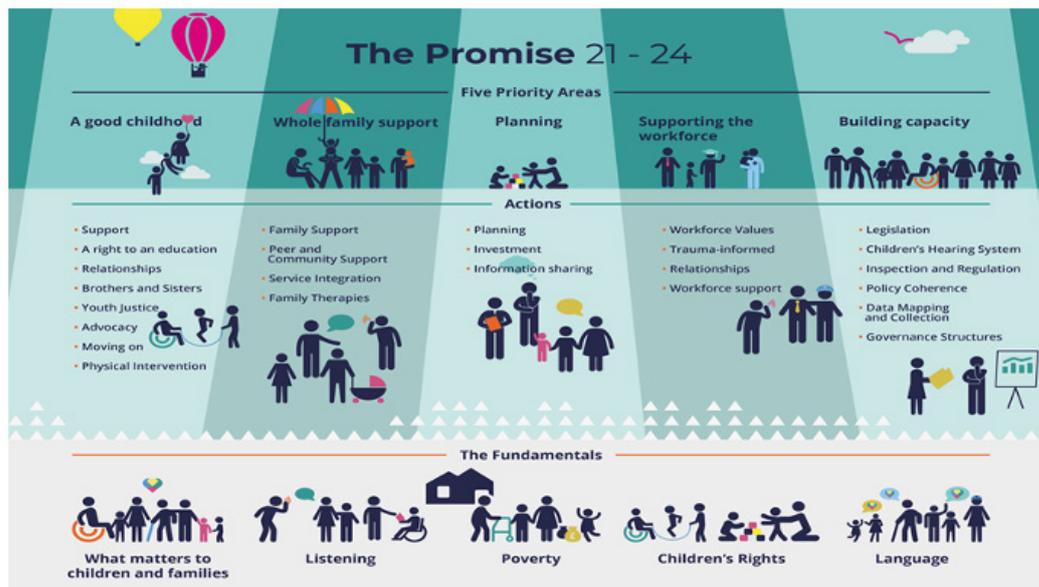
People: Relationships are important. Adults must make sure children are able to stay close to the people they want to and keep in contact with them. Adults must also help children make new relationships as they grow up. Sometimes adults need some help too. The adults who are close to children must get the help they need to make sure they can do their best for children.

Scaffolding: Help and support must be there for children and families whenever they need it. It must also be there for the adults who are close to children and families. It is important everyone knows where to go for help and that it is ready when it is asked for.

The Promise Plan 2021-2024



Work to #KeepThePromise between 2021 and 2030 will be shaped by a series of three Plans, each lasting for three years and outlining the priorities and action across that period. Each Plan will build on the progress made by the one before it to make sure transformational change happens across all the Care Review's conclusions. Taken from The Plan, this diagram highlights the time plan until 2030, and highlights we are sitting in Years 2-4 phase. By 2030 we aim for the Care Review's vision to be fully realised - that (as Scotland) we will have developed a new "business as usual" which ensures positive outcomes for all Scotland's children.



The Promise Plan 2021 – 2024 outlines Scotland's route map, providing key priorities and areas of focus under which organisations will work to achieve the required change over the next three years. This Plan is based on five priorities and rests on the foundation of five 'Fundamentals'.

The Fundamental principles of **'What matters to children and families'**, **'Listening'**, **'Poverty'**, **'Children's Rights'** and **'Language'** should be woven into the fabric of any work carried out in the five priority areas.

The five priorities are: **'A Good Childhood'**, **'Whole Family Support'**, **'Planning'**, **'Supporting the Workforce'** and **'Building Capacity'**. The Plan gives further clarity for each priority in terms of the areas that we need to look at.



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GOVERNANCE AND CORPORATE PARENTING DEVELOPMENTS APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022

Governance of Corporate Parenting in the Scottish Borders during 2021-22 has continued to be managed through the multi-agency Children and Young People's Leadership Group (chaired and co-ordinated by Scottish Borders Council), which in turn reports to the Community Planning Partnership.

The current governance structure is under review to ensure that it enables strategic leadership, monitoring and development of corporate parenting and The Promise in Scottish Borders. In Scottish Borders we are committed to ensuring that strategic planning is joined up to prevent duplication of work streams, and to ensure a more accountable and streamlined approach to children's services design, development and commissioning.

CORPORATE PARENTING OPERATIONS GROUP

Guided by the Leadership Group, the Corporate Parenting Operations Group has a key role within the Children's Services planning structure. It ensures that the particular needs of looked after children remain central to the work of other planning groups, including those developing services which work directly with looked after children, those which work with young people in Continuing Care or Aftercare, or those aiming to prevent children and young people becoming looked after. Membership of the group has developed and expanded since the list of Corporate Parents was extended in April 2015. The current membership of the Operations Group is:

- Gareth Stott (Chair) - Group Manager, Resources, Children & Families Social Work, SBC
- Cory Paterson – Lead Young Person- Champions Board*
- Sharon Johnston - Resources Team Leader, Children & Families Social Work, SBC
- Stewart Simpson - Throughcare Aftercare and Youth Justice Team Leader, Children & Families Social Work, SBC
- Hannah Hawthorn – The Promise Implementation Officer, Children and Families Social Work, SBC*

- David Kemp – Homelessness Services Manager, SBC
- Norrie Tait – CLD Youth Work Team Leader, SBC
- Scott Watson – Interim Equity and Inclusion Lead Officer- Virtual Head Teacher, SBC
- Gillian Elliott - Child Protection/Looked After Children's Nurse, NHS Borders
- Lorraine Tait – Child Protection/Looked After Children's Nurse, NHS Borders
- Rachel Pulman - Nurse Consultant Public Protection, NHS Borders
- Lizzie McLeish – Health Improvement Specialist – Children, Young People and Families, Joint Health Improvement Team, NHS Borders*
- Jan Grieve – Team Leader – School Nursing and School Immunisation Teams, NHS Borders*
- Dr Andy Gentil - Consultant Clinical Psychologist / Lead for CAMHS & Paediatric Psychology, NHS Borders*
- Jen MacKenzie – Student Services Team Lead, Borders College
- Andrea Hall – Area Manager, Skills development Scotland
- Anne Gerry, Area Support and Improvement Partner, Children's Hearings Scotland

Membership of the group has changed over this reporting period and we were delighted to welcome new members (highlighted above with an asterix). In order to ensure the group remains representative of the range of organisations and groups designated as corporate parents we continue to review our membership and liaise with our partner corporate parenting agencies.

The Corporate Parenting Operations Group met six times over the reporting period. Due to the covid pandemic, we have continued to meet virtually on Microsoft Teams. Over 2021 – 22 the Operations Group has focused primarily on implementation of the various calls to action under the Plan 21 – 24. More detail will be given below, however some of the specific themes this year have included:

- language and framing,
- participation and the development of a Champions Board approach in Scottish Borders,
- the new Brothers and Sisters project funded by the Corra Foundation,
- the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework and the introduction of Kooth and Togetherall;
- the collaborative work between SBC's education department, Skills Development Scotland and Borders College to support care experienced young people leaving school

Corporate Parenting National and Local Statistics

Looked after Children National Statistics and Trends

The Scottish Government collate statistics and data on looked after children on an annual basis. There are an estimated 5.46 million people living in Scotland (National Records of Scotland, 2019) and fewer than 1.5% of children in Scotland were being looked after by local authorities or on the child protection on 31st July 2021. In July 2021 (the latest figures available), there were an estimated 13,251 children and young people in care – this is a decrease from 14,258 in 2020.

The number of looked after children has decreased from 16,231 in 2011, and this is the lowest this figure has been since 2006.

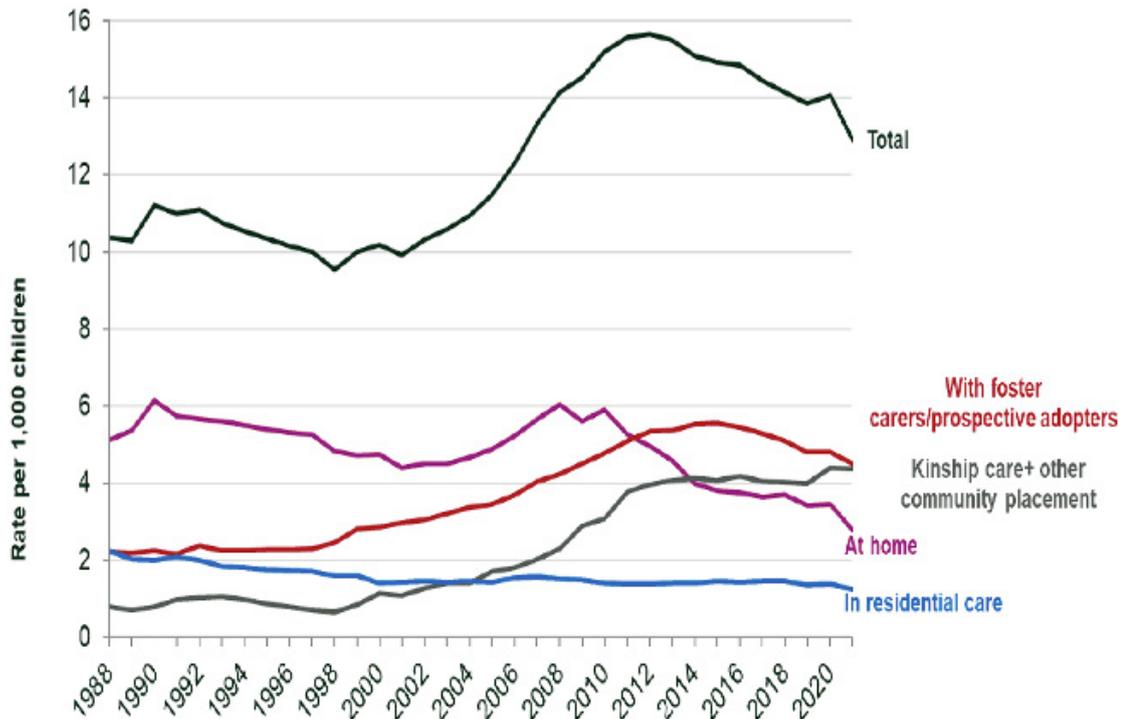
In 2021, the majority of Looked After Children (90%) were placed in the community. This included 33% of children and young people who were placed with Kinship Carers, 24% placed with Foster Carers provided by local authorities, and 22% were looked after at home. In addition to this, 10% of Looked After Children were placed with Foster Carers purchased by local authorities.

A smaller proportion of Looked After Children (10%) were placed in residential accommodation, including 4% placed in a local authority home.

Changes over time

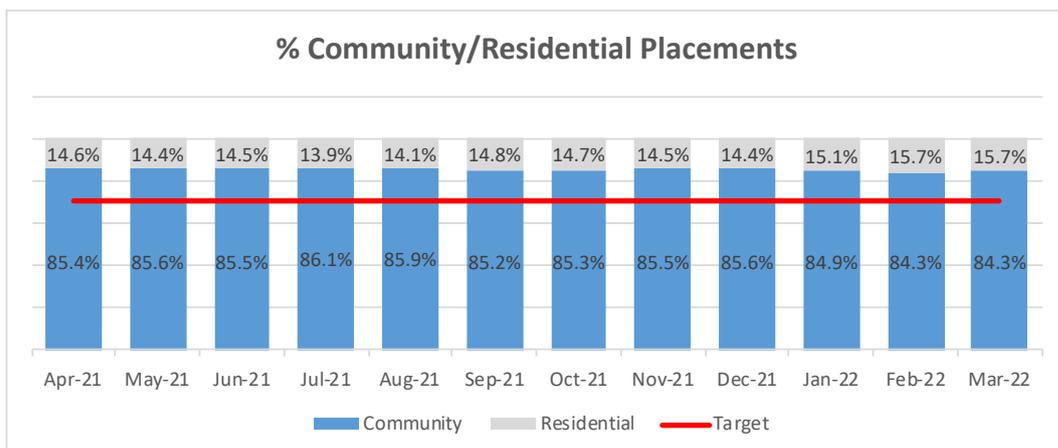
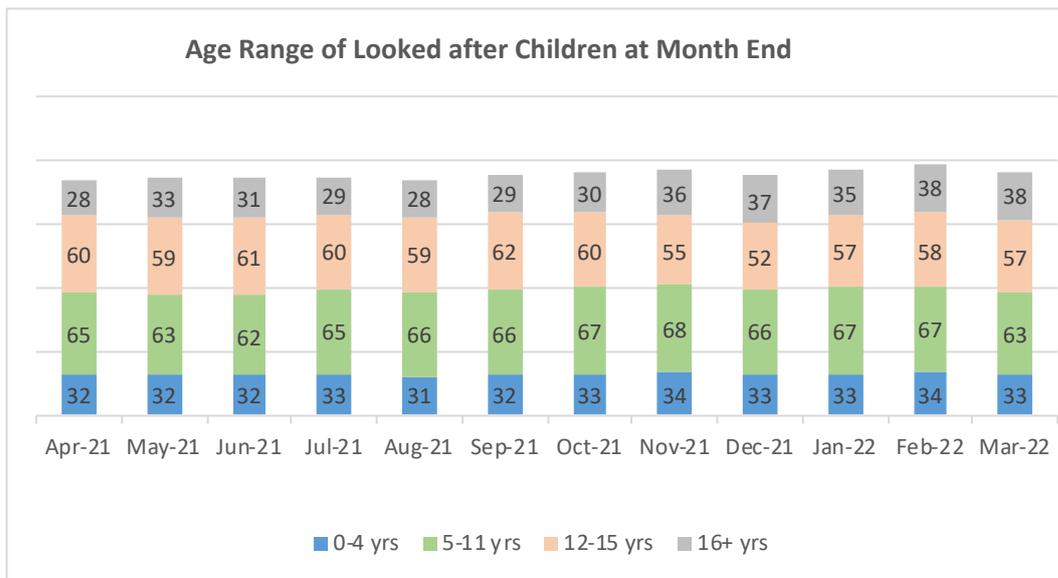
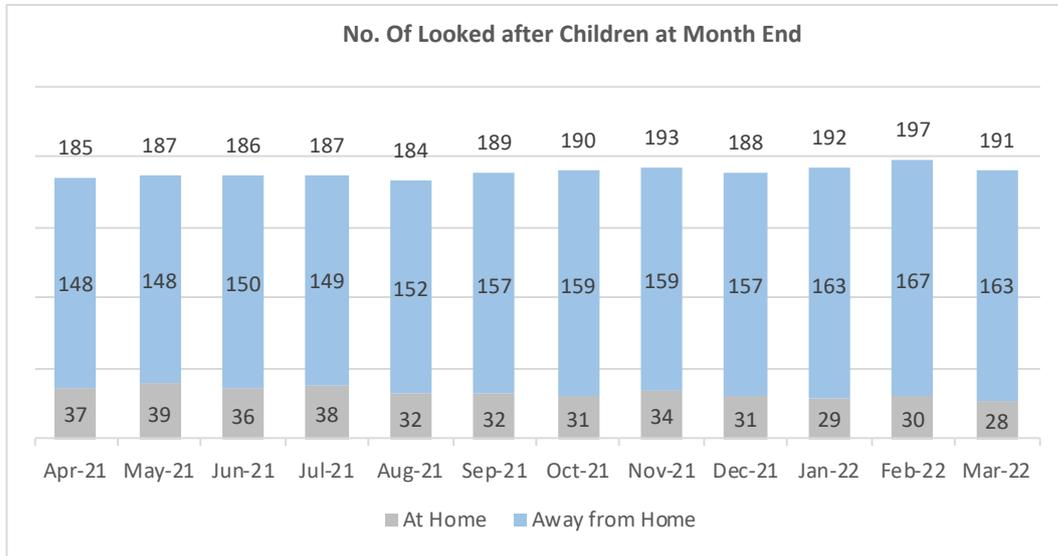
Broadly, the number of Looked After Children has declined over the past decade (Chart 1a). In 2021, the number of children placed at home with parents (2,859) was around half that of 2011 (5,476; Table 1.1). The number of looked after children placed in the community, away from home, has decreased slightly between 2011 (9,294) and 2021 (9,110).

Looked After Children per 1,000 children under 18, by type of accommodation, 1987-2021



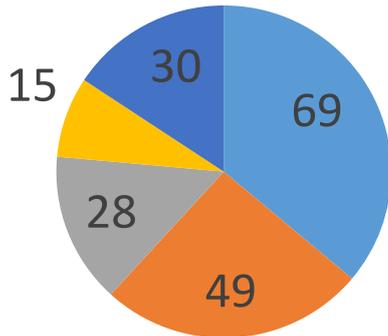
Looked After Children in Scottish Borders

The following comparative data details the number of looked after children and placement types.



Proportion of Looked After & Accommodated children (12+) in family based placements compared to those in residential placements. The target is to have at least 70% of children in community based placements.

Looked After Children Placement breakdown at Year End



Mar-22

Foster Care	69
Kinship Care	49
At Home	28
Other	15
Residential Care	30

Total Looked After Children 191

There has been an increase in the overall looked after children numbers in the Scottish Borders in 2021-22. They have increased by 13 from 178 to 191. This is a percentage increase of approximately 7%. Numbers of children in foster care placements were greater at year end than the number of children in kinship care placements, but these numbers have fluctuated throughout 2021-22. In March 2022 there were 24 young people in continuing care and 18 young people who were being supported through our aftercare service.



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ACTION PLAN AND KEY DEVELOPMENTS

COVID-19

Over 2021-22 covid-19 has continued to have a significant impact on looked after and care experienced children, young people, their families and carers – and the different corporate parenting agencies that support them. At the start of this reporting period, Scotland had been in a national lockdown since the 5th January 2021. Schools did not re-open until after the Easter break in mid-April, and children and young people on the shielding list were advised not to return to school before 26th April 2021.

THE PROMISE

As outlined above, the Scottish Borders Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-24 identified the Promise and the Plan 21-24 as providing a clear strategic direction for the development of corporate parenting in the Scottish Borders and therefore the headings of the priority areas and fundamentals have been used for reporting on Scottish Borders' progress with corporate parenting work in 2021-22. Due to the range of work being undertaken to #keepthepromise in Scottish Borders, we have not reported on all headings under each priority area of the Plan 21-24. We hope this report gives a good flavour of the important work being developed.



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THE FIVE FUNDAMENTALS

Plan 21 - 24
The Fundamentals

What matters to children and families
At all stages in the process of change, what matters to children and families must be the focus. Organisations will be able to demonstrate that they are operating from their perspective rather than the perspective internal to the 'system'.

Listening
Organisations that have responsibilities towards care experienced children and families, and those on the edge of care will be able to demonstrate that they are embedding what they have heard from children and families into the work that they are doing to #KeepThePromise.

Poverty
Scotland will have made consistent improvement in reducing poverty, in line with the definitions and targets in the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. Organisations will be able to demonstrate how they are ensuring that they play their part in mitigating the impacts of poverty.

Children's Rights
Organisations that have responsibilities towards care experienced children will be able to demonstrate that their rights under the UNCRC are being consistently upheld.

Language
Organisations that have responsibilities towards care experienced children and young people will be able to demonstrate that they are embedding destigmatising language and practices across the way they work.

'There are parts of the 'care system' that must contract, parts that must expand, some aspects that need a complete overhaul while others must be protected and preserved, with the following FIVE fundamentals embedded into all.

Whatever work organisations are doing in relation to care experienced children and families, these 5 fundamentals must form a solid core around which everything operates.' The Plan 21-24, p 12

WHAT MATTERS TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND LISTENING

In Scottish Borders we believe these two fundamentals are inextricably linked and therefore must be



Scottish Borders
Champions Board
#ListenUp



we will
#KeepThePromise

considered together. In the Summer of 2021 Scottish Borders Council appointed a Lead Young Person to develop and embed a Champions Board Approach in Scottish Borders. As this time they also secured Corra Foundation funding to create a twelve month Promise Implementation Officer post. Over the last six months with support from a small group of dedicated social work and CLD colleagues, our Lead Young Person and Promise Implementation Officer have been working together to develop and establish the Scottish Borders Champions Board.

The Champions Board is designed to provide a platform that is flexible, accessible and has young people at the forefront of any decision making. It gives a space for care experienced young people to come together and voice their views on issues they may have encountered whilst being a Looked After Young Person, and also develop stronger relationships with corporate parents. A focus on developing stronger relationships is key for any participation work, so the Champions Board workers take time to do this through fun team building activities.

The group is still early in its development and currently has a core membership of four care experienced young people aged between 15 and 20 attending weekly, with outreach work taking place with an additional two young people at this time. From January to March the group has been starting to think about Children's Rights, The Promise and Corporate Parenting, and in recent weeks has been working on designing a logo and motto. There are further plans for a monthly online group for young people aged 16+ who live out of authority. Champions Connect will aim to ensure care experienced young people who are supported by Scottish Borders Council but live outside the area have a way of keeping in touch with the Borders, and the work of the Champions Board.

It is hoped that in future years the Champions Board - and related forums - will get involved with completing the corporate parenting annual report.

In Summer 2021, Scottish Borders Council introduced a web-based communication app, Mind of My Own (MOMO) to ensure that care experienced children and young people who are receiving a service have the right and ability to express their views independently of a practitioner and/or parent/Guardian. We have contracted for both apps that Mind Of My Own offer.



The One app is MOMO's flagship App developed to help young people communicate their views in a way that suits them. Young people can create their own accounts, which can be used on any device at any time. This means that young people can use One app to say how they are feeling and what they need, in a way that suits them.

The Express App is a unique digital tool that meets the needs of those who are 'under represented', very young children or those with additional needs. Express helps children express their views, wishes and feelings in a co-designed, innovative fun digital way that's easy for workers to understand and evidence.

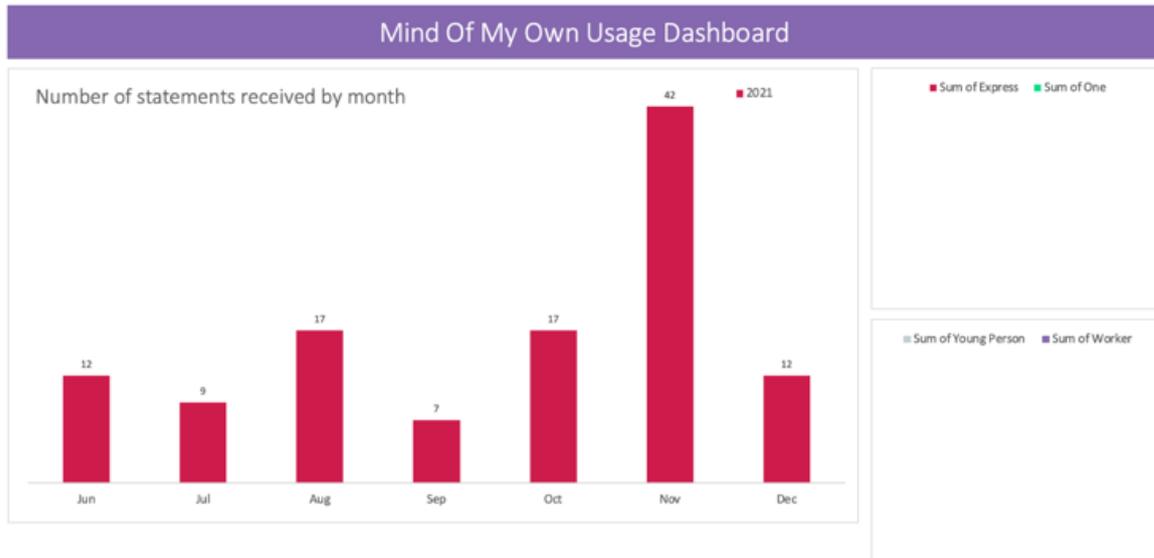


TABLE INDICATING SUM OF EXPRESS STATEMENTS RECEIVED IN 2021

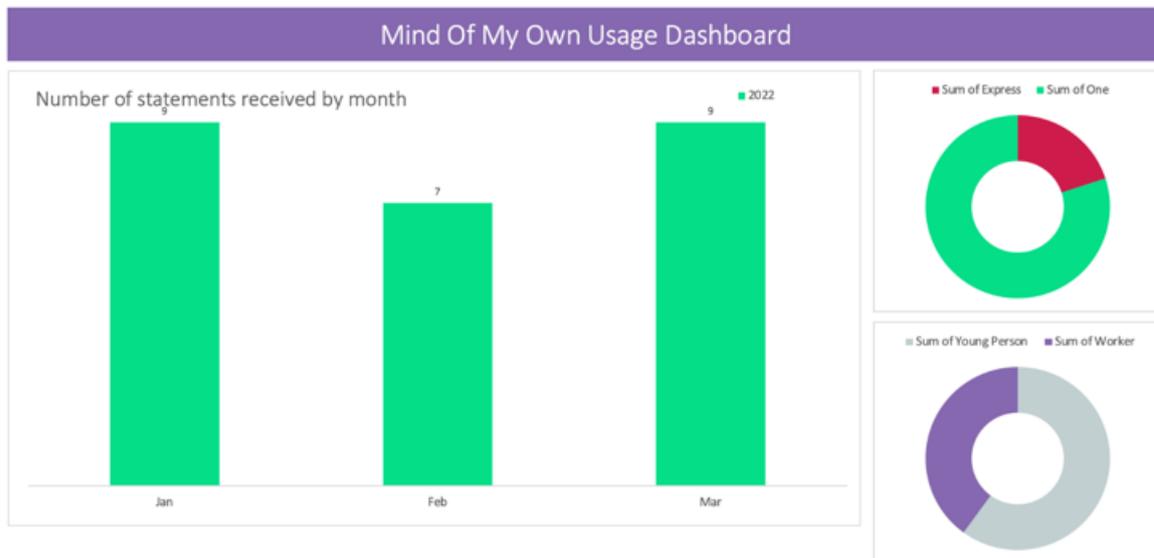


TABLE INDICATING SUM OF ONE APP STATEMENT RECEIVED IN 2022

All practitioners within children’s social work receive training to use the Mind Of My Own apps delivered by our four in-house Mind Of My Own Champions, and going forwards this training will be incorporated as part of practitioner inductions. We will also be looking at how else we can promote awareness of these apps to children and young people, and those that care for and support them.

At Borders College there is a newly established Corporate Parenting, Student Carers and Estranged Working Group to review and develop appropriate action planning. It provides

a bottom-up reporting system into the Access and Inclusion Committee and onwards to Management and Board level. This is further supported by the Student Association representative process and regular review through the Student Experience Committee where any issues or challenges are highlighted and addressed.



The Children and families Social Work Family Placement Team set up a Service Development Group which was made up of social work staff and foster carers. This built upon previous approaches to ensuring carers are actively involved in decision making and decision making within the team. Over 2021-22 the group has worked on a number of areas and was instrumental in developing and introducing the new Carers' Log Book. The Carer's Log Book enables carers to make concise daily recordings which can be used to inform current professional assessments and care planning decisions about the children and young people they care for. Additionally and importantly, the Log Book can improve a child's understanding of their time being looked after and can enhance the keeping of Memory Boxes and life story work.

As part of the commitment to listen to the voice of children, young people & families within NHS Borders Services, the Maternal & Child Health Committee (MCHC) has agreed, as part of their work plan, to focus on the implementation of the UNCRC Article 12: All children have the right to have their views heard and for them to be taken seriously. In-line with this the committee has agreed to implement Care Opinion Monkey, across Children & Young people services(link to the Care Opinion website <https://www.careopinion.org.uk/monkey>). Work has begun to identify Leads and Responders to support the implementation of this.

POVERTY

In Scottish Borders we have developed a Child Poverty Index (SB CPI) to provide additional insight into Child Poverty across the region. This work has been triggered by the Scottish Government's allocation of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) and Scottish Borders Council's Corporate Management Team's view that allocation could be improved. The SB CPI was also created to work alongside the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). SIMD provides a way of looking at deprivation in an area, covering the whole population and does not specifically reflect child poverty.

The SB CPI is a tool to help inform the Local Child Poverty Action Plan which is a requirement of the Child Poverty Act (Scotland) 2017. The SB CPI is a summary of four components which are:

- Children in Low Income Families (**CLIF**) – Source is DWP/HMRC. Relative low-income is defined as a family whose equivalised income is below 60 per cent of contemporary median income. Gross income measure is Before Housing Costs (BHC) and includes contributions from earnings, state support and pensions. The SB CPI uses the most recent available year's data, currently there is an one year lag e.g for SB CPI 2021 uses the CLIF data for 2020-21.
- Free School Meals (**FSM**) – Source is SBC. The proportion of pupils recorded for Free School Meals of all pupils in area for school year.
- Clothing Grant (**CLG**) - Source is SBC. The proportion of pupils recorded for Clothing Grant of all pupils in area for school year.
- Educational Maintenance Allowance (**EMA16+**) – Source is SBC. The proportion of pupils who are aged 16 or older (before 01 March of school year) who receive Educational Maintenance Allowance.

This table shows the results for Scottish Borders for 2017 to 2021

Child Poverty Index Component / Year	SB CPI 2017	SB CPI 2018	SB CPI 2019	SB CPI 2020	SB CPI 2021
Children in Low Income Families - CiLIF (DWP)	19.0%	20.7%	20.5%	22.0%	18.0%
Free School Meals - FSM (SBC)	10.0%	10.4%	11.6%	15.7%	15.4%
Clothing Grant - CLG (SBC)	14.6%	15.1%	15.2%	18.1%	18.0%
Educational Maintenance Allowance 16+ - EMA16+ (SBC)	8.2%	6.2%	3.8%	16.0%	10.0%

The impact of the covid-19 pandemic can be seen in both the 2020 and 2021 results. Although the proportion of children living in low income families for the 2021 index is lower compared to the 2020 index, the proportion receiving free school meals and clothing grants are similar.

The Joint Health Improvement Team leads the Financial Inclusion in Early Years Group and over 2021-22 has developed work including:

- Financial inclusion pathways from maternity and child health services
A pilot in Galashiels Health Centre where an Early Years money advisor was present during the midwifery clinic - this work has been paused due to COVID-19
- Health Visitors are now routinely asking about money worries at every contact and refer on to the SBC Financial Support and Inclusion Team where required. This work is supported by the Money Worries Leaflet (2019) which is used by Health Visitors and Midwives.
- 510 referrals to the Financial Support Team April 2021 – March 2022. Referral pathways included Financial Inclusion HV pathway, Financial Inclusion community midwifery pilot (Galashiels HC) and self-referrals. Pregnant women and families with young children witnessed benefits gains of £1.25 million
- Best Start Grants: In total from April 2021 - March 2022 1,385 Best Start and Best Foods Grants applications were made. 71% were authorised in Scottish Borders which is above the average for Scotland. Unfortunately, the data is not gathered for eligibility against applications. The April 2021 - March 2022 total claim for Scottish Borders families was £379,010.
- The 'Young Patient Family Fund' for families with children staying in hospital will reimburse travel, subsistence and some of the accommodation costs associated with visiting

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The Council, NHS Borders and their partners continue to take forward measures to improve the wellbeing of all children living in the Scottish Borders and to ensure that their rights are fully realised and protected.

With the planned incorporation of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scots Law, all corporate parenting organisations will continue to review their policies to ensure compatibility with the rights of the child; and support the development of future strategies and services which will work to further the implementation of the UNCRC for children and young people in the Scottish Borders.

You will see upon reading this report that the commitment to embedding children's rights is ongoing and underpins all developments in practice reported on.

LANGUAGE

Each and Every Child gave a presentation to the Corporate Parenting Group in January 2022. The Each and Every Child initiative aims to support people at all levels in the community to shift how they communicate when speaking about care experience, and to change how they think, feel and act. The session provides an introduction to framing and how it can improve the lives of people with lived experience of care now and in the future. It outlines the framing recommendations from the Each and Every Child toolkit with examples of how they can be used in practice.



The presentation was very well received and it was agreed that as part of the Promise work we would set up a Reframing and Language working group to explore the recommendations.

In addition, different corporate parenting agencies are also working to develop their practice around framing following the presentation. NHS Borders has membership on a multi-agency steering group that is looking at how we can use 'framing' to support a cultural shift in how we communicate when speaking about care experience. This work is supported by the 'Each and Every Child' Initiative.

In other areas of Scotland, Champions Boards have been key in developing practice around the 'Language of Care.' In Scottish Borders we want to learn from this work and hear from our own care experienced young people about what they think about the language and terminology we use. We intend to develop our own practice guidance around this important fundamental.

THE PROMISE AND CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT - NOVEMBER 2022

A GOOD CHILDHOOD

'Children who have been removed from their family of origin and live in and around the 'care system' will have a good, loving childhood.

Ensuring that children in Scotland's 'care system' feel loved, their needs are met, and their rights are upheld is a priority for 21-24. This change is urgent, it must be a focus for all organisations that have responsibility towards care experienced children and young people.'



SUPPORT

THE PLAN 21-24, P20

Covid-19 has had a significant impact on the way in which services across the whole of NHS Borders operate. With regards to care experienced children and young people this has meant implementing virtual health assessments and finding new ways of engaging with and assessing young people. Professionals have had to work in dynamic and forward thinking ways to ensure health needs of Care Experienced children and young people are best met.

In NHS Borders, the model for Health Assessments is that children and young people over the age of 5 years are seen by a school nurse and those under 5 year olds are seen by a paediatrician or Advanced Nurse practitioner. Each young person then has a health action plan devised, in agreement with the child/young people and their parent or carer.



During the Covid-19 pandemic, the usual practice of face to face health assessments temporarily ceased. These were replaced with virtual health assessments that have taken place in a variety of forms – telephone, video calls and near me/teams calls.

A core data set has been designed specifically to capture data from Health Needs Assessments in relation to health needs, outcomes and experiences of care experienced children. This was implemented in March 2022. A plan is in place for this to be audited in 6 months.

The School Nursing Service is reviewing how health needs assessments are being carried out to ensure that they continue to fulfil the national recommendations and also meet the needs and expectations of the children and young people.

Difficulties remain with children placed out of area as there is less control over when their health assessments are completed.

Areas for development in 2022-23 include; developing and embedding an effective pathway to meet the unique needs of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children and young people, including Initial Health Assessment Paperwork specifically designed to capture the unique needs and experiences of UASC.

In education, the Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP) funding through the Attainment Scotland fund is being utilised for interventions that support P7-S1 transition, mentoring, group interventions, individual wellbeing interventions and one to one support. The Virtual School Head Teacher is currently seeking out effective practice through CELCIS and colleagues in similar Local Authorities and is aiming to take a more strategic approach to maximise impact.

Schools can request support for interventions through the CECYP Fund and new procedures have been developed to support this.

Borders College established and embedded their Care Aware support service when Corporate Parenting was launched. It provides an opportunity for all Care-Experienced students (regardless of age) to a dedicated adviser who will support them with any advice/guidance they require throughout their educational journey, this includes matters relating to their wellbeing. This service is invaluable in ensuring that all students have access to the support network they need to successfully navigate their journey through further education. The College also offers' bespoke services to support health, wellbeing and development, which include a Mental Health Counselling service and specific study skills and 1-1 learning support options.

The College team also support with maximising discretionary/hardship funding to ensure that care experienced young people have access to the resources they require to sustain their education. This could include IT equipment, desks/chairs for online study, food vouchers, emergency fuel top-ups, transport costs to name a few. They also support students to access local funding grants aimed to support young people from diverse backgrounds.

The College's Borders Young Talent (BYT) project which was established in the academic year 2016-17 continues to provide mentoring support to a number of care experienced students. BYT provides opportunities for College staff to identify and assess the needs of those students who are being mentored, and ensure interventions and activities are designed to promote their wellbeing, build meta-skills and resilience. The project aims to provide a 1-1 mentoring service which will empower and support young people who need additional support with making the transition to college from school.

Over 2021-22, Scottish Borders received their first Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). These young people were referred to Scottish Borders Council through the National Transfer Scheme whereby all local authorities across Scotland receive UASC on a quota basis dependent on the size of the authority. In order to provide these young people with the care and support they need in their new homes, advice and guidance was taken from other urban local authorities with experience in this area. A close working relationship has been established with the adult Refugee Services; and, learning from our experience of caring for trafficked young people has also been invaluable. Work to develop services in this area is multi-faceted, covering areas such as types of care, culture, religion, practice, and language integration. Work is ongoing but to date has involved a variety of agencies and corporate parents – Social Work, Education, Borders College, adult services and third sector partners.

A RIGHT TO AN EDUCATION

Scottish Borders Council has partnered with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library since 2013. This scheme provides free age-appropriate books to all looked after children aged under 5 years. Over 2021-22 the scheme provided over 360 books to children placed in foster care, and kinship care across the Scottish Borders. The scheme aims to inspire a love of reading in the hearts of children everywhere by providing high quality, age appropriate books in the post, free of charge.

Many care experienced children and young people can face additional personal, social and financial barriers which can impact on their outcomes when they leave school. Their personal circumstances may mean that they go on to study, train or work at a different time in their life, or through different routes, compared to other pupils in Scotland.

The National Education Outcomes for Looked After Children, 2020 – 21 report was published in July 2022. The report includes information on the attainment and destinations of school leavers and the education outcomes and post-school destinations of 1,083 'looked after' young people between August 2020 and July 2021 who were in the 2020-21 school leaver cohort. The young people represented in the report account for 2% of the total school leavers in 2020-21.

The report shows that the education outcomes for 'looked after' young people have generally improved in recent years, however there are still gaps in attainment compared to the total population of pupils in Scotland.

38% of 'looked after' school leavers gained one or more qualifications at SCQF level 5 (the same as in 2019-20) and 86% of 'looked after' school leavers went on to a positive destination (for example college, training or employment) after leaving school (up from 80% in 2019-20).

The table below highlights that in Scottish Borders, of the 17 young people included in the snapshot, 71% were in a positive initial destination and 88% were in a positive follow up destination. This compares to 86% and 71% nationally.

Local Authority	Initial Survey		Follow - up Survey	
	Number of young people	% in a positive destination	Number of young people	% in a positive destination
Scottish Borders	17	71	17	88
Scotland	1086	86	1083	71

The national statistics also reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the experiences and outcomes of care experienced pupils. In both 2020 and 2021 the pandemic led to the cancellation of National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher exams, with grades awarded based on teacher estimates, which may have had an impact on the overall attainment of some 2020-21 school leavers. It is also likely that the pandemic will have affected the availability of certain opportunities and choices available to some school leavers due to cancellations. This may have also influenced pupils' decisions on when to leave school, for example, delaying leaving from 2019-20 to 2020-21, or leaving earlier than they had planned.

Attendance and exclusion data are reported every second year; in 2020-21, the attendance rate for 'looked after' children when schools were open was 88%, up from 87% in 2018/19. The exclusion rate for 'looked after' children was 78 per thousand 'looked after' pupils, down from 152 per thousand in 2018/19. As a result of the pandemic, new attendance and absence codes were made available to schools to enable them to record COVID-19 related absence and home learning provision more accurately. Due to the fast pace of their introduction, it is known that the use of these codes was inconsistent between different schools and local authorities, including a general under-reporting of absence from home learning. This makes it difficult to draw direct comparisons between these statistics and those previously published.

As seen in the table below, in Scottish Borders there was a gender disparity of 8% between attendance for males and attendance for females in 2020/21. This is the largest disparity in Scotland. Our Virtual School Head Teacher is currently analysing this data and reviewing what steps may need to be taken to decrease the attendance gap.

PERCENTAGE ATTENDANCE FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER WITHIN THE LAST YEAR BY LOCAL AUTHORITY AND GENDER*

Local Authority	Female	Male	Total
Scottish Borders	90	82	85

*Figures are for the local authority responsible for the looked after child, and so the data also relates to looked after children who Scottish Borders have responsibility for but who are attending school in a different authority. The figures reported for 2020/21 refer to attendance during the periods in which schools were open to all pupils.

Schools monitor and track attainment and attendance of care experienced children and young people closely. A young person who is identified as care experienced (either current or previous) is entitled to the maximum Skills Development Scotland (SDS) service offer which is a minimum of 5 coaching engagements in an academic year. Advisers work with them on a 1:1 basis over the year to provide guidance and support them to develop their Career Management Skills. Information sharing with education colleagues, enables SDS to establish who is care experienced.

Care experienced young people are discussed at regular school 14+ transition meetings by key partners – school, SDS, Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), Community Learning and Development (CLD) – to ensure they have a plan post school. Where this is not the case there is a handover between the SDS school and post school team.

The SDS Area Manager meets with the Equity and Inclusion Lead Officer, which includes the Virtual Headteacher remit, on a regular basis to discuss targeted cohort, support and 16+ data including post school intentions for care experienced school pupils and actual destinations.

The SDS Team Leader has been invited to attend the Placement Overview Group which is a multi-agency group whose remit is to review young people aged 15+ in and out of local authority placements to ensure transition planning is in place regarding care, education and future training and employment.

The Young Persons Guarantee (YPG) Partnership has been established, chaired by a senior officer from the Education Team, with an ambition of 'The opportunity of a job, placement, training or volunteering for every 16-24 year old in Scotland- based on own goals and ambitions'. The delivery plan has 4 key priorities. Priority 3 is 'Targeted support for 16-24-year-olds experiencing additional barriers' which includes a specific sub action on care experienced young people. A tracker of all statuses of 16-24-year-olds has been set up with a filter for 'care experienced' to monitor progress and sustainment.

RELATIONSHIPS

At Wheatlands, our residential children's house in Scottish Borders, the team has been developing love and relationship-based practice over 2021-22. The team endeavours to work alongside children and young people within Wheatlands and with partner organisations to support meaningful engagement in activities where love can be discussed and the meaning explored in a safe space in accordance with Scottish Borders Council policies.

Within Wheatlands, the staff have discussed how they can show young people that they are loved and respected without saying the words. The team continues to work towards developing an environment where love is an integral part of the care provided to young people, and has developed an action plan which involves some of the following:

- all young people living at Wheatlands will feel empowered on their special occasions and key workers will be aware of birthdays and special events and celebrate them appropriately, liaising with colleagues to organise celebration occasions if they are to be absent on the day;
- all young people living at Wheatlands will be encouraged to participate in offering their views with Teen Talk- a meeting/forum where young people sit with staff and give their views on the running of their home and the care that they receive. The senior team then action suggestions made by young people following Teen talk meetings and feedback to young people the outcome of their comments;

- any breakages, worn or unkempt furnishings or decorations at Wheatlands are repaired or replaced, with Senior Social Care staff regularly updating and signing off repairs. This is checked by the manager of a monthly basis.
- The young people are involved via Teen Talk meetings and open conversation with decisions regarding internal decoration, furniture and fittings. Young people decorate their own rooms with support from staff;
- Staff keep in touch with young people who have previously lived at Wheatlands and continue sending cards and vouchers on their special occasions. Young people are encouraged to get in touch when they feel support is required, and are invited back for Sunday lunch and Christmas dinners.

The importance of positive relationships for children and young people with school staff is recognised in education via the implementation of nurturing approaches in schools which began in August 2021 in Scottish Borders.

'A nurturing approach recognises that positive relationships are central to both learning and wellbeing. A key aspect of a nurturing approach is an understanding of attachment theory and how early experiences can have a significant impact on development. It recognises that all school/ELC settings staff have a role to play in establishing the positive relationships that are required to promote healthy social and emotional development and that these relationships should be reliable, predictable and consistent where possible. A nurturing approach has a key focus on the school environment and emphasises the balance between care and challenge which incorporates attunement, warmth and connection alongside structure, high expectations and a focus on achievement and attainment. It is based on the understanding of 6 Nurturing Principles which have been adapted and are outlined below:

- Children's learning is understood developmentally (NP 1)
- The environment offers a safe base (NP 2)
- The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing (NP3)
- Language is a vital means of communication (NP 4)
- All behaviour is communication (NP 5)
- Transitions are important in children and young people's lives (NP 6)

A nurturing approach can be applied at both the universal and targeted level and promotes inclusive, respectful relationships across the whole school community, including learners, staff, parents/carers and partners.'

Education Scotland and Glasgow City Council, 2017

Over the next three years training will be delivered to all school staff on nurturing approaches.

Skills Development Scotland has a national Community of Practice group with representation from the Borders team. A current focus is on relationship-based practice and discussions will be promoted in centres and teams to explore and develop over summer 2022.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS

On 26 July 2021, the law changed in Scotland as the Children (Scotland) Act 2020 and changing regulations gave new rights to siblings in Scotland. The new law emphasises the importance of ensuring brothers and sisters live together whenever possible. If brothers and sisters can't live together or near each other for reasons of safety, they must be supported to keep in touch and see each other regularly. Children's Hearings also have a new legal duty to consider sibling contact. Crucially, the new laws apply to both those who share a parent, and people who have lived together and whose relationship is like one between siblings. These changes to the law are accompanied by changes to the rules for siblings in Children's Hearings. Children and young people should now be able to have a say in their brother or sister's Children's Hearing when decisions are being made that might affect them seeing each other.

In Scottish Borders, children and families social work has a 'Brothers and Sisters' working group and has developed local guidance around this area of work with siblings. We have also received funding to create a new two year project in partnership with Children 1st which will focus on developing practice to restore and maintain loving and safe brother and sister relationships for looked after and care experienced children and young people.

Children's Hearing Scotland (CHS) has provided training for all Panel members in the changes to the legislation in July 2021. Along with the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA), CHS provided an information session on the changes in relation to children and young people attending hearings. To ensure that there is a clear understanding of focus on siblings in hearings, CHS will be working with Scottish Borders in 2022-23 to organise a multi-agency workshop focused on siblings rights in hearings.

YOUTH JUSTICE

Early and Effective Intervention considers those 16/17 year olds who have been charged with an offence, this includes any children 16/17 not on a Community Supervision Order but may still be in care under S25. Diversion to relevant supports is considered based on the seriousness of the offence and the appropriateness of diverting the young person to alternative supports including Quarriers wellbeing service, the Youth Justice team, Community Learning and Development and Skills Development Scotland.

Where the law permits, e.g. a young person is on a Community Supervision Order – remand to secure has always been considered in Scottish Borders as an alternative to custody. There are no instances where this happened in 2021-22.

A Bail Support Scheme is offered where young people appear in Court and the Youth Justice Team is alerted in advance that a young person is due to appear in court. Youth Justice and the Youth Justice Team is alerted. Bail Support aims to help young people understand their bail conditions, avoid procedural offending and remind the young person of any court dates. There are no cases of this having been requested by the Court between April 2021-22.

Work has started on developing a local Youth Justice strategy which will focus on the key strands of the new Youth Justice National Standards and the Youth Justice outcomes identified in the Plan 21-24.

ADVOCACY

To best meet the advocacy needs of children and young people in the Scottish Borders, we are aware there is a continuing need for a fully-embedded independent advocacy service for children and young people in the Scottish Borders aged 5 -26. Currently Children and Families Social Work commission a very small independent advocacy service provision for looked after children from Who Cares? Scotland.

The Borders Independent Advocacy Service (BIAS) current provides independent advocacy to children and young people involved in the Children's Hearing System. This is a statutory requirement under S.122 of the Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011. Children and families social work, SCRA and Children's Hearing Scotland are currently meeting with BIAS to promote the use of advocates for children and young people in hearings.

It is important that a culture of advocacy is created across Scottish Borders, which is reflective of both the UNCRC and the fundamentals of The Promise. To achieve this, we recognise that we must build capacity, understanding and confidence in our children and families workforce.

A small multi-agency advocacy working group is due to be set up in April 2022 to review both formal and informal advocacy needs and recommendations for Scottish Borders.

MOVING ON

The Community Learning Development Service offers targeted support to care experienced young people in the 14+ age group to help them plan a pathway which will lead to a positive destination. The service works with schools and Borders College and other educational, vocational and volunteering agencies to ensure that young people get the education that they desire and have the right to, under the UNCRC Articles 28 and 29.

Post School Careers Advisers maintain relationships and offer ongoing support to young people to ensure initial destinations after leaving school are sustained. This involves working closely with partners from education, training providers, college and social work as relevant to the young person.

Skills Development Scotland offers an all-age career guidance service through centres in Hawick and Galashiels as well as outreach across the authority. The post school targeted offer 'Next Steps' provides enhanced coaching support for young people aged 16-18.5 years old who have left school and not yet transitioned into further education, training or employment. Taking in to account the challenges of a care experienced young person's journey this is extended up to their 26th birthday.

There is an SDS Careers Adviser based in Borders College who has been working closely with the college's care experienced lead. In the reporting period, all care experienced students have been offered a careers guidance interview as well as employability support including help with completing application forms.

Team Leaders from SDS, Social Work and Social Security Scotland held a networking event in March 2022 to look at the team around the transition and re-establish and strengthen links between local teams. Feedback from practitioners at the event was very positive.

There is a commitment in SDS's new Corporate Parenting Plan 2021-24 for National Training Provider colleagues to continue to work to increase participation of those with care experience in work-based learning programmes.

A Housing Options Protocol (HOP) is in place in Scottish Borders which involves partnership working between the Homelessness Service, the Throughcare Aftercare service and Registered Social Landlords to ensure a clear housing pathway for those about to leave care. A planned transition takes place to either the young person's own tenancy or supported accommodation available within the local area.

Work is ongoing to enhance this protocol by formalising a case conferencing process for those who have already left care but have yet to reach 26. The aim of this is to avoid where possible care leavers up to 26 presenting as Homeless - or where they do, being provided accommodation based on an understanding of their support needs.

Approximately a third of the young people being supported by the Throughcare Aftercare service at end of March 2022 (24) were young people who were receiving Continuing Care. Welfare Assessments are undertaken by the Throughcare Aftercare Team staff prior to a young person entering Continuing Care and at the point where Continuing Care ends. This seeks to ensure an individual's needs are clearly assessed and met. Welfare Assessments are also carried out for each care leaver who wishes to re-engage with the team for support up to the age of 26.

PHYSICAL INTERVENTION

The physical intervention policy at Wheatlands has recently been updated and training has been provided to staff. It is well documented that in recent years incidents of restraining young people have reduced dramatically at Wheatlands. There are only two recorded incidents of children and young people requiring to be restrained since 2018 and both these incidents were noted as low level, such as turning and guiding. A number of factors are considered to have contributed to this reduction:

- A stable and long standing residential care staff group who are well supported through supervision, training and competitive contractual benefits;
- A staff group that is committed to creating a safe, warm and comfortable environment where children and young people feel included;
- Structured and planned moves to Wheatlands for young people which take 2-4 weeks and ensure that young people are introduced to each other slowly, allowing new young people to adjust to their new surroundings which in turn alleviates anxieties.



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WHOLE FAMILY SUPPORT

'All families need support at different times of their lives and family support is a crucial emphasis for 21-24. The United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises family as the fundamental group in society and the natural environment for growth and wellbeing. Supporting families is a children's rights imperative.

'Families' means all families including families of origin, kinship, foster and adoptive families. Support will not be predicated on the setting of care.

Supporting families to stay together and thrive was an imperative before the pandemic and is of even greater import now.' **The Plan 21-24, p24**

Whole Family Support is a priority area which we will be focusing on in Scottish Borders in 2022/23. Some of the key areas of development in 2021/22 include the following examples.

Support for kinship carers has been developed and improved over 2021-22. All kinship carers are now allocated a specific Supervising Social Worker who ensures they are receiving the support they need in their role. Support covers a variety of areas from procedural and financial advice and guidance to emotional support and signposting to other support agencies. The Family Placement Team has produced and published a Kinship Carer Support Statement which details the support, advice and guidance a kinship carer can expect to receive.



The Family Placement Team developed an Adopters Handbook in 2021. The handbook covers a variety of areas that inform adopters of the formal adoption process; the matching and linking of children; contact issues for adopted children with their birth-families; and, the on-going support they will receive once a child has been placed with them. The document is intended to be both a comprehensive guide to adoption and also a reminder of the support available from Scottish Borders Council and other support agencies. The Adopters Handbook is currently being formatted before being distributed to existing and prospective adopters.

A Family Group Decision Making service was launched for families in Scottish Borders in July 2021, delivered by Children 1st and funded by SBC. There are currently three possible referral pathways into the service. FGDM can be offered to families where;

- children are on the cusp of care,
- support is needed to plan for children's rehabilitation home;
- there has been a new child protection referral for one of the children

Children 1st received support from the Promise fund to test out the third referral pathway.

To date there have been 24 referrals involving 36 children across the 3 referrals routes, and Children 1st has completed 10 pieces of FGDM work. The cusp of care route has had the most referrals, and Children 1st continue to work in partnership with Scottish Borders Council to develop the other referral pathways.

Working alongside families and professionals, Children 1st has:

- facilitated 6 family meetings (involving 6 children),
- supported a family to create a Family Plan without a meeting,
- completed significant pieces of work with 3 families which didn't result in family meetings,
- facilitated 2 family review meetings.

There have been seven referrals where families have opted not to engage with the service, circumstances have changed or the referring social worker has withdrawn the referral. Some of these referrals will be reviewed going forwards to see if the FGDM service can still have a role to support.

Children 1st continues to work with 13 families. For the 10 families where FGDM work has been completed, the service supported; 2 children to maintain a kinship placement where there was a risk of breakdown, 4 children who were on the edge of care to remain at home, 2 children to make plans for contact. 1 child was accommodated into foster care after a FGDM meeting.

Over the last 6 months Children 1st has provided scaffolding to SBC children and families practitioners through the delivery of short presentations on the FGDM model and the referral pathways. Children 1st has also been inducting, training, and supporting their own staff to develop their skills as FGDM coordinators.

As part of their evaluation process Children 1st has incorporated in depth feedback from children and their families about what the FGDM experience meant for them, and what impact it had within their family. They also consulted with social workers to find out what impact FGDM had on their perceptions of the family, and how the process supported their workload. One social worker shared the following views about the process:

'It was a helpful way of reducing the perceived unequal power dynamics that often exist between family and social worker. The meeting was very child focussed, allowing the child to feel important and listened to (he wore a suit!). The plan they came up with was very specific to how they functioned together and was unique to their circumstances. Statutory plans are often more generic and centre on the concerns of professionals. The family were more engaged in the process than a normal statutory meeting and had ownership of the meeting and plan.'

Another worker shared their views on the impact of FGDM work on their relationship with the family: 'I had a better understanding of the family and the family dynamics, plus what the culture of the family was which was really helpful and I wouldn't necessarily have known as much about this without the FGDM process.'

The Parental Employability Service (PES) and the Intensive Family Support Service (IFSS) sit within the Community Learning and Development Service at Scottish Borders Council. The aim of the PES is to increase household income. The team do this by providing help, support and advice to parents and carers to help make positive changes in their lives through learning, training, employment, education or volunteering. The PES team works in partnership with other services and organisations to ensure that parents have access to a wide range of opportunities. The Community Learning and Development Service also provides intensive family support (where required) for families who have multiple barriers to employment.

Borders College has in place processes to allow them to offer care experienced students the opportunity to be assessed from the application stage to determine individual pastoral and/or learning support requirements. The College offers visits to campus, where appropriate, so they can put in place the required support for care experienced students prior to them commencing their chosen course of study. This includes discussions around finances to ensure students are maximising what they are entitled to, providing assistive technologies, digital devices and transport where required.

One care experienced young person shared the following feedback:

'I was very lucky to have individuals that communicated with all services involved in my care and develop a plan to support myself whilst knowing my needs and my downfalls and when to exercise "harsh love" to help me achieve my personal goals without procrastinating.'

Schools are improving their family learning offers through Scottish Borders Council's Partnership with Parents Framework. This framework provides clear guidance for each learning establishment or community to improve their work with parents and carers to meet the needs of all children and young people; whilst allowing flexibility to develop practice that is responsive to their own unique context. There has been a significant national drive in developing the collective capacity to improve carer and parental involvement in the life of the school and engagement in learning. In the Scottish Borders we are committed to maximising these approaches to improve attainment, inclusion, achievement, and progress for all.



The Raising Children with Confidence (RCWC) and Raising Teens with Confidence (RTWC) courses continue to be delivered by schools to parents, carers and families. RCWC is an affirming course which pulls together many of the latest findings and evidence from research to explain what influences children's emotional wellbeing and why what parents and carers do makes such a difference. It recognises the uniqueness of every family and brings parents and carers together to reflect on their experiences of family life. Raising Teens with Confidence aims to give parents and carers increased understanding about how they can best support their teenage children to navigate this time of change and help promote resilience. Drawing on the latest research in teenage brain development and mental and emotional wellbeing the course gives parents and carers the opportunity to explore together how the teenage years can be a time for the whole family to 'thrive rather than just survive!' (Siegel 2014)

At Borders College all policies and procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that they do not create barriers to learning, and through the equalities impact assessment procedure they consider the effects of being Care Experienced alongside the other formal characteristics.

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PLANNING AND BUILDING CAPACITY

‘There needs to be a different approach to investment and planning. National partners have a significant role to play in ensuring a new context for funding, investment and planning. The one year grant has been used to employ a Promise Implementation Officer whose role involves supporting the Council and partner agencies to implement the recommendations from the Promise and the **Plan 21-24**. The post is managed by the Corporate Parenting Operations Group Chair. Although sitting within Scottish Borders Council, partnership work and co-production with children, young people and families, other corporate parents and relevant third sector agencies is integral to the post.

‘Over the next 3 years, there will be a focus on work that ensures that the structural underpinning of the ‘care system’ is orientated to the needs of children and families. This work to build capacity and coherence reflects the planned obsolescence of The Promise

Scotland. It will not always be there to provide oversight and accountability and the structures need to move to ensure that the scaffolding around the ‘care system’ facilitates and upholds children’s rights.’
Plan 21-24, p34

In Scottish Borders we are starting to consider these two priority areas together. A number of calls to action under the ‘Building Capacity’ and ‘Planning’ priority area will be introduced at a national level initially and will be reported on once they reach the local implementation stage, e.g. incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law.



PLANNING

In 2021 Scottish Borders Council was successful in securing funding from The Promise Partnership on behalf of the Scottish Government for implementing the Promise. The one year grant has been used to employ a Promise Implementation Officer whose role involves the recommendations from the Promise and the Five Foundations to be progressed and implemented across the Council and with partner agencies. The post is managed by the Corporate Parenting Operations Group Chair and works in partnership with children, young people and their families and, across council services (primarily Social Work, Education, Community Learning and Development and Housing / Homelessness but with a council wide remit). Although sitting within Scottish Borders Council, partnership work and co-production with children, young people and families and other corporate parents and relevant third sector / voluntary agencies is integral to the post.

The Promise Implementation Officer works very closely with our modern apprentice who is the Lead Young Person – Champions Board and who is managed by a colleague in the Community Learning and Development Service:

'Being a care experienced young person myself, I understand how important it is for young people to have a voice and be heard. The decisions we make as corporate parents can have a massive effect on young people's lives which is why it is so important to understand the responsibility that brings and get it right.

The need for a Champions Board here in the Scottish Borders has never been more apparent, which is why my modern apprenticeship post was created to lead and assist in developing and supporting the Board.'

GOVERNANCE

As outlined earlier in the report the current governance structure for children's services planning and Integrated Children's Plan does not facilitate nor enable strategic leadership, monitoring and development of corporate parenting and The Promise in Scottish Borders. There is agreement that strategic planning could be more joined up to prevent duplication of work streams, and ensure a more accountable and streamlined approach to children's services design, development and commissioning. This is something which is currently being reviewed with the Children and Young People's Leadership Group.

INFORMATION SHARING

The benefit of data sharing agreements between relevant corporate parents is well recognised in Scottish Borders and Scottish Borders Council has data sharing agreements in place with NHS Borders, Borders College and Skills Development Scotland to ensure we are able to work collaboratively in supporting care experienced children, young people and their families.

THE PROMISE AND CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT - NOVEMBER 2022

SUPPORTING THE WORKFORCE

'Children experience the 'care system' through people. Over **Plan 21-24**, support for people who care and continue to care if times get tough, will improve. There will be consistency of approach, values and understanding across Scotland's workforce.' The **Plan 21-24**, p 27



TRAUMA-INFORMED

NHS Boards have been funded to recruit a Transforming Psychological Trauma Implementation Coordinator (TPTIC) and more recently funding has been made available to Councils via Cosla to promote developing a trauma informed workforce.

As part of this work, local Trauma Champions are being identified across NHS Borders and Scottish Borders Council. Plans are also being developed to establish a joint SBC, NHSB and third sector steering group to help drive forward this agenda and promote trauma informed practice within local services for all children, young people, adults and older adults with lived experience of psychological trauma.

Going forwards we need to ensure understanding of the National Trauma Framework and development of local training plans in accordance with the National Trauma Training Plan at all levels across statutory and third sector organisations in Scottish Borders, aligning these with both local and national priorities.

Social work teams are currently receiving level three trauma enhanced training delivered by Epione Training. There are plans to develop a 'training for trainers' model to support the implementation of this training locally. All school staff are currently receiving training in Nurturing Approaches. Over the next 3 years, school staff will receive training on 2 of the 6 nurturing approaches each year. Children's Hearing Scotland is working to ensure their approach is trauma-informed, and training is being developed for all Panel members.

To date within NHS Borders, 60 practitioners across school nursing, health visiting, Joint Health Improvement and dietetic services have completed enhanced skill training in trauma informed practice.

ONGOING RELATIONSHIPS

Borders College has established and embedded a Care Aware support service, which provides an opportunity for all Care-Experienced students (regardless of age) to meet with a dedicated adviser who will support them with any advice/guidance they require throughout their educational journey with Borders College, this includes matters relating to their wellbeing. This service is invaluable for some care experienced students who do not have that support network. At the college there is a single point of contact for care-experienced students and Corporate Parenting; this has allowed the college to ensure we have key networks in place to support the wellbeing of care experienced students.

Please see 'relationships' above for more information about the important work being undertaken at Wheatlands around love and ongoing relationships.

WORKFORCE SUPPORT

The first commitment in Skills Development Scotland's Corporate Parent Plan 2021-24 is to 'Help colleagues understand how to be a good corporate parent in practice'. To keep this commitment there are actions around reviewing training materials, sharing case studies of good practice and continuing to develop and support the SDS Care Experience Community of Practice.

The local SDS team has a Care Experienced Champion. She facilitates team reflective practice and at the forthcoming team day has a session dedicated to the service's role as a corporate parent with time to reflect on The Promise, review SDS' new plan and the 5 commitments and challenge the team to think about what more we could do. There is also a companywide Corporate Parenting Yammer group set up and the Champion shares content, best practice and resources with the local team.

A group of Corporate Parents in the Scottish Borders are working on a collaborative project to create multi-agency online live and e-learning corporate parenting training. The group consists of representatives from Scottish Borders Council, the lead young person for the Scottish Borders Champions Board, Skills Development Scotland, NHS Borders and Borders College.

The group are currently reviewing initial content provided by Who Cares? Scotland, which speaks to the national picture with a view to tailoring this in a way which captures the unique story of Corporate Parenting in the Borders. Who Cares? Scotland are early adopters of the Each and Every Child Framing Recommendations, and the language in the training materials carefully reflects this. The working group hopes in future to include local voices and perspectives, with content shaped by members of their recently established Champions Board.

"With it being two years since the Promise was published, awareness raising of corporate parenting responsibilities has never been more important. As lead young person for the Champions Board here in the Scottish Borders, I have been working alongside corporate parents in partnership with Who Cares? Scotland to develop local training. I am committed to ensuring that young people's voices are at the heart of this project from beginning to end. It has been a really positive experience and I am looking forward to the up and coming roll-out later this spring."

Cory Paterson, Lead Young Person for the Scottish Borders Champions Board

Awareness of the Promise and the Champions Board continues to be promoted through online presentations to inter-agency colleagues, multi-agency strategic groups and external partners. Presentations are adapted and tailored depending on the needs of the particular group.

The Community Learning and Development Service has recently employed a professional Mental Health practitioner who works with individual young people and also gives support and supervision to staff involved in complex family work.



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FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS 2022-2023

The Corporate Parenting agenda in the Scottish Borders over 2022-23 will build upon the considerable progress in implementing the Scottish Borders Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-24 and The Promise over 2021-22. The Promise has provided fresh impetus for corporate parents to transform support and services to care experienced children, young people and their families and 2021-22 has seen progress made in implementing the key messages and calls for action detailed in The Promise across corporate parenting agencies. Developments in 2022-23 will build upon the progress made this year and will include the following:

- Transformational change to early intervention services in the Scottish Borders (supported by the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund)
- Continued development of the Champions Board and participation initiatives across corporate parenting agencies
- Changes in corporate governance structures to better manage the delivery of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-24 and The Promise.
- Development of a specific mentoring project within schools for care experienced children and young people
- Commissioning of an Independent Advocacy Service
- Continuation of training and awareness raising across agencies in relation to Corporate Parenting and The Promise

Hannah Hawthorn
Promise Implementation Officer
16/11/2022

Gareth Stott
Chair of Scottish Borders Corporate Parenting Operational Group
16/11/2022



APPENDIX 1



CORPORATE PARENTING

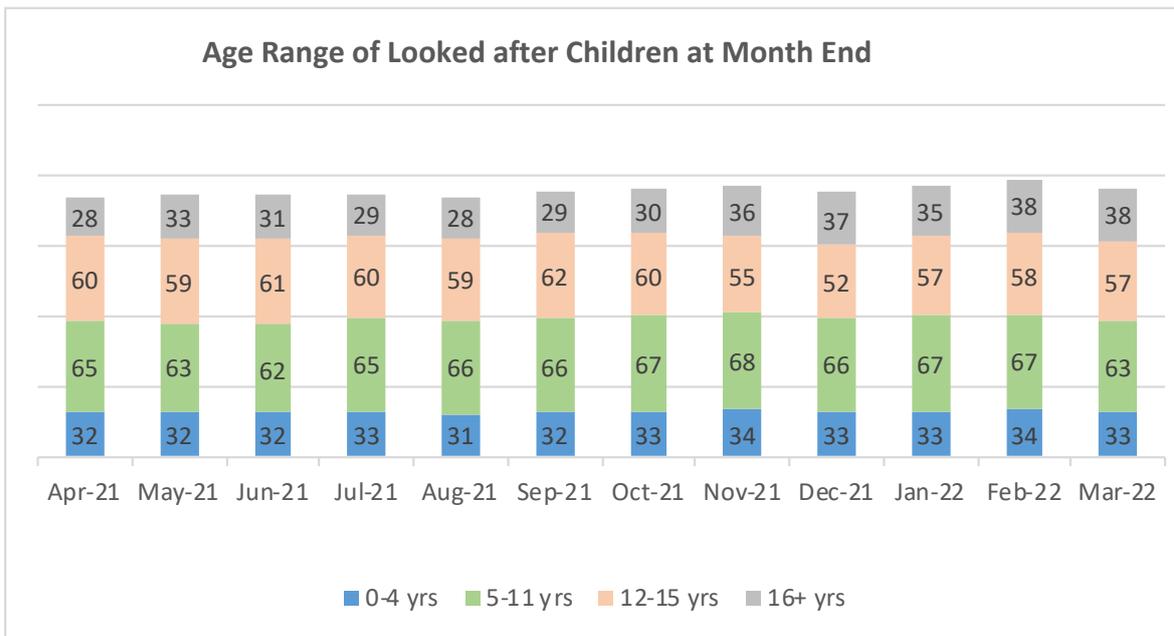
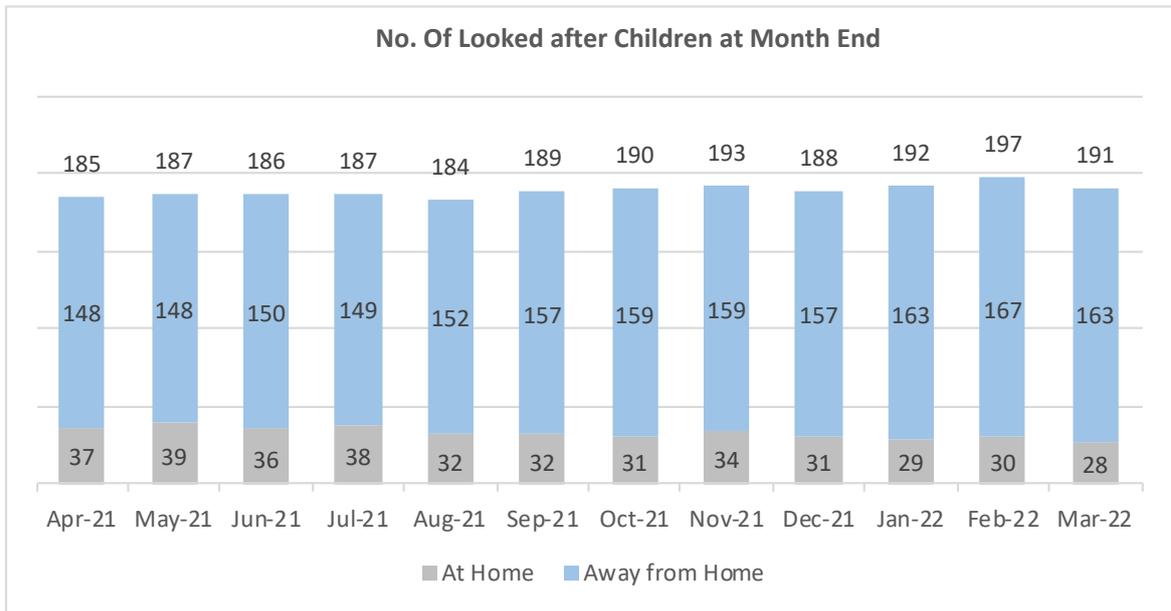
MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/21

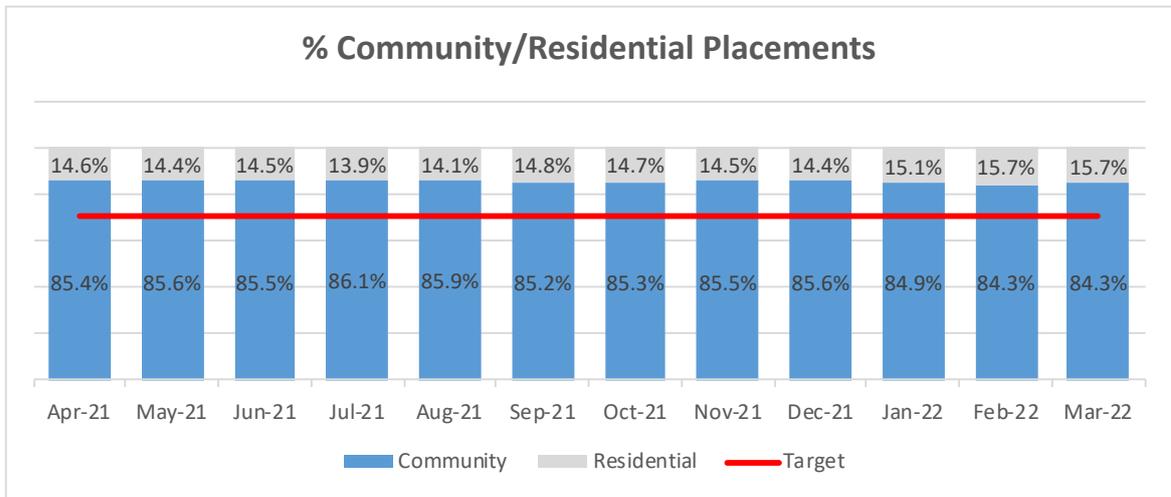
(SW DATA COVERING 01.04.21 – 31.03.22)

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Attendance and Absence	52
Exclusions	53
Attainment and Positive Destinations	55
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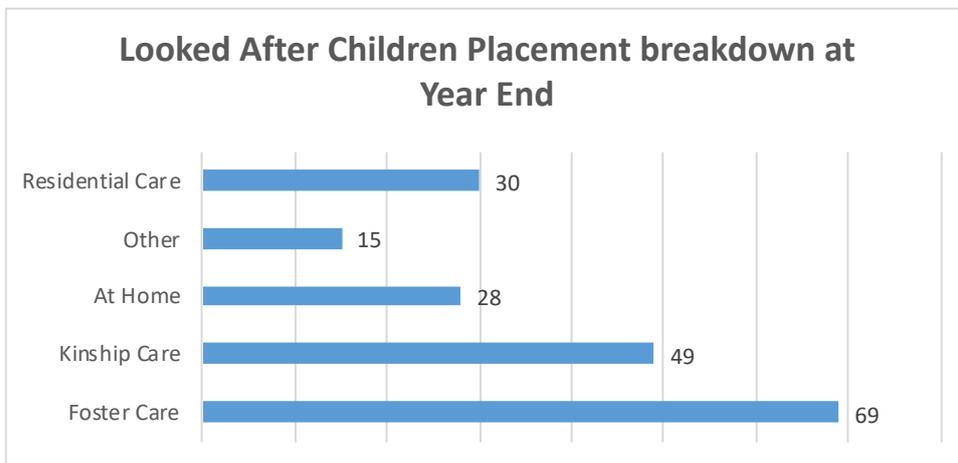
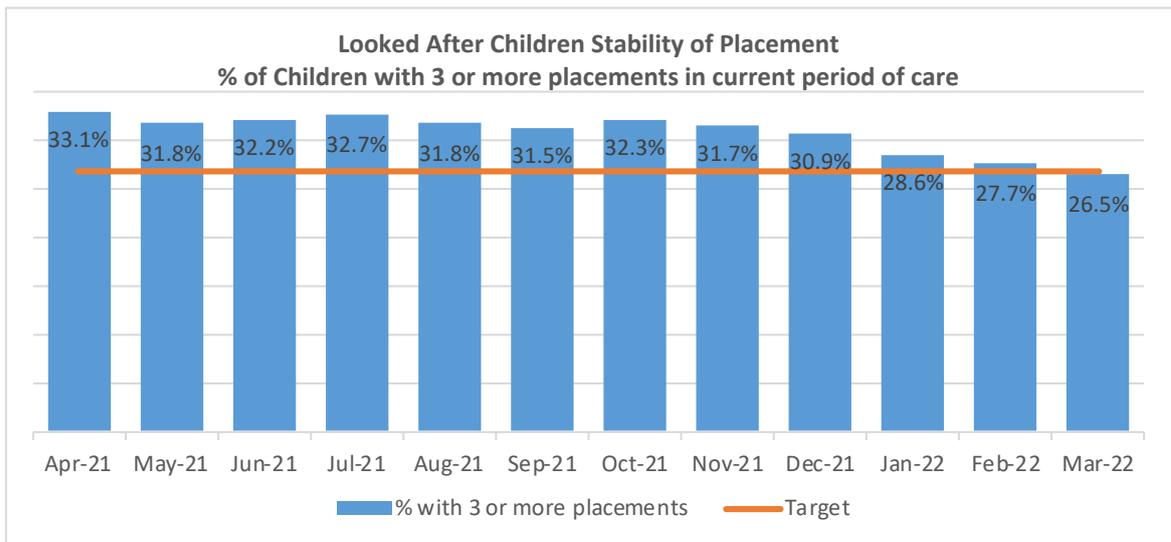
CY&P LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN INFORMATION



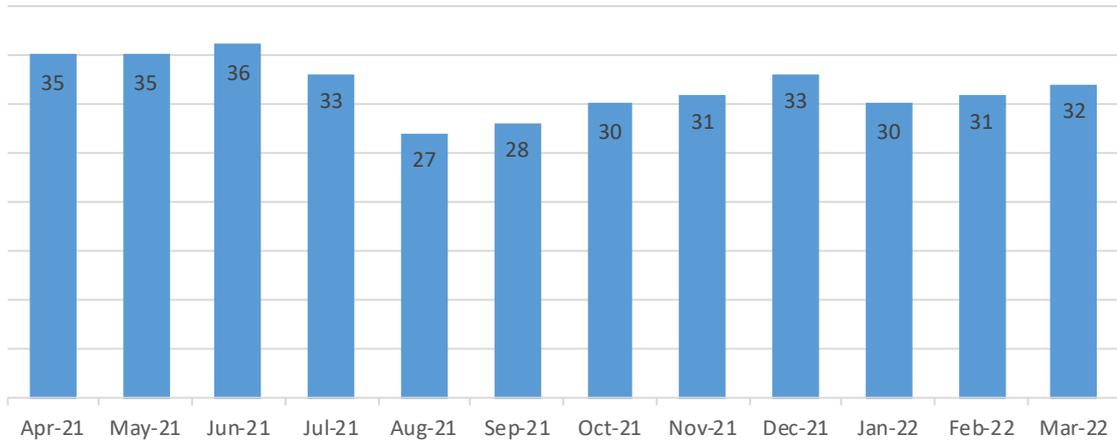
LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN PLACEMENT INFORMATION



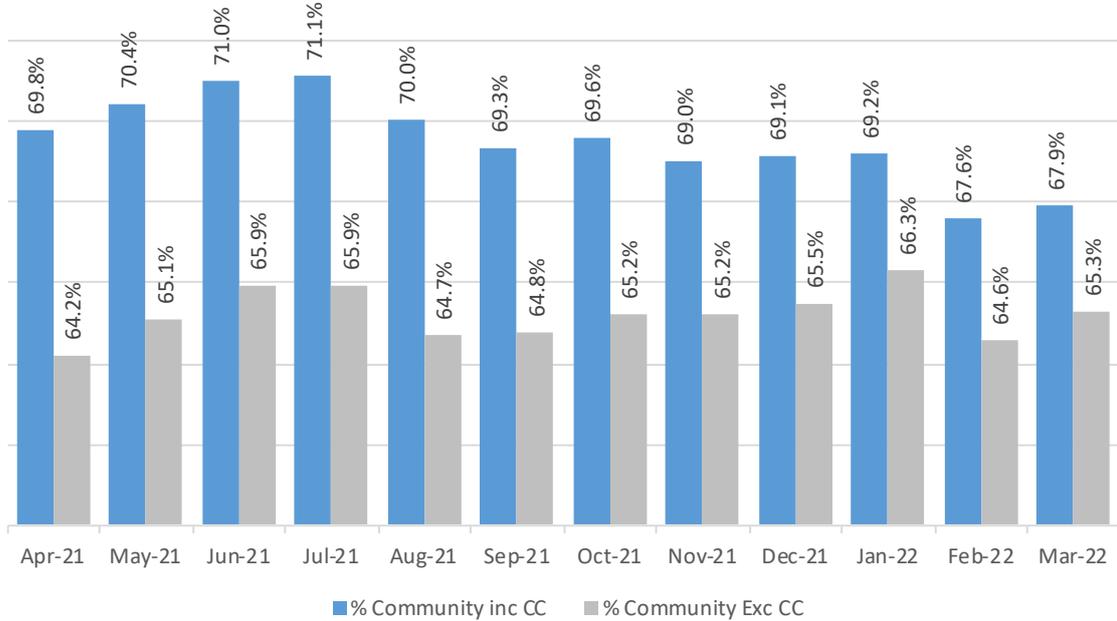
Proportion of Looked After & Accommodated children (12+) in family based placements compared to those in residential placements. The target is to have at least 70% of children in community based placements.



Average Length of Time (In Months) in Residential School Placements



Looked After Children 12+ - % Community Placements with Continuing Care



MONITOR OF S31 REVIEWS

The following data shows the number of Looked After Child reviews undertaken in each month along with the average number of months since the previous review.

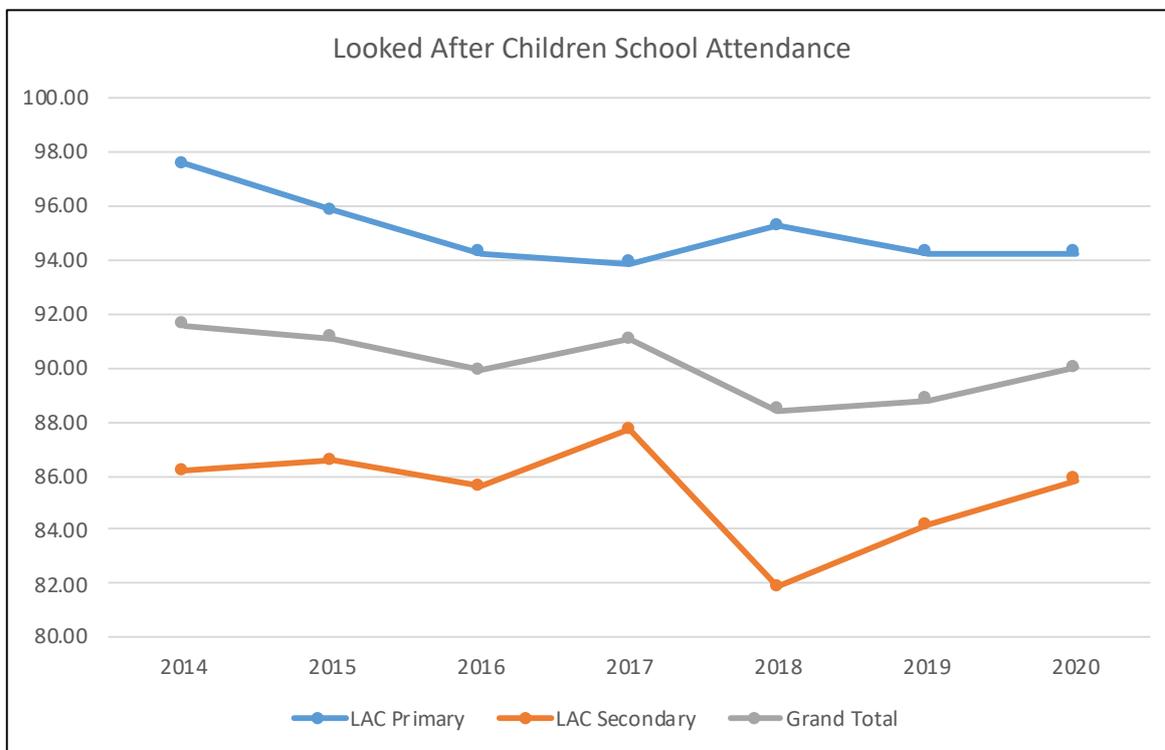
		NO. MONTHS BETWEEN REVIEWS (Average)							
		AT HOME		AWAY FROM HOME		OTHER		ALL	
		No. Reviews	Months Between	No. Reviews	Months Between	No. Reviews	Months Between	No. Reviews	Months Between
Apr-21		13	5.17	10	4.05	0	0.00	23	4.68
May-21		15	3.61	10	3.34	0	0.00	25	3.51
Jun-21		25	4.29	31	4.40	2	0.00	56	4.35
Jul-21		10	3.47	10	4.08	0	0.00	20	3.77
Aug-21		6	2.72	19	4.44	0	0.00	25	4.03
Sep-21		23	3.82	27	4.44	0	0.00	50	4.16
Oct-21		14	2.17	17	4.35	1	7.07	32	3.48
Nov-21		18	3.50	23	3.19	0	0.00	41	3.33
Dec-21		11	5.52	19	4.45	0	0.00	30	4.84
Jan-22		6	2.66	10	3.59	0	0.00	16	3.24
Feb-22		11	2.60	23	3.75	0	0.00	34	3.38
Mar-22		8	3.47	15	2.90	0	0.00	23	3.10
.....		3.71	3.98	7.07	375	3.88

Looked After Children at Home	Looked After Children Away from Home	Looked After Children Other
Home with Parents Kinship Care With friends/relatives	Local authority Home (Wheatlands) Other Residential Placement Residential School Secure Accommodation With foster carers provided by Local Authority With foster carers purchased by Local Authority With prospective adopters	Continuing Care Respite (Aberlour) Short Breaks Carers

Attendance and Absence

Academic Year 2020 (01.08.2020 – 31.07.2021)

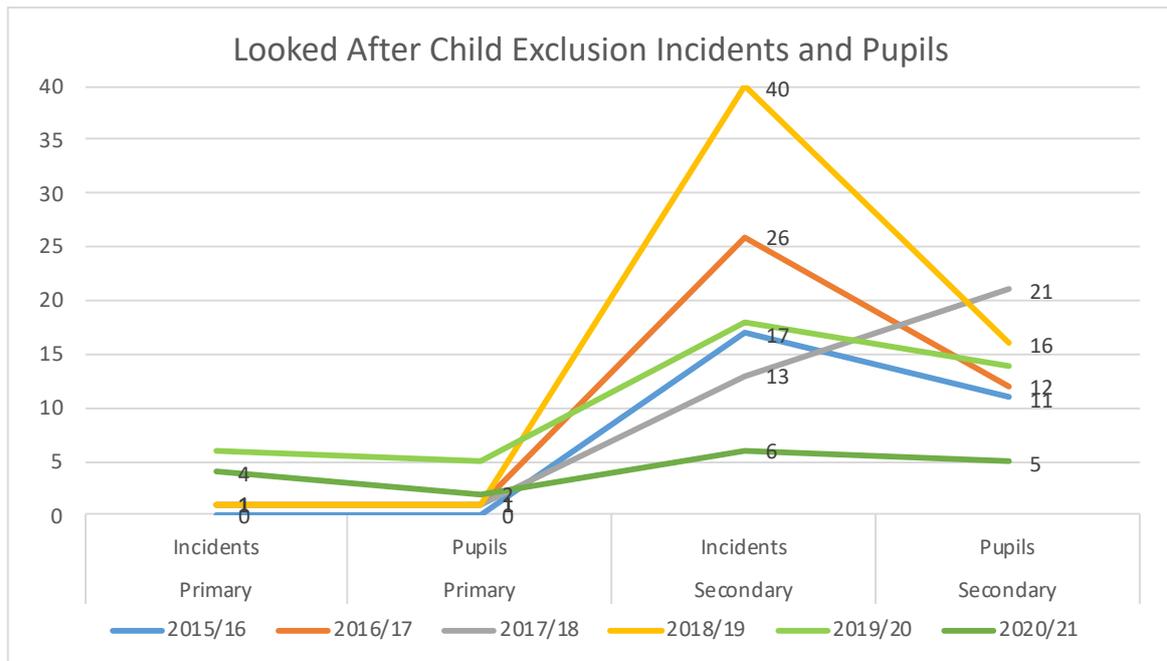
Attendance



Type	Looked After Description	% Attendance	% Authorised Absence	% Unauthorised Absence	% Exclusions	% Absence
Nursery	Away	93.42%	5.06%	1.52%	0.00%	6.58%
	Home	97.98%	0.93%	1.09%	0.00%	2.02%
	Previously	88.05%	9.70%	2.25%	0.00%	11.95%
Nursery Total		92.34%	5.97%	1.69%	0.00%	7.66%
Primary	Away	96.88%	2.41%	0.65%	0.06%	3.12%
	Home	94.64%	3.62%	1.74%	0.00%	5.36%
	Previously	91.36%	4.31%	4.33%	0.00%	8.64%
Primary Total		94.26%	3.38%	2.33%	3.00%	8.71%
Secondary	Away	92.49%	5.55%	1.96%	0.00%	7.51%
	Home	68.19%	11.29%	20.52%	0.00%	31.81%
	Previously	85.16%	8.36%	6.38%	0.10%	14.84%
Secondary Total		85.83%	7.57%	6.55%	0.04%	14.16%
Grand Total		89.99%	5.58%	4.39%	0.03%	10.00%

EXCLUSIONS

Type	Looked After Description	Number of Individuals	Individuals Excluded	Exclusion Incidents
Primary	Away	77	2	4
	Home	23	0	0
	Previously	65	0	0
Primary Total		165	2	4
Secondary	Away	80	0	0
	Home	29	0	0
	Previously	75	5	6
Secondary Total		184	5	6
Grand Total		349	7	10

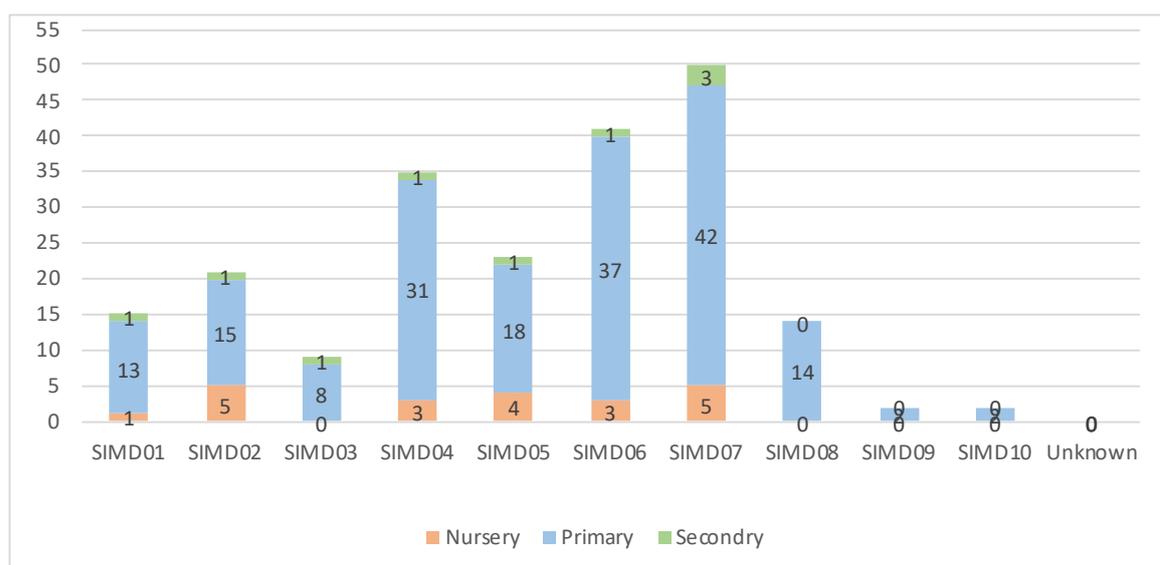


Year	Primary	Primary	Secondary	Secondary
	Incidents	Pupils	Incidents	Pupils
2015/16	0	0	17	11
2016/17	1	1	26	12
2017/18	1	1	13	21
2018/19	1	1	40	16
2019/20	6	5	18	14
2020/21	4	2	6	5

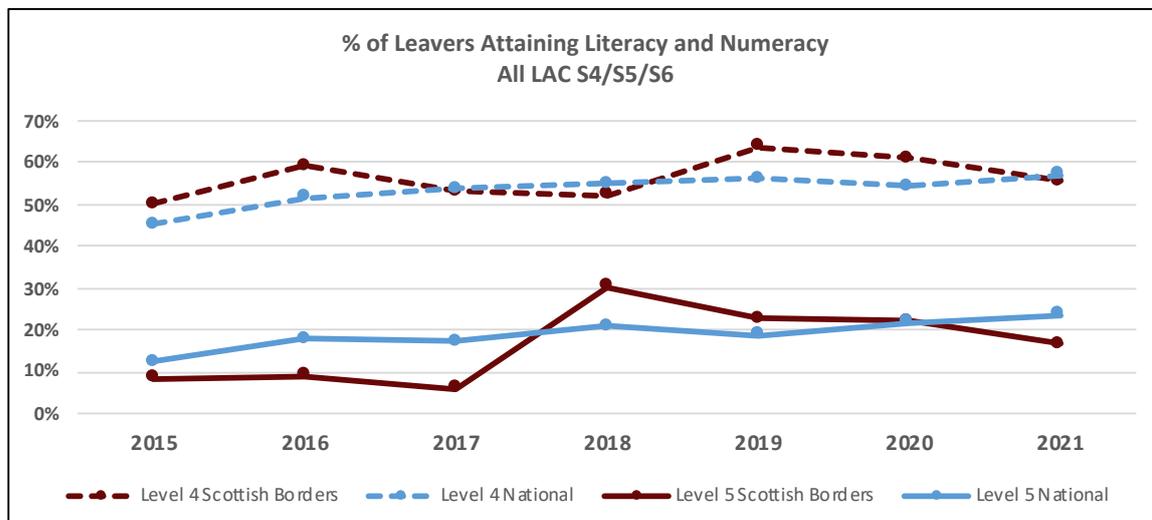
LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS 2020/21

Type	Looked After Description	No. Individuals receiving Free School Meal	No. Individuals receiving Clothing Grant	No. Individuals with ASN
Nursery	Away	0	0	5
	Home	1	1	2
	Previously	0	0	2
Nursery Total		1	1	9
Primary	Away	21	21	78
	Home	20	20	24
	Previously	48	50	55
Primary Total		89	91	157
Secondary	Away	1	1	2
	Home	2	2	3
	Previously	1	1	4
Secondary Total		4	4	9
Grand Total		94	96	175

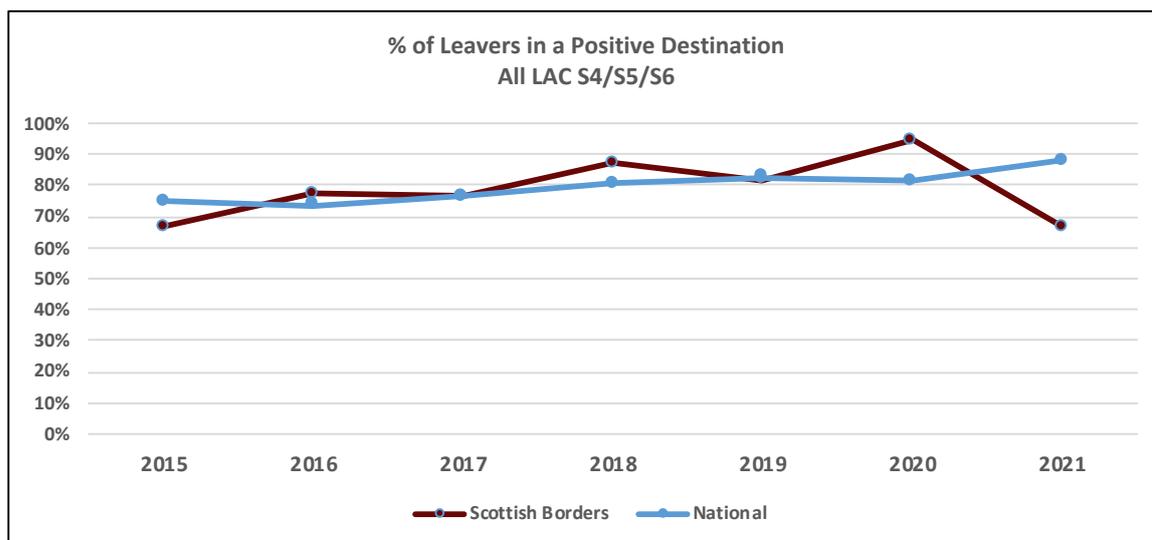
SIMD DISTRIBUTION OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN 2020/21



ATTAINMENT AND POSITIVE DESTINATIONS



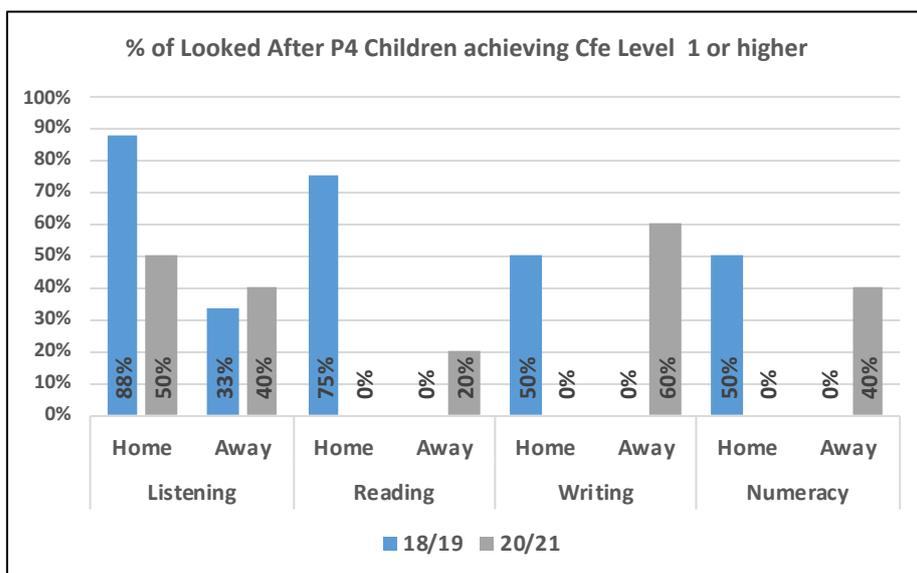
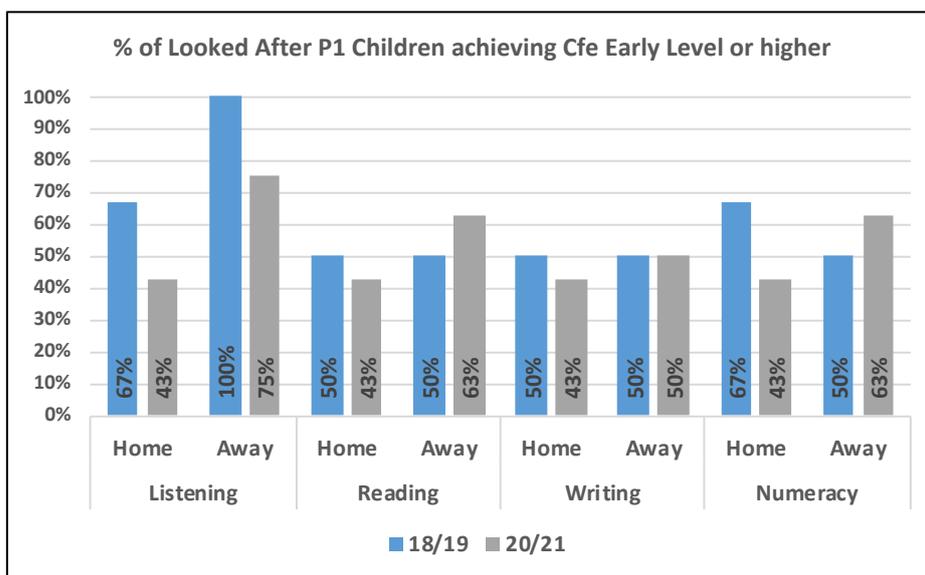
Year	Level 4		Level 5	
	Scottish Borders	National	Scottish Borders	National
2015	50.00%	45.19%	8.33%	12.25%
2016	59.09%	51.50%	9.09%	17.78%
2017	52.94%	53.70%	5.88%	17.32%
2018	52.17%	55.04%	30.43%	20.85%
2019	63.64%	56.06%	22.73%	18.91%
2020	61.11%	54.30%	22.22%	21.76%
2021	55.56%	56.94%	16.67%	23.73%

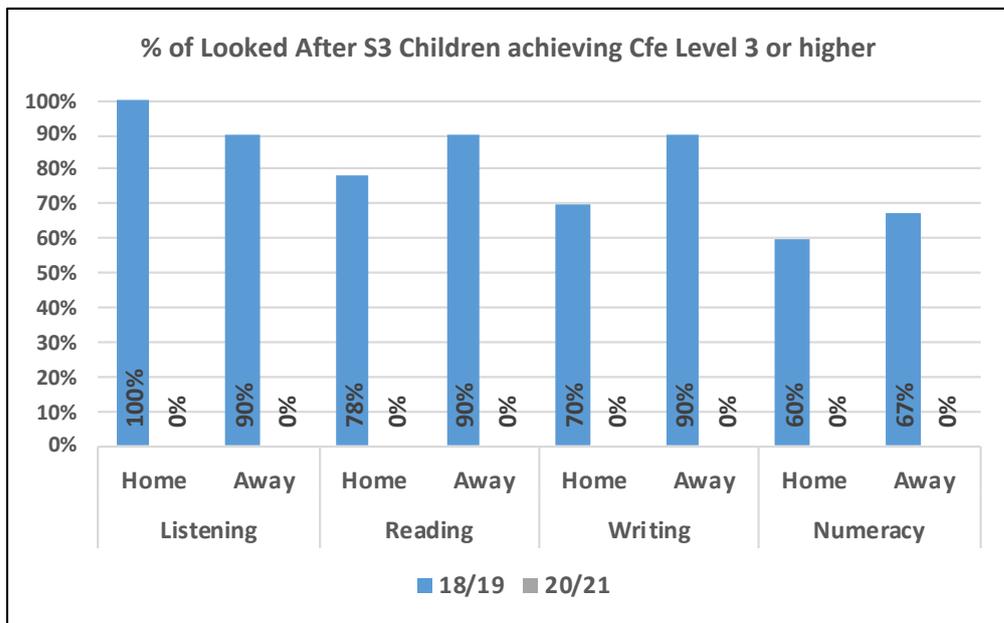
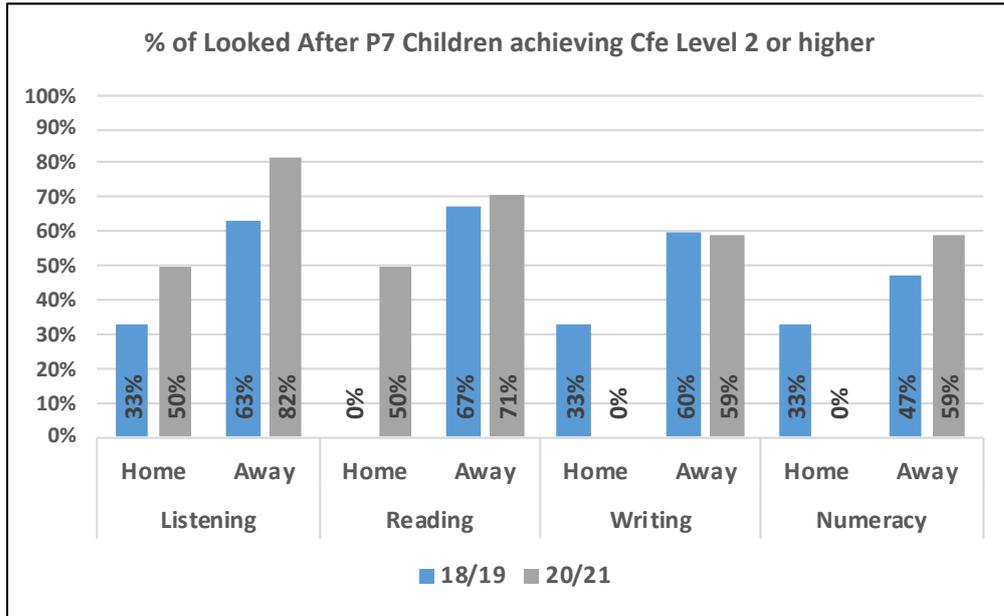


Year	% Leavers in a Positive Destination	
	Scottish Borders	National
2015	66.67%	74.62%
2016	77.27%	73.62%
2017	76.47%	76.36%
2018	86.96%	80.43%
2019	81.82%	82.43%
2020	94.44%	81.40%
2021	66.67%	87.94%

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN ACHIEVING TARGET CFE LEVEL

Please note there are no results for S3 this academic year as only primary schools were assessed.





INCREASED ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND VOCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES (LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN)

AFTERCARE COMPARISON WITH COMPARATOR AUTHORITIES

Table 3.5: Young people eligible for aftercare services, percentage receiving aftercare and percentage in employment, education or training, by local authority, 31 July 2021

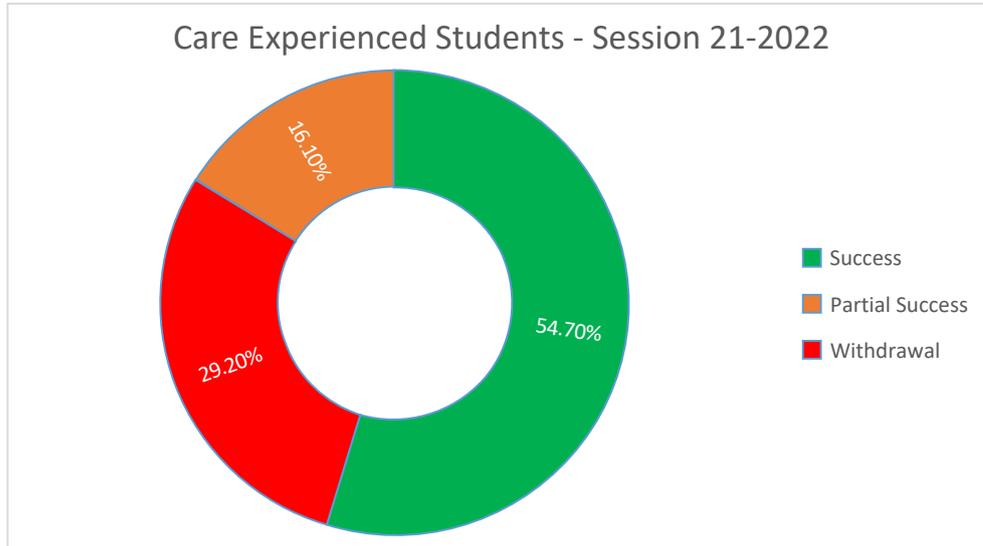
Local authority area	Young people eligible for aftercare services	Number receiving aftercare services	Percent receiving aftercare services	Percentage of those receiving aftercare services with an unknown economic activity	In employment, education or training	
					As percentage of those receiving aftercare with known economic activity	As percentage of all eligible for aftercare services
Angus	92	89	97%	31%	77%	51%
East Lothian	114	41	36%	2%	55%	19%
Highland	56	26	46%	27%	84%	29%
Moray	196	72	37%	1%	37%	13%
Scottish Borders	102	36	35%	3%	43%	15%
Stirling	167	52	31%	0%	50%	16%
Scotland	7,323	3,931	54%	20%	54%	23%

Taken from Children's Social Work Statistics 2020-21 - Additional Tables, Table 3.5 Young people eligible for aftercare services, percentage receiving aftercare and percentage in employment, education or training, by local authority, 31 July 2021

BORDERS COLLEGE CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE 2022



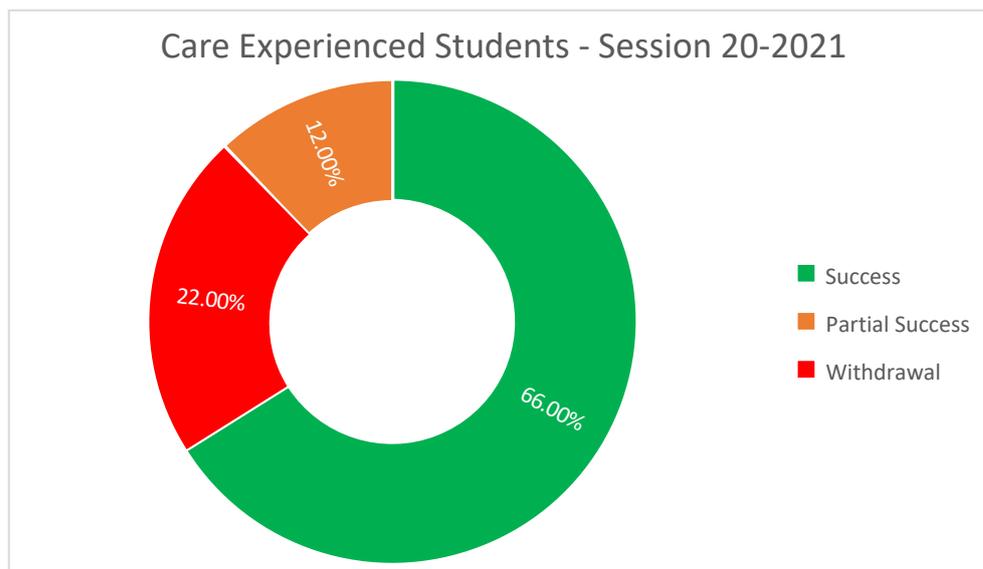
DATA SESSION 21-22



Outcome Agreement Data

Volume of credits delivered to CARE EXPERIENCED learners 1,950
Proportion of credits delivered to CARE EXPERIENCED learners 7.60%

DATA SESSION 21-22



Outcome Agreement Data

Volume of credits delivered to care experienced learners 1,947
Proportion of credits delivered to care experienced learners 7.5%

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

Many of the learners who withdrew from session 21-22 were unable to sustain full-time College, for most the impact of COVID and interrupted structure in education was a challenge. For others the challenge of being a care leaver, being able to manage a home, whilst studying with little or no support along with struggles with their mental health and wellbeing. It should be noted that every care experienced learner who withdraws is referred to Skills Development Scotland for follow up and support.

In a survey by NUS Scotland, 75% of care experienced students worried about their finances frequently or all the time.

44% of care experienced students were unable to pay their rent in full at some point (compared to 26% students overall) 70% of students with care experience indicated that their mental health was impacted by worrying about money (compared to 64% of students overall), with 50% even having considered leaving their course due to financial struggles at some point (compared to 33% overall) (NUS Scotland 2022).

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CORPORATE PARENTING

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