

Charter 8.2 Reducing School Exclusion

Improvement Project Title: Building a Trauma Skilled workforce to promote inclusion			
Executive Sponsor Derek McGowan, Chair of CJ Group			
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Aim statement Reduce by at least 5% the number of young people in schools in Aberdeen City, identified as having indicators of risk, being excluded from school by April 2021.			
Link to Local Outcome Improvement Plan			
Stretch Outcome	Key Drivers	Improvement Project Aim	Key Improvement Measures
8. 25% fewer young people (under 18) charged with an offence by 2026	8.1 Young people receive the right help at the right time through provision of a strong universal offer alongside availability of multi-disciplinary targeted interventions (using a trauma-informed approach) to improve outcomes for young people at risk of becoming involved in the Justice System	Reduce the number of young people identified as having indicators of being at risk of being excluded from school by 2021.	% of young people identified as at risk who are receiving a targeted intervention to support participation and engagement No. of school exclusion incidents for 'General or persistent disobedience' (Baseline data: 17/18: 206) Unauthorised absence levels
Why this is important			
<p>In order to improve attainment in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing it is vital that children and young people access their full entitlement to education and do not lose hours of learning due to exclusion. By raising awareness of the impact of trauma on brain development, in particular the impairment of cognitive function, staff understanding of the need for a nurturing response rather than a punitive one will be enhanced. Training will not only raise awareness of the impact of trauma but also share the strategies and approaches which are key to addressing early trauma.</p> <p>An understanding of how early experiences impact on children and young people's behaviour and the importance of relationships in shaping later outcomes is the foundation which underpins much of the Scottish policy landscape and curriculum.</p> <p>It has long been recognised that stressful events occurring in childhood can impact profoundly on children and young people's development and outcomes including the capacity to learn and participate in school life. Within the school setting they are more likely to have experienced multiple exclusions impacting on their capacity to enter positive destinations. As adults those with a history of trauma are over-represented in physical health, mental health and substance misuse services and criminal justice settings.</p> <p>Heathryburn School has sought support from central services to address the behaviours of children who have experienced a range of adverse childhood experiences. As a result these children experience high levels of anxiety which impact on their presenting behaviours and capacity to learn. The staff of the school have expressed a desire to become Trauma Skilled in</p>			

order to better meet the needs of these children and their families. For this reason, testing of change ideas will start at Heathryburn School.

A significant number of children and young people across the Northfield ASG have experience of adversities in childhood and staff would benefit from a focus on improving understanding and skills of childhood trauma.

Nurture, Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma informed practice: Making the links between these approaches **Education Scotland publication**

“Potential benefits of a nurturing approach, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) awareness and trauma informed practice in an educational context:

- ☑ Increases practitioner knowledge and awareness of the impact of early experiences thus increasing staff confidence about responding appropriately to children and young people’s needs
- ☑ Provides a framework to develop understanding and support for children and young people
- ☑ Can help to develop a shared language for practitioners
- ☑ Originates from evidence-based practice
- ☑ Encourages schools and early years and childcare settings and their wider communities to focus on early intervention and prevention
- ☑ Acknowledges the key role that practitioners can have in improving life chances for children and young people
- ☑ Helps the wider school community (including children, staff, parents and carers) to develop understanding about the potential impact of adversity and trauma on their own lives and the lives of others, thus aiding recovery”

A number of primary schools developed a good understanding of Nurture and in particular the establishment of Nurture Rooms. For a variety of reasons, including capacity to staff these provisions very few have managed to sustain these provisions. Very few schools have adopted a whole school approach to nurture in order to support the most vulnerable learners, this is particularly true within our secondary schools. There is an opportunity at this juncture to extend this awareness and develop good practice through this project. It is recognised that to embed a whole school approach to nurture takes at least 7 years with a focus on one principle per year.

It would appear that many schools continue to rely on punitive measures and there is an absence of consistency of approach across the city, which can make it difficult for partners to contribute effectively. In an empowered system it will be important for school leaders to work to a shared agenda and to be accountable for the delivery of appropriate support to all learners.

The international research on early life trauma / adverse childhood experiences has played a significant part in the development of the ASPIRE service, which aims to support wellbeing. As the ways of working within this service are different to what schools have previously experienced there is still work to be done to enable colleagues to understand why a different approach is necessary. The difficulties recruiting skilled staff who are able to provide the relational support required is limiting the work of the service.

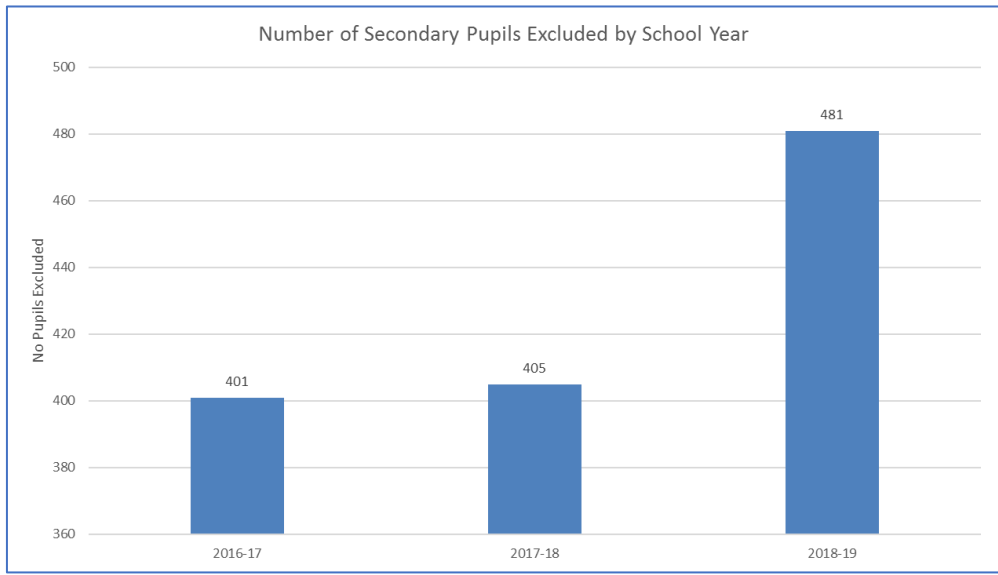
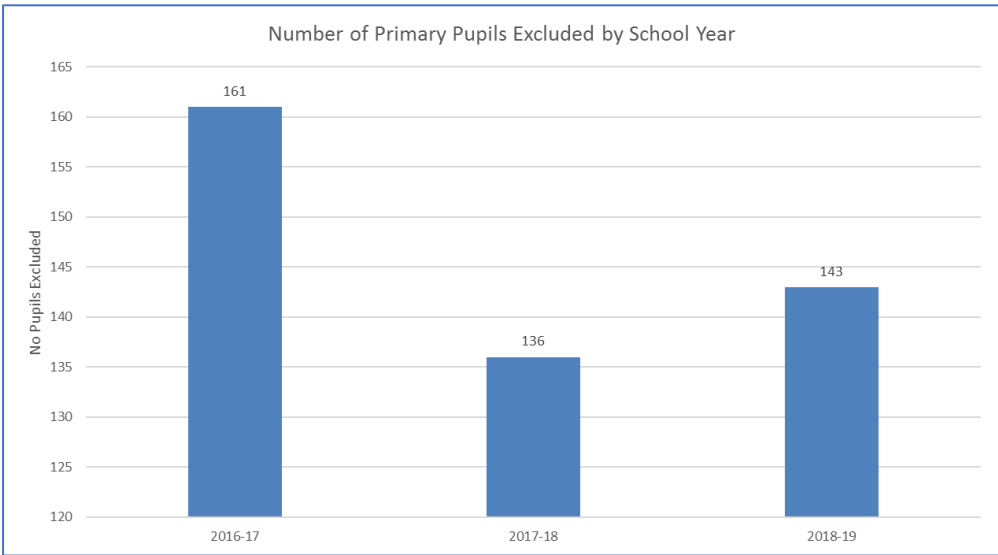
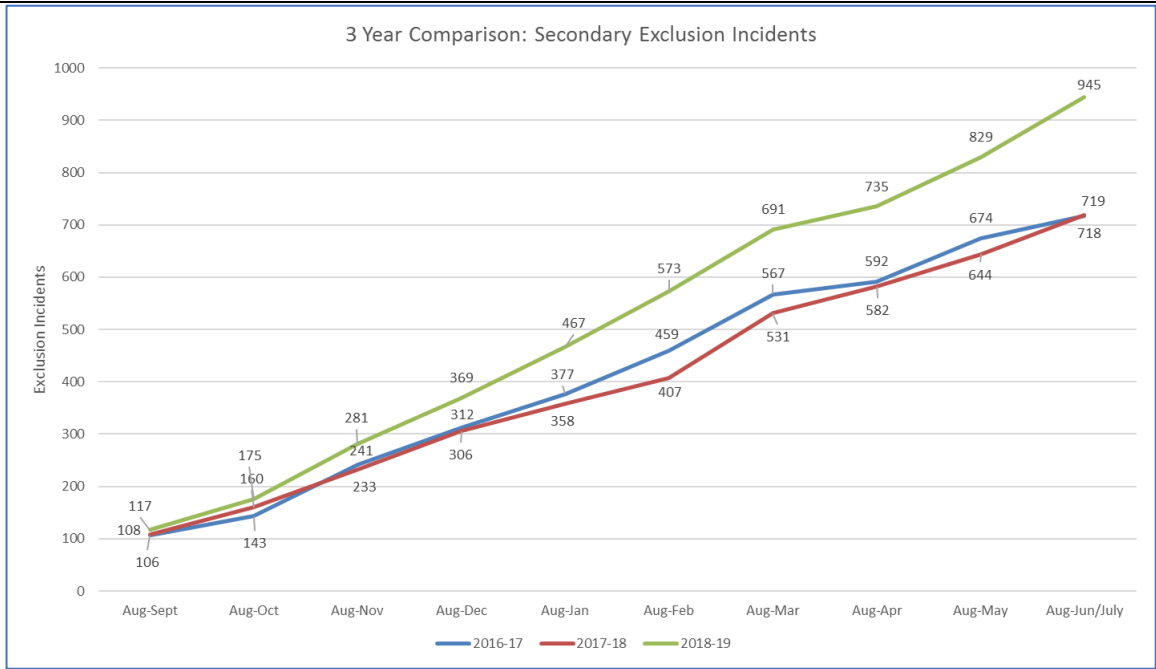
Colleagues believe that work needs to be undertaken to change the mindset of staff and to encourage those working in our schools to develop the skills required to take a different approach in relation to the children and young people whose behaviour indicates high levels of distress. It is felt that further integration of education and children's social work needs to be prioritised and a clear vision for this area of our work shared.

EXCERPT FROM **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CUSTODY IN SCOTLAND: LOOKING BEHIND THE DATA**

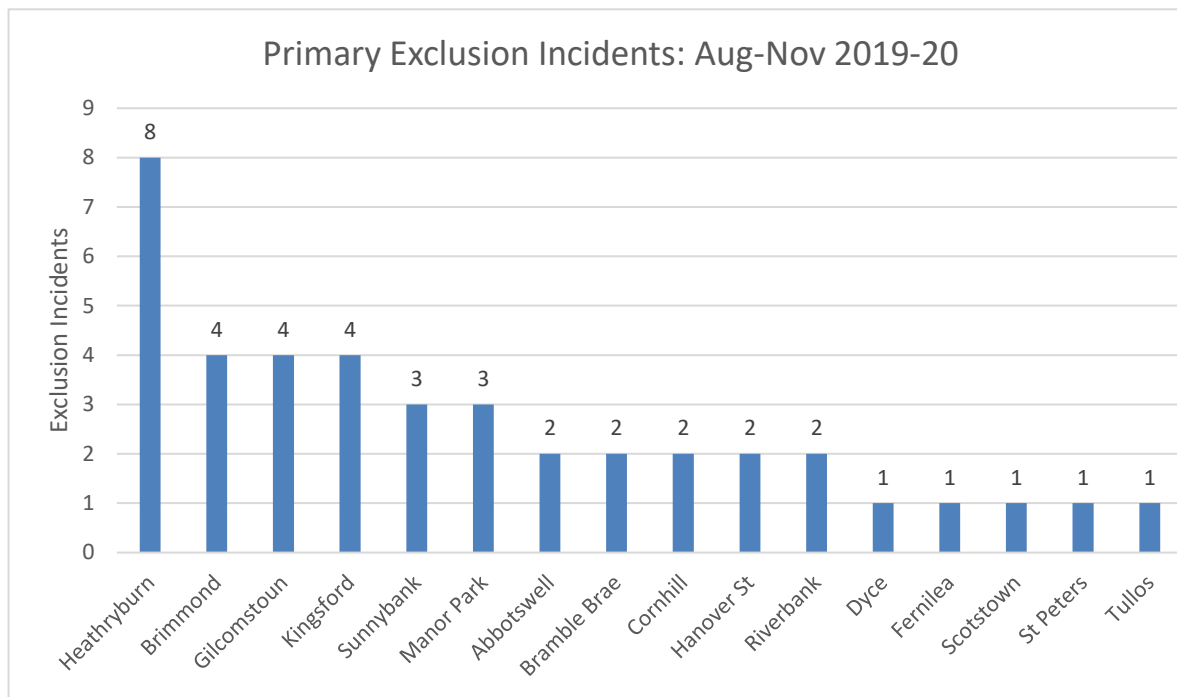
"In particular, there is a well-documented correlation between offending and school exclusion, with the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime identifying school exclusion as one of the key determinants for future involvement in offending. This remained true even when compared to children who had committed equally serious and frequent offences who had not been excluded from school (McAra and McVie, 2010). This study also found that early school exclusion was one of the strongest predictors of making the transition from the Children's Hearing System to the adult criminal justice system and of ending up in custody, even taking other factors such as offending behaviour into account. School exclusion before age 12 increased the odds of imprisonment by age 22 by a factor of four. More recently, research conducted by CYCJ found that 80% of a sample of young men in HMYOI Polmont had experienced exclusion from school (CYCJ, 2014) and, of the young people who responded to the SPS Prisoner Survey of Young People in Custody (2013), 90% reported that they had been excluded from school, 42% on four or more occasions.

Recent narrative evidence, including from young people in HMYOI Polmont (Youth Justice Improvement Board, 2016), illustrates the impact that school exclusion had had on them and its connections with their offending. They described the powerful effect of peers - especially the influence of older young people - while they were excluded, and the sometimes rapid escalation of substance abuse, violence and offending at that time. They spoke of the impact of broken connections with school but also with out-of school activities and the role models and pro-social pastimes such as football, which that wider community can provide. After exclusion, very few of these young men and women reported having made a successful return to their mainstream secondary school."

Aberdeen City Data regarding school exclusion over the last three years can be found below:



Below data highlights the incidence of exclusions at Heathryburn Primary School:



Measures

• **Outcome measures**

- Number of young people identified as at risk who are receiving a targeted intervention to support participation and engagement (*LOIP Measure*)
- No. of school exclusion incidents for 'General or persistent disobedience' (*LOIP Measure*)
- Unauthorised absence levels (*LOIP Measure*)

- Number of staff who self-report an increased confidence in dealing with trauma-based behaviour
- Reduction in the number of individual children experiencing exclusion

Process measures

- Number of teachers and school staff who receive Trauma Skilled training, in line with the national Trauma Training Framework
- Number of staff able to deliver training
- Number/% of parents who self-report feeling informed and able to support children and young people's emotional wellbeing.
- Number of parents attending awareness sessions

Balancing measures

- Increase in the number of children being supported via an early intervention programme to promote wellbeing

Change Ideas

Promoting Inclusion: Awareness Raising & Training

- Train the trainers session for ASG reps / officers, to build the city's capacity to train all staff
- Raise awareness amongst teachers and school staff of the damaging impact of exclusion on children, young people and their families by sharing evidence from those with lived experience and evidence from Community Justice sources.
- Upskill teachers and school staff to enable them to understand distressed behaviour and to create classrooms / school environments which reduce the high levels of anxiety experienced by our most vulnerable learners. This to be achieved through the delivery of the Scottish Government's Trauma Training Framework.
- Events designed to increase awareness of parents of the Health & Wellbeing Curriculum delivered to all children and through delivery of Brain Development sessions as a targeted intervention.
- Additional opportunities to be sought to engage representatives from the Partnership Forum to help share this information and raise awareness with parents.

Providing Alternatives to Exclusion:

- Identify and trial alternative responses to behaviour which may cause harm to self and others e.g. increased use of de-escalation strategies and engagement in more therapeutic activities which reduce levels of toxic stress.
- Continue to improve partnership approaches to supporting children, young people and families at risk of exclusion through development of the Partnership Forum and the range of alternative educational pathways available.

Potential risks and/or barriers to success & actions to address these

- Competing priorities in schools
- Capacity of central team to promote the importance of mental health / emotional wellbeing as pre-requisites to raising attainment of all. New approach to QA visits to schools and the focus on QI 3.1.
- Capacity of schools to ensure all staff have access to high quality training. Trauma Training Framework provides clarity re content of training and materials being developed.
- Inconsistency of response to distressed behaviour within schools; across schools; within the integrated service and from central officers. Use of all contemporary data / research to inform professional learning.
- Engagement of parents

Project Team (proposal)

Lesley Stopani, QIM Health& Wellbeing; Max McGlinchey, CSW; Lisa Elrick, HT Heathryburn School; Stuart Craig, DHT representing Pupil Support in secondary schools; Cliff McKay, Lead Officer Health & Wellbeing; Colin Lemmon, Youth Work in Schools lead; Alex Pirrie, CAMHs; Heather Collie, EIS rep; Katie MacPhee, Educational Psychologist.

Outline Project Plan		
Project Stage	Actions	Timescale
Getting Started (Project Score 1-3)	Project team identified Project team meet Initial baseline established Draft charter developed Charter submitted to CPA Board	October 2019 October 2019 January 2020 Completed February 2020
Designing and Testing Changes (Project Score 4-7)	Identify the school in which Test of Change to take place Link with the Local Partnership to promote their involvement in the design and test of change. Deliver Trauma Training for Trainers Review adherence to the city's Exclusion policy through the use of case studies. Engage with all relevant parties on change design Evaluate overall achievement to date and plan further PDSAs or move to implementation	By December 2019 From January 2020
Implementing and sustaining changes that demonstrate improvement (Project Score 7-10)	Agree which change ideas tested are proven to work and should be part of a future roll-out. Continue to gather and reflect on exclusion data to assess impact Track the journey of a sample group of children and young people who experienced exclusion	May 2020 Monthly (already occurs) Termly from May 2020

Spreading Changes (Project Score 9-10)	Publication of effective practice via case studies. Roll-out to schools across the city	By May 2020 From August 2020
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