



Community Planning Aberdeen

Progress Report	Project End Report: Increase the number of care experienced young people accessing a positive and sustained destination by 25% by 2022.
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Governance Group	CPA Board – 19/04/23

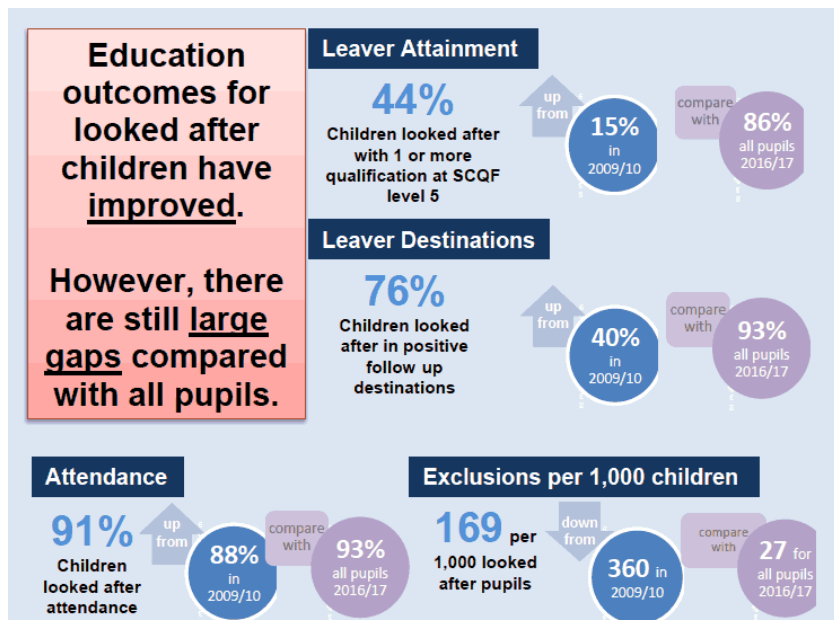
Purpose of the Report

This report presents the results of the LOIP Improvement Project Aim to Increase the number of 'care experienced young people accessing a positive and sustained destination by 25% by 2022 and seeks approval to continue the project.

Summary of Key Information

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Official statistics show that looked after children less well at school than their peers. Our key goal is to narrow the educational attainment gap for all looked after children.



Source: Education outcomes for looked after children: 2016 to 2017. Scottish Government.

- 1.2 The 2019-20 report shows that the education outcomes for Looked After Children remain higher than in 2009/10, however, there is a fall from the 2016/17 data which informed the project initially.

1.3 38% of 'looked after' school leavers gained one or more qualifications at SCQF level 5 (up from 35% in 2018-19) and 75% of 'looked after' school leavers went on to a positive destination (for example college, training or employment) after leaving school (up from 71% in 2018-19).

1.4 The statistics also reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the experiences and outcomes of ⁱⁱCare Experienced Young People. The availability of certain opportunities to 2019-20 school leavers may have been directly affected by the pandemic as start dates for certain apprenticeships and college courses were delayed.

2. IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AIM

2.1 Against this background, on October 2021 the CPA Board approved the revised Project Charter for the initiation of an improvement project which aimed to Increase the number of ⁱⁱⁱcare experienced young people accessing a positive and sustained destination by 25% by 2022.

2.2 How each school in Aberdeen delivered this was dependent on their context and the particular needs of children and young people within their school. Although the aim was to increase the number of ^{iv}care experienced young people accessing a positive and sustained destination by 25% by 2022, as the ^vcare experienced cohorts are small and can vary significantly from year to year, the intention was to undertake significance testing on the percentages from year to year along with comparing the percentage change. This ensured that we are looking at a 25% increase whilst taking into account the cohort changes.

3. WHAT CHANGES DID WE MAKE?

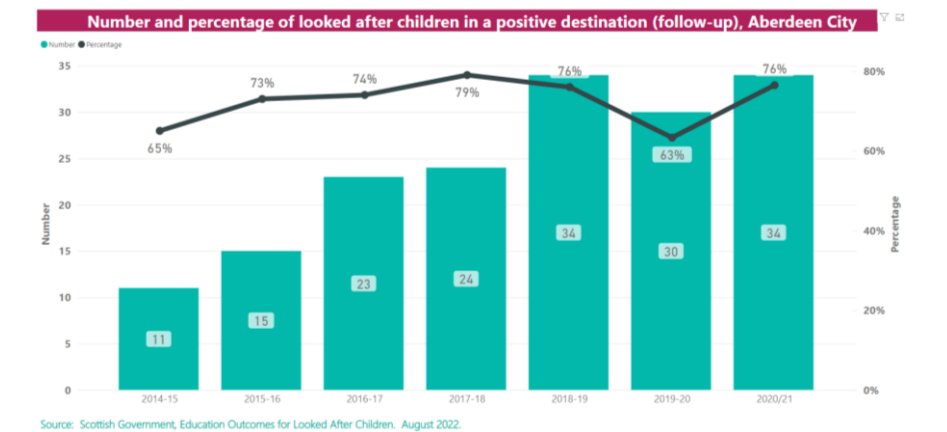
3.1 Following a positive test of change at St Machar Academy, this project further tested [MCR Pathways](#), a structured mentoring programme delivered to targeted pupils from S1 to S6 across 6 of the 11 academies in the city in 2020.

3.2 The Virtual School continued to support schools to discharge their corporate parenting responsibilities in order to support delivery of the project.

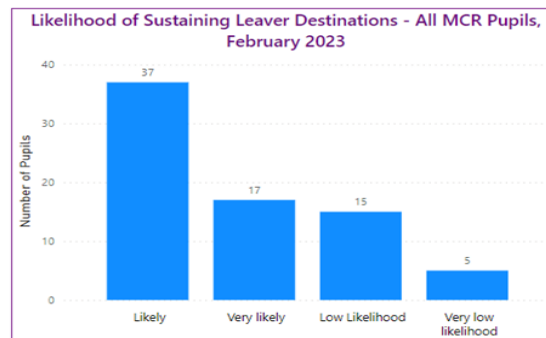
4. HAVE OUR CHANGES RESULTED IN IMPROVEMENT?

4.1 There is a 13% increase in sustained positive destination rate of those young people who are Looked After. Whilst this is short of the aim of a 25% increase it does show positive outcomes which the project anticipate will be further evidenced when validated data for sustained positive destinations for 2021/22 leavers is available in June 2023.

Graph - Number and Percentage of Looked After Children in a Positive Destination (follow-up) Aberdeen City



- 4.2 The graph shows that from the start of the programme in 2020, there has been an increase in the sustained positive destinations of those young people who are Looked After of 13%.
- 4.3 The validated data for this 2023 leavers will not be available until June 2024. In order to gain an early indication the 6 schools delivering the MCR Pathways programme were asked to complete an additional data set providing their professional judgment on the likelihood of leavers sustaining their future destination.
- 4.4 Based on the professional judgement of school staff 73% of this year's cohort in the MCR Pathways programme are likely to sustain a positive destination, this data is helping to inform the supports available to young people in advance of their leaving school and indicates that delivery of the MCR programme alone will not realise our ambitions for young people.



MCR Data

- 4.5 Not all care experienced young people participate in the programme and there are a number of reasons for that. Reasons include:
- The young person is not attending school regularly
 - The young person has moved to another local authority or moved to a school without the MCR programme
 - The school have not recommended the young person for mentoring
 - The young person declined to be involved in the programme following a discussion with the pathways co-ordinator

4.6 Data provided by MCR Pathways to ACC includes all pupils who have been recommended for the programme. However, the analysis is based on those young people who are described as being active and engaged by MCR.

- Group 1 includes those pupils who are both currently and previously Looked After
- Group 2 includes Young Carers, those in Informal Kinship and those who are in need of additional support

4.7 Central to evaluating the ongoing impact of the MCR Programme is the feedback from young people and how they have benefitted from having a mentor in S3-6 to provide input and support. The following quotes are from young people:

“Making a big difference and has given ideas for after school. Opened my eyes to all the options out there for me. Huge confidence boost to me and I don’t feel so worried about leaving school.”

“She is making me feel more confident and less worried about college and work. Easy to speak to and making me feel more confident in myself.”

“Getting on really well with my mentor and she is arranging for me to go to the police to see what that job entails and is also trying to get some time with a chef to see what happens in that job.”

“Speaking with my mentor has helped me decide to try and stay in school longer. He has also increased my confidence.”

‘Good, I like mentoring she helps me with school and basic life skills that school can’t teach.’

‘I enjoy meeting my mentor and she is really nice. I have been struggling with coming back to school and found everything a bit overwhelming. I think it is going really well, I enjoy our sessions together. I think she is beginning to get to know me and she is keen to help me.’

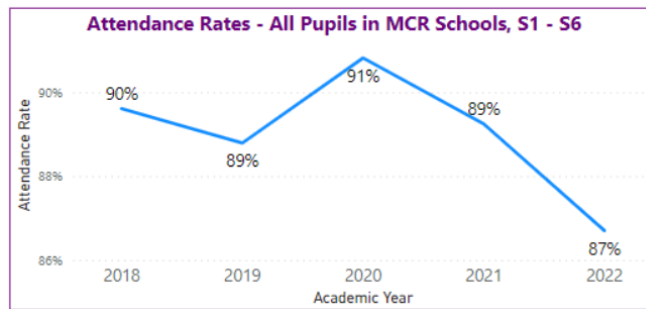
4.8 As well as considering positive and sustained destinations, MCR also looked at attendance and exclusion rate.

Attendance

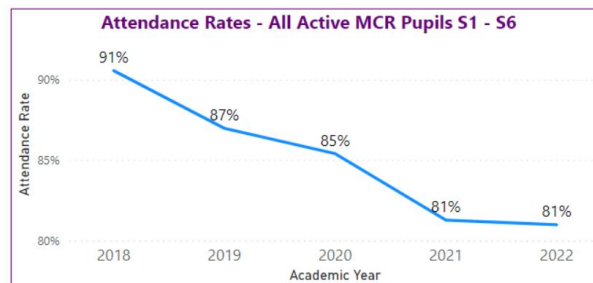
4.9 The following graphs show attendance rates for both the general school population in the 6 MCR Pathways academies and those young people who are active in the MCR Pathways programme for S1-6. It should be noted that this data is heavily influenced by the impact of public health restrictions.

4.10 It should be noted that 2018 and 2019 provide a baseline comparison of the attendance rate prior to the start of the programme in 2020. Further data cleansing is being undertaken to ensure all previously Looked After Children are accurately represented in the data for these 2 years.

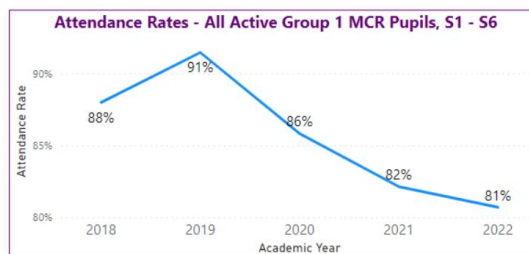
Graph 1 – Attendance Rate for whole school cohort across 6 MCR Pathways Schools (S1-6)



Graph 2 - Attendance Rate for pupils (Group 1 and Group 2) who are active in the MCR Pathways Programme across the 6 schools (S1-6)



Graph 3 – Attendance Rate Group 1 pupils who are active in the MCR Pathways Programme across the 6 schools (S1-6)



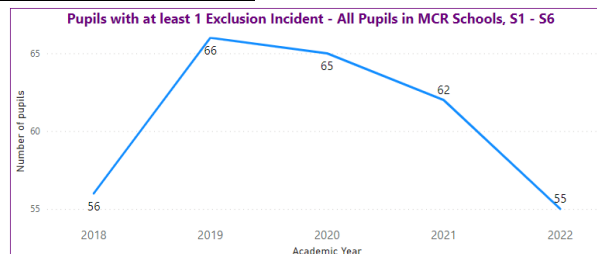
- 4.11 Graph 1 shows over the past 5 years overall attendance has fallen. This trend is mirrored in Graphs 2 and 3 which show attendance for group 1 and 2 collectively and Group 1 alone. The impact of Covid (2020) can be seen in the fall in attendance from 2019 and has been well documented those with experience of care being among those most affected.
- 4.12 Much of this can be attributed to “psychological trauma, including adverse and traumatic experiences in childhood. In particular, growing up with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) – such as abuse, neglect, community violence, poverty, homelessness or growing up in a household where adults are experiencing mental health issues, and exposure to/involvement in harmful alcohol or drug use – can have a long-lasting effect on young people’s lives”. This has resulted in many having attachment difficulties which during times of stress, loss or change - such as they have experienced during the pandemic - will often mean a return to their earliest insecure attachment behaviours. As a result, some have found it exceptionally challenging to engage with learning, self-regulate or interact socially, until they feel both physically and emotionally safe. This will inevitably have impacted on

their attendance at school. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/adverse-childhood-experiences-aces/pages/aces-overview/>

4.13 However, it can be seen that for those young people who are being supported by MCR pathways and have experience of care, although they have an attendance rate of 81% compared to their peers which is 87%, the fall in overall attendance has slowed in comparison and appears to have stabilised to date for session 2022/23. This data will continue to be carefully monitored and is it thought too early to draw firm conclusions. It is recognised that the impact of Covid continues beyond the periods of lockdown impacting on overall attendance of the school population, however, academic session 2021/22 was more stable and enabled the programme to be fully taken forward in the way it was intended to run. Based on evidence to date, it is anticipated that attendance will begin to improve and this will be monitored carefully.

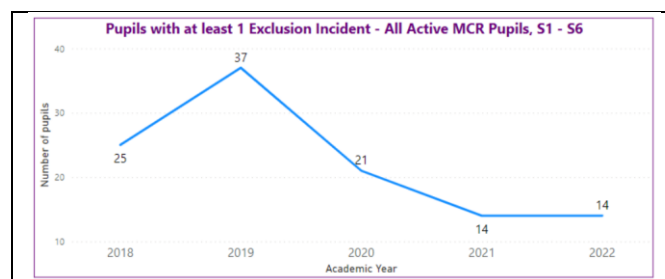
Exclusion

Graph 4 – Pupils in the whole school cohort across the 6 MCR Pathways Schools (S1-6) with 1 or more exclusion incident



4.14 Graph 4 shows pupils in the whole school cohort across the 6 MCR Pathways Schools (S1-6) with 1 or more exclusion incident. It can be seen that there is a fall in the number of incidents which is consistent with the city wide fall in exclusion incidents.

Graph 5 – Number of pupils (Group 1 and Group 2) who are active in the MCR Pathways Programme across the 6 schools with at least 1 exclusion incident



4.15 Graph 5 shows that collectively (group 1 and 2) the number of pupils with at least 1 exclusion incident has also fallen since the introduction of the MCR Pathways Programme in 2020. Data for 2018 and 2019 is for those same pupils who are now supported and so provides the baseline to compare the progress. Additional analysis has been undertaken for group 1 pupils only and figures are consistently below 5 with no evident trend across the 6 schools.

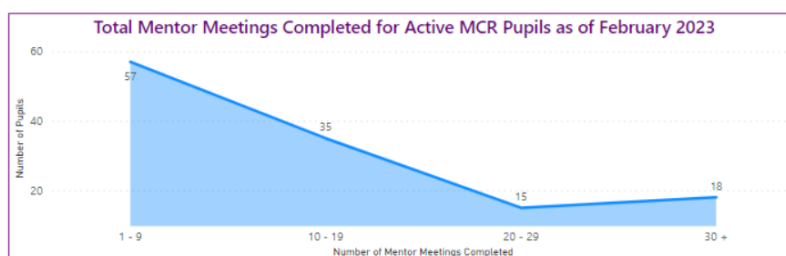
Engagement

Table 1 - Engagement with Mentor sessions S3-6

MCR Pupil / Mentor Engagement - February 2023			
School Name	Pupil Attendance Rate	Average Young Person Attendance (%)	Average Mentor Attendance (%)
Dyce Academy	88%	85	92
Harlaw Academy	87%	85	96
Hazlehead Academy	86%	83	90
Lochside Academy	74%	79	91
Northfield Academy	82%	91	93
St Machar Academy	81%	72	90
Total	83%	82	92

- 4.16 Table 1 shows the attendance of young people with their mentor sessions in S3-6. This is a new measure being collected by MCR for academic session 2022/23 and will be routinely collected going forward. For the majority of the schools, at this point in the academic year, the overall attendance at school is similar to their attendance at their mentor sessions with a variance of 2-3% in general. Both Northfield Academy and Lochside Academy however, have a higher rate of engagement with the mentors. These 2 schools have the highest number of ^vcare experienced young people attending.

Graph 6 – Total Number of Mentor Meetings



- 4.17 Graph 6 shows the number of mentor meetings that have taken place since the start of the programme. Relationships are key to supporting a young person to feel safe and loved and ultimately achieve. The Promise Scotland makes reference to ‘relationships’ 153 times in the foundation report and states that “schools must also be supported to encourage and develop mentoring relationships for those who would benefit”. It can be seen that 125 young people have sustained mentor relationships through the programme. This includes young people who are not care experienced. By offering the programme to a wider range of young people within the school ensures that it is non-stigmatising.
- 4.18 MCR pathways supports a number of young people and contribute to their positive destination. As referenced earlier in para 4.5, not all young people choose to engage or are thought appropriate to engage in the programme.
- 4.19 A high level of personalisation is required to ensure that each young person accesses the supports they require to achieve positive outcomes. Knowing that ‘one size doesn’t fit all’ has influenced our direction of travel with the establishment of 2 Edge of Care pilots and of Pathways Associates in each school to support further improvement in this area.

5 HOW WILL WE SUSTAIN THESE IMPROVEMENTS?

- 5.1 There is agreement from Scottish Government to fund 3 years of the MCR Pathways programme in each of the schools. This commenced from the time that MCR contract extension commenced (dates between 24.2.22 – 31.8.22). MCR Pathways are undertaking a review of the sustainability of the programme nationally over this academic year and we will continue to monitor the impact of the programme locally.

- 5.2 Two Edge of Care pilots are currently being tested by Education and Children's Social Work within targeted schools to realise further improvement in this area. The Pilots offer bespoke support to young people and their families in keeping with taking a whole family approach and there is emerging evidence of positive impact. The impact of this approach will be evaluated to inform next steps.
- 5.3 In addition, all secondary schools have been allocated resource to establish a Pathways Associate to support care experienced young people navigate post school opportunities. This approach ensures that a key individual supporting those with care experience is available to young people in their schools. The impact of this approach will be evaluated to inform next steps.
- 5.4 It is proposed that the impact of the intensive Edge of Care Pilots at Lochside and Northfield Academies and the introduction of Pathways Associates on CEYP attainment, achievement and positive destinations be evaluated by 2024 to inform next steps. Therefore, it is not proposed that a multi-agency improvement aim be added at this time. Year 1 evaluation will be presented to the Children's Services Board and the Education and Children's Services Committee in July 2023 to outline proposed next steps.

6. HOW WILL WE MONITOR THESE IMPROVEMENTS?

- 6.1 The MCR Pathways programme will continue to be embedded within each of the 6 schools. The Virtual School will continue to have a key role in monitoring the impact of the programme. Should it be agreed that the project is ended, the data recorded will continue to be monitored and reported to the Corporate Parenting Sub Group of the Children's Services Board, as well as added to the Outcomes Framework/Improvement Programme Dashboard to ensure that performance continues.
- 6.2 Schools continue to have a focus on tracking and monitoring of their young people with experience of care with attendance, exclusions, attainment, initial destinations and positive destinations all being monitored.
- 6.3 Monitoring arrangements are in place for both of the Edge of Care pilots with a Year 1 evaluation to be presented to the Education and Children's Services Committee in July 2023. Similar arrangements are in place to evaluate the impact of Pathways Associates to help determine next steps.

7. OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALE UP AND SPREAD

- 7.1 Evaluation of the Edge of Care Pilots and provision of Pathways Associates will help inform how learning is spread.

2

Recommendations for Action

It is recommended that the CPA Board:

- i) agree that the project is ended on the basis that whilst the aim has not been achieved, a 13% increase has been achieved and that single system work being piloted by Education within target schools is ongoing to further improve the % of CEYP experiencing positive and sustained destinations;

- ii) note as contained in the draft Children’s Services Plan 2023-26 that the impact of the intensive Edge of Care Pilots at Lochside and Northfield Academies and the introduction of Pathways Associates on CEYP attainment, achievement and positive destinations be evaluated by 2024 to inform next steps; and
- iii) note that the data set for the overall aim will continue to be reported via the improvement programme dashboard to ensure progress is monitored.

Opportunities and Risks

Risks

- Relationships have been developed between mentors and young people. If the programme is not continued these relationships will end. For the many of these young people, this may be the only positive relationship they have and we could see this having a detrimental impact on them
- As a result of the pandemic, the programme has not had the anticipated length of time to embed in the schools and deliver the full impact. If this were to not be continued, those in S1/2 who are positively engaging with the group work will not have the opportunity to go on to work with a mentor and we are not seeing the potential impact of mentoring for S3-6 pupils active on the programme
- The Promise Scotland highlighted that “Mentoring has a significant positive impact on children and young people who receive it, with evidence that it can improve educational attainment”. It is still too early in the implementation journey to see the full impact in Aberdeen City

Opportunities

- Learning identified in relation to constraints associated with data capture and analysis would be used to set clear criteria for continuation of a contract with MCR Pathways

Consultation

Corporate Parenting Performance and Improvement Group
Children’s Services Board
CPA Management Group

Background Papers

The following papers were used in the preparation of this report.

[LOIP](#)



Charter-6.1-Care-Experienced-Young-Pe

[Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2016-17](#)

[Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2019-20](#)

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- ⁱ Data informing the aim is for children who have a legal status of being Looked After
- ⁱⁱ Both previously and currently Looked After children and young people
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- ^{vi} Both previously and currently Looked After children and young people