

FALKIRK COUNCIL

**Subject: ATTAINMENT OF LOOKED-AFTER AND VULNERABLE
 CHILDREN**
Meeting: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date: 1 DECEMBER 2014
Author: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This paper reports on the attainment on Looked-After Children attending Falkirk schools. The data shown does not include the results of the 2014 exam diet so does not take account of any of the new qualifications introduced through Curriculum for Excellence.
- 1.2 Every child and young person has the right to fulfil his or her potential. This is at the heart of both GIRFEC and Curriculum for Excellence.
- 1.3 Improving attainment and achievement go hand in hand and mean improving life chances and enabling all our young people to progress and develop the skills, ambition and know how to enable them to fulfil their potential.
- 1.4 The term ‘achievement’ is used broadly in the *Getting it Right* approach. Here it is rooted in the concept of children’s rights, particularly the right of every child to fulfil his or her potential.
- 1.5 Achievement is also about accomplishing or finishing something successfully through effort, skill, perseverance and practice. This can apply to many aspects of life and not just education. It applies to sporting achievement, art, music, drama and dance, hobbies, leisure activities and other interests. Curriculum for Excellence recognises that attainment is an individual’s passport to personal, social, cultural and economic opportunities and is designed to raise standards and attainment levels through excellence in learning and teaching.
- 1.6 Curriculum for Excellence sees the introduction of a new on-line analysis tool for schools and local authorities (‘Insight’) which is designed to analyse and compare the performance of pupils in the senior phase. This new analysis tool will allow local authorities to access performance information for vulnerable groups other than Looked-After Children across a broader range of achievements and attainment.

2. CONTEXT

- 2.1 The local and national data, in conjunction with current research supports the assertion that being Looked-After has an impact on a child or young person’s ability to engage with learning positively and to achieve outcomes similar to their peers.

- 2.2 Many Looked after Children have become looked after due to experiences of disadvantage, often from conception. This will often be related to their parents' own experience of disadvantage, for example as a result of drug or alcohol misuse, maternal health issues, poor nutrition, or inadequate housing, or indeed their own experience of poor parenting. This impacts on a child or young person's readiness to learn.
- 2.3 Children are only ready to learn when they are emotionally stable, with secure attachments to key care givers, are free of threat and risk and attend school on a regular and consistent basis, and are supported by key role models who value education and actively support learning.
- 2.4 Due to their life experiences, it is not reasonable to expect 16-year-old looked-after children, especially those who have been Looked-After for long periods, to be in the same place at 16 as other children are. We know from experience that many looked-after children will go on to achieve things after they leave school. It is worth bearing this in mind when reviewing the data, and avoid using the arbitrary age of 16 as the time to measure the success or otherwise of how Looked-After Children are doing in the education system. Looked-After Children, by their very nature have had challenging and often traumatic life experience, which will have significantly impacted on their learning journey.
- 2.5 All schools within Falkirk Council provide individualised educational packages of support tailored to the learning needs of each child or young person. Our secondary schools also provide an alternative pathway for Looked-After Children, providing learning experiences geared to developing their skills for learning, life and work. They utilise a range of alternative accreditation frameworks such as:
- Duke of Edinburgh Awards
 - Crest
 - Saltire
 - ASDAN
 - Food Handling and Hygiene (REHIS)
 - First Aid

These programmes contribute towards the pupils' positive learning experiences and learning journeys, but do not count towards the pupils' tariff score. Their achievements are recorded in their pupil profiles and are recognised by colleges, training providers and employers.

- 2.6 Due to the small numbers of young people being presented year on year from Falkirk Schools, their performance is susceptible to significant variation in their SQA tariff scores. Only 17 young people were Looked-After at home and 23 Looked-After away from home in relation to the data collated for this report of S4 attainment. In addition young people residing outwith the council and attending residential school are not included in the data sets analysed as their SQA results are not recorded on SEEMIS. This is due to SEEMIS not being available to independent residential schools or establishments.

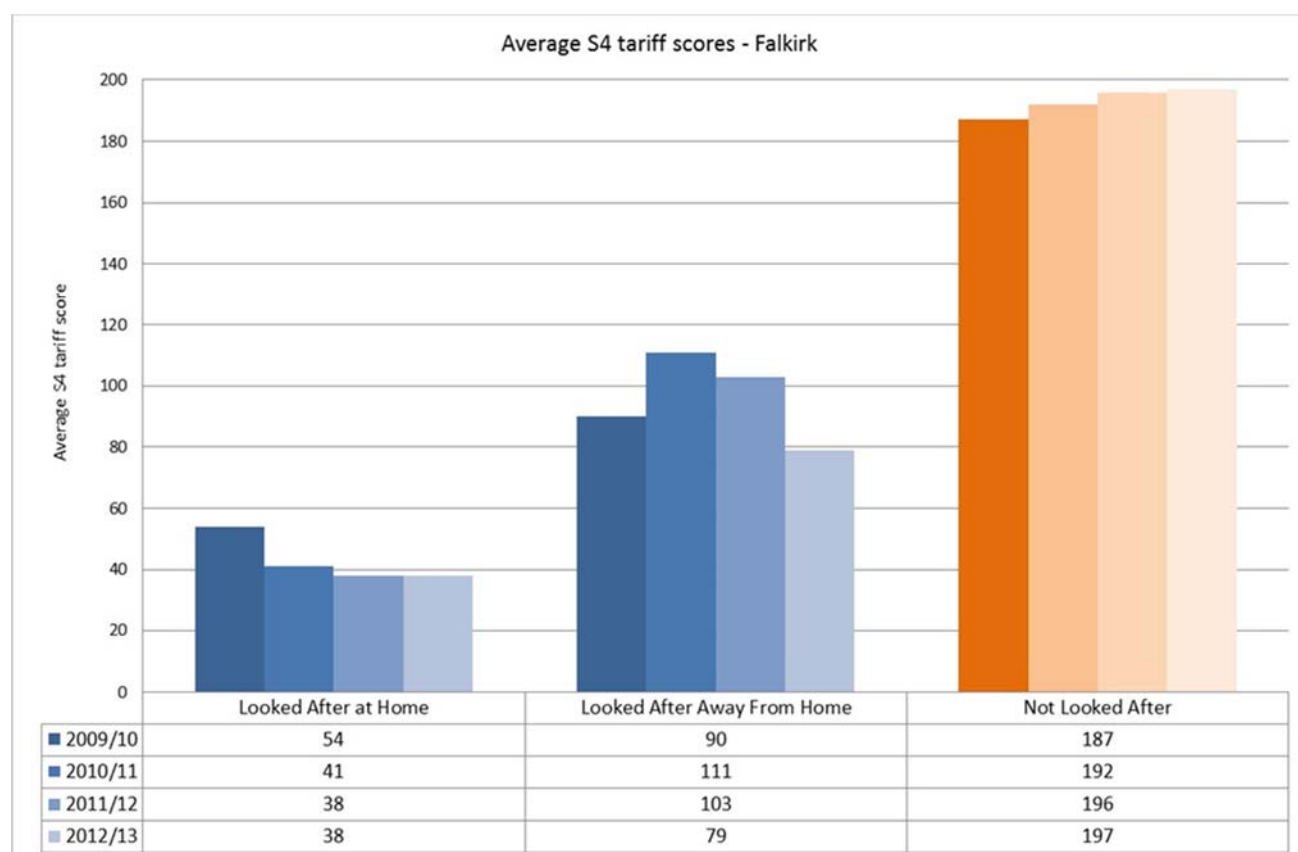
2.7 Two main measures have been chosen as key indicators of attainment and achievement for Looked After Children:

- S4 Tariff Scores
- School Leaver Destination

3. S4 TARIFF SCORES

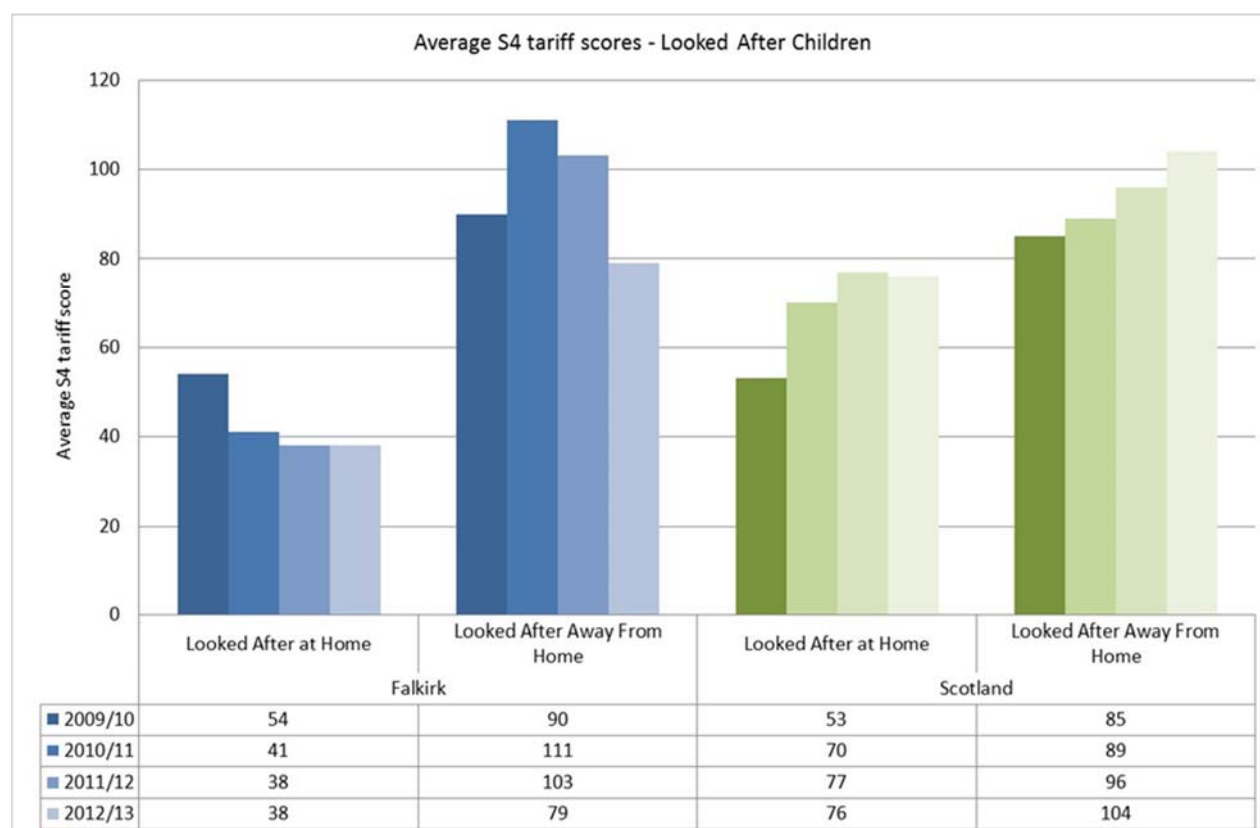
3.1 One means of measuring attainment is by looking at Tariff Scores in S4. The tariff score of a pupil is calculated by allocating a score to each level of qualification and award, using the Unified Points Score scale, and adding together all the tariff points accumulated from all the different course levels and awards the pupil attains.

3.2 The chart below shows how the average SQA tariff score for Falkirk's Looked-After Children by the end of S4 compares with the rest of the Falkirk pupil population. Figures can vary year on year due to the relatively small number of pupils involved.



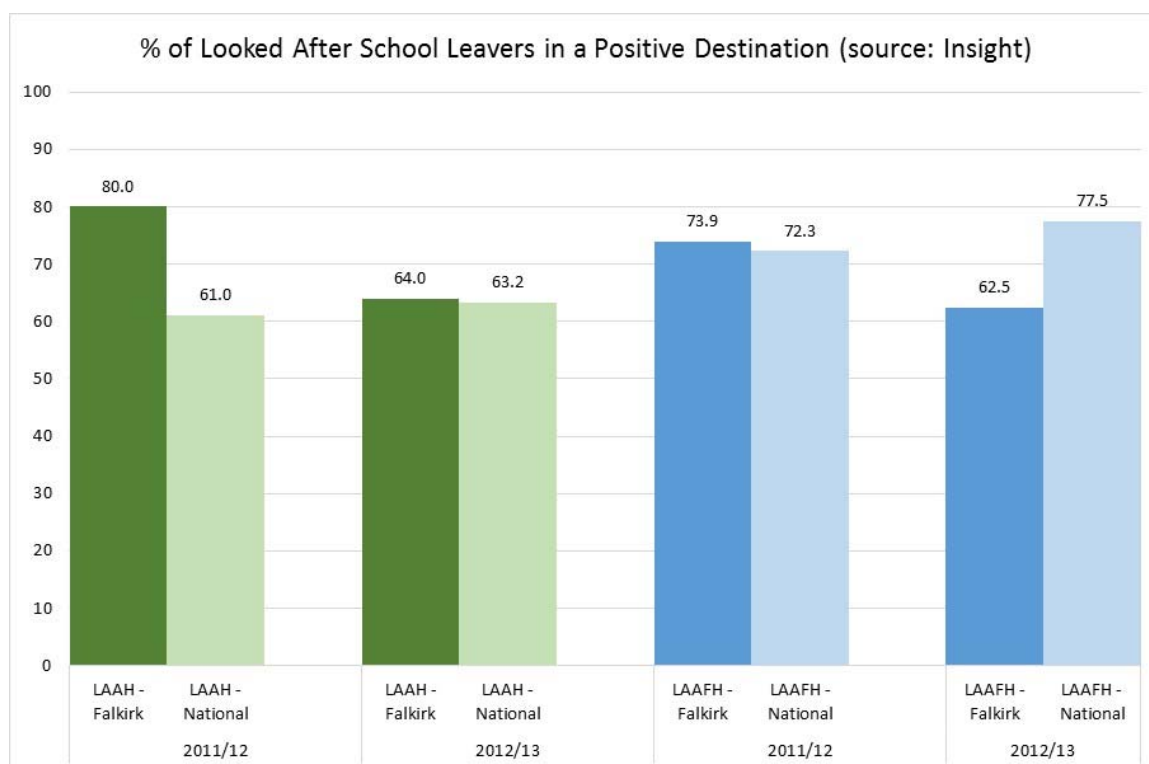
3.3 The table highlights the difference in performance between Looked-After and Non-Looked-After Children in relation to their tariff score across Falkirk. The measure of tariff score, does not enable the children and young people with an alternative educational journey to have their attainment and achievement fully captured. The data only accounts for programmes which are from the Scottish Qualifications Authority and carry SCQF points. As explained previously, our schools are utilising a wide variety of alternative programmes and certification pathways to provide individualised routes for their vulnerable Looked-After Children which will be captured via 'INSIGHT' tracking tool. Insight will enable schools to record wider achievement for all children and young people on its release shortly.

- 3.4 The chart below shows how the S4 tariff scores of Falkirk's Looked-After Children compares with the Scottish average.



- 3.5 The table highlights the difference in performance between Looked-After and Non-Looked-After Children in relation to their tariff score across Scotland. The measure of tariff score, does not enable the children and young people's alternative educational journey to be fully captured. The data only accounts for those programmes which are from the Scottish Qualifications Authority and carry SCQF points. As explained above, our schools are utilising a wide variety of alternative programmes and certification pathways to provide individualised routes for their vulnerable Looked-After Children which will be captured via 'INSIGHT'.
- 3.6 In addition, our Looked-After Away from Home children and young people attending residential schools and establishments do not have their attainment and achievements captured by Education Scotland and therefore does not feature in this report. This is due to the independent schools not having access to SEEMIS (the national educational data base).

4. SCHOOL LEAVER DESTINATIONS



Falkirk Council LAC Population (by year and sub group):

LAAH 2011/12	LAAH 2011/12	LAAFH 2012/13	LAAFH 2012/13
20	23	23	16

The data illustrates the volatility faced by Falkirk Council in relation to our Looked After Population. Due to the extremely small sample size, within an unpredictable group, we cannot utilise trend analysis year on year to provide any meaningful insight. However we can see that our destinations for our young people are broadly positive.

It is predicted that the work of the 16+ Transitions Group will contribute to an ongoing improving position for our young people, as they move on from formal education into further education, training or work. This will be due to the individualised nature of the work, focusing on young people Looked After Away from Home. This only began this year and will be reflected in future data sets.

5. ACTION WITHIN THE AUTHORITY

Education Services is operating a range of strategies and developments to support and improve the educational performance of Looked-After Children. These include:

5.1 National

- Education Services have a representative on the National working group to refresh Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2 – a positive approach to managing school exclusion. Attendance at school remains a key indicator of a child or young person's attainment and achievement.

5.2 Authority

- Education is currently taking an active role as part of the Corporate Parenting Operational Resource Group, to coordinate and monitor the impact of projects and implementation of strategies to support Looked-After children in conjunction with other services.
- The service has revised Circular 36, Joint Policy for Looked After Children between Education Services and Social Work Services.
- Education Services is developing the Looked-After Children's Scrutiny Group. This group is being established to monitor and review current procedures in relation to the attendance, exclusion and attainment of Looked-After Children. It will then offer enhanced support and challenge to educational establishments with the goal of improving the outcomes for our Looked-After Children.
- Establishment Heads across education received further awareness raising training in June focusing on Looked-After Children - Corporate Parenting and the impact education can have in promoting positive outcomes. This was delivered in conjunction with 'Who Cares Scotland' to highlight schools' responsibilities in the support of Looked-After Children. Care leavers told their stories of both positive and negative educational experiences and the consequences these had on their life choices and outcomes.
- Each educational establishment has an identified senior member of staff to maintain an overview of Looked-After children's progress and take responsibility for ensuring that appropriate measures are in place for supporting the children's education.
- Schools continue to be involved in developing the recognition of wider achievement in Curriculum for Excellence, through P7-S3 profiles.

5.3 Early Years

- As part of the implementation of the national Psychology of Parenting Programme (PoPP) Falkirk Council is currently working with partners across the child care sector to implement Promoting, Positive Parenting (Triple P) and Incredible Years Programmes to families across the council with the goal of building family capacity. This will support families at risk to develop the approaches and skills to work towards creating a more stable home environment. This is part of the Council's wider Parenting Strategy and sits alongside a variety of other universal and targeted services and approaches designed to support positive parenting.

5.4 Primary School

- The Education Service is currently involved in piloting a staged intervention approach to low attainment in literacy in upper primary, involving the building of family capacity in areas of relative deprivation. The impact of this intervention will filter its way through to further improved achievement and attainment for all our children and young people, but particularly in relation to our Looked-After Children.

- A pilot project has established Nurture rooms within 5 primary schools. In addition a number of other primaries are implementing Nurturing principles or Nurture Corners across their school. Two secondary schools are currently developing Nurture for secondary aged pupils. All projects are geared to support pupils in the development of pro-social skills and build self-esteem. Research has shown that this will have a positive impact on attendance, engagement and attainment.

5.5 Secondary School

- All of our secondary schools are offering a range of alternative learning pathways for Looked-After Children to enable them to engage with learning and achieve. Their goal is to enable their young people to continue to develop beyond school and remain engaged in lifelong learning. For example: Step Forward Programme at Falkirk High School.
- Secondary schools are currently identifying young people to participate in a project within Falkirk to support 12-16 young people aged 15-16 who would benefit from an alternative, skills based vocational programme. These young people will have been identified as being at risk of disengaging or have already disengaged from school and require alternative skills based support to successfully move into a positive and sustainable destination. Priority placement will be given to those young people who meet the criteria and are also Looked After.
- ScotXed are in the process of releasing an up dated monitoring and tracking tool 'INSIGHT', which will enable schools and authorities to analyse, compare and improve the performance of pupils in the senior phase. This tool goes beyond the Scottish Qualifications Authority attainment data and will enable wider achievement to be recognised and reported. This will enable schools to provide more accurate data on the educational attainment and achievement of the children and young people. The data from 'INSIGHT' will be reported to Elected Members in due course.
- This session has seen the start of the 16+ School Transitions Group taking place within each secondary school at key points in the session. This group is made up from members of the Local Employability Partnership's Youth Transition workstream and includes members from the school, Employment and Training Unit, Skills Development Scotland, Community Learning and Development, Forth Valley College and the Opportunities for All Coordinator.

The group meet to discuss all those young people that are approaching their indicated leaving date and are deemed as being at risk of not progressing to a positive destination. By discussing these pupils in advance of their leaving date it has been possible to improve the choices for these pupils by:

- Giving opportunities to visit Forth Valley College before interviews.
- Setting up pre-activity agreements for those showing real disengagement from education.
- Assessing core skills of those pupils who may consider taking up a training opportunity with the local Employment and Training Unit.
- Sharing the qualifications and barriers to learning with key partners to make sure the correct support measures are in place.

As part of this process all pupils who have been identified as being “Looked After” are included in all school/group communications regardless of whether or not they are at risk of not entering a positive destination. It is hoped that this “belts and braces” approach will improve both the knowledge and more importantly the employability prospects of this particularly vulnerable group.

- Along with the 16+ School Transitions Group, a separate group has been set up to meet to discuss those young people that are “Looked After Away From Home” to make sure that appropriate provisions as outlined above are in place for this group. The professionals on this group are similar to those with the schools groups with the addition of increased social work input and other appropriate professionals such as Barnardo’s, Cluaran and NHS.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Falkirk Council has a continually developing and improving educational environment with a clear focus on improving outcomes for our Looked-After Children. Our schools are supporting this group of learners by utilising a range of creative and innovative programmes, designed around the needs of the individual child or young person. Schools are fully aware of the negative impact of the social and domestic factors play in educational attainment, achievement and positive destinations and have responded to this by developing a wider range of accredited or certificated programmes and learning experiences. Many of these are, as yet, not accounted for in the national data. The data is misleading in respect to the picture painted by the tariff scores alone. Our children and young people are progressing beyond schools into positive and sustained destinations and are benefitting from the learning experience gained beyond school as they continue their lifelong learning journey.
- 6.2 We have established a range of mechanisms to track and monitor the educational progress of all our children and young people and are utilising this data to more closely monitor and support our Looked-After population. In addition there are a wide range of supports and strategies being developed to further improve the educational outcomes for Looked-After Children and close the gap on Non-Looked-After Children’s attainment and achievement.

7. RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 The Committee notes the current performance of Looked-After children attending Falkirk Schools.**
- 7.2 The Committee endorses the current developments which seek to tailor courses and programmes to provide the best accredited opportunities for our children and young people within Falkirk Council.**

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Joint Acting Director of Education

Date: 19 November 2014

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL