

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: SCRUTINY PANEL UPDATE – OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN
Meeting: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date: 3 DECEMBER 2015
Author: DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The committee agreed at its meeting on 14 May 2015 (ref S11) to establish a scrutiny panel to examine outcomes for looked after children.
- 1.2 This report updates committee on the work of the panel to date and appends the revised scoping document and notes of meetings to date.

2. SCOPE AND FORMAT FOR THE PANEL

- 2.1 The Panel, chaired by Councillor Meiklejohn, with other members being Councillors Chalmers, Hughes, McLuckie and Provost Reid agreed that the scope of the scrutiny panel would be: Why, if at all, are outcomes for looked after children different from their non-looked after peers and are there differences between different groups of looked after children, e.g those with special educational needs, those looked after away from home, looked after at home, in residential care and foster care?
- 2.2 In order to examine this question, the panel has established a programme of meetings as set out in the revised scoping document appended to this report at appendix one.
- 2.3 The panel has now completed a series of meetings focussed toward gathering background information and information from internally provided services. This is therefore an opportune time to update the committee on the panel's progress. The attached notes of meeting provide an insight to the panel's in depth considerations and demonstrate the breadth of evidence gathered to this point.
- 2.4 Arrangements are being finalised for future meetings including those to hear evidence from young people and their representatives, specialist services and other councils. In addition to this the panel intends to carry out visits to some of the specialist services which support looked after children.

3. CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 The scrutiny panel has started its work and undertaken information gathering at four meetings to date, with a series of further meetings organised for the new year. It is anticipated that the final report of the panel will be presented to the committee in March 2016.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 It is recommended that committee note the progress made by the scrutiny panel to date and its programme of meetings for 2016.



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DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Date: 23 November 2015

Contact Name: Jack Frawley

EXT 6116

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS
NIL

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone Falkirk 01324 506116 and ask for Jack Frawley

Scrutiny Panel: OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The scope of this scrutiny process will be to examine outcomes for looked after children. Why, if at all, are outcomes for looked after children are different from their non-looked after peers and are there differences between different groups of looked after children, i.e. those with Special Educational Needs, those looked after away from home, looked after at home, in residential care and foster care etc.?

The scrutiny will be undertaken by

Cllr C Meiklejohn (Chair)
 Cllr C Chalmers
 Cllr G Hughes
 Cllr J McLuckie
 Provost P Reid

The Panel will be supported by the following officers:

Robert Naylor – Director of Children’s Services
 Fiona Campbell - Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement
 Colin Moodie – Depute Chief Governance Officer

The review will be supported by the following officers:

Frank Kennedy – Service Manager Children and Families
 David Mackay – Pupil Support Service Manager

A pack of information will be provided to the Panel. TBC

The suggested timetable of panel meetings will be as follows:

	Purpose of Meeting	Date/Venue	Attendees	Public/Private Meeting
	Scoping Meeting Establish and agree the detailed scope of the scrutiny including establishing schedule of meetings/ visits / evidence and considering engagement with other elected Members.	3 July 2015 Municipal Buildings	All Members of the Panel – except Provost Reid. All Officers noted above J Frawley – Governance K McCarroll – Chief SW Officer	Private
1	Presentations	1 September 2015	Members	Public

	Purpose of Meeting	Date/Venue	Attendees	Public/Private Meeting
	<p>Background and Context</p> <p>Meeting one</p> <p>Members will be provided with a presentation to outline the background to the topic. In particular information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation – what makes a child looked after and what are our obligations; • looked after children in Falkirk – who are they and why are they looked after; • Role of reporter and children’s hearings; • Outcomes for looked after children and their non-looked after peers - comparisons to be made between different groups of looked after children and with looked after children across Scotland; • Cost of services; • What are the trends in the data – looking at Falkirk in comparison with the rest of Scotland and general trends; • Issues, challenges and opportunities 	Committee Suite Municipal Buildings	<p>Colin Moodie Robert Naylor Fiona Campbell</p> <p>Presentations from David McKay Frank Kennedy Colin Moodie</p>	
2	<p>Presentations</p> <p>Service Perspective</p> <p>How the Council meets the needs of looked after children. – what are the successes and challenges in providing services to looked after children including an overview of the services provided specifically to looked after children and the challenges of looked after children accessing mainstream services.</p> <p>Presentations from the perspective of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Social work • Housing • Transitions – Positive and sustained destinations 	22 nd September 2015 Committee Suite Municipal Buildings	<p>Presentations from services</p> <p>TBC</p>	Public

	Purpose of Meeting	Date/Venue	Attendees	Public/Private Meeting
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Parent responsibilities 			
3	Presentation and Discussion Views of young people and their representatives Meeting focussed on understanding the needs of looked after children. This session will focus on engaging with young people, with the Panel meeting with young people and their representatives / advocates. The purpose of this is to understand issues that are important to young people, what impacts on them and what would make a difference to them.	October 2015 Confirmation on the time for this meeting	Presentations from Children's Rights Officers Who Cares and Looked after children	TBC
4	Presentations Specialist Services Understanding specific needs of looked after young people and specialist services that are in place to support them. Presentations from the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cluaran Intensive Family Support Services LAC Psychologist Through care and after care. 	Early February	TBC	tbc
5	Engagement with all Members	February	TBC	

	Purpose of Meeting	Date/Venue	Attendees	Public/Private Meeting
	Areas of engagement to be confirmed but potentially around the role and way forward with regards corporate parenting etc.			
6	Visit and Discussion Visits to some specialist services developed for looked after children. What do specialist units provide, why these services are necessary and how to they support looked after children. Visits to : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mariners Service – behavioural support • Parents Group at Mariners • Tremmanna • Meeting with reps from Foster Care Consultative Committee 	Mid February	TBC	tbc
7	Presentations What do other Council's do to support their looked after children including the services they provide, the way they organise to support Corporate Parenting and also any challenges they see in the future supporting looked after children. It is proposed that the following Councils are invited to give presentations to the Panel: Perth and Kinross East Renfrewshire North Lanarkshire.	Late February	Perth and Kinross East Renfrewshire North Lanarkshire	Public
8	Conclusion Final meeting for Members to discuss and determine recommendations based on previous sessions and the evidence provided. Members consider recommendations based on the evidence heard and the discussions at previous meetings. This will include an	March		Private

	Purpose of Meeting	Date/Venue	Attendees	Public/Private Meeting
	assessment for value for money, quality of service, perceived areas of good practice and development.			
9	Recommendations to Scrutiny Committee and thereafter to the Executive. Present findings and recommendations of Scrutiny Panel to Elected Members	TBC	Members	Public

FALKIRK COUNCIL

NOTE of MEETING of the SCRUTINY PANEL – OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN held in the MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, FALKIRK on FRIDAY 3 JULY 2015 at 3.00 PM.

COUNCILLORS:

Colin Chalmers
Gordon Hughes
John McLuckie
Cecil Meiklejohn (Convener)

OFFICERS:

Fiona Campbell, Head Of Policy, Technology & Improvement
Jack Frawley, Committee Officer
Frank Kennedy, Service Manager
David Mackay, Pupil Support Service Manager
Kathy McCarroll, Head of Children & Families and Criminal Justice
Colin Moodie, Depute Chief Governance Officer
Robert Naylor, Director of Children's Services

1. APOLOGIES

An apology was intimated on behalf of Provost Reid.

2. SCRUTINY PANEL SCOPE

Panel members and officers introduced themselves and explained their respective roles in relation to the work of the panel; thereafter Councillor Meiklejohn assumed the chair.

The panel considered a draft scoping document and scrutiny panel guidance. Fiona Campbell provided an overview of the work scrutiny panels typically undertake. She stated that a review of the scrutiny panel guidance would be undertaken shortly. She advised that the work of a scrutiny panel was to review policy and practice. The panel were warned against some of the possible pitfalls such as having an unrealistic or unmanageable work programme. Further, it was important that the panel kept on task and was not pulled in too many directions. She advised the panel that it could recommend pieces of further work to be undertaken in the future if necessary.

Fiona Campbell highlighted the context to the panel including: the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014; the creation of the new Children's Service; that the service was due an inspection in autumn 2015; discussions on looked after children at the performance panel, and Councillors as corporate parents. This scoping meeting was held in order to ensure that the panel had a plan for its work going forward. It was important that the panel gathered the right evidence. She stated that the panel could hear from Council officers, get factual information, meet with stakeholders and hear from expert witnesses. Fiona Campbell also highlighted the importance of sticking to the timescale. She advised that the

panel would be attended by two types of officers: those to support the work of the panel as advisors and experts from the service.

Fiona Campbell provided details on the planned meetings of the panel. The second meeting of the panel would receive a background and context briefing from Frank Kennedy and David Mackay as experts in the field. In response to a question about the format of the meeting, Fiona Campbell stated that a pack of background information would be provided to members in advance of the meeting and that the meeting would consist of a presentation followed by questions and discussion.

Members discussed whether the meeting should be held in public or private due to the sensitivity of the issue. The panel was minded to receive the presentation in public. The panel members then discussed what they hoped to get out of the process and that the panel needed to identify if looked after children were being provided with care which allowed them to achieve the best possible outcomes. Fiona Campbell stated that the scoping document was a flexible document and that the direction of the panel would be under review following each meeting if necessary.

At the third meeting of the panel Fiona Campbell advised that the Council's three services would each be invited to present to the panel in relation to their work with looked after children. The panel asked if they would also receive information from external organisations such as Forth Valley College. Fiona Campbell stated that information regarding the college would be included in the background pack being provided to members for the next meeting. Members then asked about having the employment training unit feed into the process. Fiona Campbell stated that transitions for looked after children would be covered and that Steve Dougan, Support Officer liaises with the college. At the request of the panel, services would be briefed to ensure that their presentations included information on where practice had been improved or changed.

The panel asked a question to clarify the age to which the Council has a duty of responsibility to looked after children. Colin Moodie stated that in relation to the new legal duties accompanying the introduction of corporate parenting would be covered in the form of a briefing note on the legislative side of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and that this would be supplemented by information on the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011. The panel also discussed monitoring and tracking arrangements regarding attainment.

Fiona Campbell stated that it was proposed that at the fourth meeting of the panel young people and advocates are invited to attend to allow engagement with young people with the purpose of understanding the issues which are important to them. For the fifth meeting of the panel it was proposed that presentations are received from a number of specialist and intensive support services. The following meeting would involve the panel making visits to some specialist services developed for looked after children. David Mackay asked the panel if they would find it beneficial when visiting the Mariners Support Service – behavioural support to meet with parents, the panel agreed that would be very valuable and noted that parents have different challenges.

The subsequent meeting of the panel would look at what other Councils do to support their looked after children. It was proposed that speakers from other authorities were invited to present to the panel on the services they provide and the way they organise

support for corporate parents. It was proposed that Perth & Kinross, East Renfrewshire and North Lanarkshire Councils are invited to present.

The panel would then have a conclusions meeting to make sure that it had covered the areas it had sought to and to agree its recommendations. Fiona Campbell advised that recommendations from the panel would first be presented to the scrutiny committee and then, following consideration at committee, the next stage would be for referral to the Executive.

Colin Moodie raised that in previous panels the wider body of elected members had been engaged for their opinions, he suggested that all members could be e-mailed for their views or invited to attend a meeting. He stated that this could be done later on in the process once the issues were clearer and that doing so would reflect that all elected members are corporate parents.

The panel discussed arrangements for the meeting where young people and advocates would be invited and suggested that it might be preferable to have the meeting take place in the evening to make attendance more convenient. Fiona Campbell and Kathy McCarroll would liaise to take forward arrangements in the most suitable way.

The panel discussed dates for future meetings and agreed the dates for the first two meetings as:

- 1 September 2015 at 2pm, and
- 22 September 2015 at 2pm.

FALKIRK COUNCIL

NOTE of MEETING of the SCRUTINY PANEL – OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN held in the MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, FALKIRK on TUESDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 2015 at 2.00 PM.

COUNCILLORS:

Colin Chalmers
Gordon Hughes
John McLuckie
Cecil Meiklejohn (Convener)
Provost Pat Reid

OFFICERS:

Fiona Campbell, Head Of Policy, Technology & Improvement
Jack Frawley, Committee Officer
Frank Kennedy, Service Manager
David Mackay, Pupil Support Service Manager
Kathy McCarroll, Head of Children & Families and Criminal Justice
Colin Moodie, Depute Chief Governance Officer

1. APOLOGIES

No apologies were received.

2. PRESENTATIONS

The panel was provided with a presentation by Colin Moodie on the legal context and legal considerations regarding looked after children and service delivery. The presentation covered the following points:

- the definition of looked after children at home and away from home;
- an explanation of key jargon used in the field;
- information on the Children's Panel and Child Protection Register;
- details of the process of permanence orders and adoption;
- an overview of the most relevant legislation including the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014;
- statistical information on the number of looked after children locally and in other authorities;
- a breakdown of the placement types nationally and in Falkirk Council, and
- information on the duties of corporate parents.

The panel asked if the number of young people who could ask for continuing care was known. Kathy McCarroll advised that as the Act had only come into force this year the uptake of provision was not yet known, but that the service had identified ten young people who were eligible. She stated that if a young person left care before they were fifteen and a half they would not be eligible for continuing care. Continuing care related to financial and peer support. She made reference to the issue of homelessness and that some former looked after children struggled to find suitable housing as hostel provision did not

meet their needs. The Council does not have specialist housing provision for former looked after children, but were looking at options around this.

Members discussed the age limit for receiving continuing care. Kathy McCarroll stated that the provision was part of the Act and that there was not guidance on the matter. Who Cares? Scotland had lobbied the Scottish Government on the issue of the maximum age for after care. This age could be increased in specific cases by order of the Minister. The panel were advised that it was unusual for young people who were near the maximum age to have their care order ended as they were not old enough to voluntarily leave the service.

The panel discussed the role of the Children's Hearing system and public perception of Children's Panel members. A question was asked regarding whether or not the Children's Panel could determine what type of placement a child was given. Kathy McCarroll stated that the Children's Panel was able to recommend placement in a residential school but it needed to be assessed as an appropriate placement for that child. A social worker would determine if the child could cope in particular settings and if a place was available. She further clarified the differences between residential care and a residential school, the latter of which provided care and education at one location.

In response to a question on the higher proportionate use of residential facilities in Falkirk compared with the national average, Colin Moodie advised that a lot of work would be required to unpick why that was the case. He highlighted that although there were more looked after children away from home, there were less children in total looked after in Falkirk proportionately, when compared to the national average.

The panel asked if there was a lack of facilities and foster carers locally. Kathy McCarroll advised that the service was negotiating with providers to increase the number of local residential placements available. It was anticipated that there would be eight additional beds provided. She advised that the service continually sought to increase the number of foster carers in the area and that word of mouth had proven to be the most successful recruitment method. In partnership with Falkirk Football Club some free advertising had been accessed at football matches with leaflets handed out. Fiona Campbell advised that Falkirk had a higher number of foster carers than the national average.

Members then sought information on the types of relationships involved in kinship care situations. Kathy McCarroll stated that in most cases the child was looked after by a grandparent and that in almost all instances, it was a family member.

The panel discussed the recruitment and retention of foster carers exploring what approach was taken by other Councils and levels of remuneration. Kathy McCarroll informed the panel of the three levels of payment to foster carers in Falkirk, which were dependent on experience. Further to the basic rate, foster carers received an age related allowance for each child in their care. She advised that all Councils take a different approach and that currently foster carers were exempt from claiming benefits, but that this may change under universal credit. In terms of recruitment and retention there was pressure from competition with private agencies. The service heard from current foster carers that money was not their main motivation and that they believed the Council offered the best training and support to foster carers in the area.

There was discussion on outcomes achieved by placement type and that children looked after away from home generally had better outcomes than those looked after at home.

The panel thanked Colin Moodie for his presentation.

The panel was then provided with a presentation by Frank Kennedy and David Mackay on outcomes for looked after children. The presentation covered the following points:

- statistical information on the number of looked after children;
- information on the national picture regarding placement types used;
- school attendance, exclusion rates, tariff scores, and positive destinations for children looked after at home and away from home;
- placement costs and the stability of such placements, and
- anonymous case studies.

The panel further discussed recruitment of foster carers. Kathy McCarroll advised that on average it took between 80 and 100 hours to assess someone as a foster carer from their expression of interest to making a placement. Initially interest parties were invited to an information evening, which was held twice a year.

Members asked what the future pathways were for looked after children who entered secure units and if they were placed into other care. Kathy McCarroll stated that the procedures were robust and the Chief Social Work Officer had to take a view on the best provision with the head of the unit. There was a weekly review of this and a further three monthly review by the Children's Panel. Frank Kennedy informed the panel about the transition process undertaken with children in secure units to make any future move go positively. Kathy McCarroll advised that generally the pathway was to a residential placement first and then home when appropriate.

Provost Reid left the meeting at this point.

The panel discussed additional support needs and asked about the provision made available to looked after children in this area. Frank Kennedy stated that there were contracts with other providers of family support services and their role was to intervene and prevent a situation resulting in a child becoming looked after. David Mackay stated that the Council had a robust exclusion policy and that before the decision was taken to exclude a looked after child there must be discussion with the service manager. Schools were supported and challenged with the aim of increasing attendance as that would lead to better outcomes and more positive destinations.

Members asked if former looked after children could be given higher priority on the housing list. Fiona Campbell advised that a presentation would be given at a future meeting of the panel from Housing.

The panel discussed that for a future meeting on specialist services an invitation could be made to the NHS. Kathy McCarroll stated that the looked after children psychologist was scheduled to present as part of the specialist services meeting. The psychologist was funded by the Council although remained an NHS employee but the Council was able to determine which young people were prioritised. Further, the Council had determined the content of the job specification when the post was created. Fiona Campbell advised that during previous discussion at the scrutiny committee there had been consideration of whether or not the post should be funded by the Council, NHS or a joint funded project.

The panel thanked Frank Kennedy and David Mackay for their presentation.

FALKIRK COUNCIL

NOTE of MEETING of the SCRUTINY PANEL – OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN held in the MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, FALKIRK on TUESDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2015 at 2.00 PM.

COUNCILLORS:

Gordon Hughes
John McLuckie
Cecil Meiklejohn (Convener)
Provost Pat Reid

OFFICERS:

Fiona Campbell, Head Of Policy and ICT Improvement
Steve Dougan, Senior Phase/Opportunities for All
Coordinator
Jack Frawley, Committee Officer
Peter Graham, Principal Teacher
Elizabeth Hood, Neighbourhood & Access to Housing
Manager
Frank Kennedy, Service Manager
Jennifer Litts, Head of Housing
David Mackay, Pupil Support Service Manager
Cathy Megarry, Service Manager
Colin Moodie, Depute Chief Governance Officer
Robert Naylor, Director of Children's Services
Mary Pitcaithly, Chief Executive
Vivien Thomson, Service Manager

1. APOLOGIES

An apology was intimated on behalf of Councillor Chalmers.

2. NOTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The panel approved the note of the meeting of 1 September 2015.

3. SERVICE PRESENTATIONS

(a) Oxbang School Support Service

The panel were provided with a presentation from the perspective of education by David Mackay, Pupil Support Service Manager.

The panel discussed the impact of attendance on attainment and the need for early intervention. David Mackay advised that there was an internal looked after children scrutiny group which meet on a six weekly basis to monitor those pupils with attendance below 80%. The service also asked schools for predicted grades, including at primary, in order to track progress. There was work ongoing to address the discrepancy in attendance

rates between children looked after at home and those looked after away from home, the latter generally having higher rates of attendance.

Members discussed the Oxbang School and Support Service. David Mackay advised that the provision had been adapted to give an enhanced offering in relation to nurture and that the school had been recognised as an example of good practice. He highlighted that where there had been behavioural challenges these had related to emotion expression difficulties. The school was working closely with families and had an open door policy with parents. In relation to a question on children moving from the school to mainstream, David Mackay stated that since the start of the spring term 3 children had entered mainstream with ongoing support.

The panel then discussed measures in place to avoid exclusions in mainstream and commented on the duty to provide high quality education to all children. David Mackay advised that schools have a range of options available to them such as staged interventions, detention, removal to other classes and nurture provision. However, he advised that in the case of a significant event, such as a violent incident, the options open to the school are restricted as safety is a key priority. In response to a question on the differences in exclusion rates between looked after children and others, the panel were advised that looked after children were 7 to 8 times more likely to be excluded. Robert Naylor advised that there had been a recent policy change which meant that no looked after child could be excluded without reference to central management.

The panel thanked David Mackay for his informative presentation.

(b) Strengths and Challenges in Meeting the Needs of Looked After Children: A Social Work Perspective

The panel were provided with a presentation from the perspective of social work by Cathy Megarry, Service Manager.

The panel discussed mental health services provision to young people and asked about Government funding for these services. Vivien Thomson stated that Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) had bid for funding and that Kathy McCarroll was liaising with the service to discuss best use of the funding. Cathy Megarry made reference to the partnership work which was carried out by the team around the child which included teachers, social workers, health professionals and the family. The group works to plan the best support for a young person. For looked after children a more formal review process is also undertaken.

Members discussed the provision of accommodation for children and young people and highlighted that some units allowed young people to be part of a wider community but others were in quite isolated settings. Cathy Megarry stated that it was important to have a range of services to meet a range of needs. She advised that children looked after in rural settings were able to access local community facilities through transport arrangements and buses. She stated that the feedback received by the service was that children in rural settings were as happy as those accommodated in towns and that both settings have resulted in positive outcomes.

The panel discussed transitions and the use of halfway houses. Cathy Megarry stated that there was work to be done in this area particularly in relation to corporate parenting

responsibilities. Vivien Thomson advised that discussions had begun regarding the provision of a move-on flat at the Tremanna unit. Cathy Megarry stated that children's plans were now more outcome focussed and that through the introduction of new legislation the voice of young people had a more prominent part in influencing services. The service was increasing the provision of residential care in central Falkirk by four beds and there were two additional beds being brought on stream in Denny.

Members then discussed the emotional impact of this work on staff and asked about case loads. Cathy Megarry advised that there were 290 live cases with each team and that the service had robust supervision processes in place including a one-to-one with staff at least once a month. All team managers are accessible to their staff and teams support each other. There is further work carried out in relation to training and induction and the service recognised that the work does take a toll.

The panel thanked Cathy Megarry for her informative presentation.

(c) Positive Destinations

The panel were provided with a presentation by Steve Dougan, Senior Phase/Opportunities for All Coordinator.

The panel discussed the challenge of the wider economic climate on achieving positive destinations and commented that a number of positive destinations reported were not sustained. Steve Dougan stated that the information provided was on school leaver destinations, previously provided by Skills Development Scotland, and that participation measures tracked young people up to 20 years old. In the previous two weeks the most recent statistics had been released. The service sought to obtain the names of those included in the data in order to liaise with schools and identify if positive destinations had been maintained. He advised that if former looked after young people became unemployed and registered at the Job Centre Plus then the Council was informed of this. The employment training unit continued to advertise and make opportunities available to young people. In trying to achieve positive destinations the service had redesigned its careers information provision to allow young people to talk of their aspirations and work toward meeting them. However, the service also monitored labour market opportunities to ensure that what a young person wanted was achievable. Mary Pitcaithly assured the panel that the service was focussed on ensuring that no young person slipped through the cracks in provision by being as joined up with partners as possible. She also advised that the Council gave priority to care leavers in its modern apprentice scheme.

The panel thanked Steve Dougan for his informative presentation.

(d) Using Data to Help “Get It Right For Every Child”

The panel were provided with a presentation by Peter Graham, Principal Teacher, Denny High School.

The panel asked what extra support was provided to looked after children as they were at a high level on the risk matrix. Peter Graham advised that the tracker tool highlighted weekly progress. As looked after children approached their leaving date they were taken to speak with both further education and higher education institutions. From the next school session a UCAS portal would be provided. The service sought to ensure that looked after

and former looked after children identify themselves as such on application forms. In relation to years one and two he advised that if a child was looked after then this was included in their pupil profile and the Heads of House do social education with looked after children to raise aspirations.

Members asked about the numbers of looked after children who progressed onto further and higher education. Peter Graham advised that after the meeting he could provide the information for those from Denny High School and Steve Dougan information for the Council area. In relation to a question on the challenge of transition to a university environment, Peter Graham stated that Stirling University had been proactive in asking the Council to be told which applicants were looked after so that they could put support in place. Further, universities can access additional funding to support looked after students. Steve Dougan stated that there had been discussions about the possibility of a summer school to aid transition.

The panel thanked Peter Graham for his informative presentation.

(e) Housing

The panel were provided with a presentation from the perspective of housing by Elizabeth Hood, Access to Housing Manager.

The panel discussed the transition for looked after young people when entering independent accommodation for the first time. They highlighted that being allocated a tenancy close to people with chaotic lives can cause conflict and negatively affect looked after young people who are on a transitional journey. They discussed the provision of halfway house options for the move from school and residential as moving to independent accommodation was a lot to deal with at one time. They also highlighted that the bidding process could be intimidating and asked if the service provided support to secure the most appropriate type of tenancy.

Robert Naylor stated that there were currently gaps in the provision such as in relation to halfway houses. He highlighted that for young people in Tremanna there was the option of moving to the flat next door and to then move to a supported tenancy as a staged process.

Members raised concern in relation to care leavers becoming isolated and suggested that a group home setting would fill a gap. Jennifer Litts stated that the average age for a young person to leave the family home is 26, whereas it is often expected that a looked after young person will maintain a tenancy at a much younger age. She advised that the position had been to not separate provision for homeless people and looked after young people but that if the view of the Council was that these groups should not be mixed then arrangements would be reviewed. The current set up was for generic mixed provision. She stated that there was a key worker who made bids for looked after young people and that informed decisions were taken about where these young people should move to, for example if they should be placed near to their family etc.

(f) Corporate Parenting

The panel agreed to continue consideration of the presentation to a further meeting to allow full consideration of the topic.

FALKIRK COUNCIL

NOTE of MEETING of the SCRUTINY PANEL – OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN held in the MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, FALKIRK on FRIDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2015 at 2.30 PM.

COUNCILLORS: Gordon Hughes
John McLuckie
Cecil Meiklejohn (convener)
Provost Pat Reid

OFFICERS: Fiona Campbell, Head Of Policy and ICT Improvement
Jack Frawley, Committee Officer
Robert Naylor, Director of Children's Services
Mary Pitcaithly, Chief Executive
Vivien Thomson, Service Manager

1. APOLOGIES

An apology was intimated on behalf of Councillor Chalmers.

2. NOTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The panel approved the note of the meeting of 22 September 2015.

3. CORPORATE PARENTING PRESENTATION

The panel were provided with a presentation by Robert Naylor and Fiona Campbell on corporate parenting (attached to this note), it covered the following points:-

- what is a corporate parent – roles and responsibilities in legislation and good practice;
- where we are on the journey in Falkirk;
- brief overview of approach to corporate parenting and in particular champions, and
- way forward for corporate parenting in Falkirk.

The panel sought clarification on which organisations had responsibilities as corporate parents. Mary Pitcaithly advised that the organisations on the Falkirk Community Planning Partnership were corporate parents and highlighted work carried out by Falkirk Community Trust with looked after children and the arts. Vivien Thomson stated that there were twenty four organisations listed in the guidance with corporate parenting responsibilities. Mary Pitcaithly advised that the Council was working actively in this area with both the employment training unit and community and learning development making significant contributions.

The panel discussed funding for projects to support looked after children across the partnership. It was noted that the looked after children's psychologist was solely funded by the Council. The panel discussed the referral process to the looked after children's

psychologist, waiting times and qualifying criteria to access Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Members expressed concern that the requirement to have been diagnosed with a mental health condition prevented many people accessing the service who needed it. Vivien Thomson advised that young people were able to access the looked after children's psychologist service without an existing diagnosis of mental illness and that a consultation was offered by CAMHS to young people following an attempt to take their own life.

Members discussed the role of Police Scotland in signposting and highlighted the valuable work carried out by community constables. Fiona Campbell stated that it would be useful to know if Police Scotland were aware of which children and young people in a community are looked after. She stated that Police Scotland was developing national guidance on its approach to corporate parenting. Robert Naylor advised that national organisations were able to develop national plans. The panel commented that the police had an important role to play in early intervention and contributing to a multi-agency approach.

The panel raised concern regarding challenges around the housing bidding process for looked after young people, a suggestion was made that looked after young people could get prioritised for certain areas and suitable housing. It was noted that Jennifer Litts, Head of Housing was undertaking work in this area.

The panel then discussed the approach for Falkirk to a potential Champions Board. Fiona Campbell advised that there was an increasing shift toward champions boards and that Dundee Council was considered an example of best practice nationally. The approach taken by a number of authorities had been considered and information on the format at Argyll & Bute Council; Leicestershire County Council; Lancashire County Council; Midlothian Council, and Dundee City Council. She noted that a proposal would be developed by the strategy group in the new year following determination of funding.

Fiona Campbell stated that the strategy group was working with a number of key principles, namely:-

- engage children and young people;
- develop a model that is sustainable and not tokenistic;
- engage with partners, and
- consider the role of members.

The panel discussed the approach to be taken locally and highlighted a number of points, including:-

- that the model selected should not be too intrusive into a young person's life;
- that members role should be to provide strategic direction and not line manage officers;
- that different approaches may be required for children looked after at home and for those for whom the Council was the main parent;
- that members should most likely not be directly involved with looked after young people but could have a role in monitoring their progress and wellbeing, and
- that a former looked after child should be a member of any champions board.