

The background of the slide features the Falkirk Council Coat of Arms. It is a shield divided into four quarters. The top-left quarter shows a saltire (X-shaped cross) on a blue field. The top-right quarter shows a stag's head facing left on a red field. The bottom-left quarter shows a sailing ship on a blue field. The bottom-right quarter shows a lion passant guardant on a red field. Above the shield is a crown with four fleurs-de-lis. Below the shield is a ribbon with the motto 'A'NE FOR A'.

Agenda Item 13

**Falkirk's Attainment Challenge :
National Strategic Partnership –
Young Scot Looked After
Children Project**

Falkirk Council

Title: Falkirk's Attainment Challenge : National Strategic Partnership – Young Scot Looked After Children Project
Meeting: Education, Children and Young People Executive
Date: 17 September 2019
Submitted By: Director of Children's Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide details of Falkirk's successful funding bid via the Scottish Governments Attainment Challenge : National Strategic Partnership-Young Scot for a Looked After Children Project.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Education, Children and Young People Executive is asked to:

- (i) note the award of £100,000 funding from the Scottish Government for Falkirk's Attainment Challenge: National Strategic Partnership (Young Scot Looked after Children Project); and**
- (ii) request the Director of Children's Services to provide a report detailing the progress and impact of Falkirk's Looked After Children Project to the Education, Children and Young People Executive at the end of the 2019/20 academic year.**

3. Background

- 3.1 In December 2018, the Scottish Government approached Children's Services to assess interest in participating in Phase 2 of the Attainment Challenge: National Strategic Partnership.
- 3.2 The Scottish Government are keen to support Falkirk Council and its partners working with Young Scot to tackle inequalities, improve attainment and reduce rural poverty, with a focus on children and young people who are looked after by the Council.
- 3.3 Phase 1 of the Attainment Challenge: National Strategic Partnership ran from September 2017 to March 2019. Falkirk Council was one of three Local Authorities selected for Phase 2 and were awarded £100,000 to develop their Project, which will run until March 2020.

4. Considerations

4.1 Key Aims of the Project

- Increasing the use and fully realise the benefits of smart technology such as the Young Scot National Entitlements Card and the Young Scot Platform to improve outcomes for Falkirk's looked after children and young people.
- Maximising the use of Young Scot National Entitlements Card as a way of reducing the stigma of poverty for Falkirk's looked after children and young people.

The Project plans to:

- Develop, with First Bus, the establishment of a travel scheme for Falkirk's looked after children and young people. This will reduce stigma and improve access to services and friendships, and employment and training opportunities;
- Develop, with Falkirk Community Trust, the establishment of a leisure, cultural and heritage scheme for Falkirk's looked after children and young people. This will reduce stigma and improve health and wellbeing and particularly mental health;
- Develop a rewards scheme that would incentivise Falkirk's looked after children and young people's participation in school and wider community life. This will Reduce stigma and improve attendance at school and improve attainment/achievement; and
- Develop a rewards scheme that would prioritise increased discounts from Falkirk's retailers for Falkirk's looked after children and young people. This will contribute to reducing stigma and improving attainment/achievement.

The use of the both the Young Scot National Entitlements Card and the Young Scot Platform is key to taking the above developments forward.

4.2 Falkirk Council Corporate Parenting Priorities

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 requires the publication of a Corporate Parenting Plan, detailing how organisations will take forward their corporate parenting duties. Falkirk Council have embedded this within our Integrated Children's Services Plan and identified three priorities.

- Champions Board
- Awareness Raising
- Development of the Family Firm approach

These are subject to separate reporting, but the current project links closely the work of Falkirk Champions Board.

4.3 Falkirk Champions Board

Falkirk Champions Board formally launched in September 2017. The Champions Board is a way for Falkirk's looked after children and young people to have a voice in how they are cared for, and to influence policy and practice.

It meets four times per year, and as well as five care experience young people, membership includes Falkirk Council Chief Executive, Chair of Falkirk Children's Commission Leadership Group, 4 elected members representing the main political parties and other corporate parents.

In addition to the formal Board, there is an active participation group which meets weekly. The voice of care experienced young people via the Champions Board work has already influenced a range of practice and policy matters.

The Champions Board Action Plan includes issues which are barriers to care experienced young people achieving positive outcomes. This includes the impact of mental health issues and transport costs.

As such, the Champion's Board has been exploring how to improve transport arrangements and how they could have better access to leisure, cultural and learning and development services given evidence that this has a positive impact on mental health and therefore improves their ability to access employment and training. Access to travel and leisure/cultural opportunities are a core aspect of Falkirk's Attainment Challenge: National Strategic Partnership-Young Scot Looked After Children Project.

4.4 External Funding-Life Changes Trust

In September 2018, Falkirk Council supported a successful external funding application to the Life Changes Trust which is assisting the cultural changes required for the council to be a good corporate parent. This project, Relationships First, involves building the capacity of a group of young people to become Service Design Change Agents. Young people from Champions Board and Leaving Care Service are working alongside Falkirk Council staff to promote new delivery models which take account of the needs and aspirations of young people. The aim of the project is that 'corporate parents in Falkirk Council are better able to love and care for care experience young people in the way they would their own family.'

4.5 Closer to Home Strategy

Children's Services Closer to Home Strategy was developed following a strategic review. It aims to keep children safely at home, or where this is not possible, within the local community. This is being achieved by reducing the use of external and often costly care provision which does not always deliver good outcomes for young people.

The principles of Getting It Right for Every Child and early intervention/prevention are central to the approach of the Strategy as is retaining young people within Falkirk to enable connections with community, friend's, leisure and school. Consultation with young people, and the key messages from the national care review, also underlines the importance of asset based approaches to engagement and empowerment and of family and community connections being supported and retained - 'what would it take' for young people to be supported in their community.

5. Implications

Financial

- 5.1 £100,000 is provided by the Scottish Government via an external grant to develop these plans.

Legal

- 5.2 None

Risk

- 5.3 None

Equalities

- 5.4 Regulations and Guidance make specific reference to compliance with the Equality Act with this Project specifically targeting Looked After Children.

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

- 5.5 None

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The Young Scot Looked After Children Project aims to make it easier for looked after children and young people to access services and activities that are available to them. The Project will also support them to access information and opportunities to improve their outcomes in a non-stigmatising way.
- 6.2 As part of our corporate parenting duties Falkirk Council and partners are committed to developing innovative ways of working with looked after children and young people that will make a difference and to enable them to reach their full potential by closing the poverty related attainment gap.

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Appendix

None

List of Background Papers

None