

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 three-masted sailing ship on a blue field. The bottom-right quarter shows a crowned eagle with wings spread on a red field. Above the shield is a crown with four fleurs-de-lis. A banner at the bottom of the shield contains the motto 'AINE FOR A' in white capital letters on a blue background.

Agenda Item 11

Falkirk/Young Scot – Looked After Children Project Update

Falkirk Council

Title: Falkirk/Young Scot – Looked After Children Project Update
Meeting: Education Children and Young People Executive
Date: 01 June 2021
Submitted By: Director of Children's Services

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Education, Children and Young People Executive (EC&YP) with an update on the progress and impact of Falkirk's Attainment Challenge Funded - Young Scot Looked After Children Project.

2. Recommendations

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

- (i) note the content of the overall report; and**
- (ii) agree that Officers proceed with the Project in 2021-22 to further progress the aims and outcomes as detailed within Section 3 and 4.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The EC&YP Executive on 19 September 2019, requested that a detailed Report showing the progress and impact of the project at the end of the 2019/20 academic year.

Information on Project

- 3.2 Falkirk's Young Scot Looked After Children Project is part of the national Scottish Attainment Challenge initiative. It forms part of a wider partnership between the Scottish Government, Young Scot, Local Authorities, Transport Scotland, the Improvement Service and the National Entitlement Card Programme Office.
- 3.3 The Project was identified as a means of supporting and progressing the positive work of Falkirk Champions Board and it successfully attracted £100k of funding.

Aims of Project

3.4 The Project targets three specific care experienced groups:

- Kinship
- Looked after at home
- Care leavers/continuing care

The areas were identified by young people as requiring the most support.

Falkirk Champions Board (FCB)

3.5 The FCB has been established since 2016 with funding from the Life Changes Trust and Community Learning & Development. As part of the Champions Board, 10 priorities were identified by care experienced young people and agreed by Corporate Parents. 3 of the main priorities highlighted areas that if improved would support and help better outcomes for care experienced young people:

- Access to travel
- Access to leisure
- Support with mental health and wellbeing

It was viewed that by improving and progressing first two priorities that it would lead to an improvement in young people's physical wellbeing and mental health.

4. Considerations

4.1 Falkirk's Young Scot Looked After Children's Project Objectives

The stated objectives are:

- Improve the health and wellbeing of young people living in Falkirk who are facing barriers to their attainment
- Removal of the financial barriers when engaging in education, extra-curricular activities, and employment; and
- Providing free access to services and support without stigma.

4.2 Progress Made

During 2019/20 Falkirk Council partnered with Young Scot to support local care experienced young people facing barriers to their attainment. This partnership approach has resulted in **75** care experienced young people being offered:

- Free travel
- Free leisure access
- Young Scot Rewards.

All of these entitlements are accessed using their Young Scot National Entitlement Cards (Young Scot NEC).

4.3 Impact of Covid-19 on the Project

The Coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on the lives of young people within the Falkirk Council area including those care experienced young people. Partners had to completely change the way they work and engage with care experienced young people on the Project.

The successive lockdown periods forced partners to become more creative in the ways they engage, communicate and support care experienced young people in order to maintain and sustain their involvement in the Project.

Some of the young people have received support to ensure that they have the digital connectivity and devices that enable them to sustain contact with partners.

4.4 Outcomes and Achievements

Bus Travel

- Young people from September 2019 – March 2021 have made over 3,000 journeys saving them an estimated £3,000.
- This was delivered via their Young Scot NEC being loaded with First Bus tickets using a Transport Scotland application, which they could then use for bus travel across Falkirk.
- Spend to 31 March 2021, **c£20,000**.

“It has made a difference as I have seen a huge saving in money and I am able to get to places I need to go easier rather than worrying about the cost of it”

Young person who participated within the Project

Leisure Access

- Young people were given access to a Falkirk Community Trust (FCT) Leisure Membership, using their Young Scot NEC as proof of entitlement. Young people were encouraged to attend by staff who supported them.
- Spend to 31 March 2021, **c£16,000**.

“It has made my life easy because I don’t have to pay for travel, and it saves me a lot of money”

Young person who participated within the Project

Young Scot Rewards

- Young people taking part in the Project accessed vouchers for supermarkets, clothes, and entertainment.
- The young people earned Young Scot Rewards points for completing surveys, attending workshops, youth groups and extra-curricular activities which they could exchange for these rewards.
- When lockdown restrictions allowed, the young people were also able to exchange their points for driving lessons and vouchers for coffee shops.
- Spend to 31 March 2021, **c£10,000**.

"It has gotten me to go out and engage more"
Young person who participated within the Project

5. Implications

Financial/ Resources

- 5.1 Up to date 31 March 2021, **c£46,000** has been expended on this project leaving a balance of **c£54,000** remaining in the current year.

As a result of Covid the Scottish Government has agreed to allow the balance of funding to be carried over to 2021/22.

Legal/ Risk

- 5.2 None

Equalities

- 5.3 Under section 58(1)(c) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, corporate parents have a duty to promote the interests of care experienced young people.

The statutory guidance on corporate parenting makes it clear that this duty includes taking action to tackle the discrimination faced by care experienced young people. This means that discrimination based on care identity has been recognised at a statutory level in Scotland, and corporate parents have a duty to tackle that discrimination.

The project helps promote this duty.

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

- 5.4 None

6. Conclusions

- The Young Scot – Looked After Children Project plays a crucial role in supporting Falkirk's care experienced young people through the provision of free travel, free access to leisure activities and improving health and well-being.
- Throughout the Covid situation Project partners have developed creative, innovative, and flexible ways to support care experienced young peoples and to ensure their continued participation in the Project.
- Evidence suggests the most profound impact of the pandemic will relate to young people's mental health and wellbeing. Whilst we have yet to see

the true extent of this potential impact on Falkirk's young people, it is evident that this Project has provided support and positive experiences for those young people and this work will continue in 2021/2022 in line with the funding available.

Director of Children's Service

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Date:

Appendices

'None.'

List of Background Papers:

The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:

- None