

West Dunbartonshire Council

Report by the Executive Director of Educational Services

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee: 14 September 2011

Subject: Educational Outcomes for Scotland's Looked After Children (LAC), 2009-2010

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides information to members on the Scottish Government's first annual summary of data on the educational outcomes of looked after children.

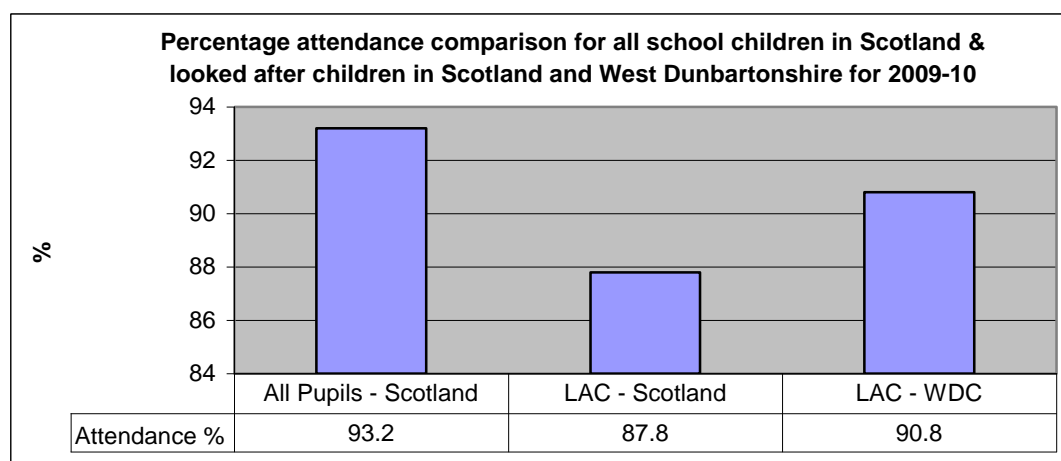
2. Background

- 2.1 Children can be Looked After at home, in which case they continue to live with their family but under supervision, or Looked After away from home accommodated in foster care, residential care or residential school.
- 2.2 The new publication presents key findings on a range of educational outcome statistics for children or young people who have been Looked After continuously during the 12-month period in different types of care placements, and for pupils with multiple placements within the school year. There were 9 West Dunbartonshire children in this category for the purposes of this report, although a significantly higher number of children within West Dunbartonshire are looked after at any given time.
- 2.3 The statistics from the Government's report have been supplemented by the addition of data from West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC) thereby forming a second set of statistics which forms the basis of the analysis within this report.

3. Main Issue

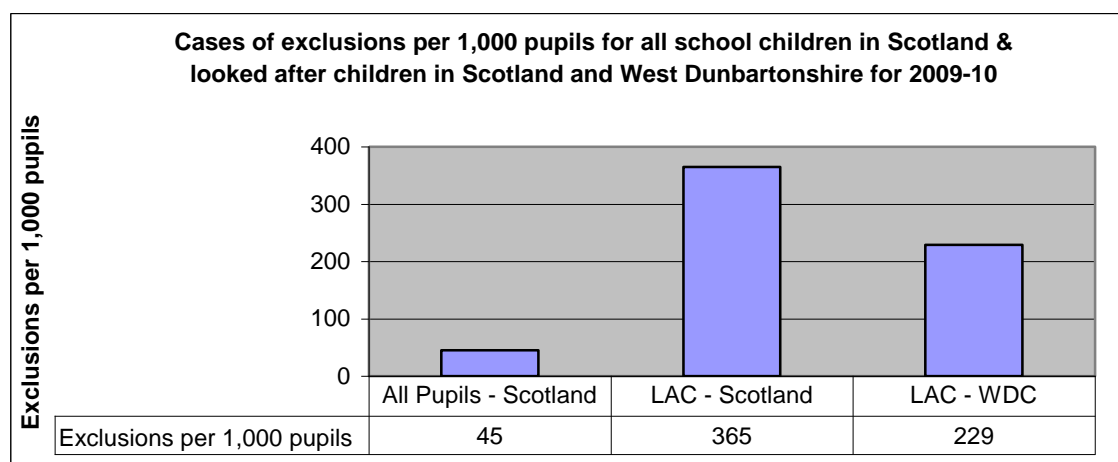
Attendance

- 3.1 Table 1 shows the percentage attendance of WDC's Looked After learners compared to national figures. Overall school attendance rate for Looked After children from West Dunbartonshire was 3 per cent higher than the national rate of 87.8 per cent in 2009/10. However, the attendance rate for all school pupils in Scotland was 2.4 per cent higher than West Dunbartonshire Looked After children. WDC's Looked After learners have the 6th highest attendance rate from among local authorities

Table 1

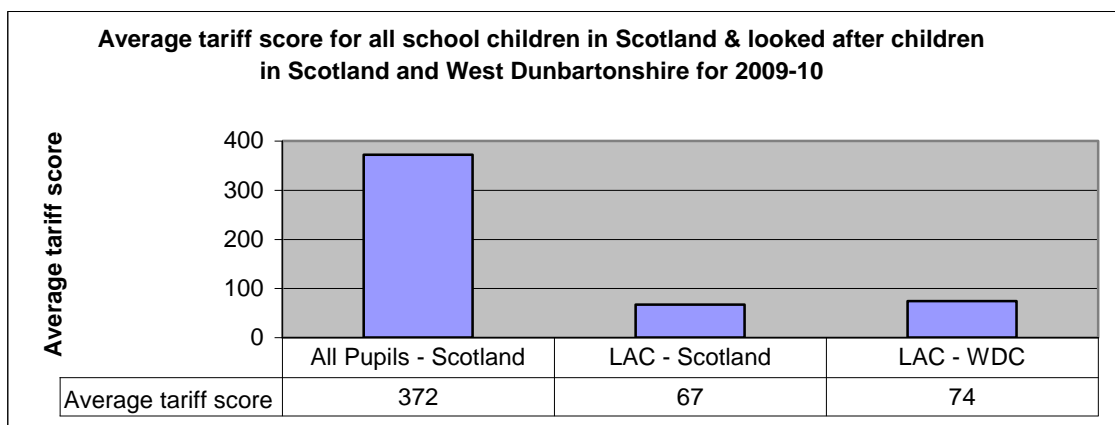
Exclusions

- 3.2** Table 2 shows the cases of exclusions per 1000 for WDC's Looked After learners compared to national figures. Overall exclusion rate for Looked After children from WDC was lower by 136 per 1,000 than the national rate of 365 per 1,000 pupils. Looked After learners from WDC have 7th lowest exclusion rate per 1,000 pupils among local authorities.

Table 2

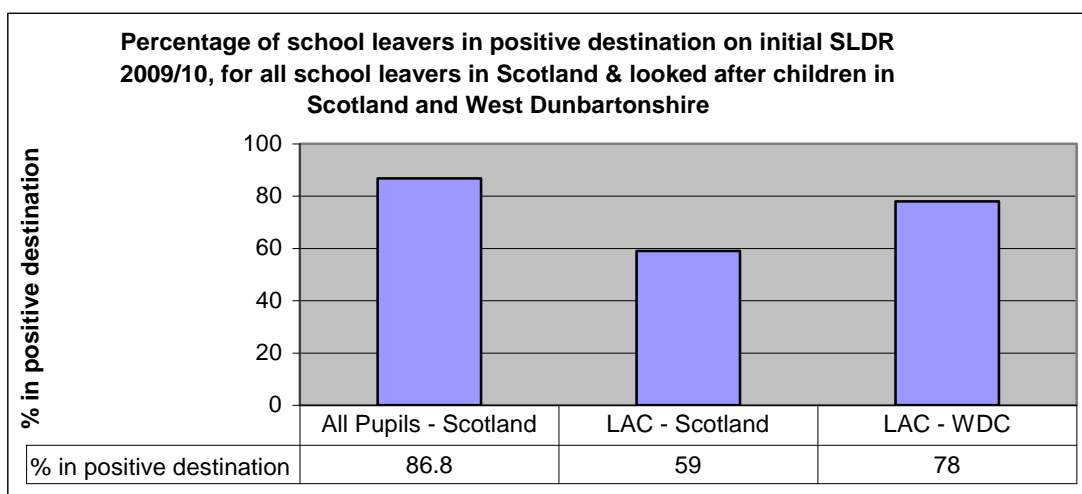
Attainment

- 3.3** Table 3 shows the average "tariff score" of WDC's Looked After learners compared to the national figures. Average tariff score for West Dunbartonshire Looked After children who left school during 2009/10 was 74 compared to 67 for their equivalent in Scotland. Looked After learners from WDC have the 12th highest average "tariff score" among local authorities.
- 3.4** The Unified Points Score Scale is an extended version of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) Scottish Tariff points system. The tariff score of a pupil is calculated by simply adding together all the tariff points accumulated from all the different course levels and awards he/she attains.

Table 3

School Leavers Destinations

- 3.4** Table 4 shows the percentage of WDC's Looked After learners school leavers in positive destinations for 2009/10 compared to the national figures. Initial figures for Looked After learners from WDC in positive destinations was 78 per cent compared to 59 per cent at the national level.
- 3.5** The initial destination count was taken in September 2010. A follow up count was taken in March 2011 which showed 56 per cent of Looked After learners from WDC sustaining their positive destination. At the national level this figure was 44 per cent.

Table 4

4. People Implications

- 4.1** There are no people implications

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** There continues to be a significant financial investment in school based measures for Looked After Children particularly if at risk of being excluded or not attending. Many of the measures are dependent on enhanced pupil-staff ratios, and intensive input from specialist staff from Education, Social Work and Health. These services require additional funding which is provided from the Community Planning Partnership investment, on top of the mainstream budget

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** Failure to deliver improved educational outcomes for Looked After learners represents a risk to their future wellbeing and achievements.
- 6.2** Failure to deliver services for Looked After children represents a risk that the Council may fail to discharge its duties under the terms of the Additional Support for Learning Act and the Children Scotland Act 1995 as well as Scottish Government guidance on the responsibility of local authorities as Corporate Parents to their Looked After Children (We Can and Must do Better 2007)

7. Equalities, Health & Human Rights Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 7.1** No significant issues were identified in a screening for potential equality impact for this report.

8. Strategic Assessment

- 8.1** The information from this report demonstrates that Looked After learners are being supported and are therefore better equipped to benefit from employment, training or education opportunities thereby contributing to the social and economic regeneration priority.
- 8.2** The information from this report demonstrates that the judicious application of funding within an early intervention preventative model may prevent the need for high levels of public resources to be spent at a later date to alleviate social problems and tackling “failure demand.” This accords with the Council’s Financial Strategy.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 9.1** The attendance and exclusion rates demonstrate that WDC’s looked after learners are achieving better outcomes than the similar cohort elsewhere in Scotland; however, there is further improvement required before the figures reach the national norm for all learners.
- 9.2** The average tariff score for WDC’s Looked After learners is ranked 12th in terms of local authority ranking; however, there is significant further improvement required before the figures reach the national norm for all learners.

- 9.3** The percentage of Looked After learners in positive destinations is significantly higher when compared to the similar cohort elsewhere in Scotland and stands comparison with the national norm for all learners.
- 9.4** Members are asked to:
- 1) To note the contents of this report and,
 - 2) To acknowledge the achievements of the Looked After learners themselves and the hard work and commitment of staff from Education, Social Work and Health who have contributed to this performance.

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Appendix 1: West Dunbartonshire Council: Educational Outcomes for Scotland's Children

Background Papers: Scottish Government's Educational Outcomes for Scotland's Looked After Children 2009/10 – available from children.statistics@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Wards Affected: All