

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 3 JUNE 2009

SUPPORT FOR LOOKED AFTER YOUNG PEOPLE PREPARING FOR SQA EXAMINATIONS

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To advise Cabinet of the strategies in place to support looked after children (LAC) and young people in East Ayrshire as they prepare for Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) examinations.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** In 2005 the then Scottish Executive announced the establishment of pilots to identify strategies to help raise the attainment of Looked After and Accommodated Children. At that time East Ayrshire was considering approaches to address the underachievement of our LAC pupils in the national examinations. A proposal was submitted and East Ayrshire was among a group of seven local authorities successful in securing funding to develop support strategies for this group of young people.
- 2.2** The East Ayrshire project focussed on the children and young people who were in danger of failing to get any award in S Grade English or mathematics at foundation or general level. Since receiving the funding over two hundred mini lessons are now available on-line. Colleagues in Corporate IT and Social Work have also been involved to ensure that the pupils have access to the materials in the residential homes and the community learning centres as well as in schools.
- 2.3** In schools, mentors have been identified to work with the pupils with the core subjects and to act as first point of contact for the pupils. This has involved staff in meetings at the morning interval, lunchtime and after school. Schools are also running supported study sessions for these pupils.
- 2.4** These strategies have provided a firm foundation for further developments to support LAC pupils and raise levels of attainment as they prepare for SQA examinations.

3. SUPPORTING S4-S6 LOOKED AFTER PUPILS – SQA EXAMINATIONS 2008-2009

3.1 Each of the nine secondary schools has provided an update on the support that they are providing for Looked After Pupils in S4, S5 and S6. James Hamilton and Stewarton Academies indicated that at present they have no pupils in this category at these stages. The remaining seven schools have submitted detailed responses, a summary of which follows.

3.2 Mentoring and supported study sessions are provided to all Looked After pupils. Additional support structures have been provided as appropriate to the needs and wants of the pupils concerned. Where supported study sessions have taken place outwith the normal school day additional transport arrangements have been put in place to allow these pupils to attend.

Schools are monitoring attendance of pupils closely and have in place plans for staff to visit individual pupil's homes on the days of the exams that they will be sitting to make sure that the pupils are up and prepared, and if necessary transport them to school.

Carers as well as the pupils themselves have been informed of the progress that they have made; the arrangements that are in place to support them during the study leave period; and the transport arrangements on the days of the exams.

Schools have indicated that they have in place arrangements to allow pupils to study in a quiet area during the study leave period if this is required. They have also provided pupils with revision materials such as past papers and access to laptop computers some of which have been allowed home as they have appropriate revision software installed (these machines cannot be used on the internet outwith our network).

More detailed establishment responses have been placed on the Members' portal.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Fairer Scotland funding has been secured to support LAC activities within the Council

5. POLICY/LLEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 NIL

6. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** Support for LAC children and young people, contributes directly to the delivery of key targets in the Improving Lifelong Learning plan.

7. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** All activities are appropriately risk assessed and consideration of the health and safety of staff and young people has been paramount in putting in place the travel arrangements to ensure attendance at examination centres.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1** It is recommended that Members:

- (i) note the support that has been given to ensure attendance of LAC pupils at SQA examinations;
- (ii) invite the Executive Director to report on pupil performance in the examinations, in due course; and
- (iii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

AS/KMcK/EO'N
14 May 2009

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Members wishing further information should contact Graham Short, Executive Director of Educational and Social Services, Tel: (01563) 576017 or Andrew Sutherland, Head of Service: Schools , Tel: (01563) 576126

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER

Andrew Sutherland: Head of Service, Schools