

**REPORT TO: DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL EDUCATION AND SOCIAL
WORK COMMITTEES –
19th FEBRUARY 2001**

**REPORT ON: THE EDUCATION OF PUPILS WHO ARE ‘LOOKED
AFTER’ BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITY**

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK**

REPORT NO.: 112-2001

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 This report outlines the steps being taken to promote the educational interests of children who are ‘looked after’. It describes a policy document to which all schools will adhere, and emphasises that close co-operation and partnership between the Education and Social Work Departments will be necessary if these children are to receive an effective education. A copy of the policy document has been placed in the members’ lounge.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Education and Social Work Committees are recommended to:
- i) approve the policy document on the education of pupils who are ‘looked after’ by the local authority
 - ii) instruct the Directors of Education and Social Work together to monitor progress on the educational performance of ‘looked after’ children

3.0 Financial Implications

3.1 Nil

4.0 Local Agenda 21 Implications

4.1 ‘Looked After’ children will have the same access to skills, knowledge and information that is available to other children, and the same entitlements to an effective educational service.

5.0 Equal Opportunities Implications

5.1 This policy reinforces the Council's support for the concept of social inclusion, and will ensure equality of access to educational opportunity for all pupils.

6.0 Background

6.1 Children and young people are 'looked after' in terms of Section 17(6) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 if they are under 18 years of age and are:

- provided with accommodation under section 25
- subject to a supervision requirement from a children's hearing
- subject to orders made, or authorisations or warrants granted under Chapters 2, 3 or 4 of Part II of the Act; these can include child assessment orders, child protection orders, children hearing warrants or authorisations and parental responsibilities orders held by local authorities
- subject to orders elsewhere in the UK, which are determined to be parallel to orders in Part II of the Act

6.2 This means that children who are subject to a supervision requirement through a Children's Hearing but who are living with their family are 'looked after' at home. Other children may be subject to a supervision requirement, or another Children's Hearing or Court decision, which means that they have to live somewhere other than at home, usually with foster carers or in a residential placement, and so are 'looked after' and accommodated away from home. For children who are orphaned, abandoned or cannot have their needs met by their parents, the local authority provides accommodation on a voluntary basis.

6.3 In November 2000 there were 351 'looked after' Dundee children of school age, accounting for 1.7% of the primary, secondary and special pupil population. 38% were 'looked after' at home, 48% were 'looked after' in foster care or community placements and 14% were in residential accommodation and secure units.

6.4 Children who are 'looked after' form one of the main groups of children who are in need, and who deserve the care and attention of a range of Council departments. For this reason, while the document concentrates on education policy, and should lead to an enhanced

education service for these children, it must be viewed as a contribution to the Council's emerging joint policy on corporate parenting.

7 Key Issues Contained Within The Policy Document

7.1 Dundee City Council Education Department is committed to providing the same high standard of educational provision for all its pupils, irrespective of status. In this respect 'looked after' children are no different from any other group of children. It is in two important areas that Education and Social Work staff need to be aware of their different status, viz. that this is a group which under-achieves in a number of key aspects, and that the Council is, in practical terms, the corporate parent of those 'looked after' children who are accommodated away from home.

7.2 Good channels of communication are essential, in order that schools may quickly have access to information on the 'looked after' status of children, and that Social Work staff can equally quickly access details of educational progress.

7.3 The policy document acknowledges that there are three specific areas of concern where performance is significantly below that of other children, viz. academic attainment, attendance and behaviour issues. Headteachers, school staff and Social Work staff are reminded to be aware of the difficulties experienced by 'looked after' children in these areas, and of the steps that can be taken to overcome their disadvantage.

8.0 Consultation

8.1 This report has been the subject of consultation with the Director of Support Services and the Director of Finance.

9.0 Background papers

9.1 **No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.**

Anne Wilson _____ Date _____

Director of Education

Jacque Roberts _____ Date _____

Director of Social Work