Background
Over the course of the last 12 years Corporate Parenting has become more significant within the work being undertaken in relation to our Looked After children and young people. Various documents have been produced to support this area of work including *We Can and Must do Better* and *These are our Bairns*. These have ensured greater emphasis on partnership working and taking ownership of our young people in order to increase the life opportunities for one of our most vulnerable group of young people.

South Lanarkshire Council Perspective (October 2011)
Within South Lanarkshire there are currently 48 children and young people within our children’s houses. There are 156 children in Foster Placements, an additional 32 children are in external placements including Residential School (7), secure (3), external foster placements (6), other providers (8) and accommodated children with a disability (8).

There has been a conscious decision over the last decade in relation to the redistribution of care to ensure that councils do what works most effectively in relation to achieving better outcomes for children and with this in mind South Lanarkshire has increased its foster carer provision. The Council has also closed 2 children’s houses and now provides residential care within 8 children’s houses.

South Lanarkshire has invested greatly in returning children back to their local communities from where they had been placed externally as outcomes for children tend to be better when they are accommodated within their own communities. This has meant that more young people who would have been placed externally are now accommodated within the council. These young people have very different profiles from 10 years ago.

Foster Care has been proven to provide an environment which ensures that children and young people secure better outcomes overall but more specifically better educational achievement.

South Lanarkshire has invested in developing the More Choices More Chances agenda for its care leavers. This includes the following:

- better tracking and monitoring of young people
- allocation of a link worker who has responsibility for ensuring that young people who are experiencing issues with their care leaver destination or activity agreement are picked up at the earliest opportunity
- Ownership of the Corporate parenting agenda

Barriers to achieving better educational attainment/ employment, education or training destinations for young people
- Young people being accommodated later with multiple complex needs and attachment issues that impede their ability to engage with education
• Young people accommodated at a period of crisis
• The need to prioritise the presenting emotional and behavioural needs of the young person
• Matching the individual needs of a child with an educational support plan that meets their needs and provides more fuller timetables
• Exclusions from school as this at times will support the young person to take an entrenched position by refusing to return to school
• Multiple placement moves across Children’s Houses and foster care for children and young people
• Too much focus on core curriculum, rather than identifying specific strengths of the young person

What makes the difference?
• The quality of the relationship between the young person and a significant adult
• Foster Care placements that pro-actively support learning and achievement
• Security and predictability
• Young people being accommodated for a significant settled period prior to exams.
• Effective communication between schools and children’s houses which engender mutually respective relationships
• Educational support plans that match the needs of the child
• Additional educational support to young people to support them with homework and other areas of education
• Effective partnership working
• Specialist education provision within the council’s Alternative to Care programme and elsewhere

Current Strategies for ensuring better outcomes for children
• Corporate Parenting sub group of the Integrated Children’s Services planning structure
• Corporate Parenting Annual Event
• Performance Indicators within the Integrated Children’s Services Plan and the Children and Families Services Plan
• Corporate Parenting Action Plan
• Consultation with children, young people and their families
• Young Voices consultation group
• Children and Family Team leaders identified with specific responsibility for MCMC agenda
• All Children’s House managers have educational outcomes as a key work objective in annual review
• Regular tracking and reviewing of children and young people’s educational progress
• Annual report on the average tariff scores obtained by children looked after away from home
• Ongoing partner events between residential staff, Education Resources and Educational Psychology: these events focus on driving forward and reviewing partnership working by exploring the better ways of working and developing ways of working which better benefit the young person
• Every Care leaver has a pathway plan and co-ordinator
• Development of Specialist Educational Provision dedicated team of staff based at Hope Street. This service provides educational and emotional support to looked after children and young people who may be experiencing difficulties realising their full potential within their mainstream school. The team consists of teaching staff, peripatetic and in-house, home link staff, Careers Scotland and health staff who work closely with primary and secondary schools to ensure full and worthwhile timetables that increase attendance, engagement and attainment. The team also provide and intensive service to the residential houses through daily contact, visits and homework support
• Education Liaison staff to support our children and young people in residential houses
• Provision of flexible timetables
• Resilience and Attachment work
• Provision of C.A.Y.P. This service provides support to Foster Carers to assist younger children who are experiencing mental health issues
• Whole System approach to Youth Justice which attempts to retain young people within their own communities and avoid disruption to their education

Further Suggested Strategies for ensuring better outcomes for children
• Re-introduction of the literacy champions
• Re-introduction of homework groups within the children’s houses
• Possible service re-design within Education Resources may free up additional staff to support this group of young people.
• Further development of data analysis. For example identifying the difference that long term foster care placements have on children and young people in comparison with short term placements.
• Greater importance placed on achievement rather than educational attainment.

Summary
South Lanarkshire places great importance and emphasis on supporting children and young people to achieve better outcomes overall. The profiles of our looked after children and young people have changed over the course of the last 10 years. Achieving better educational outcomes for children and young people will require all services to work together pro-actively to progress care planning. Systems exist to monitor and review the services that are provided in order to adapt to the challenges being faced by this group of young people. There is an overwhelming commitment from partners to work together to ensure better outcomes, however this will only be achieved by all partners being ambitious for all our children and young people.