

EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE

THE SENIOR PHASE OF SCHOOL: HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE PURSUE THE RIGHT PATHWAY FOR THEM

SUBMISSION FROM Foster Care Associates (FCA) Scotland

Learner Journey: Education, Training and Work survey

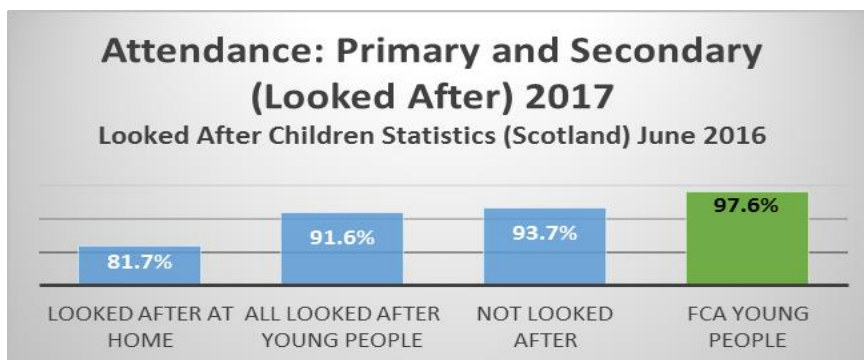
In response to the *Learner Journey: Education, Training and Work* survey findings, Foster Care Associates (FCA) Scotland have the following considerations:

As a proportion of all school leavers, the largest single group go to University and this perhaps creates the perception that this is the preferred or optimal destination. Figures from the publication *Initial Destinations of Senior Phase School Leavers No. 2: 2018 Edition published 27th February 2018* reports that “the percentage signing up for university last year was 40.7%, up from 37.8% six years ago. A total of 26.8% opted for a college course - up 0.1% on 2011/12. However, the percentage of school leavers going into training has steadily fallen from 4.5% in 2011 to 2.4% in 2016.”

This is markedly different to the experience of Looked-After Young People for whom – though the proportion going on to positive destinations is certainly improving - there may be an expectation bias which means they will normally be signposted towards other destinations.

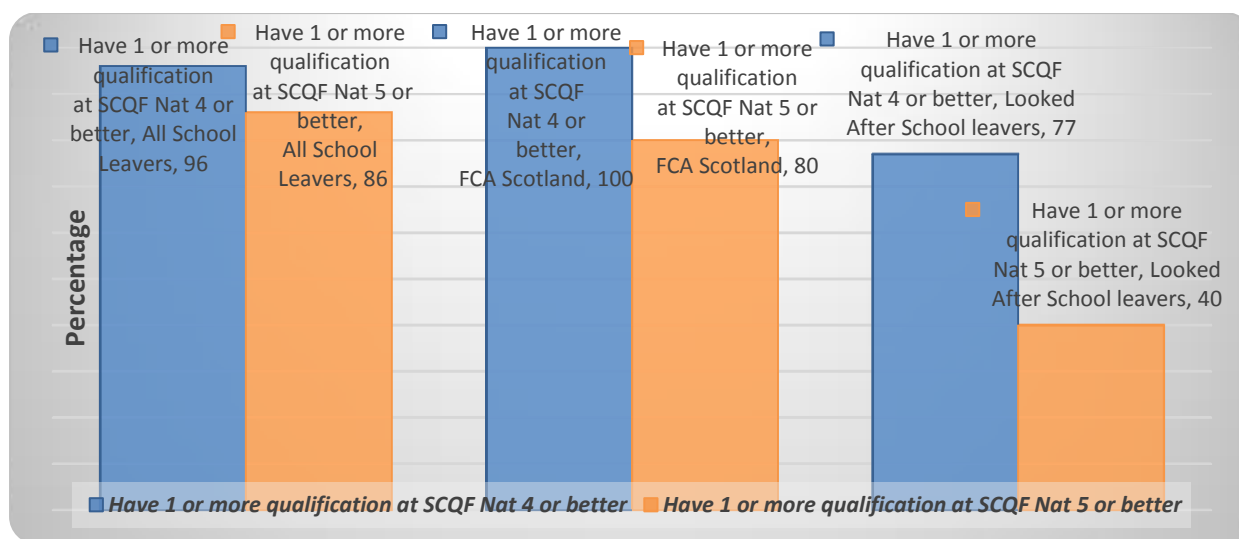
Destinations of Senior Phase School Leavers are channelled by exam results and as research indicates, there is a strong correlation between attendance and attainment.

Attendance - In the school year ending 2017 our young people continued a **6 year trend** of exceeding 97% attendance across the Primary and Secondary sector.



Attainment – In 2017, **100%** of our school leavers achieved a qualification at SCQF Level 4 or better and **80%** achieved a qualification at level 5 or better. This is against a national average of **77% and 40%** respectively for looked after young people in Scotland.

Attainment Outcomes 2017



*we acknowledge the sample for FCA Scotland will be significantly lower than the other populations in this chart

Destinations – We track our school leavers journeys into education, employment or training in the year following their exit from school. **94%** of FCA Scotland young people leaving school in June 2016 remained in a positive destination one year later. Currently **100%** of our school leavers from 2017 are in a positive destination. This is a mixture of college, training or employment with more than **50%** of our School Leavers in college placements.

Foster Carers

Anecdotally our foster carers and Education service at FCA Scotland experience high levels of engagement by individual schools in response to the further and higher educational needs of our 'Looked After' Young People.

It is worthy of note that more than **98%** of children and young people placed with FCA Scotland have been in placement for more than 3 years, with **50%** of our young people in Permanent or Long-term family placements which will also influence our foster carers experience of the Learner Journey. The significance of permanence for young people is underpinned by the main findings from the Scottish Government official statistics publication *Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2015/16* published June 2017 that:

Looked After Children with the most positive Education outcomes are those:

- In foster care rather than in other care settings.
- With fewer care placements in the year.
- Who have been looked after for the whole year, rather than just part of it.

More broadly in response to the report findings our observations include:

- Colleges tend to be catchment based so less 'recruiting' than Universities.
- Universities may do more outreach/presentations in schools etc. to attract students.

- Students tend to over-reach when requesting information on possible destinations.
- We would query whether Training providers make themselves available/ are they invited to schools to present an alternative path for young people.
- Corporate Parents have a responsibility to promote individualised plans for School Leavers that is ambitious whilst considers the range of alternatives available for the young person.
- Relationships with foster carers, social workers and key 'advocates' are essential to support young people in making decisions in relation to positive destinations and *sustaining* this destination.
- Wrap around support to young people once they have transitioned out of school results in the best outcomes for sustaining positive destinations.
- Overall NEET levels in Scotland continue to fall.
- The role of Skills Development Scotland is key; Looked After and Accommodated Young People now get 5 points of contact in the senior phase per year. This is where the most individualised/ targeted support should happen.
- It would be beneficial to our young people if Skills Development Scotland were aware of and engaging with foster carers as the young person's key role model on a consistent basis throughout Scotland.

FCA Scotland hopes that this evidence is helpful in informing the Committee's inquiry with particular regard to looked-after young people. We would be happy to provide references and research evidence in relation to these points if it would be of interest. FCA Scotland would also welcome the opportunity to work with the Committee and/or other partners to develop and conduct a survey of Looked After Young People and/or their Foster Carers in relation to the subject of the inquiry.