Care experienced children attainment funding – National Operational Guidance (2019-20)

1. **What is it?**

The Scottish Attainment Challenge was launched by the First Minister in February 2015, focusing on improvement activity in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing in specific areas of Scotland and closing the poverty related attainment gap. The £750 million Attainment Scotland Fund is a targeted initiative focused on supporting young people affected by poverty and deprivation across Scotland.

The Care Experienced Children and Young People fund is an additional resource provided through the Attainment Scotland Fund. Launched in 2018, it provides up to £33 million over this parliamentary term for local authorities to fund initiatives and interventions aimed at improving educational outcomes for care experienced children and young people, **aged between 0-26**, with the overarching aim of closing the poverty related attainment gap.

This national operational guidance is intended to help local authorities determine how to invest this funding in ways which could improve educational outcomes for care experienced children and young people. The term 'care experience' is now a widely used term within the sector to describe any person who has experience of being in care, regardless of their placement length, type or age. The reason this guidance uses this term as opposed to the statutory term 'Looked After Children' is to ensure that this policy is inclusive and provides for all groups of young people who experience care and could benefit from this funding.

The Scottish Government and local authorities are committed to ensuring that all care experienced children and young people receive the vital support they need, to improve their life experiences and educational outcomes.

2. **Key principles**

- This funding stream is designed to enable local authorities, as corporate parents, to make strategic decisions around how best to **improve the attainment of care experienced children and young people from birth to the age of 26**, in line with The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.
- The Chief Social Work Officer and Chief Education Officer should work together to ensure there are strategic plans in place with processes for reporting on impact.
- Local Authorities should work in collaboration with each other to ensure the needs of children and young people educated outside the authority who look after them are considered.
Local Authorities could consider where the Regional Improvement Collaboratives can play a role in coordinating and supporting activity, or through establishment or participation in networks, such as the Virtual School and Care Experience network facilitated by CELCIS.

The Scottish Government recognises that to improve a child's attainment support may be required in all aspects of their wellbeing, in line with the Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) approach. The funding should be used in developing new, or supplementing existing interventions or initiatives. This activity should address the factors which could impact on the child or young person's attainment, which are not exclusively within the educational setting.

This funding must enable local authorities, working in partnership with other agencies, to deliver additional activities, interventions or resources, specifically for the benefit of care experienced children and young people, and/or to enhance any current provisions. The funding should not be used to replace existing services.

Funding should be used to enhance care experienced children and young people’s capacity and/or readiness to learn.

Decisions around how the funding is used should be made within existing corporate parenting mechanisms and in line with existing planning processes and procedures. Examples of this include, integrated children’s service planning and strategic commissioning processes.

3. How much is it?

Over the 2019/20 academic year, funding for this work stream is provided at a figure of £1,200 per looked after child aged 5-15 (figures from the latest Children Looked After Survey (CLAS) returns as at 31 July 2018).

This is the same methodology as used for allocation in 2018/19 which saw £800 (as it was part year funding) provided per looked after child aged 5-15.

CLAS data as at 31 July 2019 will be used to determine allocations in 2020/21.

4. How can it be used?

Although the allocations are based on the 5-15 age group who are currently looked after (agreed with COSLA as the best proxy for needs-base distribution), it is for the local authority to decide where the funding will be best used to improve attainment and it’s important to note that all care experienced children and young people aged between 0-26 are eligible for support.

Local authorities, as corporate parents, should identify the ways in which the funding could be best used to improve attainment of their care experienced children and young people. The funding is allocated to local authorities, with the Chief Social Work Officer and the Chief Education Officer working in collaboration with planning partners, and other professionals, carers and children, to assess where the funds could have the most impact on attainment. The funding should have a clear focus on delivering equity and improving educational outcomes for care experienced children and young people.
Informed by this assessment, funds will be allocated at the direction of the Chief Social Work and Chief Education Officers to ensure that the funds improve attainment in a way that is consistent with the Getting It Right for Every Child approach.

The money can be used to fund initiatives that benefit a number of children, or activities that are specific to an individual child's needs. Use of the money for individual children should be discussed within existing planning processes for children in accordance with their local authorities’ additional support policies and/or GIRFEC. Examples of this include additional support plans, Looked After Children reviews, or integrated children’s services plans.

Local authorities may wish to work with their champions boards or other groups of care experienced young people to coproduce approaches, interventions or activities which could be funded in line with the guidance above.

5. Outcomes, Impact and measurements

Local authorities will be accountable for the use of funding allocated and required to report on its spending, and any outcome measures available, as outlined in the grant letter terms and conditions. Reporting will be done as part of existing relevant authority reporting requirements highlighting evidence of the impact alongside qualitative and, where available, quantitative information as outlined in the Grant terms and conditions. Measures should reflect the strategic decisions taken around how the funding is used and local authorities should agree the mechanisms which best illustrate impact on attainment. Measures for individual children should also be included in the child or young person's plan. These can be quantitative or qualitative measures, for example capturing the experiences and feedback from care experienced children and young people, or through the Chief Social Work Officer Reports.

The Scottish Government will use a range of measures to determine improvements in educational outcomes. Nationally published data, such as the annual Educational Outcomes for Scotland's Looked after Children statistics will be one specific resource for considerations on measuring impact. Improved school attendance, evidence of better engagement with education, or specific improvement in relation to a specific action in the child's plan or education support plan would also be useful measures of evaluation.

The National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan is designed to help us deliver the twin aims of excellence and equity; galvanising efforts and aligning our collective improvement activities across all partners in the education system to address our key priorities. At national level, this Improvement Plan summarises the key evidence and identifies both ongoing and new improvement activity that the Scottish Government will be taking forward or supporting at national level. These plans will play an important role in measuring ongoing activity and the impact of this work stream.

6. Resources
Attainment Advisors from Education Scotland will be able to provide advice on a local and regional basis.

Local Authorities may wish to consider the guidance produced by the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS), Looked After and Learning, in developing their plans. These cover seven distinct areas; Commitment to the designated manager role, support for teachers, promoting resilience and positive attachments, planning for education, developing engagement between schools, parents and carers, inclusive and relational approaches to education, and planning for improvement.

The National Improvement Hub is a platform developed by Education Scotland that provides information and support that enables practitioners to improve their practice and increase the quality of learners’ experiences and outcomes. It provides access to: self-evaluation and improvement frameworks, research, teaching and assessment resources, exemplars of practice and support for on-line collaboration and networks through Glow. This will be a helpful resource for considerations relating to allocation of this funding. The section on corporate parenting contains an extensive suite of links and resources with specific relevance to this funding stream.

Within this hub is the EEF Toolkit, a resource that provides an accessible summary of educational research designed to inform discussions on the most effective approaches to improving educational outcomes, with a focus on 5-16 year olds and poverty disadvantage. It contains 34 teaching approaches and interventions, each summarised in terms of their average impact on attainment, the strength of the evidence supporting them and their cost. It is useful for Local Authorities, education leaders, and practitioners to inform decision making on the use of this funding, raising attainment, and improving equity.

Intandem, is Scotland’s mentoring programme for young people looked after at home, launched in November 2016. It is funded by Scottish Government and delivered by Inspiring Scotland. Intandem provides mentors for young people aged between 8-14 years who are looked after by their local authority but living at home. Intandem and Inspiring Scotland can provide a range of support across a range of activities including recruitment, training, safeguarding, and evaluation as well as capacity building and organisational support.

Additional support and resources are provided by a range of national and local organisations which can provide support for vulnerable young people and their families. These include organisations such as MCR Pathways, whose mentoring programme is making a significant positive impact on educational outcomes for care experienced young people in Glasgow and other areas of Scotland, and Includem, who are developing new services focused specifically on raising attainment, which will be beneficial in identifying and addressing barriers to attainment.

7. Publications
