

# Care Experienced Children and Young People Funding



National  
Operational  
Guidance  
2023-24

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# What is Care Experienced Children and Young People Funding?

The Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund is a targeted resource provided to local authorities to support care experienced children and young people from birth to the age of 26. The funding is provided to local authorities and aims to improve the educational outcomes and experiences for care experienced children and young people, supported by the strategic goals of [The Promise](#) and the [Scottish Attainment Challenge](#).



The mission of this refreshed Challenge is:

to use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, with a focus on tackling 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, supported by the strategic aims of The Promise and the Scottish Attainment Challenge.



# What is this guidance for?

The term 'care-experienced' refers to anyone who has been or is currently in care or from a looked-after background at any stage in their life, no matter how short, including adopted children. This care may have been provided in one of many different settings such as in residential care, foster care, kinship care, or through being looked-after at home with a supervision requirement.

The reason this guidance uses this term as opposed to the statutory term 'Looked After Child' 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. This could include children and young people who are on the edges of care and who need support in order to avoid becoming care experienced.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> The Scottish Government recognises that defining 'edges of care' may vary between, or within, local authorities.

# Key Principles



- This guidance should be considered alongside the Scottish Attainment Challenge [Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress](#).
- 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](#). This includes appropriate engagement with agencies and institutions involved in the delivery of services for young people aged 0-26, including working with other corporate parents such as Further and Higher Education Institutions, other national bodies, Early Years providers and post 16 employment, training and education providers.
- The Chief Social Work Officer and Directors of Education should work together, supported by Education Scotland Attainment Advisors 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 and that appropriate plans and supports are put in place for children and young people in these circumstances.
- Local authorities should consider where the Regional Improvement Collaboratives can support the role of coordinating and supporting activity, or through establishment or participation in networks, such as the Virtual School Head Teacher and Care Experience Team network, facilitated by [CELCIS – The Centre for Excellence for Children’s Care and Protection](#).
- 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 supports or initiatives. This activity should address the factors which could impact on the child or young person’s wellbeing and 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 targeted provisions. The funding must not be used to replace existing services.
- Funding should be used to enhance care experienced children and young people's wellbeing, and capacity and/or readiness to learn.
- Decisions around how the funding is used should be made within existing corporate parenting mechanisms and statutory corporate parenting duties, and in line with existing planning processes and procedures. Examples of this include, integrated children's service planning and strategic commissioning processes.
- Decisions should be informed by robust data and take account of care experienced voices (voices of care experienced children and young people, their families and/or those who know them best) in order to ensure that the use of funds is centred on overcoming the barriers to achieving the best outcomes for their care experienced children and young people.
- Local SAC plans should complement one another and must include ambitious and achievable stretch aims for progress in improving outcomes for all while closing the poverty related attainment gap, as set out in the [Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress](#).
- Local plans and decision making should consider the aspirations of [The Promise and show how they are working towards the Plan 21-24](#).



# Allocations

Funding is provided to local authorities annually to support care experienced children and young people at a figure of £1,225 per looked after child aged 5-15, as outlined in the Children's Social Work Statistics Scotland, 2021/22.

In 2022/23 the distribution methodology for Care Experienced Children and Young People Funding increased to align with the uplift in PEF, to £1,225 from £1,200. The same methodology is being used for the 2023/24 Allocations.

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-based distribution), local authorities should use their local data to understand which individual children, groups of children, or families would benefit most from this additional funding. This includes considering the needs of all young people aged 0-26 who are eligible to be supported and engaging with partner agencies and establishments to provide this.

## Drawdown Dates

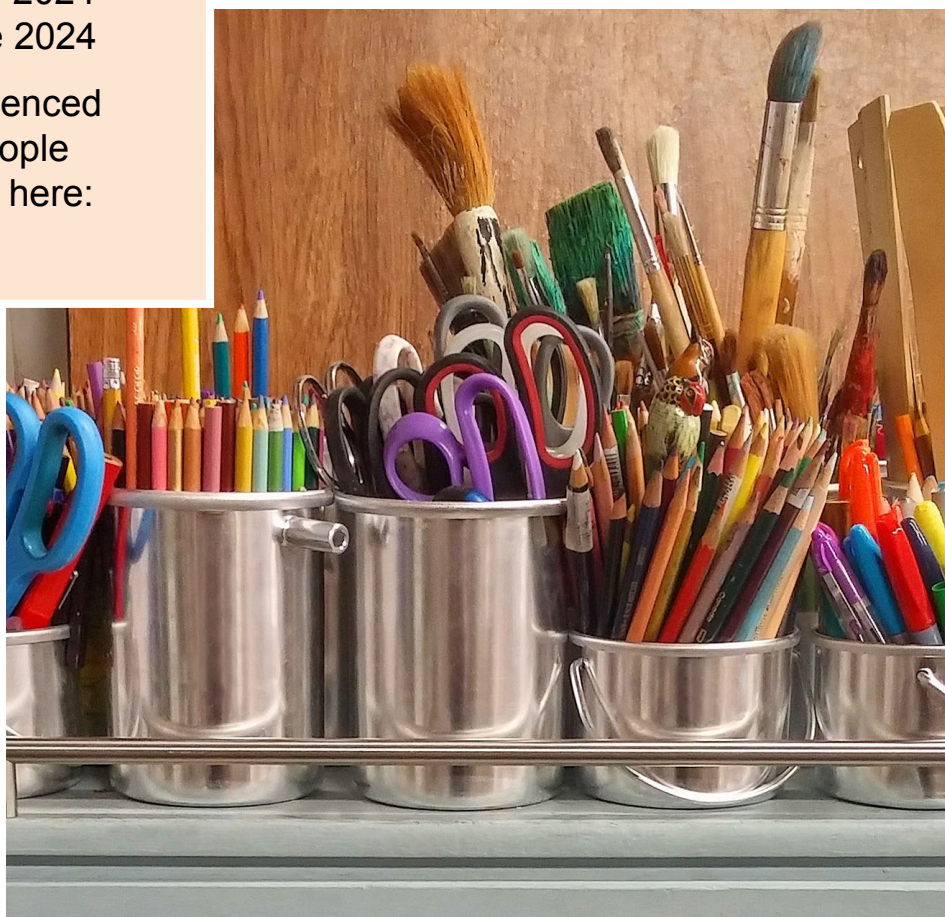
Local authorities will receive funding over two instalments in 2023/24.

First Drawdown: January 2024

Second Drawdown: June 2024

The 2023/24 Care Experienced Children and Young People Allocations can be found here:

[www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)





# Use of Care Experienced Children and Young People Funding

## How can it be used?

It is important to note that all care experienced children and young people (and those on the edges of care) aged between 0-26 are eligible for support. Local authorities, as corporate parents, should identify the ways in which the funding can be best used to improve attainment of their care experienced children and young people. This may include working with other corporate parents such as Further and Higher Education Institutions, other national bodies, Early Years providers and post-16 employment, training and education providers. In addition, third sector and voluntary sector organisations can provide support and services to children and families for both school based and non-school based issues.

The funding is allocated to local authorities, with the Chief Social Work Officer and the Directors of Education, assisted by Attainment Advisors, working in collaboration with planning partners, and other professionals, carers and children and young people, 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. Therefore, the involvement/views of children and young people should be sought at all stages of the process, from planning through to delivery and evaluation. Details of the methods used to involve the views of children and young people in the planning process should be included in reporting.



# Misconceptions

There are some commonly held misconceptions around the use of Care Experienced Children and Young People Funding which are addressed below.

***“Only children aged between 5-15 can benefit from Care Experienced Children and Young People Funding.”***

**False.** Although allocations are based on those aged between 5-15, children and young people aged between 0-26 can benefit from the funding.

***“Funding can only be used if a young person is on the child protection register.”***

**False.** Funding can be used to support anyone who has been or is currently in care or from a looked-after background at any stage in their life, no matter how short.

***“Funding cannot be used for young people who have been adopted.”***

**False.** The term care experienced is used to be as inclusive as possible and includes children and young people who have been adopted.

***“Children and young people on the edges of care cannot be supported.”***

**False.** Preventative approaches such as targeting resources to support young people on the edges of care are encouraged.

***“Spending decisions should only be made in either social work or education departments, not together.”***

**False.** Spending decisions should be made collaboratively between local Directors of Education and Chief Social Work Officers.

# Considerations for using Care Experienced Children and Young People Funding

**When utilising the [Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress](#) to implement interventions, Chief Social Work Officers and Directors of Education should consider the wider landscape supporting Care Experienced Children and Young People.**

[The Independent Care Review](#), which resulted in the creation of the Promise, listened to the voices of 5500 people engaged in the care system. The Scottish Government, our partners in local government and across the public sector are committed to acting on what they told us needs to change. And this Parliament too has confirmed its commitment.

The Scottish Government signed up to all of the conclusions set out through the Independent Care Review and we remain committed to making sure each and every child grows up feeling loved, safe and protected.

In March 2022 the Scottish Government's published the [Promise Implementation](#) setting out how we will Keep The Promise by 2030. The Plan has a wide range of actions and commitments across nearly all Ministerial portfolios that we will take to Keep The Promise.

The Plan provides a framework for the rest of Scotland to plan around as well as setting out the actions we are taking across Government.

We will continue to work with all partners across our local authorities, The Promise Scotland, and organisations like Who Cares? Scotland to implement the change required, and to ensure that the voice of the care experienced community informs the actions we take.

Additionally, all care experienced children and young people are identified as requiring additional support through the amended [Education \(Additional Support for Learning\) \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#) until they are assessed as not requiring that support. Angela Morgan's review of Additional Support for Learning is a useful resource. [Review of additional support for learning implementation: report – gov.scot](#).



# Planning

**The Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund has been allocated for the duration of this Parliamentary term until March 2026. Opportunities to implement longer-term interventions can be realised with the support of this long-term commitment. Consideration should also still be given to shorter-term interventions which support the mission to *improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, with a focus on tackling the poverty related attainment gap* and to improve educational outcomes for care experienced children and young people.**

Utilising a longer-term approach by planning the use of Care Experienced Children and Young People Funding over multiple years may enable better planning of spending, recruitment and development.

Funds will be allocated to local authorities and it is the role 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 (GIRFEC) approach.

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

It would be beneficial for local authorities 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.

**Local authorities should also work in close collaboration with Attainment Advisors to ensure effective planning thereby identifying appropriate opportunities for improvement and to close the poverty-related attainment gap for care experienced children and young people.**

All support should be planned through a trauma-responsive lens, with acknowledgement that most care experienced children have experienced developmental trauma and are protected under [article 39 of the UNCRC: Article 39 \(recovery from trauma and reintegration\)](#).

Scotland's [Equity Toolkit](#) aims to provide an accessible and adaptable resource for local and sectoral needs to support the refreshed mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

The toolkit has been designed to support practitioners in their practice and decision making by providing access to a range of evidence, research and practice, and importantly identify the conditions contributing to success in one place. It includes key information which may be helpful to consider or guide implementation and sustainability in different settings.

The toolkit is underpinned by existing research and evidence. It and will be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure high quality information that is relevant and impactful.

Support can be accessed via this [resource on how to enable children and young people to have that input to planning and evaluation of approaches](#).

**Planning can be supported by the logic model, which shows how a programme produces change. The logic model can help bring detail to programme goals, aid planning, evaluation, implementation and communication. It incorporates outcomes reflecting the mission, which encompasses child poverty, broader achievement and an increased focus on health and wellbeing and family and community support which can be found as a supporting document to the [Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress](#).**

The planning cycle will follow the academic year, aligning with the annual Service Improvement Planning cycle. Therefore, stretch aims as described and exemplified in the [Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress](#) should be agreed annually by the end of September at the latest.



# Accountability

Local authorities are responsible for:

- Ensuring that care experienced children and young people's voices are heard and embedded in decision making.
- Preparing plans for the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund, which should outline clear outcomes to be achieved and how progress towards these will be measured and monitored.
- Providing assistance to schools and partners by:
  - supporting schools, social care services and other partners to raise awareness of the needs of care experienced children and young people through coaching, professional learning, trauma awareness and supporting access to tracking and monitoring and data analysis tools.
  - providing professional learning around planning (data, outcomes & measures), interventions & approaches.
  - offering practical support, where required, in terms of financial management, access to data, tracking and monitoring tools and HR.
- Ongoing, active monitoring of plans in place for Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund spending, supporting and challenging key stakeholders and/or partners; and adjusting plans where necessary.
- Reporting on progress towards identified stretch aims.
- Reporting on the effective investment of ASF and linking Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund in to wider plans.
- Collaborating with a range of services across the local authority and in local communities to secure additional contributions to the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

## Stretch Aims

Specific requirements for setting local stretch aims are set out in The [Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress](#).

In summary, local stretch aims should be both ambitious and achievable within local contexts. The process of setting local stretch aims should be done in collaboration with stakeholders, taking account of their school and service plans to tackle the poverty-related attainment gap. There should be two-way engagement between local authorities and schools when planning for and setting stretch aims.

There is a need to consider equalities when identifying root causes of attainment gaps – data about poverty and the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation should be looked at in conjunction with other key characteristics including care experience.

In order to ensure some national consistency a “core plus” model has been developed. The “core” is for aims measurable by a sub-set of the [National Improvement Framework](#) (NIF) key measures and an aim for improvement in pupils' health and wellbeing. These form a minimum expectation for all local authorities to set out aims for raising attainment for all and for improving health and wellbeing and tackling the poverty-related attainment gap.



At a minimum these should include (core) stretch aims for both overall progress and for reducing the poverty-related gaps in:

- a) achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (literacy combined and numeracy combined);
- b) the proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more pass at SCQF level 5 based on the “Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations” publication;
- c) the proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more pass at SCQF level 6 based on the “Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations” publication;
- d) the proportion of 16-19 olds participating in education, employment or training based on the Annual Participation Measure produced by Skills Development Scotland; and
- e) a locally identified aim for health and wellbeing, to be measured using local datasets.

The “plus” enables local authorities to identify further aims, measurable by either local or national data, in particular considering wider achievement, readiness to learn, or the cost of the school day. Underpinning these should be locally identified indicators of progress.

Each identified stretch aim should clearly articulate overall aims for raising attainment and improving health and wellbeing, and for tackling the poverty-related attainment gap in 2025/26. The [Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress](#) includes exemplification of such local stretch aims.

The setting and ambition of these aims should be achieved by local authorities as a result of robust evidence-informed self-evaluation, supported and challenged through professional dialogue with Education Scotland.

These plans and stretch aims should be developed in line with the existing academic planning cycle and be agreed by the end of September each year, if not before.

# Reporting on Interventions

Local authorities will be accountable for the use of funding allocated and required to report on its spending, using any outcome measures available, as outlined in the grant letter terms and conditions. Reporting can be done, highlighting evidence of the impact on attainment alongside qualitative and, where available, quantitative information.



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. These can be both quantitative and qualitative measures, for example capturing the experiences and feedback from care experienced children and young people, or through the Chief Social Work Officer Reports. Outcomes, measures of progress and evaluation of impact should be built into any programme or initiative at the outset and clearly set out in the relevant plans. Measures for individual children should also be included in the child or young person's plan. A key consideration and focus should be strategic planning to ensure the sustainability of the plans in place to support care experienced children and young people.

As part of [Strategic Equity Funding guidance](#), local authorities should ensure that there is a clear narrative on the extent to which the Attainment Scotland Fund (including Care Experienced Children and Young People funding) has influenced and supported local approaches in meeting locally identified stretch aims, and that there is evidence of strategic coherence and alignment in the use of these funding streams.



# Impacts and Outcomes

Nationally published data, such as the annual [Educational Outcomes for Scotland's Looked after Children](#), the [National Improvement Framework](#) and the [Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress](#) will be used to measure impact. Improved school attendance, reduced exclusions, evidence of readiness to learn, 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 [Achieving Excellence and Equity - 2024 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 we will be taking forward or supported at national level. These plans will play an important role in measuring ongoing activity and the impact of this work stream.





# Resources

**There is a package of national and local support available to assist local authorities in planning how to use their Care Experienced Children and Young People Funding.**

Attainment Advisors from Education Scotland will engage with local authorities to provide professional advice and guidance, on a local and regional basis, to support planning, implementation and reporting, taking account of national guidance.

Examples of this include Attainment Advisors:

- working with Chief Social Work officer and Director of Education to support joint planning and development of collaborative approaches to the use of the Care Experienced Children and Young People fund.
- providing advice and support to local Care Experienced Children and Young People officers on planning and reporting on Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund initiatives and the use of impact evaluation data and evidence to identify successful approaches and areas for improvement.
- supporting review of local authority [SAC self-evaluation framework](#) and approaches and providing advice on how this could be expanded to include work related to the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund.
- working with local Care Experienced Children and Young People officers to support enhanced tracking and monitoring of attainment for Care Experienced Children and Young People and collaborative working with a variety of local authority partners.

Local authorities may wish to consider the guidance produced by the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection (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 or [corporate parenting](#) contains an extensive suite of links and resources with specific relevance to this funding stream.

[Scottish Attainment Challenge – Self-evaluation resource](#) designed to assist schools and others bring about further improvement at this time of recovery.

A reflective tool for educators can be found at [Getting It Right For All Learners during Covid: a reflective tool for educators working together across Scotland | Self-evaluation | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](#)

NHS Education for Scotland (NES) lead on the [National Trauma Training Programme](#) and have developed a suite of universally accessible and free resources to support awareness raising and training. The latest addition to these resources is a very helpful training module for people who work with and care for children and young people. This module is open to anyone and is available on the NES learning platform, [Turas Learn](#). Anyone can register on Turas using an e-mail address (personal or company) and you will be able to access this module and other learning resources.

[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, local and third sector 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.

Some Local Authorities have established a [Virtual School, Virtual Head Teacher or a Virtual Care Experienced Team](#). These teams and roles have a specific focus within their local authority to bring about improvements in the education of Looked After (Care Experienced) children and to promote their educational achievement as if they were in a single school. The school does not exist in real terms, or as a building but is an organisational tool which has been created for the effective co-ordination of support for this vulnerable group at a strategic and operational level.

Scottish Government, February 2024



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