

Gathering evidence and producing estimates for care experienced pupils during the SQA 2021 exam diet

Practice document to support SQA Coordinators and Designated Managers in Schools

Produced by the Virtual School Head Teacher and Care Experience Team Network

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Background and Context

This document has been produced by the Virtual School and Care Experienced Team National Network with the intention of providing supportive, practical advice for schools and local authorities during the 2021 exam diet. This advice may be helpful when planning for and collating evidence to support an estimate, and when working alongside colleagues in schools to determine the appropriate grade and band to estimate for looked after or care experienced young people. The principles outlined within this document can also be applied to gathering evidence to support assessment at National 1-4 level.

This advice has not been produced in collaboration with the SQA and does not intend to replace any guidance offered by them, or any other statutory body. It has been produced by drawing on practitioner wisdom of which practical supports and considerations may be helpful for SQA Co-ordinators, and other education practitioners, when carrying out assessments for looked after and care experienced young people.

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 who were previously looked-after. 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 requirementⁱ.

[The Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#), stipulates that we, as Corporate Parents, have duties to uphold the rights and secure the wellbeing of care experienced young people. We have a responsibility to **promote their educational development, advocate for them and be aspirational in our planning for them. In order to do this**, we need to have an understanding of their lives.

The statutory guidance on [Corporate Parent Duties](#) outlines our responsibilities in further detail.

Our looked after and care experienced young people in Scotland have a range of needs, strengths and vulnerabilities. Whilst their circumstances vary, most have experienced some form of difficulty in their lives. Many of these young people have experienced multiple, serious adversities, which may include socio-economic disadvantage, parental drug and alcohol misuse, and domestic violence. They can live in chaotic households and may experience more uncertainty about where and who they live with which may make it difficult to study at home, complete assignments or homework. They are significantly more likely to have particular physical health conditions, poorer mental health (even when poverty and disadvantage are accounted for), emotional difficulties, and face multiple barriers

when it comes to addressing such difficulties, all of which may have an impact on school attendance.

Educational outcome indicators show that the gap between looked after children's attainment and achievement, with that of all children, remains unacceptably largeⁱⁱ. As Corporate Parents and in order to ensure we are delivering on the excellence and equity agenda, we must take account of their past and current experiences.

The [Education \(Additional Support for Learning\) \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#) promotes the interests of looked after children by stating that **they are presumed to have additional support needs unless assessed as otherwise**ⁱⁱⁱ. This has been further reinforced in the [Review of Additional Support for Learning 2020](#). The factors giving rise to additional support needs for looked after or care experienced young people, discussed above, are varied and can be complex in nature. Due to the range of additional support that can be required to ensure our young people have equity of access to the curriculum and educational experiences, it is imperative that there is adequate understanding and scrutiny of the additional resource being provided to them.

Estimates and fairness for all candidates – Considering Equity

The [SQA Estimates Guidance 2020-21](#) recognises that there may be a range of factors that impact on a young person's access to learning. It makes it clear that when making judgements on estimates, it is important to bear this in mind, especially in the following case:

*"Candidates who experience barriers to learning including those who have caring responsibilities, **those who are care experienced**, and those who may have further interrupted learning due to illness or disability^{iv}".*

Key points which are particularly relevant to care experienced and looked after young people within the SQA Guidance are:

"For candidates who have assessment arrangements, or who would have reasonable adjustments, estimates must be based on likely achievement with the reasonable adjustments/assessment arrangements in place^{iv}"

"When reviewing assessment evidence, you should reflect on whether appropriate support was in place, or whether the assessment was used as a 'baseline' indicator for future support. It is worth emphasising that these candidates may have been unable to access appropriate levels of support in home learning situations^{iv}"

"Some candidates may have their learning supported by peripatetic teachers or support for learning specialists. You may wish to include these staff in estimate discussions^{iv}".

Gathering Evidence

The SQA Guidance outlines the need for an estimate grade to be a holistic professional judgement based on evidence of a candidate's attainment in all aspects of the course and that it should reflect the candidate's demonstrated attainment of the required skills, knowledge and understanding for the estimated grade and band. Gathering a range of evidence to help build a picture of the performance and a true reflection of the ability of a care experienced young person can potentially be a challenge due to a number of factors including attendance, chaotic home life and/or changes to school or home.

Schools are asked by the SQA to look for and provide:

Instances where candidates have applied their learning, or particular aspects of it (previously identified, 'planned checkpoints in teaching and learning programmes for example, prelims or mock question papers, assignments, performances, etc.), or they might be naturally occurring^v".

- Evidence of where a young person has applied their learning in unseen contexts. This 'added value' might have high predictive value if it mirrors important aspects of course assessment.
- A selection of key tasks and/or questions carried out under appropriate conditions and with an appropriate level of demand will give a good indication of likely performance in the final course assessment.
- A focus on the predictive value of the evidence gathered — looking at what the evidence demonstrates as measured against the requirements of the course assessment. For example, this could be the consistency of a candidate's performance or practical activity, or the depth of a candidate's responses in relation to discriminating questions on key concepts.

The National Qualifications 2021 Group: Assessment approach to National 5

"Given current public health advice and to maximise learning and teaching time, it is important to stress that there is no expectation that schools and colleges hold a formal diet of prelims for National 5. One of the key reasons for moving to an alternative model was to create additional teaching time through removing the need for prelims and replacing the final examination diet with more flexible classroom-based assessment^{vi}".

This means that if a school does choose to hold a prelim, that a looked after or care experienced young person should not be disadvantaged if they are unable to sit this one assessment.

Suggested Practice

Examples listed below are provided as a means to support schools to feel confident about being able to contextualise the evidence gathered for a looked after or care experienced young person while considering what is outlined in the previous sections around equity and gathering evidence.

These examples could inform planning, and support a proactive approach in meeting the equity and excellence agenda and ensuring that we remain aspirational as Corporate Parents, and encourage others to do likewise.

The Designated Manager or person responsible for care experienced young people should liaise with Principal Teachers of Pastoral Care (PTPC)/Principal Teachers of Pupil Support (PTPS) or their equivalent, and middle leaders to:

- Develop effective communication systems between Pastoral Care and Pupil Support to ensure challenges for care experienced young people are recorded, evidenced and supported. Information is documented within the Child's Plan and/or Individual Education Plan (IEP) and shared with all appropriate and relevant professionals
- Relevant staff are aware of pupils' circumstances through the school's system of sharing information. A suggestion may be that all S4-6 looked after or care experienced young people are discussed at departmental / faculty / SMT level at regular intervals e.g. fortnightly. These discussions should be used to inform any necessary changes to support required in order to update the child's plan/IEP
- PTPC are aware of when and how departments are planning assessments. In order to support this, the PTPC should be informed in writing an agreed number of days in advance of when assessments are planned to ensure that any additional practical support can be arranged and put in place.
- If additional individual support is offered to young people then that staff member should be included in evidence gathering discussions/moderation. This could include a Pupil Support Assistant who has been allocated as a reader, scribe or to support a young person in another way as agreed in the Child's Plan / IEP.
- PTPC record periods of illness/isolation and measures put in place to support the young person / family during this time.
- Evidence gathering is planned in advance to ensure adequate time for young people to catch up and provide the opportunity to sit assessments at another time.
- Procedures are in place to support young people who can't sit an assessment or test on a certain day or time. This may include for example a young

person who has caring responsibilities that prevents them being in school before 9am.

- If necessary, sitting assessments in a different location could be considered and recorded in a child's plan / IEP. This could include a location where a young person has been accessing their education offsite. For example a satellite provision for the school / community centre / 3rd sector building. Resources such as IT and transport should be considered in advance.
- Within the school's existing verification/ moderation procedures, ensure a system of cross marking is in place to reduce the potential for bias. Where possible, this may be a member of the department to whom the young person is not known
- AAA ([Alternative Assessment Arrangements](#)) are considered in advance by the PTPS and SQA Co-ordinator. The consideration of AAA should be documented along with the outcome of the discussions as part of the evidence gathered "*Assessment arrangements allow candidates who are disabled, and/or have been identified as having additional support needs, access to appropriate arrangements to complete the assessment without compromising its integrity^{vii}.*"
- The Designated Manager or person responsible for care experienced young people in schools should liaise with PTPC / PTPS / PT Faculty in relation to candidate evidence to consider whether appropriate support was in place and if not, is there prior/alternative evidence that could be assessed.
- PTPC and PTPS should ensure that a robust plan is in place and that it is regularly shared and reviewed throughout the session (maintaining open lines of communication with social work colleagues will ensure relevant information is available timeously to maximise opportunities for success or support through any barriers)
- Ensure evidence is gathered and stored in such a way as to ensure a young person is not disadvantaged if there is a need for a planned / unplanned move. Young people in these situations should be prioritised by schools to share information that will be supportive. For example, retaining classwork / assessments for a care experienced young person for a longer period of time would provide the necessary evidence should a young person need to change level.
- PT subject and PTPC/PTPS should discuss and agree estimate before it is submitted.

Case Studies

The SQA [Assessment Arrangements Explained: Information for Centres document](#) (p12, p16, p20, p23, p31) provides case studies with examples of contextual evidence that could support an estimate grade for a Looked After or Care Experienced young person.

In addition to this, it may be helpful to consider the [AAA Mental Health Case Study on the SQA website](#).

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- i) [Scottish Government National operational guidance for care experienced children school attainment funding 2020-2021](#)
 - ii) [Education Outcomes - Looked After Children](#)
 - iii) [Code of Practice](#)
 - iv) [SQA Estimate Guidance 2020-21 \(p2\)](#)
 - v) [SQA Estimate Guidance 2020-21 \(p3\)](#)
 - vi) [Update from the National Qualifications 2021 Group - 11th November 2020](#)
 - vii) [Assessment Arrangements for 2020-21](#)

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CELCIS is a leading improvement and innovation centre in Scotland. We improve children's lives by supporting people and organisations to drive long-lasting change in the services they need, and the practices used by people responsible for their care.

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Visit: www.celcis.org **Email:** celcis@strath.ac.uk **Tel:** 0141 444 8500