

**Agenda Item No 7
Appendix 1****Overview of National Children's Social Work Statistics**

Each year, the Scottish Government collect and publish data on Children Looked After, Child Protection and Eligibility for Aftercare services. The data collection period is for 1 August to 31 July following year. All data included within this report is accurate to 31 July 2020 and is based on the national dataset published by Scottish Government on 30 March 2021¹. Data may be subject to revisions during the year.

Data has been collected at an individual level since 2008 and matched using Scottish Candidate Numbers (SCN). Doing so allows for data to be linked to other data sets such as education outcomes but also to allow for benchmarking between authorities. The purpose of benchmarking is to compare like with like, provide learning opportunities and drive improvements.

This report provides a summary of Angus Council performance against the key measures within the datasets. The report also outlines how Angus Council compares with other local authorities in the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF)².

For the purposes of benchmarking, we use "family groups" which are councils similar in terms of the type of population that they serve (e.g. relative deprivation and affluence) and the type of area in which they serve them (e.g. urban, semi-rural, rural). Family groups do not make any comparison of how services are delivered, so while statistical similarities may exist, further investigation is always required to determine the reasons for variations in performance. Within the LGBF Angus Council is placed into Family Group 2 for Children Social Work Statistics. The other members of the group are Argyll & Bute, East Lothian, Highland, Midlothian, Moray, Stirling and Scottish Borders. Some measures within the LGBF and wider statutory dataset are expressed in rates per 1,000 population, meaning the data is more comparable between the family group members.

The statistics presented in this document represent only a proportion of the children and families supported by Angus Council. On a weekly basis the Children, Families & Justice Service supports around 800 children. Of these, around 35% (280) are 'looked after' and 7.5% (60) are on the Child Protection Register. Statutory returns do not record information about voluntary or informal support arrangements. An area for development is how we monitor data for these groups in a meaningful way and begin to build a picture of pathways and outcomes for all who receive our services.

¹ Scottish Government Statistics - <https://www.gov.scot/collections/childrens-social-work/>

² LGBF Tool - <https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/benchmarking>

Children Looked After

Number of Children Looked After

Over the last 5 years, the total number of children looked after in Scotland has been falling gradually. There was a slight increase (1.4%) between 2019 and 2020, the first increase since 2014. Table 1 below shows the number of children looked after as at 31 July of each year plus the percentage change between 2016 - 2020, and 2019-2020.

As can be expected when looking at smaller numbers, the number of children looked after in Angus has been more variable. In Angus, the overall percentage change over the last 5 years is 11% (27 children). The single biggest percentage increase was between 2019 and 2020 at 8.6% (21 children).

Table 1 – Number of children looked after as at 31 July

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% Change between 2016 & 2020	% Change between 2019 & 2020
Scotland	15,317	14,897	14,554	14,262	14,458	-5.61%	1.4%
Angus	238	255	251	244	265	11.34%	8.6%
Moray	213	215	222	210	188	-11.74%	-10.5%
Stirling	216	245	236	238	246	13.89%	3.4%
East Lothian	229	242	245	246	260	13.54%	5.7%
Scottish Borders	218	228	205	195	187	-14.22%	-4.1%
Highland	440	487	521	483	495	12.50%	2.5%
Argyll & Bute	163	175	149	150	162	-0.61%	8.0%
Midlothian	250	259	233	218	214	-14.40%	-1.8%

The pattern of variation can also be seen when comparing Angus Council to other members of Family Group 2. Three local authorities (Stirling, East Lothian, and Highland) have also seen overall increases in the last 5 years between 2019-2020. The other four local authorities (Moray, Scottish Borders, Argyll & Bute, and Midlothian) have seen decreases over the same periods.

The following charts show the same data presented as a rate per 1000 children aged 0-17 for each member of Family Group 2. The rate in Angus remains significantly lower than the rate for Scotland overall, and is broadly comparable with others in the family group. Scottish Borders and Stirling appear as outliers within the group. A similar chart is also provided comparing Angus Council to the other councils in Tayside. The charts show that within the family group, rates have increased for five authorities, including Angus Council. In Tayside rates have decreased for Dundee City and remained broadly stable in Perth & Kinross.

Chart 1 – Number of children looked after as at 31 July as a rate per 1000 of children aged 0-17 – Family Group 2

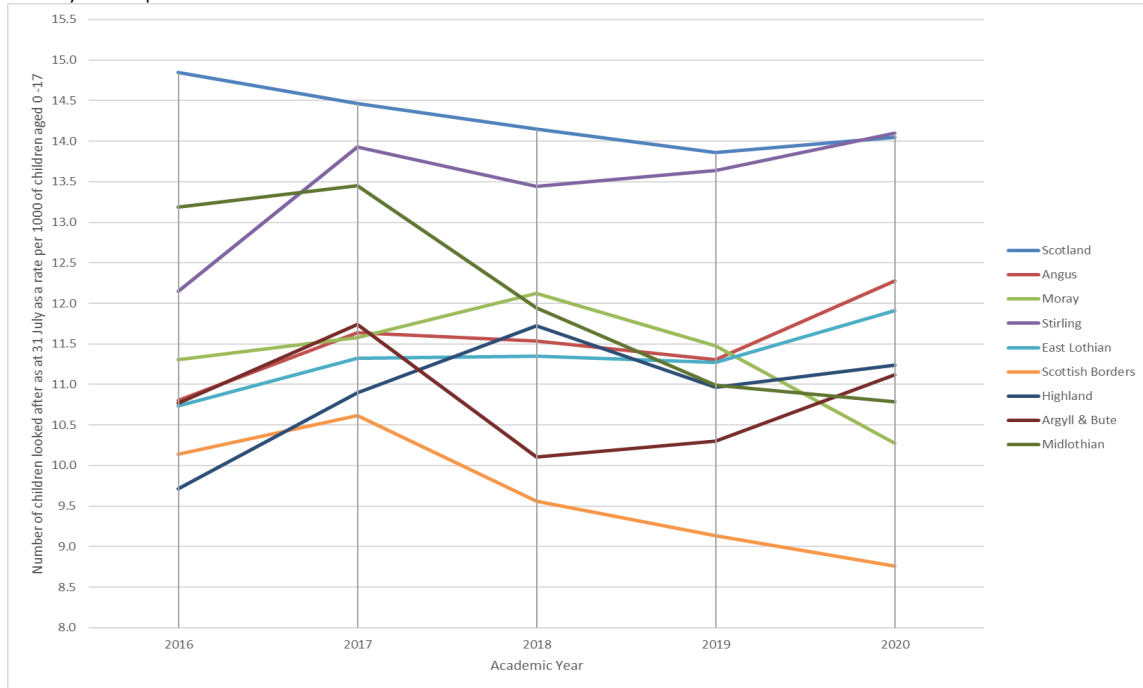
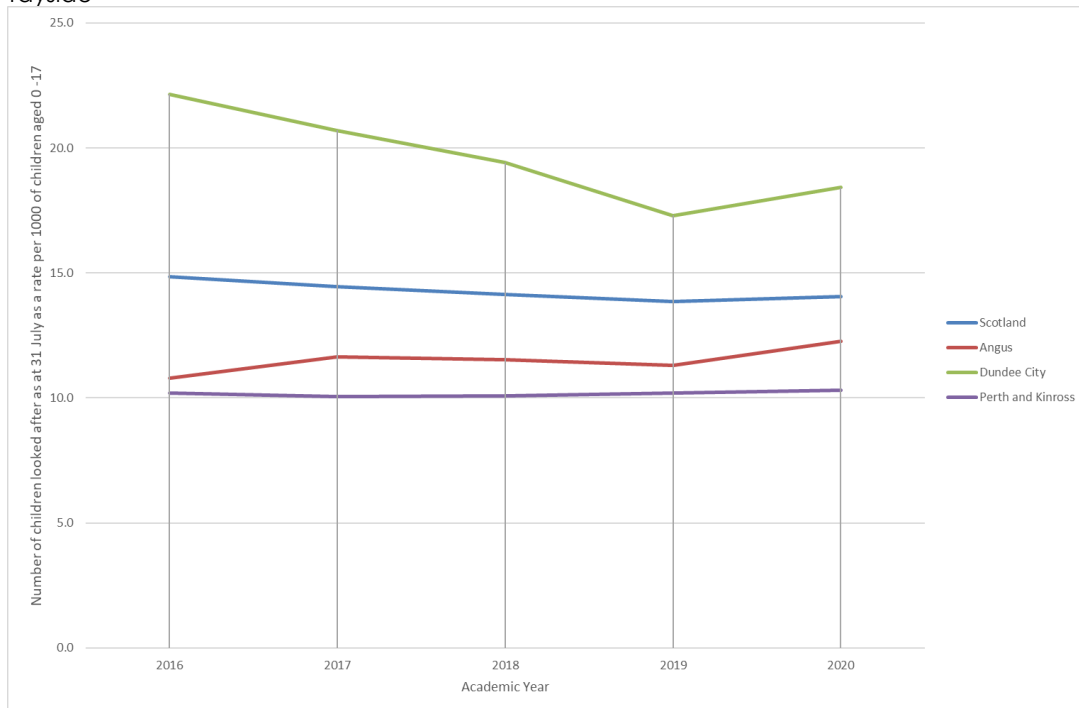


Chart 2 - Number of children looked after as at 31 July as a rate per 1000 of children aged 0-17 – Tayside



Type of Placement

There are several types of care setting where a looked after child or young person may reside. Nationally the proportion of children being looked after at home has decreased over the past decade. Increasing proportions are being looked after away from home in community settings (for example kinship carer or foster care). The proportion of children looked after in a residential setting has remained static nationally, at around 10%.

The following charts show a breakdown of accommodation types for the year to 31 July 2020. Data is presented for comparison across the family group (chart 3), as well as the Tayside authorities (chart 4). Looking across Tayside, Angus Council has the highest proportion of children remaining at home with their parents. In Angus this proportion has been steadily increasing from 25% in the year to 31 July 2017, to 29% in 2020.

Chart 3: Type of Accommodation – Family Group

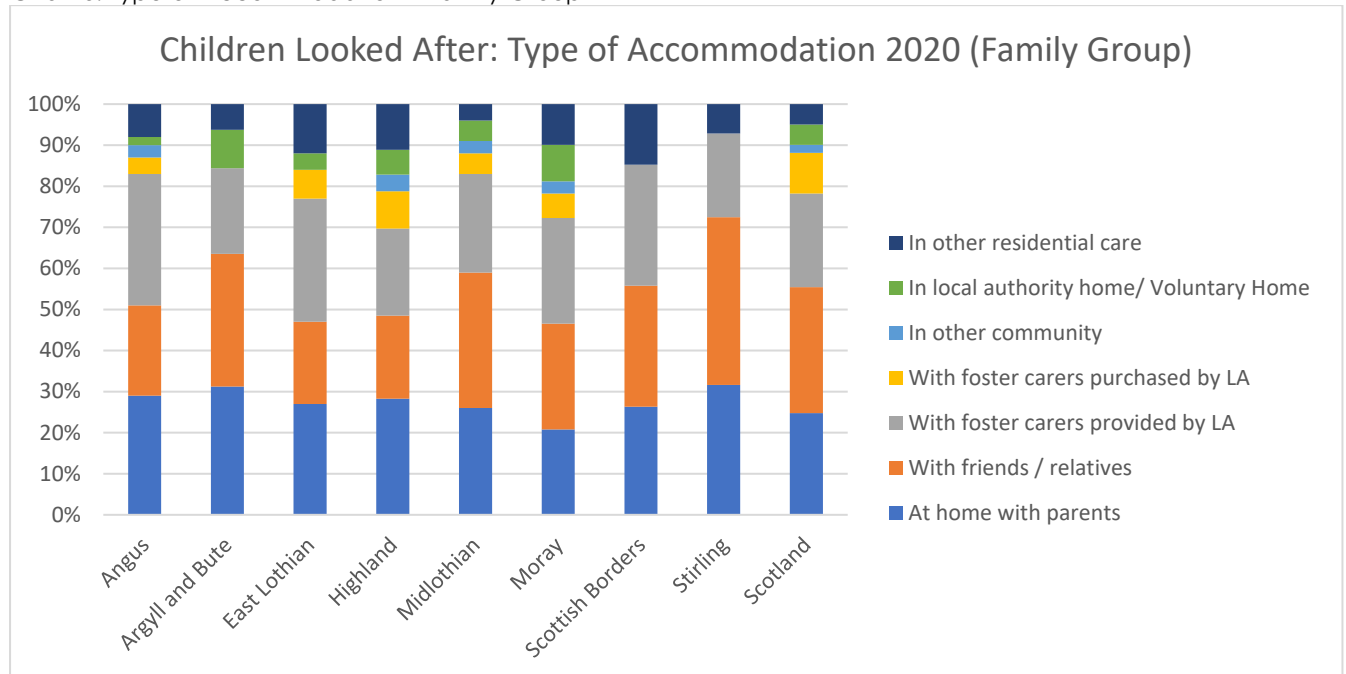
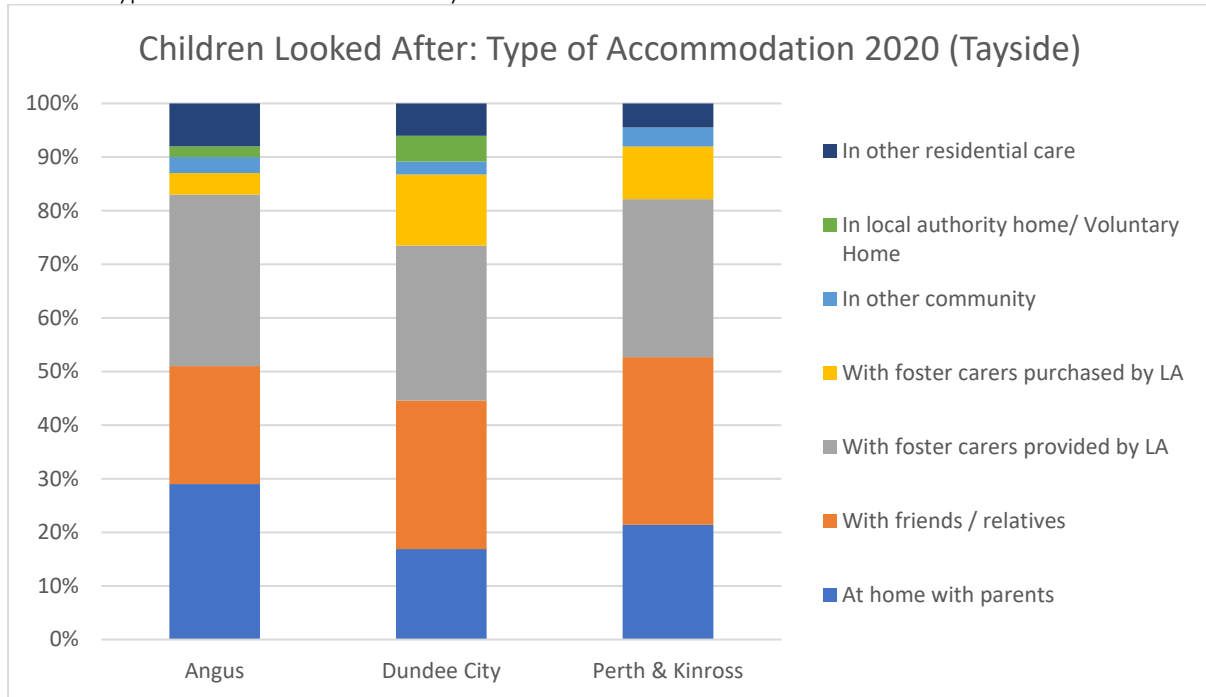
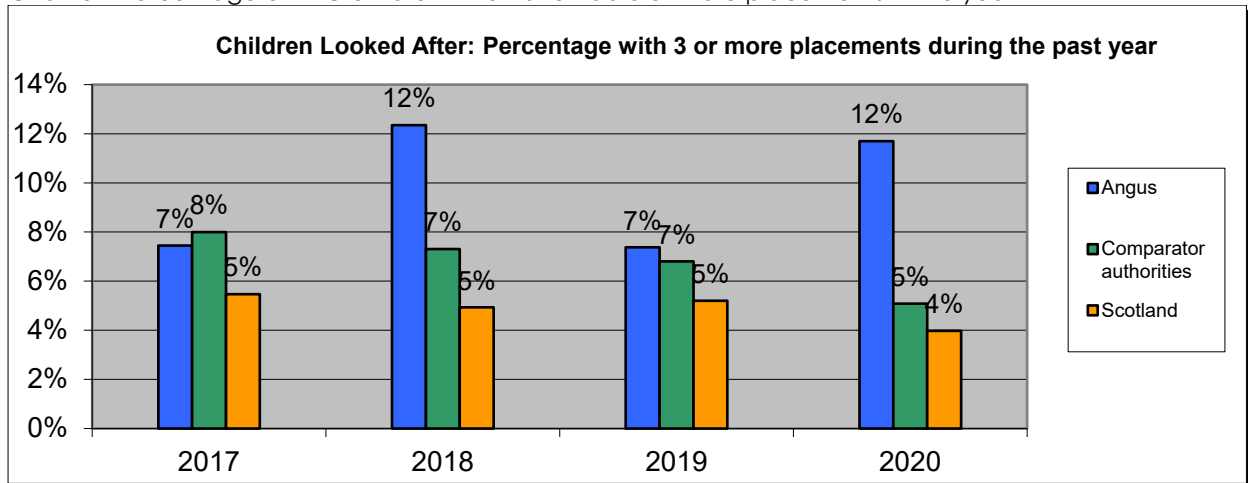


Chart 4: Type of Accommodation - Tayside



Number of Placements

Chart 5 – Percentage of LAC children who have had 3 or more placements in the year



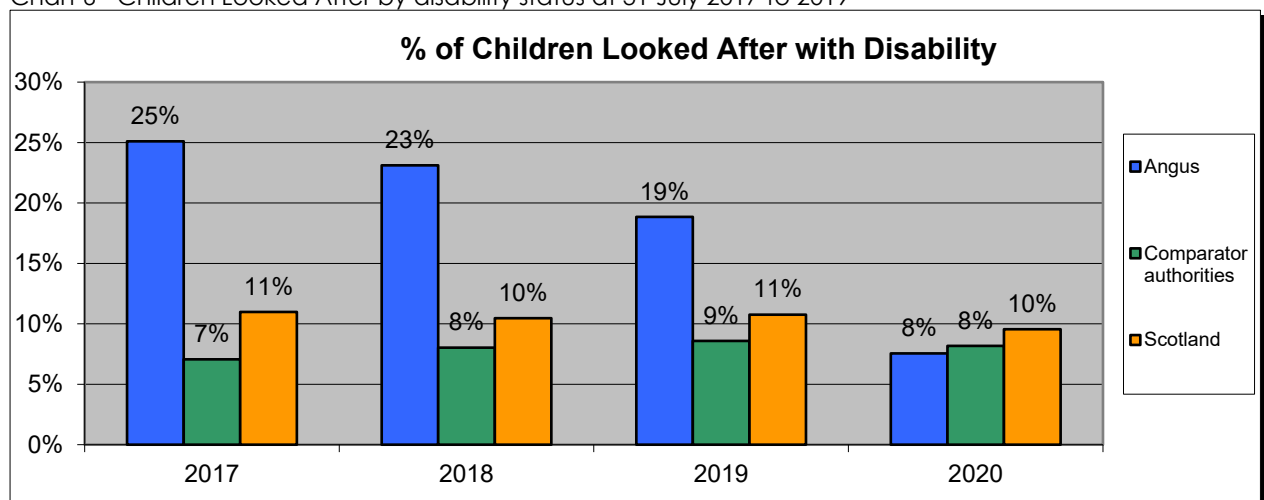
Across Scotland, trend data shows that around 5% of looked after children have three or more placements during each year to 31 July. In 2020 this reduced slightly to 4%.

In Angus, performance has been more variable. Data for the year to 31 July 2018 shows slightly over 12% of looked after children had three or more placements. Following a reduction in 2019, the proportion for Angus children has increased to just under 12% in 2020. Performance within Family Group 2 has also been variable within the same period. Family Group performance is currently much closer to the national average. When considering the data for Angus it is important to note that the number of looked after children is low, and especially so for those who are accommodated. Percentage changes should be considered in this context.

Placement instability can negatively impact the development of attachment and cause or worsen feelings of anxiety, fear, and instability³. The reasons for placement changes are, however, complex. Children with more severe emotional and behavioural problems, and those who are older at the start of their placement are at greater risk of placement instability⁴. Angus Council works to minimise placement changes where possible, however it should be recognised that in some cases there may be limited choice available of placements, especially for older children or those with specific needs. Placements can, and do, breakdown. A placement change may also be in the best interests of the child or young person, if an initial 'match' proves to be less suitable in practice. Further work is needed in Angus to understand the profile of this data, who the children are and the reasons for change.

Children with Disabilities

Chart 6 - Children Looked After by disability status at 31 July 2017 to 2019



The percentage of looked after children with a disability has been steadily decreasing since 2017. As at 31 July 2020 8% of children looked after were recorded as having a disability, a significant decrease compared to the previous year.

Angus Council data was higher than the comparator average for 2017 and 2018, moving below in 2019. Angus Council was below both the family group and national average in 2020. Some caution is needed when considering this data, due to the small number of children captured in this dataset for Angus. Some variation within the data is to be expected due to overall changes in the population of looked after children. Consideration also needs to be given to the consistency and accuracy of our recording of disability status and a recent change in recording system.

³ <https://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/esss-outlines/care-experienced-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health>

⁴ <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1122/achieving-emotional-wellbeing-for-looked-after-children.pdf>

Children eligible for aftercare services

From April 2015, aftercare eligibility has been extended to cover all care leavers up to and including people aged 25. Previously, eligibility was until the date of the young person's 21st birthday. Figures for those eligible for aftercare have risen from 64 in 2016 to 74 in 2019, increasing again to 82 in 2020.

Child Protection

Child Protection Registration

Data from the latest Child Protection return shows that nationally the number of children on the child protection register increased from 2,580 on 31 July 2019 to 2,654 on 31 July 2020. Numbers peaked in 2014, before gradually decreasing again until 2018. Both 2019 and 2020 have seen slight overall increases.

Our most recent Chief Social Work Officer's Report noted that 12 Child Protection Orders were issued in 2019/20. This is below the Scottish average and is in line with our commitment of offering support early and following the minimum intervention principal.⁵ The Report also provides updates on other improvement work being carried out in relation to our Child Protection Services. The multi-agency Angus Child Protection Committee regularly considers statistics in relation to this group of young people across all services. Work is currently underway to further develop a minimum dataset for monitoring across the wider Committee membership. The revised National Child Protection Guidance has been subject to consultation and it is expected that the updated document will be published later in 2021, this may impact on child protection data reported in future years.

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has created additional pressures for children's services. The closures of childcare, schools and businesses, restrictions in the provision of face-to-face health services, as well as extended periods of isolation from family and wider community, may have increased the vulnerability of some children. It is widely reported that there is likely to have been increased prevalence of domestic abuse during the pandemic and/or exacerbation of the impact of abuse. The challenges presented are particularly difficult when factoring in the reduced 'visibility' of children during this period. Supplementary guidance has been prepared by Scottish Government to support the continued delivery of services⁶.

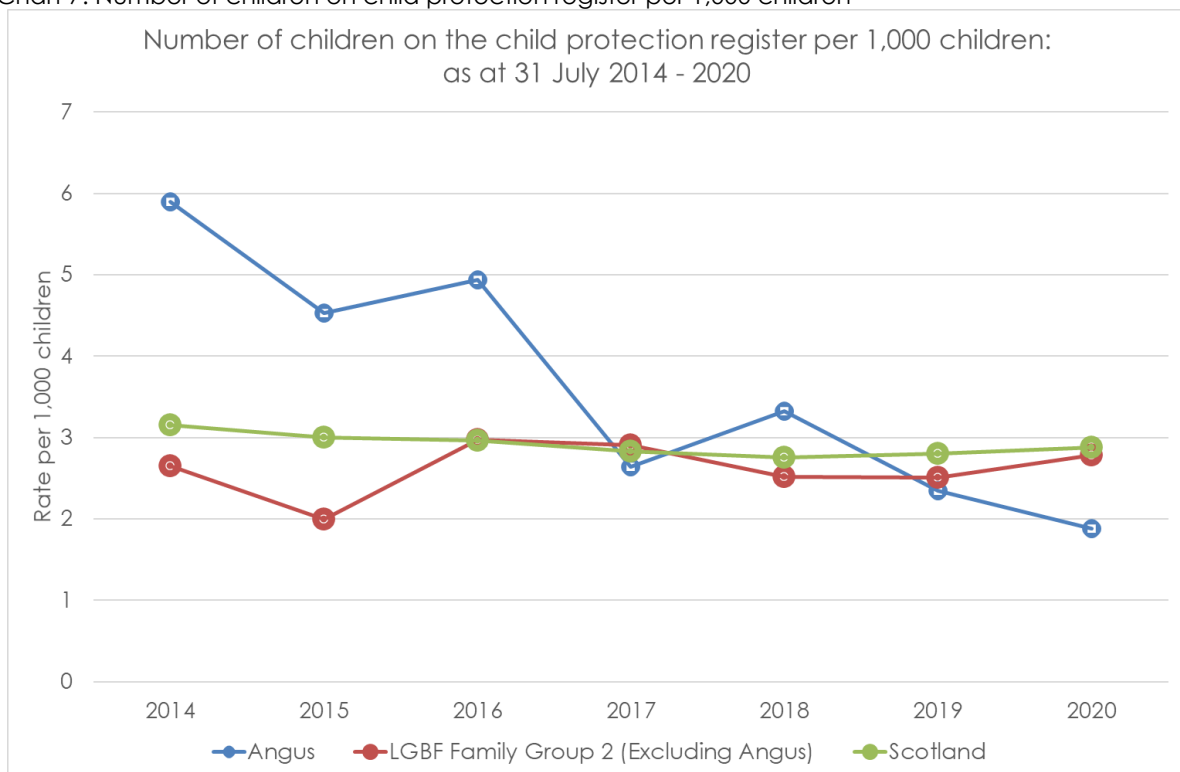
Due to the small number of children on the child protection register at a local level, comparative data for local authorities is best viewed as a rate per 1,000 children. Presented this way, a generally decreasing trend can be seen for Angus Council, moving from 5.9 per 1,000 children in 2014 to 1.9 per 1,000 children in 2020. Angus

⁵ <https://www.angus.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-09/Angus%20Chief%20Social%20Work%20Officer%20Report%202019-20.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2020/03/coronavirus-covid-19-supplementary-national-child-protection-guidance/documents/coronavirus-covid-19-supplementary-national-child-protection-guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-supplementary-national-child-protection-guidance/govscot%3Adocument/Coronavirus%2B%2528COVID-19%2529%2B-%2BSupplementary%2BNational%2BChild%2BProtection%2BGuidance%2B22.12.20.pdf>

Council previously had the highest rate of registrations of all the Family Group 2 authorities. This decrease has brought the Angus rate below the Scottish average and also that of the combined Family Group 2 authorities. A link can be drawn between this data and the information presented in Chart 3. In Angus an increasing proportion of children are being looked after at home. Work has taken place to ensure appropriate use of both child protection registration and other measures through Children's Hears. This has contributed to a reduction in the number of children subject to registration. Variation across local authorities is to be expected due to the different policy frameworks in place.

Chart 7: Number of children on child protection register per 1,000 children



Causes for Concern

Nationally, the concerns most frequently identified at child protection case conferences in the year to 31 July 2020 were emotional and domestic abuse, parental substance misuse, and neglect. In Angus, the concerns most frequently identified were:

- Emotional abuse
- Domestic abuse
- Neglect

Table 2: Concerns identified at the case conference of children on the CPR as at 31 July

	2019	2020
Parental drug misuse	14	*
Parental alcohol misuse	5	*
Parental substance misuse	16	*
Neglect	22	9
Parental mental health problems	20	7
Non-engaging family	7	0
Domestic abuse	18	9
Sexual abuse	*	0
Physical abuse	6	6
Emotional abuse	32	12
Child placing themselves at risk	*	0
Child exploitation	0	0
Child sexual exploitation	*	0
Other concern	16	23

In the year to 31 July 2019 reports of concern regarding parental drug, alcohol or substance abuse were much higher. Further work is required to better understand the reason for the change in this data. It is also suggested that work is needed to understand the use of the 'Other concern' category. The circumstances of families are complex and varied. Often, there are several concerns identified in a single case and practitioners record only the most significant of these on the system for data purposes.

The infographic⁷ below sets out a simplified illustration of the multi-agency process followed when a child protection concern is identified.



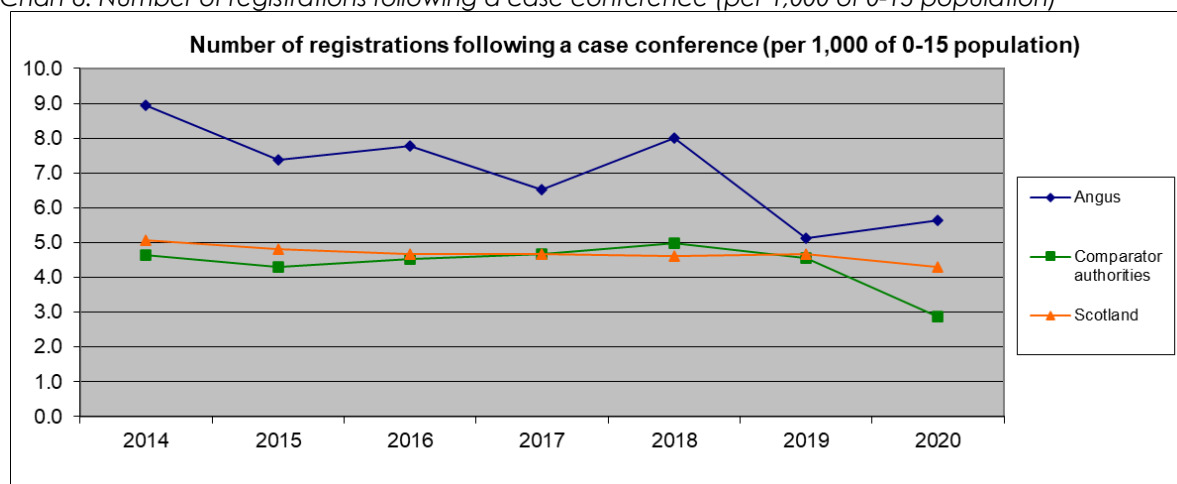
The number of registrations following case conferences in Angus increased in 2020 to 108 from 98 in 2019. Overall, 83% of pre-birth, initial and transfer-in case conferences resulted in child protection registration. Since 2014, the rate of registrations per 1,000 population has been decreasing in Angus. The rate of conversion from case conference to registration remains the highest in Family Group 2 and above the Scottish average, despite the lower rate of children on the register. This suggests that families are only progressed through the multi-agency child protection process in Angus where there is a high degree of likelihood that registration is merited. Other cases referred may result in a multi-agency child's plan being agreed with the family and other professionals, without the need for a child protection case conference and/or registration. It is appropriate that families are supported at the least intrusive level to meet a child's needs.

Table 3 – Number of child protection referrals that resulted in a case conference between July 2014 and July 2020 as a percentage of total referrals for Scotland

Council	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Angus	3.7%	3.2%	3.2%	3.0%	3.6%	2.6%	2.6%
Argyll & Bute	1.1%	1.1%	1.3%	1.6%	1.4%	1.2%	1.5%
East Lothian	1.8%	0.9%	1.4%	1.5%	1.5%	1.7%	1.5%
Highland	4.1%	3.0%	3.4%	2.9%	3.1%	3.2%	3.4%
Midlothian	3.3%	1.4%	2.2%	2.7%	2.3%	2.4%	2.2%
Moray	1.7%	1.2%	1.7%	2.0%	1.6%	2.0%	1.0%
Scottish Borders	0.7%	1.0%	1.6%	1.0%	1.6%	1.2%	0.9%
Stirling	1.4%	1.3%	1.3%	1.1%	1.8%	1.1%	1.0%
Scotland	5882	6061	5707	5653	5655	5528	5090

⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2021/03/childrens-social-work-statistics-2019-20/documents/childrens-social-work-statistics-scotland-2019-20/childrens-social-work-statistics-scotland-2019-20/govscot%3Adocument/childrens-social-work-statistics-scotland-2019-20.pdf>

Chart 6: Number of registrations following a case conference (per 1,000 of 0-15 population)



Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) Indicators

The LGBF is a high-level benchmarking tool designed to support senior management teams and elected members to ask questions about key council services.

It reflects a commitment by SOLACE (Scotland) and COSLA to develop better measurement and comparable data as a catalyst for improving services, targeting resources to areas of greatest impact and enhancing public accountability.

The framework provides high-level 'can openers' which are designed to focus questions on why variations in cost and performance are occurring between similar councils. They do not supply the answers. That happens as councils engage with each other to 'drill down' and explore why these variations are happening.⁸

The LGBF helps councils compare their performance against a suite of efficiency, output and outcome indicators that cover all areas of local government activity. The framework now has 8 years of data. Publication of the LGBF forms part of each council's statutory requirements for public performance reporting, replacing the previous Statutory Performance Indicator regime.

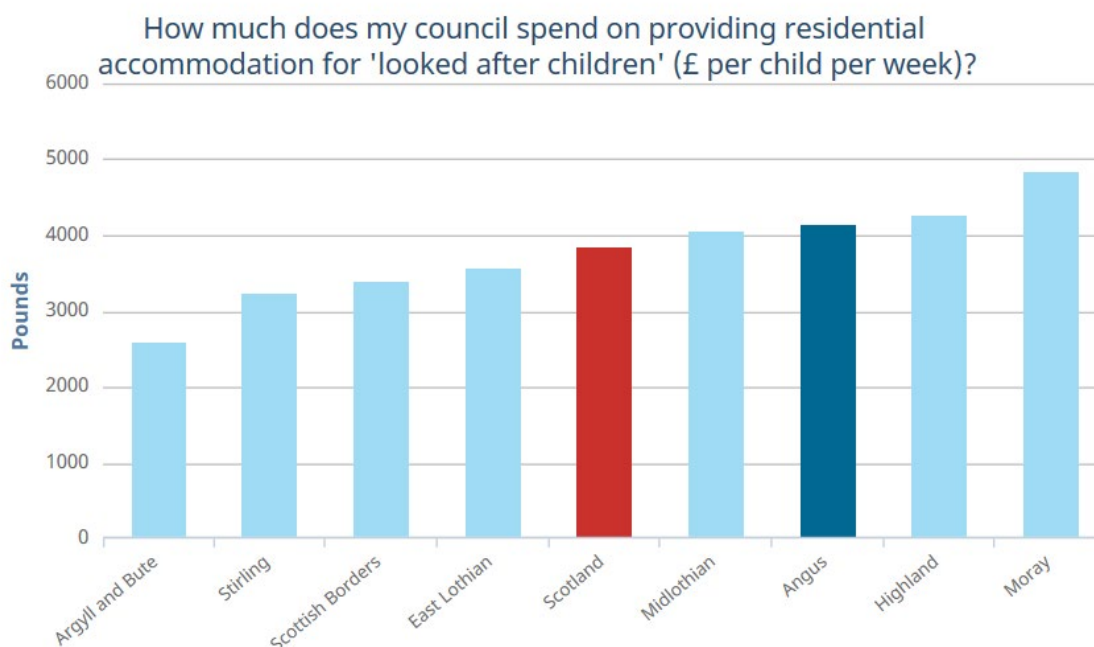
Within the LGBF, the Children's Services theme provides comparative indicators in relation to education and children's social work. Data recorded in the LGBF relates to either academic year or financial years. The latest published data reports on performance to 31 March 2020.

Cost of providing residential accommodation for looked after children

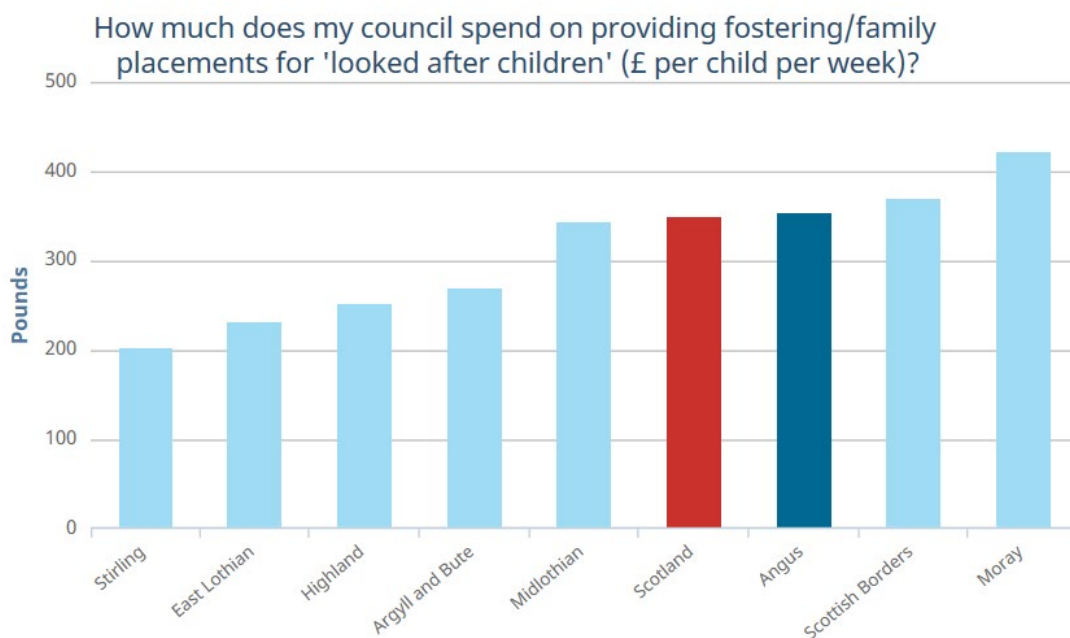
In 2019-20, Angus Council exceeded the Scottish average for expenditure on residential accommodation placements. Spend is also relatively high when compared to the family group comparators. The reasons for variations in expenditure are complex and will always be driven by the particular needs of the children being

⁸ <https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/benchmarking/explore-the-data>

accommodated. Children with complex physical and mental health needs may require enhanced support and costs will increase accordingly. Angus Council has small numbers of children in residential care and a slight variation in these numbers can have a significant impact on costs. As such, cost measures should always be considered in the wider context of service performance.



Cost of providing family/foster placements for looked after children

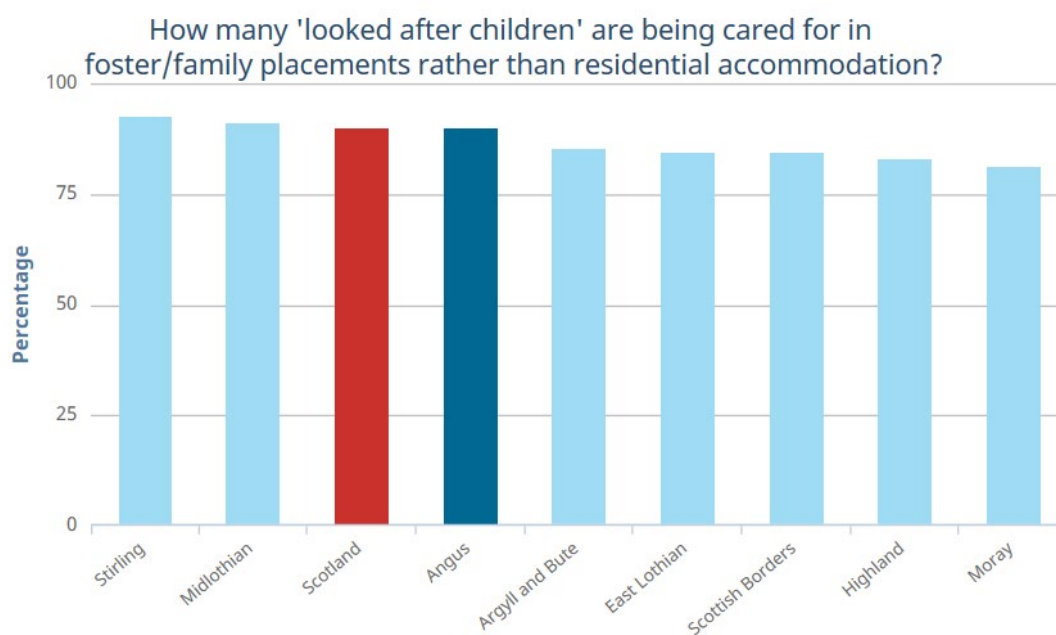


Angus Council spends slightly more than the Scottish average on fostering / family placements. As with residential accommodation, expenditure is also relatively high

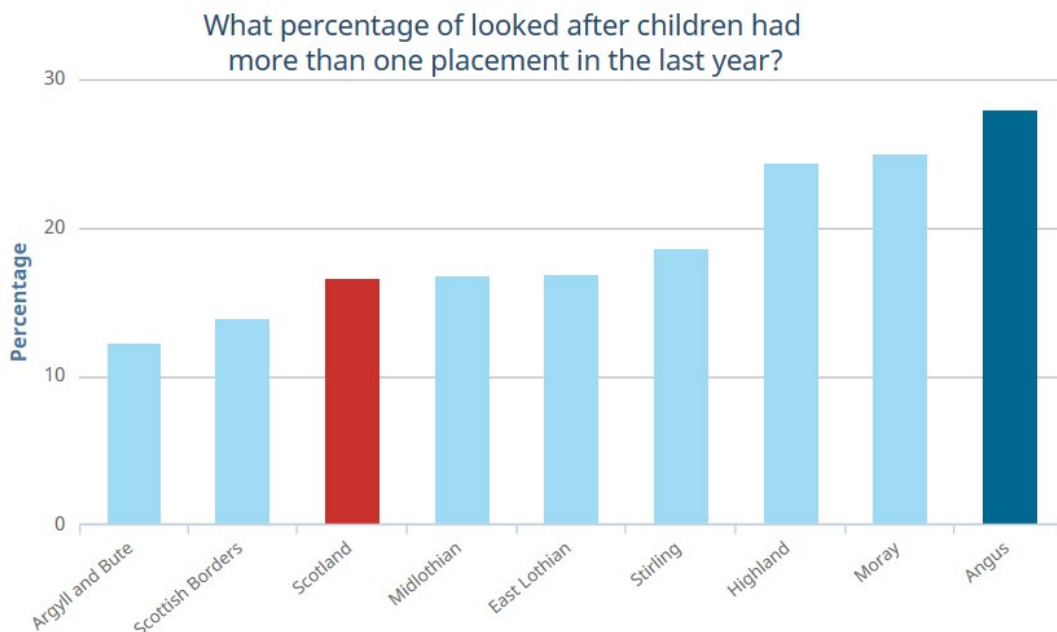
compared with the rest of the comparator family group. The reasons for variation are complex and will be influenced by the type of fostering scheme each local authority deliver. In Angus Council we have a skills-based scheme that encourages our foster carers to increase their skill set to develop, train and progress through the skill levels and in turn receive greater remuneration. We also pay a higher rate of allowances for children than some authorities which are age based along with summer, Christmas and birthday allowances.

Placements

Under the LGBF measure for 'How many looked after children are being cared for in a foster/family placement rather than residential accommodation,' the latest reported figure for Angus Council is 89.9%. Performance against this measure has decreased steadily since 2016-17, when the equivalent data was 92.2%. Angus Council is currently slightly below the national average, but above the majority of the family group comparators. Children and young people will be placed in the setting most appropriate to meet their individual needs. While a family or fostering placement may be considered preferable, on occasion the best possible place will be residential accommodation.

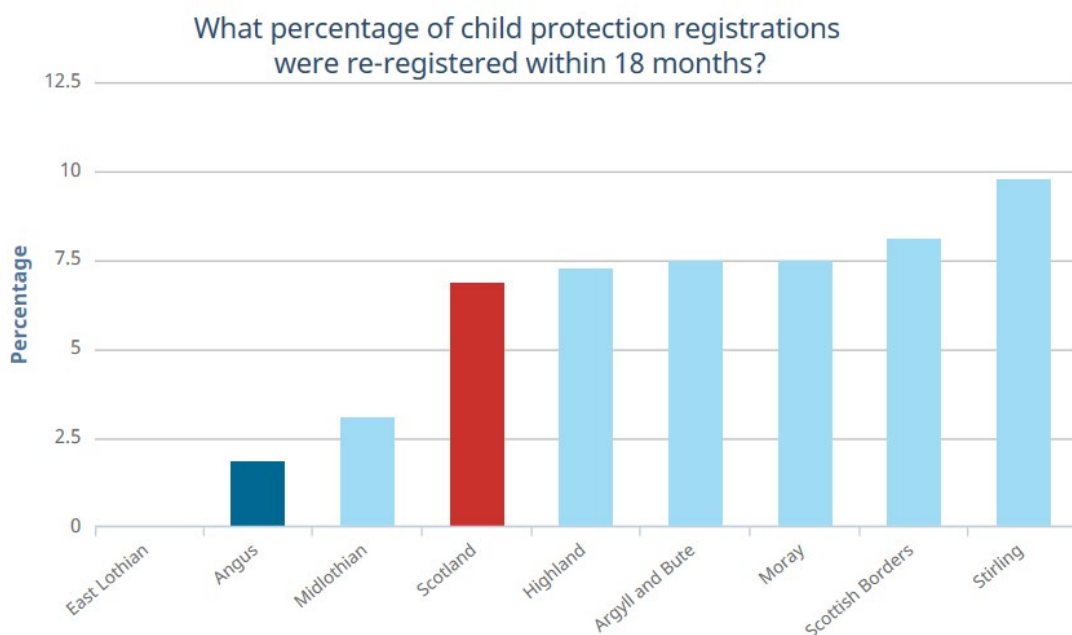


Under the measure 'what percentage of looked after children had more than one placement in the last year' Angus Council performance was 27.9% in 2019-20. This is an increase from 2018-19 (24.2%) but remains lower than the peak of 30.2% in 2016-17. Under this measure, all comparator authorities in the family group have a lower percentage of moves. As noted on page 4 and 5 of this report, the reasons for placement changes are complex and may be required due to the best interests of the child or young person, or placement breakdown.



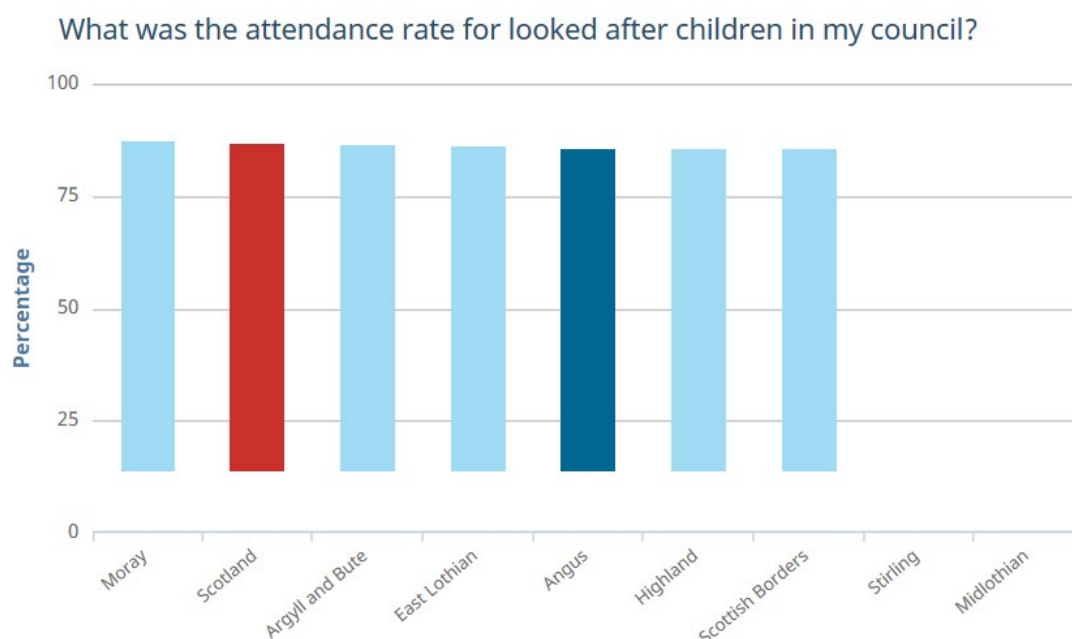
Child Protection – Re-registrations within 18 months

For 2019-20 1.9% of child protection registrations in Angus were re-registered within 18 months. This is the lowest of the family group (data is not available for East Lothian) and well below the Scottish average of 6.9%. It is positive that only a small number of children are presented back to case conference within 18 months with several factors influencing this including improved family circumstances, children subject to compulsory supervision both at home and away from home and families moving out of area. The data provides confidence in the decision-making process. A clear process is in place for the review of registration decisions.

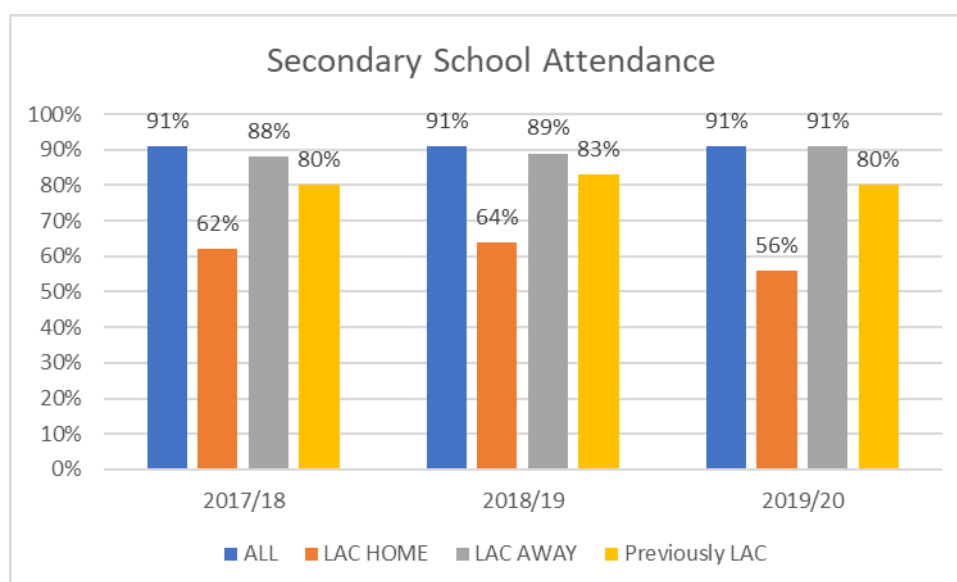
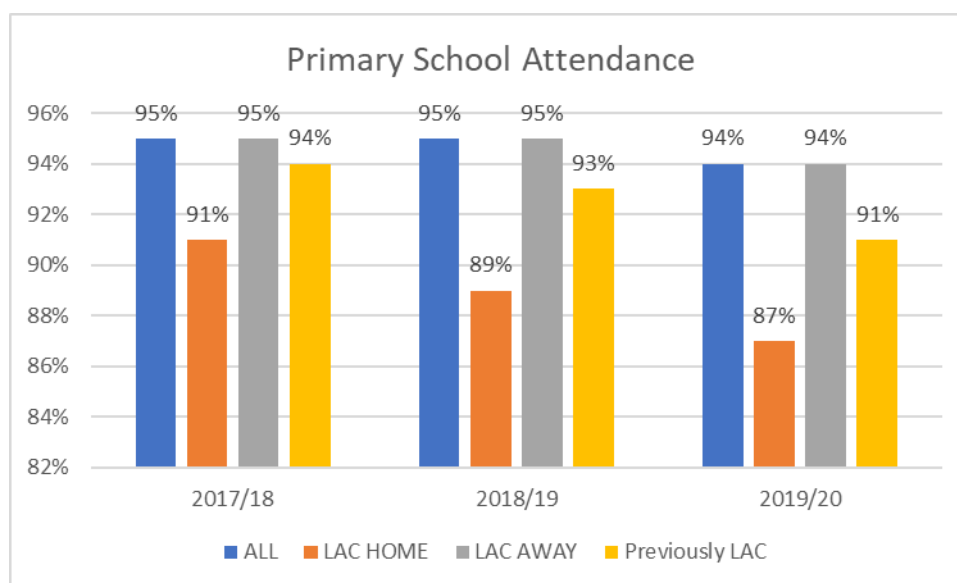


School Attendance and Exclusions for looked after children and young people

Overall, attendance at school for care experienced children and young people is lower than the national average. Angus Council performance against this measure sits in the middle of the family group, however it should be noted that the overall range of performance across the group is limited (from a maximum of 87.4% and minimum of 83.7%). The reported LGBF measure includes attendance for all looked after children and does not include a breakdown for primary / secondary or whether looked after at home or away.



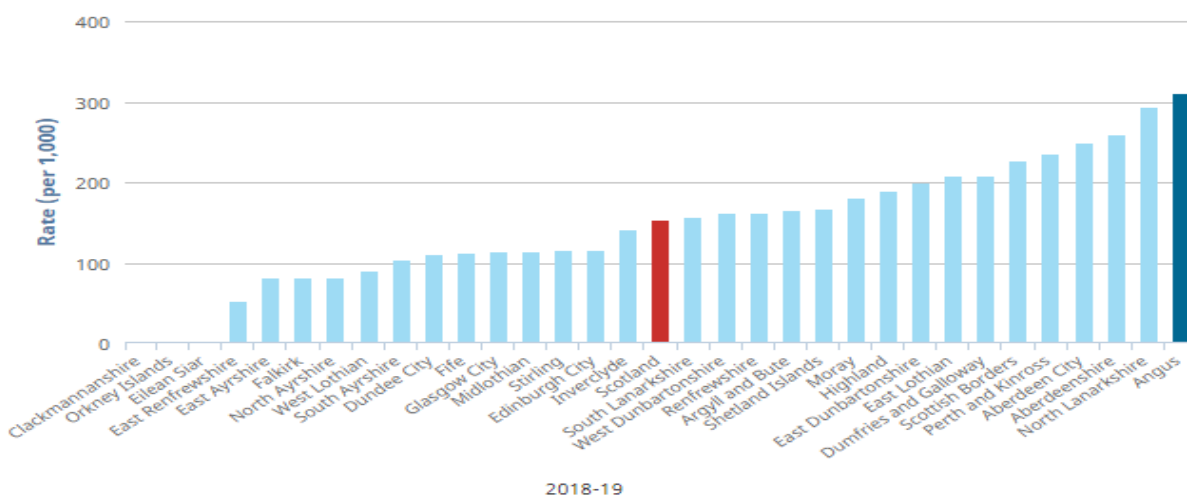
Our own analysis of this high-level data shows a more complex picture. Children who are looked after at home have poorer levels of attendance. This is the case for both primary and secondary age children. Attendance for those looked after away from home is higher and more in line with the overall school population. Our attendance management procedures note that senior leaders within schools should be aware of any issues that impact attendance for looked after children, and look for ways to support the child with these. Some caution is needed when interpreting this data due to the relatively small number of children involved.



The Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate has plans in place to increase monitoring of attendance data for care experienced children and young people. Data will be available in Pentana later in 2020/21 and will be accessible to the Children, Families and Justice Leadership Team.

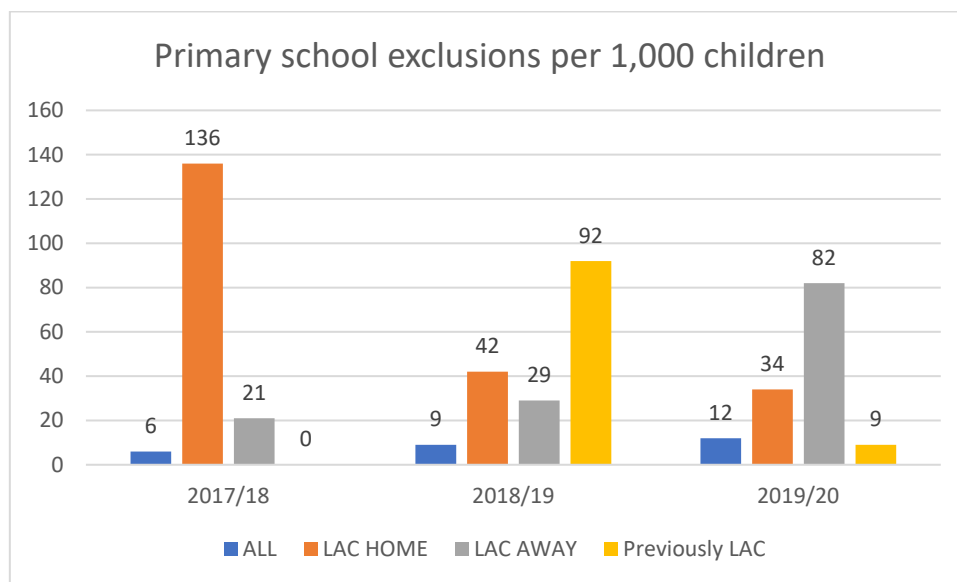
Overall, Angus Council has the highest exclusion rate in Scotland per 1,000 looked after children and young people. As with the LBGF attendance measure, no distinction is made between primary or secondary age children, or whether they are looked after at home or away.

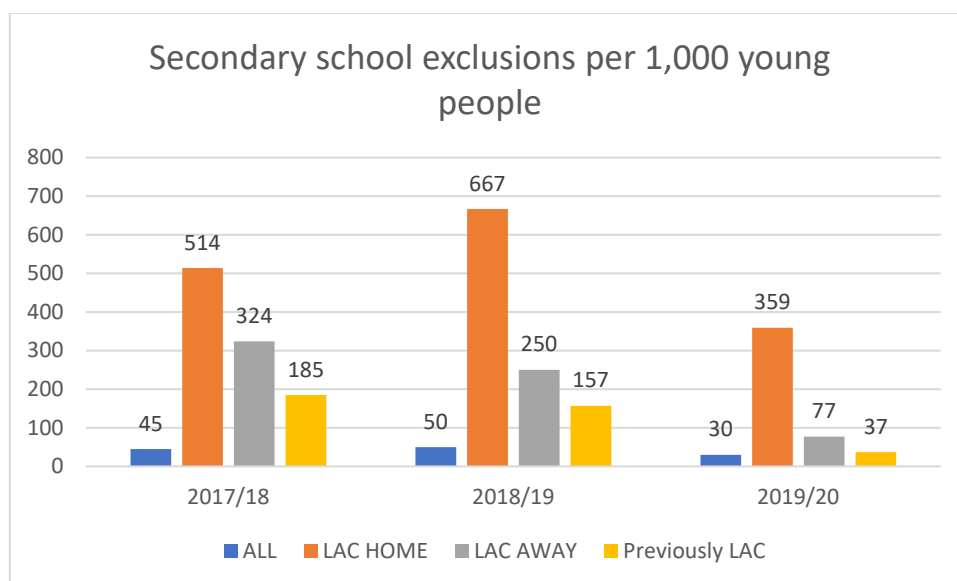
What was the school exclusion rate for looked after children in my council?



Select similar councils

Data for this LGBF indicator is reported bi-annually, however the Council has tools available for more regular analysis of this information. Our latest data shows that exclusions for primary aged children looked after at home have been decreasing since 2017/18. Exclusions for those looked after away from home have increased over the same period. Some caution is required due to the small numbers of children this relates to. For secondary aged young people the patterns are more variable. Exclusions for those looked after at home remain high. For young people looked after away from home there has been a steady decrease since 2017/18.





Exclusions for looked after children can lead to increased loss of learning and potentially impact on home life or placements. The Council's exclusion procedures note that any decision to exclude a looked after learner should be taken in consultation with the child's social worker / lead professional, the relevant Service Leader and parents / carers. Further work is required to interrogate the data available to the Council regarding exclusions, particularly for secondary school. It would also be beneficial to look at data in relation to part-time timetabling. Education and Lifelong Learning will add indicators to Pentana during 2020/21 to enhance monitoring of this data. As above, the data will be available to the Children, Families & Justice Leadership Team.

The LGBF also includes a number of attainment indicators relating to care experienced young people. In Angus we primarily use the Insight senior phase leavers' data for tracking achievement and attainment. Our latest report on Senior Phase attainment was published in April 2020.⁹

Care experienced young people are more likely to have experienced multiple forms of disadvantage and to be at risk of poor outcomes. These wider challenges have a clear impact on the attainment of this group as a cohort.

The 2019 cohort of leavers included 25 looked after young people. Given the small numbers, some caution is needed when interpreting these figures compared with all school leavers.

Fewer young people who were 'looked after' achieved qualifications in literacy and numeracy. However, for the combined measure for literacy and numeracy, achievement increased for both level 4 and level 5 in 2019. For each of the individual literacy and numeracy levels, the attainment of care experienced young people improved on that of 2018.

⁹ <https://www.angus.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-05/127.pdf>

Young people who are 'looked after' away from home achieve more than those who are 'looked after' at home.

Fewer young people who are 'looked after' enter an initial positive destination.

The latest Education Outcomes for Looked After Children report was published by Scottish Government in June 2021. Detailed performance is not reported here, however is available online. The report notes that care must be taken when comparing 2019-20 performance with previous years, due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. As with previous years, it should also be highlighted that the 2020 'leavers' cohort of looked after children for Angus included 24 young people. Caution is needed when interpreting this data compared with all school leavers.¹⁰

Our Corporate Parenting Plan (Angus Promise Plan 2021-2024) pledges that we will help care experienced young people to achieve their best at school. The Education and Lifelong Learning directorate monitors attainment data for looked after young people as part of an annual reporting processes and secondary schools have completed dedicated reviews. A new phase of progress reviews is underway, beginning with care experienced children in primary schools.

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/education-outcomes-looked-children-2019-20/>