
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

7 June 2022

Cabinet

Title: Educational Achievement of Care Experienced Learners in North Ayrshire in 2021

Purpose: To update Cabinet on: (i) Curriculum for Excellence Broad General Education (BGE) attainment levels of care experienced learners in 2021; (ii) Senior Phase attainment of care experienced school leavers in 2021; (iii) Post-school participation of care experienced learners.

Recommendation: That Cabinet:

- a) Notes the content of the report, including the progress being made by learners, specifically in literacy and numeracy;
- b) Notes the achievements of school leavers in SQA examinations in 2021.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report summarises the key performance measures of care experienced¹ and looked after² learners, focusing specifically on the published 2021 attainment data and trends over time. Overall, educational outcomes for care experienced learners have improved over the last five years. However, there remains a significant gap between the educational outcomes achieved by care experienced learners and all learners, both in North Ayrshire and nationally.
- 1.2 In the Broad General Education, Care Experienced learners at the national data collection stages of P1, P4 and P7 have been adversely affected by the pandemic. This has led to a reduction in attainment levels in 2021.
- 1.3 Care experienced school leavers are achieving better in literacy and numeracy than their counterparts nationally and in the South West Educational Improvement Collaborative (SWEIC) and there has been a positive trend in average total tariff score over the last 10 years. The proportion of care experienced learners entering a positive destination has been above the national figure for the last 5 years.

¹ Care Experienced is a term we use in education; it has no statutory basis. Care experienced is an umbrella term which can mean children / young people who are: Looked after at home through a Compulsory Supervision Order; Looked after away from home; Previously looked after, where at some point in their lives they have had any of the above experiences.

² Looked after young people include those: Looked after at home through a Compulsory Supervision Order (CSO) or Looked after away from home in a residential children's house, in a foster placement or a kinship placement.

2. Background

- 2.1 Care experienced young people are categorised for the purposes of our management information system SEEMIS as: Looked After at Home, Looked After Away from Home and Previously Looked After. The total number of care experienced young people in North Ayrshire at the annual census date in September each year is shown in the charts in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 This report focuses on the following key measures:
1. Attainment in Literacy and Numeracy across the Broad General Education for care experienced learners for 2021.
 2. Attainment in Literacy and Numeracy and overall attainment in all qualifications at Senior Phase level for care experienced school leavers in 2021.
 3. Average Total Tariff Score of school leavers and the impact of the stage at which they leave school.
 4. Post-school participation of care experienced school leavers for 2021.
- 2.3 **Attainment in Literacy and Numeracy in Broad General Education for care experienced learners** (These highlights are supported by charts in Appendix 2)
- 2.3.1 The charts at Appendix 2 indicate that the attainment of care experienced learners at all assessed stages of Curriculum for Excellence (currently P1, P4 and P7 in 2021) has declined since the last time this data was collected before the pandemic in 2019. The reduction in attainment levels is evident in both literacy and numeracy. This mirrors the impact the pandemic has had on Curriculum for Excellence levels overall for all learners in North Ayrshire, with a similar pattern occurring for the full cohort groups.
- 2.4 **Attainment in Literacy and Numeracy and overall attainment in all qualifications at Senior Phase level for care experienced school leavers** (These highlights are supported by charts in Appendices 3-5)
- 2.4.1 It should be noted that the cohort size for care experienced school leavers varies from year to year and is generally between 40-50 young people. Therefore, care must be taken when analysing variations in performance for this group. For example, one care experienced learner attaining/not attaining a specific qualification may account for more than 2 percentage points of a difference in the overall attainment measures for care experienced learners (whereas in the general population, one pupil would make less than 0.07 percentage points of a difference in the same attainment measure).
- 2.4.2 Performance in Literacy and Numeracy at SCQF levels 4 and 5 is consistently lower for care experienced leavers than for the overall school leaver cohort in North Ayrshire. However, North Ayrshire Looked After school leavers perform generally better than their counterparts nationally and in the SWEIC authorities (see Appendix 3). In level 5 Numeracy, North Ayrshire has performed above both National and SWEIC comparators in each of the last 3 recorded years. The decline in Level 4 Numeracy for care experienced leavers in 2021 is in line with the attainment pattern across all learners in North Ayrshire in the same year and can be attributed in part to the impact of the pandemic. Literacy Level 5 achievement remains above or in line with National and SWEIC comparators continuing achievement of previous years where it was above on all

comparators. For Literacy Level 4, North Ayrshire remains above comparators as it has been in last 3 years.

- 2.4.3 Care experienced leavers in North Ayrshire are continuing to attain better each year and are increasingly gaining more qualifications and at a higher level than in the past (see appendix 4). In 2021, 86% of North Ayrshire's care experienced leavers attained at least 1 qualification at SCQF Level 4 or better (the second highest performance in the last 5 years). 2021 has seen the highest attainment at Levels 5 and 6 for the care experienced leavers group in the last 5 years – 62% left with at least one SCQF Level 5 qualification or better (up from 51% in 2016/17) and 41% left with at least one SCQF Level 6 qualification (up from 20% in 2016/17).
- 2.4.4 The average total tariff score is also improving for care experienced school leavers (see appendix 5). At 449, the average total tariff score in 2021 was the highest achieved on record. Nevertheless, there is still a significant gap between the attainment of care experienced learners and those who are not care-experienced, both locally and nationally. In North Ayrshire, the gap is gradually closing. Over the last three years, the gap between care experienced average total tariff scores and all North Ayrshire school leavers has been on average 493 points, compared to an average of 534 points for the five years previously. Whilst this is clear progress, there is still a significant amount of work to be done to reduce this gap more consistently and at a faster rate.
- 2.4.5 The number of care experienced learners in North Ayrshire who are currently choosing to leave school at the end of S4 is much higher compared to the general school population. For example, in 2021 in North Ayrshire the proportion of looked after children who left at the end of S4 was 33% (the corresponding figure for all care experienced was 27%) compared to 8% of not care experienced young people who left at the end of S4.

2.5 **Post-school participation of care experienced school leavers** (These highlights are supported by charts in Appendix 6)

- 2.5.1 The overall percentage of North Ayrshire care experienced school leavers entering a positive destination has remained consistently above the national performance for this group over the last five years. In 2021 the number of care experienced school leavers in a positive destination is currently at its highest recorded level. At 94.1%, the percentage of care experienced leavers entering an initial positive destination in 2021 is only 1.2 percentage points behind the group of leavers who are not care experienced and is a significant improvement on recent years.

2.6 The Education Service continues to focus on improving positive outcomes for care experienced learners at all stages. It is acknowledged that, whilst educational outcomes for care experienced learners have improved over time, there is still significant scope for further improvement. Attainment and achievement for this group of learners is an area of focus during quality improvement visits in all schools and the annual attainment review in each secondary school. The Education Service Improvement Plan makes specific reference to actions impacting positively on care experienced learners.

3. Proposals

3.1 It is proposed that Cabinet:

- a) Notes the content of the report, including the progress being made by learners, specifically in literacy and numeracy; and
- b) Notes the achievements of school leavers in SQA examinations in 2021.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

4.1 None.

Human Resources

4.2 None.

Legal

4.3 None.

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 Tackling inequality is a key aspect of this report. The Council is committed to a continued focussed approach to improve outcomes for care experienced leavers.

Climate Change and Carbon

4.5 None.

Key Priorities

4.6 NAC Council Plan 2019-2024: Aspiring Communities: “Children and young people experience the best start in life”.

This work relates to the following high-level action in the Education Service Plan: “We will support our children and young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.”

Community Wealth Building

4.7 The Council will continue to consider the pillars of community wealth building in any future developments in this area.

5. Consultation

5.1 None specifically related to this report.

Audrey Sutton
Executive Director (Communities and Education)

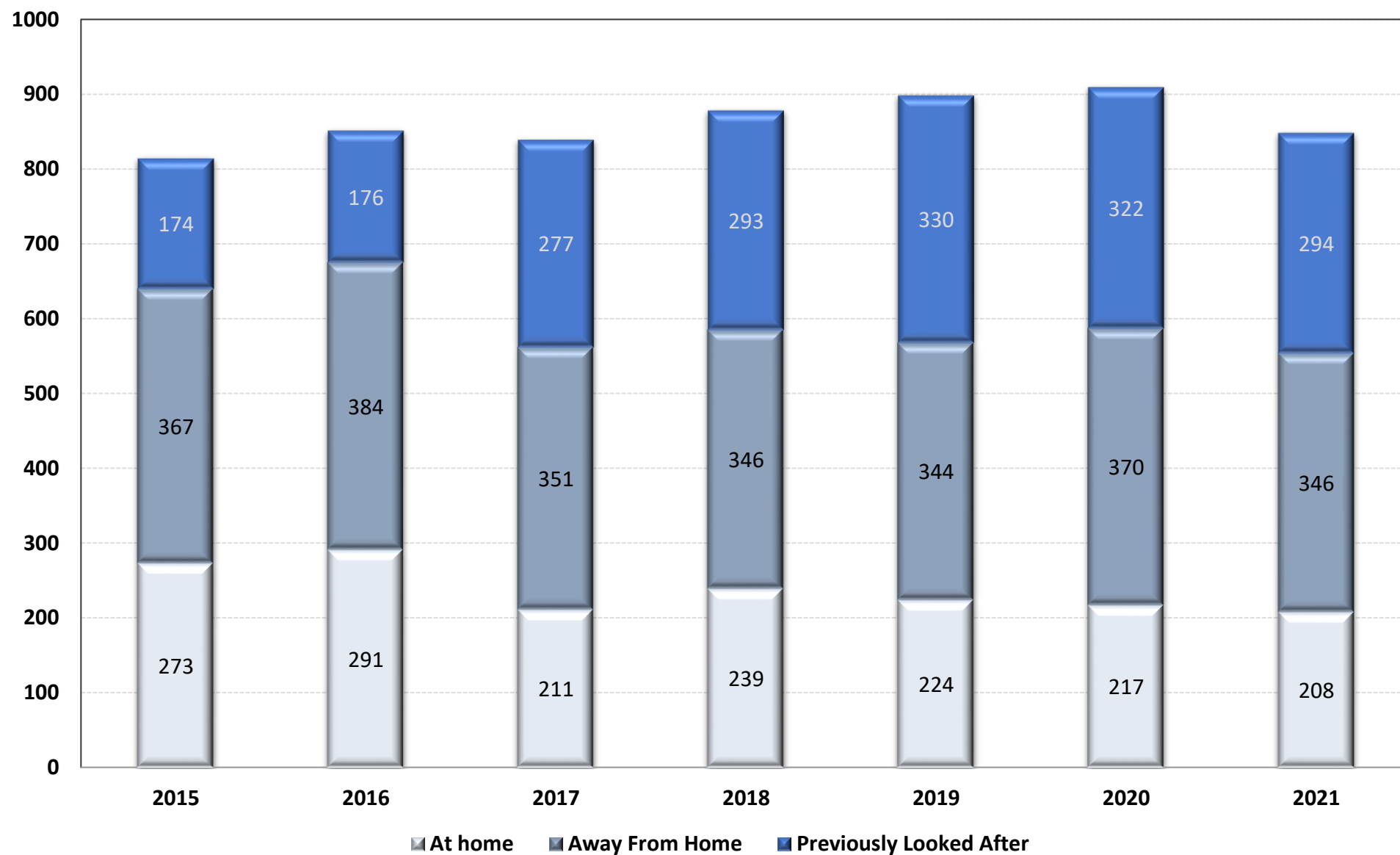
For further information please contact **Kevin Herron, Senior Manager, Education** on **(01294) 324450**.

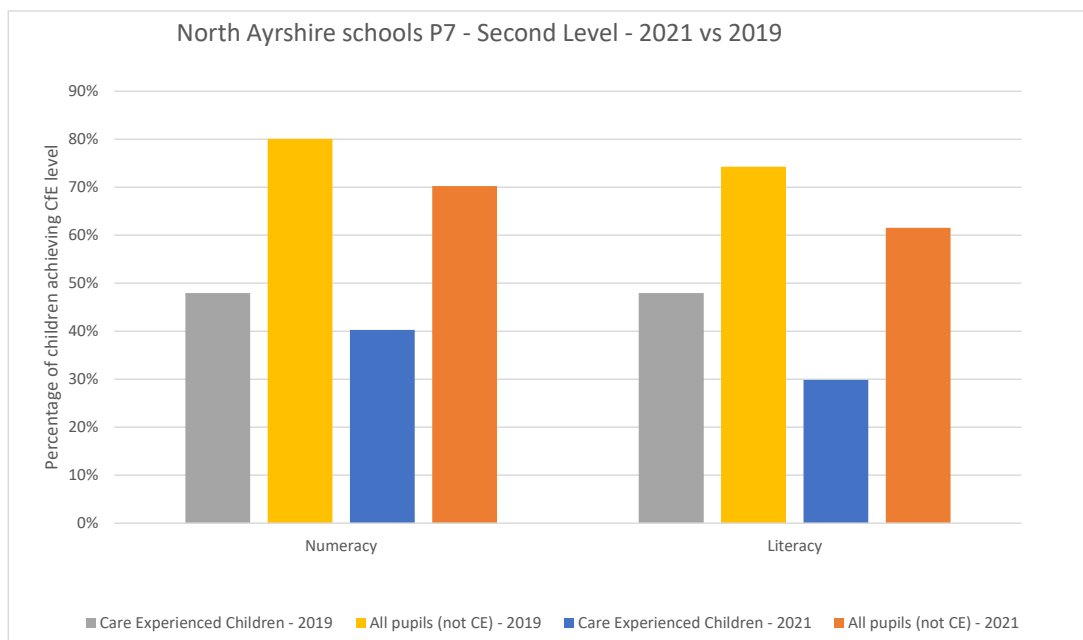
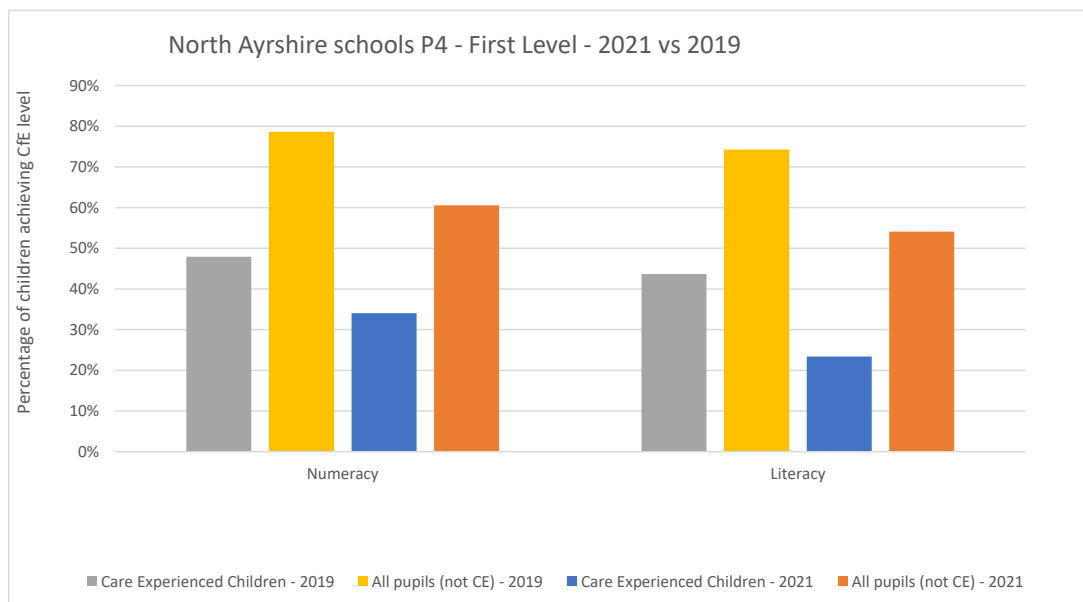
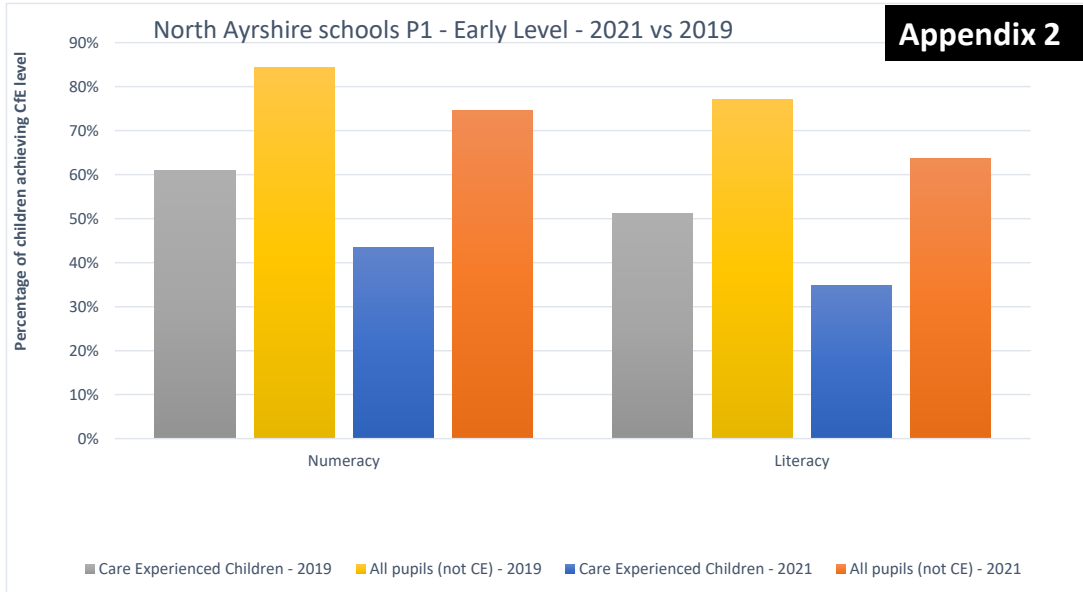
Background Papers

None.

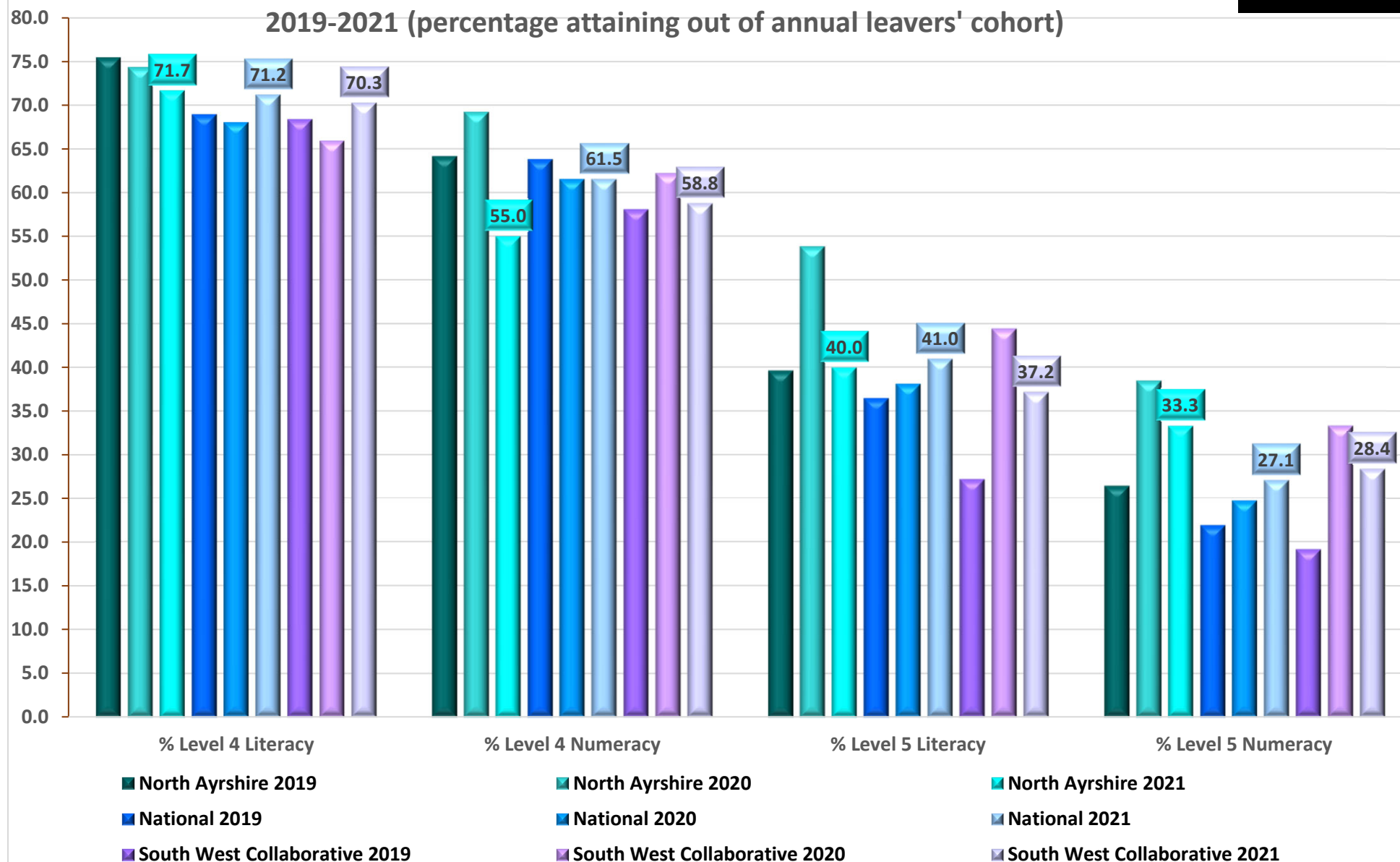
Care Experienced Pupils - All Schools

Appendix 1

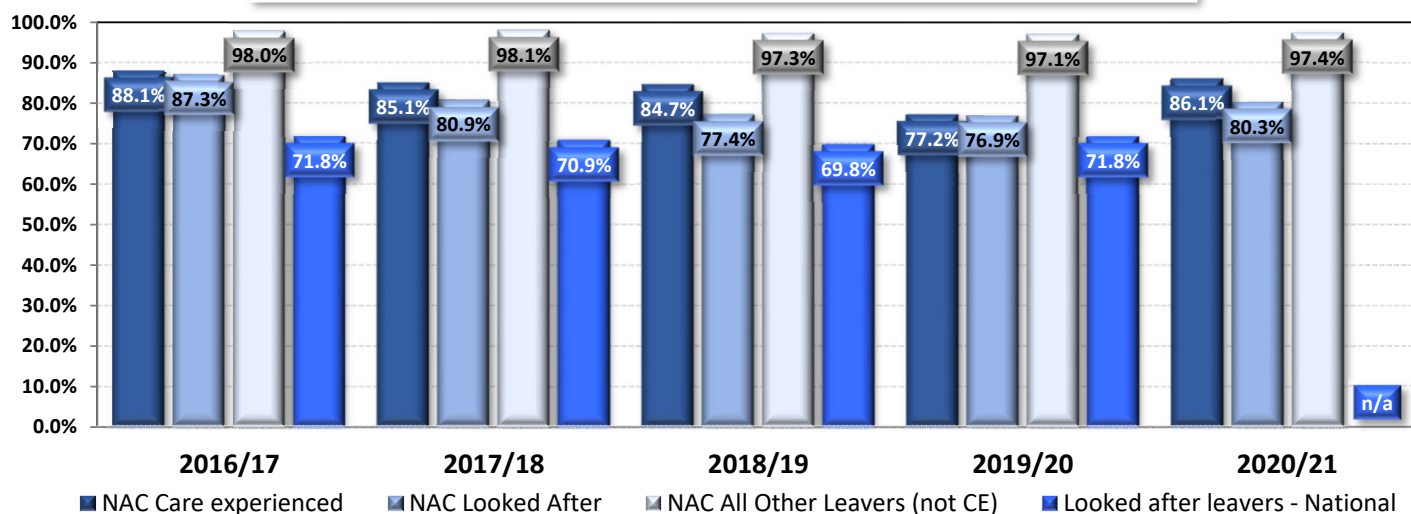




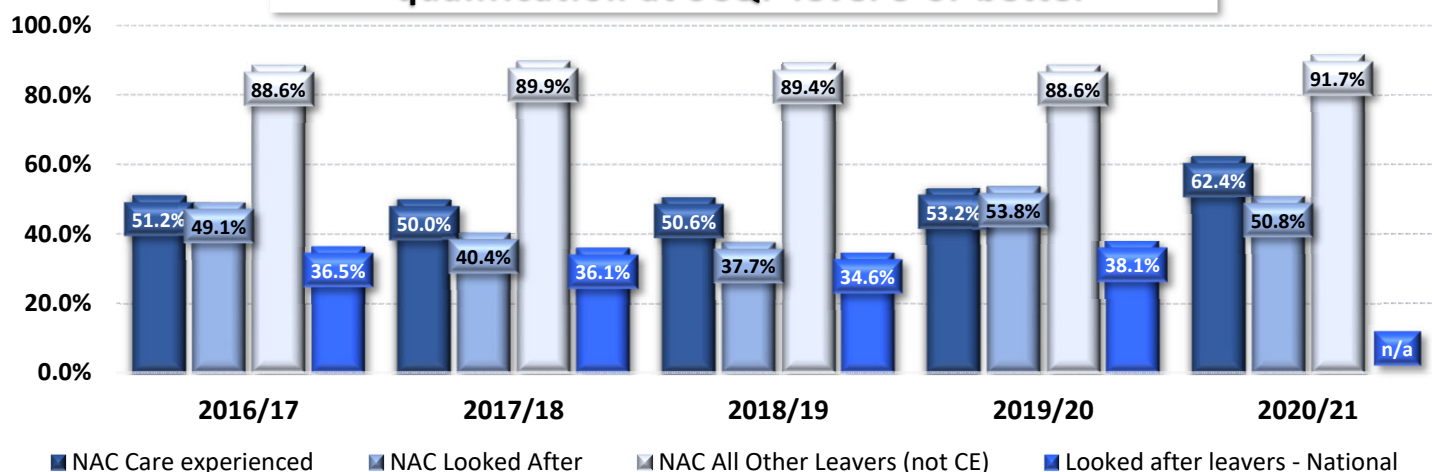
LAC attainment in Literacy and Numeracy - North Ayrshire vs. National and SWEIC - 2019-2021 (percentage attaining out of annual leavers' cohort)



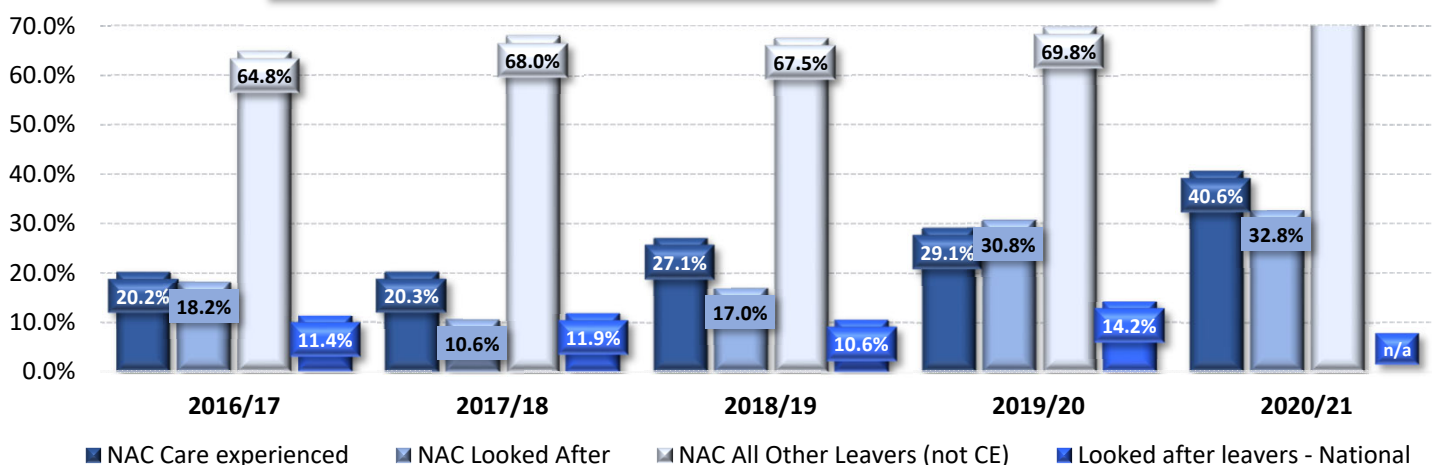
Percentage of School Leavers achieving 1 or more qualification at SCQF level 4 or better

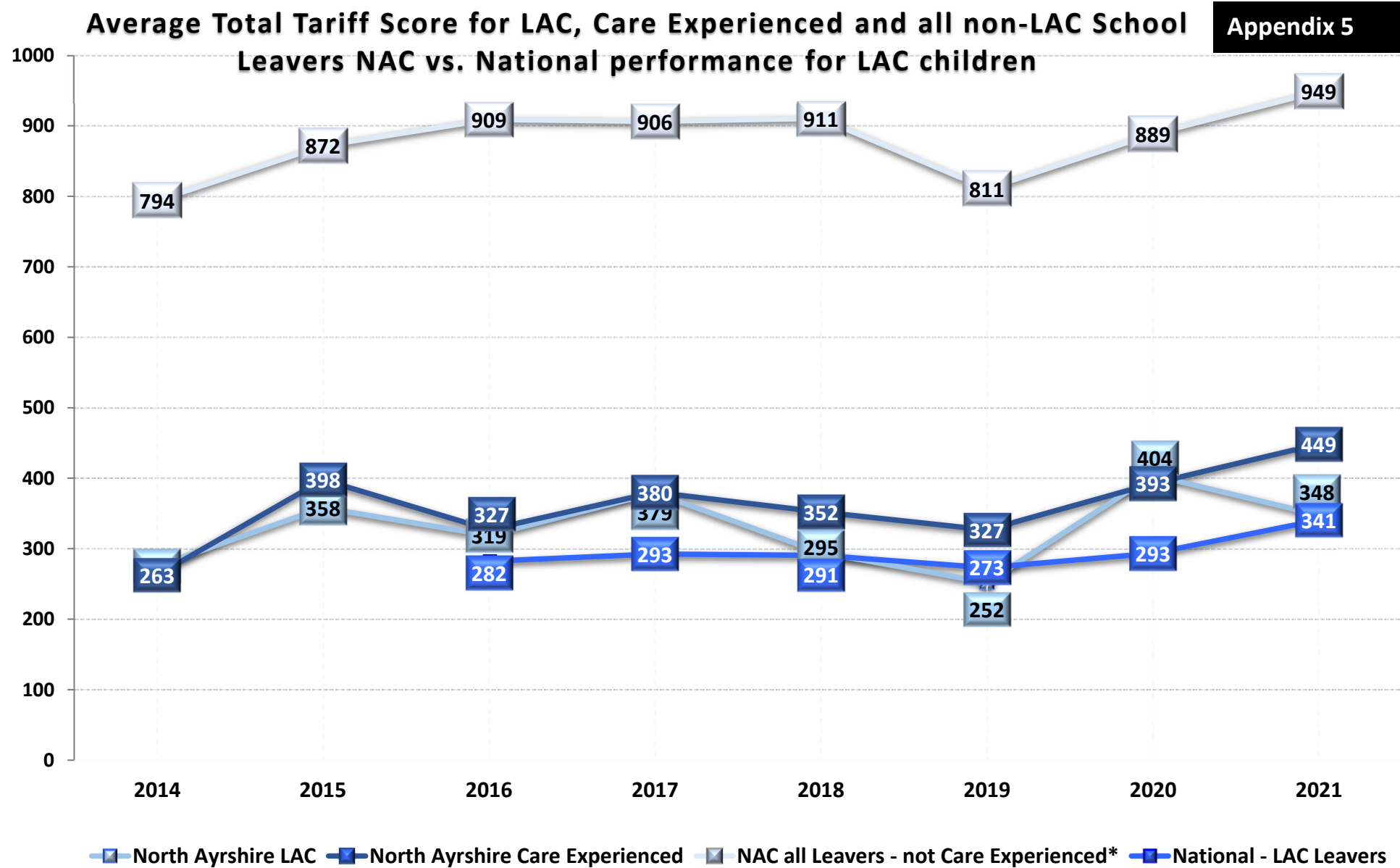


Percentage of School Leavers achieving 1 or more qualification at SCQF level 5 or better



Percentage of School Leavers achieving 1 or more qualification at SCQF level 6 or better





*not looked after and not previously looked after - and unable to determine status for 2015 and 2016

Percentage of Care Experienced and Looked After Leavers entering a Positive Destination

Appendix 6

