

**Scrutiny Sub-Committee for  
Strong, Healthy and Safe  
Communities**



**5 Jun 2006**

**“A+dding Value?” - Report of the  
Looked After Children Scrutiny  
Working Group**

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**Report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. To introduce the attached report of the Scrutiny Working Group which has carried out an investigation into the education of Looked After Children in County Durham.

**Background**

2. This project was initiated by members because of concerns about the educational achievement of Looked After Children in County Durham, which, whilst improving, is still low compared to national targets. The project also supported one of the Council's priorities linked to improved life chances for children.
3. The investigation was broad in scope, as, at the outset, members decided to take a holistic view of support for Looked After Children. Evidence was taken from officers in the social care, education and health sectors. Research on best practice nationally was also carried out on behalf of the Working Group by Northumbria University and an independent sector provider submitted views. A survey of designated teachers and governors was undertaken, training events were attended and consultation events were held with care leavers, Looked After Children and foster carers.

**Findings**

4. The Working Group felt that there were good levels of provision for the education of Looked After Children in County Durham, with committed and dedicated staff and carers, but there was more that could be done. The main themes of the report (which will be the subject of a presentation to the Sub-Committee) concern:
  - The role and actions of the Council as Corporate Parent
  - The functions of Designated Teachers and Governors

- The role of Foster Carers
  - Support for Children who are Looked After and Recognition of Achievement
5. The recommendations are set out in detail in Section Fourteen of the main report. Given the size of the report, an Executive Summary has been prepared for wider circulation, and this is also attached.

**Recommendation**

6. You are asked approve the report for submission to the Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee and then to Cabinet.

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