

# Public Document Pack



To: Councillor Greig, Convener; Councillor Mennie, Vice Convener; Councillors Allard, Blake, Bouse, Brooks, Hazel Cameron, Fairfull, Grant, MacGregor, McLeod, Radley and Mrs Stewart; and Ms Danielle Barclay (Parent Representative - Nursery / Primary), Mr Doug Haywood (Teacher Representative - Primary Schools), Ms Jacqueline Munro (Teacher Representative - Secondary Schools), Dr Alison Murray (Parent Representative - Secondary), Mr John Murray (Roman Catholic Religious Representative), Mr Madhav Regmi (Third Religious Representative) and Mrs Hilda Smith (Church of Scotland representative).

Town House,  
ABERDEEN, 19 November 2024

## **EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE**

The Members of the **EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE** are requested to meet in the **Council Chamber - Town House** on **TUESDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2024 at 10.00am**. This is a hybrid meeting and Members may also attend remotely.

The meeting will be webcast and a live stream can be viewed on the Council's website. <https://aberdeen.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

ALAN THOMSON  
INTERIM CHIEF OFFICER - GOVERNANCE

### **BUSINESS**

#### **NOTIFICATION OF URGENT BUSINESS**

1.1 There are no items of urgent business at this time

#### **DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT BUSINESS**

2.1 There are no items of exempt business at this time

#### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS**

3.1 Members are requested to intimate any declarations of interest

## **DEPUTATIONS**

4.1 There are no requests for deputation at this time

## **MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

5.1 Minute of Meeting of 17 September 2024 - for approval (Pages 5 - 20)

## **COMMITTEE PLANNER**

6.1 Committee Business Planner (Pages 21 - 30)

## **NOTICES OF MOTION**

7.1 There are no Notices of Motion at this time

## **REFERRALS FROM COUNCIL, COMMITTEES & SUB COMMITTEES**

8.1 There are no referrals at this time

## **PERFORMANCE AND RISK**

9.1 Performance Management Framework/National Improvement Framework Progress Update - CORS/24/338 (Pages 31 - 86)

9.2 Education & Children's Services Committee Annual Effectiveness Report - CORS/24/276 (Pages 87 - 108)

9.3 Cluster Risk Registers and Assurance Maps - F&C/24/344 (Pages 109 - 136)

9.4 Inspection Reporting - F&C/24/321 (Pages 137 - 222)

## **EDUCATION**

10.1 Summer in the City Programme 2024 - F&C/24/318 (Pages 223 - 234)

10.2 Parental Involvement and Engagement Plan - F&C/24/315 (Pages 235 - 244)



- 10.3 Riverbank School Excess Capacity Options - F&C/24/329 (Pages 245 - 262)
- 10.4 Behaviour Action Plan - F&C/24/322 (Pages 263 - 328)
- 10.5 Learning outcomes from Care Inspectorate Thematic Review - Disabled Children and Young People's experiences of Social Work Services - F&C/24/330 (Pages 329 - 342)

**AT THIS JUNCTURE, THE EXTERNAL MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE WILL DEPART**

### **CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

- 11.1 Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report 2023/24 - F&C/24/334 (Pages 343 - 382)
- 11.2 Keeping the Promise - Year 3 Evaluation - F&C/24/337 (Pages 383 - 458)
- 11.3 Aberdeen City's Child Protection Committee Annual Report 2023-24 - F&C/24/312 (Pages 459 - 498)
- 11.4 Children's Social Work: Workforce Development Plan (2024-2030) - F&C/24/331 (Pages 499 - 524)

Impact Assessments for this Committee can be viewed here:- [Impact Assessments | Aberdeen City Council](#)

Should you require any further information about this agenda, please contact Steph Dunsmuir, [sdunsmuir@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:sdunsmuir@aberdeencity.gov.uk)

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## EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN, 17 September 2024. Minute of Meeting of the EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE. Present:- Councillor Greig, Convener; Councillor Mennie, Vice-Convener; Councillor Steve Delaney, the Depute Provost (as substitute for Councillor Bouse); and Councillors Allard, Blake, Brooks, Hazel Cameron, Clark, Delaney (as substitute for Councillor Bouse), Hutchison (as substitute for Councillor Fairfull), Grant, McLeod, Radley, MacGregor, McLellan and Mrs Stewart. External Members:- Ms Danielle Barclay (Parent Representative - Nursery / Primary), Mr Doug Haywood (Teacher Representative - Primary Schools), Ms Jacqueline Munro (Teacher Representative - Secondary Schools), Dr Alison Murray (Parent Representative - Secondary), Mr John Murray (Roman Catholic Religious Representative), Mr Madhav Regmi (Third Religious Representative) and Mrs Hilda Smith (Church of Scotland representative) (for articles 1 to 11).

**The agenda and reports associated with this minute can be located [here](#).**

**Please note that if any changes are made to this minute at the point of approval, these will be outlined in the subsequent minute and this document will not be retrospectively altered.**

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS

1. Members were requested to intimate any declarations of interest or connections, whereby the following were noted:-

In relation to item 10.1 (Music Service Update), Councillor Blake advised that her sons took music lessons through the Music Service and one had participated in many of the performances highlighted in the report and was a member of one of the ensembles, however she did not consider this amounted to an interest which would prevent her from taking part in the item. Also in relation to item 10.1 (Music Service Update), Councillor McLeod advised that he had previously been the Music Co-ordinator for Aberdeen City Council, however he also did not consider that this amounted to an interest which would prevent him from participating in the item. Finally in relation to item 10.1, Dr Murray advised that she also had a son who had received lessons from the Music Service.

In relation to item 10.4 (School Estate Plan), Councillor Blake advised that she had two children at Cults Academy however she did not consider this to be an interest which needed to be declared. Also in relation to item 10.4, Ms Barclay stated that she had two children in a feeder primary school for Northfield Academy but did not consider this amounted to an interest at this time which would prevent her from participating in the item. Dr Murray advised that she also had a child who attended primary school, but again, did not consider that this amounted to an interest which would require her to leave the meeting for that item.

In relation to item 10.5 (Denominational Primary Schools), Councillor Mrs Stewart advised that she was a practising Roman Catholic and three of her children had attended St Joseph's RC School prior to attending Aberdeen Grammar School. She did not

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consider that this amounted to an interest which required to be declared and advised that she would be participating in the item. Also in relation to this item, Mr Murray advised that he had two grandchildren who attended St Joseph's RC School and his daughter was a teacher at the school. He added that he had two other grandchildren who were looking forward to attending denominational schools in the future. He did not however consider that this amounted to an interest and advised that he would be participating in the item.

Councillor Grant made a general statement of transparency, advising that he had two children at Riverbank School and one child at St Machar Academy however he did not consider this required him to declare an interest in any of the items and would be participating in the business of the meeting.

#### **DEPUTATIONS - ITEM 10.5 DENOMINATIONAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

2. The Convener advised that three deputations had been requested in relation to item 10.5 on the agenda (Denominational Primary Schools) – from Elizabeth Spencer, Anthony Steppie and JJ Welsh.

The Committee firstly heard from Elizabeth Spencer, who thanked Members for the opportunity to speak on behalf of all Catholics in Aberdeen, as well as for minorities in the city. She advised that she currently headed a social enterprise called Aberdeen Ethnic Minority Women's Group and had been working as a community researcher in Aberdeen for the past two years. She explained that her daughter attended St Joseph's RC School and so the denominational school feasibility study had been close to her heart. Ms Spencer stated that she had started a petition online for the need for a secondary Catholic school as well as for more funding for more primary Catholic schools in Aberdeen. She explained that she found it very difficult to send her daughter to a school which was 1.7 miles away, and therefore she would like there to be more primary Catholic schools in the city, noting that she would therefore also like her daughter to attend a Catholic secondary school when the time came.

She added that in Scotland, Aberdeen was the only city without a Catholic secondary school, and despite staying in the city for 13 years, she did not understand why that was the case. She noted that it might have been because there was not much need for one a decade earlier, but due to an influx of migration, students and migrant communities, there were now almost 140 nationalities in Aberdeen. Due to the research she had undertaken over the past two years with migrant communities, minorities and religious minorities, she had found a gap in the need for a secondary Catholic school, which had become the basis of her petition. She added that she hoped everyone would be supporting positive action for minorities, given the recent spate of race riots in the UK, noting that Aberdeen needed to show solidarity towards minorities, and the religious minorities in the city. Identifying funding to start the first secondary Catholic school in the city would show that solidarity from a city which she noted was welcoming to migrants, oil workers, international students and international minorities. She felt that this would

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show that Aberdeen cared about their needs, and concluded by stating that a secondary Catholic school was really needed and she called on all present to help make the dream a reality.

The Committee then heard from Anthony Steppie, chair of Holy Family RC School Parent Council. Mr Steppie thanked the Committee for letting him speak, and advised that both the Parent Council and the school were very much against any faith school either closing or merging with another. However, he stated that he was in attendance to talk about Holy Family. He noted that it was a special school which had been in the city for a long time and had taught many citizens in Aberdeen. He advised that his two children attended Holy Family School, despite the fact they stayed in Mastrick and there were five schools in closer proximity. He explained that he chose to put his children there because he was a person of faith, but also because of the education they received. He stated that the education, such as Maths, English, Geography etc was good, as was the moral education, and he was very glad to see that had been acknowledged in the report. However he noted that it was more than the moral education, it was the way the children were taught about fellow human beings. It was how they were taught tolerance, empathy, how to treat each other, how to have self respect and how to have respect for other people. He added that in this day and age, that was something to be cherished, and the children at the school were happier. He stated that they did not want their school going anywhere. He had been involved in the school for a long time and it had only got better over the years. Mr Steppie invited Members to come to the school and see how happy the children there were. He added that Aberdeen was a great place to live and a brilliant place to bring up children. He concluded by highlighting the statement at the end of Holy Family School's newsletters, that they were a small school with a big heart.

Finally, the Committee heard from JJ Welsh, who advised that he was addressing Committee on behalf of St Joseph's RC School, the parents and the Parent Council. He added that his former guidance teacher had told him "Save our schools, because, after all, without good education, the future is lost". He explained that as a collective parents' group across the three denominational schools, they were disappointed with the feasibility study and how it had been put together. He added that it had been difficult to view the consultation on a phone and see what it was actually about.

He noted that it was important to get the facts correct, and he was pleased to see that the report highlighted the mistakes and the errors that were made, that there were some communication issues and that there were some things that were out of date. He advised that parents had been concerned over the Summer period as to whether or not their children would have a school to go to, and he felt this was very unfair. He considered that the way the consultation had been put together had created that concern, when there was no need for it to happen. He felt that if there had been better engagement with the community in general and in the three schools, the wording of the feasibility study could have been changed to alleviate a lot of the concerns, and he believed there was a lesson to be learned from that by the schools and by the Council.

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He explained that there was a multi-ethnic community of pupils at all denominational schools in Aberdeen. He added that there was a perception that those with a baptism certificate would be given places first, but it was important to realise that the facts showed a different picture. The number of Roman Catholic children at St Joseph's RC School was around 50/50, based on current numbers available, and he added that it was important to get that information across. Many people from different places had chosen to put their children to a faith-based school, no matter their own religion, because they believed in the interests of their child and what they felt they would get from the school. He added that it was also important to highlight that the catchment area for the denominational schools was west of Peterculter and south of Portlethen, which meant it extended into Aberdeenshire, but Aberdeenshire did not have any Roman Catholic primary schools. Therefore there were parents who drove from Stonehaven each day to take their children to school as they were outwith the area. Some parents could not afford to do this. Mr Welsh added that this highlighted the importance of denominational schools and for people to have a choice and for it to be available for them.

He added that consideration also needed to be given to the new housing developments in the areas he had mentioned, and whether the Council was giving any consideration to other faiths and other areas where new families might move. He asked if the Council was saying it should be reducing the number of schools that were available to people who were moving to the area. He did not believe this was right in any shape or form in the modern world and in a modern Scotland. He added that there was an argument potentially that there was a need for more denominational schools, not less.

Mr Welsh stated that there was no Catholic secondary school in Aberdeen, however there were 19,000 registered Catholics, not including those in Aberdeenshire. He explained that many parents were put off moving to Aberdeen by the lack of a secondary school. He noted that Dundee had an equivalent Catholic population to Aberdeen, but it had 12 Catholic primary schools and there was no intention at this time for any of them to be closed. Mr Welsh stated that the schools had a feeling of community, and enhanced, improved and maintained a mixed ethnic community. It was not just a school – it was about the future that Scotland should have.

Mr Welsh explained that St Joseph's RC School was an excellent school. He had two boys in Primary 1 and 3 at the school. He added that although he was biased, this was supported by the recent inspectorate report of the school which highlighted that children's overall attainment was consistently above the local and national expectations to maintain high levels of literacy and numeracy over time. This had been an ongoing position and the Head Teacher had been given special mention for her highly effective leadership.

Mr Welsh added that the school was at bursting point and only the day before, another three children had joined. He noted that he asked the Head Teacher where there were spaces for these children, adding that there should not be more than 25 children in Primary 1 classes, and so if the school had over 434 children, was the Council saying it was acceptable that there should be 32 pupils in a class. He added that it was a Victorian

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building and the classrooms were not built to have that number. In some areas, class sizes had to be reduced to fit children in, and in others, numbers had to be increased.

Mr Welsh explained that the school was a listed Victorian building and there were things which needed to be done which could not wait another two years, as was set out in the report. This would not help the children today nor in the future. He added that this future should be invested in, and reminded the Council that when it took ownership of St Joseph's in 2015, it had stated that it would continue to invest in the school to maintain and increase the levels of education at the school. He said that what had actually been spent in the school since 2015 was a disgrace, and some of it had only come about because of the leaks and floods that had happened.

He added that he wanted to take the opportunity to highlight that as a Parent Council they had funds available, but due to red tape were not able to spend that money on improving the playground area. He asked that someone sit down with the Parent Council and explain how they could overcome this to make improvements to the condition of the school, and extended an invitation to Members to visit the school. Mr Welsh added that he could guarantee that the gymnasium at Members' schools was probably more modern than they had at St Joseph's.

He asked that Members did not make decisions about the school based on what they may have heard, but asked that they came to visit for themselves, as it was a very welcoming and open school. It was important for Members to see what their decisions were doing.

Mr Welsh concluded by saying that he was very pleased to see that the report highlighted that there was no recommendation to close any of the denominational schools. He highlighted his earlier question, that perhaps there should in fact be more. However, he stressed that it was not helping children or their education to sit and see what happened over the next two years. The focus should be on today's young people, with investment in them and their education. He understood that the Council had a very difficult decision to make in balancing budgets, but ultimately he felt that children should be put first. He finished by stating that the Council should keep its schools, especially the good ones.

Members asked a number of questions of each deputation.

**The Committee resolved:-**

to thank Ms Spencer, Mr Steppie and Mr Welsh for their contributions.

**MINUTE OF MEETING OF 2 JULY 2024**

3. The Committee had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 2 July 2024 for approval.

**The Committee resolved:-**

to approve the minute as a correct record.

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### COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLANNER

4. The Committee had before it the business planner as prepared by the Interim Chief Officer – Governance.

**The Committee resolved:-**

- (i) to note that the Clerk would liaise with the Executive Director and her team to assign dates or explanations to the reports in the planner where the date for reporting back was to be confirmed;
- (ii) to note that the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning would present a report to the November meeting on the Parental Involvement and Engagement Plan and that officers would ensure this was added to the business planner;
- (iii) to note the reasons outlined in the planner for the delay to items 4 (National Children with Disabilities Thematic Inspection) and 5 (Children's Social Work Workforce Planning); and
- (iv) to otherwise note the business planner.

### NOTICE OF MOTION - COUNCILLOR MCLEOD

5. The Committee had before it a Notice of Motion by Councillor McLeod in the following terms:-

That Committee:-

- (a) note the number of privately educated children at independent schools in Aberdeen. The latest estimate was approximately 2530;
- (b) note the number of state secondary schools in Aberdeen that were at full capacity was 2;
- (c) note the number of state secondary schools in Aberdeen at 90 – 100% capacity was 4;
- (d) note the policy of the UK Labour Government to apply VAT on private school fees;
- (e) note the report from the Institute of Fiscal Studies that, as a result of this, between 3% and 7% of privately educated children may be forced to leave and look for places in state schools. If this figure was correct then that equated to between 75 and 175 pupils looking to be placed in Aberdeen schools; and
- (f) instructs the Executive Director Families and Communities to bring back a report within one cycle about any arrangements regarding these placements and an analysis of the impact of this Labour policy.

Councillor McLeod, seconded by Councillor Brooks, moved the Notice of Motion.

Councillor Blake, seconded by Councillor Grant, moved as an amendment:-



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That the Committee:-

- (a) agree the majority of parents/guardians in Aberdeen chose to ensure their children were educated by the local authority;
- (b) agree Aberdeen City Council was extremely competent in delivering education throughout the city, thanks to the dedicated staff who are employed within our schools;
- (c) agree that the UK Labour Government's decision to apply VAT on private schools should bring an estimated £150 million in Barnett consequentials to the Scottish Government which could result in employing 1800 new teachers across Scotland;
- (d) note the position of the First Minister John Swinney who said that the SNP supported the policy to introduce VAT on private independent schools; and
- (e) agree to take no action in respect to this motion.

The Convener, seconded by the Vice Convener, moved as a further amendment:-

That the Committee:-

- (a) note that the Education service regularly met independent school Head Teachers where there was sharing of information on pupil numbers; and encourage continuation of this engagement;
- (b) appreciate the anxiety caused to schools and families in the city by the proposal to introduce VAT on Independent school fees;
- (c) note that the proposed legislation on VAT on independent school fees was likely to impact more on primary than secondary schools and that there was more flexibility in Council primary school capacities;
- (d) note that there was discussion and analysis of impact on local authorities of the proposed legislation at Scottish national level and that the impact of independent school sector contracting had so far resulted in marginal consequences on the local authority sector and encourage continuation of this engagement;
- (e) note that there was ongoing tracking of placing requests of pupils coming from the independent sector; and
- (f) instruct the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to prepare a service update to respond to the motion.

In terms of Standing Order 29.21, the first vote was taken between the Notice of Motion by Councillor McLeod and the amendment by Councillor Blake.

On a division, there voted:- for the Notice of Motion (3) – Councillors Brooks, McLeod and Mrs Stewart; for the amendment by Councillor Blake (4) – Councillors Blake and Grant; Ms Barclay and Mr Regmi; declined to vote (13) – the Convener; the Vice Convener; Councillors Allard, Hazel Cameron, Delaney, Hutchison, MacGregor and Radley; and Mr Haywood, Ms Munro, Dr Murray, Mr Murray and Mrs Smith.

**In terms of Standing Order 29.21.1, the Committee therefore moved to the next item of business.**

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**The Committee resolved:-**

to adopt the amendment by Councillor Blake.

**ABERDEEN CITY NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN - F&C/24/266**

6. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which sought approval to implement the refreshed Aberdeen City Council National Improvement Framework Plan for 2024/25, following submission of the Self-Evaluation and Plan to the Scottish Government.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Committee –

- (a) note the content of the service Self-Evaluation and Plan contained in Appendix A;
- (b) instruct the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to implement the proposed Aberdeen City National Improvement Framework Plan 24/25; and
- (c) instruct the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to maintain a review of the 24/25 Plan in light of any impacting national legislative or policy provisions through the education reform agendas and advise Committee of any required changes in due course.

**During the discussion on the report, Dr Murray advised for reasons of transparency, she ran a peer support group for children and parents, however she did not consider this to be an interest which required to be declared and would prevent her from participating in the item.**

**The Committee resolved:-**

- (i) in relation to the implementation of the revised Anti-Bullying Policy, to note that the lead officer monitored data by school on a monthly basis and followed this up with schools to consider any changes or anomalies in the data, and understand what was being done as mitigation; and to note that the Executive Director had undertaken to include a question in the next health and wellbeing survey around how satisfied young people were with how bullying situations had been resolved under the revised Policy;
- (ii) in relation to the query around the provision of National 5 over two years (namely how many academies had switched to this; the increased proportion of National 5 presentations expected in 2025; and whether modelling had been undertaken on what was expected to happen to the pass rate as a result), to note that the Executive Director would provide a response to Members outwith the meeting;
- (iii) to note that a service update in respect of the work around Healthy Weight was expected to be circulated in October;
- (iv) to congratulate staff and pupils at Riverbank School on winning the Scots Bairns Book of the Year for *Summer e Magic Scurry*, and to note that officers would consider how best to publicise where the book was available to purchase;

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- (v) in relation to the Youth Climate Group, to note that officers would provide an update to Members outwith the meeting on the work of the group, particularly in relation to any work undertaken on whole school environmental efficiencies; and
- (vi) to approve the recommendations.

**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK REPORT - CORS/24/274**

7. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which presented the status of key quarterly and annual performance measures relating to the Education and Lifelong Learning and Children's and Families Clusters.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Committee note the report and provide comments and observations on the information contained in the report appendix.

**The Committee resolved:-**

to note the report.

**INSPECTION REPORTING - F&C/24/267**

8. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which detailed the outcome of inspection reports published by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) and The Care Inspectorate published since the last meeting of the Education and Children's Services Committee.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Committee –

- (a) note the content of this report; and
- (b) instruct the Chief Officer - Education and Lifelong Learning to continue to support Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings and schools to implement continuous improvement in keeping with agreed Quality Improvement Frameworks approved at Committee in July 2024.

**The Committee resolved:-**

- (i) to note that officers would pass on the Committee's congratulations to Seaton School Nursery in Aberdeen for being announced as the top performing nursery in Scotland for 2024; and
- (ii) to approve the recommendations.

**MUSIC SERVICE UPDATE - F&C/24/212**

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9. With reference to article 5 of the minute of its meeting of 12 September 2023, the Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which presented an update following the instruction to officers to continue to extend opportunities for music making through partnership working between the Music Service and Aberdeen City Music School and others; and to report back on progress within one calendar year. The report provided an evaluative overview of the progress made over the 2023/24 academic session.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Committee –

- (a) instruct the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to continue to extend opportunities for music making through partnership working between the Music Service and Aberdeen City Music School and others; and
- (b) instruct the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to report back on progress in one calendar year.

**The Committee resolved:-**

- (i) to note that officers would include data about tuition at primary school level broken down by school in the next report; and
- (ii) to approve the recommendations.

**SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE POLICY - F&C/24/235**

10. With reference to article 13 of the minute of its meeting of 20 February 2024, the Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which sought approval for the reviewed and refreshed Aberdeen City Council School Age Childcare Policy.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Committee –

- (a) note the work undertaken with key stakeholders to review and refresh the Aberdeen City Council Out of School Care Policy, in line with national policy and updated guidance; and
- (b) approve the School Age Childcare Policy and the Agreement (Appendices 1 and 2), which had been reviewed for approval by the Council's Policy Group and Risk Board.

**The Committee resolved:-**

to approve the recommendations.

**At this juncture, Councillor Grant made a transparency statement in connection with the following item, noting that he had been involved in discussions with partners around some of what was in the report through his previous role as City Centre Manager with Aberdeen Inspired. He did**

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**not consider that this amounted to a declaration and advised that he would be remaining in the meeting.**

**COMMUNITY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN - F&C/24/269**

11. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which provided an update on the outcome of the Community Learning and Development (CLD) Review, on progress towards delivery of the Community Learning and Development Plan 2021-2024 and shared a proposed interim Plan for 2024-25.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Committee –

- (a) note the content of the CLD review and the recommended outcomes to be realised;
- (b) note the progress made towards delivery of the Community Learning and Development Plan 2021-2024;
- (c) approve the proposed interim Plan; and
- (d) instruct the Chief Officer - Education and Lifelong Learning to present an updated 2 year CLD Plan to the Education and Children's Services Committee in September 2025.

**The Committee resolved:-**

- (i) in relation to "Empowering our Gypsy Traveller community", to note that officers would contact the Adult Learning team to ascertain what work was being done with those travellers who did not use the Gypsy Traveller site and (a) share this with Members outwith the meeting and (b) include detail on this in future reports; and
- (ii) to approve the recommendations.

**SCHOOL ESTATE PLAN ANNUAL UPDATE - F&C/24/265**

12. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which presented the 2024 annual update to the School Estate Plan, provided updates on progress with implementation of the Plan, and highlighted new priorities which had emerged since the School Estate Plan was first approved in September 2022.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Committee –

- (a) note the updates to the School Estate Plan which were provided at Appendix A of the report;
- (b) instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to continue to implement the School Estate Plan in accordance with the updated timeline, presented within Appendix A of the report;

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- (c) instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to carry out a review of spaces currently available within schools for supporting pupils with additional support needs, and in consultation with the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning, to report back to the Committee with recommendations for improving such spaces where this was required; and
- (d) agree the intended scope of the proposed asset review in Northfield to include all public assets and instruct the Chief Officer Corporate Landlord to proceed with this review and to commence engagement with all partners working in the wider Northfield area.

The Convener, seconded by Councillor Clark, moved:-

That the Committee:-

- (a) agree recommendations 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and replace 2.4 as follows:
  - agree that the aim and priority of the asset review in Northfield was to invest in the area and enhance community and learning provision locally and there would be no detrimental impact on services;
  - note that the Community Campus Model, approved by Committee in November 2021 was a community-based education model that ensured improved learning environments and opportunities for our children and young people;
  - note that the Family Support Model, approved by Committee in July 2024, aimed to empower residents, build trust and consistent relationships through support that was flexible and responsive to local needs;
  - agree that the Northfield Community asset review would encompass the principles of both the Community Campus Model and the Family Support Model to deliver services for our children and families in line with our commitment to drive targeted improvement in our SIMD1 quintiles;
  - agree that new purpose-built learning environments in Northfield would represent an appropriate opportunity to meet the inclusion needs of primary and secondary pupils;
  - agree the intended scope of the proposed asset review in Northfield to include all public assets, and instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to proceed with the review and to commence engagement with all partners working in the wider Northfield area;
  - instruct the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to work closely with the Northfield community throughout this process to ensure community empowerment and resilience was prioritised in all stages of planning; and
  - instruct the Chief Officer - Education and Lifelong Learning to work with the Northfield Advisory Group to invite and support their guidance in shaping improvements and outcomes.

Councillor Blake, seconded by Councillor Grant, moved as an amendment:-

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That the Committee:-

- (a) note the updates to the School Estate Plan which were provided at Appendix A of the report;
- (b) instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to continue to implement the School Estate Plan in accordance with the updated timeline, presented within Appendix A of the report, as amended;
- (c) instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to carry out a review of spaces currently available within schools for supporting pupils with additional support needs, and in consultation with the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning, to report back to the Committee with recommendations for improving such spaces where this was required;
- (d) note that the Northfield primary school feasibility study consultation closed in June 2023. Parents and guardians had been waiting for over a year and the revised timeline meant that the earliest any decisions would be made was September 2025 with the budget decision in March 2027;
- (e) note that the published School Roll forecast was out of date, dated from 2020 and had not been updated due to the unpredictability of the Aberdeen city school roll. There had been a 10% increase in the roll since the forecast was published and it was anticipated that there would be continued fluctuations due to global events;
- (f) agree that it was unacceptable for parents and guardians of Northfield ASG primary school children to have continued uncertainty and delay and instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to cease work on the primary school feasibility study (N2); and
- (g) as per the instruction from Education and Children's Services Committee on 20 February 2024:
  - 2.1.1 *instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to carry out a detailed options appraisal for the long term future of Northfield Academy, with a view to providing a solution to address the presence of RAAC within the building*
  - 2.1.2 *agree that there will be active engagement with the local community and young people;*
- (h) instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to bring a report to the Education and Children's Services Committee in February 2025.

On a division, there voted:- for the motion (9) – the Convener; the Vice Convener; Councillors Allard, Clark, Delaney, MacGregor, McLellan and Radley; and Ms Barclay; for the amendment (6) – Councillors Blake, Brooks, Grant, McLeod and Mrs Stewart; and Ms Munro; declined to vote (2) – Mr Haywood and Mr Murray; absent from the division (3) – Dr Murray, Mr Regmi and Mrs Smith.

**The Committee resolved:-**

- (i) to note that the Executive Director had suggested that the report due to be presented to the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee in November on a detailed phased Implementation Plan reflecting plans for internal zoning of the Central Library and testing of the Library and Information Service as

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE  
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an integral part of the emerging model of Family Support which would incorporate plans for ongoing engagement with communities and groups could also be presented to the November meeting of this Committee if it was felt this would be beneficial; and

(ii) to adopt the motion.

**At this juncture, Councillor Grant intimated that he wished to refer the matter to Council, under Standing Order 34.1. He was supported in this regard by Councillors Blake, Brooks, McLeod and Mrs Stewart, and Mr Haywood and Ms Munro. The Convener advised that he was exercising his right under Standing Order 34.1 to determine that the matter would not be referred. Councillor Grant advised that he wished to record his dissent with this decision.**

**At this juncture, the Convener sought Committee agreement to suspend Standing Order 40.2 to enable the rest of the business to be considered that day. The Committee agreed to suspend Standing Order 40.2.**

### **DENOMINATIONAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS FEASIBILITY STUDY - F&C/24/264**

**13.** The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which provided a summary of the outcomes of a recent feasibility study to assess the options for the long term future of denominational primary school provision in the city, and sought approval of the next steps. The report also detailed the findings of a stakeholder engagement exercise carried out to support the feasibility study.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Committee note the contents of the report, and instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to continue to monitor forecast pupil numbers for the three denominational primary schools, and to include recommendations in next year's annual school estate plan update report on any required actions to be taken to ensure that the city's denominational primary school provision continued to be appropriate to meet the expected demand for pupil places.

The Convener, seconded by the Vice Convener, moved the recommendation as set out in the report.

Mr Murray, seconded by Councillor Blake, moved as an amendment:-

That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the content of the report;
- (b) regrets the lack of a proper and open consultation with all the people of Aberdeen on the possibility of establishing a Catholic Secondary School in Aberdeen;
- (c) welcomes the pause in recommending any changes to the Roman Catholic school estate;



EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE  
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- (d) agrees to recommend to Full Council that it establish a working group consisting of representatives from Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, representatives from the Catholic Church, parent representatives and staff representatives. This group would work in a spirit of cooperation and partnership to explore what is an appropriate level of provision of Catholic schools in the city and produce a costed plan as to how this level of provision might be realised;
- (e) instructs the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to continue to monitor pupil numbers at all three primary schools and report back on this and the findings of the above working group to the Education and Children’s Services Committee in September 2025;
- (f) decides to take the opportunity provided by this pause to instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to engage with all the people of Aberdeen on the possibility of establishing a Catholic secondary school in the city; and
- (g) agrees that the pause proposed in the paper will in no way delay the urgently needed work to provide for the refurbishment of St. Peter’s School.

On a division, there voted:- for the motion (8) – the Convener; the Vice Convener; Councillors Hazel Cameron, Clark, Delaney, Hutchison, MacGregor and McLellan; for the amendment (9) – Councillors Blake, Brooks, Grant, McLeod and Mrs Stewart; and Ms Barclay, Mr Haywood, Ms Munro and Mr Murray; absent from the division (3) – Dr Murray, Mr Regmi and Mrs Smith.

**The Committee resolved:-**

- (i) to request that officers circulate information to Members outwith the meeting on the list of projects in the Condition and Suitability programme which had led to improvements being made at St Joseph’s RC School and Holy Family RC School since 2016; and
- (ii) to adopt the amendment.

**At this juncture, the Convener advised that he wished to refer the matter to Council under Standing Order 34.1. He was supported in this regard by the Vice Convener and Councillors Hazel Cameron, Clark, Delaney, MacGregor and McLellan.**

**At this juncture, the External Members left the meeting.**

**CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORK STATISTICS - F&C/24/270**

14. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which set out the Children’s Social Work Statistics, Scotland 2022-23 report and provided a commentary on the performance of Aberdeen City Council compared with the national position.

**The report recommended:-**

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that the Committee –

- (a) note that care experienced children and those children who needed protection in Aberdeen City, were, predominantly, receiving care and protection in line with national averages;
- (b) note that where performance differed from national averages, there were improvement plans in place; and
- (c) instruct the Chief Social Work Officer to update the Education and Children's Services Committee on the 2023/24 Statistical Report following its publication in Spring 2025.

**The Committee resolved:-**

to approve the recommendations.

- **COUNCILLOR MARTIN GREIG, Convener**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	<b>EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLANNER</b> The Business Planner details the reports which have been instructed by the Committee as well as reports which the Functions expect to be submitting for the calendar year.								
2	Report Title	Minute Reference/Committee Decision or Purpose of Report	Update	Report Author	Chief Officer	Directorate	Terms of Reference	Delayed or Recommended for removal or transfer, enter either D, R, or T	Explanation if delayed, removed or transferred
3	<b>26 November 2024</b>								
4	Education and Children's Services reforms	A standing item if required - To provide Committee with an update		Eleanor Sheppard	Families and Communities	Families and Communities	1.1.1/2.1	R	A standing item if required - no report is required this cycle
5	Learning outcomes from Care Inspectorate Thematic Review – Disabled Children and Young People's experiences of Social Work Services	To present an update		Carol Davie	Children's Social Work and Family Support	Families and Communities	2.1		
6	Education and Children's Services Committee Annual Effectiveness Report	To present the annual effectiveness report		Steph Dunsmuir	Governance	Corporate Services	GD 8.5		
7	Summer in the City Programme	E&CS 02/07/24 - to instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to report to Committee on the impact of the Summer 2024 programme following delivery		Sharon Skene	Education and Lifelong Learning	Families and Communities	1.1.1		
8	Corporate Parenting Annual Report	To present the Corporate Parenting Annual Report for assurance		Graeme Simpson	Children's Social Work and Family Support	Families and Communities	2.1	D	It is proposed to delay this report to allow cognisance to be taken of the 24/30 Plan
9	Behaviour Action Plan	E&CS 30/04/24 - (i) to instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to continue constructive engagement with Unions and others; such as those with an interest in the provision of supports for those with additional support needs including local organisations and the Northfield Advisors, to allow a continuous improvement journey in all of our schools; (ii) to instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to review the adequacy of the current allocation of pupil support staffing and provision of specialist placements across the city; and (iii) to further instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to consider the output of (i) and (ii) and report options for consideration back to the Education and Children's Services Committee within three cycles		Emma Powell	Education and Lifelong Learning	Families and Communities	1.1.1		
10	Riverbank School Excess Capacity - Options Appraisal (S1)	EODC 08/09/22 - to instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to carry out an options appraisal on potential uses of the additional capacity to be provided by the new school at Tillydrone, and to report back to the Education and Children's Services Committee with recommendations as appropriate.  E&CS 20/02/24 - Approval of revised School Estate timeline		Andrew Jones	Corporate Landlord	Families and Communities	1.1.1, 1.1.5, 1.3		
11	Education and Children's Services Performance Management Framework	To present the regular performance update		Alex Paterson	Data Insights	Corporate Services	1.1.3		



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
	Report Title	Minute Reference/Committee Decision or Purpose of Report	Update	Report Author	Chief Officer	Directorate	Terms of Reference	Delayed or Recommended for removal or transfer, enter either D, R, or T	Explanation if delayed, removed or transferred
2	Autumn in the City Programme	E&CS 02/07/24 - to instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to report to Committee on the impact of the Autumn 2024 programme following delivery		Sharon Skene	Education and Lifelong Learning	Families and Communities	1.1.1		
24									
25	<b>29 April 2025</b>								
26	Children's Services Plan - Annual Update	<p>E&amp;CS 21/03/23 - to instruct the Director Children's and Family Services to ensure that yearly progress reports are presented to Committee &amp; thereafter for approval by the Community Planning Management Board over the lifetime of the Plan.</p> <p>E&amp;CS 04/07/23 - to instruct the Director Children's and Family Services to report progress in developing a Family Support Model and progress on the impact of delivering improved multi-agency support to Kinship Carers through the Children's Services Plan annual progress report.</p> <p>E&amp;CS 20/02/24 - to note the current plans to provide appropriate accommodation, support and intervention to meet the needs of this vulnerable group of children and young people; and instruct the Chief Social Work Officer to provide an annual update through the Children's Services Plan Annual Report.</p> <p>E&amp;CS 20/02/24 - to request that the Chief Social Work Officer provides Members with an update on progress to deliver a Bairs Hoose within the Annual Child Protection Committee Report and within the annual update to Aberdeen City's Children's Services Plan.</p> <p>E&amp;CS 30/04/24 - to instruct the Director Families and Communities to consider the findings of the health &amp; wellbeing annual report and plan next steps as part of work being taken forward through the Children's Services Plan and associated National Improvement Framework Plan</p>		Eleanor Sheppard	Families and Communities	Families and Communities	1.1.1		
27	Inspection Reporting	A standing item (if required) to report on the outcome of inspections and any changes in the approach of inspection agencies		Shona Milne	Education and Lifelong Learning	Families and Communities	1.1.6		
28	Education and Children's Services Performance Management Framework	To present the regular performance update		Alex Paterson	Data Insights	Corporate Services	1.1.3		
29	<b>24 June 2025</b>								
30	ABZCampus	E&CS 30/04/2024 - (i) to instruct the Chief Officer - Education and Lifelong Learning to report back on progress including a full review of the impact of Pathways Advocates within one calendar year; and to note that officers would however investigate the possibility of bringing an interim evaluation of the impact of Pathways Advocates to Committee, or potentially bringing the full evaluation at an earlier stage than 2025; and (ii) to instruct the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to report back with a method for providing an overview of participation and achievements in ABZCampus		Mark Jones	Education and Lifelong Learning	Families and Communities	1.1.1		



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2	Bairns Hoose updates / visit	E&CS 30/04/24 - (i) to instruct the Chief Officer, Children's Social Work and Family Support / Chief Social Work Officer to provide an update on progress as appropriate during 2024/25; and (ii) to instruct the Chief Officer, Children's Social Work and Family Support / Chief Social Work Officer to arrange a visit for Elected Members to view the Bairns Hoose upon completion of the build.		Graeme Simpson	Children's Social Work and Family Support	Families and Communities	2.1			
38	Education and Children's Services Performance Management Framework	To present the regular performance update		Alex Paterson	Data Insights	Corporate Services	1.1.3			
39	Healthy Weight	E&CS 02/07/24 - to instruct the Executive Director Families and Communities to report progress within one calendar year on the whole systems approach		Eleanor Sheppard	Families and Communities	Families and Communities	1.1.1 / 1.1.2			
40	Spring in the City Programme	E&CS 02/07/24 - to instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to report to Committee on the impact of the Spring 2025 programme following delivery		Sharon Skene	Education and Lifelong Learning	Families and Communities	1.1.1			
41	Health and Wellbeing	E&CS 30/04/24 - to instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to report the findings of the next Health and Wellbeing surveys to Committee within one calendar year; and to note with concern evidence that indicated that the current cohort of S4 girls were generally outliers in the improvement journey; and, therefore, instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to give this issue special focus and undertake further targeted work on supportive solutions; with information on actions and outcomes reported back in the agreed report		Emma Powell	Education and Lifelong Learning	Families and Communities	1.1.1			
42										
43				<b>16 September 2025</b>						
44	Education and Children's Services Performance Management Framework	To present the regular performance update  EOD Committee 19/04/18 - to instruct the Chief Operating Officer to track progress against the proposed KPIs in order to report progress to the Education Operational Delivery Committee. Reporting will comprise (a) a yearly progress report based on validated data and (b) a six monthly update to provide an indication of progress to that point.		Alex Paterson	Data Insights	Corporate Services	1.1.3			
45	Northfield Asset Review	E&CS 17/09/24 - to instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to proceed with a review of all public building assets in Northfield, which will include an assessment of options for the future of the primary schools. It is anticipated that the findings of this review will be presented to the Committee on 16 September 2025		Andrew Jones	Corporate Landlord	Families and Communities	1.1.1, 1.1.2 and 1.1.5			
46	Aberdeen City National Improvement Framework Plan	To present the plan  This report will cover the instruction from EODC 25/11/21 - to instruct the Chief Officer - Education to present an annual report on the progress of care experienced children and young people to the Committee, commencing in September 2022, and will also cover the yearly self evaluation.		Eleanor Sheppard	Families and Communities	Families and Communities	1.1.1			

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2	School Estate Plan Annual Update	EODC 08/09/22 - to instruct the Chief Officer - Corporate Landlord to present an annual update to the School Estate Plan to the Education and Children's Services Committee, commencing from September 2023, to report on progress with the agreed actions and to update these as appropriate, in light of the most recently available data.  Council 02/10/24 - to instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to continue to monitor forecast pupil numbers for the three denominational primary schools, and to include recommendations in next year's annual school estate plan update report, on any required actions to be taken to ensure that the city's denominational primary school provision continues to be appropriate to meet the expected demand for pupil places		Andrew Jones	Corporate Landlord	Families and Communities	1.1.1, 1.1.2 and 1.1.5		
47	Northfield Academy, Northfield Primary Schools and Wider Asset Review - approval of Outline Business Case and consultation proposal	E&CS 17/09/24 - (i) to agree the intended scope of the proposed asset review in Northfield to include all public assets, and to instruct the Chief Officer - Corporate Landlord to proceed with the review and to commence engagement with all partners working in the wider Northfield area; (ii) to instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to work closely with the Northfield Community throughout this process to ensure community empowerment and resilience was prioritised in all stages of planning; to instruct the Chief Officer to work with the Northfield Advisory Group to invite and support their guidance in shaping improvements and outcomes		Andrew Jones/Shona Milne	Corporate Landlord / Education and Lifelong Learning	Families and Communities	TBC		
48	Music Service Update	E&CS 17/09/24 - (i) to note that officers would include data about tuition at primary school level broken down by school in the next report; and (ii) to instruct the Chief Officer - Education and Lifelong Learning to report back on progress in one calendar year		Beth Edwards / Shona Milne	Education and Lifelong Learning	Families and Communities	1.1.1		
49	Community Learning and Development Plan	E&CS 17/09/24 - to instruct the Chief Officer - Education and Lifelong Learning to present an updated 2 year CLD Plan to Committee in September 2025		Margaret Stewart	Education and Lifelong Learning	Families and Communities	1.1.1		
50	School Age Childcare Policy	E&CS 17/09/24 - to approve the School Age Childcare Policy. Policy to be reviewed on an annual basis - report may not be required, show no changes be needed to policy		Louise Beaton	Education and Lifelong Learning	Families and Communities	1.1.1 and 1.1.5		
51	Children's Social Work Statistics	ODC 31/08/22 - to instruct the Chief Officer – Integrated Children's and Family Services, to report annually to the relevant Committee, sharing the published Children's Social Work Statistics, Scotland and providing a comparison with performance in Aberdeen City.		Graeme Simpson	Children's Social Work and Family Support	Families and Communities	2.3		
52	Inspection Reporting	A standing item (if required) to report on the outcome of inspections and any changes in the approach of inspection agencies		Shona Milne	Education and Lifelong Learning	Families and Communities	1.1.6		
53									
54	<b>25 November 2025</b>								
55	Education and Children's Services Performance Management Framework	To present the regular performance update		Alex Paterson	Data Insights	Corporate Services	1.1.3		
56	Education and Children's Services Committee Annual Effectiveness Report	To present the annual effectiveness report		Steph Dunsmuir	Governance	Corporate Services	GD 8.5		



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2	Minimising Exclusion Policy	To present the revised exclusion policy for approval	Officers anticipate updated national guidance by summer 2025 and will look to take a refreshed policy to Committee when they have considered the guidance	Mhairi Shewan	Education and Lifelong Learning	Families and Communities	1.1.5		
57	Corporate Parenting Annual Report	To present the Corporate Parenting Annual Report for assurance		Graeme Simpson	Children's Social Work and Family Support	Families and Communities	2.1		
58	Family Support Model - engagement	E&CS 17/09/24 - to note that the Executive Director had suggested that the report due to be presented to the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee in November on a detailed phased implementation plan reflecting plans for internal zoning of the Central Library and testing of the Library and Information Service as an integral part of the emerging model of Family Support which would incorporate plans for ongoing engagement with communities and groups could also be presented to the November meeting of this Committee if it was felt this would be beneficial		Eleanor Sheppard	Families and Communities	Families and Communities	TBC		
59	Cluster Risk Register - Education / Integrated Children's & Family Services	To report on the cluster risk register		Eleanor Sheppard	Families and Communities	Families and Communities	1.1.4		
60	Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report	To present the Chief Social Work Officer annual report.		Graeme Simpson	Children's Social Work and Family Support	Families and Communities	2.5		
61	Child Protection Committee Annual Report	E&CS 21/11/23 - to instruct the Chief Social Work Officer to provide Committee with a further report in November 2024 detailing the continuing impact and effectiveness of partnership work in relation to child protection.		Graeme Simpson	Children's Social Work and Family Support	Families and Communities	2.1		
62	Inspection Reporting	A standing item (if required) to report on the outcome of inspections and any changes in the approach of inspection agencies		Shona Milne	Education and Lifelong Learning	Families and Communities	1.1.6		
63									
64	<b>2026</b>								
65	Early Learning and Childcare Concession Agreements	E&CS 24/01/23 - to instruct the Chief Education Officer to continue to monitor the concession contracts and report back to Committee at the end of the first 3 full years of the current concession agreement.	January 2026	Louise Beaton / Fiona Lawrie	Education and Lifelong Learning	Families and Communities	1.1.1		
66	Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2024-26 / 2026-28	E&CS 02/07/24 - to instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to report on the progress and outcomes of the Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2024-26, and to prepare an updated Delivery Plan for 2026-28, in June 2026, in line with our statutory duties under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014	June 2026	Louise Beaton / Fiona Lawrie	Education and Lifelong Learning	Families and Communities	1.1.1		
67	Accessibility Plan	E&CS 12/09/23 - to instruct the Chief Officer - Education to present an updated Accessibility Plan to the Education and Children's Services Committee within 3 calendar years.		Mhairi Shewan	Education and Lifelong Learning	Families and Communities	1.1.5		

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
	Report Title	Minute Reference/Committee Decision or Purpose of Report	Update	Report Author	Chief Officer	Directorate	Terms of Reference	Delayed or Recommended for removal or transfer, enter either D, R, or T	Explanation if delayed, removed or transferred
2									
68	<b>REPORTING DATE TO BE CONFIRMED</b>								
69	Northfield Advisory Group	E&CS 23/05/23 - to instruct the Director Children's and Family Services to routinely report the outputs of each meeting of the Advisory Group to the next scheduled meeting of the Education and Children's Services Committee.		Eleanor Sheppard	Families and Communities	Families and Communities		R	This item is recommended for removal, as updates will be included when each Northfield Academy update is given as part of the inspection reporting reports
70	Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence Bill	ODC 17/01/19 - To instruct that annual reports be submitted on the progress of implementation of the Autism Action Plan. Reported 5 March 2020 and will then be annually, however 2021 was delayed to May due to pandemic impact. Was reported to former Operational Delivery Committee on 31 August 2022, thereafter annually.  E&CS 02/07/24 - to instruct the Chief Officer Children's Social Work and Family Support to provide an update on progress of the Bill as appropriate		Graeme Simpson	Children's Social Work and Family Support	Families and Communities	2.1.1		An update will be provided to Committee once the Bill has concluded Stage 2 of the Parliamentary process. Officers are unable to provide a date for reporting back at this time as it is dependent on Parliament
71	St Peter's RC School - Long Term Education Provision	E&CS 21/11/23 - subject to approval of recommendation 2.4 (for the Finance and Resources Committee), to note that a progress report would be presented to a future meeting of the Education and Children's Services Committee in 2024		Maria Thies	Corporate Landlord	Families and Communities	1.1.1, 1.1.5, 1.3	R	Recommended for removal as there is no further decision required from ECS Committee at this time, and officers have circulated a service update with the latest position
72	<b>SCHOOL ESTATE PROJECTS CURRENTLY ON HOLD / NOT YET STARTED</b>								
73	Grandhome / Oldmachar / Bridge of Don Secondary Provision - Outline Business Case (NA1) / Oldmachar ASG primary school provision	EODC 08/09/22 - to instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to make arrangements to carry out a feasibility study and stakeholder engagement to identify options for reducing the predicted long term excess secondary school capacity in Grandhome, Oldmachar and Bridge of Don, and report back with an outline business case for consideration by the Education and Children's Services Committee.  E&CS 12/09/23 - to instruct the Chief Officer - Corporate Landlord to carry out further work to identify potential future options for improving and consolidating primary school provision in the Oldmachar ASG, alongside the planned work to review secondary school provision in this area of the city, and to report back to the Committee with recommendations and next steps as appropriate.  E&CS 20/02/24 - Approval of revised School Estate timeline  E&CS 19/09/24 - Annual School Estate Plan update advised project had not yet commenced. Reporting dates to be confirmed		Andrew Jones	Corporate Landlord	Families and Communities	1.1.1, 1.1.5, 1.3		Not yet commenced, as per decision at E&CS on 17/09/24 (School Estate Plan Annual Update)



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<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education and Children’s Services
<b>DATE</b>	26 November 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Performance Management Framework/National Improvement Framework Progress Update
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	CORS/24/338
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS</b>	Andy MacDonald/Eleanor Sheppard
<b>CHIEF OFFICERS</b>	Martin Murchie/Shona Milne/Graeme Simpson
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Alex Paterson
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	1.1.3

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To present Committee with (a) the status of key quarterly and annual performance measures relating to the Education and Lifelong Learning and Children’s and Families Clusters, (b) early reflections against the initial release of 2024 Senior Phase attainment and achievement data through the Insight benchmarking tool and (c) a progress update against the 2024/25 National Improvement Framework for Aberdeen City Council.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 That the Committee note the report and provide comments and observations on the information contained in the report appendices

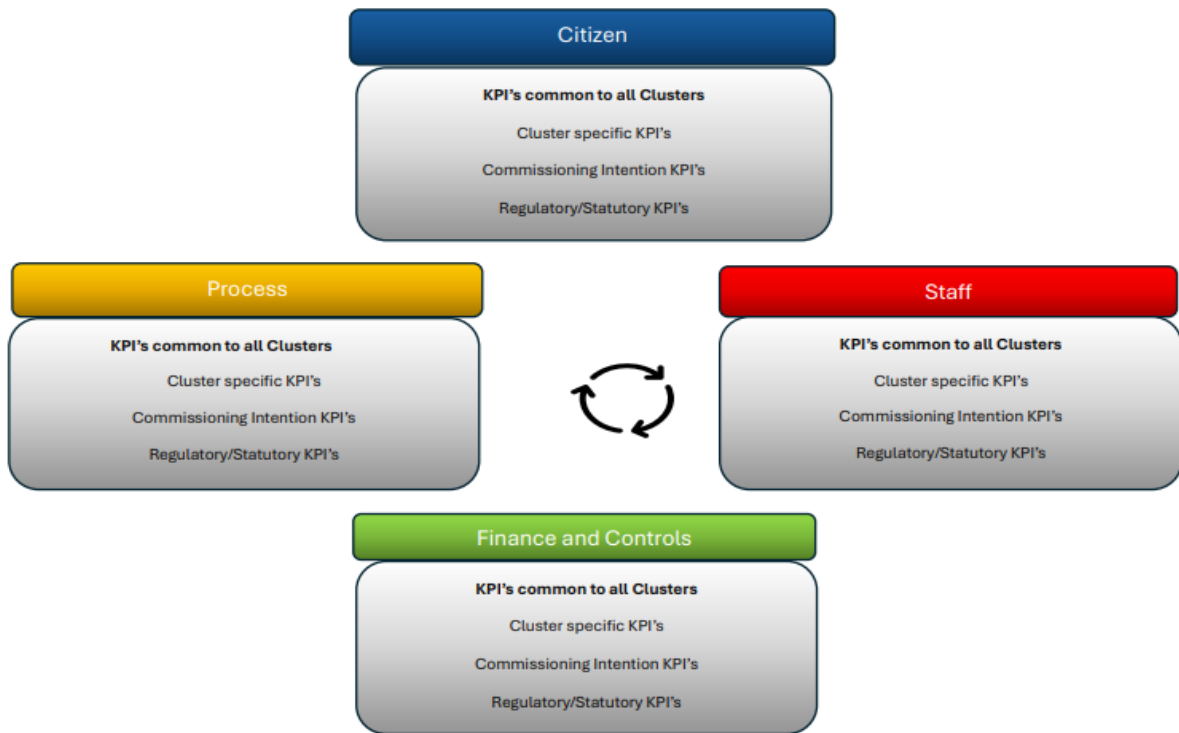
**3. CURRENT SITUATION**

**Report Structure and Content**

3.1 The Council’s refreshed Performance Management Framework for 2024/25 was agreed at the meeting of Council on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2024

3.2 Performance Management Framework Reporting against in-house delivery directly contributing to, or enabling delivery against, the City’s Local Outcome Improvement Plan, (LOIP) has informed development of successive Council Delivery Plans, including the [2024-25.Council Delivery Plan](#) ( the Plan) that was agreed by Council on the 6th of March 2024.

3.3 The Performance Management Framework provides for a consistent approach within which performance will be reported to Committees. This presents performance data and analysis within four core perspectives, as shown below, which provides for uniformity of performance reporting across Committee.



3.4 Appendix A reflects the in-year performance against the Plan, including corporate and service level measures, alongside a number of nationally benchmarked datasets from more recent publications. It also incorporates reflection against, and metrics aligned to. Service Standards set for the current financial year.

3.5 Within the summary dashboard the following symbols are also used:

### Performance Measures

#### Traffic Light Icon



On target or within 5% of target/benchmarked outcome.



Within 5% and 20% of target/benchmarked outcome and being monitored



More than 20% out with target/benchmarked outcome and being actively pursued



Data only – target not appropriate/benchmarked outcome not available

3.6 Appendix B offers early analysis, and highlights, from the initial release of Senior Phase attainment data from the 2024 examination diet, and wider end of year achievement by our young people in 2023/24, as provided to local authorities through the national Insight Benchmarking Tool in September.

3.7 A progress update against Aberdeen City Council's 2024/25 National Improvement Framework Plan is made available through Appendix C.

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising out of this report.

#### 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal implications arising out of this report.

#### 6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct environmental implications arising out of this report

#### 7. RISK

The assessment of risk contained within the table below is considered to be consistent with the Council's Risk Appetite Statement"

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic</b>	None	NA	NA	NA
<b>Compliance</b>	No significant legal risks.	Publication of service performance information in the public domain ensures that the Council is meeting its legal obligations in the context of Best value reporting.	L	Yes
<b>Operational</b>	No significant operational risks.	Oversight by Members of core employee health and safety/attendance data supports the Council's obligations as an employer	L	Yes
<b>Financial</b>	No significant financial risks.	Overview data on specific limited aspects of the cluster's financial performance is provided within this report	L	Yes

<b>Reputational</b>	No significant reputational risks.	Reporting of service performance to Members and in the public domain serves to enhance the Council's reputation for transparency and accountability.	L	Yes
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	None	NA	NA	NA

## 8. OUTCOMES

<u><a href="#">Council Delivery Plan</a></u>	
	<b>Impact of Report</b>
<p><u><a href="#">Aberdeen City Council Partnership Agreement</a></u></p> <p>Improving Educational Choices</p> <p>Creating Better Learning Environments</p> <p>Caring for Young People</p>	<p>This report supports the following key Council priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commit to realising the potential of each individual, by seeking to widen curriculum choice and implement progressive choices.</li> <li>- Work with the city's universities, North East Scotland College and businesses to increase educational and training options and the number of care experienced young people and young people from deprived communities, going onto positive destinations, including further and higher education, vocational training and apprenticeships.</li> <li>- Promote the number of apprenticeships on offer through the council.</li> <li>- Work to ensure that every school community provides a safe and respectful environment for young people and staff.</li> <li>- Ensure the Council follows best practice as a corporate parent to get the best outcomes for looked-after young people, those in kinship care and those with additional support needs such as autism, developmental disorders or mental health problems.</li> <li>- Work with the Scottish Government to expand free early learning and childcare to one- and two-year-olds from low-income households.</li> <li>- Continue to seek to support young people to receive care in Aberdeen, through fostering, adoption and other services and seek to reduce "out of authority" placements</li> </ul>



	- Ensure local education services identify young people with mental health problems and help them get early support and help, where appropriate, to transfer to adult services.
<b><u><a href="#">Aberdeen City Local Outcomes Plan April 2024 Refresh</a></u></b>	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes (Children and Young People)	<p>The detail within Performance Management reporting to this Committee evidences how Families and Communities delivery leads, contributes to, or influences, each of the Children &amp; Young People Stretch Outcomes in the refreshed LOIP. This includes the following Outcomes:</p> <p><b>3. 95% of all children will reach their expected developmental milestones by their 27–30-month review by 2026.</b></p> <p><b>4. 90% of children and young people report they feel listened to all of the time by 2026.</b></p> <p><b>By meeting the health and emotional wellbeing needs of our care experienced children and young people they will have the same levels of attainment in education and positive destinations as their peers by 2026.</b></p> <p><b>5. 95% of children living in our priority neighbourhoods (Quintiles 1 &amp; 2) will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026.</b></p> <p><b>6. 83.5% fewer young people (under 18) charged with an offence by 2026</b></p> <p><b>7. 100% of our children with Additional Support Needs/disabilities will experience a positive destination</b></p>
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes (Adults)	<p>Families and Communities services, through the Improvement Project Aims below contribute to achievement of Outcome 11 - <b>Reduce the rate of both alcohol related deaths and drug related deaths by 10% by 2026</b></p> <p><i>Reduce the average age from 14 to 12 at which children are identified as requiring preventative support to mitigate the risk of future harm in relation to drug and alcohol use by 2026 and ;</i></p> <p><i>Reduce the % of 13–15-year-olds reported as using each sub group of drug by 50% and cannabis by 20% by 2026.</i></p>
Community Empowerment Stretch Outcomes	The detail within Performance Management reporting to this Committee evidences how Families

	<p>and Community service delivery leads, though the Improvement Project Aim; <i>100% of decisions which impact on children and young people are informed by them by 2026</i> contributes to, or influences Outcome 16:</p> <p><b>50% of people report they feel able to participate in decisions that help change things for the better by 2026.</b></p>
<b>Regional and City Strategies</b>	<p>The detail within Performance Management reporting to this Committee evidences how Families and Communities delivery leads, contributes to, or influences outcomes aligned to the City's National Improvement Framework Plan.</p> <p>Data contained in the report also offers contextual evidence of Education &amp; Lifelong Learning and Children's Social Work Service's contributions to the City's Children's Services Plan, along with both regional Economic and Skills strategies.</p>

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	It was confirmed by Chief Officer, Martin Murchie, on 1 <sup>st</sup> October 2024 that no Integrated Impact Assessment is required for this report
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	A Data Protection Impact Assessment is not required for this report.
<b>Other</b>	No additional impact assessments have been completed for this report.

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Performance Management Framework Update 2024-25 -CORS/24/232  
Council Delivery Plan 2024-25 – COM/24/060

## 11. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Education & Lifelong Learning and Children's and Families Performance Summary Dashboard  
Appendix B – National Improvement Framework Progress Update  
Appendix C – Insight 2024 Attainment and Achievement Summary

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS













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## Appendix A - Performance Management Framework Report – Education and Children’s Services Committee

### Education and Lifelong Learning

#### 1. Citizen

**Table 1. Service Level Measures – 2024-25 Service Standards (Education)**

Performance Measure	Year to Date Value	2024/25 Target	Status	Long Trend - Annual
We will meet all eligible requests for early learning and childcare placements within one month.	100%	100%		
We will meet all mainstream requests for a primary and secondary school placement within one month.	100%	100%		
ACC managed/funded Early Learning and Childcare settings will meet the National Standard (average evaluation of 'good'- 12 month rolling data)	98.8%	100%		
Primary, secondary, and special schools will achieve an average evaluation of 'good' in formal evaluations of core Quality Indicators by Education Scotland (12 month rolling data)	91.7%	100%		
We will work to ensure that school attendance is as good or better than the national average.	92.9%	=/> 91.2%*		
We will process requests for additional support to meet the wellbeing needs of children and young people within 40 days	100%	100%		

\*Based on national data calculations for 2023/24

#### Service Commentary – Service Standards

The metric suite above offers evidence against the Service Level Standards which were agreed at the Budget meeting of Council on 6th March 2024, and apply to the current academic year. In some instances, the phrasing around these may differ marginally from that expressed in the Appendix of the budget report to enable conversion of the statements in the Standards for presentation as reportable measures.





ELC National Standard – Day Care of Children and Out of School Care

Coinciding with the new academic session, reporting against the Standard metric, which was being captured as a fixed measure, has been brought in line with the averaged evaluation scoring below (Table 3.) to demonstrate the capacity for continuous improvement and direction of travel by the Authority towards the expressed objective.

Education Scotland Inspections

There has been a single publication of Education Scotland inspection activity in the current academic year. This exceeded the Service Standard across each organiser and the Overall Quality Indicator average, The average rolling year to date figure of 91.7% is improved on the reported to the September meeting (84.4%) which represented the outcome at conclusion of the previous academic year.

**Table 2. Service Level Measures – 2024-25 Service Standards (Lifelong Learning)**

Performance Measure	Year to Date Value	Status	Long Trend - Annual
We will provide CLD services to a level that achieves a rating of good or better through external inspection.	100%		
We will ensure library Item Requests are satisfied within 21 days – 12 month rolling value	74%		

**Service Commentary – Service Standards (Lifelong Learning)**

Community Learning and Development

Education Scotland visited the local authority week beginning 13 May 2024. This was a positive visit with work with partners, understanding of leaders and partners and well supported volunteers being key strengths. The family learning team has increased the reach to include families with children beyond 5 and has become an integral part of our Edge of Care offer.

**Table 3. Service Level Measure - Quality of Early Learning Centre Provision (Care Inspectorate)**

<b>Care Inspectorate Core Quality Indicators</b>
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Core Quality Indicator Scope	How good is our care, play and learning?	How good is our setting?	How good is our leadership?	How good is our staff team?	Overall Quality Indicator Outcome
Percentage of assessments achieving National Standard (average score of Good) *	94.4%	99.1%	98.3%	103.1%	98.8%

**Service Commentary - Table 3**


As at early November 2024, the rolling 12-month average score for Care Inspectorate (CI) evaluations, were improved on those reported to the July meeting of this Committee when the Overall QI (OQI) score figure was 94.5% and similar to the last reported rolling period ( August 2023 to July 2024), which was 98.9%.

Average scoring against Leadership and Staff indicator evaluations met or exceeded the National Standard, with assessments of Care, Play and Learning environments being slightly below the Service Standard based expectations. The service continues to focus on these areas.

This data encompasses published inspections against 30 settings with the average scores of both local authority and partner provider settings being comparative to each other. An additional five inspections have been published in the period from August to October 2024, three of which attained outcomes of Good or better across all four Indicator themes, fully achieving or exceeding the National Standard, with an average OQI score of 96.3% across the five settings.








\*Percentage of Care Inspectorate Evaluations of Core Quality Indicators receiving an average score of Good (12 month rolling average to 31st October 2024)

**Table 4. Service Level Quarterly Measure – Library Services**

Performance Measure	Quarter 3 2023/24	Quarter 4 2023/24	Quarter 1 2024/25	Quarter 2 2024/25	Long Trend - Quarterly
	Value	Value	Value	Value	
% of library Item Requests satisfied within 21 days	72.0%	75.0%	73.0%	74.0%	

**Table 5. Corporate Measures – 2024-25 Cluster Level Indicators (Quarterly)**

Performance Measure	Quarter 3 2023/24	Quarter 4 2023/24	Quarter 1 2024/25	Quarter 2 2024/25	2024/25 Target	Status	Long Trend - Quarterly
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	Value	Value	Value	Value			
Total No. complaints received (stage 1 and 2) - Education & Lifelong Learning	31	33	33	16			
% of complaints resolved within timescale (stage 1 and 2) – Education & Lifelong Learning	58.1%	78.8%	75.8%	75.0%	75.0%		
% of complaints with at least one point upheld (stage 1 and 2) – Education & Lifelong Learning	16.1%	6.1%	9.1%	0.0%			
Total No. of lessons learnt identified (stage 1 and 2) – Education & Lifelong Learning	3	2	1	3			


#### Service Commentary –

The total number of complaints have halved from Quarter 1 to Quarter 2 however the complexity of complaints has increased, which has had some impact on resolution timescales in comparison with the two previous quarters.

The percentage of complaints resolved within timescale remains within the target of 75% and this measure, in common with each of the other measures is, displaying an improving long-term trend, producing an improved overall position for Complaints handling in aggregate.

While there have not been any complaints upheld in Quarter 2, learnings have still been identified, showing that feedback has been taken on board and processes have been improved where possible.

**Table 6. Service Level Measure - Visits in Person to Library Service Premises**

Performance Measure	Quarter 3 2023/24	Quarter 4 2023/24	Quarter 1 2024/25	Quarter 2 2024/25	Long Trend - Quarterly
	Value	Value	Value	Value	
Total Number of visits in person to library service premises	115,334	130,661	135,708	140,364	

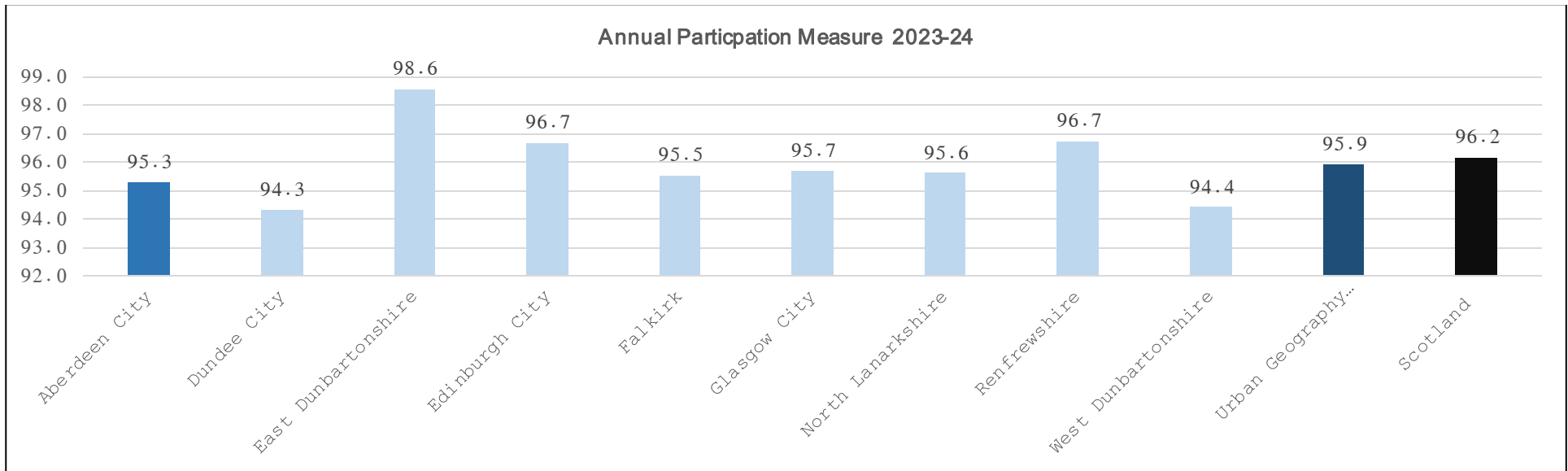
#### Service Commentary

**Table 6**

Visits in person to Library Service premises have been on a continuous upwards trend (taking account of seasonal influences) for a period of 24 months. The value of visits at Quarter 2 is the highest in the post pandemic period, is c.14,500 greater (+11.5%) than in the same comparable period in 2023/24 and just under 40% greater than Quarter 2 data for 2022/23.

**2. Process**

**Chart 1. Annual Participation Measure for 16–19-year-olds by Benchmarks – Adjusted for Unconfirmed Status Responses**



**Service Commentary**

**Chart 1**

This strategic level measure is jointly delivered by City Development & Regeneration, Education & Lifelong Learning and Children's Social Work and Families Clusters, alongside a series of other internal (e.g. People and Citizen Cluster) and external partners, including Skills Development Scotland which acts as the regional lead for this outcome.

Overall, the outcomes for Aberdeen City are marginally lower than the majority of its Urban Geography Local Authority comparators, and the National figure, but closer to the Urban Geography Average and above both Dundee and West Dunbartonshire. There is limited statistically significant change in the absolute value of the Aberdeen City Measure from 2022/23, but this stable position has resulted in some weakening of the city's relative standing, with an extending of the distance to its benchmark authorities from 2021/22.

These data are locally adjusted to exclude those 16–19-year-olds where an Unconfirmed Status was recorded from the SDS surveying, In 2023/24, this particular Status represented 5.4% of the estimated survey cohort (392 individuals) which was higher than most other local authority areas.

The Service is currently working with partners to gain additional insight into this outlying position (and re-validate the present understanding of influences behind this) and is strengthening its oversight of tracking data at school level to assist SDS to reduce the numbers of individuals whose destinations are Unconfirmed within the current survey model.

**Table 7. Service Level Measures – 2023-24 Annual Participation Measure (%)**

Year	Total Cohort (16-19)	Participating (16-19)	Participating in Education (16-19)	Participating in Employment (16-19)	Participating in Other Training & Development (16-19)	Not participating Unemployed Seeking (16-19)	Not participating Unemployed not Seeking (16-19)	Unconfirmed Status (16-19)
2023/24	7,234	90.1	73.2	15.0	1.9	2.4	2.1	5.4
2022/23	6,880	90.2	72.7	15.8	1.7	2.0	2.1	5.6
2021/22	6,551	91.2	74.8	14.6	1.9	2.8	2.1	3.9

### Service Commentary

#### Table 7

##### Data Description

The Annual Participation Measure (APM) survey, conducted by Skills Development Scotland and published in Autumn of each year, reflects the survey destination outcomes of all 16–19-year-olds across a full 12-month period from April to March of the following year. The survey methodology is based on



continuous monitoring of clients known to Skills Development Scotland, as opposed to the snapshot surveying that populates the related statistics around school leaver destinations and the Interim Participation Measure that were reported to the September meeting of this Committee.

### Analysis

In 2023/24 the number of city APM survey participants has risen significantly from 6,880 to 7,234, (+5.1%) a movement replicated nationally but at a faster rate than that of the majority of other local authorities and the Scottish figure (+3.1%). This increased sample size, although with a similar survey response rate, can influence the sensitivity of direct comparisons with prior year data.


The Annual Participation Measure, in common with related data reported to previous Committee's, shows statistically limited year-on-year variation in either the proportion of 16–19-year-olds in a participative destination overall or the spread of outcomes. Education remains the City's most prevalent destination at 73.2% of all surveyed, placing Aberdeen City in the upper quartile for all Scottish Local Authorities, and above the national establishment figure of 71.2%.

As a destination, Employment remains at a level which is below that of most other authorities. This needs to be considered in the context of the higher proportion of individuals in the city positively electing to remain in an education destination rather than representing an absolute lack of opportunities in employment.

At the same time, there may be a dynamic correlation between the proportion of 16–19-year-olds Seeking Employment, which has risen marginally on 2022/23, and the state of the current job market for this age group. This aspect is continuously considered in detail, and in the context of the wider employability data ecosystem, by individual services, the corporate ACC body and in partnership through ABZ Works.

Presently, the proportion of 16–19-year-olds who, in combination, were not in a participative destination ( 4.5%) is above the Scotland figure of 3.7% and that of the Urban Geography average ( 4.0%), although these variations are within the +/- 1p.p tolerances that would naturally apply to both inter-authority and year-on-year comparisons

**Table 8. Service Level 2023/24 Annual Measures**

Performance Indicator	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Status	2023-24 National Figure
	Value	Value	Value		
% of City schools which are evaluated as being in Good (A) or Satisfactory (B) condition	98.4%	96.7%	96.7%		92.0%

### **Service Commentary**

**Table 8**

National Statistics around the condition of schools' estates are published annually, with the most recent release being in September 2024.

In 2023/24, 59 out of 61 evaluated school premises were rated as Good or Satisfactory for condition with 20 (32.8%) schools being rated Good (29.5% in 2022/23) and 39 (63.9%) graded as being Satisfactory condition based on the most recent condition surveys. The combined measure is unchanged from the prior year but with a higher proportion of premises rated as Good than in 2023/23.

2 school premises were graded as Poor (St Peters RC School and Hazlehead Academy) and no schools were graded as being in Bad condition. The school estate reports recently considered at this, and other Committees, around St. Peter's RC School and Hazlehead Academy (which were subject to scheduled condition evaluations in the 2022/23 condition census period) have outlined the proposals for addressing the condition gradings of these premises through redevelopment of these sites.

Aberdeen City Council's school estate has consistently been graded more highly for the combined Good and Satisfactory measure than the national outcome over an extended timescale. The overall number and percentage of pupils being educated in settings with a rating of Good and Satisfactory was 24.885\* (95.1%). In comparison, the Scotland figure for 2023/24 sat at 92.0%.

\*Based on 2023 Pupil Census data

**Table 9. School Attendance Measure 2024-25 – Academic Year to Date (Term 1)**

School Type	% Present Openings	% Authorised Openings	% Unauthorised Openings	% Exclusions Openings	% Total Absence
Primary	94.4	3.5	2.1	0.00	5.6
Secondary	90.8	5.6	3.5	0.04	9.2
Special	90.7	7.7	1.6	0.00	9.3
All Phases	92.9	4.4	2.7	0.02	7.1

### Service Commentary

#### Table 9

This data serves as a local baseline in the context of the Service Standard around school attendance above and informs review actions reflected within Aberdeen City Council's National Improvement Framework Plan for 2024/25.

Although not wholly comparable to the National Attendance Measure reported against the same term in the report to the November 2023 meeting of this Committee (as a consequence of statistical adjustments made by the Scottish Government to the published NAM prior to release), the local data is very closely



matched to the 2024 August – October datasets. As of October 2023, attendance rates for Primary were 94.8%, Secondary 90.5%, Special Schools 92.0% and overall attendance was 93.0%.

The Education Analytical Services, Scottish Government fortnightly data source for the National Attendance Measure has not been made available in the current academic session.





### 3. Staff

#### Corporate Measures – 2024/25 Service Level Indicators

**Table 10. Establishment (Education and Lifelong Learning)**

Performance Measure	Quarter 3 2023/24	Quarter 4 2023/24	Quarter 1 2024/25	Quarter 2 2024/25	Status	Long Trend - Quarterly
	Value	Value	Value	Value		
Establishment actual FTE – Education and Lifelong Learning)	3.147	3,148	3,248	3,233		

**Table 11. Accidents and Incidents (Education and Lifelong Learning)**

Performance Measure	Quarter 3 2023/24	Quarter 4 2023/24	Quarter 1 2024/25	Quarter 2 2024/25	Status	Long Trend - Quarterly
	Value	Value	Value	Value		
H&S Employee Reportable Accidents by Cluster – Education and Lifelong Learning	3	5	2	2		
H&S Employee Non-Reportable Accidents by Cluster – Education and Lifelong Learning	256	416	286	228		







#### Service Commentary

##### Table 11

The Corporate Health and Safety Quarterly Update report considered at the meeting of the [Staff Governance Committee](#) on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024 offered detailed analysis of accident and near miss data across Clusters and at Primary and Secondary school levels.

Although there was an initial expectation that the number of incidents could rise as a consequence of an increased focus on recording, the present data trend does not, at this point, strongly support this. This may be a consequence of improved guidance and understanding of the processes of reporting incidents/accidents at a front-line level but will be carefully monitored for any outlying data.

**Table 12. Absence Due to Illness (Education and Lifelong Learning) 12 month rolling average.**

Performance Measure	Quarter 3 2023/24	Quarter 4 2023/24	Quarter 1 2024/25	Quarter 2 2024/25	Quarter 2 Corporate Figure	Status	Long Trend - Quarterly
	Value	Value	Value	Value	Value		
Average number of working days lost due to sickness absence per FTE – Education and Lifelong Learning (12-month rolling figure at quarter end)	6.9	6.5	6.0	5.1	5.4		
Average number of working days lost due to sickness absence per FTE – Primary and Secondary Schools (12-month rolling figure at quarter end) *	6.7	6.25	6.4	5.8	5.4		
Average number of working days lost due to sickness absence per FTE – Early Learning and Childcare (12-month rolling figure at quarter end)	9.7	8.8	7.9	5.8	5.4		

**Table 13. Absence Due to Illness (Education and Lifelong Learning) Monthly Average**

Management Measure	July 2024/25	August 2024/25	September 2024/25
	Value	Value	Value
Average number of working days lost due to sickness absence per FTE – Education and Lifelong Learning (monthly)	0.83	0.72	1.08
Average number of working days lost due to sickness absence per FTE – Primary and Secondary Schools (monthly)	0.88	0.76	1.2
Average number of working days lost due to sickness absence per FTE – Early Learning and Childcare (monthly)	1.27	1.13	1.36

**Service Commentary**

**Table 12**

Levels of employee absence due to illness are showing an improving quarterly trend that, taking account of natural seasonal variations, indicates material impacts are being evidenced from both Service Management’s focus on actions to support employees back to work after periods of illness, and as a result of corporate data and operational workstreams around this theme.

Across the four quarterly periods, the pace of change around Early Learning and Childcare settings is the fastest improving and now aligns more closely to those for the Cluster and within Schools, which both record similar rates of improvement to each other. Each of the measures now sit within range of the corporate figure and are comparable to the levels recorded in other more front-facing clusters/services.



\*Work around constructing new system-based absence data at an individual school level is currently being progressed which will offer a revised benchmark for this measure. It is anticipated that this will reduce the recorded levels of absence against this metric to a level that is lower than the corporate level outcome. Currently, the early data for 2024/25 (based on 15 establishments incorporated to date) indicates a comparable outcome of just over 2 days average absence per FTE within schools for the rolling measure, based on staff budgets directly attributed to, and managed at, school level.

**Table 13**

Month to month data is particularly statistically sensitive to limited changes in baseline drivers and is offered only as supportive management information on this basis.

**4. Finance & Controls**

**Table 14. Staff Expenditure (Education and Lifelong Learning)**

Performance Indicator	Quarter 1 2024/25		Quarter 2 2024/25		Quarter 3 2024/25		Quarter 4 2024/25	
	Value	Status	Value	Status	Value	Status	Value	Status
Staff Expenditure – % spend to YTD budget profile – Education and Lifelong Learning *	26.75%		51.3%					

**Service Commentary**

**Table 14**

The Management Commentary provided within the Q2 2024/25 budget report to the Finance and Resources Committee on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, outlined the financial position of the children’s services overall. It noted a year-end forecast of a significant overspend against the full year budget for the Cluster, incorporating that related to staff costs, because of demand pressures noted below.

Within this and more recent quarterly commentaries, reflection on the sustained 24-month period of inflation of school rolls, although this is now rising at a slightly lower pace, and costs relating to long term absence, were highlighted. This latter pressure, and absence levels overall (as noted in Table 12 above) are being actively addressed by the Service, and there are expectations that this, excluding the impacts above, will lead to closer expenditure to budget profile ratios over the course of the fiscal year.

\* Reported data does not take account of subsequent re-charges into and out of the Staff Expenditure budget line which may result in revisions to the projected trajectory to year-end financial forecasts as each periodic re-charge exercise is concluded

## Children’s Social Work and Family Support

### Corporate Measures – 2023-24 Cluster Level Indicators (Quarterly)

#### 5. Citizen

Table 15. Complaints Handling

Performance Measure	Quarter 3 2023/24	Quarter 4 2023/24	Quarter 1 2024/25	Quarter 2 2024/25	Status	2024/25 Target	Long Trend Quarterly
	Value	Value	Value	Value			
Total No. of Complaints received (stage 1 and 2) - Children’s Social Work	11	12	12	11			
% of Complaints resolved within timescale (stage 1 and 2) - Children’s Social Work	63.6%	100.0%	75.0%	90.9%		75%	
% of complaints with at least one point upheld (stage 1 and 2) - Children’s Social Work	9.1%	37.5%	41.7%	0%			
Total No. of lessons learnt identified (stage 1 and 2) - Children’s Social Work	0	0	0	0			









#### Service Commentary

**Table 15.**

The number of complaints in Quarter 2 was similar to that in each prior quarter. There has been a significant improvement in the proportion of complaints resolved within the required timescale on Quarter 1.









Across the scope of measures contributing to the service's effective delivery of complaints handling, there are long term improvement trends, and increasing averaged outcomes of over the course of the current annual period (October 2023 to September 2024) in comparison with the previous 12-month data cycle.

**Table 16. Service Level Standards 2024/25 (Children's Social Work)**

Performance Measure	Quarter 3 2023/24	Quarter 4 2023/24	Quarter 1 2024/25	Quarter 2 2024/25	Status	2024/25 Target	Long Trend Quarterly
	Value	Value	Value	Value			
% of care provided in Council children's homes, fostering and adoption services achieve a care standard of Good or better	100%	100%	100%	100%		100%	
We will ensure care provided by the Council's fostering service achieves a care standard of good or better through regulatory inspections.	100%	100%	100%	100%		100%	
We will ensure care provided by the Council's adoption service achieves a care standard of good or better through regulatory inspections.	100%	100%	100%	100%		100%	
% of children open to Children's Social Work supported to live at home, where safe to do so	75%	75%	75%	75%		75%	

## 6. Process

**Table 17. Service Level Standards 2024/25 (Children's Social Work)**

Performance Measure	Quarter 3 2023/24	Quarter 4 2023/24	Quarter 1 2024/25	Quarter 2 2024/25	Status	2024/25 Target	Long Trend Quarterly
	Value	Value	Value	Value			
% of initial screenings undertaken, and action decided, on new referrals within 7 days.	97%	99%	98%	98%		100%	
% initial Child Protection Planning Meetings held within timescale	71%	32%	53%	67%		80%	
% of Care experienced children and young people with three or more placements in 12 months	1%	1%	2%	2%		<7.5%	
% Care Experienced Children and Young People with a pathway plan by the age of 15 years	68%	73%	58%	74%		95%	

### Service Commentary

#### Table 17.

#### Screenings and CPPM Timescales

As noted in the report to the previous meeting of this Committee, the importance of undertaking initial screenings in a timely manner is critical to ensuring that those referrals which indicate a children and young people are at significant risk are responded to in a timely manner. This measure continues to perform at a very high level from quarter to quarter.

Whilst every effort is made to ensure Child Protection Planning Meetings are held timeously, all children considered at a CPPM have a multi-agency safety plan in place ensuring their protection until a CPPM is held. There is a continued focus on reducing the timescales involved where this is within the direct control of the Service, which is producing an improved quarterly Quarter 2 outcome and a reversed long-term trend from that noted in the previous report.

#### Pathway Plans

The recent focus around improving the accuracy of recording of pathway plan implementation is producing an improving trend against this measure. This system related influence on the data will continue to be monitored with a view to raising the recorded proportion of CEYP with a pathway plan further.

### Chart 2. Service Level Measures – Average Number of Looked After Children and Young People by Placement Type Timeseries



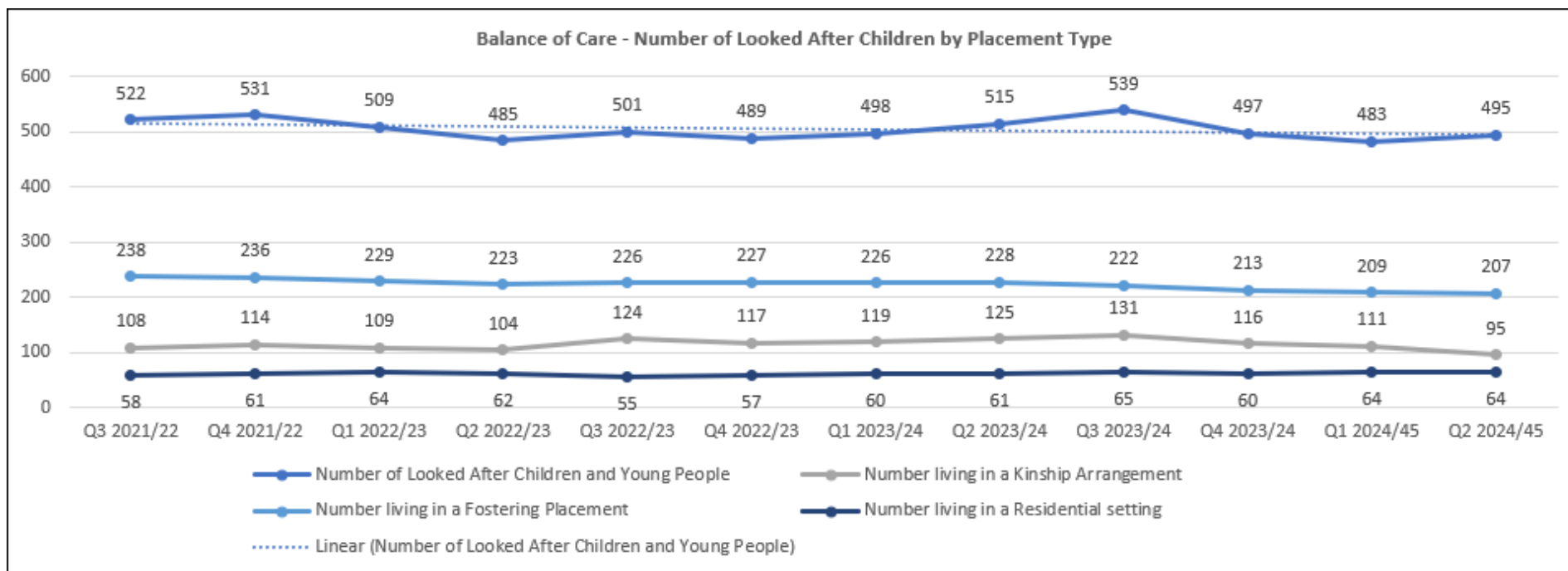


Table 18. Balance of Care -% of Looked After Children by Placement (Rolling 12-month average by Quarter)

Period	% Looked After living in a Kinship Arrangement	% Looked After Children living in a Fostering Placement	% Looked After Children living in a Residential setting
Q2 2022/23	21.3%	45.3%	12.0%
Q2 2023/24	24.2%	45.3%	11.6%
Q2 2024/25	22.4%	42.3%	12.6%

Service Commentary

**Chart 2 and Table 18**

The number of Looked After Children has been on a consistently reducing monthly trend over the period of the last 12 months which is reflected in the quarterly average data in Chart 2.



The % of Looked After children and young people in the respective placements by both fixed and 12 month rolling quarters shows some limited change in comparison with prior periods. As at Quarter 2, there is evidence of some migration of the proportion of placements from Kinship and Fostering to other care settings (e.g. Living with parents, continuing care, other community including residential care, and prospective adopters\*) which are acting as a dynamic deflationary influence on these main placement types.

The numbers of children and young people behind these changes are small but in the context of a reducing number of Looked After Children and Young People, these movements are consistent with the strategic direction of travel outlined for the Balance of Care, whilst maintaining the Promise objective that those in living in the care system maintain safe and caring relationships that are important to them.

In combination with Data and Insight colleagues, we will look at how we provide a clearer breakdown of all placement types within future reporting recognising that these smaller placement settings contribute around 20 – 25% of all looked after children for whom the local authority has corporate parenting responsibilities.

However, we need to recognise that it is less appropriate that some of this data is framed and presented by quarterly reporting frequencies within public performance reporting in terms of both GDPR principles and the capacity for developing intelligence led evaluation. Consequently, these data may require to be reflected in an alternative format from that laid out in Chart 2, which excludes these particular settings, but which can still offer meaningful oversight to Committee.

**7. Staff****Corporate Measures – 2024/25 Service Level Indicators****Table 19. Establishment Levels**

Performance Measure	Quarter 3 2023/24	Quarter 4 2023/24	Quarter 1 2024/25	Quarter 2 2024/25	Status	Long Trend - Quarterly
	Value	Value	Value	Value		
Establishment actual FTE – Children’s Social Work	342.0	335.8	343.63	354.77		

**Table 20. Accidents and Incidents**

Performance Measure	Quarter 3 2023/24	Quarter 4 2023/24	Quarter 1 2024/25	Quarter 2 2024/25	Status	Long Trend Quarterly
	Value	Value	Value	Value		
Accidents - Reportable - Employees (No in Quarter – Children’s Social Work	0	0	0	0		
Accidents - Non-Reportable - Employees (No in Quarter - Children’s Social Work	0	3	0	0		

**Table 21. Absence Due to Illness (Children’s Social Work) 12 month rolling average.**

Performance Measure	Quarter 3 2023/24	Quarter 4 2023/24	Quarter 1 2024/25	Quarter 2 2024/25	Quarter 2 2024/25 Corporate Figure	Status	Long Trend - Quarterly
	Value	Value	Value	Value			
Average number of working days lost due to sickness absence per FTE – Children’s Social Work	7.8	6.5	5.3	3.9	5.4		

**Table 22. Absence Due to Illness (Children’s Social Work) Monthly Average**

Management Measure	July 2024/25	August 2024/25	September 2024/25
	Value	Value	Value
Average number of working days lost due to sickness absence per FTE – Children’s Social Work (monthly)	1.23	0.75	0.95

**Service Commentary**

**Table 21**



Levels of employee absence due to illness are showing an improving quarterly trend that, taking account of natural seasonal variations, indicates material impacts are being evidenced from both Service Management’s focus on actions to support employees back to work after periods of illness, and as a result of corporate data and operational activity around this theme.

**Table 22**

Month to month data is particularly statistically sensitive to limited changes in baseline drivers and is offered only as supportive management information on this basis.

## 8. Finance & Controls

**Table 23. Staff Expenditure (Children' Social Work)**

Performance Indicator	Quarter 1 2024/25		Quarter 2 2024/25		Quarter 3 2024/25		Quarter 4 2024/25	
	Value	Status	Value	Status	Value	Status	Value	Status
Staff Expenditure – % spend to YTD budget profile – Children's Social Work	31.4%		54.4%					

### Service Commentary

#### Table 23

As above, the Q2 2024/25 Budget report to Finance and Resources Committee on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024, noted the pressures, and forecast potential for an end of year budget overspend encompassing children's services delivery.




The Management Commentary section of the Quarter 1 2024/25 Budget report to Finance and Resources Committee in September outlined (i) a continued and potentially an extended period of pressure on staff expenditure arising from the increased levels of need and vulnerability amongst our children and young people, a legacy issue from the past four years, and (ii) the consequences of meeting the often significant demands on specialist staff arising from supporting the young asylum/refugee community, the size of which, although now more stable, continues to require considerable inputs by Children's Social Work teams on a sustained basis.





These influences remain as the most significant variable drivers of budgetary pressures within Children's Social Work Services, although the Year-to-Date budget at present is only marginally out with the Period 6 profile.

\* Reported data does not take account of subsequent re-charges into and out of the Staff Expenditure budget line which may result in revisions to the projected trajectory to year-end financial forecasts as each periodic re-charge exercise is concluded

### Appendix Data Notes

- Target Setting: Where no target is applied against Service Standards, the 'Business-as-Usual' objective is that these services will be delivered on a consistent basis within the available resource.
- Data Trend Directions: Unless stated to the contrary, Long-Term Data Trends are based against the average of 12 monthly, 4 quarterly and 3 annual consecutive periods, respectively.
- Absence Management: (i) Absence data throughout this report reflects robust calculations of FTE based absence but with recognition that minimal variances in accuracy can arise in longitudinal and service comparisons where part time/variable hours working contracts are more common. The impact of this technical/statistical issue has been assessed as producing a marginal inflationary effect on absence levels within Services where a greater proportion of these types of contracts are appropriate to effective service delivery. (ii) An element of caution requires to be applied around interpretation of the trend data relating to increases in absence data around those services with smaller FTE complements as a minimal number of medium to long term absences can materially affect the average working days lost at Service levels.
- Staff Costs: Staffing costs referred to throughout this Appendix exclude adjustments for the corporate vacancy factor.

Long Term Data Trends	
	Improving/Increasing
	No or Limited Change/Stable
	Getting Worse/Decreasing

PI Status	
	Alert (figure more than 20% below target and being actively pursued)
	Warning (figure between 5% and 20% out with target and being monitored)
	OK (figure within target or better)
	Data Only



## APPENDIX B - INSIGHT Local Benchmark Measures Summary

### Introduction

Formally benchmarked educational attainment and achievement data are released at various points throughout the course of each subsequent academic year with an emphasis on the provision, and use of two main sets of comparable measures, for the purpose of detailed analysis by education authorities and schools.

The first of these releases, the **Local Benchmark Measures**, which are reflected in the summary below, offer a pre-review (i.e. prior to completion of the appeals process) evaluation of outcomes from examination diet and end of year achievement assessments of all Senior Phase pupils undertaking evaluated work aligning with the Scottish Qualifications Framework

The Framework encompasses Scottish Qualification Authority, Vocational, Skills for Work and Foundation Apprenticeship qualifications, along with a range of personal development courses and activities. Each of these in combination contribute to a holistic assessment of the educational progress and achievement being made by our young people.

This cumulative year data is provided to education authorities in detail through the national INSIGHT Benchmarking Tool, which is released in September subsequent to completion of the prior academic year and is updated in February of the subsequent calendar year. This latter release encompasses the attainment and achievement of school leavers from the prior academic year, referred to as National Benchmarking Measures.

Evaluation of the data provided through each release of the Insight Tool is provided through an extensive, and on-going, analysis by the education authority and its partners which ‘tests’ the validity of the current National Improvement Framework Plan and informs the development of future Plans.

### Benchmark Comparability

In the context of data comparisons between year cohorts and education authorities, including the Virtual and National Comparators, there are multiple influences at each level of achievement.

Of these, the profiles and characteristics of each pupil cohort e.g. SIMD status, language skills etc. are amongst the most important determinants of comparative achievement but course availability, presentation policies and course grading changes are also influential.

As examples of the influences noted above, an increasing number and proportion of our Senior Phase pupils were presented for assessment, and against higher SCQF levels, in 2023/24 than in most prior years. The levels of fluency in English Language/Reading of some of those pupils, including those more recently welcomed to the city, understandably, are also material to an appreciation of the range of attainment and achievement outcomes.

At the 2023 Pupil Census point 15.3 % of all secondary pupils were recorded as having English as an Additional Language, more than twice the national level of 6.6%. In September 2024, the unvalidated Census data indicated that this figure had increased to 17.2%, with 1,656 recorded as having an Additional Support Need related to this characteristic, some 85% greater than in 2018/19 when the number was 894.

At the same time, the quality and scope of educational provision and teaching seeks to mitigate both the natural and assessment-based data variations in the outcomes between and among our young people, and those of the city's benchmarks. The Virtual Comparator is a data construct that seeks to offer authorities additional comparability of outcomes taking into account similarities in the core profiles of pupils, although it does not account for differences in delivery models and locally set priorities within individual education authorities.

### Data Continuity

In each of the past three years, the remaining mitigations applied to SQA attainment, initially as a response to the circumstances around the pandemic and the legacy impacts that this created, have increasingly been removed as more comprehensive assessments of some practical course activity has been re-instated. Consequently, the boundaries for each grade banding ( A-C, A-D and No Award) in particular subjects, and across SCQF levels overall, have generally risen. In 2023/24, this increase equates to an average of 2 percentage points across all levels.

### Summary



What follows are highlights of key measures and analysis from the September INSIGHT release, based on three core aspects of National Improvement Framework themes for Senior Phase: Literacy and Numeracy, Improvement for All and Breadth and Depth of qualifications

### **Literacy and Numeracy**

Key Measure: Percentage of learners in **S4** ( based on S4 roll) who achieve both literacy and numeracy at Level 5.

Trend Analysis

- 2024 results show an increasing trend with 58.1% of pupils achieving SCQF Level 5, representing the best outcome in five years.
- Work in this area has resulted in a narrowing of the gap to both the virtual comparator (4.4%) and the national figure (1.5%).

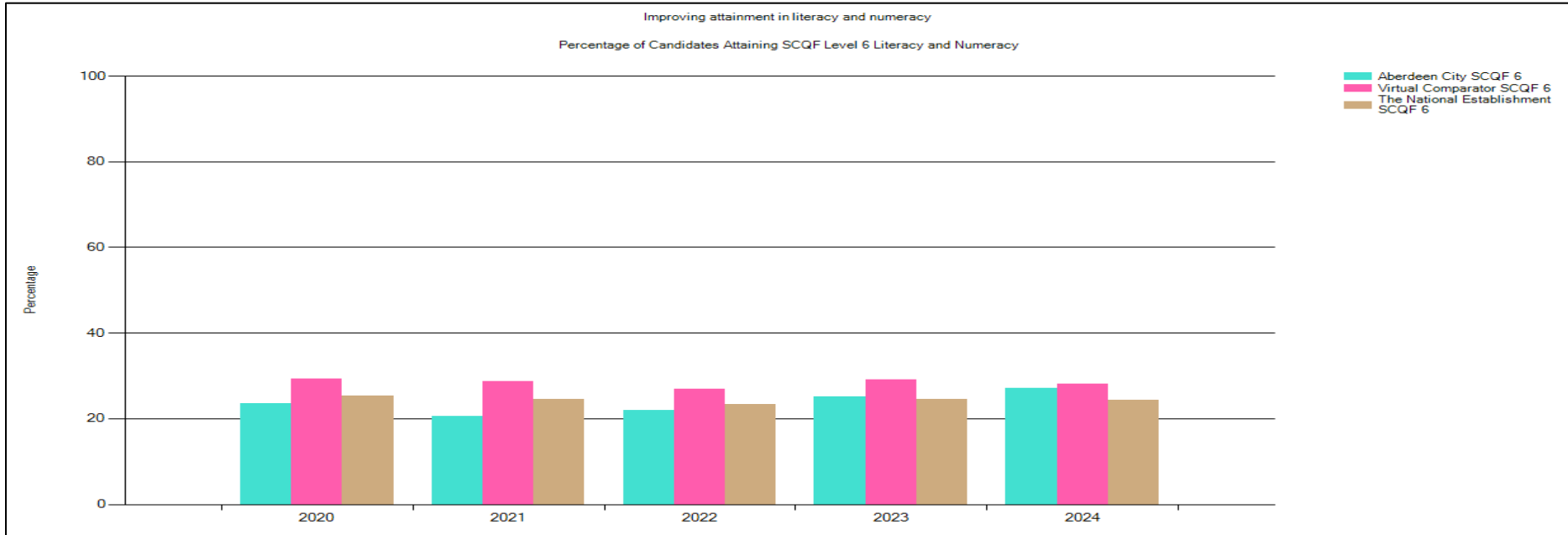


Key Measure: Percentage of learners in **S5** (based on S5 roll) who achieve both literacy and numeracy at Level 6.

#### Trend Analysis

- 2024 results show an increasing trend with 27.2% representing the best outcome in five years.

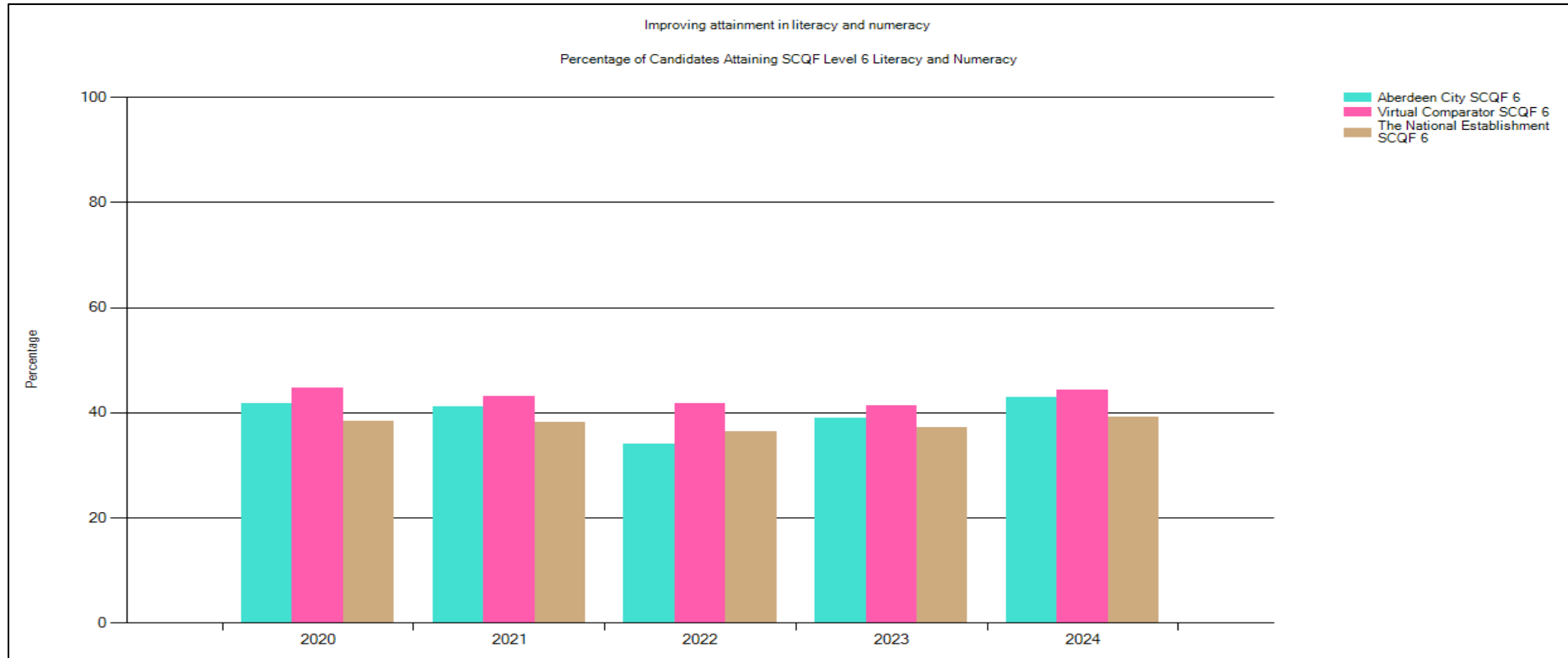
- Work in this area has resulted in the narrowing of the gap to the virtual comparator (0.9%) and moving ahead of the national figure by 2.8%.



Key Measure: Percentage of learners in **S6** (based on S6) roll) who achieve both at Level 6.

#### Trend Analysis

- 2024 results show an increasing trend with 42.8% again representing the best attainment in five years.
- Work in this area has resulted in the narrowing of the gap to the virtual comparator (1.5%) and moving further ahead of the national figure by 3.7%.



Attainment for All converts learner success in qualifications into *tariff points*, which numerically represents the cumulative attainment of our pupils across the Senior Phase stages. This is presented within INSIGHT by percentile quintiles of candidate attainment that enables comparative analysis of trends across the spectrum of abilities.

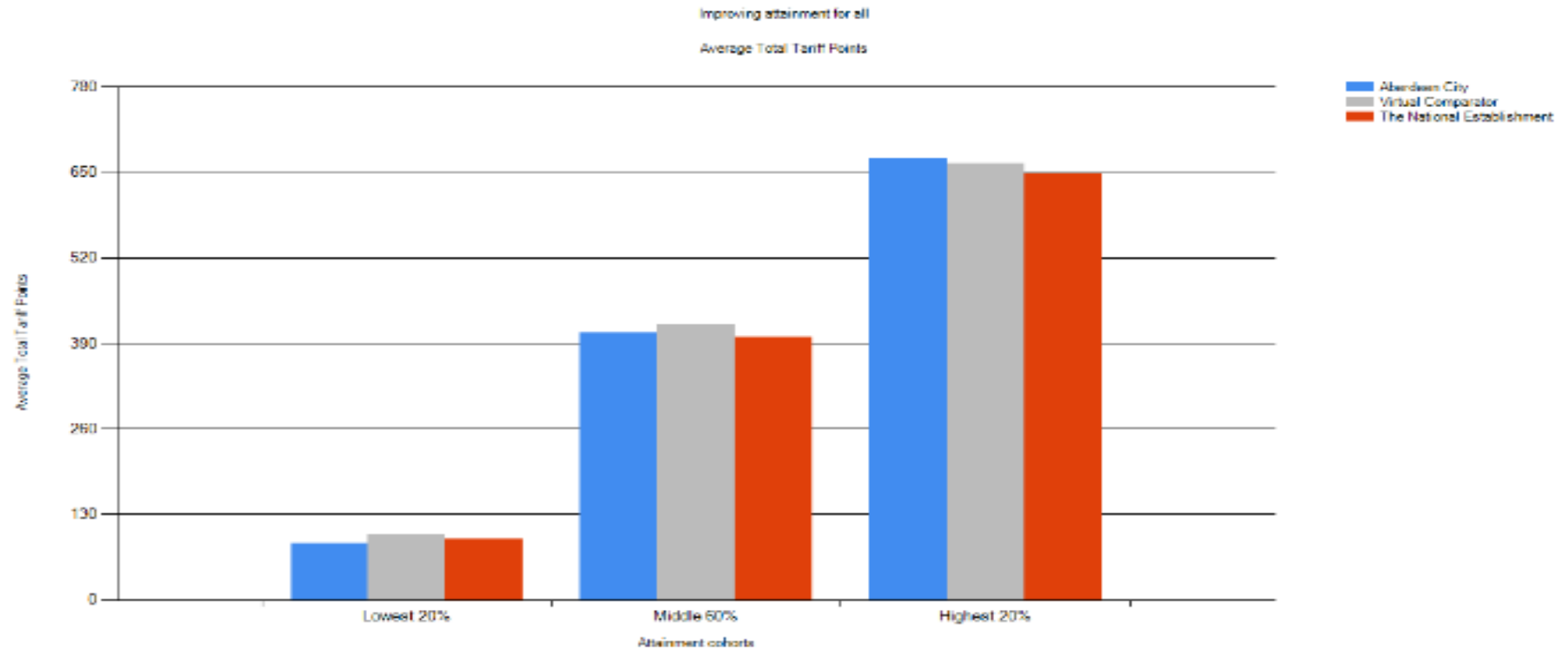
The graphs below shows the performance of learners split into the Lower 20 percentile (L20), Middle 60 percentile (M60) and Highest 20 percentile (H20) quintiles of candidate attainment. The charts below outline outcomes at each of the Senior Phase stages. It should be borne in mind that completion of a proportion of course activity may be undertaken across more than a single stage.

#### **Stage 4**

- 2024 saw increases in the Middle 60 percentile (406 in 2024, 394 in 2023) and Highest 20 percentile (672 in 2024, 665 in 2023) compared to 2023, with a slight reduction for the Lowest 20 percentile (86 in 2024, 101 in 2023).

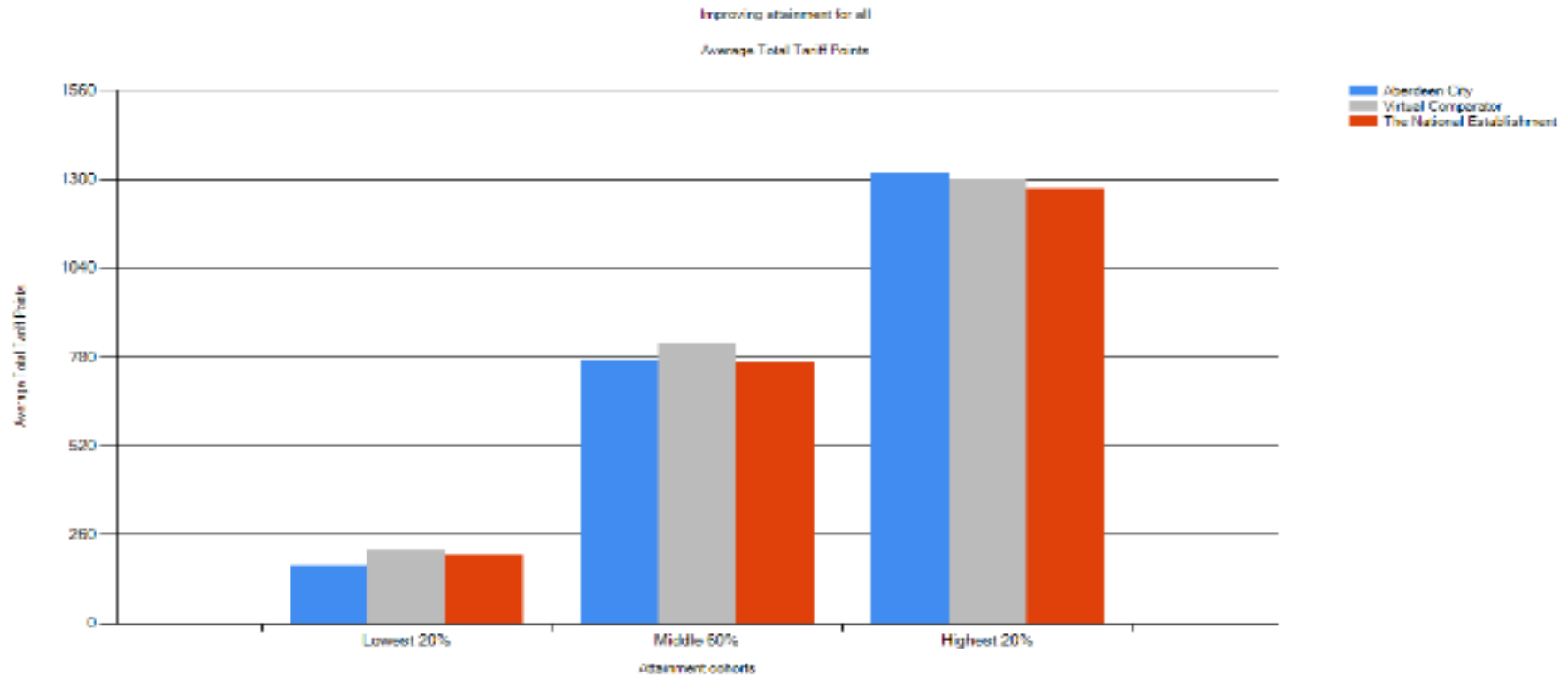
- The Middle 60 and Highest 20 percentiles are now ahead of the national figure, with the Highest 20 percentile of candidate attainment now exceeding the virtual comparator.

The selected year is 2024



- 2024 saw the Lower 20 percentile hold steady (160 in 2024, 170 in 2023) with increases in the Middle 60 percentile (770 in 2024, 758 in 2023) and Higher 20 percentile (1319 in 2024, 1234 in 2023) categories compared to 2023.
- The Middle 60 percentile and Highest 20 percentile are now ahead of the national figure, with the Highest 20 percentile exceeding the virtual comparator.

The selected year is 2024

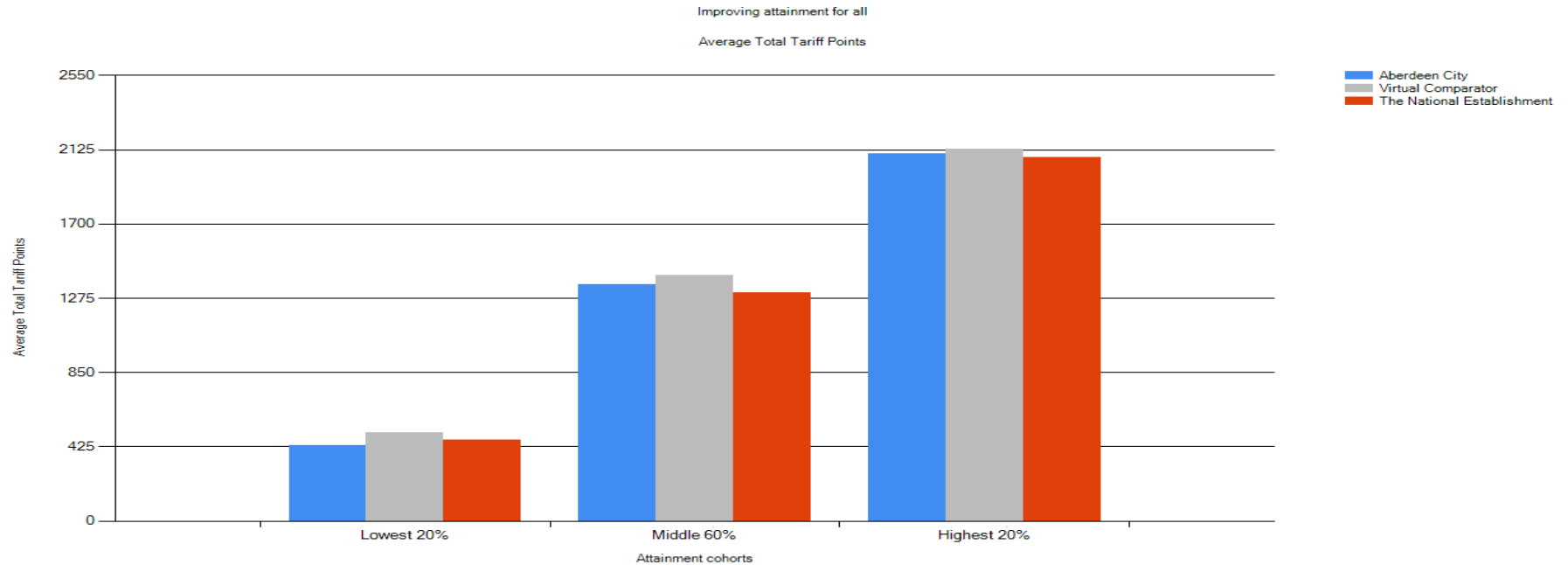


### Stage 6

The final graph in this section shows the performance of **S6** (based on S6) learners split into the lower 20% (L20), middle 60% (M60) and highest 20% (H20) categories of performance.

- 2024 saw increases in the Middle 60 percentile (1352 in 2024, 1329 in 2023) and Highest 20 percentile (2103 in 2024, 2047 in 2023) compared to 2023, with a decrease for the Lowest 20 percentile (431 in 2024, 451 in 2023).
- The Middle 60 percentile and Highest 20 percentile are ahead of the national figure and slightly behind the virtual

The selected year is 2024



comparator.

### Breadth & Depth



Breadth & Depth information provides data to show the number of learners as a percentage of their cohort who achieve a series of passes in a particular SCQF level -for example those who achieve more than one pass at Level 5 in S4. The number of passes and levels selected align with those key measures highlighted within National Improvement Framework Evidence Reporting (NIFIER) and Scotland's National Performance Framework.

#### **Stage 4**

- In **S4**, there have been improvements in the percentage of learners who have achieved 3 and 5 or more passes at Level 5 compared to 2023. These figures are also ahead of the national picture but remain behind the Virtual Comparator.

#### **Stage 5**

- In **S5**, there have been improvements in the percentage of learners who have achieved 3 and 5 or more passes at Level 6 compared to 2023. Again, these are now ahead and significantly ahead of the national picture and are behind but approaching the Virtual Comparator.

#### **Stage 6**

- In **S6**, there have been improvements in the percentage of learners who have achieved 1 and 5 or more passes at Level 6 compared to 2023. The 5 or more figure is significantly ahead of the national picture and only slightly behind the Virtual Comparator. There has also been an improvement in the percentage of young people who have achieved 3 or more passes at Level 7 compared to 2023. The figure for Aberdeen City learners is ahead both of the national picture and the Virtual

<b>S4</b>	2024 ACC	2024 National	2024 VC	Change on 2023
1 or more at Level 5	83.98%	84.22%	85.32%	-0.72%
3 or more at Level 5	70.35%	69.53%	71.84%	2.50%
5 or more at Level 5	55.57%	54.36%	57.99%	2.87%

<b>S5 (based on S5 roll)</b>	2024 ACC	2024 National	2024 VC	Change on 2023
1 or more at Level 6	71.45%	73.80%	76.02%	0.97%
3 or more at Level 6	53.90%	52.42%	57.32%	0.49%
5 or more at Level 6	33.67%	29.35%	34.18%	3.64%

<b>S6 (based on S6 roll)</b>	2024 ACC	2024 National	2024 VC	Change on 2023
1 or more at Level 6	91.43%	91.82%	92.79%	0.07%
3 or more at Level 6	80.34%	79.25%	82.92%	-1.01%
5 or more at Level 6	66.53%	63.11%	68.44%	2.67%

<b>S6 (based on S6 roll)</b>	2024 ACC	2024 National	2024 VC	Change on 2023
1 or more at Level 7	43.15%	43.16%	47.93%	-1.53%
3 or more at Level 7	12.40%	7.35%	8.83%	1.65%

Comparator.

## Appendix C - National Improvement Framework Update

Programme/ project	November 2024	RAG
<b>Improve Leadership of Change in schools</b>		
<p>Build leadership capacity and capability through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a coordinated professional learning programme</li> <li>involvement of middle leaders in quality assurance arrangements</li> <li>analysis of surveys of staff, parents and learners to inform Quality Improvement activity</li> </ul>	<p>Our professional learning programme has been developed in consultation with staff and mainly focusses on Learning, Teaching &amp; Assessment and curriculum in order to increase consistency and raise attainment in our schools. There is also a bespoke package (including mandatory courses) linked to the Local Authority Behaviour Plan.</p> <p>Quality improvement visits are scheduled and involve middle leaders across all sectors, the impact of this inclusion will be closely monitored.</p> <p>Surveys will be issued to a selection of schools prior to Quality Improvement Visits in order to triangulate evidence gathered during the quality Improvement visit and support the setting of appropriate next steps.</p>	
<b>Improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment in schools</b>		
<p>Continue to improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment (pace, and challenge) by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>collaborating with the Regional Improvement Collaborative to publish the Toolkit</li> </ul>	<p>The Northern Alliance Learning, Teaching and Assessment Group was tasked with creating and utilising a research-based toolkit to bring about improvements in Learning, Teaching and Assessment.</p> <p>A presentation was given to Head Teachers as the Toolkit was published and currently 6 primary schools and 1 secondary school are engaging with support from the local authority representatives.</p> <p>All schools involved have chosen Pace, Challenge and Differentiation as a focus area. Schools report finding the overviews and action planning template particularly helpful.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the phased deployment of additional digital tools and a new digital identity</li> </ul>	<p>Work has continued at pace across schools in Wave 1 of the migration, this has included Northfield Academy and 14 Primary Schools. IT and Education teams have worked with school staff to deploy 495 Staff devices and 2351 learner devices to schools.</p> <p>Following the completion of Wave 1, there will be a review of the programme to identify lessons learned prior to embarking on Wave 2.</p> <p>Our network of school Digital Champions has completed a 5-week professional learning programme to support the development of digital skills in their schools.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continued roll out of the national improvement in writing programme.</li> </ul>	<p>Cohort 4 training is now underway bringing our total number of schools trained to 22.</p> <p>Spread and scale training is also being delivered again to all schools within cohorts 1-3 to ensure that all P3-7 teachers and any specialist teachers are able to utilise the approach given the movement of staffing. In addition, school visits to support with implementation</p>	

	<p>of the programme will be offered to all cohort 3 schools during the current academic session.</p> <p>Cohort 5 schools have been identified for this session and training for those further 6 schools is planned for the start of 2025. Qualitative feedback from staff training continues to be positive.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>developing and testing an approach to improve the numeracy curriculum with a focus on transitions</li> </ul>	<p>A Project Coordinator has assembled a team comprising Head Teachers, central officers, school staff and partners to focus on a series of activities to improve numeracy at key stages of transition (primary into secondary and secondary to the world of work and further/higher education).</p> <p>This work will also provide resources to allow adults to increase their confidence in key aspects of numeracy.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>development of a city-wide literacy offer for children, young people and adult learners</li> </ul>	<p>An initial planning meeting with stakeholders has been held where current literacy supports were mapped. Links between services were established and roles and responsibilities discussed with a view to each service providing a more detailed descriptor to be translated into our ACC Literacy Journey.</p> <p>A visual to depict the Literacy Journey is being planned to ensure accessibility for all our citizens.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>working with practitioners to develop an ELC (Early Learning and Childcare) standard to support improvement in pedagogical understanding</li> </ul>	<p>Session one (of four) of the pedagogical leadership in ELC programme delivered by Education Scotland was well attended, with sixty practitioners from a variety of local authority and funded provider settings.</p> <p>The session had a focus on developing people and approaches to leading positive change and providing plentiful opportunities for quality professional dialogue.</p> <p>Verbal feedback on the day suggested that practitioners enjoyed the opportunity to network with other services, appreciated the protected time and space to be reflective, and that the topic focus was relevant to their current improvement practices.</p> <p>Education Scotland have welcomed the plan that members of the central team are attending the sessions and will deliver to teams in the future.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure a robust application of the new tracking system and use of the digital data tools with an increased focus on care experienced children and young people</li> </ul>	<p>In April 2024, secondary schools in Aberdeen collectively agreed to work towards introducing a new tracking system from August 2024.</p> <p>Rollout of this new system is in full flow with schools adopting a collaborative approach through a weekly virtual meeting to support effective implementation.</p> <p>A meeting has taken place between the Virtual Head Teacher and the system developer to provide quality access to tracking data for care experienced young people.</p>	
<b>Continue to improve the quality of universal health and wellbeing supports</b>		
Continue to encourage children and young people to be more physically active, including	PEPASS (Physical Education, Physical Activity and School Sport) are working collaboratively to encourage	

<p>those with sensory and other identified needs.</p>	<p>all schools to achieve a bronze, silver or gold Sport Scotland Award. The award involves undertaking a holistic self-assessment and can be tailored to a range of needs.</p> <p>Partners are currently sharing programme information in order to establish any gaps in provision across the city.</p>	
<p>Shaping and delivering a whole system approach to the healthy weight of children and young people in partnership with others</p>	<p>On the 30th of August over 100 representatives from various Aberdeen City Council clusters, Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership, NHS Grampian, Higher education institutes, Elected Members and Third Sector partners met at the Town House to learn about the challenges concerning population health and in particular healthy weight.</p> <p>Attendees learned about how a whole systems approach to Healthy Weight might be helpful and explored the range of factors that can impact and the barriers, enablers and priorities for consideration. Barriers such as deprivation, competing stakeholder priorities, societal attitudes, access to healthy food establishments and silo working were common themes.</p> <p>Attendees identified many enablers which including healthy school meals, a wide provision of sporting facilities, initiatives offered by the Third Sector and whole family education similar to that offered by Family Learning.</p> <p>Several partners made specific action pledges towards achieving a whole system approach. Officers are currently using the qualitative and quantitative data gathered on the day to develop a Whole Systems Approach to Healthy Weight action plan to be shared with all stakeholders.</p>	
<p><b>Increase the voice of children and young people in the design and delivery of services</b></p>		
<p>Ensure children and young people are involved in decision-making and that we respond to what children and young people tell us they want and need including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• continuing to work in collaboration with the Youth Climate Group to work towards Net Zero</li> </ul>	<p>In the spring of 2024, ETZ Ltd.'s Community Lead, invited Aberdeen Youth Climate Change Group to participate in co-designing a creative project focused on telling the story of the energy transition in Aberdeen – past, present and future - through the eyes of young people.</p> <p>Since then, the group has organised and attended various planning meetings with members of the ETZ Ltd Community and Communications team that have led to the development of a series of storytelling workshops themed around shaping the future of energy.</p> <p>The workshops will take place at the W-ZERO Wind Campus in Altens, with up to 40 secondary-aged participants in attendance from across Aberdeen City Schools and feature business sector speakers and a commissioned artist. The final artwork created will be displayed as part of the 'Fill the Space' programme, before moving to a more permanent location.</p>	

	<p>In October 2024, the Aberdeen Youth Climate Change Group (YCCG), in consultation with the Chief Officer - Education and Lifelong Learning, allocated a total of £150,000 across Aberdeen City's 11 Associated School Groups (ASGs). Each ASG received £13,636 for identified projects that promote biodiversity, sustainability and outdoor learning within their localities.</p>	
<p>Continuing to engage with Aberdeen Youth Movement</p>	<p>The Aberdeen Youth Movement (AYM) were recently involved in stage 1 of the budget consultations and will support stage 2 through visits to schools.</p> <p>Round 2 of the 2024/25 of the Youth Activity Grant was held on 3rd October and AYM members processed £13,098 worth of grants which will have a positive impact on 383 young people across the city. The application process has been updated to include a youth friendly application form. A number of schools applied and were awarded resource, including the Create and Aesthetics group in Oldmachar Academy, Cults Lunch time youth club and the Cults "Annie" Show.</p> <p>The Group has continued to engage positively with a range of partners and groups including Aberdeen Disability Equity Partnership, Broomhill Community Council to offer a "youth lens" session, the Transition Commission on a range of environmental topics and ACE VOICES.</p> <p>The Young Ambassador group, supported by Creative Learning, are working towards becoming a constituted group, to "use creative approaches to explore ideas and goals. They want to bring young people to share their voices and bring the ideas to people who influence change.</p> <p>This group will connect with Aberdeen Youth Movement to provide children and young people aged 10-17 years with opportunities to influence change while Aberdeen Youth Movement will shift to cover older young people 16-25 years</p> <p>In September, the Young Ambassador group were involved with the Saatchi Gallery, the Homewards project and local artist Chloe Nicole Farrell, using art as a tool to tell powerful stories, discuss big themes and inspire young people to be involved in the goal of bringing an end to homelessness.</p>	
<b>Deliver a broader range of senior phase learner pathways aligned to growth areas</b>		
<p>Deliver a broader range of learning pathways through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• delivery of Phase 2 of ABZ Campus</li> </ul>	<p>Courses as part of Phase 2 of ABZ Campus have commenced. Fifty eight courses are on offer with 846 places taken up following 1,685 initial applications. Pilot projects for delivery of our ASN Employability and delivery of Anytime courses is underway.</p>	



	<p>Planning has already commenced for developments as part of Phase 3 (Session 2025-26) of ABZ Campus. A number of local authorities have engaged with Central Officers to review how ABZ Campus might be a model that they could adopt to support increased learner pathways in their context.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continue developing pathways to support those with a range of additional support needs</li> </ul>	<p>During this term (Aug 2024 – Oct 2024) People and Citizen Services (P&amp;CS) have been delivering preparation for work sessions at Bucksburn Academy (wing).</p> <p>This has been received positively and has led to strong partnership working between young people, school, P&amp;CS and Central Team colleagues. Employees have connected with relevant staff and ‘meet and greet’ visits are taking place.</p> <p>Placements (1 day a week until April 2025) will commence after the October holidays. The process for applying for ‘ABZ #WHATif’ 2025-2026 session will begin in the New Year and this year’s participants will finish their experience by acting as a ‘mentor’, supporting those considering the ‘ABZ #WHATif’ pathway in future.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensuring that the school curriculum is ideally matched to pupil needs</li> </ul>	<p>In Broad General Education there will be a focus on curriculum planning and moderation across all areas to ensure curriculum is matched to learner needs. The output from the review of supports for ASN will inform curriculum planning at milestone levels.</p> <p>For Senior Phase, the ongoing work of schools through ABZ Campus continues to see improvements to the curriculum to meet the needs of learners. This includes exploring increasing partnerships to support curriculum delivery.</p> <p>Work has commenced to review and re-imagine the role of work placements as part of the Senior Phase curriculum, with a view to making broader placements available as part of ABZ Campus from Phase 3 and beyond.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>opportunities for CLPL (Career Long Professional Learning) for Computing Science Secondary Staff and staff across BGE</li> </ul>	<p>Secondary staff attended a session presented by FIRST Tech Challenge which provides industry supported equipment to schools in June.</p> <p>This was positively received with two schools engaging in the challenge competition for 2024/25. CLPL as part of the Ada Scotland Festival has been shared with schools.</p> <p>Scottish Teachers Advancing Computing Science (based at University of Glasgow) will be delivering training for secondary staff on the November inset date.</p>	
<b>Improve the quality of environments/supports for those with additional support needs</b>		
<p>Improve the quality of environments and supports by:</p>	<p>Collaborative planning has commenced by Education and Children’s Social Work regarding the creation of a</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuing to implement our accessibility plan</li> </ul>	<p>single digital source of information for parents, carers and disabled young people</p> <p>Guidance on sensory needs continues to be developed by the Educational Psychology Service.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing roll out of the Circle Framework</li> </ul>	<p>The City wide network comprises CIRCLE leads from each setting who benefit from a sharing practice space via the Circle Teams site. Schools continue to use the CIRCLE framework to consider their physical and social environments for all learners.</p> <p>We are now implementing the participation scale for targeted support at pace and consistently across the city in particular primary settings.</p> <p>Locality support groups are now being established who will lead troubleshooting and practice sharing sessions once a term for their locality. This termly offer will be made in addition to addressing queries throughout the year.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate the impact of the Educational Psychology Service on school practice to determine next steps</li> </ul>	<p>The Educational Psychology Service is currently undertaking the systemic review of the support available in our schools for children with additional support needs and the findings are presented in the behaviour report presented at this committee.</p> <p>Following this review the service will undertake an evaluation of the impact of the interventions currently in place to allow them to consider next steps.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivery of the Behaviour Plan</li> </ul>	<p>The Behaviour plan continues to be delivered with all aspects of professional learning in place as part of the wider professional learning offer for session 24/25.</p> <p>All sessions will be evaluated at the point of delivery and 6 months later to determine the ongoing impact. City staff are being trained to be able to deliver to colleagues in the future to ensure sustainability</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the provision for supporting learners need</li> </ul>	<p>The Educational Psychology service has completed a review of the provision of support available for children with additional support needs.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeted use of TalkBoost</li> </ul>	<p>Use of TalkBoost is currently being audited in order to target future training provision. TalkBoost KS1 training has been delivered in partnership with NHS Speech and Language Therapy</p>	
<b>Close the poverty related attainment gap</b>		
Help address the gap and gradient through:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>working with HTs to monitor the impact of PEF (Pupil Equity Funding) interventions</li> </ul>	<p>PEF trackers are reviewed as part of Quality Improvement Visits and in relation to data discussions in primary and attainment reviews in secondary.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>asking every school to have a cost of the school day position statement known by the whole school community</li> </ul>	<p>This will be discussed and progressed at our termly equity network meetings.</p> <p>Schools will be provided with examples from other local authorities and supported to develop their own in collaboration with all stakeholders in their school community.</p>	



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>maintaining our focus on attendance levels and termly communication to parents and carers</li> </ul>	Attendance guidance was issued to parents in August and will be issued again in November. A reminder will also be included in the parent and carer newsletter.	
<b>Prevent families from experiencing poverty wherever possible</b>		
<p>Continue to work in collaboration to address the root cause of poverty through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>targeting families most in need of our help by sharing data</li> </ul>	<p>Officers are currently working with partners to provide winter coats to children in primary schools in one of our areas of high deprivation.</p> <p>Work is ongoing with Aberdeen Performing Arts to identify families who would benefit from free tickets for the pantomime.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the provision of Money Advisors</li> </ul>	Money advisors continue to work in partnership with schools and have managed to secure £31,057.70 in unclaimed benefits for the period from 1 Aug to 30 Sept 2024	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>working with the third sector to support foodbanks and uniform swaps and target families in need of assistance</li> </ul>	<p>Almost all schools operate a uniform swap scheme which is easily accessed by users.</p> <p>Schools know their families well and are able to direct any additional support offered by local charities to the families with greatest need.</p>	
<b>Partnership Delivery of the Family Support Model in keeping with the Promise</b>		
<p>Delivery of The Promise through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reviewing oversight arrangements for those who are cared for out of authority</li> </ul>	Working in partnership with social work colleagues, officers are exploring reasons for young people moving into placements out of authority in order to establish systems or practice which could avoid others having to move out of authority.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>expanding our Edge of Care pilots to St Machar</li> </ul>	<p>Using lessons learned from the Northfield and Lochside pilots, a third pilot is being established at St Machar.</p> <p>The team are working with the school to identify young people and families who would benefit from the model.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>supporting the development of our Family Support Model test</li> </ul>	The implementation plan for the Fairer Futures Partnership has been drafted and a Programme Lead is being recruited to now that the Grant has been received.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>implementing our Request for Assistance</li> </ul>	There has been a delay in the implementation of the new format as there will be a need for data to be stored in the new M365 education tenant. This will ensure the system is future proofed.	
<b>Addressing inequality</b>		
<p>Continue to address inequality by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>all secondary schools registering with Equally Safe at School and ensure key staff complete the e-module</li> </ul>	<p>During this session, all secondary schools will register with Equally Safe at School to support the development of a culture which prevents gender based violence.</p> <p>The programme is designed to increase staff and young people's confidence in dealing with incidents and disclosures.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>secondary schools to review their RSHP curriculum</li> </ul>	During this session, all schools will review the relationship, sexual health and parenthood programmes to ensure they align with the draft guidance issued by Scottish government in November 2023.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continuing to support all secondary schools to establish effective systems to support LGBTQIA+ community in school</li> </ul>	Schools continue to engage with Time for Inclusive Education. 348 teaching staff across 50 education settings have completed Stage 1 of the E-Learning Module.	

	<p>3 Schools are involved in Stage 2 of the professional learning which will be delivered in November. Schools continue to participate with the LGBT Charter programme.</p> <p>St Machar Academy achieved Silver level and AGS are currently working towards attaining Silver, other schools are at the Bronze stage.</p> <p>4 Pillars have delivered LGBT training to 140 staff ensuring that there are key staff in our schools who are well placed to support our LGBTQIA+ communities.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>primary schools to pilot primary Mentors Against Violence programme and full roll out across secondary</li> </ul>	<p>All secondary schools have trainers in Mentors against Violence. We are awaiting confirmation of the primary school pilot</p>	
<p><b>High quality professional learning for all</b></p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain an agile professional learning programme for all ELC and school staff based on both QI outcomes and audits of need</li> <li>Continue to increase opportunities for collaboration at secondary subject level</li> <li>Establish an ELC support worker network</li> <li>Where possible, support staff to gain statutory qualifications in order to realise career progression and promotion and improve the staffing pipeline</li> <li>Continue to work towards implementation of the Behaviour Action Plan</li> </ul>	<p>Professional learning continues to be planned to address feedback gathered through Quality Improvement visits and inspection evidence. Good practice is shared and networks of seniors and EYPs is resulting in greater sharing of practice.</p> <p>QIOs and Locality Leads have developed a shared planning format which is supporting greater consistency and shared expectations resulting in higher quality learning activities in our settings.</p> <p>There are good examples of effective collaboration across secondary subject areas which is beginning to lead to more consistency in the quality of learning and teaching.</p> <p>A working group consisting of Locality Lead and Senior EYPs has been set up and work is underway to develop a programme of support and CPD for Support Workers. This will include an induction package as well as opportunities for ongoing training and networking.</p> <p>For session 24/25 90 staff are being supported to gain qualifications in order to realise career progression. 54 staff are undertaking the BA Childhood Practice, 4 undertaking PDA Childhood Practice, 23 staff are beginning Social Services Children and Young People level 3 and 4 at level 2. 2 members of staff from School Age Childcare are undertaking Playwork Level 3 and 1 at level 2.</p> <p>Work continues on the behaviour plan and an update can be found at the end of this report.</p>	
<p><b>Senior and Middle Leadership development</b></p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to deliver a programme for Middle Leaders to enhance leadership skills</li> </ul>	<p>The continuation of 2 Middle Leaders groups is being enthusiastically attended once again. 2 leadership sessions on teamworking and personal leadership have been attended by around 20 Middle Leaders, including a number of music instructors, this term.</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with external professional learning opportunities to improve leadership capacity</li> </ul>	<p>The leadership group for most experienced leaders has run one session, 12 of our most experienced Middle Leaders across both primary and secondary sectors are coming together to better understand leadership pedagogy and policy to enhance the work in their settings.</p> <p>The Middle Leader development officer is now also seconded to Northern Alliance and as part of this is focusing upon leadership of learning, teaching and assessment. This will support and enhance the development work with Middle Leaders.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase opportunities for middle leaders to participate in Quality Improvement activity</li> <li>Deliver newly appointed HT programme and review implementation</li> </ul>	<p>All middle leaders will be given the opportunity to participate in Quality Improvement visits in their own schools and in other schools in their Trio or Quad. Bespoke professional learning around self-evaluation and improvement planning will also be offered.</p> <p>The first newly appointed HT has been through our new programme and feedback received was positive. The programme provides the new head teacher with essential information and provides introductions to key staff within the organisation.</p> <p>This, along with the allocation of head teacher buddy and ongoing support from their QIO and QIM ensure the newly appointed HT has the support they require.</p>	
<b>Continue to support staff health and wellbeing</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver staff wellbeing surveys</li> <li>Continue to signpost staff to corporate supports for health and wellbeing and highlight case studies</li> <li>Monitor compliance in the application of corporate staffing policies</li> </ul>	<p>Regular updates are sent to all staff to ensure they are aware of corporate supports and officers signpost staff with People Organisation and Development for bespoke support.</p> <p>People, Organisation and Development are working with officers to develop bespoke refresher training for all Head Teachers in the application of staffing policies to ensure issues are dealt with at the most appropriate level.</p>	
<b>Monitor workforce to ensure our capacity to deliver for children and families</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor recruitment to ensure swift identification of any issues to be addressed.</li> <li>Build in performance management and absence reporting expectations for HT network and DHT network (CLPL planned)</li> </ul>	<p>Recruitment is a standing item on Service Manager meetings to ensure any issues are identified and addressed quickly.</p> <p>People, Organisation and Development are working with officers to develop bespoke refresher training for all Head Teachers and middle leaders around performance and absence management.</p>	
<b>Continue to develop School Profiles</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate the consistency of effective use of school profiles and ensure access for all</li> </ul>	<p>The use of school profiles is evaluated through data discussions with QIOs which take place 3 times per year.</p> <p>QIOs model how the dashboards could be used to improve attainment and any feedback on suggested improvements is fed back to the data and insights team.</p>	
<b>Implement improved tracking and reporting</b>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandatory data training sessions for senior leaders which includes BGE tracker, H&amp;WB data, School Profiles, etc this should also cover analysis of data and planning next steps, and transition at all levels</li> <li>• Data training for all staff to ensure accountability through the system</li> <li>• City wide programme of moderation including work with university to ensure alignment with undergraduate training programme</li> </ul>	<p>Head teachers use the data dashboards well to identify where interventions will have the greatest impact.</p> <p>Training sessions are being developed for all teaching and SLT staff in the use of data dashboards to support understanding of data for improvement at class, faculty and school level.</p> <p>Moderation sessions are being offered as part of the 24/25 professional development programme supported by the QAMSO team.</p> <p>Moderation activities planned at ASG level will enhance curriculum transition arrangements from primary to secondary.</p> <p>Officers are working with staff from Aberdeen University to explore joint moderation events for final year students.</p>	
<b>Collaborate with partners to join data sets when beneficial to do so</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve data sharing processes to ensure that all relevant data can be shared to support planning and implementation of interventions e.g. PEPAS, Health</li> </ul>	<p>We continue to work with data and insights to ensure essential data can be shared safely with partners allowing the impact of interventions to be tracked more effectively .</p>	
<b>Increase central oversight of tracking data and PEF impact measures</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to monitor the use of the Equity tracker and provide support through the Equity Network sessions</li> </ul>	<p>A programme of equity networks supported by our Education Scotland attainment Advisor have been planned for session 24/25.</p> <p>These will support schools to create cost of the school day position statements to be shared within their communities.</p>	
<b>Clear expectations around the Core Quality Indicators</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the refreshed Quality Improvement Framework to help improve standards against the core Quality Indicators</li> </ul>	<p>Central officers will continue to work collaboratively with schools and Associate Assessors to implement the refreshed Quality Improvement Framework which was approved at Education and Children’s service committee in July 2025.</p> <p>Our Learning Teaching and Assessment Standard has been updated and a group of central officers and Head teachers has begun developing our curriculum standard which will be shared with schools in January 2025.</p>	
<b>Continually improve central Quality Improvement approaches</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement quality improvement calendar (QIC) which provides well planned, focused quality improvement activity</li> </ul>	<p>Our Quality Improvement Calendar for session 24/25 was shared with schools in May 2024 and provides an overview of planned central activities for session 24/25.</p> <p>This provides schools with the dates of all planned visits for the year allowing them to plan local activities alongside those of the central team.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate the effectiveness of activities within the QIC to determine next steps</li> </ul>	<p>All activities contained within the calendar will be evaluated at the time of delivery and then again in 6 months to evaluate the ongoing impact on our schools.</p>	
<b>Maintain approaches to collaborative improvement across the city</b>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to support delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant</li> <li>• Align partnership forum activity with the family support model building on good practice in existence</li> <li>• Refresh trio model and involve the Associate Assessors in supporting quality improvement activity.</li> <li>• Review and develop collaboration with locality leads / QI team</li> <li>• Improved transition across the city</li> </ul>	<p>All schools are able to identify armed forces families at the application stage and can offer support at local level.</p> <p>Officers are working with neighbouring local authorities to ensure the Covenant is known to all. Funding opportunities for projects will continue to be shared with all schools with armed forces children.</p> <p>Primary trios have been refreshed to ensure there is a balance of experience to support improvement across the trio. Where possible we have an associate assessor connected to the trio to support staff to have a greater understanding of the national standard.</p> <p>Trios are meeting monthly to provide support and challenge around ongoing self-evaluation and quality improvement activities. Secondary schools are in quads with each one supported by an Associate Assessor. Quads will meet regularly and support and challenge during Quality Improvement visits.</p> <p>Locality leads play an active part in quality improvement activity in schools. The team meets regularly with QIOs to ensure consistency in support and challenge across the early level</p> <p>Literacy and Numeracy progressions are being refreshed to ensure quality and consistent information is passed at all transitions however there will be a focus on transition from ELC to primary and Primary to Secondary. As part of this a city wide transition week has been established in June.</p>	
<b>Delivery of Parental Involvement and Engagement Plan</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the parent forum to improve communication between schools and parents and increase parental engagement</li> <li>• Stronger family series to be further developed</li> </ul>	<p>Officers attend the city wide parent forum to provide updates on the work of the central team and answer queries in relation to this plan and any other issues related to schools.</p> <p>Communication is one of the development areas on the parent involvement and engagement plan and developments will be monitored closely.</p> <p>Stronger family sessions are being planned for session 24/25 based on feedback.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement the Parental Involvement &amp; Engagement Plan</li> </ul>	<p>The refreshed Parent Involvement and engagement plan is being presented to committee alongside this report. This plan was developed in consultation with all stakeholders including the city parent forum and the wider parent body.</p>	
<b>More closely align the universal services of health and education</b>		
<p>Design and capitalise on opportunities for co-location and co-delivery of services for children and families</p>	<p>Northfield Academy had been identified as the location for a test of change. The following priorities have been agreed :</p> <p>Health focussed drop-in sessions for S3/4 girls led by nurse practitioner. The first sessions will concentrate on body image with subsequent sessions planned by</p>	



	<p>the group. Nurse practitioner will liaise with FA, DHT, to identify target group.</p> <p>Health professionals to link with DHT with responsibility for 16+/DYW to explore career workshops/seminars, promoting Health and social Care pathways</p> <p>Attendance in P.6 and P.7. Raising attendance is an improvement priority for Northfield Academy. This strand will emulate a test of change undertaken at Manor Park School (school nurse worked with 8 families over the school session. Attendance rates rose for all learners in group).</p>	
<b>Accessibility Update</b>		
Augmentative and alternative signage at learner appropriate height	Burro Happold Consultants were commissioned to review signage in school buildings and create guidance. Guidance for consistent standard of signage in all buildings to improve accessibility has been created and shared as an "Agreed Standard for School Signage."	
Consider suitability, accessibility and capacity within Victorian schools through feasibility study and options appraisal	The Victorian School feasibility study is ongoing at the moment with an online survey available to parents, staff and pupils of all the Victorian schools. Results will feed into action planning.	
CIRCLE framework training delivered with partners across settings including use of Up and Away to support understanding of environments to meet needs.	The established CIRCLE leads in each school will continue to support work around implementing the framework. Opportunities to work collaboratively will continue through the Circle Teams site. Use of INSET for training continues in November and February 2025.	
Develop guidance to meet a range of sensory needs	Guidance continues to be developed by the Educational Psychology Service. Consideration as to appropriate online learning modules is ongoing.	
Child's planning format which is accessible for learners	Pilot ongoing in selected schools. Feedback so far has been positive.	
Empower children and young people to have their voice heard when experiencing child protection processes through effective use of alternative communication systems	Ongoing project to develop consistent approach to use of alternative communication systems, including use of IT and PECs for example.	
Access to information through a single digital source of information for parents, carers and disabled young people	Collaborative planning has commenced by Education and Children's Social Work regarding the creation of a single digital source of information for parents, carers and disabled young people	
Implement "One Good Adult" programme	Implemented	
Ensure summary information regarding additional support needs is accessible and available in a variety of formats in accordance with legislation	Information is available on ACC website pages. A summary document with all the information is awaiting upload	
<b>Behaviour Plan</b>		
<p><b>Improve the consistency of incident reporting by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuing to investigate how to send an automatic notification to staff through Core HR</li> <li>Reviewing the guidance flowchart to further exemplify expectations of the</li> </ul>	<p>Emails are not yet automated and rely on the manager sending a confirmation to the staff member. It is hoped automation will be in place by the end of this session. The flow chart has been reviewed, agreed and shared with schools</p> <p>The incident reporting system has been updated to allow reporting of racist and prejudice incidents.</p>	

<p>manager/employee post incident discussion to correctly determine if the incident is reportable through Core HR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring appropriate linkage to Prejudice Incident Reporting arrangements which will have to be reviewed following publication of national guidance on Preventing and Responding to Racism and Racist incidents.</li> <li>Reviewing arrangements further in light of the <a href="#">National Behaviour Plan</a> (to include clear definitions when Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2 and Respect for All has been refreshed)</li> </ul>	<p>The National behaviour plan was published in August 2024.</p> <p>The Aberdeen city plan contains all the actions contained within the national plan and the safeguarding group are content to continue with the plan until we receive further updates from Scottish Government.</p>	
<p><b>Gain further assurance around the knowledge of/compliance with agreed policies by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-designing a mandatory E-Learning module for all staff to cover key policies and procedures with TUs to include Person Centred Risk Assessment, Incident Reporting, Exclusion, Health and Safety and Whistleblowing (this will be subject to further review following publication of refreshed Included, Engaged and Involved)</li> <li>Implementing E-Learning module as part of induction arrangements/mandatory yearly training and reporting compliance to ECS Committee</li> <li>Update the Health and Safety policy exemplar template to include incident reporting and expected collaboration with TU H&amp;S reps</li> <li>All schools to update their Health and Safety policy in keeping with local exemplar</li> <li>All schools to add a Health and Safety place holder in whole staff meeting agendas</li> <li>Short Health and Safety briefings to be developed in collaboration with Trade Unions and posted on the Edu-Sharepoint site</li> </ul>	<p>The e learning module went live in August. Unfortunately, there was a system failure on the in-service day which meant only a small number of staff were able to complete the module. Schools have allocated time in the working week and 60% have completed the module as of 6 October.</p> <p>The template for the Health and Safety Policy has been updated in consultation with trade unions and issued to schools in August 24, to help build consistency across all schools. All schools have added Health and Safety into whole staff meeting agendas and are aware of the need to personalise the exemplar health and safety policy.</p> <p>Work is continuing on the development of short health and safety briefings for staff. The administration of medication guidelines have been updated in consultation with trade unions and training materials have been developed for all staff providing clear guidance on roles and responsibilities.</p>	
<p><b>Refresh Behaviour and Relationship policies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All schools to provide the central team with copies of current policies by May 2024</li> </ul>	<p>The safeguarding group are developing guidance for schools on creating relationship policies which will be shared with schools by January 2025.</p> <p>The Educational Psychology Service has undertaken the review of the approaches to supporting young</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake an audit of what is working well with regard to nurturing approaches by the end of October 2024</li> <li>• Engage in peer learning around risk assessment, managing bullying, distressing and violent incidents (including support for pupils and parents) in keeping with the National Plan</li> <li>• All schools to table the National Plan with key stakeholders when published</li> <li>• Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers (LNCT) safeguarding group to develop an agreement and guidance note for schools based on the refreshed Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2 including relevant definitions</li> <li>• Each school community to lead a local refresh of their Behaviour/Relationship Policy to reflect changes in refreshed Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2 in collaboration with and through consultation with stakeholders (parents, school staff, young people and recognised Trade Unions). Policies to include agreement of how policy effectiveness will be monitored and reflect national best practice.</li> <li>• Implementation of school behaviour policies to be considered as part of quality assurance arrangements for 2024/25 through the updated Quality Improvement Framework in July 2024</li> </ul>	<p>people with additional support needs. The report will be presented to committee in November 2024.</p> <p>School leaders continue to have opportunities to come together through HT meetings to discuss successful approaches. The officer with responsibility for bullying and equalities carries out regular audits of the data and samples schools to have a deep dive into their antibullying processes. Our anti-bullying processes will be reviewed in light of any change to Scottish government guidance.</p> <p>The Safeguarding group (comprising officers, school staff and trade unions) continues to meet fortnightly to implement the plan. To date all actions have been delivered within timescales. All schools have built time into their working time agreement to allow this work to happen over session 2024/25. The Plan will be subject to review once a refreshed copy of included, engaged and involved is published (anticipated before March 2025).</p> <p>The implementation of school behaviour policies has been built into the quality assurance processes for session 24/25, with the links clear in the updated Quality Improvement Framework.</p>	
<p><b>Ensure robust provision of risk assessments by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building a generic staff risk assessment into the general school risk assessment process (this will be subject to review when the refreshed Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2 is published)</li> <li>• Make an accessible whole school stress risk assessment approach available to support the monitoring of staff wellbeing (and include reference to this in the Health and Safety guidance.</li> <li>• Collaboratively reviewing and updating Person Centred Risk Assessment guidance to include escalation arrangements, FAQs, the frequency of review alongside considerations of how</li> </ul>	<p>A generic risk assessment has been shared with all schools and will be updated regularly. The health and safety team are creating a central site to gather all school risk assessments.</p> <p>An approach to stress risk assessment is in development and will be worked on with trade unions and the headteacher group.</p> <p>The e-module will provide guidance on the creation and review of Person Centred Risk Assessment (PCRAs), and this will be accompanied by written guidance. The module has been published and the guidance is currently being developed.</p> <p>This new guidance will include reference to grab and go PCRAs which provide key information for supply staff working in a school. Debrief guidance has been agreed and has been distributed to schools.</p>	



<p>best to provide targeted support to the young person during this period</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide guidance to shape post-incident discussion to encourage reflection and discourage blame (link to debrief guidance)</li> <li>• Quality Assurance process over 2024/25 to include sampling of Person Centred Risk Assessment processes</li> </ul>	<p>Quality assurance of PCRA's has been built into quality improvement visits for session 2024/25</p>	
<p><b>Supporting staff by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluating the impact of the whistleblowing form to determine next steps by July 2024</li> <li>• Regularly reminding staff of corporate wellbeing supports through the education newsletter.</li> <li>• Developing debrief guidance (including decompression time) to be agreed at LNCT and issued by July 2024</li> <li>• Clarifying location of Education Scotland resources to support improvement at school level</li> <li>• Clarifying how schools should enable Police investigations</li> <li>•</li> <li>• Resilience training offered to schools through Winning Scotland / Able-Futures</li> </ul>	<p>The whistleblowing form was only used once, and the staff member was happy for no further action following a discussion with the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning. Due to the fact it was not accessed regularly there was agreement between all stakeholders that it could be removed.</p> <p>Corporate wellbeing supports are shared through the education wellbeing newsletter to ensure all staff in schools have access to all supports available. Education will be part of the corporate pulse checks in relation to health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Awaiting information on the publication of resources to support improvement in relationships at school level</p> <p>Guidance on enabling police investigations will be discussed as part of the safeguarding group activity.</p> <p>8 schools have signed up for the offer of resilience training from Winning Scotland following a presentation at an HT meeting (St Machar Academy, Countesswells, Kingsford, Bucksburn Academy, Cults Academy, Airyhall, Lochside and Hazlehead Primary).</p> <p>Able futures continues to be offered to individuals through the regular newsletter and staff who access rate the support offered highly.</p>	
<p><b>Further build the capacity/capability of staff by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing to deliver Compassionate and Connected Communities</li> <li>• Continued focus on the CIRCLE framework</li> <li>• Continuing to roll out CALMs theory (de-escalation) training to all school communities</li> <li>• Continuing to offer bespoke training through the Educational Psychology Service</li> <li>• Reviewing the programme of Professional Learning/Thinglinks to increase the range of professional learning opportunities for all school staff by August</li> <li>• Continuing to work with head teacher colleagues to develop and implement</li> </ul>	<p>The professional Learning Calendar has been published and there is a separate section relating to the behaviour action plan allowing staff access to all training offers in one place.</p> <p>The established CIRCLE leads in each school will continue to support work around implementing the framework. Opportunities to work collaboratively will continue through the Circle Teams site.</p> <p>The Maybo offer has been confirmed and all staff will have access to the de-escalation module on the November Inservice day. Trainers will be trained throughout session 24/25 and deliver to peers in session 25/26. This will ensure the intervention is sustainable at minimum cost beyond the first year.</p> <p>The Educational Psychology Service is finalising the restorative practice offer and this will be available in the new year and the review of PSE features in the NIF plan for session 24/25</p>	

<p>a spending proposal for £33,000 received from Scottish Government for staff training by the end of May</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme of restorative practice training being put in place from August 2024</li> <li>• Implement Restorative Justice training (currently being negotiated)</li> <li>• Consider PSE review as part of National Improvement Planning 2024/25</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Improve knowledge of the legislative framework by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Co-designing a Webinar on the legal framework with Trade Unions</li> <li>- Launching the Webinar and ensuring its availability to all school staff</li> </ul>	<p>An online webinar covering the legal framework for exclusion, and other aspects of educational provision, are in the process of being developed.</p>	
<p><b>Ensure effective mechanisms are in place to support continuous improvement by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing the Terms of Reference of the Safeguarding School Staff group in collaboration with the Trade Unions and the Health and Safety team (a further review in light of the National Behaviour Plan may be required)</li> <li>• Establishing a Terms of Reference for the Incident Reporting Group in collaboration with the Trade Unions and Health and Safety team in light of the National Behaviour Plan.</li> <li>• Commit to long term support of the nominated head teacher group to shape our use of resources to support those with a range of wellbeing and ASN needs.</li> </ul>	<p>The terms of reference have been agreed and meetings continue to be held monthly. The recent publication of the <a href="#">National Behaviour plan</a> was considered and it was felt there was no requirement to alter the terms of reference for the group in light of the plan.</p> <p>Terms of reference have also been agreed by the Incident Reporting group.</p> <p>The headteacher group continues to meet to inform the work of the plan and look at identifying best practice and sharing across the local authority. The review of the adequacy of support is almost concluded and has been informed by focus groups of all stakeholders as well and engagement with all senior leaders in schools.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Continue to focus on a positive culture by:</b></li> <li>•</li> <li>• Asking all head teachers to provide evidence of current arrangements for listening to staff and commit to keeping arrangements under review</li> <li>• Continuing to distribute wellbeing survey to staff (Trade Unions to help promote completion)</li> <li>• Collaborative review of learning from the staff wellbeing surveys with Trade Unions</li> <li>• Head teachers, central staff and Trade Unions to all encourage open and blame free reporting in all establishments</li> </ul>	<p>This has been gathered and will be used to share best practice across the local authority, informal feedback from our recent Thematic Inspection of the Education Service was complementary of our positive culture.</p> <p>Corporate wellbeing surveys will be distributed, and feedback will be shared with TUs to identify areas. All managers are aware of the need to promote open and blame free reporting of incidents .</p> <p>Respectful relationships continue to be maintained between Trade unions and central team.</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trade Unions and central officers to exemplify expectations around respectful relationships and interactions for all staff</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Engagement with parents and carers on behaviour and relationships by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tabling this Action Plan with the City-Wide Parent Forum for comment</li> <li>Tabling the National Plan at Parent Council meetings</li> <li>Actively involving parents/carers in the review of Behaviour/Relationship policies</li> <li>Work with Trade Unions to better understand the levels of violence from parents and carers and establish a protocol for staff who face aggression from parents and carers</li> </ul>	<p>The Chief Officer has a standing item on all parent forum meetings to update on progress of the plan. Representatives then share these updates at their local meetings to ensure the information is disseminated across the whole parent body.</p> <p>A working group of TUs, parent representatives and central officers will work on the protocol for staff who face aggression from parents. This group will meet for the first time after the October holiday.</p>	
<p><b>Committee business</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the Devolved School Management scheme as planned</li> <li>Take the agreed Action Plan through the Education and Children's Services Committee and report any impact on recruitment</li> <li>Review the plan regularly in light of any updated national guidance</li> <li>External review of our Whistleblowing Policy</li> </ul>	<p>The review of the Devolved School Management scheme is planned for 2025</p> <p>This is the update that will provided as part of the performance report at every Education and Children's services committee</p> <p>The plan has been reviewed in light of the National plan and all partners are happy to continue with the original plan as it covers all areas in the National Plan.</p> <p>The review of the whistle blowing Policy has taken place and the decision has been made to stand down the form.</p>	

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## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education and Children’s Services Committee
<b>DATE</b>	26 November 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Committee Annual Effectiveness Report
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	CORS/24/276
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Andy MacDonald
<b>INTERIM CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Alan Thomson
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Steph Dunsmuir
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	GD 8.5

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the annual report of the Education and Children’s Services Committee to enable Members to provide comment on the data contained within.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Committee:-

- 2.1 provide comments and observations on the data contained within the annual report; and
- 2.2 note the annual report of the Education and Children’s Services Committee.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

#### **Annual Reports on Committee Terms of Reference**

- 3.1 The annual committee effectiveness reports were introduced in 2018/19 following a recommendation from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) as part of the Council’s work towards securing that organisation’s accreditation in governance excellence. The Terms of Reference set out that each Committee will review its own effectiveness against its Terms of Reference through the mechanism of the annual report.
- 3.2 The annual effectiveness reports were mentioned by CIPFA in their report which awarded the Mark of Excellence in Governance accreditation to Aberdeen City Council. CIPFA highlighted the implementation of the annual effectiveness reports as a matter of good practice in governance and were encouraged that, during consideration of the reports at Committee and Council, Members had made suggestions for improvements to the reports in future years.
- 3.3 Data from the annual effectiveness reports is used to inform the review of the Scheme of Governance, ensuring that Committee Terms of Reference are

correctly aligned, and identifying any areas of the Terms of Reference which had not been used throughout the year in order that they can be reviewed and revised if necessary. The information from the effectiveness reports has also been used in the past to feed into the Annual Governance Statement.

- 3.4 The reports provide a mechanism for each committee to annually review its effectiveness, including data on attendance, any late reports, referrals to Council and the number of times officer recommendations were amended, and to ensure that it is following its Terms of Reference.
- 3.5 Similarly, recording the sections or stretch outcomes of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) which apply to each report allows Members to be aware of the direct impact of any proposals before them on the LOIP, and gives a general overview at the end of each year of the number of reports which have had an impact on the LOIP stretch outcomes.
- 3.6 Any comments from Members on areas of data that should be considered would be welcomed to ensure that Members are presented with meaningful data.
- 3.7 The annual report for 2023/2024 is therefore appended for the Committee's consideration. Following consideration by the Committee, the report will be submitted to Full Council in December for noting.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations of this report.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

#### **6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

#### **7. RISK**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Risk</b>	<b>Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?</b>
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	N/A			Yes
<b>Compliance</b>	Failure to submit this report would	L	Council is given the opportunity to consider the reports	Yes

	mean that the Council would not be complying with its instruction that all committees and Full Council receive such a report each year.		and provide feedback on any amendments Members would wish to see in the content so that this can be taken on board for next year's Scheme of Governance review.	
<b>Operational</b>	N/A			Yes
<b>Financial</b>	N/A			Yes
<b>Reputational</b>	N/A			Yes
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	N/A			Yes

## 8. OUTCOMES

There are no links to the Council Delivery Plan, however the committee effectiveness annual reports link to the Scheme of Governance, by ensuring that each committee is fulfilling its Terms of Reference.

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Impact Assessment</b>	No assessment required. I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with Vikki Cuthbert, Interim Chief Officer - Governance on 09/10/24
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

## 11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Education and Children's Services Committee Annual Effectiveness Report 15 October 2023 to 15 October 2024

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Steph Dunsmuir  
Committee Services Officer  
[sdunsmuir@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:sdunsmuir@aberdeencity.gov.uk)

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# Education and Children's Services Committee Annual Effectiveness Report 2023/2024



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## 1. Introduction from Convener

- 1.1 This is the third annual effectiveness report for Aberdeen City Council's Education and Children's Services Committee (ECS). These reports inform the review of the Council's Scheme of Governance. They enable officers to identify any changes that are required, for example, to the Committee Terms of Reference.
- 1.2 The ECS Terms of Reference were considered as part of the general Scheme of Governance review for 2024. No changes were made to the ECS Terms of Reference since the last report to Committee.
- 1.3 Over the reporting period, the committee has processed a significant amount of business. Reports have reflected the work of staff whose dedication and professionalism delivers educational and care services for the benefit of all children and young people in the city. It is appropriate to express appreciation and thanks to staff for the consistent, high quality commitment that they give each and every day.

Councillor Martin Greig

Convener – Education and Children's Services Committee

## 2. The Role of the Committee

### PURPOSE OF COMMITTEE

To advise on and discharge the Council's functions as:

- an education authority as set out in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 and all other relevant legislation and regulations where not otherwise delegated; and
- a social work authority as set out in the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 and all other relevant legislation and regulations where not otherwise delegated, in relation to children.

The Committee will also:

- monitor the delivery of educational services undertaken as education authority (including community learning and development) and children's services provided by Integrated Children's and Family Services;
- receive assurance on the statutory and regulatory duties placed on the Council for Child Protection and Corporate Parenting;
- make recommendations in respect of school property matters to the Finance and Resources Committee;
- scrutinise performance; and
- agree changes such as school zoning arrangements (within set budgets), or make recommendations to another committee, for improvements to functions related to education in order to ensure best value and delivery of the Council's agreed outcomes, commissioning intentions, service specifications and service standards.

### REMIT OF COMMITTEE

#### 1. Service Delivery and Performance

1.1 The Committee will, in respect of educational services (early years, schools and community learning and development) and children's services provided by Integrated Children's and Family Services and services delivered within the school estate:-

- 1.1.1 oversee, and make decisions relating to, service delivery (such decisions including those relating to population changes);
- 1.1.2 approve options to improve/transform service delivery relative to the functions of the Council as education authority and social work authority;
- 1.1.3 scrutinise operational performance and service standards in line with the Performance Management Frameworks and consider recommendations for improvements where required;
- 1.1.4 receive the cluster risk registers relative to its remit and scrutinise to ensure assurance of the controls in place;
- 1.1.5 approve all policies and strategies relative to its remit; and
- 1.1.6 receive reports on school inspections and peer reviews in order to ensure best practice and note any resultant improvement actions arising from those inspections and reviews.

- 1.2 In undertaking the aspects at 1.1, the Committee will ensure that it is acting within the budget set by Council and is supporting the delivery of the Council's agreed outcomes, commissioning intentions and service standards.
- 1.3 The Committee may make recommendations to the appropriate committee(s) or sub committee(s) on matters affecting its remit where the authority to approve sits within the remit of another committee or sub committee.

## **2. Child Protection**

The Committee will receive assurance from the Child Protection Committee and the Children's Services Board on:

- 2.1 Services delivered to children and young people in need of care and protection including care experienced young people, including:
  - 2.1.1 delivery of national initiatives and local implications;
  - 2.1.2 learning from learning reviews;
  - 2.1.3 quality assurance;
  - 2.1.4 training and development; and
  - 2.1.5 local evidence-based initiatives;
- 2.2 effective working across child protection; and
- 2.3 statistics relating to the Child Protection Register and children and young people for whom the Council has Corporate Parenting responsibilities, whilst noting that it has no remit to challenge entries.

The Committee will also:

- 2.4 receive assurance on the Council's compliance with statutory duties in respect of child poverty; and
- 2.5 consider the Chief Social Work Officer's Annual Report.

## **EXTERNAL MEMBERSHIP**

3. The Committee's membership will include seven persons who are not members of the Council but who have full membership of the Committee and voting rights in connection with advising on and discharging the functions of the Council as Education Authority only. The seven external members will be appointed by the Council at its statutory meeting (or other meeting as appropriate) as follows:-
  - 3.1 three persons representing religious bodies in accordance with the requirements of s124(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973; and
  - 3.2 in accordance with the discretion conferred by s124(3) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:

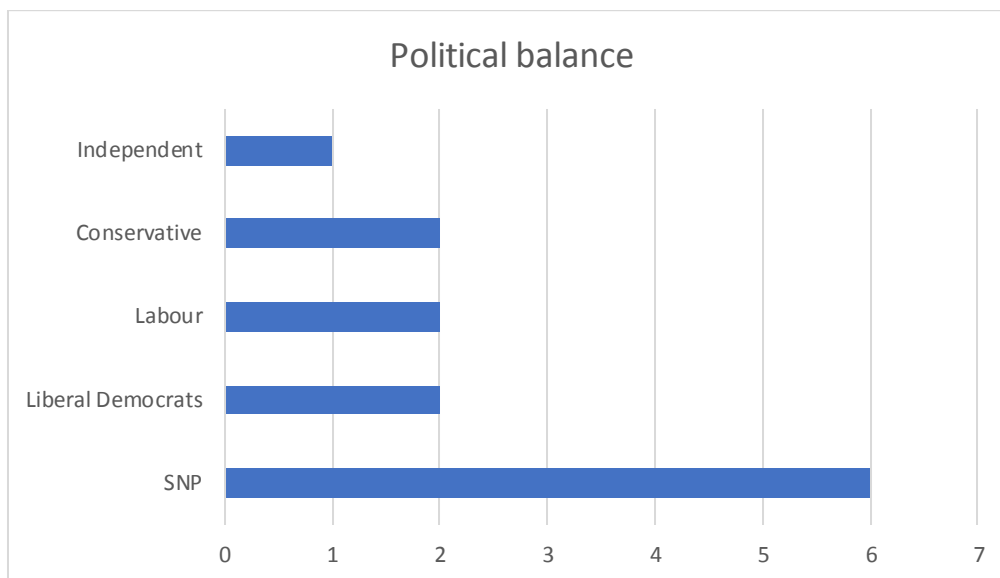
- 3.2.1 two teachers employed in educational establishments managed by the Council and nominated by the Teachers' Consultative Forum, comprising one representative from primary (including nursery) and one representative from secondary; and
- 3.2.2 two parent representatives, selected by the Aberdeen City Parent Council Forum from within its own membership, comprising one representative from primary (including nursery) and one representative from secondary.

**Executive Lead: Executive Director – Families and Communities**

### 3. Membership of the Committee during 2023/2024

3.1 The Education and Children’s Services Committee has 20 members - 13 Elected Members and 7 External Members.

3.2 The Committee composition is presented below:-



3.3 The Committee has seven External Members (who have full voting rights). The current External Members are as set out below:-

Ms Danielle Barclay	Parent Representative (Primary / ASN)
Dr Alison Murray	Parent Representative (Secondary/ASN)
Mr John Murray	Roman Catholic Representative
Ms Jacqueline Munro	Teacher Representative (Secondary)
Mr Madhav Regmi	Third Religious Representative
Mr Doug Haywood	Teacher Representative (Primary)
Mrs Hilda Smith	Church of Scotland Representative

## 4. Membership Changes

- 4.1 Councillors Al-Samarai, Boulton and McLellan were members for the November 2023 meeting, following which they stepped down from the Committee. Councillor Mrs Stewart and Councillor Fairfull joined the Committee from February 2024.
- 4.2 In respect of the External Members, this year Miss Pamela Scott stepped down as the primary teacher representative and Council appointed Mr Doug Haywood (previously Miss Scott's substitute representative on the Committee) as her replacement in August 2024. Mr Haywood joined the Committee as a full Member from the September 2024 meeting, having substituted for Miss Scott at earlier meetings. Miss Scott will continue as the substitute primary teacher representative.

Mrs Frances Cardno and Mr Michael Crawford, the parent representatives on the Committee, came to the end of their two year tenure, and were replaced from the July 2024 meeting of the Committee by Ms Danielle Barclay and Dr Alison Murray.

## 5. Member Attendance

Member	Total Anticipated Attendances	Total Attendances	Substitutions
Councillor Martin Greig	5	5	
Councillor Jessica Mennie	5	4	1- Councillor Alex Nicoll
Councillor Gill Al-Samarai	1	1	
Councillor Christian Allard	4	3	1 - Councillor Ciaran McRae
Councillor Kate Blake	5	5	
Councillor Marie Boulton	1	0	1 - Councillor Mrs Jennifer Stewart
Councillor Desmond Bouse	5	3	2 - Councillor Ian Yuill and Councillor Steve Delaney
Councillor Richard Brooks	5	5	
Councillor Hazel Cameron	5	4	1 - Councillor Dell Henrickson
Councillor Lee Fairfull	4	0	4 - Councillor Michael Hutchison
Councillor Ross Grant	5	5	
Councillor Neil MacGregor	5	5	
Councillor Alex McLellan	1	1	
Councillor Ken McLeod	5	5	
Councillor Miranda Radley	5	4	1 - Councillor Neil Copland
Councillor Mrs Jennifer Stewart	4	2	2 - Councillor Barney Crockett and Councillor Marie Boulton
Ms Danielle Barclay	2	2	
Mrs Frances Cardno	3	3	



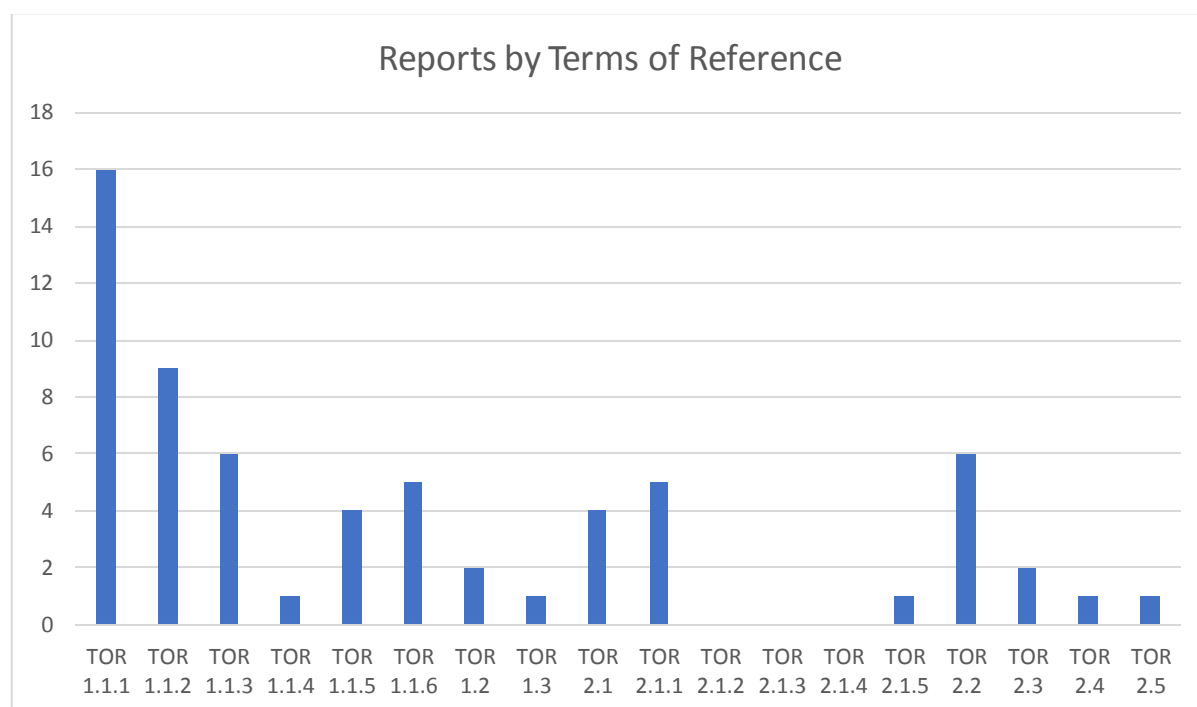
Mr Michael Crawford	3	3	
Mr Doug Haywood	1	1	
Ms Jacqueline Munro	4	4	
Dr Alison Murray	2	2	
Mr John Murray	5	5	
Mr Mike Paul	1	0	
Mr Madhav Regmi	5	3	
Miss Pamela Scott	4	2	2 - Mr Doug Haywood
Mrs Hilda Smith	5	5	

## 6. Meeting Content

6.1 During the 2023/2024 reporting period (15 October 2023 to 15 October 2024), the Committee had 5 meetings and considered a total of 52 reports.

### 6.2 Terms of Reference

6.2.1 The following chart details how reports aligned to the Terms of Reference (TOR) (set out at section 2 above) for the Committee.



6.2.2 During the course of 2023/2024 the Committee received reports under the majority of the main Terms of Reference which indicates that the Committee has discharged its role effectively throughout the course of the reporting period.

6.2.3 Last year it was noted that a number of reports had been listed under the general Terms of Reference 1.1.1, and officers undertook to monitor this over the year to ensure that all applicable TOR were reflected. There is therefore a more even spread

across the Terms of Reference for this year, compared to last year's report. Although there are some TOR which have not been utilised this year (TOR 2.1.2, 2.1.3 and 2.1.4), it is not anticipated that these require to be reviewed as they sit as sub-TOR under the main 2.1, which was utilised this year in a number of reports:-

- 2.1 *Services delivered to children and young people in need of care and protection including care experienced young people, including:*
  - 2.1.1 *delivery of national initiatives and local implications;*
  - 2.1.2 *learning from learning reviews;*
  - 2.1.3 *quality assurance;*
  - 2.1.4 *training and development; and*
  - 2.1.5 *local evidence-based initiatives;*

6.2.4 The Committee TOR were reviewed as part of the annual Scheme of Governance review, and no changes were made to the Education and Children's Services Committee TOR.

## 7. Reports and Decisions

7.1 The following information relates to the committee reports and Notices of Motion presented to Committee throughout the reporting period, as well as the use of Standing Orders and engagement with members of the public.

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total Percentage of Reports</b>
Confidential Reports	0	0%
Exempt Reports	0*	0%
Number of reports where the Committee amended officer recommendations	0**	0%
Number of reports approved unanimously	44	85%
Number of reports or service updates requested during the consideration of another report to provide additional assurance and not in business planner	5***	N/A
Number of reports delayed for further information	0	0
Number of times the Convener has had to remind Members about acceptable behaviour in terms of the Code of Conduct	0	N/A
Late reports received (i.e. reports not available for inspection at least 3 clear days before the meeting)	0	N/A
Number of referrals to Council under SO 34.1	1	2%

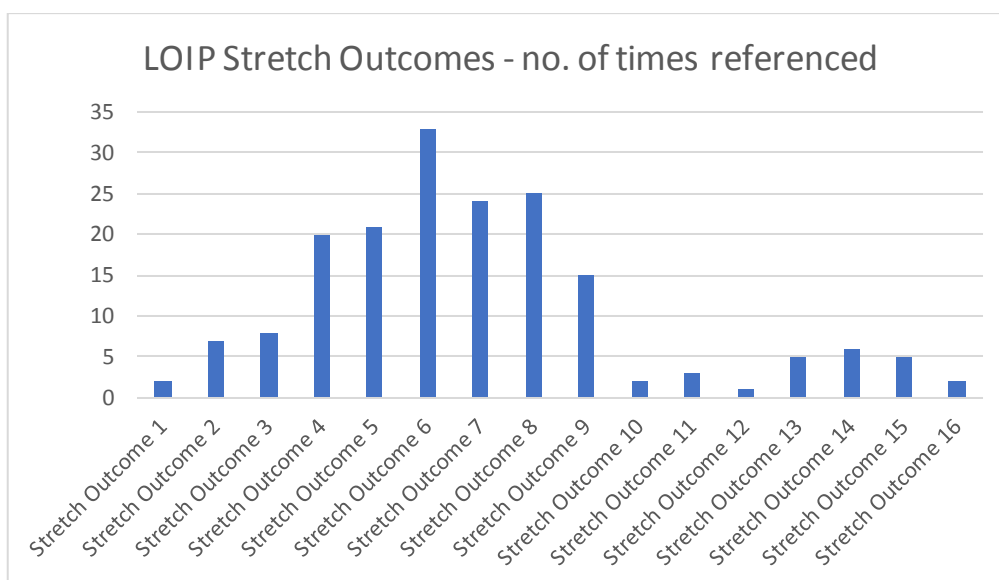
- \* There were no exempt reports, however there were exempt appendices to two reports – the St Peter’s RC School Long Term Education Provision and Outline Business Case – New Secondary School Countesswells and Hazlehead. The reports themselves were however in the public part of the agenda.
- \*\* Although there were a number of occasions where additional recommendations were added by the Committee, the original recommendations from officers were all approved.
- \*\*\* The reports requested by Committee related to managing behaviour in city learning settings; consideration of options relating to the provision of supports for those with additional support needs including local organisations and the Northfield Advisors, to allow a continuous improvement journey in all schools and a review of the adequacy of the current allocation of pupil support staffing and provision of specialist placements across the city; a method for providing an overview of participation and achievements in ABZCampus; and an instruction to officers to provide the annual update on Education climate change work by committee report, rather than service update. There was also a service update requested in relation to the Healthy Weight event and ongoing work.

<b>Notices of Motion, Suspension of Standing Orders, Interface with the Public</b>	
Number of Notices of Motion to Committee	2*
Number of times Standing Orders suspended	1
Specific Standing Orders suspended	40.2**
Number of deputations requested	4
Number of deputations heard	4***
Number of petitions considered	0

- \* The two notices of motion to Committee during the reporting period were as follows:-
  - National Parent Forum – Notice of Motion by Councillor Kate Blake
  - Private School Fees - VAT – Notice of Motion by Councillor Ken McLeod
- \*\* Standing Order 40.2 was suspended at the September 2024 Committee to enable the meeting to continue past six hours.
- \*\*\* The four deputations made were in relation to the following items of business:-
  - Denominational Schools Feasibility Study – three requests made
  - Behaviour in Schools – one request made

## 8. Reports with links to the Local Outcome Improvement Plan

- 8.1 The following table details of the 52 reports how each report linked to the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP Stretch Outcomes are appended to this report for reference at Appendix 1). As can be seen from the chart below, reports to the Education and Children’s Services Committee span across all of the Stretch Outcomes, although the greatest number of reports linked to Stretch Outcomes 4 to 9, which would be expected for the nature of the business, as those Stretch Outcomes relate to development, wellbeing and positive destinations for children and young people.
- 8.2 It is encouraging to see that the Stretch Outcomes have been used so frequently in reports presented, as it demonstrates that the reports are closely tied to meeting the objectives of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan.
- 8.3 Members should note that due to the refresh of the LOIP in April 2024, the numbering and wording of some of the Stretch Outcomes was altered halfway through the reporting period.



## 9. Training and Development

9.1 Opportunities for Members during the reporting period were as follows:-

A briefing session from the Educational Psychology team on Health and Wellbeing

A presentation to Committee on Maybo training at Bucksburn Academy

9.2 Service updates were also circulated to Members throughout the year to provide additional background and information in respect of matters considered at Committee, namely:-

- [Expansion of Free Schools Meals - Primary 6 and 7](#)
- [Expansion of Universal Free School Meals for Primary 6 and 7 pupils - update](#)
- [Guidance on Mobile Phones in Scotland's Schools](#)
- [Improving Relationships and Behaviour in Schools - Action Plan 2024-2027](#)
- [Lochside Academy Bus Services 2024-25](#) and [Appendix](#)
- [Non-statutory guidance on taking a children's human rights approach](#)
- [Northfield Advisory Group meeting June 2024](#)
- [Parent Information - Attendance](#)
- [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation - Numbers and Percentages](#)
- [Scottish Languages Bill](#)

9.3 As with previous years, officers have continued to support the Committee's External Members through hosting pre-Committee briefing sessions which enable them to ask officers questions about any aspect of education along with seeking clarity on reports within the committee business planner. This approach has strengthened the role of External Members and encouraged scrutiny through questioning at Committee. Training was also provided to the new External Members prior to them sitting on the Committee.

9.4 Further development opportunities will be considered for next year based on Committee business throughout the year, Executive Lead proposals and Member feedback on what may be required to assist them in performing their roles.

## 10. Code of Conduct Declarations and Transparency Statements

- 10.1 0 declarations of interest and 23 transparency statements were made by Members during the reporting period. Information in respect of declarations of interest and transparency statements is measured to evidence awareness of the requirements to adhere to the Councillors' Code of Conduct and the responsibility to ensure fair decision-making. This figure is marginally down on last year's report, however there were two fewer meetings of the Committee in the reporting period than in 2022/2023.

## 11. Civic Engagement

- 11.1 During the reporting period, the Service has engaged in a wide variety of engagement and consultation. The following bullet points list some, but not all, of the engagement undertaken to give a flavour of the work throughout the year.

- Consultation with Parent Councils / Parent Forum on Parental Involvement and Engagement Plan
- A Citizen Space survey to Parent Councils regarding improving communication between schools and parents and how to improve parental engagement
- Consultation with Community Learning and Development staff on a refreshed vision for the new service
- Feedback surveys for the 'In the City' programmes
- Statutory Consultation with the public on proposals for a new campus at Hazlehead Academy and changes to the catchment area, as well as rezoning for Greenbrae and Scotstown Schools
- Various surveys in relation to Early Learning and Childcare to assist with the development of the ELC Delivery Plan 2024-2026 and the School Age Childcare Policy
- Consultation with Trade Unions on the production of the Behaviour Plan
- Consultation on the School Holiday dates for 2025-2030
- Stakeholder engagement in respect of denominational schools
- Ongoing engagement with young people, staff and the school community at Northfield Academy, as well as engagement with staff involved in other inspections
- Regular engagement between officers and the Aberdeen City Parent Forum

## 12. Executive Lead to the Committee - Commentary

- 12.1 Officers have presented a wide range of reports to the Education and Children's Services Committee over the year, highlighting the very broad range of work undertaken by Education, Children's Social Work and most recently by Community Learning and Development. Reports are now being presented that explore how different Council clusters and Community Planning Partners are working more closely together to improve outcomes for our children and families as we progress our model of Family Support.
- 12.2 It has been particularly pleasing to see how areas of work, such as the development of the Music Service, work to support mental health and wellbeing and on-going delivery of The Promise have progressed over successive reports to Committee demonstrating the clear and positive impact of the Education and Children's Services Committee. Work to address variation in education outcomes remains a key priority and the presentation of a refreshed quality improvement calendar on a yearly basis is thought to be a positive opportunity to continually strengthen arrangements, it is also thought helpful that Head Teachers continue to attend Committee to respond to questions from Members on published HMIE and Care Inspectorate Inspection reports.
- 12.3 Officers continue to respond to feedback from Members of Committee to ensure that reports presented provide information and analysis in a transparent and accessible format. Officers continue to appreciate both the scrutiny and high level of interest in our work with children and young people across the city.

## 13. The Year Ahead

- 13.1 Although there were no changes to the ECS Terms of Reference in 2024, in accordance with the usual practice of an annual review of the Scheme of Governance, the Terms of Reference will be reviewed and officers will reflect on whether any areas require further refinement moving forward to ensure the continued efficient operation of the Committee.
- 13.2 Aside from the regular annual reports and performance reports received for assurance, reports on progress towards delivery of our Family Support Model will be presented to Committee over the coming year and we may start to learn of changes being made nationally in light of the various education reform agendas. A selection of the planned business for the next year is listed below:-
- National Children with Disabilities Thematic Inspection
  - Behaviour Action Plan
  - Child Protection Committee Annual Report
  - Refreshed Local Authority Plan for implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
  - Children's Services Plan - Annual Update

- Children's Care and Justice Bill
- ABZCampus
- Review of Spaces - Support for Pupils with Additional Support Needs
- Whole Systems Approach – Healthy Weight
- Various School Estate Plan projects, and the annual update
- Inspection Reporting



## Appendix 1 – Local Outcome Improvement Plan Stretch Outcomes

<b>Economy</b>	
1.	No one will suffer due to poverty by 2026
2.	400 unemployed people supported into fair work by 2026
3.	500 people skilled/ reskilled to enable them to move into, within and between economic opportunities as they arise by 2026
<b>People (Children &amp; Young People)</b>	
4.	95% of children will reach their expected developmental milestones by their 27-30 month review by 2026
5.	90% of children and young people report they feel listened to all of the time by 2026
6.	By meeting the health and emotional wellbeing needs of our care experienced children and young people they will have the same levels of attainment in education and positive destinations as their peers by 2026
7.	95% of children living in our priority neighbourhoods (Quintiles 1 & 2) will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026
8.	83.5% fewer young people (under 18) charged with an offence by 2026
9.	100% of our children with Additional Support Needs/disabilities will experience a positive destination
<b>People (Adults)</b>	
10.	25% fewer people receiving a first ever Court conviction and 2% fewer people reconvicted within one year by 2026
11.	Healthy life expectancy (time lived in good health) is five years longer by 2026
12.	Rate of harmful levels of alcohol consumption reduced by 4% and drug related deaths lower than Scotland by 2026
<b>Place</b>	
13.	Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate
14.	Increase sustainable travel: 38% of people walking and 5% of people cycling as main mode of travel by 2026
15.	Addressing the nature crisis by protecting/ managing 26% of Aberdeen's area for nature by 2026
<b>Community Empowerment</b>	
16.	100% increase in the proportion of citizens who feel able to participate in decisions that help change things for the better by 2026

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## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education and Children’s Services Committee
<b>DATE</b>	26 November 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Cluster Risk Registers and Assurance Maps
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	CFS/24/344
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Eleanor Sheppard, Executive Director, Families and Communities
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Shona Milne, Chief Officer, Education and Lifelong Learning and Graeme Simpson, Chief Officer, Children’s Social Work and Family Support
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Chief Officers
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	1.1.4

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the Cluster Risk Registers and Assurance Maps in accordance with Education and Children’s Services Committee Terms of Reference to provide assurance that risks are being managed effectively within Education and Lifelong Learning and Children’s Social Work and Family Support Clusters.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee note the Cluster Risk Registers and Assurance Maps set out in appendices A and B.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for overseeing the system of risk management and for receiving assurance that the Extended Corporate Management Team (ECMT) are effectively identifying and managing risks. Reviewing the strength and effectiveness of the Council’s system of risk management as a whole is a key role for the Committee.
- 3.2 The Risk Management Policy Framework states that all other committees should receive assurance on the risk management arrangements which fall within their terms of reference. This is provided through the risk registers for the relevant Clusters which fall within the remit for this Committee as detailed below:
- Education and Lifelong Learning
  - Children’s Social Work and Family Support

## Risk Registers

- 3.3 The Council's Risks Registers are tools used by Functions and Clusters to capture and manage the risks which could prevent achievement of organisational outcomes and service delivery.
- 3.4 The Council's Corporate Risk Register (CRR) captures the risks which pose the most significant threat to the achievement of the Council's organisational outcomes and have the potential to cause failure of service delivery. The CRR is scrutinised annually by the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.5 The Cluster Risk Registers are set out in appendices A and B and reflects the risks which may prevent each Cluster from delivering on organisational outcomes and services, these risks may be escalated to the CRR where deemed necessary.
- 3.6 The risks contained within the Risk Register for each Cluster are grouped by risk category in appendix E and show the Council's corresponding risk appetite for each category as set within the Council's Risk Appetite Statement (RAS) which was approved by the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee in February 2024.

The Clusters are working towards a target risk score which aligns with the risk appetite.

- 3.7 The Cluster Risk Registers provides the organisation with the detailed information and assessment for each risk identified including;
- **Current risk score** – this is current assessment of the risk by the risk owner and reflects the progress percentage of control actions required in order to achieve the target risk score.
  - **Target risk score** – this is the assessment of the risk by the risk owner after the application of the control actions. This is aligned with the risk appetite for this particular category of risk.
  - **Control Actions** – these are the activities and items that will mitigate the effect of the risk event on the organisation.
  - **Risk score** – each risk is assessed using a 4x6 risk matrix as detailed below.

The 4 scale represents the impact of the risk and the 6 scale represents the likelihood of the risk event.

Impact	Score						
Very Serious	4	4	8	12	16	20	24
Serious	3	3	6	9	12	15	18
Material	2	2	4	6	8	10	12
Negligible	1	1	2	3	4	5	6
Score		1	2	3	4	5	6
Likelihood		Impossible	Almost Very Low	Low	Significant	High	Very High

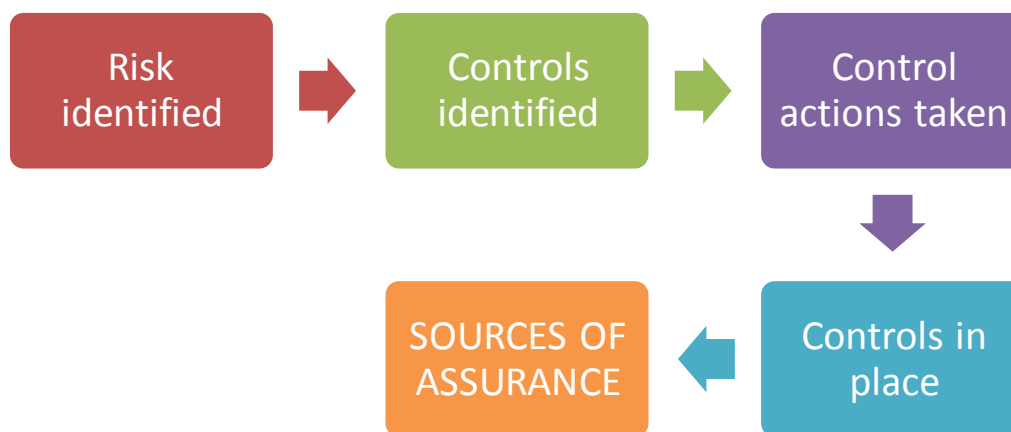
3.8 Development and improvement of the Cluster Risk Registers and associated risk management processes has continued since the Cluster Risk Register was last reported to Committee:

- The Council's Risk Appetite Statement (RAS) was reviewed and updated.
- On-going improvements and updates to the "Managing Risk" pages published on the Council's intranet pages which contains information and links for officers and elected members on the Council's RAS, Risk Management Policy, Guidance and Training. This supports the further embedding of our risk management culture and ensures that everyone knows the part they play in managing risks within the wider system.
- Risk owners and leads continue to review and update risk registers to improve monitoring and reporting across the organisation. These are mechanisms which reflect the day-to-day business of assessing and mitigating the risks and opportunities inherent in delivering public services.

### **Assurance Maps**

3.9 The risk registers which are reviewed by the Council's Committees detail the risks identified within each of the relevant Functions and Clusters and provide detail of the risk, the potential impact and consequence of the risk materialising and the control actions and activities required to manage and mitigate the risk. Assurance Maps as set out in appendices C and D provide a visual representation of the sources of assurance associated with each Cluster so that the Committee can consider where these are sufficient. Sources of assurance are controls which are fully effective, following the completion of control actions.

Presentation of each Cluster's assurance map provides full sight of the defences we have in place as an organisation to manage the risks facing local government.



3.10 The Assurance Map provides a breakdown of the sources of assurance within “three lines of defence”, the different levels at which risk is managed. Within a large and complex organisation like the Council, risk management takes place in many ways. The Assurance Map is a way of capturing the sources of assurance and categorising them, thus ensuring that any gaps in sources of assurance are identifiable and can be addressed:

First Line of Defence “Do-ers”	Second Line of Defence “Helpers”	Third Line of Defence “Checkers”
The control environment; business operations performing day to day risk management activity; owning and managing risk as part of business as usual; these are the business owners, referred to as the “do-ers” of risk management.	Oversight of risk management and ensuring compliance with standards, in our case including ARSC as well as CMT and management teams; setting the policies and procedures against which risk is managed by the do-ers, referred to as the “helpers” of risk management.	Internal and external audit, inspection and regulation, thereby offering independent assurance of the first and second lines of defence, the “do-ers” and “helpers”, referred to as the checkers” of risk management.

### **Risk Overview**

#### Education and Lifelong Learning Cluster

3.11 Fortnightly assessment and mitigation of risk as part of service manager meetings has supported the education service to address identified risks over the year.

The risk around quality has been removed as our Updated Quality Improvement Framework, along with the staff development activities, has reduced risk in this area. We are experiencing more positive inspections in all sectors and this will continue to be reviewed over the school session.

The establishment of a safeguarding group to oversee the implementation of the incident reporting system and other mitigations to reduce incidents in school

is ensuring all staff know when and how to record incidents and seek support from their line manager.

There continues to be a small number of applicants for HT posts and this risk reflects the requirement for those applying to either have the qualification for headship or undertake the qualification within the first 3 years of taking up post.

Demographic changes continue to present a risk. This risk reflects the continuing inward migration of families settling in the city and the number of families fleeing conflict choosing to settle in the city.

Lack of specialist teachers in some secondary subject areas is a national issue and we continue to place adverts to attract staff to the city. The use of ABZ campus and other consortium arrangements between schools that are geographically close to each other provides some mitigation.

#### Children's Social Work and Family Support Cluster

- 3.12 The risk register is routinely considered by the Chief Officer and members of the Senior Management Team. This ensures there is a regular review of the mitigating actions, their effectiveness but also whether new risks are emerging.

Evaluative activity in relation to Child Protection and Corporate Parenting help inform our assessment of risk. In addition, we utilise the findings of local and national inspection activity to which we have contributed to. All locally based regulated services continue to be graded as either very good or good. Work to ensure we are fully prepared for a systemic inspection in respect of children who are in need of care and protection is ongoing.

While there has been a marginal up turn, attracting social workers into vacant positions we recognise the experience of the social work workforce is decreasing at a time when the complexity of the work is increasing. Locally and nationally there continues to be a challenge recruiting social workers in to Team Manager roles. We continue to recognise the emotional and psychological impact on our staff as a result of the nature and volume of the work and the more complex needs of those they support. Mitigating the risks associated with ensuring sufficient numbers of suitably qualified staff remains a priority.

Demographic changes continue to present a risk. The service continues to see a growing demand to support unaccompanied asylum seeking young people transferred to the city via the National Transfer Scheme as well as those who present spontaneously in the city. This is a complex area of social work activity and while our experience is growing it remains a challenging and multi-faceted area of social work activity.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report. This report deals with risk management at Cluster level and this process serves to identify controls and assurances that finances are being properly managed.

## 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report. The Council's Risk Registers serve to manage many risks with implications for the legal position and statutory responsibilities of the Council.

## 6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

## 7. RISK

7.1 There are no risks arising from the recommendations in this report. The Committee is provided with assurance that the risks presented within the Cluster Risk Register are those that may affect achievement of organisational outcomes and delivery of services for each Cluster are identified, appropriately managed and that the Council's activities are compliant with its statutory duties.

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	The council is required to have a management system in place to identify and mitigate its risks.	The council's risk management system requires that risks are identified, listed and managed via Risk Registers.	L	Yes
<b>Compliance</b>	As above.	As above.	L	Yes
<b>Operational</b>	As above.	As above.	L	Yes
<b>Financial</b>	As above.	As above.	L	Yes
<b>Reputational</b>	As above.	As above.	L	Yes
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	As above.	As above.	L	Yes

## 8. OUTCOMES

8.1 The recommendations within this report have no direct impact on the Council Delivery Plan however, the risks contained within the Council's risk registers could impact on the delivery of organisational outcomes.



## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	It is confirmed by the Interim Chief Officer – Governance that no Integrated Impact Assessment is required.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required
<b>Other</b>	Not applicable

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None

## 11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix A and B - Cluster Risk Registers for Education and Lifelong Learning and Children's Social Work and Family Support.

11.2 Appendix C and D - Cluster Assurance Maps for Education and Lifelong Learning and Children's Social Work and Family Support

11.3 Appendix E – Cluster Risks grouped by category

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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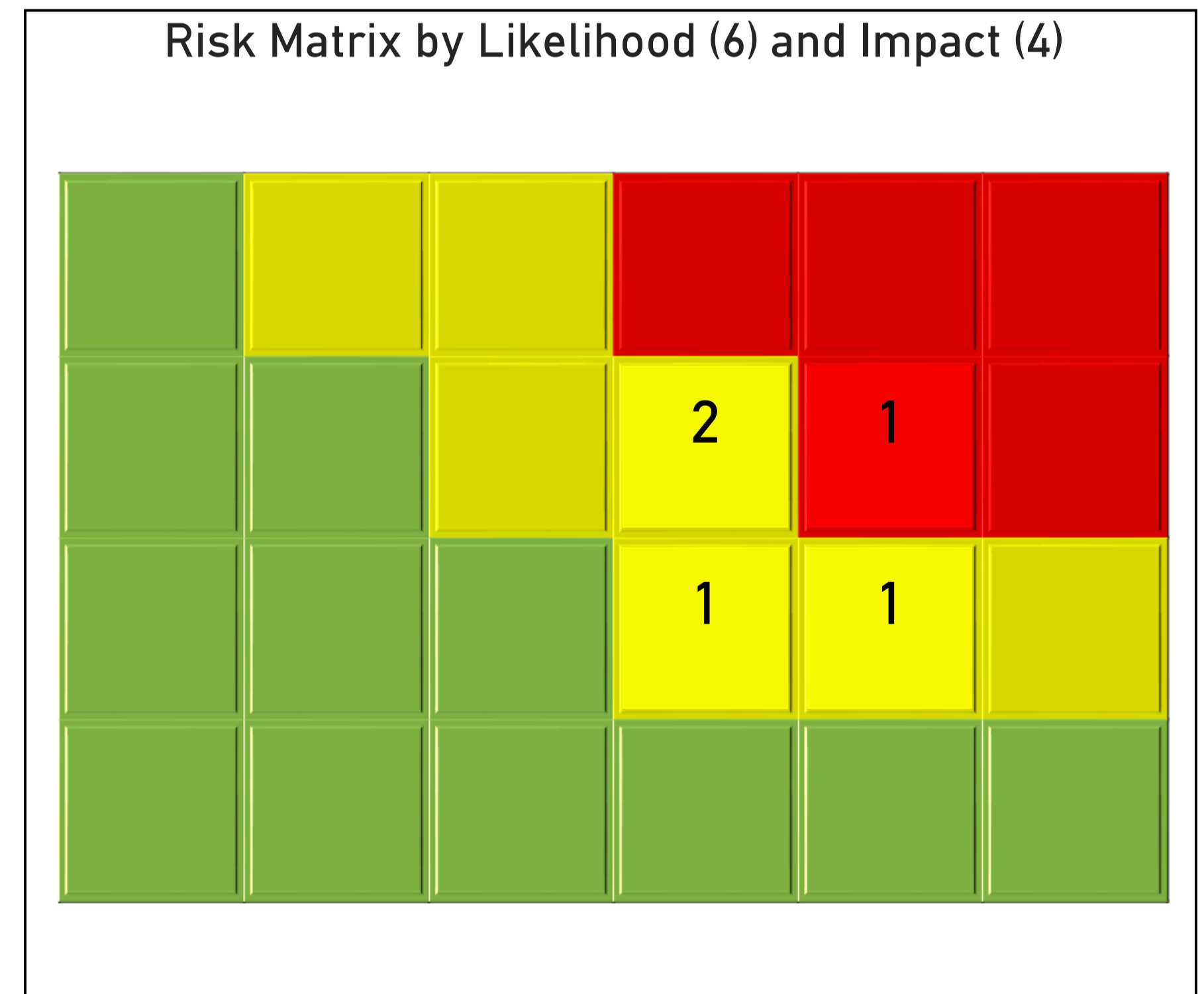


# Education & Lifelong Learning Risk Register

CURRENT CLUSTER RISKS	CURRENT RISK SCORE
Education - Demographic demands	10
Removal of Scottish Attainment Challenge funding	12
Risk that the number of Senior Leadership vacancies leads to staff in posts that are not of required quality	15
Specialist teacher shortage in secondary schools	8
The perception of failure to record incidents of violence and aggressive behaviour against school staff.	12

Number of Cluster Risks

**5**



FUNCTION	CLUSTER	RISK OWNER	RISK LEAD
Families and Communities	Education & Lifelong Learning	Shona Milne	Shona Milne

RISK TITLE	RISK DESCRIPTION	CONTROL ACTIONS	TARGET RISK SCORE	CURRENT RISK SCORE	CURRENT LIKELIHOOD	CURRENT IMPACT	TARGET COMPLETION DATE
Education - Demographic demands	Growing demographic demands result in service delivery pressures	<p>1) Produce annual pupil roll projections against existing school capacity and use to inform school estate plans.</p> <p>2) Monitor school admissions on a monthly basis to ensure changing trends are understood and informing planning</p> <p>3) Maintain accurate records of school places available across the city to help manage school admissions as efficiently as possible and support medium term planning</p> <p>4) Proactively engage with Higher Education Institutions to help determine likely demand for school placements from International Students</p> <p>5) Continue to work closely with Further Education to ensure that post school opportunities are promoted with older young people who arrive in the city</p> <p>6) Continue to work closely with Further and Higher Education partners to ensure that our approach to delivery of the senior phase makes efficient use of shared resource and physical space.</p> <p>7) Maintain regular contact with displaced person lead to ensure availability of provision is shared with Scottish Government to inform decision making.</p> <p>8) Regular meetings with independent head teachers to ascertain numbers of young people likely to move into local authority schools due to the impact of the 20% VAT on</p>	8	10	5	2	17 March 2025

FUNCTION	CLUSTER	RISK OWNER	RISK LEAD
Families and Communities	Education & Lifelong Learning	Shona Milne	Shona Milne

RISK TITLE	RISK DESCRIPTION	CONTROL ACTIONS	TARGET RISK SCORE	CURRENT RISK SCORE	CURRENT LIKELIHOOD	CURRENT IMPACT	TARGET COMPLETION DATE
The perception of failure to record incidents of violence and aggressive behaviour against school staff.	The existing recording system does not provide accurate data to allow for investigation and accurate reporting of incidents.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop and implement a behaviour action plan – Complete</li> <li>2. Co designing mandatory eLearning module with trade Unions to include procedures for H&amp;S, PCRA’s and exclusion – Complete</li> <li>3. All schools to add H&amp;S to staff meeting agendas – Complete</li> <li>4. Short H&amp;S briefings to be developed in collaboration with TU’s and used for staff training – October 24</li> <li>5. All school policies to be reviewed and updated to incorporate the National Behaviour Plan – May 25</li> <li>6. Review incident reporting system to ensure reporting procedures are clear - Complete</li> <li>7. Develop and provide guidance to support post incident discussion – Complete</li> <li>8 - Continue to meet fortnightly with Trade Unions to identify good practice - on-going</li> <li>9 - Educational psychology review of support for learners - November 24</li> </ol>	3	12	4	3	30 August 2025

FUNCTION	CLUSTER	RISK OWNER	RISK LEAD
Families and Communities	Education & Lifelong Learning	Shona Milne	Caroline Johnstone

RISK TITLE	RISK DESCRIPTION	CONTROL ACTIONS	TARGET RISK SCORE	CURRENT RISK SCORE	CURRENT LIKELIHOOD	CURRENT IMPACT	TARGET COMPLETION DATE
Removal of Scottish Attainment Challenge funding	If the Scottish Attainment Challenge Funding is removed schools will be unable to continue to afford interventions in place to support young people	<p>1) Desktop review of PEF plans with HT to identify risks at school level Greater consideration of sustainability in PEF Plans 24/25.</p> <p>2) Collation of school information on staff employed through PEF funding to determine risks around contracts.</p> <p>3) Working group of HTs and Officers to undertake scenario planning based on the information gleaned.</p>	8	12	4	3	30 December 2024

FUNCTION	CLUSTER	RISK OWNER	RISK LEAD
Families and Communities	Education & Lifelong Learning	Shona Milne	Caroline Johnstone

RISK TITLE	RISK DESCRIPTION	CONTROL ACTIONS	TARGET RISK SCORE	CURRENT RISK SCORE	CURRENT LIKELIHOOD	CURRENT IMPACT	TARGET COMPLETION DATE
Risk that the number of Senior Leadership vacancies leads to staff in posts that are not of required quality	Very few applications for senior leader posts and the quality is not as high as would be expected.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Clear signposting to leadership development programmes at all levels</li> <li>2) Leadership programmes shared regularly with HTs</li> <li>3) Regularly review the quality of leadership programmes</li> </ul>	9	15	5	3	20 June 2025

FUNCTION	CLUSTER	RISK OWNER	RISK LEAD
Families and Communities	Education & Lifelong Learning	Shona Milne	Mark Jones

RISK TITLE	RISK DESCRIPTION	CONTROL ACTIONS	TARGET RISK SCORE	CURRENT RISK SCORE	CURRENT LIKELIHOOD	CURRENT IMPACT	TARGET COMPLETION DATE
Specialist teacher shortage in secondary schools	Risk that attainment in particular subjects will be impacted by the shortage of secondary specialist teachers.	<p>1 - Create subject networks across the City.</p> <p>2 - ABZ Campus Courses offered in all secondary schools.</p> <p>3 - Provide probationars with high quality professional learning and opportunities to shadow in other schools.</p>	2	8	4	2	29 May 2025



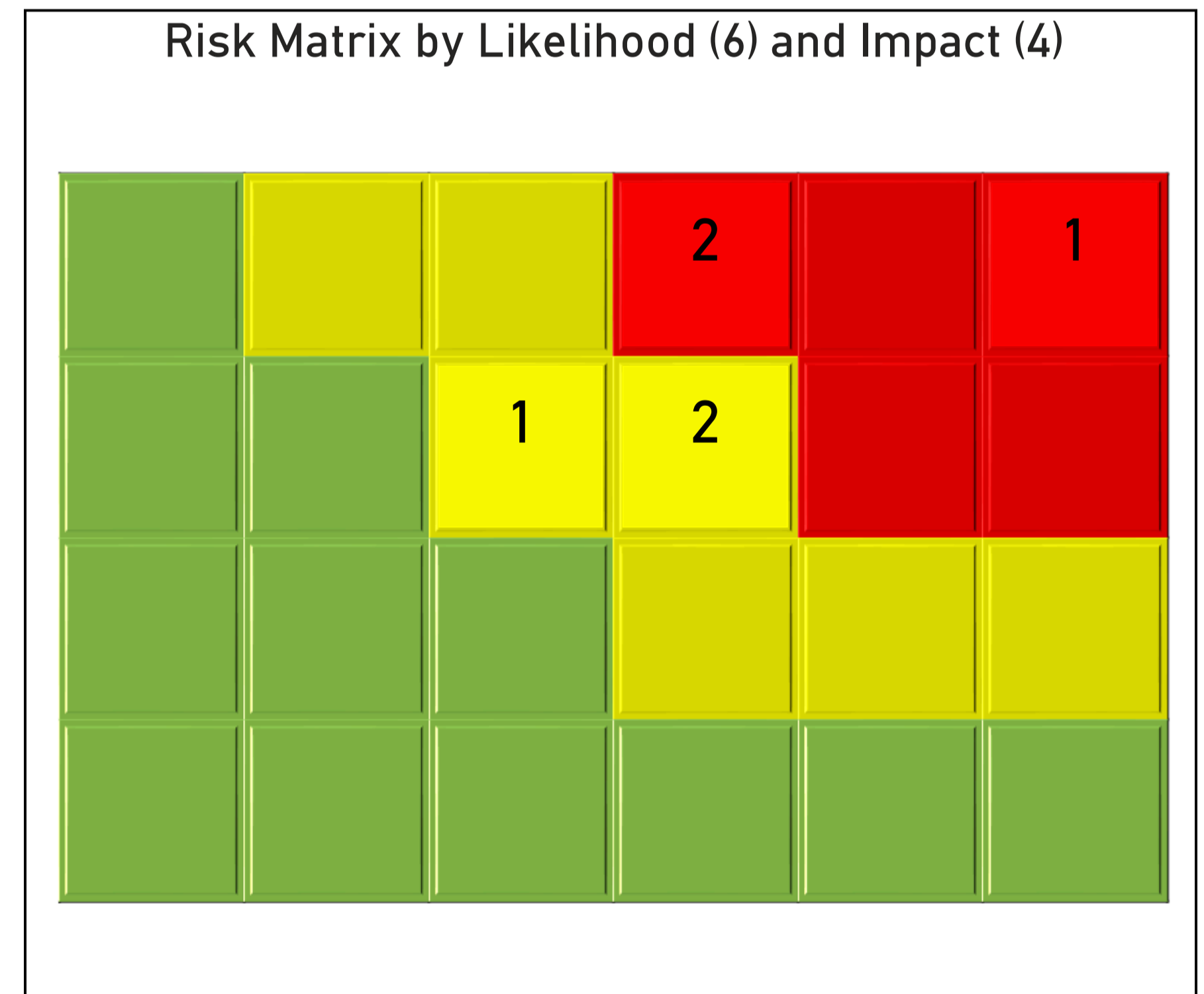


# Children's Social Work & Family Support Risk Register

CURRENT CLUSTER RISKS	CURRENT RISK SCORE
Budget Constraints/Pressures	24
Child Migration including unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people (UASC) and all families requiring resettlement or with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)	9
External factors – increase in service demand and impact of National Care Service (NCS)	12
Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI)	16
Service Standards/ Performance	16
Workforce – Children's Services	12

Number of Cluster Risks

**6**



FUNCTION	CLUSTER	RISK OWNER	RISK LEAD
Families and Communities	Children's Social Work & Family Support	Graeme Simpson	Ali McAlpine

RISK TITLE	RISK DESCRIPTION	CONTROL ACTIONS	TARGET RISK SCORE	CURRENT RISK SCORE	CURRENT LIKELIHOOD	CURRENT IMPACT	TARGET COMPLETION DATE
Budget Constraints/Pressures	Risk that budget reductions and budget allocation within the Cluster for service delivery, staff training and development and CPD impacts capacity of services and income.	<p>Existing control action from Budget/Cost of Care Risk:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Prioritisation of critical cases – all Service Managers. CSSF to oversee all specialist residential ooc placements for children. Any over £7k per week to be endorsed by CSWO Graeme Simpson.</li> <li>2) Review of forecasting data for resource deployment – Service Manager oversight</li> <li>3) Develop and design Family Support Model to incorporate learning from Northfield/Lochside pilots in order to identify and maximise early intervention opportunities.</li> <li>4) Co-ordinate intervention with multi-agency partners to avoid duplication of support – oversight by Children’s Services Board (CSB) and Child Protection Committee (CPC)</li> <li>5) Children’s Service Managers will monitor/track budget risk areas to establish corrective actions.</li> <li>6) Identify and create critical/statutory related training requirement plan with L&amp;D coordinator and P&amp;OD</li> </ol>	9	24	6	4	31 March 2024

FUNCTION	CLUSTER	RISK OWNER	RISK LEAD
Families and Communities	Children's Social Work & Family Support	Graeme Simpson	Caroline Johnston & Ali McAlpine

RISK TITLE	RISK DESCRIPTION	CONTROL ACTIONS	TARGET RISK SCORE	CURRENT RISK SCORE	CURRENT LIKELIHOOD	CURRENT IMPACT	TARGET COMPLETION DATE
Child Migration including unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people (UASC) and all families requiring resettlement or with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)	<p>Risk is that there is insufficient resource to meet demand and that this position compromises the care, protection and wellbeing of already vulnerable children and their families including –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UASC</li> <li>• Child Migration</li> <li>• Refugees</li> <li>• Child criminal and sexual exploitation</li> <li>• Children and families of foreign students</li> </ul>	<p>1) Alignment between children’s social work/education and adult services to ensure GIRFEC approach. This will allow for specialist social work services to respond when required.</p> <p>2) Oversight within Strategic Partnership Group.</p> <p>3.) Additional fixed term resource implemented to manage needs of older UASYP within Youth Team</p>	8	9	3	3	01 September 2024

FUNCTION	CLUSTER	RISK OWNER	RISK LEAD
Families and Communities	Children's Social Work & Family Support	Graeme Simpson	Graeme Simpson

RISK TITLE	RISK DESCRIPTION	CONTROL ACTIONS	TARGET RISK SCORE	CURRENT RISK SCORE	CURRENT LIKELIHOOD	CURRENT IMPACT	TARGET COMPLETION DATE
External factors – increase in service demand and impact of National Care Service (NCS)	Risk that legislative programmes/initiatives and contraction of public services and agencies increase pressure on service demand and budgets including numbers of children with disabilities, increased asylum and resettled children and families, the impact of covid / cost of living.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Unintended consequences resulting from budget savings across partner and public sector organisations.</li> <li>2) Interagency integration and collaboration to identify opportunities to reduce likelihood of family entering crisis.</li> <li>3) Close alignment with Adult Services to share expertise and workload appropriately.</li> <li>4) Keeping pace with future needs resulting from legislative changes</li> </ul>	9	12	4	3	31 December 2024

FUNCTION	CLUSTER	RISK OWNER	RISK LEAD
Families and Communities	Children's Social Work & Family Support	Graeme Simpson	Ali McAlpine

RISK TITLE	RISK DESCRIPTION	CONTROL ACTIONS	TARGET RISK SCORE	CURRENT RISK SCORE	CURRENT LIKELIHOOD	CURRENT IMPACT	TARGET COMPLETION DATE
Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI)	<p>Resource and Capacity of Aberdeen City Council to research and respond to statutory notices and requests for information within statutory timescales, the portfolio includes s21 notices, criminal and civil proceedings, Scotland's Redress Scheme and Right of Access.</p> <p>Resource requirements and potential reputational risk associated SCAI and the associated portfolio.</p>	<p>1. Resource – Ownership of all Care Experienced Right of Access – Subject access Requests (RoA- SAR's) have transferred to Customer with 2 posts funded from SCAI budget to provide on-going support with a specific focus on requests from people with care experience. SCAI and Customer sides to remain connected on cases due to the interdependencies between the SCAI portfolio and people with care experience seeking their records. Utilisation of support assistant resource from existing CSW structure.</p> <p>2. Governance - SCAI multi-cluster Programme Board to maintain oversight and scrutiny and mobilisation of resource allocation requirements, monitoring of performance and identification of potential risks and issues in accordance with ToR. Target Date – In place and on-going 6 weekly basis.</p> <p>3. Finance - Monitor financial impacts of on-going Civil litigation and fair and meaningful contribution to Scotland's Redress Scheme. Target Date – In place and on-going within Programme Board.</p> <p>4. Performance Monitoring/Reporting - SCAI performance and response rates to be reported to programme board 6 weekly. Target date 31.12.24 All performance reporting rates to SCAI Programme Board and overseen by COs for CFT and CSW.</p> <p>5. Records (physical copy original) – Existing process for movement of records to be considered, any gaps, areas for improvement to mitigate risk of records loss during collection, return and use. Target date 29/02/24</p> <p>6 - Loss of Data/Single Point of Failure - investigate Sharepoint and Power App options to replace existing Excel log sheets - LS compiled detail for completion by Managers/UC/Bus Support staff. Target date 01/10/24</p> <p>7- ACC/Shire Archive Service Archive service is currently being relocated the priority for archivists is to focus on the move. Therefore the response time and lead time to receive materials from the service is extended. Some of the archive materials could potentially made electronic reducing the need for archivists to research these. In principle this is a good opportunity however, this would shift resource capacity issue to SCAI further impacting on existing resource available. Investigate the time, resource and electronic capacity to improve the existing process. Action by 01/10/24</p>	6	16	4	4	31 December 2024

FUNCTION	CLUSTER	RISK OWNER	RISK LEAD
Families and Communities	Children's Social Work & Family Support	Graeme Simpson	Ali McAlpine

RISK TITLE	RISK DESCRIPTION	CONTROL ACTIONS	TARGET RISK SCORE	CURRENT RISK SCORE	CURRENT LIKELIHOOD	CURRENT IMPACT	TARGET COMPLETION DATE
Service Standards/ Performance	Risk that service standards and performance are not achieved, and risk of budget overspend on external services and resource.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Review and update service standards to reflect resource available.</li> <li>2) Prioritise statutory work on priority basis.</li> <li>3) Enhancing family support model.</li> <li>4) Continue to review existing processes for efficiency, duplication and wastage.</li> <li>5) Explore and develop new digital solutions to data gathering and recording within new electronic recording system D365.</li> </ul>	9	16	4	4	31 December 2024



FUNCTION	CLUSTER	RISK OWNER	RISK LEAD
Families and Communities	Children's Social Work & Family Support	Graeme Simpson	Ali McAlpine

RISK TITLE	RISK DESCRIPTION	CONTROL ACTIONS	TARGET RISK SCORE	CURRENT RISK SCORE	CURRENT LIKELIHOOD	CURRENT IMPACT	TARGET COMPLETION DATE
Workforce – Children’s Services	<p>Risk that staff recruitment/retention challenges within Social Work and Social Care reduce staff capacity and resilience whilst service demand continues to increase. Staff training requirements increase in complexity and budgets are under pressure.</p> <p>New demands placed on managers and organisation to deliver commitment to NQSW and early years practitioners will be challenging to deliver within current resources.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Newly qualified social work training programme in place.</li> <li>2) Realign service priorities and workload on a risk-based basis.</li> <li>3) Grow your own approach implemented and ongoing.</li> <li>4) Close links to Robert Gordon University and participation in recruitment fairs.</li> <li>5) Enhancing, creating and monitoring of “leavers” data to inform learning and support.</li> <li>6) Workforce development plan incorporating career development plan (training, supports, career progression)</li> <li>7) Enhancement of wellbeing supports at corporate and targeted level in recognition of complexity of trauma-laden work across CSW.</li> </ol>	9	12	4	3	01 September 2024

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<b>Assurance Map</b>		
<b>Cluster – Education and Lifelong Learning</b>		
<b>Cluster Risk Register Risks:</b>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Education - Demographic demands</b> - Growing demographic demands result in service delivery pressures</li> <li>2. <b>The perception of failure to record incidents of violence and aggressive behaviour against school staff.</b></li> <li>3. <b>Removal of Scottish Attainment Challenge funding</b> - If the Scottish Attainment Challenge Funding is removed schools will be unable to continue to afford interventions in place to support young people</li> <li>4. <b>Risk that the number of Senior Leadership vacancies leads to staff in posts that are not of required quality</b></li> <li>5. <b>Specialist teacher shortage in secondary schools</b> - Risk that attainment in particular subjects will be impacted by the shortage of secondary specialist teachers .</li> </ol>		
<b>First Line of Defence (Do-ers)</b>	<b>Second Line of Defence (Helpers)</b>	<b>Third Line of Defence (Checkers)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trained and qualified staff</li> <li>• School Leadership Team oversight and quality assurance of day to day operations and finances in school</li> <li>• School health and safety procedures agreed annually</li> <li>• All staff involved in school risk assessment process</li> <li>• Designated school Health and Safety Reps</li> <li>• Risk assessments shared with all staff including Trade Union reps</li> <li>• School risk registers in place in all schools with effective mechanisms in place for review and escalation</li> <li>• School Business Continuity Plans in place</li> <li>• Tracking and monitoring arrangements in place in all schools to track attainment</li> <li>• School positive behaviour management procedure agreed yearly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CMT Boards</li> <li>• Council Committees</li> <li>• Health and Safety guidance for schools</li> <li>• Identified health and safety team link for all schools</li> <li>• Child protection and safeguarding guidance and professional learning available to schools</li> <li>• Range of policies/procedures for schools to support consistent practice</li> <li>• Quality Improvement Framework setting expectations around accountability</li> <li>• Quality Improvement Visits to schools and Early Learning and Childcare provision</li> <li>• Quality Improvement Team monitoring of live data</li> <li>• Service Business Continuity Plan</li> <li>• Monitoring of complaints</li> <li>• Improvement groups comprising central Officers and school staff identify and address emerging risks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education Scotland inspections</li> <li>• Care Inspectorate Inspections</li> <li>• HSE inspections</li> <li>• Health and Safety Team compliance visits to schools</li> <li>• ECMT data reviews</li> <li>• External Audit</li> <li>• Monthly budget print outs</li> <li>• Annual Internal Audit Plan</li> <li>• Audit Scotland and National Audit reports</li> <li>• Internal Audit – Secondary assurance – 26/10/23</li> <li>• Internal audit SEEMiS - 30/04/24</li> <li>• Internal Audit – Pupil Equity Fund – 27/09/23</li> </ul>

- School child protection and safeguarding procedures agreed yearly
- Yearly analysis of school community data to inform the school improvement plan
- Regular review of applications for school placements in order to identify emerging trends
- In house middle leadership training to support increase in internal candidates for Headship.
- Regular meetings with Higher Education to understand demand for school placements from international students
- Calendar of data gathering around the health and wellbeing needs of pupils
- Monitoring of levels of vacancy in schools and ELC provisions
- Continued expansion of ABZ campus
- In-service days and staff meetings to address any identified vulnerabilities

- Weekly Trade Union meetings
- Fortnightly safeguarding meetings
- Engagement with Parents and Carers
- Data dashboard and Risk Register discussed fortnightly by Senior Leadership Team
- Regular finance meetings with Senior Leadership Team
- Assurance Team
- Regular contact with ADES and COSLA

<b>Assurance Map</b>		
<b>Cluster – Children’s Social Work and Family Support</b>		
<b>Cluster Risk Register Risks:</b>		
<p>1. <b>Budget Constraints/Pressures</b> - Risk that budget reductions and budget allocation within the Cluster for service delivery, staff training and development and CPD impacts capacity of services and income.</p> <p>2. <b>Child Migration including unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people (UASC) and all families requiring resettlement or with no recourse to public funds (NRPf)</b></p> <p>3. <b>External factors</b> – increase in service demand and impact of National Care Service (NCS)</p> <p>4. <b>Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI)</b></p> <p>5. <b>Service Standards/ Performance</b> - Risk that service standards and performance are not achieved, and risk of budget overspend on external services and resource.</p> <p>6. <b>Workforce – Children’s Services</b> - Risk that staff recruitment/retention challenges within Social Work and Social Care reduce staff capacity and resilience whilst service demand continues to increase. Staff training requirements increase in complexity and budgets are under pressure.</p>		
<b>First Line of Defence (Do-ers)</b>	<b>Second Line of Defence (Helpers)</b>	<b>Third Line of Defence (Checkers)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trained and qualified staff</li> <li>• Professional Supervision in place for all CSW staff ensuring day to day service delivery.</li> <li>• Team Managers/SM's oversight of finances for teams</li> <li>• Agreed health and safety procedures – all staff supported to familiarise as part of induction.</li> <li>• All staff involved in risk assessment process</li> <li>• Team Business Continuity Plans in place</li> <li>• Tracking and monitoring arrangements in place in all schools to track performance and delivery of statutory duties.</li> <li>• Learning from case reviews considered on single and multi-agency basis and embedded at practitioner level.</li> <li>• Voice of children and young people at the heart of service planning and improvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CMT Boards</li> <li>• Council Committees</li> <li>• Health and Safety guidance for services, including Lone Working</li> <li>• Identified health and safety team link for all teams</li> <li>• Child protection and safeguarding guidance and professional learning available</li> <li>• Range of policies/procedures for schools to support consistent practice</li> <li>• SM QA activity within teams and through professional supervision.</li> <li>• Multi-agency Quality Improvement activity</li> <li>• Service Business Continuity Plan</li> <li>• Improvement groups comprising central Officers and school staff identify and address emerging risks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care Inspectorate Inspections</li> <li>• HSE Covid-19 inspections</li> <li>• Health and Safety Team compliance visits to work settings</li> <li>• ECMT data reviews</li> <li>• Performance reports to Committee</li> <li>• Annual reporting of Risk Registers to Committee</li> <li>• Regular contact with Scottish Government OCSA Team</li> <li>• External Audit</li> <li>• Monthly budget print outs • Annual External Audit and report • Annual Internal Audit Plan approved and overseen by Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee</li> <li>• Audit Scotland and National Audit reports</li> </ul>

- Regular analysis of CSW data to improvement planning on both single and multi-agency basis.
- Staff supported to fulfil registration requirements to ensure continuous professional development.

- Data dashboard and Risk Register discussed fortnightly by SMT
- Regular finance meetings with Senior Leadership Team
- Assurance Team
- Committee reports
- Regular contact with SWS and COSLA

**Education**

<b>Risk Title</b>	<b>Risk Category</b>	<b>Target Risk Appetite</b>	<b>Aligned with RAS?</b>
1. Education Demographic Demands	Operational	Cautious	Yes
2. The perception of failure to record incidents of violence and aggressive behaviour against school staff.	Reputational	Averse	No
3. Removal of Scottish Attainment Challenge funding.	Operational	Cautious	Yes
4. Risk that the number of Senior Leadership vacancies leads to staff in posts that are not of required quality	Operational	Cautious	Yes
5. Specialist teacher shortage in secondary schools	Operational	Averse	No

**Integrated Children's and Family Services**

<b>Risk Title</b>	<b>Risk Category</b>	<b>Target Risk Appetite</b>	<b>Aligned with RAS?</b>
1. Budget Constraints/Pressures	Operational	Cautious	Yes
2. Child Migration including unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people (UASC) and all families requiring resettlement or with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)	Operational	Cautious	Yes
3. External factors – increase in service demand and impact of National Care Service (NCS)	Operational	Cautious	Yes
4. Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI)	Compliance	Averse	Yes
5. Service Standards/ Performance	Reputational	Cautious	Yes
6. Workforce – Children's Services	Compliance	Cautious	No

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## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education and Children’s Services Committee
<b>DATE</b>	26 November 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Inspection Reporting
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	F&C/24/321
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Eleanor Sheppard
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Shona Milne/ Graeme Simpson
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Shona Milne / Graeme Simpson
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	1.1.6

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report details the outcome of inspection reports published by His Majesty’s Inspectors of Education (HMIE) and The Care Inspectorate published since the last meeting of the Education and Children’s Services Committee.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee: -

- 2.1 Notes the content of this report; and
- 2.2 Instructs the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to continue to support Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings and schools to implement continuous improvement in keeping with agreed Quality Improvement Frameworks approved at Committee in July 2024.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The Education Service utilise a Quality Improvement Framework (QIF) to support schools and ELC settings to achieve the standards expected by external inspection agencies. The QIF categorises schools/ELC settings as needing different levels of support based on internal self-evaluation and external scrutiny from the central team:
- Category 1/Universal includes schools/settings who have self and external evaluation identifying all core Quality Indicators (QIs) as good or better.
  - Category 2 /Targeted includes schools/settings with external and or self-evaluation which has identified one or more of the core QIs as *satisfactory or below*.

- Category 3/Intensive includes schools/settings with external and or self-evaluation which has identified one or more of the core Quality Indicators as *weak* or *unsatisfactory*.

The updated QIF for academic session 2024/25 was approved by the Education and Children's Services Committee in July 2024.

## **3.2 EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTIONS**

### **3.2.1 National Thematic Inspection: Local Authority approaches to support school improvement**

Our local Authority thematic inspection took place on Tuesday 17 and Wednesday 18 September 2024. During the 2 days a team of two inspectors and an associate inspector met with the Executive Director of Families and Communities, Chief Officer Education and Lifelong learning and focus groups of central support staff, headteachers, class teachers, parents/carers and Elected Members. The inspection team also reviewed a significant volume of supporting evidence. Individual inspection findings will be used to inform a national report which will be published in early 2025. Following the publication of the national report we will receive a finalised written summary of the findings reflecting our visit. Our report will be shared with committee thereafter.

### **3.2.2 Education Scotland Inspection of Tullos School and ELC**

Tullos School and Nursery Class was inspected in June 2024 using the short inspection model. The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work

- Almost all staff have a clear understanding of the social, cultural and economic context of the school and nursery. This helps staff to build positive relationships with children to better support them in their learning.
- The strong focus among staff on emotional wellbeing across the school and nursery. This work is supporting most children to understand their feelings and manage their emotions to engage in learning effectively.
- In the nursery, staff work very well together to provide well organised environments with rich learning experiences to motivate and engage children in their learning.

The following areas for improvement were identified:

- Teachers need to improve the quality of learners' experiences across the school. This should include planning more enjoyable, challenging and relevant learning experiences.
- School leaders should work with teachers to ensure strategies to promote positive relationships and behaviour are applied consistently across the school. There is a need to improve attendance of children to school.
- Teachers should, with the support of the local authority, ensure that they quickly and consistently identify the needs of individuals and groups of children. To support this, teachers should plan tasks, activities and resources more effectively to meet the identified needs of children.



- Senior leaders and staff need to work together to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy across the school. Staff should develop and implement approaches to track children’s progress, attainment and achievements more effectively. This will help them to better monitor children’s progress and evaluate the impact of interventions to remove barriers to learning

Tullos School were evaluated as weak across the quality indicators.

Primary School Quality Indicators	Evaluation
Learning, teaching and assessment	Weak (2)
Raising attainment and achievement	Weak (2)

Through Quality Improvement Visits during session 22/23 the central team had identified key areas for improvement, particularly around the quality of teaching and learning. The school was placed in category 3 and the central team had worked with the senior leadership team to develop a comprehensive improvement plan.

The resignation of the Head Teacher in January 2024 resulted in the need to recruit, and the decision was made to second one of our experienced Head teachers to the post and she had begun to address the improvements prior to the inspection. The inspection team are confident in the Head Teacher’s ability to lead improvements in the school. Following the inspection the Quality Improvement team have supported the school to amend the action plan to take account of the HMle feedback. Inspectors will return to Tullos within one year of the publication of the letter. The headteacher will remain in post to lead the school through the return visit.

The school was in **Category 3** of the quality Improvement framework prior to the inspection and will remain in **Category 3**.

HMle made the following evaluations of the Tullos ELC class. The Care inspectorate were not part of this inspection.

Nursery Class Quality Indicators	Evaluation
Learning, teaching and assessment	Good (4)
Securing children’s progress	Good (4)

Staff in the ELC were delighted their nurturing approach, organised and well planned environments and ability to motivate and engage children in learning was recognised. The ELC was in **Category 1** prior to inspection and has moved to **Category 2** post inspection to allow the improvement work that is required around transition to school to be tracked and supported by central officers

A copy of the improvement plan can be found in Appendix A.  
A copy of the HMle report can be found [here](#).

### 3.2.3 Education Scotland Inspection of St Joseph's School and Nursery Class

St Joseph's School and Nursery Class was also inspected in June 2024 using the short inspection model. The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work:

- Across the school and nursery, children are motivated to learn in a highly inclusive and diverse learning environment. In the school, this is underpinned by the strong Catholic ethos where every child is supported to make very good progress in their learning.
- The headteacher's highly-effective leadership supports staff well to improve the consistency of quality learning and teaching across the school and nursery. Together with senior leaders, staff are working well together to consider carefully the best approaches to improve learners' experiences.
- Senior leaders are rigorous in monitoring the progress of children's literacy and numeracy attainment across the school. They use assessment information well to identify gaps in children's learning and inform well-judged approaches to support children effectively. As a result, most children attain very well.

The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the headteacher and a representative from Aberdeen City Council.

- Children should have a greater role in setting and reviewing quality targets to improve their learning. They need to use these targets regularly to reflect on their learning and measure the progress they make across all curriculum areas.
- Staff should provide increased levels of challenge to children across all stages of the school and nursery who are capable of making greater progress in their learning

St Joseph's School were evaluated as Good and Very Good across the quality indicators.

Primary School Quality Indicators	Evaluation
Learning, teaching and assessment	Good (4)
Raising attainment and achievement	Very Good (5)

St Joseph's staff were delighted their hard work had been recognised and that inspectors highlighted the work around maintaining standards through rigorous monitoring of young people's attainment as a strength of the school.

The leadership of the headteacher was also highlighted as a strength and following the inspection she has been sharing her experiences with others. Through the work of trios (school groups to support school improvement) her experience as a leader will be used to support other schools to improve.

Prior to the inspection St Joseph's School were in **Category 2** to ensure inspection readiness, following the inspection they will be moved into **Category 1** and the Head Teacher will have the opportunity to work with others to support improvement across the city.

HMIe made the following evaluations of the St Joseph's Nursery class. The Care inspectorate were not part of this inspection.

Nursery Class Quality Indicators	Evaluation
Learning, teaching and assessment	Very Good (5)
Securing children's progress	Very Good (5)

Inspectors noted that the rigorous tracking in the school was also evident within the ELC leading to effective transitions to school.

Inspection findings aligned with our evaluation of the ELC as prior to inspection the ELC was in **Category 1**. Following the inspection the setting will remain in **Category 1** and have the opportunity to share practice with other settings through our ongoing professional development sessions.

A copy of the report can be found [here](#).

### 3.2.4 Airyhall Primary School

In September 2024, a team of inspectors from Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate visited Airyhall School and Nursery Class. The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work.

- The headteacher demonstrates strong, effective leadership and is well supported by her depute headteachers. They have a nurturing and aspirational vision for all children.
- Together, the senior leadership team and staff work very well to create positive, respectful and trusting relationships with all children and parents.
- The staff in the nursery and school are enthusiastic to lead change. They feel trusted and respected by senior leaders to lead change to improve learning experiences and outcomes for children. They are proactive in engaging with professional learning and research. This is resulting in improved outcomes for all children.
- The staff in the school and nursery work effectively with a wide range of partners. These partners support the delivery of the curriculum and the wellbeing of children and families very well. This is helping all children to have their needs met effectively and to engage in learning.
- Across the school and nursery, children have a strong understanding of their own wellbeing. They know how to access and use a range of strategies to support them and others when they feel deep emotions. This is helping children to feel calm and engage well in play and learning.
- Teachers have developed a clear approach to assessing and recording children's progress, which has resulted in strong attainment in literacy and numeracy.

The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the headteacher and a representative from Aberdeen City Council.

- As planned, teachers and senior leaders should further strengthen approaches to planning learning and teaching beyond literacy and numeracy. In doing so, children should have greater opportunities to lead their own learning.

- In the nursery, senior leaders and staff should use data more effectively to ensure that they have a clearer focus on children's progress.

Airyhall School was evaluated Very Good across all the quality indicators.

Primary School Quality Indicators	Evaluation
Leadership of change	Very Good (5)
Learning, teaching and assessment	Very Good (5)
Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	Very Good (5)
Raising attainment and achievement	Very Good (5)

Education Scotland evaluations aligned with the findings of the central team at the last quality improvement visit. Inspectors noted the highly effective leadership of the head teacher and how her clear strategic vision for school improvement and well informed rationale for change creates a school which is nurturing and calm enabling most children to make very good progress. The headteacher routinely involves parents and children in the setting of improvement priorities.

The Senior Leadership Team and teachers were delighted inspectors recognised the range of robust assessment and moderation practice in place and the importance placed on the celebration of children's achievements both in and out of school.

The school was in **Category 2** to support preparations for inspection. Following the inspection the school will now sit in **Category 1**. The headteacher will be encouraged to apply to be an Associate Assessor and has already volunteered to support the delivery of the middle leadership programme.

HMIe made the following evaluations of the Nursery Class

Nursery Class Quality Indicators	Evaluation
Leadership of change	Very Good (5)
Learning, teaching and assessment	Good (4)
Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	Very Good (5)
Raising attainment and achievement	Good (4)

The team were pleased both sets of inspectors noted how they worked well together valuing each other's strengths in order to support improvements in pedagogy. Other settings will be offered the chance to visit the setting and learn from the strengths of the team.

The inspectors' gradings aligned with the most recent quality improvement visit to the school. The nursery was in **Category 2** as they were preparing for inspection. Following the inspection the ELC is now in **Category 1** and will be encouraged to share their practice with others.

A copy of the HMIe report can be found [here](#).

### 3.2.5 Harlaw Academy Inspection

Harlaw Academy was originally inspected in November 2019 with a report published in February 2020. Three further visits were made in the intervening period, with the most recent being during the week of 10<sup>th</sup> June 2024. Despite intensive support from central officers and peers provided to Harlaw Academy throughout this time, this most recent inspection report sets out that a journey of improvement still lies ahead in addressing the three key priorities which remain to:

- Streamline approaches to improvement so that self-evaluation activities clearly identify priorities which will make the biggest difference to outcomes for young people.
- Continue to improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment so that young people's experiences engage them and meet their needs. Develop more fully an ethos for learning with high expectations and mutual respect.
- Strengthen approaches to monitoring young people's progress across all subject areas so that staff at all levels have a clear overview of learners' progress. Continue to raise attainment of young people at all stages.

An Acting Head Teacher has been put in place. The Acting Head Teacher has supported the staff and wider school community to put an Action Plan in place to steer work against the priorities and good progress is being made. A summary of progress since June, a draft high level plan and faculty plan can be found in **Appendix B**. Further information made available at the point of publication will be used to finalise the plan.

There are already positive early signs emerging from survey work with the school community. The Acting Head Teacher and wider leadership team are receiving and now benefitting from support from experienced Head Teacher colleagues and officers. The school has been in **Category 3** since 2022 and will remain in receipt of this intensive support.

The full report can be found [here](#)

### 3.2.6 Northfield Academy Update

An update to Committee was provided on 2nd July following the inspection of Northfield Academy during the week of 11th March 2024. The Head Teacher continues to provide clear direction for school improvement, noted in the most recent inspection report. This includes ensuring that the whole school community has a voice in evaluation and planning, and creating a clearer set of remits and policies to guide school improvement. Following the successful changes made to the guidance around use of mobile phones in the classroom, the school is now working on a refreshed anti-bullying policy, with consultation, implementation and evaluation to follow.

Northfield Academy continues to improve learning and teaching through their Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework. Whilst continuing to build upon the work by school staff to improve core routines and the learning environment, next steps include enhancing the professional learning

programme in the school and the introduction of the new monitoring and tracking software PupilTracking, with clearly identified roles and responsibilities for how the data collected is used and analysed to improve learner outcomes.

Northfield Academy continues to be driven by improving outcomes for learners. These outcomes relate both to increasing wellbeing and raising attainment. In relation to wellbeing, the school has built on the description of S1 Crew by HM Inspectors as an emerging success to develop a further, reduced but continued experience of Crew in S2 allowing learners to continue to benefit from the established relationships with their Crew Teacher. Early evidence is showing that Crew increases attendance, reduces exclusions, and impacts positively on individual learners with the benefits seen by all involved, with Table 1 below showing some examples of what learners say about the impact of Crew. Although with significant continued work required for all aspects of attainment, the SQA results in 2024 showed improvements in a number of key measures (Literacy and Numeracy at SCQF 5, Attainment for All in all cohorts for S5 and S6, and Breadth and Depth measures in S5) for learners in S5 and S6. The school has identified further key measures for improvement in attainment during session 2024-25.

Who?	What they said...
Pupil Voice	"Crew is a safe place where you can express yourself and no-one can judge you."
Pupil Voice	"Crew has supported me by making me feel more confident in talking in big groups."
Pupil Voice	"Crew is a safe place to share. We circle up to express ourself and how we feel. Crew has supported me a lot, especially what has gone on in my life."
Pupil Voice	"Crew is a safe space where you can talk freely. Crew has supported me by helping with math. I think S1 would have been bad without crew because I don't think I would have had the skills I now have."

Table 1

### 3.3 **Care Inspectorate Inspections**

The Care Inspectorate has now resumed their standard inspection model and no longer prioritise the inspection of settings deemed to be at higher risk. Where a setting has been subject to a return visit from the Care Inspectorate, we have included the date of their previous visit and the gradings for reference.

**3.3.1 Flexible Childcare Services Tillydrone**, a funded provider setting in the Tillydrone area, received an unannounced inspection over two days on 31st July and 1st August 2024. Inspectors noted that children were happy, confident and settled. Children were leaders of their own play and learning and could transport resources to meet their interests. Daily access to fresh air and outdoor experiences supported children's health and wellbeing. The staff team were motivated and enthusiastic about their roles and were keen to undertake training to develop their practice. Staff and management should now work together to ensure they have a planning, observing and tracking system in place which supports good experiences and outcomes for children.



Aspect being inspected	Previous evaluation Oct 23	Recent Evaluation Aug 24
How good is our care, play and learning?	Good (4)	Good (4)
How good is our setting?	Good (4)	Very Good (5)
How good is our leadership?	Good (4)	Very Good (5)
How good is our staff team?	Adequate (3)	Good (4)

The team are very pleased that their improvements have been recognised. They will continue to develop their planning and tracking systems. The setting will move from a **Category 2** to a **Category 1** level of support in the Quality Improvement Framework and there will be an opportunity for practitioners to share their practice with other settings through our manager development sessions.

The full report can be read [here](#).

**3.3.2 Stonewood ELC**, a Local Authority setting in Stonewood School, received an unannounced inspection over 2 days in August 2024. Inspectors noted that children were settled and happily engaged in play and learning leading their own play through a well-balanced mix of activities both indoors and outside. Children received nurturing care and support from staff who knew them well. The staff team were motivated and enthusiastic about their roles and were keen to continue to take on training to develop their practice. Inspectors identified that to ensure high quality care and experiences for children, quality assurance, including effective audits and monitoring of staff practice should be embedded into practice.

Aspect being inspected	Evaluation August 2024
How good is our care, play and learning?	Good (4)
How good is our setting?	Good (4)
How good is our leadership?	Good (4)
How good is our staff team?	Good (4)

Locality leads will share examples of where effective audits are implemented and support staff to increase confidence and realise improvement in this area. Prior to the inspection the setting was in **Category 2** and receiving regular visits and support from the Locality Lead. Following the inspection the setting will remain in **Category 2** of the Quality Improvement Framework with continued regular engagement from the Locality Lead until the team are confident the improvements are embedded.

The full report can be read [here](#).

**3.3.3 Happitots Cove Bay**, a funded provider setting in the Cove Bay area of Aberdeen, received an unannounced inspection over 2 days in July 2024. Inspectors noted that staff were warm and caring, helping to support positive connections with children. They knew children well and followed their routines and preferences from home. This provided continuity of care between home

and the service. Improvements were needed to ensure children experienced a safe, clean and well-maintained environment. Staff deployment was not outcome focused. As a result, there were missed opportunities to support children. Following two incidents relating to children's safety, the provider had taken some action to prevent risk to others, however, there were areas of practice that still needed to be improved. Quality assurance systems needed to improve to ensure children experienced consistently positive outcomes.

Aspect being inspected	Evaluation July 2024
How good is our care, play and learning?	Weak (2)
How good is our setting?	Weak (2)
How good is our leadership?	Weak (2)
How good is our staff team?	Weak (2)

Many of the areas for improvement have already been addressed and an action plan has been created to support further development. Prior to the inspection the setting was in **Category 2** and following the inspection the service will be placed in the **Category 3** level of support in the Quality Improvement Framework. Fluctuations in staff and management have meant grades for the setting have not been consistent with them moving in and out of Category 3. In order to address this variation, the Locality Lead will be in the setting once a fortnight to review processes and procedures and ensure improvements are made and embedded.

The full report can be read [here](#).  
An Action Plan is available in Appendix C.

**3.3.4 Great Western @ Kingswells**, a Funded Provider setting based in the Kingswells area of Aberdeen, received an unannounced inspection in July 2024. Inspectors noted that children experienced care from kind, nurturing and caring staff. Children were meaningfully and actively involved in leading their play and learning. There were a wide range of high-quality resources, offering children opportunities for challenge, creativity and problem solving. Children have regular outdoor experiences to promote their health and wellbeing. Staff were committed to their role to support the wellbeing of children and families in their care.

Management and staff should now continue the process of quality assurance including self-evaluation to support further improvements to the experiences for children.

Aspect being inspected	Evaluation July 2024
How good is our care, play and learning?	Good (4)
How good is our setting?	Very Good (5)
How good is our leadership?	Good (4)
How good is our staff team?	Good (4)



The setting was in **Category 1** prior to inspection and will remain in the **Category 1** support category of the Quality Improvement Framework with opportunities to share practice through management training sessions.

The full report can be read [here](#).

**3.3.5 Little Dreams**, a funded provider setting in Bon Accord Street, Aberdeen, received an unannounced inspection in July 2024. Inspectors noted that staff knew children well which supported them to meet their needs. They reported that mealtimes were a positive, unhurried experience offering children opportunities to be independent. Positive and safe sleep routines supported children's health and wellbeing. Quality assurance processes were mainly effective and had a positive impact on experiences for children and families. The provider and manager engaged well with the inspection process and were responsive to suggestions made. Interactions should now be developed to support children's autonomy and critical thinking skills. Learning opportunities should be extended to provide sufficient challenge, curiosity and engagement for all children.

Aspect being inspected	Previous evaluation June 23	Recent Evaluation July 24
How good is our care, play and learning?	Adequate (3)	Adequate (3)
How good is our setting?	Good (4)	Good (4)
How good is our leadership?	Good (4)	Good (4)
How good is our staff team?	Adequate (3)	Good (4)

Although the setting has made steady progress following the support provided by the Locality Leads, they are not meeting the standard for care, play and learning meaning they will remain in **Category 3** level of support in the Quality Improvement Framework until we are sure improvements are embedded and evident across all core indicators.

The action plan can be found at Appendix D.

The full report can be read [here](#).

**3.3.6 Little Trees**, a funded provider in the Bridge of Don area of Aberdeen, received an unannounced inspection in September 2024. Inspectors noted that children experienced kind, nurturing interactions with staff who knew them well. Staff were being supported to develop their skills in planning, assessing and observing children's play and learning. Children experienced clean, fresh, well-resourced surroundings. They benefitted from significant improvements to the outdoor areas since the last inspection. Staff worked well together to provide consistency for children. Where gaps in care were identified, staff adjusted their practice to promote improved experiences. Quality assurance practices were effective in identifying areas for development to promote positive outcomes for children.

Aspect being inspected	Previous evaluation January 23	Recent Evaluation Sept 24
How good is our care, play and learning?	Good (4)	Good (4)
How good is our setting?	Adequate (3)	Good (4)
How good is our leadership?	Good (4)	Good (4)
How good is our staff team?	Good (4)	Good (4)

The setting is making steady progress and are now meeting the National Standard and therefore no longer on a Service Improvement Period (SIP). The setting will move from **Category 3** to **Category 2** level of support in the Quality Improvement Framework and progress will continue to be monitored by the Locality Lead team.

The full report can be read [here](#)

**3.3.7 Orchard Brae**, a Local Authority setting, received an unannounced inspection in September 2024. Inspectors noted that children experienced caring and loving interactions. They were well supported in their learning and had fun. Snacks and mealtimes were well supervised, relaxed, and unhurried. Self-evaluation and quality assurance processes led to consistent high quality care and support. Staff were skilled in supporting children with additional support needs and worked well as a team. Some areas of the Ashgrove building would benefit from maintenance and refurbishment. This included the garden area and these have been shared with our colleagues in Corporate Landlord.

Aspect being inspected	Previous evaluation Sept 23	Recent Evaluation Sept 24
How good is our care, play and learning?	Adequate (3)	Very Good (5)
How good is our setting?	Adequate (3)	Good (4)
How good is our leadership?	Adequate (3)	Very Good (5)
How good is our staff team?	Adequate (3)	Very Good (5)

The team are delighted the improvements made have been recognised and are motivated to continue to improve. Staff are working well as a team and communication across the team has improved ensuring smooth transitions at the start and the end of the session. To support the ongoing improvement journey Orchard Brae will move from **Category 3** to **Category 2** level of support in the Quality Improvement Framework. Locality Leads will continue to offer support and monitor progress.

The full report can be read [here](#).

**3.3.8 Danestone ELC**, a Local Authority setting in Danestone School, received an unannounced follow up inspection on 17 September 2024. This follow up inspection focused on the requirements and areas for improvement made during the previous inspection and evaluated how the service had addressed these to improve outcomes for children. Although evaluations do not usually

change at a follow up inspection, during this follow up inspection, Care Inspectorate increased the evaluation for quality indicators 1.1, 1.3, 2.2, 3.1 and 4.3 to adequate, because the service had made progress by building of key strengths.

Some of the key messages contained in the report include Improvement had been made in all required areas, as a result, children's needs were met more effectively. Progress had been made in all areas of improvement and the setting had a detailed improvement plan in place to ensure this continued. Children were happier and more settled within nursery. Parents gave positive feedback to the changes that had been made so far. Support for staff was more consistent and tailored to their individual and team needs.

Aspect being inspected	Previous evaluation May 2024	Recent Evaluation Sept 2024
How good is our care, play and learning?	Weak (2)	Adequate (3)
How good is our setting?	Weak(2)	Adequate (3)
How good is our leadership?	Weak (2)	Adequate (3)
How good is our staff team?	Weak (2)	Adequate (3)

The team are pleased the improvements made have been recognised and are motivated to continue to improve. To support the ongoing improvement journey Danestone will remain in the **Category 3** level of support in the Quality Improvement Framework. Locality Leads will continue to offer support and monitor progress'

A copy of the Action Plan is available in Appendix E.

The full report can be read [here](#).

3.3.9 The Kindergarten, a funded provider setting on Westburn Road, received an unannounced visit from Care Inspectorate in August 2024. Inspectors noted that children experienced kind and nurturing care from a staff team who were dedicated to the wellbeing of children. Most children enjoyed their time at nursery, had fun in their play and formed friendships and connections.

There were several areas for improvement identified. Inspectors found that children's experiences over mealtimes were varied and did not consistently provide a relaxing experience, with meaningful connections to support social skills. The setting should work in partnership with families to bring them back fully into the setting to further develop meaningful relationships and strong connections.

The arrangements for monitoring maintenance and repair of the setting were not sufficient to deliver safe, high-quality spaces for children. Quality assurance had not always led to effective and meaningful changes to ensure consistently positive outcomes for children. Staff were not always deployed in a way that best met children's needs.

Aspect being inspected	Evaluation Aug 2024
How good is our care, play and learning?	Adequate (3)
How good is our setting?	Weak (2)
How good is our leadership?	Adequate (3)
How good is our staff team?	Adequate (3)

A detailed action plan has been created to ensure improvements are made and maintained. The setting will be placed in the **category 3** level of support in the Quality Improvement Framework. The Locality Lead will offer regular support and monitor progress.

An action Plan is available in Appendix F.  
The full report can be read [here](#)

- 3.3.10 **Hazlehead ELC**, a Local Authority setting in Hazlehead School, received an unannounced visit from Care Inspectorate in October 2024. In the very positive inspection report, inspectors noted that children were very settled and happily engaged in play and learning. They led their own play through a well-balanced mix of activities. Children received nurturing care and support from staff who knew them well. The staff team were motivated and enthusiastic about their roles and were very keen to continue with training to further develop their practice. To ensure continued high-quality care and experiences for children, self-evaluation and quality assurance should continue to be a focus.

Aspect being inspected	Evaluation Oct 2024
How good is our care, play and learning?	Very Good (5)
How good is our setting?	Very Good (5)
How good is our leadership?	Very Good (5)
How good is our staff team?	Very Good (5)

The staff were delighted that their hard work had been recognised. The setting was in **Category 1** prior to inspection and will remain in the **Category 1** support category of the Quality Improvement Framework with opportunities to share practice through management training sessions.

The full report can be read [here](#).

### 3.4 Children's Social Work

- 3.4.1 Registered services in children's social work are inspected by the Care Inspectorate on a regular basis. The frequency of inspections are risk based, taking account of data from a range of sources. This includes service type, complaints, data provided by the service to the Care Inspectorate but fundamentally the outcome of past inspections – positively evaluated services are inspected less frequently, with the opposite for weaker services.
- 3.4.2 All inspections are unannounced and registered services need to be "inspection registered and ready" at all times. As part of the inspection the

Care Inspectorate undertake a range of activities to evaluate “How well does the service support children and young people’s rights and wellbeing.”

3.4.3 In July 2024 the Care Inspectorate undertook an inspection of Marchburn Children’s Home service. The service was positively evaluated and graded as “very good” (5) based on a 6 point scale. There were no ‘requirements’ to attend to, although 2 ‘recommendations’ were made:

- There should be demonstrable evidence that all staff have completed the essential training expected by the organisation.
- A staffing needs assessment should be completed to ensure the numbers, skills, training and experience of the team are appropriate to meet the needs of young people

3.3.4 These recommendations are being actively attended to and form part of the continuous improvement of the services. The report can be accessed [here](#).

3.3.5 In August 2024 our Kingsfield Children’s Home Service was inspected. The service was positively evaluated and graded as “very good” (5) based on a 6 point scale. There were no ‘requirements’ to attend to, although again 2 ‘recommendations’ were made:

- All staff should have completed the essential training expected by the organisation. There should be demonstrable records which ensure managers at the service can have an overview of the training, and training needs, of the team. This includes, but is not exclusive to, child and adult protection training
- The continuing care and aftercare policy should be reviewed by the service to ensure that it reflects the practice and support young people receive.

3.3.6 The recommendations are being taken forward by the service. The report can be accessed [here](#).

3.3.7 Both inspection reports spoke very encouragingly about the quality of the relationship between staff and the young people they care and support. “Young people experienced relational nurturing care, which promoted their emotional and physical safety”. Inspectors recognised that staff appeared to know the children and their needs well. In addition Inspectors positively recognised the extent to which both services ensured a rights based approach to the care provided to the young people.

3.4.6 The Chief Social Work Officer annual report shared with Committee today provides further information about the philosophy of care provided to the young people. Recruitment of staff to our residential services is challenging and these roles are recognised as being ‘hard to fill’. This context reinforces very positively on the leadership and commitment of all our residential staff.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

## 6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 No negative environmental impacts have been identified.

## 7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve. Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *Taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	Risk of not improving outcomes for learners	Positive engagement with Inspection agencies and sharing learning across the system where appropriate.	L	Yes
<b>Compliance</b>	Risk of not complying with national guidance	Positive engagement with Inspection agencies and sharing learning across the system where appropriate.	L	Yes
<b>Operational</b>	Risk that schools/ELC settings do not accurately identify the areas for improvement that will make the greatest difference to learners	Quality assurance arrangements in place to validate self-evaluation gradings	L	Yes
<b>Financial</b>	No risks identified			
<b>Reputational</b>	Risk that poor quality of provision will present a reputational risk to the Council	High levels of assurance are taken Quality Improvement and Inspection visits	L	Yes
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	No risks identified			

## 8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
<p><b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b></p> <p>Commit to realising the potential of each individual, by seeking to widen curriculum choice and implement progressive choices.</p> <p>Commit to closing the attainment gap in education while working with partners across the city.</p>	<p>External scrutiny provides helpful assurance that there is sufficient focus on helping young people recover from the pandemic and that the school self-evaluation and improvement plan is well positioned to support a closing of the poverty related attainment gap.</p>
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
<p>Prosperous People - 95% of all our children, including those living in our priority neighbourhoods, will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026.</p>	<p>Engagement with inspectors provides an opportunity to learn from national best practice and validate self-evaluation evidence available. The support and challenge received by Inspectors helps to shape improvement plans for the coming sessions in keeping with the LOIP stretch aims.</p>
<p><b>Regional and City Strategies</b></p> <p>Regional Cultural Strategy</p> <p>Prevention Strategy</p> <p>Children's Services Plan</p> <p>National Improvement Framework Plan</p>	<p>Engagement with the Inspectorate is fully aligned to the city prevention strategy. Work to address poverty and improvement in the Children's services plan, the Child Poverty Action Plan and the National Improvement Framework Plan is also supported through external scrutiny.</p>

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	No assessment required. I confirm this - Shona Milne, Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	No DPIA is required.
<b>Other</b>	

**10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

**11. APPENDICES**

- A – Tullos Action Plan
- B – Harlaw Action Plan
- C – Happitots Action Plan
- D - Little Dreams Action Plan
- E – Danestone Action Plan
- F - The kindergarten Action Plan

**12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS**

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# Improvement Plan

2024-25

**Tullos Primary**

Last year	Current year	Next year
<p>QI1.3 Leadership of Change</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New SLT remits with clear responsibilities linked to school improvement action plans (this may change as the SLT changes).</li> <li>• Embed the new school vision and values into the ethos of the school and evaluate.</li> <li>• New staff working groups to support school improvement.</li> <li>• Re-establish the Pupil Council and pupil participation groups to focus on pupil voice to contribute to the life and ethos of the school.</li> <li>• Re-establish partnerships with the local community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robust SLT remits to be established having recruited additional SLT staff</li> <li>• All senior leaders to have a clear strategic direction and involvement in delivering school improvement</li> <li>• Refine and embed the school values in line with the expectations and ensure a shared approach for ALL stakeholders</li> <li>• Re-establish the Pupil Council to capture a whole school approach to pupil voice. There will be an introduction of HGIOurS</li> <li>• Establish new pupil voice groups in line with RRS expectations with clear action plans</li> <li>• Increase partnerships with the local community, involving them in school improvement and gathering impact regularly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to develop stakeholder awareness of our VVA and ensure that these are firmly embedded throughout the whole school community with a consistent use of language</li> <li>• Link all success and achievements, including wider achievements in and out of school to our VVA</li> <li>• Learners to become more familiar with HGIOurS and use this document for whole school and class self-evaluation</li> <li>• Continue to develop our approach to RRS and ensuing pupil voice is heard and reflected in school improvement planning</li> <li>• Continue to embed partnership working within the local community</li> </ul>
<p>QI2.3 Learning, Teaching &amp; Assessment</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literacy (Writing) – improved pedagogy in writing through CYPIC initiative in P4 and P5 and throughout the school with the local ASG.</li> <li>• Improved pedagogy in numeracy through introduction of the SEAL Maths recovery programme.</li> <li>• Review IDL approach and planning with a focus on skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers will improve learning, teaching and assessment to ensure the needs of all children are met</li> <li>• Robust plan to be implemented detailing staff training developments and reflections for learning and teaching themes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The learning, teaching and assessment standard developed in year 2024-25 will be embedded</li> <li>• Staff and all stakeholders will have an increased understanding of the T&amp;L expectations at Tullos School.</li> <li>• Curriculum policies will be revisited and clarified having reflected on</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development on pupil participation and engagement in their learning including pupil voice.</li> <li>• Continue to develop the Tullos curriculum through digital technology.</li> <li>• Continue to embed the whole-school agreed expectations for learning and teaching.</li> <li>• Review and develop the school Assessment plans.</li> <li>• The effective use of assessment data to inform next steps and achievements with class teachers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revised L&amp;T standard to be devised following this training</li> <li>• The introduction of the Big Maths Approach will supplement delivery of numeracy and resources already being used in school</li> <li>• Improve the quality of learner experiences across the school – this will include planning and pupil voice</li> <li>• Teachers and practitioners will work together more effectively at early level to improve opportunities for learners by using effective play-based learning approaches</li> <li>• Ensure there is a consistent understanding and use of planning formats across school</li> <li>• Increase outdoor learning opportunities for learners at Early level</li> <li>• New assessment and attainment tracking processes established to develop an understanding and overview of progress over time for school and ELC</li> </ul>	<p>previous academic year. Expectations will be very clear and consistent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outdoor learning opportunities to be increased throughout the whole school</li> <li>• CYPIC approach for writing to be rolled out from P3-P7</li> <li>• Further develop Big Maths approach across school</li> <li>• Curriculum design working party to be established and revisit IDL 3-year plan</li> <li>• Embed play-based learning approaches at early level and consider how this develops into first level</li> </ul>
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QI3.1 Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality & Inclusion

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Health and wellbeing policy in line with new initiatives.</li> <li>• Ensuring all members of staff (particularly new staff) have a shared understanding of Our Tullos PLACE.</li> <li>• To continue to embed the CIRCLE Framework within the school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CIRCLE Framework to be revisited to include all staff.</li> <li>• Up Up and Away to be embedded in ELC</li> <li>• Glasgow Motivation and Wellbeing Profile information and data to be used</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear HWB expectations and programme will be developed to ensure a whole school approach</li> <li>• Continue to develop areas and space within school to ensure all learners' needs are being met</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To introduce the Up Up and Away Resource to ELC.</li> <li>• To review the use of the strengths and difficulties questionnaires to ensure appropriate supports are identified and implemented.</li> <li>• To implement the use of Kitbags to ensure consistent approaches to restorative practices.</li> </ul>	<p>in line with whole school approaches in class and for assemblies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revisit Kitbags for support staff to use in supporting restorative conversations</li> <li>• Make better use of space and resources in areas of the school used for additional supports e.g. Learning Den and PSA input area</li> <li>• Ensure that all PR&amp;D and CR&amp;Ds are recorded and actioned in line with target setting and line management supports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revisit the Hive provision, staffing and resources to ensure the supported classroom is meeting the needs of the identified children at Tullos</li> <li>• Continue to embed Circle and include this in planning and evaluations</li> </ul>
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QI3.2 Raising Attainment & Achievement

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To improve learning and teaching practice.</li> <li>• To focus on learner engagement in numeracy and Writing.</li> <li>• Developing professional understanding and use of attainment data to inform practice and assessment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of SeeSaw to be cascaded throughout the whole school</li> <li>• Revisit our attendance procedures, looking at how to improve learner attendance at school by using creative approaches and supports, with a particular focus on vulnerable learners</li> <li>• Develop teacher knowledge and understanding in writing IEPs, ensuring targets are timely and specific</li> <li>• Dyslexia Inclusive Practice (DIP) to be cascaded throughout school following intensive training by SfL staff</li> <li>• Review approach to the delivery of SfL in line with our recovery curriculum for our P4 and P7 learners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embark upon Year 2 of DIP ensuring that all classrooms are appropriately resourced and dyslexia friendly</li> <li>• DIP policy for teachers to follow will be devised and shared</li> <li>• Embark upon Year 2 of SfL model and recovery curriculum for identified learners</li> <li>• Child Friendly IEPs to be created with the involvement of all members of the Team Around The Child (TATC)</li> </ul>
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**Q1 – 1.3 Leadership of Change** **RAG**

<b>Improvement Outcomes</b>  <b>What do we hope to achieve?</b>	<b>Measures of Success</b>  <b>How will we know this has been achieved?</b>  <i>What evidence will we have?</i>	<b>Actions Required</b>  <b>What do we need to do?</b>	<b>Timescales</b>	<b>Resources</b>  <b>Who and what is required?</b>  <b>(including cost/fund)</b>	
<b>Shared understanding of VVA which informs 3 clear school expectations and forms the basis of the positive relationships policy</b>	All staff can articulate a clear understanding of our VVA and this is evident in the overall ethos of the school culture  Confidence surveys Staff questionnaires Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revisit the vision, values and aims and positive behaviour policy to ensure they reflect changes in our setting, are meaningful and accessible to all and can truly be embedded in the life of the school.</li> <li>The policy should include the UNCRC and whole school RR charter</li> <li>Devise a child friendly version reflecting both PLACE and Vision Values and Aims (VVA) which will be used in line with all expectations for behaviour moving forwards</li> <li>Review school and ELC vision, values and aims and align these to provide consistency and continuity across school and ELC and support positive transitions.</li> </ul>	Aug 24  Sept 24  Oct 24	All staff	
<b>To Ensure Class Charters are concise, linked to UNCRC and closely aligned to the overarching school positive relationships policy to ensure</b>	All staff can articulate a clear understanding of the UNCRC and this is evident in the overall ethos of the school culture  Confidence surveys Staff, parent and pupil questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This will be revisited with staff in line with reviewing the whole school policy and before the beginning of session 2024/25.</li> </ul>	Sept 24	All staff	

<b>clarity and accessibility for all.</b>	Observations				
<b>Whole school approach to positive change in all aspects of school life - influencing positive attitudes to change.</b>	Evidence of a consistent approach and shared understanding to move school improvement forward  Positive feedback from staff regarding line management support – evidence through staff surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior leaders will create conditions which provide creativity and innovation whilst always being mindful of sustainability</li> <li>• Senior leaders have a shared understanding of the strategic direction that the school is moving towards</li> <li>• Leaders at all levels motivate and inspire others</li> </ul>	Ongoing	SLT	
<b>Leadership roles within the SLT are clearly defined</b>	Evidence of a consistent approach and shared understanding to move school improvement forward  Positive feedback from staff regarding line management support – evidence through confidence surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior leaders to effectively guide and manage strategic direction and pace of change</li> <li>• Working parties to be reviewed and expectations on school staff reduced to ensure that staff time is protected to improve learning and teaching</li> </ul>	Ongoing  Oct 24	SLT  All staff	
<b>Self-evaluation processes are timely, rigorous and involve all stakeholders</b>	Evidence of increased meaningful engagement from parents/carers and pupils. This evidence should inform future school improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-evaluation to be a consistent part of any staff development so we can continuously reflect and evaluate inputs</li> <li>• Google questionnaire and other feedback data to be collated, easily accessible and used regularly to inform improvements</li> </ul>	Ongoing	All staff  SLT	

**Q1 – 2.3 Learning, Teaching & Assessment** **RAG**

Improvement Outcomes	Measures of Success	Actions Required	Timescales	Resources	
What do we hope to achieve?	How will we know this has been achieved? <i>What evidence will we have?</i>	What do we need to do?		Who and what is required?  (including cost/fund)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers should improve learning, teaching and assessment to ensure the needs of all children are met</li> <li>Improve the quality of learner experiences across the school – this will include planning and pupil voice</li> <li>Teachers and practitioners should work together more effectively at early level to improve opportunities for learners at early level</li> </ul>					
<b>Tullos LT&amp;A standard is clearly understood by all staff and is reflected in practice in every classroom. Lessons are stimulating and reflect learners interests to sustain their engagement</b>	Observed lessons will have a clear and concise format covering all areas of the agreed standard.	Revisit Tullos Learning & Teaching (L&T) standard with all teachers to ensure this is accessible and realises consistency across classes and stages.	Oct 24	All teaching staff	
	The standard will be visible around school and staff will be able to talk about it.	This will focus on developing a shared understanding of what a good lesson looks like and developing a consistent standard to the range of teaching approaches used by staff.	Oct 24	SLT	
	Learners will be able to share what is expected of them in regard to their learning experiences.	Regular learning and environment walks to be undertaken by SLT to ensure standards are upheld	Ongoing	SLT	
<b>Effective use of learning time</b>	All timetables will evidence agreed coverage of the curriculum	Purposeful learning to be monitored more closely. Timetables to be audited by line- managers regularly, discussed at SLT and a shared understanding across school to be devised for staff to refer to.	Oct 24	SLT	



	All timetables will evidence that all learning time is accounted for				
<b>Learning intentions and success criteria are used effectively to help children progress in their learning</b>	<p>Learners will be able to articulate what they are learning and why</p> <p>Learners will be able to articulate what knowledge and skills they need in order to progress</p> <p>Learners will be able to articulate what level they are working at</p>	<p>In line with planned work to revisit the L&amp;T standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop a consistent approach to the use of LI/SC to ensure that learners understand the purpose of their learning and what they need to do to achieve success.</li> </ul>	Sept 24 and ongoing	SLT	
<b>Verbal and written feedback is of a consistently high standard and helps children progress in their learning</b>	<p>Through observations, jotter monitoring and professional discussion it will be clear to determine what learner next steps are</p> <p>Learners will be able to articulate what their next steps are</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improve the quality of feedback provided to learners to help them understand their progress and next steps in learning through staff development sessions</li> </ul>	Sept 24 and ongoing	AV SLT	
<b>Teacher explanations are clear and support the learning</b>	<p>Learners are on task following teacher input</p> <p>Teachers are actively involved and</p>	<p>SLT to support with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team teaching</li> <li>Modelling</li> <li>Classroom observations</li> <li>Planning meetings and professional dialogue</li> </ul>	August 2024 and on-going	All staff	



<p><b>activities provided.</b></p>	<p>supporting in activities after input given</p> <p>Learners can articulate what is expected of them in terms of the activity they have been given</p> <p>There will be evidence of completed tasks in jotters and a reduction in unfinished work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gathering pupil voice</li> <li>• Jotter monitoring</li> <li>• Feedback to staff</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Teachers consistently use effective questioning effectively support learning in all classes.</b></p>	<p>Learners and staff are able to make reference to the Tullos 9 Key Questions and these are used effectively to support learning.</p> <p>Learners are encouraged to challenge themselves and one another.</p>	<p>All teachers are familiar with the Tullos 9 Key Questions, however there is a need to revisit the Tullos 9 Key Questions as part of ‘What Does a Good Lesson Look Like?’ to ensure a shared understanding of effective questioning informs consistent practice across school.</p>	<p>Nov 24</p>	<p>AV</p> <p>SLT</p>	
<p><b>Learners have increased opportunities to develop independence and lead their own learning.</b></p>	<p>Learners will be able to demonstrate an increased confidence in leadership in school</p>	<p>Work in partnership with RADS to develop skills for learning, life and work.</p> <p>CT use a variety of ways to consistently seek learners views and prior knowledge is to inform planning</p>	<p>Aug 24 and ongoing</p>	<p>AV</p> <p>SLT</p>	

	<p>Learners will be able to demonstrate an increased confidence in wider achievement and success</p> <p>Learners will be given the opportunity to feed into whole school improvement as part of their class learning</p> <p>Learners will be given the opportunity to provide teachers with contexts for learning based on their interests</p>	<p>Increase opportunities for learners to experience responsibility and contribute to the wider life of the school.</p> <p>Harness learner interests to provide a 'hook' for learners to develop and lead their own learning</p> <p>Embed 'Tullos Thoughts and Talks' as a consistent mechanism for seeking learner voice to inform school improvements</p>			
<b>Learner engagement is improved</b>	<p>Learners will complete their learning in their core classroom area unless otherwise timetables for interventions or support</p> <p>Learners are visibly safe and comfortable in their classroom area</p>	<p>Further develop and improve staff skills in supporting individual needs to ensure continued and improved learner engagement, particularly for those who have additional needs. This will include further use of digital technologies to support learning.</p>	<p>August 24 On-going</p>	<p>SLT  All staff</p>	
<b>Robust forward planning formats support teachers to plan using CFE Es &amp;</b>	<p>QA of planning</p>	<p>Forward planning formats will be reviewed to ensure they support teachers to move away from resource-based planning for learning and teaching.</p>	<p>Oct 24</p>	<p>SLT All staff</p>	

<b>Os, progression and benchmarks</b>	Weekly timetables uploaded and QA by line managers	Implement a more robust approach to the quality assurance of forward plans.  Feedback on forward plans will be given to staff on a regular and timely basis as identified through the school QA calendar.			
<b>Consistent use of digital technology supports learning and challenges learners appropriately</b>	Learning walks Class Observations QA assurance of planning Audit of technology in school	Continue to develop and extend use of technology by providing support to develop staff skills and confidence in using digital technologies, making use of information from staff questionnaires.  Implementation of Seesaw across the whole school. All teachers to ensure photographic evidence of use of technology is gathered.  Develop and implement digital skills progression	On-going	JW  SLT	
<b>Learners' experiences are effectively differentiated to ensure that all learners are appropriately supported and challenged</b>	Learning walks Class Observations Jotter Monitoring	Further staff training to be delivered to ensure that consistent approaches to differentiation are in place across the school and learners' needs are being met.  Establish programme of SLT modelling lessons to support teachers in developing their understanding of differentiation, pace and challenge and approaches to this in the classroom.  Stage partners to work together to engage in peer observations/feedback – Benchmark Buddies.	Sept 24 Oct 24 Nov 24	SLT NA partners ACC colleagues	
<b>Teacher accuracy in assessing achievement of a level is improved</b>	Tracking Meetings PPM information	Continue to work collegiately across school to support consistency of approach.  Build on previous ASG moderation sessions in writing, extend and develop this in numeracy and reading.  Through staff development enable CT to support one another as Benchmark Buddies.	Sept 24	SLT  All staff	
<b>Teachers are gathering a range of assessment</b>	All assessment data will match up	Ensure a range of data is used to triangulate evidence including NSA and SEEMiS tracking of progress and achievement.	Ongoing	SLT	

<p>evidence, including NSA data, and are using this to inform their planning and adapt learning and teaching.</p>	<p>Tracking Meetings  PPM Meetings  Professional discussions</p>	<p>A robust QA calendar reflects all key dates throughout the year and identifies when key assessments should be undertaken</p> <p>Continue to develop work with schools across the ASG to further improve our shared understanding of national standards and expectations.</p>		<p>All staff</p>	
<p>The use of agreed Formative Assessment strategies is introduced in all classes.</p>	<p>All assessment data will align e.g. teacher judgement/NSA/CEM  Tracking Meetings  PPM Meetings  Professional discussions  Lesson observations</p>	<p>Support teachers to develop their use of formative assessment strategies to support learners' understanding of how they are doing and what their next steps in learning are.</p> <p>In line with planned work to revisit the L&amp;T standard, ensure this includes a clear progression for formative assessment and allocate staff development time to support this.</p>	<p>Nov 24  Nov 24</p>	<p>AV  AV</p>	
<p>Tracking formats are reviewed to provide all information on one document.</p>	<p>Tracking formats  Tracking input and professional dialogue at meetings</p>	<p>Review and streamline tracking documentation to have all the information on one document.</p> <p>Review agenda and record keeping for PPMs so that this is a live document which reflects where learners are at any given time. Ensure that this is stored in a shared folder so SFL team can also access this information. Staff training in Sept 24</p> <p>Introduce tracking system in ELC which will feed into the school system at transition.</p> <p>SLT will develop their knowledge and understanding of Power-BI and use this to inform their interrogation of school data.</p>	<p>July 24  July 24  Sept 24  Oct 24  Oct 24</p>	<p>AV/LS  AV/LS  AV  SLT</p>	
<p>Progressive outdoor learning opportunities are planned and</p>	<p>A regular programme of progressive learning opportunities is</p>	<p>Deliver training from outside agencies – outdoor nursery practitioner/Lindsay Shepard and Alec Miller to all staff including ELC</p>	<p>February 2025</p>	<p>Lizzie Sinclair</p>	

<p><b>delivered on a regular basis at Early level.</b></p>	<p>evident in ELC and P1. Classroom observations Professional dialogue</p>	<p>Outdoor areas to be developed – see action plan for The Hive and ELC allotment.</p>	<p>November 2024 and ongoing</p>		
<p><b>Play based learning reflects national practice guidance and is being developed in P1</b></p>	<p>Teacher planning reflects opportunities for children to learn through play Classroom observations Professional dialogue</p>	<p>PEF funded PT to support with developing play-based pedagogy and extending the link between ELC, P1 and P2. This will include modelling, professional dialogue, use of resources, reflective practice.  Guidance for CT to develop a shared understanding of what effective play-based learning looks like and how this supports the development of core skills for learners.  Supporting staff skills with observation to inform both intentional and responsive planning. This will enable CT to use SeeSaw to share the learning and progress with parents.</p>	<p>June 2024 Ongoing  October 2024  October 2024</p>	<p>Claire Duncan</p>	

**Q1 – 3.1 Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality & Inclusion** **RAG**

Improvement Outcomes	Measures of Success	Actions Required	Timescales	Resources	
What do we hope to achieve?	How will we know this has been achieved? <i>What evidence will we have?</i>	What do we need to do?		Who and what is required? (including cost/fund)	
<b>Ensure that wellbeing data is being shared with all staff to inform planning</b>	GMWP data x2 year Shine data SHANARRI discussions	Data to be shared with staff on a timely basis. Use data to identify needs, patterns and trends over time. Lesson plans and whole school assemblies/approaches to be in line with any findings.	Ongoing	AV/AMack SLT  All staff	
<b>Senior leaders to ensure that teaching staff, ELC staff and PSAs are being supported regularly</b>	PR&Ds CR&Ds Line management processes Supporting staff attendance procedures	Line managers are available to support department staff daily.  Line managers to provide feedback on a regular basis.  Whole school staff wellbeing activities and approaches to be offered to staff both in terms of physical and mental health.	Ongoing	SLT  SLT  SLT	
<b>The whole learning community has a shared understanding of wellbeing and children's rights</b>	Staff are able to articulate what the 3 school UNCRC rights are and why we have chosen them for our charter	Whole school charter to be devised along with all stakeholders. Embark upon the Bronze RRSA. Establish a RRS pupil focus group.	Sept 24  Sept 24 Oct 24	L. Sinclair  L. Sinclair	

<b>Use of Circle Framework is embedded to support inclusive practice.</b>	Classroom environments reflect good inclusive practice and learner needs are being met.  Learner engagement is improved.	Revisit the use of the Circle Framework to include all new staff and a refresher for all.  Training to be offered as a voluntary twilight session for staff.  In Term 3 to re-introduce Circle evaluation info into PPM paperwork as another measure of success/tracking.	October 24  November 24  January 25	L. Sinclair/ C Gormley	
<b>We comply and actively engage with statutory requirements</b>	Audit of training	A robust Quality Assurance (QA) calendar to be created with clear timescales for audits and deadlines.  The QA Calendar is adhered to in terms of legislative expectations in school and ELC.	June 24  Ongoing	AV  All SLT SEYPs	
<b>Ensuring inclusion is at the heart of our offer, using effective strategies to ensure increased attendance</b>	Increased attendance of our hard-to-reach learners	Ensure robust implementation of the ACC Attendance policy.  Continue to build on and develop strong links with HSLO and other agencies which can support attendance.  Introduce robust evaluation of attendance statistics and subsequent meeting planning alongside school admin and HSLO.	AV Admin HSLO	AV	



**QI – 3.2 Raising Attainment & Achievement** **RAG**

Improvement Outcomes	Measures of Success	Actions Required	Timescales	Resources	
What do we hope to achieve?	How will we know this has been achieved?  <i>What evidence will we have?</i>	<b>What do we need to do?</b>		<b>Who and what is required?</b>  <b>(including cost/fund)</b>	


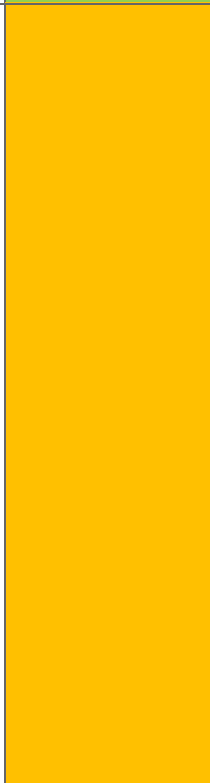
- **Teachers and practitioners should ensure they track progress and achievement more effectively – this will help learners to overcome barriers and support learners to aspire to do their best**

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 170</p> <p><b>The introduction and development of the Big Maths approach will provide guidance for staff</b></p>	Increased consistency for learners across all levels	Training and development opportunities for staff in this approach will be provided.	June 2024 and ongoing	PD	
	Increased attainment in numeracy	Team teaching and modelling opportunities to be provided by ASG Principal Teacher of Transition and Raising Attainment.	Ongoing	PD	
<p><b>The SLT will develop a tracking system using a range of assessments, including standardised assessments, to robustly track individual learner progress over time.</b></p>	Tracking documentation details progress over time and includes termly assessment data, NSA and other standardised assessment information.	More robust analysis of the attainment of different cohorts of children, as they move through the school will provide additional information to support senior leaders and teachers to identify any patterns of attainment or gaps in learning for different groups of children.	July 24	AV/LS	
		Analysis of CfE and tracking information (school profile data) highlights trends. Scrutiny of NSA data informs discussion with class teachers and triangulates evidence.	Ongoing	SLT	
		As part of ASG development work the need for more robust standardised assessment information at P2,	Ongoing	SLT	



		<p>P3, P5 and P6 has been identified and we have collectively agreed to use CEM to support this.</p> <p>Continue to develop tracking and monitoring systems to ensure analysis of CfE and tracking information (school profile data) highlights trends and this information informs planning, including planning for specific interventions.</p> <p>Robust analysis of the attainment of different cohorts of children, as they move through the school, will provide additional information to support senior leaders and teachers to identify any patterns of attainment or gaps in learning for different groups of children.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Oct 24</p>	<p>SLT/VW</p> <p>AV/LS</p>	
<p><b>Individual planning (including IEPs) identifies strategies to support individual progress and attainment, which are reviewed termly by teachers and learners.</b></p>	<p>There will be increased staff understanding of the needs of the most disadvantaged learners and identification of appropriate interventions to support them to inform planning.</p> <p>IEPs and Child's Plans evidence planning for individuals and progress towards individual targets.</p>	<p>Continue to develop teacher agency in identifying attainment gaps and planning effective interventions to support through the whole school Dyslexia training and professional discussions through PPMs with line managers and SfL staff.</p> <p>Review content and format of IEPs to ensure they are an effective tool and are fit for purpose.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Sept 24</p>	<p>AV</p> <p>SLT</p>	
<p><b>Termly pupil progress meetings between class teachers and SLT support</b></p>	<p>Evidence from pupil progress meetings.</p> <p>Learners are making expected progress.</p>	<p>Ensure tracking data is updated by teachers termly and moderated in PPMs. All teachers will have regular tracking meetings (PPMs) with SLT to discuss individual children's progress. Through professional dialogue, interventions will be</p>	<p>Termly</p>	<p>SLT</p>	

<p><b>teachers to plan universal and targeted support, including appropriate interventions for learners in their class.</b></p>		<p>discussed and planned for children facing barriers to their learning. This will be recorded and reflected in teachers' planning for individuals.</p> <p>SLT to support Class Teachers to have high yet achievable aspirations for all individuals.</p>			
<p><b>Support for Learning Teacher time is protected as much as possible and a robust plan for SfL is in place using data to identify core groups of children who need targeted support.</b></p>	<p>SfL plans, regular reviews and PPM meetings will evidence expected pupil progress.</p> <p>SfL teacher will evidence the impact for learners using our Equity tracker.</p>	<p>The SfL teachers will support learners both in small groups and in class.</p> <p>DHT and Sfl teacher will undertake the DIP Dyslexia training over a 5-week period. Dyslexia Outreach staff will deliver training to all teachers as part of our work towards establishing this as a universal support across all classes.</p> <p>PSAs will take part in 2 sessions of training led by the Dyslexia Outreach Service.</p> <p>A small budget will be given to SLT to support resourcing our dyslexia friendly school – toolkits.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Aug – Oct 24</p> <p>Sept 24</p> <p>Nov 24</p>	<p>LS/VW</p> <p>CTs</p> <p>LS/VW</p> <p>PSAs</p> <p>LS/VW</p>	
<p><b>PEF funding supports a sustained and targeted focus on raising attainment in literacy and numeracy.</b></p>	<p>Attainment in literacy and numeracy is increased.</p> <p>Impact on attainment will be evident from the Equity tracker.</p>	<p>Review focus of PEF funding to reflect need to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy.</p> <p>Develop tracking system and use of Equity Tracker to evidence impact of interventions funded through PEF. Allocate PEF monies for specific resources to support SFL interventions.</p> <p>Barnardo's Support Worker engaging with families to improve attendance and engagement. PSAs delivering specific programmes. This support needs to be further tracked to ensure we can evidence impact</p>	<p>June 24</p> <p>Nov 24</p> <p>Oct 24</p>	<p>AV</p> <p>AV and Suzie Wood</p> <p>AV/AMack</p>	

<p><b>Effective partnerships provide opportunities for our learners to develop a range of skills and attributes, experience wider achievement and take part in extra-curricular activities at no cost to families.</b></p>	<p>Increased number of learners accessing a range of opportunities both during and after school</p>	<p>Continue to extend extra-curricular offer across school and work with partners to develop opportunities for younger age groups to attend out of school activities.</p> <p>The establishment of a variety of lunchtime and after school clubs is planned to provide additional opportunities for pupils.</p> <p>Pupils' learning and achievements will be shared with parents and carers through the introduction of Seesaw. This will enable parents and carers to share both learning and other achievements from out of school more easily.</p>	<p>Aug 24 and ongoing</p> <p>Aug 24</p> <p>Sept 24</p>	<p>AV/CD</p> <p>AV/CD</p> <p>All staff</p>	
<p><b>Partnerships will allow for existing Cost of the School Day initiatives to be refreshed and shared widely to ensure they are accessible to all.</b></p>	<p>All children will have the opportunity to access and wear the school uniform and feel part of the school community.</p> <p>All children will have appropriate clothing to ensure they can be warm and ready for school.</p> <p>All children will have the opportunity to access sportswear and weather appropriate footwear.</p>	<p>Pre-loved school uniform will be available for parents and carers to access.</p> <p>Our first "Pop up shop" will take place in November 2024 as part of the partnership with AberN which will ensure all learners have access to warm winter clothing to include footwear, jackets and other accessories.</p>	<p>Nov 24</p> <p>Nov 24</p>	<p>AV</p> <p>AV</p>	

ELC only

<p>Improvement Outcomes</p> <p>What do we aim to achieve</p>	<p>Measures of Success</p> <p>How will we know that this has been achieved?</p> <p>What evidence will we have?</p>	<p>Action Required</p> <p>What do we need to do?</p>	<p>Timescale</p>	<p>Resources</p> <p>Who</p>	<p>RAG</p>
<p><b>Transitions into ELC 2.6</b></p>					
<p><b>Positive and interactive inductions and transitions into ELC</b></p>	<p>100% of parents/carers will have attended the session and any questions will be answered.</p> <p>Parent questionnaires</p> <p>Pupil voice will be gathered</p>	<p>Parents/carers will be invited to an induction session with their child.</p> <p>Parents/Carers will have the opportunity to speak with ELC staff about their child and ask any questions.</p> <p>ELC staff will prepare the nursery environment to welcome new families to view. The environment will be set up to allow parents to see what learning experiences are available.</p> <p>Powerpoint shared with all families detailing the expectations at Tullos ELC.</p> <p>SEYP will support families to complete personal plans and any relevant paperwork.</p> <p>SEYP/key worker will support parent to</p>	<p>Aug 2024 and ongoing</p>	<p>ELC staff</p>	<p style="background-color: yellow;"></p>

		complete personal plans and share these with all staff. These will be reviewed each term.			
<b>Sharing children's learning and progress 3.2</b>					
<b>To recognise and celebrate children's achievements at home and in ELC</b>	Families will share achievements and learner's pictures will be taken and uploaded onto SeeSaw.  An increased number of SeeSaw posts from home will be shared by learners.  All children will receive a special sticker/certificate to take home.	SEYP to ensure families are aware of how to share their child's achievement through sending out a newsletter.  Children's achievements will be acknowledged and displayed where all families can access	October 2024	ELC staff	
<b>Children will have more opportunity to use their emergent writing in a meaningful way</b>	Children's writing will be displayed around the setting.  Observations.	Practitioners will ensure they are providing a range of opportunities for children to develop their writing skills in a variety of real-life contexts.  SEYP to include this evidence in peer monitoring and room audits.	Jan 2025	ELC staff	
<b>Family Learning 2.5</b>					
<b>Parents / Carers will have opportunities to</b>	Parents/Carers will attend sessions such as	Organise regular sessions for stay and play.	August 2024	ELC staff	

<p><b>stay and play within the nursery and attend extracurricular activities.</b></p>	<p>Bookbug, child smile. Parent and staff questionnaires. Staff will record families' feedback and use this to plan further events.</p>	<p>Regular reminders to be sent out to increase engagement. Encourage parents to opt in to stay and play at any time. Parents will fill out a stay and play evaluation form.</p>	<p>January 2025</p>		
<p><b>Families to attend target support sessions</b></p>	<p>Attendance will increase for harder to reach families</p>	<p>Provide a safe space for supportive and difficult conversations To run a parent group monthly in line with planning/targeted support</p>	<p>August 2024</p>	<p>SEYP HT</p>	
<p><b>Learning experiences 2.3</b></p>					
<p><b>Children to be given more experiences in phonics and rhyming</b></p>	<p>Children's literacy trackers will be updated according to achievements.  There will be measurable Improvements in children's language skills.</p>	<p>SEYPs to ensure language rich activities are provided and regularly refreshed, which deliver a focus on phonics and rhyming.  Work in partnership with other agencies to provide a range of opportunities to develop children's language skills, such as Bookbug, SALT, Big Noise.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>ELC staff</p>	
<p><b>Learning will be enriched by embedding use of digital technologies</b></p>	<p>Learning observations will show an increase in use of digital technologies.</p>	<p>Practitioners will ensure daily opportunities for children will develop, extend and demonstrate their digital skills through</p>	<p>August 2024 and ongoing</p>	<p>All ELC staff</p>	

<p>within the ELC setting.</p>	<p>All ELC staff will report increased knowledge and confidence in how to embed digital technologies within the ELC.</p>	<p>everyday learning activities. Digital resources will be easily accessible to learners. Evidence will be recorded in children's online learning account (SeeSaw)</p>			
<p><b>Children will understand their next steps and ways they can achieve them and in a language they can understand.</b></p>	<p>Children will know where to find their next steps (targets). Children will be able to articulate their next steps.</p>	<p>Supported by the HT, all ELC staff will work together to devise a child friendly, visual system to record children's next steps/targets that are accessible to children and families.  Practitioners will spend time fortnightly with their key children discussing their learning and ensuring that they are using language to support children's developing understanding of the skills they are learning, how they are doing in their learning, what they need to do to achieve success and what their next steps in learning will be.</p>	<p>September 2024</p>	<p>All ELC staff</p>	
<p><b>There will be evidence of high quality and quantity written observations</b></p>	<p>Written reports will consistently reflect use of the language in the progression planners.</p>	<p>High quality learning experiences will be recorded in the Floorbook, linked to CfE.</p>	<p>From August 2024</p>	<p>All ELC staff</p>	

	SeeSaw observations and reports will reflect a more consistent use of the language of learning.	SEYP to monitor online reports/ observations and support EYP/SW. SEYP to model high quality written reports.			
<b>Children to be confident leading their own learning and taking part in the planning process.</b>	Children will be able to talk about their own learning.  Responsive planning will be visible in the floor book, spontaneous observations and reports.	Additional training at INSET to ensure consistent approaches for all ELC staff.  Practitioners will discuss children's learning with them on a regular basis, with a focus on talking about the skills they have mastered and what they would like to learn or improve on.  Practitioners to show children and families where their targets can be found displayed in the setting.	August 2024 and ongoing as per QA	All ELC staff  Families/partners	
<b>Enhancing the outdoor learning environment to maximise learning opportunities.</b>	Learning observations will show rich learning experiences outdoors.  Photographic evidence on a working wall. Most children engaged in outdoor learning.  All ELC staff will report increased confidence in	Staff will work in pairs to improve targeted areas of the outdoor space.  Identified staff to attend Outdoor Learning training and cascade to staff team.	Ongoing  Nov 2024	All ELC staff	



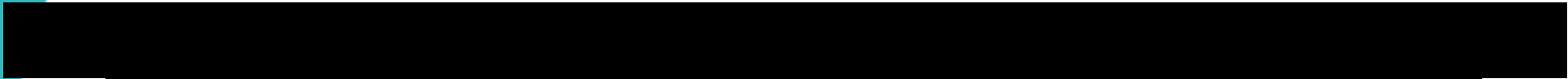
	making our outdoor provision a rich learning environment.				
For all staff to be familiar with Highland Literacy, Bumps to Bairns to support learners not yet achieving or on track.	Staff will use the resource to provide targeted support and this will be reflected in children's trackers and reports.	SEYP to source additional information on this resource and share with the team.	September 2024	All ELC staff	
	QA from SLT	Staff training to be delivered in Nov 2024	November 2024	All ELC staff	
Staff will have increased confidence and skills in supporting learners with communication needs.	All ELC staff will report increased confidence in supporting learners with communication needs. Observations will show all ELC staff are supporting learners communication needs effectively.	Staff will work alongside other agencies to support learners with communication needs e.g. Speech and Language Therapy.  Staff training delivered in Nov 2024	Ongoing  Nov 2024	All ELC staff	

**Meaningful observations and tracking 2.3**

<p><b>Practitioners are gathering a range of evidence and data and are using this to inform their planning and adapt learning and teaching approaches.</b></p>	<p>Trackers will show clear progress of children's learning throughout their time in Tullos Nursery.</p> <p>Trackers will be used successfully to inform individual children's progress and planned next steps.</p>	<p>HT will liaise with colleagues and the central team to devise a manageable digital tracking system for ELC to utilise.</p> <p>SEYP will attend school tracking meetings to ensure we developing our approach to collection and use of data alongside the school to promote consistency as children move from ELC into P1.</p>	<p>3x per year with HT</p> <p>Nov</p> <p>March</p> <p>June</p>	<p>HT</p> <p>SEYP</p>	
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**Circle framework 1.3**

<p><b>Use of CIRCLE Framework will become further embedded in practice to support inclusive practices and learner engagement.</b></p>	<p>Staff will have developed a range of targeted strategies to support individual learners.</p> <p>Staff will have used the circle framework</p>	<p>SEYP and some staff are already trained in CIRCLE. Remaining staff will be trained in the use of this resource.</p> <p>Use of CIRCLE Literacy Rich Environment Toolkit will be built into QA Calendar and support</p>	<p>November 2024</p> <p>August 2024</p>	<p>All ELC staff</p>	
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	<p>environment tools to support self-evaluation.</p> <p>Staff will have a clear understanding of what works well.</p> <p>Staff will have clear observations of how our nursery environment, routines, motivation, and skills support or challenge each child's learning.</p>	<p>provision of an inclusive learning environment.</p> <p>Staff to continue to develop confidence and familiarity with the Literacy Rich Environment Tool, the Risk and Resilience Tool and the Wellbeing Tool, building confidence to use this in their practice.</p> <p>Staff to use the literacy rich tool to self-evaluate and develop each area.</p>	<p>Termly</p> <p>August 2024</p>		
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The table below sets out the actions taken to address the recommendations following the HMIE visit in June 2024.

Extract from HMIE Letter	Actions taken since most recent HMIE visit
<p><b>Priority Area 1:</b> Streamline approaches to improvement so that self-evaluation activities clearly identify priorities which will make the biggest difference to outcomes for young people.</p>	
<p><i>The local authority needs to take prompt and urgent action to address the significant weaknesses in the leadership of the headteacher</i></p> <p><i>Staff remain unclear about current improvement priorities with a majority still feeling that they are not fully involved in devising and leading priorities. There remains a need for senior leaders to involve the school community to have a greater role in identifying, leading and evaluating school improvement.</i></p> <p><i>Senior leaders need to simplify and streamline school improvement priorities, so these are coherent and well understood across the school. They need to ensure that these priorities are clear and measurable in terms of improving learners' experiences.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An interim Acting Head Teacher, who already had knowledge of the school, has been in place at Harlaw Academy since June 2024. This provided stability and an opportunity to proactively respond to the verbal feedback received from HMIE during the inspection. Since the week of the inspection on 10th June he has helped drive the changes required and there is considerable early evidence of rapid progress against the HMIE recommendations.</li> <li>• The interim Acting Head Teacher has been provided with an experienced Head Teacher mentor (who is also an Associate Assessor). This mentoring is on a 1-1 basis with meetings every three weeks and supports a quad arrangement where Harlaw Academy join with Bucksburn, Hazlehead and St. Machar Academies for more informal support and collaboration.</li> <li>• The three DHTs have been provided with support from individuals with Head Teacher experience to build their capacity and capability.</li> <li>• SLT remits have been clarified to ensure they align clearly to leadership of the Quality Indicators and priorities for the school.</li> <li>• A set of key school improvement priorities were shared with staff in June 2024 and progress continues to be shared. These key priorities have also been shared with the Parent Council both in June 2024 and at their AGM in September 2024.</li> <li>• Survey responses from 55 out of 87 members of staff (27<sup>th</sup> August) showed that almost all staff felt that there was a clarity to these priority areas and that they understood them. Almost all staff also believed that there was a clarity to the 'plan on a page' and its links to QIs 1.3, 2.3, &amp; 3.2. Almost all staff also believed that the Harlaw Academy 'plan on a page' aligns with the previous findings of HMIE and from local authority QI visits.</li> <li>• Feedback from the parent council, after a meeting in June 2024 and a further meeting in September 2024, has demonstrated broad agreement over the new direction of the school and the narrowing of objectives towards key areas that link into the inspection process.</li> <li>• Following consultation with staff, and to strengthen ownership and involvement, the school have established working groups that give</li> </ul>



	<p>groups, will be refining these policies so that these are ready for the start of session 25-26.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plans are in place to engage young people in helping to lead a review of the vision and values of Harlaw Academy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority Area 2:</b> Continue to improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment so that young people's experiences engage them and meet their needs. Develop more fully an ethos for learning with high expectations and mutual respect.</p>	
<p><i>There remains a need to develop more fully an ethos for learning with high expectations and mutual respect.</i></p> <p><i>The implementation of the framework remains inconsistent and has not improved learners' experiences sufficiently enough.</i></p> <p><i>Teachers should review how they meet the needs of young people in the class.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The imperative to improve learning, teaching and assessment at Harlaw Academy has been hampered by the fact that <i>staff do not feel their views are taken into account</i> which is leading to an impact on <i>staff morale</i>. This has presented itself most prominently in the way the purpose of lesson observations have been communicated and received by staff.</li> <li>To begin the work of building back confidence and understanding of purpose, a pause on formal observations has been introduced up to December 2024. There is evidence that the top-down approach to improving learning and teaching had not realised improvement and staff report having insufficient time to reflect on and respond to guidance and advice given. Faculty learning walks and support activity has continued.</li> <li>The refreshed Learning &amp; Teaching Working Group has started work to provide more clarity on the framework of identifying the characteristics of high quality learning and teaching at Harlaw Academy. The learning and teaching framework outlines clear expectations around lesson planning, engagement, and student respect, creating an environment that supports high standards and academic rigor.</li> <li>Visits have taken place from the DHT responsible for Learning &amp; Teaching (L&amp;T) and the L&amp;T Faculty Head to Aberdeen Grammar School to discover what is working well within that school. Learning gleaned has been shared with the L&amp;T working group and a redrafted learning and teaching framework is almost at the stage to be shared with staff and young people for comment.</li> <li>To support teacher empowerment to ensure improvements in pedagogy, each teacher has created their own individual action plan. These have been shared with Faculty Heads and the professional learning requirements collated by school leaders to create a programme reflecting these themes to run during session 2024-25. Taking this approach will help build greater ownership. Within individual plans, almost all staff have identified and welcome informal observations of classes from peers or the Faculty Head.</li> <li>A record of classroom observations is being kept to enable the highlighting of commonality across the school and also areas which require greater focus. In Term 2 teaching staff will update their</li> </ul>

	<p>individual action plan and demonstrate the next steps that they wish to build into improving their pedagogy for terms 3 and 4.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training around observations and questioning techniques has been provided to Faculty Heads as part of established fortnightly middle leadership sessions. The training on questioning techniques is now being rolled out to staff.</li> <li>• The launch of the new <i>PupilTracking</i> system to support monitoring, tracking and intervention is supporting staff to review how well they meet the needs of young people in the class.</li> <li>• Harlaw Academy have started to share with greater transparency the levels that pupils have achieved both in the BGE and in the senior phase. Lists of pupils have also been broken down into the top 20% - middle 60% - and bottom 20% of young people. This will provide a greater understanding of what pupils require greater planning for their individualised learning.</li> <li>• Pupil assemblies now occur most weeks in the school. This is an opportunity for the senior leaders to reinforce high expectations with all young people. There is also the opportunity for other staff and pupils to lead these assemblies in the longer term.</li> <li>• The interim relationships policy centres around how positive relationships between staff and pupils is vital to the progress of our young people. There is evidence that following the implementation faculty heads are accepting more responsibility for the maintenance of positive pupil relationships in their classes and faculties with less calls on senior leaders.</li> <li>• For the small number of young people who can demonstrate dysregulated behaviours, more coherent and reviewed plans agreed with parents/carers and partners are in place to support their learning with the involvement of outside partners where needed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority Area 3:</b> Strengthen approaches to monitoring young people’s progress across all subject areas so that staff at all levels have a clear overview of learners’ progress. Continue to raise attainment of young people at all stages.</p>	
<p><i>There is a continued need to strengthen approaches to monitoring young people’s progress across all subject areas. Staff at all levels do not yet have a clear overview of learners’ progress.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new monitoring and tracking system, PupilTracking, has been introduced this session. This is being used in all year groups and enabling the sharing of more timely reporting to parents and carers – 4 times per school session – so that they are informed more regularly about the progress of young people.</li> <li>• All staff have been trained in how to use the system. There has also been additional training for FHs as part of the school’s fortnightly middle leader training sessions. The focus of these sessions has been on how data can be used to plan and implement interventions that will improve pupil performance to ensure that every student receives the support they need.</li> </ul>



<p><i>Young people are achieving at lower levels at Harlaw Academy across almost all national measures compared to learners with similar needs and backgrounds across Scotland.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a more transparent sharing of any prior attainment data that is held on the young people of Harlaw Academy allowing staff to see which pupils are underperforming within their classes as well as those young people who require specific support in their learning.</li> <li>• With particular focus on literacy and numeracy, Harlaw Academy are implementing targeted interventions and adjusting teaching strategies where needed. Literacy and numeracy data is now tracked in all year groups. There is a specific focus on the S4-S6 group. In particular any S4 leaver is tracked to ensure that they are achieving the highest possible Literacy and Numeracy level at their point of exit.</li> <li>• Similarly, in S5 &amp; S6 young people who are not studying English or Maths are also being tracked to ensure they also have the highest Literacy and Numeracy level at their point of exit.</li> <li>• Staffing appointments have been made to the positions of Principal Teacher of Literacy and Principal Teacher of Numeracy. Their focus will be to work with the local Primary School to ensure alignment of levels and coursework as P7 pupils transition into S1. The broader focus will be on the Broad General Education (S1-S3) and the activities that will engage young people positively in classes.</li> <li>• The Assessment Group has reviewed the number of courses available to S4 and S5 students to balance breadth with depth, ensuring that each student's course load supports their learning and attainment goals. This has been supported through a systematic review and refresh of processes has been undertaken to begin to meet the challenge to ensure that young people at Harlaw Academy achieve their full potential and are coursed appropriately.</li> <li>• There is closer tracking of all pupils within the senior phase. Attainment reviews with middle leaders in school have focused on current classes rather than dwelling on the results from courses in 2023-2024. This is allowing the school and staff to be much more focused on the pupils who require support and interventions.</li> <li>• A robust approach to a Presentation Policy will support procedures to ensure that young people achieve the 'highest and best'.</li> <li>• The Assessment policy provides greater clarity of the expectations of class teachers, faculty heads, guidance teachers and Depute Heads. Pupils are discussed in the 1-1 meetings with Faculty Heads and their Depute Head link with next steps agreed which are then shared with class teacher via the Faculty Head.</li> </ul>
<p><i>There is an urgent need to improve young people's attainment in the senior phase across all measures.</i></p>	
<p><i>Senior leaders need to review the number of courses young people are presented for in both S4 and S5, including dual presentation as</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an understanding in all faculty areas that no pupil should leave a faculty in S4-S6 without achieving a qualification. This links to the closer tracking of young people so that they can be switched to a different course or level of course where they are more likely to</li> </ul>

<p><i>the school is not following national guidance.</i></p>	<p>be successful based on robust evidence of performance within classes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work continues to ensure that Harlaw Academy offers a curriculum that is broad and has a balance of breadth whilst maintaining a focus on ambition and 'highest and best'. This includes ensuring that young people at Harlaw Academy access consortium and city-wide curriculum offers.</li><li>• Consultation has been carried out to implement a change to the number of courses young people are presented for in S4, with a commitment to further review during session 2024-25. In session 24-25 S4 young people at Harlaw Academy will be in the main presented for 7 courses rather than the previous 8. From session 25-26 there will be a further reduction to 6 courses in S4 for the majority of the young people. This will enable young people to focus on achieving quality grades in a more refined number of courses. Historically data from the senior pupils of Harlaw Academy has demonstrated an insufficient number of young people achieving A &amp; B passes in their National 5 courses in S4. This is also impacting the choices and success of these S4 pupils when they move into S5 and S6, as in Higher courses when a young person has achieved a C or D award they are unlikely to be successful. The depth of learning from the S4 pupils studying more than 6 subjects in S4 at Harlaw Academy has not been there.</li><li>• The curriculum staff working group is examining the number of courses available to our young people across the senior phase. This is with a view to increasing the number of courses available for pupils to choose from in S4-S6. The courses that the group are focusing on are at SQA Level 5 and Level 6 that focus on internal assessment rather than an examination.</li><li>• A robust understanding at school level now means that dual presentations will follow national guidance.</li><li>• To support focused improvement, a set of measurable outcomes has been identified by school leaders to ensure that progress against the HMle recommendations is tracked and made.</li><li>• Additional Pupil Support Assistants have been employed within the school. Interviews for additional Support for Learning (SFL) teachers are scheduled for later in November. This is in recognition that the number of staff who were working with pupils who had an additional support need was less than in many other schools. This is allowing for the Faculty Head of SFL to provide strategies to those young people who need an extra level of support.</li><li>• A focus of the fortnightly middle leader training with the Pastoral Support team has been around effective pupil pathway planning. The good practice that exists within other schools in Aberdeen has been shared. A clearer routine of supporting pathway discussions</li></ul>
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	<p>with young people from S1 onwards is now in place. This will provide the young person and the school a greater knowledge of the direction that they wish to pursue during their time in school and also the area that they wish to pursue post-school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For those young people in S4-S6 a clarity of expectations has been given over what is expected from Guidance staff to ensure that we have an awareness of the pathway that each pupil is pursuing and that the supports are in place to help every young person in Harlaw Academy to achieve their goal.</li> </ul>
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QI	What the young people will experience	Measurable Outcomes	Activity	Owner
1.3	We want young people at Harlaw Academy to all experience a school that 'works' well for all of them, with everyone provided with the environment they need to flourish and be the best they can be, and the best version of themselves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All staff in school feeling actively involved, and understanding, the schools ongoing self-evaluation process through DMs, FSMs, and surveys and be clear over its intended positive impact on young people.</li> <li>Young people will have their views considered within the self-evaluation process via focus groups and surveys.</li> <li>There will be the creation of a wider range of working groups with an expectation that all staff will be on at least one working group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Robust analysis of attendance, attainment, and engagement data at faculty level in order to inform faculty plans</li> <li>Increase the opportunities for the whole education staff team to work collegially together through staff meetings and in-service days. This will create a greater sense of ownership and understanding of the school's improvement priorities and how they will contribute to creating improved outcomes for young people.</li> <li>Provide greater opportunities for young people to share their views listened to and acted upon through the consistent creation of pupil focus groups using feedback to inform staff working groups.</li> <li>Create a number of key working groups, including: Better Relationships, Better Learning, Learning &amp; Teaching, Curriculum, Tracking &amp; Monitoring, and Crew.</li> <li>Other whole-school working groups will be created based on the suggestions that staff want to see and be part of in school.</li> <li>There will be 10 slots allocated over the course of the session for staff to engage in their working group so that every member of the school's education team is supporting whole school improvement to lead to better outcomes for our young people.</li> </ul>	SLT SA SLT SLT SC
2.3	Young people will experience greater challenge in classes and the extent to which they are encouraged to be ambitious leading to improved outcomes. There will be a focus on every teacher having an action-plan to address an area of their teaching practice leading to young people experiencing a higher standard of learning and teaching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proportion of lessons evaluated as 'good' or better will increase when formal class observations return in 2025 demonstrating an improvement in the experiences of our young people.</li> <li>Surveys of young people, parents and staff will demonstrate a belief in an improvement of the quality of teaching in the school will improve and be demonstrated within surveys.</li> <li>Staff demonstrating a greater sense of ownership of L&amp;T and also the methods they can use to improve their practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarity provided from the L&amp;T working group over what makes an excellent lesson at Harlaw Academy.</li> <li>All staff will create an individual action plan to improve an area of their teaching practice. This will be shared with their Faculty Heads by the week beginning 23<sup>rd</sup> September.</li> <li>Staff will decide themselves the methodology they are using to improve their practice. This could be wider professional reading, peer observations, working in trios, FH observations, SLT observations etc.</li> <li>Training will be provided on the various methodology options that staff could utilise to improve their teaching practice within staff meetings and twilight sessions.</li> <li>There will be a pause in top-down observations from SLT and the LA until 2025.</li> <li>SLT observations of staff will return in January 2025 at which point we hope to see an overall improvement in the pedagogy and experiences of our young people from the implementation of individualised plans.</li> </ul>	DC DC DC DC SC SC
3.2	Young people will be encouraged to succeed through ambitious expectations, rigorous tracking with timely interventions, and a broader curricular offer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5@5 in S4</li> <li>M80% and H20% in S4</li> <li>1@6 and 3@6 in S5</li> <li>Young people will stay on at school in greater numbers especially in S6.</li> <li>Greater curriculum offer at Harlaw with alternative SCQF courses at level 5/6 for 2025-26</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on evidence gathered, a change will be made to the S4 curriculum for 2024-25, with a focus on 7 rather than 8 subjects. Young people will be able to concentrate on fewer subjects and gain better grades in these thanks to a greater depth of learning.</li> <li>The presentation policy will be used to ensure that all stakeholders are ambitious for the success of our young people.</li> <li>Robust procedures will be in place to ensure that young people achieve the 'highest and best' qualifications.</li> <li>A new tracking and monitoring system will be in place to ensure that greater ambition is demonstrated for our young people.</li> <li>Staff are confident at identifying which pupils require intervention to ensure they meet the demands of the level they are completing.</li> <li>Focus on ensuring that young people have a broad range of courses to choose from within the curriculum to ensure they achieve their full potential at Harlaw Academy and stay on at school in greater numbers.</li> </ul>	LL SA SA SA SA/FH LL



Harlaw Academy Faculty/Department Improvement Planning



Harlaw Academy Faculty/Department Improvement Planning



Faculty/Department	English
Staff Lead:	Mr Smith (FH)
Other Staff Involved:	English Faculty
School Priority QI	1.3 ✓ 2.2 ✓ 2.3 ✓ 3.2 ✓
Plan Overview:	<p><b>(QI 1.3) Leadership and Staff Morale</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff involvement with the school Relationships/Behaviour working group aims to offer support and strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour, identified in faculty meetings as a negative influence on staff morale. FH heavily involved in managing negative learning behaviours across the faculty, working one-to-one with students withdrawn from class, supporting positive reintegration measures, and delivering CPD related to behaviour management in faculty meetings. More broadly, FH aims to put strategies in place to maintain positive attainment trends after a successful set of exam results in 2024.</li> </ul> <p><b>(QI 1.3) Greater Staff Empowerment and Working Groups + (QI 1.3) Greater Staff Involvement in Self-evaluation and School Improvement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aiming to use faculty meetings to showcase excellent practice and quality resources from across the faculty, and beyond. Encourage participation in working groups and use Personal Action Plans to hold staff accountable for their own professional development. Grouping staff into pairs or trios, according to overlap in PAPs, will allow for constructive, targeted observations to take place.</li> </ul> <p><u>Personal action plans from English faculty members aim to address themes such as:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Differentiation</i></li> <li><i>Promoting engagement, pace and challenge</i></li> <li><i>Making the most of smartboards and other ICT</i></li> <li><i>Consolidating the delivery of alternative courses, such as Media and NPAs.</i></li> <li><i>Use of Oracy skills, including optimizing questioning in lessons</i></li> <li><i>Enhancing feedback protocols; offering feedback in a more diverse, efficient manner</i></li> </ul>

	<p><b>(QI 2.3) Learning and Teaching</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Again, facilitating lesson observations within the faculty as well as sharing good practice and conducting moderation at FMs will be central to our improvement. Renewed focus on assessment cycles, feedback protocols, and promoting positive learning behaviours are priority areas.</li> </ul> <p><b>(QI 3.2) Whole-school Tracking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment calendar has been agreed upon in our opening meeting. Monitoring use of our centralized, SP tracker will allow for an overview of attainment in the faculty. FH has composed a list of 'At Risk' students, with the aim of securing some level of attainment for all. Additionally, looking to update the BGE tracker to make it more streamlined. Also looking to update BGE topsheets/markings matrices to ensure consistency; moderation of BGE work will also help to achieve this reliability in tracking across the department.</li> <li><i>Other actions include lifting the standard for entry into a Higher English class, B+ at National 5.</i></li> <li><i>Level 6 Communication (already in place) and potentially L6 Scottish Studies, in the future, will offer a conduit for those students who are looking for an alternative Literacy pathway.</i></li> <li><i>Study support sessions to be put in place to support attainment.</i></li> </ul>
Activities and Timeline:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities detailed above. All to be put in place this session, with the exception of L6 Scottish Studies, which is a potential project for session '25/'26.</li> </ul>
Milestones:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Successfully presenting L6 Communication candidates. Likely to be verified after first year of presentation, so aiming for "strong confidence" feedback from the SQA following that process.</li> <li>In terms of improving departmental behaviour standards, a key measure of success will be to see a reduced number of referrals (79 between starting in August and end of term 1 as FH). I would like to half this number between October and Christmas break. Staff testimony will also be used to gauge any shifts in behavioural standards across the department.</li> <li>Hoping to see a particular uplift in the RUAЕ prelim paper at N5 and Higher level, as we target this area of the SP course (identified as sub-optimal in attainment meeting).</li> <li>Maintaining positive trends in attainment at N5, whilst also looking to pull up RUAЕ to hit the national average. Looking to take overall Higher attainment up closer to national average.</li> </ul>



Harlaw Academy Faculty/Department Improvement Planning



<p>Measures of Success:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff testimony, perhaps in a concluding FM, can give a measure of where things are at regarding staff morale. Planning to check-in with this at the end of each term, informally. Improving staff morale will help staff retention, resulting in consistent and high-quality delivery of courses. Naturally, staff wellbeing is worthwhile as an end in itself.</li> <li>- Looking to continue positive trends in N5 attainment, specifically targeting an uplift in RUAE, which has been stubbornly low, historically. Uplift in our N5 performances will better equip students moving on to level 6 courses and give students the best possible chance of positive destinations after their time at Harlaw is over. Getting more students into our '5@5' bracket is a key measure of success for our centre, one which the English faculty plays a key role in, with such a high proportion of senior students taking our course.</li> <li>- Looking to bring Higher results closer to the national comparison. Option of Level 6 Communication should improve attainment of Level 6 Literacy, whilst also offering an outlet to those students at risk for a N/A at Higher English. Looking to take N/As below 10% (15% last session).</li> <li>- Hoping to improve consistency of tracking and monitoring protocols. Updating the BGE tracker and feedback systems will improve reliability when it comes to gauging the level of BGE candidates. Easy consensus during moderation meetings and general uniformity between classes will help to evidence this. Accuracy of predicted grade vs actual grade will be a key measure of success for tracking systems across the Senior Phase. Accurate tracking systems across the BGE will help the faculty to launch attainment interventions as early as possible, to maximise the chances of making an impact on students' long-term attainment prospects. In turn, having a clear picture of where students are at by the end of S3 will help us to place students accurately into Senior Phase courses. Mapping optimal curricular pathways will help students to gain maximum value from their time in S4-S6.</li> </ul>
<p>Review Date:</p>	
<p>Next Steps:</p>	<p>Actions detailed above. Ensuring the relevant staff are ready to deliver and assess L6 Communication, and tracking initiatives, are priority actions ahead of inspection in March/April.</p>

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Areas for improvement (Appendix C – Happitots)	Action required	Stakeholders & timescale	Desired outcomes for children	Evidence and review/confirmed completion	RAG Rating
<b>How good is our care play and learning? 1.1 Nurturing care and support , 1.2 Play and Learning &amp; 1.3 Play and learning</b>					
<p>Ensure all children experience nurturing and supportive mealtimes, the provider should support the staff and management team to improve mealtime experiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mealtime observations and audits</li> <li>Management to work alongside staff team to model best practice with mealtimes and interactions</li> <li>Mealtimes to promote independence and allow children to self-serve food and drinks</li> <li>Marvelous mealtimes Falkirk council to be delivered at staff training</li> <li>Children will have access to fresh water throughout the day</li> <li>Safe and Successful mealtimes guidance will be read by all staff, with training reflection forms completed</li> <li>Staff rotas within each room will be implemented outlining responsibilities and tasks within the room</li> </ul>	<p>Immediate action to be taken</p> <p>Training to be completed by 31/08/2024</p>	<p>-Practice by staff reflects families' personal preferences and promotes children's independence</p> <p>-Children to experience mealtimes in an unhurried and relaxed atmosphere ensuring a caring and positive social experience</p> <p>-Fresh water is available through the day and children are encouraged to remain hydrated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marvelous Mealtimes Falkirk online training completed by each staff member, the staff have furthered their knowledge and understanding of mealtimes, and this has been seen through monitoring practice. However, it is evident that the preschool room requires further support with their mealtimes</li> <li>Children have fresh water through the day in each room. This is evidenced in morning checklists. Staff members sign checklist when water station has been made</li> <li>Staff rotas are still ongoing but have ensured that all tasks and cleaning required is being completed through the day</li> </ul>	
<p>Support children's wellbeing, development and progress, personal planning approaches should be further developed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal plan training (this will be done during a training in-service day)</li> <li>In-service nursery training day</li> <li>Rigorous quality assurance process will be implemented to monitor quality and impact</li> <li>Personal plan audits carried out by management team and SEYP</li> </ul>	<p>Immediate action to be taken</p> <p>Inservice day: 4<sup>th</sup> of October</p> <p>Parents' evening 16<sup>th</sup> November</p>	<p>-Children's overall wellbeing is supported through effective use of personal planning</p> <p>-Children and families are central to this process ensuring effective information sharing which is used</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monthly monitoring of personal plans is carried out by both management team and SEYP in each room</li> <li>Quality assurance has shown that personal plans and connect have improved within the SB and MB room meaning</li> </ul>	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement parent's night every 6-months for reviews and assessment tracking</li> </ul>		<p>by staff to promote consistence and continuity of care</p>	<p>that children's progress is being tracked and developed. PS requires some more time and knowledge to develop theirs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prior to the Inservice day management completed a thorough personal plan audit on all personal plans and outlined actions for each plan to further support staff</li> <li>Personal Plan training was completed as part of the Inservice day. The team discussed each part of the personal plan including what they are for, and how we can use them. We discussed some examples and how to embed learning and development into personal plans. Time was given for personal plans to be added to.</li> <li>Parent's night has been added to the calendar. It will be held on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November</li> </ul>	
<p>Promote high quality play, learning and development opportunities, the provider should ensure staff are supported to develop an understanding of relevant child development theory and approaches that empower children to lead their play and learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality Assurance calendar to be put in place</li> <li>PDP/CPD folders to be put in place, SSSC continuous learning framework will form a core component</li> <li>Staff training matrix to be made and will be based on core training list</li> <li>Implement system to monitor quality of training self-evaluation (EYPs monitor their PDP folder and evaluation the impact of their training)</li> </ul>	<p>Immediate action 2x a month staff meeting</p>	<p>-Staff have a good understanding of child development, relevant theory, and practice, and skilfully use this to support high quality play and learning experiences.  -Children made informed choices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff meetings have been held twice a month. A staff meeting schedule has been placed on the training board to inform parents our focuses for each staff meeting. Every third staff meeting (second when we go back to one a month) is focused on CPD and</li> </ul>	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement twice monthly staff meetings for training and learning (Environment training)</li> <li>• Signpost staff to CI hub to learn and refresh their knowledge</li> <li>• Signpost staff to SSSC badges and MY SSSC app.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>		<p>about learning their play within a stimulating, challenging, creative setting.</p>	<p>looking back at the impact of the training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conversations have been had with staff regarding SSSC badges, but none have been completed yet. This will be discussed further.</li> <li>• In-service day has been completed and has been very beneficial. Personal plan, planning, environments, child protection, provocations and invitations to play were covered in depth.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>How good is our setting? 2.2 – Children experience high quality facilities</b></p>					
<p>Children experience play and learning opportunities that promote their wellbeing and development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff training on enabling environments and planning through management</li> <li>• Training on child development and development theory</li> <li>• All staff will complete flick training</li> <li>• Staff will take note of resources, new resources will be sourced</li> <li>• Additional Support Needs advisory project (ASNAP) contacted to visit and support enabling environments</li> <li>• ASN coordinator will review care plans every 3 months (including audit)</li> <li>• Monthly planning on audits</li> </ul>	<p>Immediate action</p> <p>Ongoing monthly</p> <p>ASNAP coming to complete training on the 26<sup>th</sup> of Sept</p>	<p>-The setting is very comfortable, furnished to a high standard and welcoming with plenty of natural light and ventilation. It gives a strong message to children that they matter and have ample space for their needs.</p> <p>-Indoor and outdoor environments are sensitively structured and take account of age and stage of children. Spaces reflect children's current interests and curiosities with appropriate resources and materials to support learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff have completed flick training on environments in early years the impact is shown in the room as environment audits have evidenced that they are improving. Children are more engaged in their activities and experiences and enjoy being in the room</li> <li>• ASNAP training has been completed and has been beneficial for all staff. This has supported staff in dealing with behaviours in different manners and looking into why children behave in certain ways. A quiz has been sent via email for staff to complete</li> </ul>	

				<p>by 4<sup>th</sup> of November along with impact on practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hana and Ursula (EY head) have ordered resources for each garden. This will ensure that the gardens are extensions of indoor areas and are inviting and loved.</li> </ul>	
<p>Ensure the health and safety and wellbeing of children, the provider must ensure the service is safe, secure, and well-maintained</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thrive health and safety audits to be completed monthly</li> <li>Staff opening and closing checks include reporting maintenance issues to management and put onto maintenance log (Manager to spot check daily)</li> <li>Risk assessments to be completed to mitigate security risks</li> <li>Internal door at entrance to be replaced to make more secure</li> <li>External door at entrance to be replaced</li> <li>Staff training: dynamic risk assessments, importance of completing daily indoors and outdoors checks and reporting faults immediately</li> </ul>	<p>Implement as soon as possible</p> <p>Training to be completed at upcoming staff meeting</p>	<p>-Well-functioning arrangements for monitoring, maintenance, and repair of the setting</p> <p>-Staff work well together to identify and remove risks to children within the setting both indoors and outdoors across the whole day. They ensure the environment is safe and secure, in doing so children's activities are not compromised and they are supported to enjoy challenging, fun, play experiences.</p> <p>-The setting provides security and safety without impinging on children's rights and reflects the service's aims and objectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Risk assessment completed to mitigate security risks</li> <li>Internal door at entrance of the nursery has been replaced and a key code lock has been added</li> <li>Impact has shown that the children now attend a setting where they are safe and secure. Children are unable to leave the premises by the front of side doors as new gates and internal doors have been added. The code on the door will be changed termly to manage the code being spread to more than just parents collecting their children</li> <li>Staff meetings covered dynamic risk assessments and health and safety checklists in depth. To measure the impact of this Hana has been completing deployment spot checks to ensure that staff are in areas they would be able to assess</li> </ul>	

				<p>risks effectively. Management checks cover checking each rooms checklists to check they are being completed and the actions are completed to a good standard.</p>	
<p>Provider must ensure children experience a consistently clean and homely environment through the implementation of robust infection, prevention, and control practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff training:infection, prevention and control, health and safety, importance of looking after resources and raising any issues</li> <li>• Infection control training will be prioritised as part of induction week process for any new employees</li> <li>• Health and safety will form part of monthly staff meetings. Infection control being added to the agenda termly</li> <li>• Nighttime checklist for cleaner to be created and used daily</li> <li>• Room rotas to organise responsibilities of keeping areas within each room clean</li> <li>• Deep cleaning to take part 2x a year</li> <li>• Infection control audit to be completed weekly then monthly as per QA calendar (SEYP to complete monthly)</li> <li>• Environmental audits will take place weekly then monthly (QA calendar)</li> </ul>	<p>Training to completed throughout the staff meetings</p> <p>Implement immediately and ongoing</p> <p>First deep clean taking part on 4/10/2024</p>	<p>-Robust infection prevention and control and food safety practices provide high levels of safety for children. These are supported by effective quality assurance practice</p> <p>-All staff understand the arrangements for cleaning within the service. Risk assessments have been undertaken that address the current guidance in respect of infection prevention and control. Staff have received appropriate training on infection prevention and control and are confident in ensuring a high-quality safe environment for themselves and the children in their care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cleaner checks have been made and the cleaner has been using effectively</li> <li>• Infection audits monthly has shown an improvement in infection control procedures in each room. Weekly audits being carried out by senior staff members have shown some issues and these are actioned immediately. This ensures that the children have a safe and clean environment to clean. They are also being shown how to keep their resources clean and are encouraged to take part</li> <li>• Environmental &amp; hygiene audits have shown a massive improvement, I feel confident to allow for these documents to be completed monthly by the management team. Seniors will complete weekly or where required. Management will continue to spot check their documents. The next</li> </ul>	

				spot check will be the 11 <sup>th</sup> during our senior meeting.	
Prevent the spread of infection and promote positive hand hygiene, staff should support children in effective handwashing practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infection control training- with training reflection forms completed</li> <li>• Posters displayed in hand washing areas</li> <li>• Monitoring of cleaning practices to be delegated to ensure this is completed to a high standard</li> </ul>		<p>-Robust infection prevention and control and food safety practices provide high levels of safety for children. These are supported by effective quality assurance practice</p> <p>- Staff have received appropriate training on infection prevention and control and are confident in ensuring a high-quality safe environment for themselves and the children in their care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posters have been added to hand washing areas</li> <li>• Staff have completed infection control training and have completed training reflection forms</li> <li>• Hygiene audits were completed weekly I found the improvements were in place and am comfortable with these audits being completed monthly to ensure all areas of infection control are still in place effectively</li> </ul>	
<b>How good is our leadership? - 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well</b>					
Ensure children experience consistently positive care, play and learning opportunities, the provider must develop quality assurance systems that promote improved outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a robust improvement plan, addressing weakness and building on current strengths</li> <li>• Implement an in-service day to enhance training opportunities</li> <li>• Extra staff meetings to be added each month so that two monthly meetings are held to provide extra opportunity for training</li> <li>• Staff PDP/CPD completed based on supervision discussions</li> <li>• Training calendar to be devised to target required training and action revisits for impact</li> <li>• Staff will complete a reflection overview for each training piece and revisit this in 6 weeks to evaluate impact of training</li> </ul>	Implement immediately and continue to update	<p>-Leaders have a comprehensive understanding of the importance of using the views of children and families, as well as partners, to inform planning and development of the service</p> <p>-Learning through play is at the heart of improvement planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A detailed action plan has been created that outlines weaknesses, ways to improve and build on current strengths.</li> <li>• CPD/PDP folders have been made and started with each staff member</li> <li>• 2 staff meetings have been organised from September onwards</li> <li>• In-service day has been organised for the 4<sup>th</sup> of October</li> <li>• The in-service day was completed and was beneficial to the team. Areas that were covered:</li> </ul>	

				personal plans, planning, deployment, environments, provocations, invitations to play and transient art.	
<b>How good is our staff team? – 4.3 Staff deployment</b>					
Ensure that children's care, learning and support needs are met, the provider must ensure staffing arrangements are safe and effective to meet the needs of all children in the service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training: staff deployment regarding sensible decisions, personal plan, observation and assessment training, provocation, child development and theorists, schemas, nation and local documents and guidance</li> <li>• ASN co-ordinator to receive training</li> <li>• All staff to read and review Thrive ASN guidance</li> </ul>	Immediately implemented and ongoing	<p>-deployment and levels of staff are effective in ensuring high-quality outcomes for children</p> <p>-staff are flexible and support each other to work as a team to benefit children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training completed during staff meetings and in-service day. Impact is measured through checks through the day, conversations with the staff, looking at their planning and completing their CPD revisit.</li> <li>• SB &amp; MB have both used schemas during their planning and are supporting their key children with their knowledge!</li> <li>• ASN guidance has been sent to all staff to read and complete a training reflection form.</li> <li>• ASNco has received two training opportunities with an ASNco from Boddam to better support their role.</li> </ul>	
Ensure children are effectively safeguarded, the staff and management team should be supported to improve their knowledge of child protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training: Child protection, Chronologies</li> <li>• Contact outside agencies to source child protection training</li> <li>• CI Child protection care inspectorate hub to be included on Inservice day</li> </ul>	Inservice day: 4/10/24	-Children and families benefit from staff that are well trained, competent, skilled and register with the relevant professional body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child protection was a large part of the in-service day. Ursula, head of the early years, discussed policies and guidance for child protection and discussed real world scenarios for everyone to discuss.</li> <li>• Discussions were also held where we discussed how</li> </ul>	

				we kept our children safe from harm daily	
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Appendix D - Little Dreams Nursery - Improvement plan following inspection – October 2024					
Area for improvement 1	To ensure children access experiences meaningful to them which support their learning and provide increased opportunities to have fun and experience joy, children should be supported to lead their own play and learning.				
	Action required & stakeholders involved	Timescale	Desired outcomes for children	Evidence and confirmed completion	RAG Rating
<p>Further develop staff knowledge and understanding of child development, relevant theory and practice</p> <p>Further develop loose parts play in the indoor environments to support children’s play experiences.</p> <p>Further develop the staff teams understanding and use of high-quality interactions, extending children’s thinking and widening their skills to support them in developing their curiosity, creativity and</p>	<p>All staff and management will undertake CPD using the following documents:</p> <p>Health &amp; Social Care Standards 2.27 &amp; 2.22 Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged children. Realising the Ambition: Being Me Curriculum for Excellence SHANARRI wellbeing indicators Play Scotland Risky Play</p> <p>Resources required for improvement include but is not limited to:</p> <p>Internet – guidance, research, training. In-House training evenings. Tools –</p>	<p>All improvements achieved between Dec 2024 - March 2025</p>	<p>Staff have a greater knowledge and understanding of child development and provide experiences to show this.</p> <p>Children’s learning and development is being extended appropriately.</p> <p>Staff have a greater knowledge and understanding of loose parts play and this is evident during play.</p> <p>Children use loose parts confidently during play experiences.</p> <p>Staff have high-quality interactions with the children and extending children’s thinking and skills with ease.</p> <p>Children are curious, creative and lead their own play with less support from staff.</p>		

leading on their play and learning.	computer, iPads, cameras Care Inspectorate Inspection & report Scottish Government Play Scotland Lead locality officer External training providers Floor books Wall displays Resource list				
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### Danestone ELC Improvement Plan 2024-2025

How Good is our Care, PI

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<b>Improvement Outcomes</b> What do we hope to achieve?	Measures of Success How will we know this has been achieved? What evidence will we have?	Actions Required What do we need to do?	Timescales	Resources Who and what is required? (including cost/fund)	R	A	G
<b>Requirement 1</b>							
Staff are knowledgeable about the individual care needs of children and this is used to keep children safe.	Record of meeting will be kept and signed off by all staff and SLT	Individual meetings with all nursery staff to review Personal Plans and Risk Assessments used to support children.	5 July 24	Locality Lead and Nursery Team			
Next Steps	All Personal Plans will be shared with the Leadership Team for Quality Assurance.  All chronologies will be quality assured weekly by Nursery Leadership.  Minutes of weekly briefings will align with chronologies and SLT samples these weekly/monthly to quality assure.	Personal plans are robust and time is protected for staff to familiarize themselves with these.  All staff will review Personal Plans of returners and share strategies for key children. All staff will have allocated admin in the weekly planning and updates to plans/strategies will be shared with wider team through morning briefings.  Each child has a chronology which tracks strategies identified to support their needs. These will be updated regularly and staff will be supported to ensure children's needs are being met each day.	19 August 24  27 Sept 24  6 September 24	Nursery Team and Leadership Team  Nursery Team and Leadership Team  Nursery Team and SEYP			
Hazardous items are inaccessible to children.	Ongoing monitoring by senior staff to ensure standards are maintained.  Minutes of Staff meetings and Daily Briefing	Immediate audit of nursery to ensure all hazardous items are out of reach of children.  A rota is in place to ensure the nursery toilet areas are checked every hour and regularly throughout the session.  Health & Safety will be the first item on all meeting agenda and a review of staff remits and responsibilities to ensure this is a priority for all will take place weekly at staff meetings.	30 May 2024  31 May 2024	Nursery Team and Leadership Team  Principal Teacher and SEYP  Nursey Leadership Team			

Staff supervise and support children effectively to prevent them coming to harm.	Daily checklists completed as part of the evaluation process for staff and children.	Zoning of nursery, supports effective deployment of staff to supervise and support children’s safety. Daily safety evaluations will be modelled by LLO and supported by senior leaders to evaluate the nursery environment before children arrive.	5 July 2024	Locality Lead and Nursery Team	
	Leadership will review record sheet daily/regularly to quality assure impact.	On arrival, children will then repeat the risk assessment process with a member of the nursery staff.	5 July 2024	Nursery Team and Children	
	Further consultation will all member of the nursery community will evidence impact along with daily monitoring by nursery leaders.	The sign-in sheet will be edited to allow easier record keeping where pupils have had sun cream applied at home. A daily record sheet will be maintained for repeated application and an allocated member of staff will be responsible for this.	3 July 2024	Nursery Team, Children and families	
		A new protocol for Drop off/Pick Up was created with the nursery community which supports the monitoring of adults visiting the setting and the safety of children at these busy times.	3 June 2024	Nursery Team and Children	
	Quality assurance and observations	During warm weather a water station is in place in the nursery garden to ensure children have access to water at all times. Staff encourage and monitor children to ensure they are hydrated.	5 July 2024	AO Practitioner, LLO and nursery team	
Children are well supervised and not left in play areas unattended.	Nursery leaders will monitor this on a daily basis.	Coaching approaches have been used to improve staff confidence and competency in supporting children effectively. Individual meetings and on-the-floor coaching was provided to individual practitioners.	5 July 2024	Nursery Team and Leadership Team	
		Door alarms must be used to alert staff to any children exiting the space.	5 July 2024		
		Use of radios will support the effective deployment of staff to allow for safe movement of children throughout the setting.	5 July 2024		
Next Steps		Update nursery values to introduce ‘Safe’ and involve the children in creating a character to support their understanding of safety and keeping safe in nursery.	Term 3 2024	Nursery Team and Leadership Team	Coin drop to be used to capture family views on values and evaluate if ‘safe’ is a
		Use of care Inspectorate improvement programs to support staff development. This will be planned within the Annual Calendar.	December 2024		

		<a href="#">Early learning and childcare improvement programme   Care Inspectorate Hub</a>	May 2025		requirement. Review with children during session and staff on Nov Inset.
A plan is in place to monitor staff practice and further develop staff knowledge and skills to identify risks for children and act when needed	Nursery Annual Calendar will provide an overview of all training and staff development.	Individual coaching for staff to enhance their awareness of monitoring all children by Locality Lead	5 July 2024	Carol Main and Nursery Team	
Next Steps	All training will include a confidence survey for staff and will then feed into Leadership Quality Assurance to evaluate impact.	Training through Health and Safety colleagues of ACC to support staff monitor groups of children in a wide space and assessing risk.	17 & 19 Sept 24	Caroline Duguid and nursery Team	
		A member of the nursery leadership team will quality assure all personal plans. This will include observing the impact of strategies to support children. This will be done through Learning Walks and observations.	Term 1 2024	Nursery Leadership Team	
		CRD sessions with Wellbeing Team to increase staff understanding of behaviour as a form of communication, increase confidence in supporting children effectively and building an effective and supportive staff team.	30 April 2024 14 May 2024 4 June 2024 Nov/Dec 2024	Karen Gebbie Smith (Trainer)	
					Date tbc
<b>Requirement 2</b>					
Children's up-to-date care and support needs are included within their personal plan and staff use this information to effectively support them.	Record of meeting will be kept and signed off by all staff and SLT	All Personal Plans were updated in Term 4 with Key Worker meeting with family members.	5 July 2024	Nursery Team	
	Timetable of coaching sessions	Individual meetings with all nursery staff to review Personal Plans and Risk Assessments used to support children.	5 July 2024	Locality Lead and Nursery Team	
	Minutes of daily briefing will be kept	Specialist staff from ASN service provide coaching opportunities to ensure staff are effectively supporting children using identified strategies.	5 July 2024	ASN EYP and Nursery Team	
	Further consultation will all member of the	Daily briefings highlight changes to identified strategies for individual children.	5 July 2024	Nursery Leadership	
			5 July 2024		

	nursery community will evidence impact along with daily monitoring by nursery leaders	A new protocol for Drop off/Pick Up was created with the nursery community to ensure a warm welcome is received by all visitors to the nursery and children are supported through this transition.			
	Quality Assurance by the Leadership team will monitor the impact of support strategies for children.  All personal plans will be signed off by a member of leadership to ensure consistency and, once written, are regularly reviewed throughout the session.	Information within Personal Plan is reviewed regularly with children, families, other professionals and relevant staff. Through this, appropriate next steps and strategies are identified based on individual needs and reflect children's choices and wishes.  Next steps and strategies are used by staff to ensure consistency and continuity for all children. Weekly briefings will be used to highlight any updates to the nursery team.	5 July 2024  5 July 2024	Nursery Team and Leadership Team  Nursery Team and Leadership Team	
Next Steps	Peer moderation both within the setting and with colleagues from across the authority.	Planned opportunities will be available for staff to development their practice, both internally and across partner settings. In additions, staff swaps will be facilitate to allow professional development of the team specifically on implementing strategies effectively with children.	Term 2 and Term 3	Nursery Team and Leadership Team	Calendar being created for remained of session.
	Evaluate ongoing impact of changes and consultation process through regular review of the improvement plan.	Update of nursery handbook with any new procedures and shared with families.  Discussion with children about their experience: things that are going well and any further changes they would like to see.  Parent feedback shared with all families  SEYP and SLT will quality assure the experience through observation and professional discussion to highlight any further points for improvement. This will continue at the beginning of every term to ensure impact is sustained. Consultation with families and children will also be part of this process.	Term 2  September 2024  Termly  27 September 24, November 24, January 25 and June 25	Nursery Leadership Team  SLT and nursery Team  Nursery Leadership Team	In progress  Ongoing  Term 1 review completed

<p>Staff are well informed about the children attending and use this information to provide individualised and responsive care relevant to their needs.</p>	<p>Record of meeting will be kept and signed off by all staff and SLT</p> <p>A log is kept to evidence this and ensure all staff are well informed about children needs.</p> <p>Senior Leaders will monitor these regularly through observations, to ensure they are up to date and used effectively.</p>	<p>Individual meetings with all nursery staff to review Personal Plans and Risk Assessments used to support children.</p> <p>A one-page summary for every child is accessible for all staff to ensure familiarity with children needs. This is also used to brief relief staff about children’s needs. Maintaining this record be the responsibility of the key worker</p> <p>Induction checklists will be reviewed to ensure all new and relief members of staff have accessed relevant information.</p>	<p>5 July 2024</p> <p>5 July 2024</p> <p>5 July 2024</p>	<p>Locality Lead</p> <p>Principal Teacher and Nursery Team</p> <p>Nursery Leadership Team</p>	
<p>Children are provided with warmth, comfort, and compassion</p>	<p>A member of SLT will be at all pick-up and drop-off times to model warm and nurturing interactions.</p> <p>Daily monitoring by leadership team through observations. Formal and Informal feedback from children and families</p> <p>Minutes of meetings and daily briefing ensure staff are kept up to date with relevant information about the children. The impact of these briefings will be observed by the leadership team through interactions with the children and feedback from families.</p>	<p>Children are given a warm welcome when they arrive in the morning and when they move between areas throughout the day.</p> <p>Nursery Staff will work and interact with children at their level this is also modelled by SLT/Locality Lead/ASN EYP and staff provided with immediate feedback if required.</p> <p>Nursery Meetings ensure expectations of staff are clear and individual discussions will take place where issues are observed and informal counselling introduced</p> <p>Additional comfort and care will be provided at moments of distress, if instigated by a child or if needed. Effective strategies are shared at daily briefings e.g. supports provided to children struggling with the transition into nursery in the morning.</p>	<p>5 July 2024</p> <p>5 July 2024</p> <p>5 July 2024</p> <p>5 July 2024</p>	<p>SLT and nursery Team</p> <p>SLT and nursery Team</p> <p>SLT and nursery Team</p> <p>Nursery Leadership Team</p>	
	<p><u>Drop Off/Pick Up</u> Baseline information from sample of parents attending focus group.</p>	<p><u>Drop off/Pick up</u> Parent Forum held to evaluate and improve the Pick-up and drop-off experience for children and families.</p>	<p>June 2024</p> <p>June 2024</p>	<p>SLT and families</p>	



	Feedback from parents, staff and children to refresh process	Discussion with children about their experience and suggestions for improvement		Nursery team and nursery children	
Next Steps	Record of VIPs is kept and photographs are taken to celebrate winners	V.I.P certificates will be awarded to children who demonstrate these values or caring and kindness in their daily interactions.  Professional Development sessions will support staff to ensure this is embedded within all interactions moving forward.	December 2024  Term 1	Principal Teacher and SEYP  Karen Gebbie Smith	In place but use of these is part of the consultation
Children are well supported in their personal care including when going to the toilet and handwashing.	Updates are shared through daily briefings and impact observed during nursery sessions.  Feedback received through daily interactions with families  Class observations will ensure the impact of changes for the children	Clear information is recorded in children's Personal Plan to ensure staff are aware of their level of independence for toileting. This is updated as children become more independent and information shared at the morning briefing/communication book so all staff are aware of changes.  All staff understand who requires additional support, what that looks like and how we are teaching the children the skills to become more independent. This information will be kept in the one-page guide.  New staff/relief staff will be offered training and modelling to ensure they are aware of the correct support to provide for children.  Handwashing will be prompted throughout the day by nursery staff who will monitor children to ensure this is done thoroughly. Tissues will be available for children throughout the setting	5 July 2024  5 July 2024  5 July 2024	Principal Teacher  Principal Teacher  Nursery Staff Team, Leadership Team and LLO	
<b>Requirement 3</b>					
Children are effectively supervised and supported by staff during meal and snack times.	Daily observation by SEYP/SLT. This will be fed-back to staff as part of daily briefings or individually when required.	A new lunchtime protocol has been created to ensure children have an enjoyable and relaxed experience. Staff have consulted on this along with ACC colleagues to identify a more successful routine. All staff will be supported by PT and LLO to implement new routine.  A member of staff will be at each lunch/snack table and individual children will have extra support if required. The server will ensure	May 24  5 July 2024	Locality Lead, SLT and Nursery Team  Principal Teacher and Nursery Team	

		<p>that all children know where to sit and tables are numbered to help this. The floating member of staff along with all lunch helpers will prompt and support children to wash hands before and after eating. Radios will be used to support safe movement of the children to and from mealtimes</p> <p>Staff deployment supports all children appropriately, ensuring those who require extra support receive this. Areas of the nursery are closed to allow for safe management of lunchtime routines. A rota and deployment schedule allows for this to be monitored.</p>	<p>5 July 2024</p> <p>5 July 2024</p>	<p>Locality Lead and Principal Teacher</p> <p>Principal Teacher and Nursery Team</p>	
<p>Meals and snacks are a time for supporting children's independence, skills and social development and learning.</p>	<p>Daily observation by SEYP/SLT. This will be fed-back to staff as part of daily briefings.</p> <p>Peer observations will support staff in developing their skills in effectively promoting key skills.</p>	<p>Staff promote and model positive interaction while supporting pupils through this routine.</p> <p>Positive interaction between adults and children will support children's language and communication</p> <p>This ensures children have opportunities to support the set-up of lunchtime, make choices about what they eat for lunch/snack and have opportunities to serve themselves.</p>	<p>5 July 2024</p> <p>5 July 2024</p> <p>5 July 2024</p>	<p>Principal Teacher and Nursery Team</p> <p>Principal Teacher and Nursery Team</p> <p>Principal Teacher and Nursery Team</p>	
<b>Area for Improvement 1</b>					
<p>To support children's health and wellbeing, the provider should ensure that children are provided with a warm, comfortable space for sleep and are given the nurturing care to aid rest and relaxation.</p>	<p>Views of children, families and staff will be gathered and used to inform change.</p> <p>Change will be implemented and impact monitored through feedback and observations.</p>	<p>Nursery environment to be reviewed to ensure that a suitable sleep/relaxations space is available for children who need quiet time or a rest. Children, families and staff will plan, develop and implement this change.</p> <p>Additional opportunities for children to have quiet/relaxation time reviewed and build into their daily routines</p>	<p>September 2024</p> <p>September 2024</p>	<p>Nursery Team, Nursery Children and Families</p> <p>Nursery Team, Nursery Children and Families</p>	
<b>Area for Improvement 2</b>					
<p>Children experience high quality play and learning relevant to their age and stage of development.</p>	<p>Classroom observations and learning walks will evidence the impact of the learning environments and</p>	<p>Intentional Planning process are reviewed and collegiate planning routines established. Routines will include opportunities for all staff, children and families to support planning within the nursery setting.</p>	<p>September 24</p> <p>December 24</p> <p>March 25</p> <p>June 25</p>	<p>Nursery Leadership Team</p>	<p>Term 1 planning reviewed and updated</p>



	<p>planning on the children's experiences.</p> <p>Clear assessment guidance and training provided to staff. QA impact on children</p>	<p>Regular evaluation of the learning environment, including the quality of interactions, experiences and spaces and their impact on children's learning.</p> <p>Review approaches to assessment to ensure they are used to effectively to promote all aspects of children's development, learning and wellbeing.</p>	<p>September 24 December 24 March 25 June 25</p> <p>November 24</p>	<p>Nursery Leadership Team</p> <p>Nursery Team, Nursery Children and Families</p>	<p>Term 1 evaluations and QA completed</p>
<p>Staff are knowledgeable and trained in supporting children's learning</p>	<p>A training record will be maintained by all individual staff and for the nursery team. This will include evaluations on the impact of training for the children through Quality Assurance.</p>	<p>Staff's training records will be reviewed along with quality assurance information to ensure development areas are identified and training opportunities are provided. The impact of any training will be assessed.</p> <p>Opportunities will be provided to staff to share good practice through staff meetings and inset day training.</p>	<p>November 24 March 24</p> <p>November 24 March 24</p>	<p>Nursery Team and Leadership Team</p> <p>Nursery Team and Leadership Team</p>	<p>Ongoing and individual coaching in place where required.</p> <p>In place and ongoing</p>

How Good is Our Setting							
Improvement Outcomes What do we hope to achieve?	Measures of Success How will we know this has been achieved? <i>What evidence will we have?</i>	Actions Required What do we need to do?	Timescales	Resources Who and what is required? (including cost/fund)	R	A	G
<b>Requirement 1</b>							
Children are effectively supervised and supported to wash hands following best practice guidance.	Senior staff will monitor this regularly throughout the nursery session.	All staff will support children with gently reminders to wash their hands when required and praise will be offered when this is done independently or when support is given to friends. Staff will ensure that children are follow best practice for handwashing and teaching them why it is important.	5 July 2024	Nursery Team and SLT			
		Handwashing will be included within intentional planning to develop this skill in children. The Glitterbug resource will support children to understand why it is important to support their understanding and development.	5 July 2024	Nursery Team and SLT			
		Children’s Personal Plans will include up to date information about any support they require with care/toileting routines, and this will be known by the nursery team. Individual meetings will ensure this is the case.	5 July 2024	Nursery Team and SLT			
Toilets and hand wash facilities for children are clean, and in a presentable state for children to use.	Senior staff will monitor the use of this rota on a daily basis to ensure standards are maintained.	A staff rota will be used to ensure the toilet areas are checked regularly during the nursery session. When needed they will be cleaned thoroughly to ensure a safe environment for children. In addition to this, nursery staff will check these areas throughout the session to ensure any issues are identified quickly and addressed in a timely manner.	5 July 2024	Nursery Team and SLT			
		Any additional issues identified through SLT monitoring will be addressed immediately and staff updated both individually and through the team daily briefing.	5 July 2024	Nursery Team and SLT			
Staff understand and implement safe and effective infection	Meeting led by SLT will confirm staff have refreshed their knowledge and have a	All staff have refreshed their knowledge of the Care Inspectorate Infection Prevention and Control Policy as well as Danestone Nursery policy. Copies sent to all individuals by email, a copy has been uploaded to the shared drive.	5 July 2024	Nursery Team and SLT			

<p>prevention and control practices.</p>	<p>clear understanding. Daily monitoring will further evidence this.</p> <p>A log is kept by nursery leadership to track which policy have been read and understood.</p>	<p>A hardcopy of Infection Control policies is kept in the nursery floor by the leadership team to ensure that new/relief staff are inducted with procedures and understand how to support children effectively.</p>	<p>5 July 2024</p>	<p>SLT</p>	<p></p>
<p><b>Area for Improvement 1</b></p>	<p></p>	<p></p>	<p></p>	<p></p>	<p></p>
<p>To support children's developmental needs, and learning the provider should ensure there are appropriate areas, resources and materials to support children's interest, creativity and curiosity.</p>	<p>Quality Assurance of planning by nursery leadership team.</p> <p>Parent focus group and consultation to capture views on use of resources.</p> <p>Pupils observations to assess whether resources are engaging pupils.</p>	<p>A refresh of approaches to planning to support staff development and ensure learning needs of children are consistently met.</p> <p>An audit and reorganisation of resources to ensure a range of contexts are provided to children to promote their curiosity and creativity.</p> <p>Regular opportunities for children to share their views on changes to the environment and resourcing.</p> <p>Planned opportunities for staff to visit other setting.</p>	<p>30 Sept 24</p> <p>30 Sept 24</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Term 2 and Term 3</p>	<p>SEYP and Nursery Team</p> <p>SEYP and Nursery Team</p> <p>Nursery Team and children</p> <p>SEYP and Nursery Team</p>	<p>New planning introduced by SEYP</p> <p>Resources evaluated and positive feedback of changes received from children and families</p> <p>Captured for Term 1 and ongoing</p>

How Good is Our Leadership								
Improvement Outcomes What do we hope to achieve?	Measures of Success How will we know this has been achieved? <i>What evidence will we have?</i>	Actions Required What do we need to do?	Timescales	Resources Who and what is required? (including cost/fund)	R	A	G	
<b>Area for Improvement</b> To ensure quality care and experiences for children, the provider should ensure effective quality assurance and self-evaluation is in place. This should include but not limited to:								
Providing meaningful opportunities for staff, children and families to provide feedback that impacts positive changes.	Quality Assurance Calendar	Daily opportunities for staff to welcome families into the setting at pick-up and drop-off allow informal, regular feedback to be captured but either key worker or other staff member.	10.10.24 25.11.24 3.3.25 26.5.25	Nursery Team, families and children	Positive feedback received for Oct and ongoing evaluations			
	Digital feedback and book creator to evidence impact of consultations for children and families.	Consultation opportunities are designed to ensure nursery community to contribute to improvements and share their feedback. Families will be invited into the setting for planned events in addition to digital alternative provided.	Monthly	Nursery Staff and SEYP				In pace and ongoing
	Floor book ensure pupils feedback is captured and used to support improvement.	Opportunity for children are embedded within intentional planning across each term.	Daily	Nursery Staff and SEYP				In pace and ongoing
Providing consistent support and monitoring of staff practice.	Weekly briefing ensure informal feedback from families is reviewed and changes are made.	Staff meetings are used to engage nursery team in reflections and self-evaluation of changes in addition to planning further improvements.	Weekly	Nursery Staff and SEYP				
	Annual calendar	Weekly staff meetings allows for regular and timely feedback to be shared with the nursery team; to promote good practice and highlight any changes.	Weekly	Nursery Staff and SEYP				
	CRD reviews	Creating opportunities for peer support both within and out with the setting.	Term 2 and Term 3	Nursery Staff and SEYP				
	Quality Assurance through Learning Walks and observations	CRD calendar to be informed by QA calendar to ensure effective staff development.	Term 2 and Term 3	SEYP and SLT				

Ensuring that Improvement plan leads to continuous improvement	Fortnightly meeting of nursery leadership team	Review of Improvement Plan to ensure consistent progress. Through this, planned opportunities will be identified for children to regular feed into the nursery improvement and evaluate the impact of changes/developments.	Fortnightly	Nursery Leadership Team	Ongoing
	Floor books and discussion with pupils to capture their views and ideas.				
	Daily interactions with families as well as product of planned sessions e.g. Google form/post-it feedback	Planned opportunities for children and families to feedback on improvement to support the measurement of impact. e.g Focus groups, coffee mornings, Stay and Play sessions or digital opportunities		22 Aug 24 7 Oct 24 3 March 24 26 May 24	Nursery Leadership Team
	Record of Quality Assurance activities aligned which are aligned with Improvement plan and evidences by impact throughout the year	Quality Assurance activities will be linked to improvement agenda to ensure sustained improvement and tacking of impact.	Termly	Nursery Leadership Team	Ongoing

How Good is Our Staff Team							
Improvement Outcomes What do we hope to achieve?	Measures of Success How will we know this has been achieved? What evidence will we have?	Improvement Outcomes What do we hope to achieve?	Timescales	Resources Who and what is required? (including cost/fund)	R	A	G
<b>Area for Improvement:</b> To ensure quality care and the safety of children the provider should ensure that:							
Staff have the skills and experience to provide effective supervision and interactions with children that meets their needs.	Record of meetings supported by SEYP CRD records and regular reviews as part of QA feedback Confidence surveys and comparison with QA data to determine accuracy of self-reflection	Individual staff meetings to review all Care Plans at the beginning of the new session.	6 Sept 24	SEYP and Nursery Team			
		Training needs identified at the end of last session will inform annual calendar for this session e.g. Understanding Behaviour session to continue Health and Safety training on supervising children in a large area	Term 1  17&18 Sept 24	SEYP and Nursery Team			
		Communication/Makaton training to be sources to improve use of this communication support within the setting.	Term 2 and 3			Planned to be included in Christmas sing-a-long	
The staff team communicate well and are deployed effectively.	SEPY daily monitoring  Nursery leadership checks  Minutes of weekly meetings	Review of staff deployment at the beginning of the new sessions following the change of classes to ensure it meets the needs of children. Changes to rotas and recruitment needs identified and actions.	23 Aug 2024 and daily from this	SEYP and Nursery Staff Team			Ongoing
		Daily staff briefing and communication book ensure staff are kept up to date with change for children and families. Staffroom notice board is used to share daily updated.	Daily	SEYP and Nursery Staff Team			Ongoing
		Weekly staff meetings include time to reflect on nursery improvement and ensure shared understanding is maintained.	Weekly	SEYP and Nursery Staff Team			Ongoing



Areas for improvement	Action required	Stakeholders & timescale	Desired outcomes for children	Evidence and review/confirmed completion	RAG Rating
<b>How good is our care play and learning? 1.1 Nurturing care and support &amp; 1.3 Play and learning</b>					
To support children's care and wellbeing, the provider and manager should ensure that personal plans consistently contain clear information on how children are to be supported. Staff should use this information to support children's development and progression.	<p>Create a clearer care plan for children to reflect needs and progress            Ensure all staff have a clear understanding of their key children's plans, and how do evaluate them.</p> <p>-Staff training (in house)            -Management and lead staff to monitor (added to new QA Calendar)</p>	<p>Manager and all keyworkers</p> <p>1 week to create new document and put into place for new starts (Completed 13.09.2024)</p>	<p>'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15); and            'My needs, as agreed in my personal plan, are fully met, and my wishes and choices are respected (HSCS 1.23)</p>	<p>New Care Plan and Registration forms created in line with CI recommendations. There is more focus on the child's voice (I am/ my statements included), and a section specifically for changes, challenges and achievements. Key workers have been paired, one practitioner and one support worker, to ensure high quality knowledge and guidance. Continue to update regularly, where there are changes, and evaluated every 6 months.</p>	
To ensure children are nurtured and supported through their daily experiences, the provider, manager and staff should ensure that mealtimes are a safe, relaxing experience that meets the individual needs of children	<p>Mealtimes promote choice, independence and social skills for all ages of children. Food provided to children is appropriate for their age and stage of development. Staff are skilled in their understanding of safe foods for children and how to support weaning</p> <p>-New routine/ process to be implemented            - Staff training (in house)            - Most up to date guidance to be sent/ available at the nursery</p>	<p>All staff</p> <p>1 week to discuss and implement new routine (Completed 23.08.2024)</p> <p>All new documentation to be sent when available</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring of practice</p>	<p>'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19); and            'I can enjoy an unhurried snack and mealtimes in as relaxed atmosphere as possible' (HSCS 1.35).</p>	<p>All staff (including the nursery cook) have been directed to and sent the most up to date Setting the Table guidance (2024), and the CI document "Good practice guidance: prevention and management of choking episodes in babies and children" (2019) via email. Each room has implemented an updated routine that is safe, relaxed, and encourages independence.</p>	
To ensure children have fun and experience high quality play, learning and development opportunities	<p>Ensure planning processes are effective to promote children's learning.            Ensure that staff demonstrate an understanding of child development and how to use play to support children's learning.</p>	<p>All staff</p> <p>In-house training completed 05.09.2024</p>	<p>'I am supported to achieve my potential in my education and employment if this is right for me' (HSCS 1.27)</p>	<p>With support from our LLO, we have implemented an effective intentional planning method which will directly link to our responsive and in the moment planning.</p>	



	<p>Ensure that observation and assessment of children's individual learning supports and identifies progress.</p> <p>-Staff training (in house refresher on tracking and monitoring)</p>	<p>Room audit completed 25.10.24</p> <p>Intentional planning (using planning exemplar) to be completed by 15.11.24 Evaluation to be completed by 29.11.24 (2 weekly cycle)</p>		<p>All staff have been resent the Curriculum for guidance documents, and had a refresher in how to use monitoring and tracking, to solidify their knowledge, enabling them to confidently explain our planning processes.</p> <p>Continue to use our online Learning Journals, however, we will document evidence of our intentional planning in the "story" section, and responsive planning in the "observation" section.</p>	
<p><b>How good is our setting? 2.2 - Children experience high quality facilities</b></p>					
<p>To ensure the safety and wellbeing of children the provider, manager and staff should ensure that the environment is safely and respectfully maintained</p>	<p>There is sufficient lighting on the stairs to ensure safety and in the playrooms to support effective use of this area. That trip hazards on the stairs are repaired. Unpleasant odours are effectively eliminated. The environment throughout is of good standard to promote children's safety and wellbeing</p> <p>-Maintenance reporting and completion (re-worded and added to QA Calendar)</p>	<p>Owner and manager</p> <p>Maintenance reporting to the owner for these issues complete at the time of inspection (14.08.24)</p>	<p>'My environment is safe and secure' (HSCS 5.19); and 'My environment is relaxed, welcoming, peaceful and free from avoidable and intrusive noise and smells' (HSCS 5.20)</p>	<p>New lighting bought by the owner and in place for stairway Extractor fans have been re-cleaned and block air fresheners in place (out of reach of children) The manager will continue to report any maintenance/ environment issues to the owner</p>	
<p>To support the health and safety needs of children, the provider and manager should ensure nappy changing spaces are well maintained at all times and safe infection prevention and control practice are carried out by staff</p>	<p>To support the health and safety needs of children, the provider and manager should ensure nappy changing spaces are well maintained at all times and safe infection prevention and control practice are carried out by staff</p> <p>-Staff training (in house) -Maintenance reporting and completion (re-worded and added to QA Calendar)</p>	<p>Owner Manager</p> <p>Changing area updated/ work completed 24.08.24</p>	<p>'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well-maintained premises, furnishings and equipment' (HSCS 5.24)</p>	<p>The nappy changing area has been cleared out and redecorated to reflect good infection control and hygiene. All staff already receive infection prevention and control training within the first 3 months of employment, which is refreshed every 3 years. 'Nappy changing for Early Learning and Childcare settings</p>	

				(excluding childminders)' (2023) has been resent to all staff.	
<b>How good is our leadership? - 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well</b>					
To ensure high quality care and experiences for children, quality assurance and self-evaluation should be embedded into practice	<p>Children and families are meaningfully involved and influence changes within the setting. Quality assurance, including self-evaluation and improvement plans lead to high quality outcomes and experiences for children and families.</p> <p>-New QA calendar -Continue parental involvement through evaluation processes</p>	<p>Manager and Setting Leads (Deputy Manager, Teacher and Baby Room Supervisor)</p> <p>QA calendar complete 10.10.24</p>	'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance systems' (HSCS 4.19)	<p>With support from our LLO, an updated QA calendar has been created and put in place. There is a colour coding system in place to identify which lead has responsibility for each action. Evidence will be provided in the corresponding folders (we hope to eventually move this to a paperless system) Children and families will continue to be involved in the life of the setting through stay and play sessions, parent's evenings, development reviews, learning journals, questionnaires etc. We will also continue to encourage them to take part in evaluation processes. This will ensure they are meaningfully involved and influence changes in the setting.</p>	
<b>How good is our staff team? - 4.3 Staff deployment</b>					
To support children's wellbeing, learning and development, the provider and manager should ensure staff are deployed effectively in a way that ensures children are cared for by staff who have the mix of appropriate knowledge, skills and experience	<p>Ensure that staff were supported, and children's needs were being met When reviewing the deployment of staff, the provider and manager should ensure that the care and experiences of children remain consistent as possible through changes</p> <p>-Staff training (NDNA online – Baby Room Lead) -Minor changes to allocation of staff at certain times of the day -Add staff observations to QA calendar (team leads to observe practice and document)</p>	<p>Manager Baby Room Lead</p> <p>NDNA training complete 14.09.24</p> <p>Staff allocation complete 19.08.24</p>	I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14)	<p>Although already in ratio, an extra member of staff has been allocated to the baby room to help cover lunches, nappy changing times etc. This will ensure the children's needs are consistently met. Staff undergo in house training when moving rooms for the first time and given sufficient time to get to know the children and their care plans. To extend on this, the baby room supervisor has</p>	

				completed the NDNA "Baby Room Lead" training course. The manager has daily contact with each room to support and mentor staff.	
To ensure children are cared for by skilled and suitable staff, the provider and manager should ensure recruitment procedures consistently meet the recommended guidance	Ensure recruitment practices are robust and consistent More in depth interview records and application history  -New interview questions (NDNA)	Manager  Interview questions in place 10.09.24	I am confident that people who support and care for me have been appropriately and safely recruited' (HSCS 4.24)	Safer Recruitment records are already in place, and the manager uses the Safer Recruitment guidance. This has now been re-read, and new interview questionnaires in place. This will allow for a simple to follow, step-by-step recruitment process that is robust and consistent.	

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## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education and Children's Services Committee
<b>DATE</b>	26 November 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Summer in the City Programme 2024
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	F&C/24/318
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Eleanor Sheppard
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Shona Milne
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Sharon Skene
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	1.1.1

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report shares a high level evaluation of the Summer in the City programme 2024.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee: -

- 2.1 notes the high level evaluation of the Summer in the City programme; and
- 2.2 instructs the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to report to Committee on the impact of the autumn (2024) and spring (2025) programmes through Service Update following delivery.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

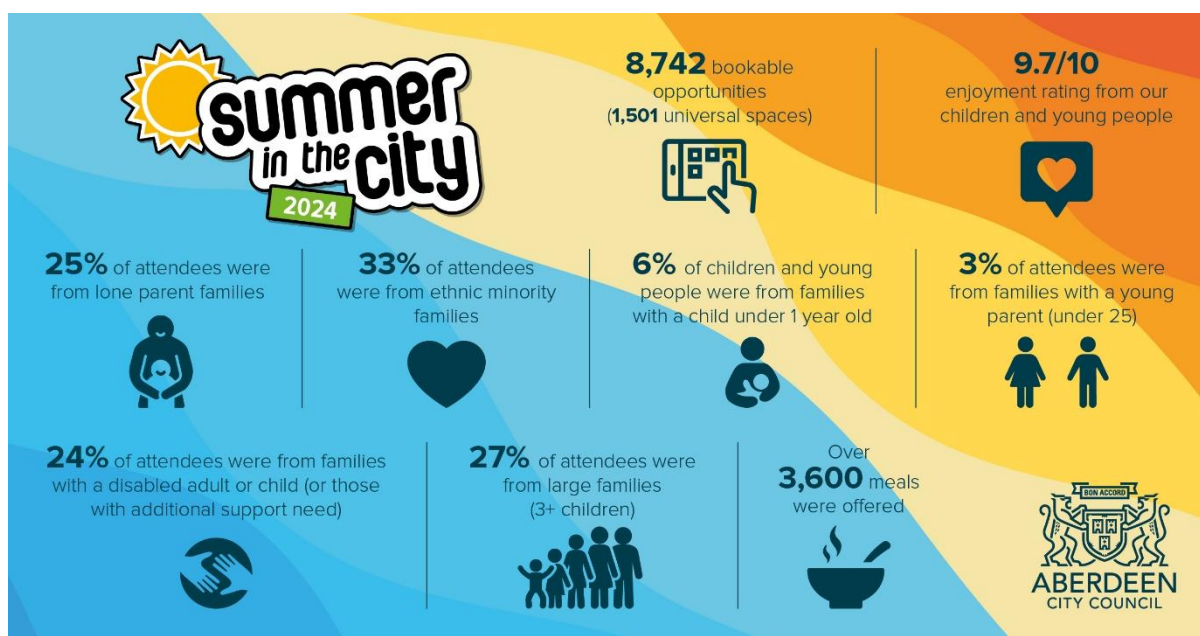
- 3.1 A Summer in the City programme was made available to children and young people across Aberdeen City over the school holiday period. This programme, shaped by the feedback of young people and their families, included a range of short, half-day and full-day activities ranging from sport, art and outdoor activities to drama camps, and science sessions. In line with previous years, the programme was delivered across three strands; universal activities, activities designed to support children and young people with additional support needs, and a programme for young people who directly, or through their family, identify as part of a 'priority group.'
- 3.2 Priority groups were consistent with the groups identified nationally as being most at risk of poverty and therefore included:
- Children from lone parent families
  - Children from ethnic minority families
  - Children from families which have 1 or more person with a disability or additional support needs (adult or child)
  - Children from families with a young parent (under 25 years old)
  - Children from families with a child under 1 year old

- Children from larger families (3+ children)
- 3.3 A budget was allocated by Council to deliver holiday programmes over summer, autumn 2024, and Easter 2025.
- 3.4 Officers from across the organisation and local partners worked together to deliver the programme. The full Summer in the City programme delivered is available in Appendix A.
- 3.5 Community assets and many organisations involved in delivering the programme operated their own bookings. Microsoft Bookings was used to manage all remaining bookings. Bookings opened on Monday 24 June at 12pm. Families eligible for priority activities were asked to only book 3 half or full day activities OR 2 half/full day activities and 1 multiday activity per child to ensure that as many families had the opportunity to utilise invaluable daylong, and half-day activities as possible.
- 3.6 Council social media channels were used to highlight the programme and available places to maximise uptake. Officers updated webpages, delivered an associated social media campaign and responded to social media enquiries. The overall campaign saw a 62.2k reach (number of times customers saw the posts on their social media channels). Across the entire campaign we saw 166 likes and 133 shares/retweets. The Summer in the City webpages had 37,526 page views with customers landing on the webpage directly from the links shared on social media and through other promotional avenues, such as colleagues in schools and social work sharing the programme with families to achieve the widest possible reach and impact.
- 3.7 The universal programme provided 1,501 bookable opportunities to all children and young people in the city as well as numerous drop-in activities in parks, museums, galleries, and local communities.
- 3.8 The programme for priority groups provided a total of 7,241 bookable opportunities. These included, short sessions, half day and full day camps/holiday clubs, and this provided greater flexibility for many parents accessing the programme. These spaces included activities such as football, beach days, scrambling and included lunch, as well as shorter activities such as dance and art. Figures from the ACC booking system showed over 94% occupancy was achieved on day long activities. Proactive social media coverage of available spaces is thought to have contributed to this high uptake figure, in addition to the popularity of previous programmes.
- 3.9 There is clear evidence that the targeted programme benefited those in the priority groups with the bookings showing participation statistics as follows:
- 25% of children and young people were from lone parent families
  - 33% of children and young people were from ethnic minority families
  - 24% of children from families with a disabled adult or child (or those with additional support need)
  - 3% of children from families with a young parent (under 25)
  - 6% of children and young people were from families with a child under 1 year old

- 27% of children and young people were from larger families (3+ children)

Families were not restricted in the number of priority group categories they could self-identify with. By empowering customers to self-identify in this way it was possible to build a fuller picture of the diversity profile of the programme. Throughout the priority programme 16% of bookings were made by families who identified with more than one priority group.

- 3.10 The data above does not take account of those with additional support needs/disabilities who benefited from an accessibly adjusted programme delivered by We Too, Early Intervention services and Sport Aberdeen.
- 3.11 The average enjoyment rating as given by children and young people who attended the activities was 9.7/10. This high rating was consistent with the previous programmes.



- 3.12 Officers are extremely grateful to all partners listed in para 4.1 who helped deliver a varied and high-quality Summer in the City programme.
- 3.13 In addition to the Summer in the City activities programme, a Summer Holidays What's On webpage was created as a resource for parents and families. On this webpage, families could access information on other activities -outside of the Summer in the City programme- that were taking place during the school holiday, as well as find out more information on free and paid for available activities and discounts with local providers. This webpage was visited 3,347 times since its launch in June 2024, an increase of 1,223 views from the previous holiday programme page for Easter 2024.
- 3.14 It is proposed that the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning will design and deliver similar programmes for autumn (2024) and spring (2025)

and report on the impact of the programmes through Service Update following delivery of each programme.

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Costs for the Summer in the City programme were met from the resource allocated at Full Council. The total cost of delivery of the Summer 2024 programme was £52,844.17.

Partner	Total Cost
Sport Aberdeen	£ 19,999.08
ASV	£772.75
Techfest	£1,200
Kidsize	£1,200
Transition Extreme	£4,575
We Too	£2,530
CLICC	£2,048
ACC School Aged Childcare	£3,000
Peep	£100
Creative Learning	£1000
Community Groups –  Russell Anderson Foundation, Early Intervention Aberdeen, Barnados, Cairncry Community Centre, Family Learning, Kings' Church Aberdeen, Middlefield Community Project, Aberdeen North Church, Tillydrone Community Campus with Shazam Theatre Company SCIO, Sheddocksley Baptist Church, Stockethill Church of Scotland, Streetsport, Team Jak's, and Ukrainian Hub Aberdeen	£15,919.34
Cleaning	£500(TBC)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£52,844.17</b>

- 4.2. There is £47,155.83 within the 24/25 budget to fund the Autumn (2024) and Easter (2025) programmes.

#### 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

#### 6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 No negative environmental impacts have been identified. Good use has been made of outdoor space where feasible to do so.



## 7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	Risk of not fully using the opportunity to support those in our priority groups	Priority access is given to those identified as being at risk of poverty in keeping with national guidance and local intelligence	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Compliance</b>	Risk of not complying with national guidance	Continuing to provide a priority group exclusive programme, in addition to the universal offering, actively increases the opportunity for priority families to participate.	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Operational</b>	Risk that parents and carers are unclear of how the national policy will impact on opportunities available to their child.	Communicate the parameters of the national guidance clearly with families.  Monitor uptake carefully to determine any remedial action required.	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Financial</b>	No significant risks identified			
<b>Reputational</b>	Risk that reduction in the number of spaces offered through the programmes will lead to reputational risk	Pivoting from full-week activities and focusing exclusively on part day and full-day activities will allow for participation opportunities to be maximised within the available budget and delivery constraints.	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	No risks identified			

## 8. OUTCOMES

<u><b>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</b></u>	
<b>Impact of Report</b>	
<p><b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b></p> <p>Build on the success of the Summer of Play, extending these learning experiences at least into school holidays, including the Spring and October holidays.</p> <p>Council Delivery Plan 2022/23 - Commit to closing the attainment gap in education while working with partners across the city.</p> <p>Council Delivery Plan 2022/23 - Continue to promote diversion activities for youths and adults in our city with enhanced focus on our three locality areas</p>	<p>The provision has been extended to include spring, summer and October to allow young people the opportunity to extend their learning experiences into the school holidays through a variety of activities.</p> <p>The provision of a programme which prioritises those impacted by poverty will help mitigate some of the wellbeing harms associated with those living in poverty and help address the attainment gap by working with partners to provide a range of activity to support wellbeing.</p> <p>Providing activities for those aged 14+ will help complement work to provide diversion activities to youths. Activities for a range of ages have been provided directly in and around the three locality areas, as well as some providers providing transport for young people within the locality areas to attend activities out with their locality.</p>
<u><b>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</b></u>	
<p>Prosperous People – Stretch Outcome 6 - 95% of children living in our priority neighbourhoods (Quintiles 1 &amp; 2), will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026</p> <p>Mitigating the causes of immediate and acute poverty</p> <p>Supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged people, families and groups</p> <p>Poverty affecting those with protected characteristics and in specific communities</p> <p>Stretch Outcome 3 - 95% of children (0-5 years) will</p>	<p>The programme has been deliberately tailored to meet the needs of those most in need and this approach will help ensure positive impacts against many of the people stretch outcomes.</p> <p>By prioritising groups who are known to be at risk of poverty and those already experiencing poverty we are able to work to ensure positive impacts on groups who most need our help including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• children and young people from lone parent families</li> <li>• children and young people from ethnic minority families</li> <li>• children from families with a disabled adult or child (or those with additional support need)</li> <li>• children and young people from families with a young parent (under 25)</li> <li>• children and young people from families with a child under 1 year old</li> </ul>

<p>reach their expected developmental milestones by their 27-30 month review by 2026</p> <p>Ensuring that families receive the parenting and family support they need</p> <p>Stretch Outcome 4 - 90% of Children and young people report they feel listened to all of the time by 2026. This is reflected in interactions, activities, supports and services</p> <p>Improving health and reducing inequalities.</p> <p>Increasing children's knowledge and understanding of their own physical and mental wellbeing and take an early intervention and prevention approach.</p> <p>Stretch Outcome 5 – By meeting the health and emotional wellbeing needs of our care experienced children and young people they will have the same levels of attainment in education and positive destinations as their peers by 2026</p> <p>Improving education outcomes for care experienced children and young people.</p> <p>Supporting attainment of balance of care where children are able to remain more often at home and or with kin.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• children and young people from larger families (3+ children)</li> </ul> <p>The programme will help provide a range of supports for families which will help mitigate some of the costs associated with school holiday periods and support the wellbeing of children and young people.</p> <p>The programme has been designed to offer a range of physical activities given the close alignment between good physical health and positive mental wellbeing and will therefore support positive mental health and wellbeing in our children and young people. The programme will also offer opportunities for our children and young people to make positive choices which are not influenced by financial resources which will hopefully help establish positive health habits in the longer term.</p> <p>The continued prioritisation of our care experienced young people, and those on the edge of care, helps ensure that we effectively discharge our Corporate Parenting responsibilities and promote and support the wellbeing of those in our care. The provision of activities will also provide support for carers.</p>
<p><b>Regional and City Strategies</b></p> <p>Regional Cultural Strategy</p> <p>Prevention Strategy</p> <p>Children's Services Plan</p>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of the Regional Cultural Strategy due to close collaboration with our Museums and Galleries team. The programme is fully aligned to the city prevention strategy. Work has been done to address poverty in the Children's services plan, the Child Poverty Action</p>

National Improvement Framework Plan	Plan, and the National Improvement Framework Plan.
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## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	Previous Integrated Impact Assessment relating to In the City Programmes has been reviewed and no changes required.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required
<b>Other</b>	None

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None

## 11. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Full Summer in the City Programme

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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## APPENDIX A- Summer in the City programme

Universal Offer available to all children and young people

Provider	Event Description	Ages	Sessions
<b>Libraries</b>	Young people are invited to join sessions throughout the holidays.	All	Throughout holiday
<b>Museums and Galleries</b>	Activities such as tours and trails	Families	Throughout holiday
<b>Sport Aberdeen</b>	Family swimming sessions	Families	11
	Family ice skating session	Families	2
	Family Footgolf at Hazlehead	Families	6
<b>Peep</b>	Peep is a free service that provides families and their young children opportunities to play, sing, and share stories together. It is also an opportunity for children and their grownups to socialise with others.	0-4 years	20
<b>Tech Fest</b>	Sociable science drop-in sessions at local school.	All ages	3

### Targeted offer for Priority Groups

Provider	Event Description	Ages	Sessions
<b>Sport Aberdeen</b>	Multi Active Day (AM or PM)	5-12 years	10
	Boccia and a bite - family lunch and play (Sport Aberdeen)	Families	10
	Multi Active Day Adventure Aberdeen	8-11 years	10
	Scrambling/sandboarding	8-15 years	2
	Burn o Vat Day Trip	5-11 years	2
	Hillwalking	8-14 years	2
	Beach Day	5-9 years	1
	Canoe River Trip	12-14 years	1
	Tubing at Snowsports	P4-P7	5
	Outdoor Tennis	Families	10
<b>Middlefield Community Youth Hub</b>	Day trips programmed in consultation with the young people. Trips included Ice Skating, Cinema	12-18 years	5

<b>Middlefield Community Project</b>	Holiday club with various trips and activities across Aberdeen	5-11 years	6
<b>Make Lunch (Sheddocksley Baptist Church) Activities and lunch</b>	1 hour of fun interactive holiday club activities followed by 1 hour of a hot meal around tables.	Primary School Age	11
<b>School Age Childcare ACC Holiday Club</b>	Session offering activities such as art, sports and included meals	5-12	16
<b>VicTorry Holiday Club (King's Church Aberdeen)</b>	Holiday club- games, fun and lunch	P1-7	2
<b>Creative Learning</b>	Artists Assemble (Creative Learning)	5-8 years AM	2 multi day sessions session
	Artists Assemble (Creative Learning)	8-12 years PM	2 multi day sessions session
	Dance (Creative Learning & Citymoves)	5-8 years PM	2 multi day sessions session
<b>Transition Extreme</b>	Skate and scran multi activity session	8-14 years	6
	Climb and Dine	5-14 years	12
	BMX Workshop	8-15 years	3
<b>Tillydrone Community Campus with Shazam Theatre Company SCIO</b>	Drama and games workshop	8-12 years	4
<b>Denis Law legacy Trust (Streetsports)</b>	Variety of outdoor sports activities	8-18 years	60
<b>Music School</b>	Musical activities at Muirfield Primary School	5-11 years	1
<b>Russell Anderson Development School (RADS)</b>	Fun sporting activities	7-11 years	10
<b>Summer camp for Ukrainian Children (Ukrainian Hub Aberdeen)</b>	Activities are planned with children to spend time in Aberdeen.	5-14 year	2
<b>Holiday Lunch Club (Stockethill Church of Scotland)</b>	Session for families which include games, crafts and lunch.	Families with primary aged children	6
<b>Barnardo's Young Carers</b>	Various session for young carers	P7-S2	9

<b>Cairncry Summer Playscheme</b>	Arts and crafts, Group games, bouncy castle fun day, mini golf, and end of summer disco.	5-12 years	11
<b>Activity Fun Day for Children-Mastrick (Aberdeen North Church)</b>	Activities - songs, crafts song, crafts, puppets	Primary aged children and their families	1
<b>Family Learning</b>	Various activities such as golf and craft sessions.	Families	7
<b>Football &amp; Food (ASV)</b>	Children to develop their football skills.	5-12 years	1
<b>Kidsize Holiday Club</b>	Multi-activity holiday clubs with games, crafts and outdoor play	5-12 years	3
<b>Summer Holiday Club (CLICC)</b>	Sports, arts and face painting.	5-12 years	8

### Additional Support needs specialised sessions

Provider	Event Description	Ages	Sessions
<b>Sport Aberdeen</b>	ASN Stay and Play sessions 2 session were exclusive to Orchard Brae	5-12 years	10
<b>We Too</b>	Super Summer Sensory Session	5+	4
	Relaxed Ice Skating @ Linx Arena	5+	2
	Relaxed Bowling at Codonas	3+	6
	Snowsports - Tubing	5+	3
	Relaxed Mini Golf – Codonas	3+	1
<b>Family Learning</b>	Family Learning & SensationALL Family Chillout session	Families	6
<b>Early Intervention</b>	Princess & Pirates Stay and Play	3 and 9 years	1
	Therapy Dogs and Lego	4-10 years	1
	Mindful Mondays	5-9 years	6
	Art Therapy	Primary age	4
	ASN Potion making, Sensory Messy Play & Visit to Pets Corner	3-9 years	1
	Minions Theme Stay & Play	Primary age	2
	Tshirt and Bags Design & Create with Art Therapist Tracey		
	Wyndford Farm Play Barn & Role Play Area	Primary age	1
	Super Hero Theme Stay & Play	3-9 years	1

	Sensory Sneekers Messy Play & Lets Create with Art Therapist Tracey	Primary age	1
	The Critter Keeper	4-11 years	1
	Therapy Ponies & Pygmy Goats with Summer Crafts	3-9 years	2
	Circus Theme Stay & Play	3-9 years	2
	Summer Theme Music Therapy	Primary age	4
	Princess Slumber Party	4-10 years	1
	Young Gamers Experience	3-9 years	1
	End of Summer Party	Primary age	2



## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education and Children's Services Committee
<b>DATE</b>	26 November 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Parental Involvement and Engagement Plan
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	F&C/24/315
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Eleanor Sheppard
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Shona Milne
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Niki Paterson
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	1.1.1,1.1.2

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval for the refreshed Parental Involvement and Engagement Plan (PIE) 2024-2027

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee -

- 2.1 note the evaluation of the Council's current state;
- 2.2 approve the new Parental Involvement and Engagement Plan; and
- 2.3 instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to report progress through the regular updates provided to Committee on progress towards delivery of the National Improvement Framework Plan.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1.1 The Scottish School (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 recognises the vital role that parents and other carers play in children's learning and development. Parents are the first and ongoing educators of their own children.

- 3.1.2 Local Authorities have a duty to prepare and regularly review approaches to parental involvement and engagement. The Plan currently in place covers the period 2021-2024.

Parental Involvement and Engagement Plans document how the Local Authority will:

- involve parents in their own child's education, and that provided by a school to its pupils generally;
- give advice and information to parents in respect of their own child; and
- promote the establishment of Parent Councils in schools and support their operation.

- 3.1.3 The education authority must seek and take account of the views of all those with an interest in the authority's implementation of its duties when developing or reviewing its approach, with experience telling us that drawing from a broad

range of evidence helps build a more comprehensive and impactful Plan. As a result, a range of approaches have been used to engage and consult with key stakeholders including:

- regular engagement with parents through focus groups at termly meetings with Aberdeen City Parent Forum
- utilising a city wide survey of parents and carers to check emerging themes for further development;
- Focussed PIE working groups including parents, headteachers and education central staff (including those with corporate parenting responsibilities), children and young people from both primary and secondary settings.

3.1.4 Post-pandemic living and the cost-of-living crisis has undoubtedly presented several challenges for families and highlighted a need to address issues such as mental health and wellbeing more fully in the Plan. The education service has deliberately kept planning high level to enable on-going agility.

## 3.2 CURRENT STATE

3.2.1 The PIE for 2021-24 was organised across 6 themes:

- **Communication** – high quality communication from home to school;
- **Sharing learning** – at home, school, and community;
- **Supporting parenting** – strengthening families to support children in all aspects of their learning and development;
- **Volunteering** – contributing to the life and work of the school;
- **Parental Voice** – genuine influence in decision making in planning, policy making and school improvement; and
- **Collaboration with community** – working in partnership with parents and partners to support families.

3.2.2 Feedback suggests that organising the plan under key themes provides a useful structure for both schools and the Local Authority., It also allowed sufficient flexibility to respond to changing circumstances. It is felt that the simple visual put in place in 2021 helped develop a shared understanding of the Plan.

3.2.2 In reviewing the impact of the 2021-2024 Plan, each of the themes has been explored with Focus Groups of young people, headteachers, central staff, the City-wide Parent Forum and through a survey issued to all parents and carers in February 2024. The information from all sources is broadly aligned.

3.2.3 The survey received a total of 1897 responses and parents/carers with children and young people across all schools were represented. 68% of responses were from Early Years/Primary settings, 31% from Secondary and 1% from Specialist provision.

3.3.1 **Communication** – 88% of Aberdeen parents/carers who responded to the survey said that key information about school life was regularly shared with them. 92% found schools approachable (an improvement on the 89% who reported positively in 2021). 87% said their views and suggestions were

welcomed, an 8% increase from the last survey point. 81% agreed that their views were sought to inform school improvement and this area will form a priority in the refreshed Plan.

3.3.2 Communication was the most popular topic raised in free text responses to the survey, suggesting that experiences vary. Children and young people also said parents should know more about happens in school. The headteacher focus group raised the need for school communities to be aware of Stronger Families Series and about being consulted in the development of Family Learning programmes. As a result, communication will remain a priority.

3.4.1 **Sharing Learning** – Schools continue to share learning and are creative in how they celebrate children’s achievements with parents and carers. 82% of those who responded to the survey stated that they received regular information about what their child was learning. 85% said they were kept well informed about their child’s progress. This is a 15% increase on the 70% who participated in 2021 and is welcomed. 82% of parents and carers told us that they have the opportunity to share their views about their child’s learning.

3.4.2 77% of parents indicated that they receive enough information to support their child’s learning at home. However, focus groups suggest that there are inconsistencies in arrangements and as a result this area has remained a priority for the new plan.

3.5.1 **Supporting Parenting** – Scottish Attainment Challenge funding has been used to commission Family Learning to provide families with 1:1 or group support sessions across all of our schools. Family Learning opportunities have become more innovative and have helped build the capacity in families. The expansion of the Family Learning offer has enabled delivery of four core offers; 1:1 intensive support, universal courses, open access groups and targeted holiday provision.

- In 2021- 22, Family Learning delivered 85 activities across the city to 452 participants. This equated to 4556 Learner Hours (registered) and 5736 Total Learner hours including children.
- In 2022-23, Family Learning delivered 350 activities across the city to 621 participants. This equated to 9777 Learner Hours (registered), and 15716 Total Learner Hours including children.
- In 2023-24, (to-date/June '24), Family Learning have delivered 277 activities across the city to 464 participants. This equates to 8355 Learner Hours (registered) and 14325 Total Learner Hours including children.

The diverse abilities of the team are greatly enhanced by taking a multi-agency approach which includes working alongside over 30 local and national organisations. Key partners include Fit Like Family Wellbeing Team, Education, Social Work, Kinship, The Promise Support Pilot, SensationALL, Homestart, Scottish Childminding Association, Sport Aberdeen and Aberdeen Science Centre.

- 3.5.2 The city survey indicated only 23% of parents who responded to the survey had engaged with parental supporting opportunities such as Family Learning, PEEP and the Stronger Families Series. This may indicate that there is more to do in raising awareness of the supports available.
- 3.5.3 81% of those who have taken advantage of the offer said that the support and information they received from parenting workshops had increased their confidence and knowledge as a parent.
- 3.5.4 The Parent Learning Hub website was launched in April 2020 and although originally designed to support Learning at Home, it has continued to support parenting, and signpost families to a wide range of support agencies post pandemic. It continues to be updated. The site hosts the Stronger Families Series online series of parent workshops which have received over 1300 views since January 2023. A parent focus group will help inform the further development and potential location of the Digital Hub to ensure we maximise the potential of the site and ensure that it is easily accessible to families.
- 3.5.5 The Education Service continues to work in partnership with a range of partners who continue to help support families in many ways, and we remain grateful for their expertise in this area. NSPCC, Alcohol and Drug Action, Sport Aberdeen and SAMH have all provided support over the last year.
- 3.6.1 **Volunteering** – Curriculum enrichment, supporting fundraising and using parents' skills, time and interests for wider achievement are vital to support the work and life of our schools. Parent councils and fundraising groups contribute many hours in volunteering to ensure that families benefit from activities and community events. Feedback from a school focus group has resulted in the provision of a citywide volunteering resource to support parent involvement in school. Recruitment of volunteers can be challenging for some schools and will remain as a priority in the new plan.
- 3.6.2 89% parents said they were given opportunities to be involved in the life and work of the school. 60% said they were actively involved in the parent council.
- 3.6.3 Post pandemic, a small number of schools have struggled to recruit volunteers and are operating with a minimum quorum. Some still choose to meet virtually or via a hybrid model to maintain engagement. ACC officers will continue to work alongside parent support organisation Connect to develop recruitment to parent councils.
- 3.7.1 **Parent Voice** – All Aberdeen schools have a Parent Council although some operate with minimum members. It will be important to maintain our focus on this area. All School Improvement Plans now record the involvement and contribution of parents in self-evaluation. 92% of parents in Aberdeen City report that they feel that Parent Council views and suggestions are considered by senior management. In line with the learning outlined in paragraph 3.3.1, there is a need to ensure that opportunities to influence school improvement planning processes are extended beyond Parent Councils where possible.

3.7.2 ACC continues to work together with Aberdeen City Parent Forum (ACPF) collaboratively and share information on the work of the education service. ACC actively promotes city wide opportunities to support development of ACC policies and frameworks. Parents continue to be represented on the Education and Children's Services Committee as valued voting members.

3.8.1 **Collaboration with Community** – Schools continue to actively form partnerships with businesses and third sector partners to support the delivery of the curriculum as well as offering targeted interventions to learners and families. This is being greatly supported through Business and Community Support Officers, in some of our secondary schools, who ensure all programmes are well managed and provide a positive experience for children.

3.8.2 Family Learning continues to develop strong partnerships with families and are a key partner in our Fit like Hubs. The plan looks to ensure families are well informed of the Fit Like universal offers.

### **3.9 LOOKING FORWARD 2024 – 2027**

3.9.1 The new plan continues to be strategic so that the service can continue to respond to changing needs with important levels of agility. It focuses primarily on 5 areas of parental engagement: Sharing Learning, Supporting Parenting, Communication, Volunteering, and Parent Voice. It is compliant with the UNCRC requirements as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, ensuring that we fulfil our obligations as duty bearers to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights.

3.9.2 A key focus of our work will be to review the content and location of the Parent Hub to ensure that the resource continues to support families. There is also a need to improve the visibility of a range of Family Supports across the city including those helpful to families of children with additional support needs.

3.9.3 Increasing opportunities for parents to build confidence and skills to support their children's learning at home and school will remain our focus. Education services will continue to strengthen partnerships with agencies who can help to support parents creatively in their children's learning particularly with numeracy, literacy and children's health and wellbeing.

3.9.4 Parental Engagement is a driver in the National Improvement Framework Plan. Aligning the new PIE plan with the National Improvement Framework Plan will bring a focus on working together with parents and partners to improve outcomes across the 4 national priority areas:

- Improvement in attainment, particularly literacy and numeracy;
- Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children;
- Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing; and
- Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school leaver destinations for all young people.

3.9.5 It is proposed that progress against the high level PIE Plan (**Appendix A**) will be regularly reported to Committee through the established National Improvement Framework Plan reporting.

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

#### 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 requires the local authority to prepare and publish details of activities undertaken annually regarding their parental involvement plan. They should comply fully with this requirement while also ensuring that parental engagement is included in the broader National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan reports.

#### 6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no negative environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

#### 7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	N/A			
<b>Compliance</b>	Statutory duties and relevant legislation	Implementation of the PIE Plan will satisfy these legal duties.	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Operational</b>	Clear guidance and planning together with staff training around PIE.	Strong partnership working with services & parents to engage and support their children's learning and family wellbeing.  An increase in staff confidence and capacity to understand and support PIE.	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Financial</b>	The PIE is unlikely to	All activity will be met from existing budgets.	L	<b>Yes</b>

	carry any financial risk.			
<b>Reputational</b>	Not effectively supporting parents and families with their child's learning could present a reputational risk to the Council, including higher numbers of parental complaints.	Effectively implementing the plan and close monitoring of impact will enable the Council to positively report on progress made in involving and engaging parents in their children's learning.	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	N/A			

## 8. OUTCOMES

<b>Council Delivery Plan 2024</b>	
<b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b>	<b>Impact of Report</b>
<b><u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u></b>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of the following ACC Priorities:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise attainment and achievement</li> <li>• Support improvement in the health and wellbeing of children and young people</li> <li>• Maximise the impact Of Early Learning and Childcare</li> </ul>
<b>Local Outcome Improvement Plan</b>	
Prosperous People (Children and Young People) Stretch Outcomes	<p>The proposals support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 3 - 95% of all children will reach their expected developmental milestones by their 27-30 month review by 2026. Through offering support to all parents and sharing parenting opportunities we will create networks of support for families.</p> <p>The proposals within this report also support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 6 – 95% of children living in our priority neighbourhoods (Quintiles 1 &amp; 2) will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026. Through developing</p>

	partnerships and working with parents we will ensure families will be able to support their children to achieve.
<b>Regional and City Strategies</b> Children's Services Plan National Improvement Framework Plan	The recommendations within this committee report are fully aligned with the relevant purpose and priority contained in both the Children's Services Plan and National Improvement Framework Plan.

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not Required

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

## 11. APPENDICES

**Appendix A** Parental Involvement and Engagement Plan

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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# WORKING TOGETHER: A PLAN FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT (2024-27)

The plan has been developed using the voice of Aberdeen parents, young people, school staff and ACC central education team. It outlines Aberdeen City Council's commitment to working in partnership, recognising parents as the primary educators.

We will provide appropriate professional development and levels of funding to schools, early learning and childcare settings and parent councils to help them provide a wide range of opportunities for parents to be involved. As corporate parents we will continue to champion improvements in the education of our care experienced children as defined by **THE PROMISE**.

The plan takes account of the legislation and recommendations of Scottish Schools (**PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT**) ACT 2006 and **LEARNING TOGETHER** (Scottish Government 2018) and **UNCRC ARTICLES** 5, 6, 14, 18, 23, 27, 29 & 31.

It is underpinned by the guiding principles of mutual respect for each stakeholder's role;

- ▶ **Honesty and Openness;**
- ▶ **Valuing Culture and Diversity;**
- ▶ **Actively Listening;**
- ▶ **Demonstrating Empathy; and Promoting Equality and Inclusion.**

*The term "Parents" refers to anyone with parental responsibilities and others who care for or look after children or young people.*

**ACC recognises Parental Involvement and Engagement can support delivery of the 4 priority areas of the National Improvement Framework**

- 1** Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy
- 2** Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people
- 3** Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing
- 4** Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people

## PARENT VOICE VOLUNTEERING

### VOLUNTEERING : We will

- ▶ Provide a volunteer toolkit and professional learning for school staff. **3**
- ▶ Identify approaches to support parents who might initially feel reluctant to be involved but may wish to do so with the right support and the right opportunities. **2 3**
- ▶ Use parents' skills knowledge and experience to support the delivery of developing the young workforce. **4**
- ▶ Ensure parents are well informed about ABZ campus and the potential for parental involvement. **4**

## PARENT VOICE

### PARENT VOICE : We will

- ▶ Involve parents in the work of education committees.
- ▶ Support and enable the functions of the Aberdeen City Parents Forum.
- ▶ Ensure effective arrangements for dealing with complaints and questions from parents via ACC Customer Feedback Team.
- ▶ Incorporate collaboration with parents as part of headteacher and NQT induction. **1 2 3 4**
- ▶ Offer training to parents and staff to ensure meaningful collaboration which informs improvement planning and policy development. **1 2 3 4**
- ▶ Support parent councils to act as a partner in school improvement. Provide training and involve parents in the recruitment of headteachers and senior staff.
- ▶ Provide advice, information and training for parent councils through partnership with **CONNECT**.



## A Plan for PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT (2024-27)

## SHARING LEARNING

### SHARING LEARNING : We will

- ▶ Share accessible health and wellbeing information on **Parent Learning Hub and through Stronger Families Series**.
- ▶ Share practical and specific information to help support children's learning in particular subject areas, with a focus on numeracy and literacy. **1**
- ▶ Provide, straightforward advice and information to parents and families about how they can be involved in education and engaged in their child's learning and development. **1 2**
- ▶ Make sure that all parents feel welcomed and supported to get involved in the life and work of the school, bearing in mind that some parents may not have had a positive experience of school. **1 2**

## COMMUNICATION

### COMMUNICATION : We will

- ▶ Improve the quality of all communication between schools, parents and families. **1 2**
- ▶ Encourage and support collaborative partnerships between schools, parents and families.
- ▶ Share city-wide key information through Parent Learning Hub, Group Call and Parents newsletter.
- ▶ Identify a variety of effective and appropriate communications channels to reach ALL parents. **1 2**
- ▶ Produce guidance and support on how effective communication with parents can be achieved.
- ▶ Provide a variety of opportunities to feed back to parents, recognising that formal meetings are not going to work for everyone. **2**

## SUPPORTING PARENTING

### SUPPORTING PARENTING : We will

- ▶ Develop a single digital source of information for parents, carers and disabled young people to support additional support needs. **1 2 3**
- ▶ Expand access to family learning opportunities which meet participants needs. This will be co-created with parents/caregivers. **2**
- ▶ Use data, research and community feedback to respond to the needs of families. **2**
- ▶ Improve equity across the city. **2**

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## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education & Children's Services
<b>DATE</b>	26 November 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Riverbank School Excess Capacity Options
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	F&C/24/329
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Eleanor Sheppard
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Stephen Booth
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Andrew Jones
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	1.1.1; 1.1.2

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an assessment of the options available for making use of anticipated excess capacity at the new replacement Riverbank School building, which is expected to open in Spring 2025.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Approves the proposal to relocate the Autism Outreach Service from the Ashgrove Children's Centre building, and to establish an Early Intervention Space at the new Riverbank School building, as outlined under Option 3 at Appendix 1 of this report.
- 2.2 Instructs the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to continue to monitor pupil numbers and use of space at the new Riverbank School building and to provide updates on any further action required in the future, through the annual School Estate Plan update reports.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The planned new replacement building for Riverbank School is currently under construction, and is due to be completed in Winter 2024/2025, after which it is expected that pupils and staff at the existing Riverbank School will transfer to the new school building.
- 3.2 When plans for the new school building were first taking shape in 2017, the pupil roll at Riverbank School had reached 392, which was close to the school's maximum capacity of 420. School roll forecasts at that time indicated that pupil numbers at the school would continue to rise rapidly, with the roll predicted to exceed 500 by 2022. It was therefore agreed that the planned new Riverbank School building would provide additional pupil capacity, to meet the anticipated demand for school places. The new building has therefore been designed to provide an increased capacity of 651 pupil places.

- 3.3 Since the size of the new school was determined in 2017, pupil numbers at Riverbank School have begun to reduce significantly year on year. This is thought to be due in part to changing demographics within the Tillydrone community, which is served by Riverbank School.
- 3.4 For example, in 2017, the pupil roll forecast for Riverbank School indicated there were just over 100 five-year old children eligible to enter the P1 year group the following year. In 2024, birth rate figures provided by NHS Grampian show that the number of five year old children living in the Riverbank School catchment area has dropped to 76, and the numbers are expected to continue to fall, with just 52 five-year old children expected to be living in the catchment area for entry to P1 in 2028.
- 3.5 Due to these unexpected changes, the School Estate Plan, approved by the former Education Operational Delivery Committee in September 2022, highlighted the expectation based on updated forecasts at that time that pupil numbers at the school would not exceed 413, and that as a result there would be excess unused capacity within the planned new school building. Officers were therefore instructed by the Committee to carry out an options appraisal on potential uses of the additional capacity to be provided by the new building.
- 3.6 Since the instruction in 2022 for the options appraisal to be carried out, pupil numbers at Riverbank School have continued to drop. Currently there are 308 pupils enrolled at the school, and the latest school roll forecast indicates that numbers will fall below 300 from 2028, if the recent factors which have led to the decline in pupil numbers continue. The new school building is therefore expected to have a significant amount of spare capacity, at least initially after opening. Based on the school's class configuration for 2024/25, there will likely be eight classroom spaces which are surplus to requirement, when the school moves in to the new building in 2025.
- 3.7 The options appraisal has therefore focused on identifying potential uses for some of these surplus classroom spaces, to help ensure the new building can be utilised as fully as possible, and to minimise any unnecessary costs. A summary of the options available is presented at Appendix 1 of this report.

#### Retaining Flexibility

- 3.8 Whilst some of the options presented within Appendix 1 would require the use of most or all of the eight excess classroom spaces in the new Riverbank School building, officers have been mindful of the need to retain flexibility in the building, so that some of the spaces could be put into use as classrooms at short notice.
- 3.9 This may be required if there is an unexpected increase in pupil numbers within the school's catchment area, for example, or should pupil numbers at other nearby schools reach their capacity in the future, requiring spaces at alternative schools to be identified for families moving in to the wider area.

- 3.10 There is also the possibility that the new school building will appear more attractive to parents, compared with the existing school building, and this could have an impact on the numbers of children attending the school in future.
- 3.11 In recent years, there has been a significant number of pupils each year who live within the Riverbank School catchment area, but whose parents have chosen to enrol them at other schools in the city, rather than at Riverbank School. Ahead of the start of the current school session, a total of 40 children who live within the Riverbank School catchment area, and who might therefore have been expected to be attending Riverbank School from August, were instead enrolled at other schools. When combining the numbers of children living in the Riverbank catchment area who have enrolled at other schools over each of the past five years, the data shows that there are over 130 children across the P1 to P7 year groups who are currently zoned to Riverbank School but who are instead attending other schools.
- 3.12 Given that these children continue to live within the Riverbank School catchment area, their parents would have the right to request a place for them at the new Riverbank School building, and they could do this at any point in the school year. If just a proportion of these children were to move back to Riverbank, this may require additional classrooms in the new Riverbank School to be opened up at short notice.

#### Conclusion and Preferred Option

- 3.13 Considering the above, it is recommended that some of the surplus classrooms are left unoccupied initially, to allow them to be put back into use as classrooms at short notice, should this become necessary.
- 3.14 The preferred option identified in the options appraisal at Appendix 1 is therefore Option 3 - to use four of the surplus classroom spaces in the new Riverbank School building to accommodate the Autism Outreach Service, which would relocate to Riverbank from its current base at the former Ashgrove Children's Centre building, and which would use existing resource to operate a new Early Intervention Space from Riverbank, to provide specialist support to pupils with additional support needs from schools around the city. Children would remain on the roll of their own school and attend the unit at Riverbank to develop strategies to allow them to cope better in their mainstream school.
- 3.15 This proposal is in line with the findings of a separate report from the Education Psychology Service, due to be presented to the Committee on 26 November 2024, which recommends establishing an early intervention space at Riverbank School, as a test of change for supporting pupils across the city, and working and learning collaboratively from this.
- 3.16 A cluster of four classrooms within one part of the new Riverbank School building has been identified as potentially suitable for use by the Autism Outreach Service. An existing door in the corridor adjacent to these rooms would provide them with natural separation from the rest of the school, along with secure entry and exit to / from the unit. The classrooms are also adjacent

to a secure garden area which would serve as an outdoor learning space for pupils attending the unit.

- 3.17 If the preferred option is approved by the Committee, this would mean that the four remaining surplus classrooms in the new school building would remain surplus to requirement initially. These rooms would be split between the middle stages and upper stages wings of the school, and not assigning a specific purpose to them would ensure that flexibility is retained, should there be a significant increase in pupil numbers after the new building opens, which requires new classes to be created. In the meantime, the school would be able to make temporary use of these rooms for other purposes, to the benefit of pupils and staff.
- 3.18 It is therefore recommended that the Committee approves the proposal to relocate the Autism Outreach Service to the new Riverbank School building, and to establish a new Early Intervention Space within the building. Work would then be undertaken over the remainder of this school session to make the required minor changes to the building, plan the relocation of the service and how the new intervention space will be operated, and to identify pupils who would benefit from attending initially. It is anticipated that the service and intervention space would commence operation from the Riverbank building from August 2025, and it is recommended that the unit is established initially for a trial period of two years.
- 3.19 Given the fluctuations in the pupil roll at the school over recent years, it is also recommended that officers are instructed to continue to monitor numbers and use of space in the new building, and to provide updates on any further action required in the future, through annual school estate plan update reports.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 If the recommendations in this report are approved by the Committee, the cost for the relocation of the service, estimated at approximately £5,000, would be covered by existing revenue budgets. The cost of the minor reconfiguration of the building layout required to accommodate the service will be incorporated within the overall Riverbank School capital project. The additional cost implications will be considered by the Chief Officer – Capital, in consultation with the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Section 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 provides that it shall be the duty of every education authority to secure that there is made for their area adequate and efficient provision of school education.
- 5.2 Section 17 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 provides that it shall be the duty of an education authority in the performance of their functions under sections 1 to 6 of the Act, to provide for their area, sufficient accommodation in public schools and other educational establishments under their management to enable them to perform their said functions.

5.3 Under the Education (Additional Support for Learning ) (Scotland) Act 2004 every education authority must make adequate and efficient provision for the additional support required by each child or young person having additional needs. The recommendations of this Report addresses these duties.

## 6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

## 7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	No significant risks identified			
<b>Compliance</b>	No significant risks identified			
<b>Operational</b>	Identifying alternative use for all surplus spaces in the school building could remove any flexibility in use of space should pupil numbers begin to increase	Adopting the recommended option would ensure some space in the school remains available, should more classrooms be required at short notice.	L	Yes
<b>Financial</b>	If no action is taken to make alternative use of any of the surplus space, the overall efficiency of the building would be reduced, and overall running costs for the building would be unnecessarily high. The extent to which best value can be achieved from the Council's investment in the	Adopting the recommended option would provide alternative use for some of the surplus space in the school, helping to reduce any inefficiency and helping to achieve best value for the capital investment in the building.	M	Yes

	new Riverbank School building would also be negatively impacted.			
<b>Reputational</b>	If no action is taken to make alternative use of any of the surplus space, there is a risk that the Council would be seen to be not making best use of its assets.	Adopting the recommended option would provide alternative use for some of the surplus space in the school, helping to ensure the new building can provide maximum benefit to learners.	M	Yes
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	No significant risks identified			

## 8. OUTCOMES

<b>Council Delivery Plan 2024</b>	
<b>Impact of Report</b>	
<p><b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u></a></p>	<p><u>A City of Opportunity</u></p> <p>Policy Statement 2 - Review and invest in our school estate, ensuring all of Aberdeen's schools are fit for the educational needs and the challenges of the 21st century. The report seeks Committee's approval of a proposal to make best use of surplus space at the new Riverbank School, to meet the needs of pupils from across the City.</p>
<a href="#"><u>Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026</u></a>	
<p>Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of all Children &amp; Young People Stretch Outcomes 3 to 8 in the LOIP. The paper seeks approval to establish an early intervention unit which will help to meet the needs of pupils with additional support needs, which will ultimately help them to achieve successful outcomes.</p>
<p><b>Regional and City Strategies</b></p>	<p>Making best use of the available space will support the delivery of the Council's Property and Estates Strategy.</p>



## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	N/A

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Education Operational Delivery Committee, 8 September 2022: [Agenda Item 14: School Estate Plan 2022](#).
- 10.2 Education Operational Delivery Committee, 26 November 2024: Behaviour Action Plan Report

## 11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix 1: Options Appraisal

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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## Appendix 1

### Riverbank School Excess Capacity : Summary of Options

<b>Option 1 – Do Nothing</b>	
Description	This option would result in no action being taken to identify alternative uses for the eight surplus classroom spaces at Riverbank School. This would enable the school to make use of the spaces as it sees fit, for additional general purpose / breakout space, storage etc, and to respond positively to any unanticipated surge in demand for pupil places.
Expected Costs	There would be no direct cost in implementing this option – however, leaving eight classroom spaces unused / under-utilised would reduce the overall efficiency of the building. Based on the estimated total running cost for the building and the size of floorspace which would be surplus to requirement, there would therefore be an indirect cost to the Council of approximately £28k per year.
Expected Benefits / Disbenefits	<p><u>Benefits</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoids any disruption to existing services and to the running of Riverbank School</li> <li>• Allows the school maximum flexibility in how classroom spaces are allocated and used</li> <li>• Ensures there is sufficient classroom space available should pupil numbers increase significantly.</li> </ul> <p><u>Disbenefits</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not provide a solution to the excess capacity at Riverbank School</li> <li>• Does not help improve the overall efficiency of the building</li> </ul>
Risks Specific to this Option	Implementing this option risks drawing criticism that the new building does not provide value for money, in that a significant amount of space in the building is under-utilised.
Viability	Whilst this is not the recommended option for the reasons detailed above, it is considered viable as it could be implemented without any difficulty.
Other Points	None identified.

## Option 2 – Relocation of Services from Sunnybank School

Description	<p>This option would involve the reconfiguration of the surplus classroom spaces within the new Riverbank School building, to accommodate other education services.</p> <p>Officers had previously identified a potential need to find alternative office and classroom accommodation for the ASN and Outreach Services (comprising Aberdeen School for the Deaf and the English as an Additional Language Service), which are currently based at Sunnybank School. This was in response to previous school roll forecasts indicating that pupil numbers at Sunnybank School were rising significantly, and therefore that the space occupied by the ASN and Outreach Services would be needed as classroom space.</p> <p>Officers considered that the surplus classroom space at Riverbank School could be used to accommodate some or all of the ASN &amp; Outreach Services, which in turn would free up space in the Sunnybank building to be used as classrooms by Sunnybank School. Based on the current use of space at Sunnybank School, the ASN &amp; Outreach Services would require up to eight classroom spaces in the new Riverbank building, to be used as offices, meeting rooms and teaching spaces, if all services were to be relocated.</p> <p>However, more recent school roll forecasts now indicate that pupil numbers at Sunnybank School are not expected to increase as sharply as previously indicated, and the spaces occupied by the ASN &amp; Outreach Services are not likely to be required for use as classrooms by Sunnybank School.</p>
Expected Costs	<p><u>Capital Costs</u></p> <p>It is likely that significant costs would be involved in making changes to the design and layout of spaces and entrances in the new Riverbank School to accommodate the ASN &amp; Outreach Services.</p> <p><u>Revenue Costs</u></p> <p>There would be a cost implication for packing and relocating resources, furniture etc from Sunnybank School to new Riverbank School</p> <p>As this option was discounted as unviable at an early stage, for the reasons outlined below, detailed costs for this option have not been obtained.</p>

Expected Benefits / Disbenefits	<p><u>Benefits</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensures all classroom spaces at the new Riverbank School building are fully utilised, either by the school or by the ASN &amp; Outreach Services, thus maximising the efficiency of the Riverbank building</li> </ul> <p><u>Disbenefits</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires significant retrospective changes to be made to the design, configuration and layout of the Riverbank building, to provide appropriate, separate and secure space for the ASN &amp; Outreach Services. This could significantly compromise the original intended design and flow of the new school building and reduce the positive impact that the building will have on learning and teaching.</li> <li>Creates significant disruption to the ASN &amp; Outreach Services, if they were required to relocate, and potential logistical difficulties with management and staffing of services, if only some services were to relocate, and the remaining services were to remain at Sunnybank School.</li> </ul>
Risks Specific to this Option	<p>Implementing this option would require most if not all of the surplus classroom spaces at the new Riverbank building to be permanently repurposed for use by the ASN &amp; Outreach services. This would remove any flexibility in the use of these spaces and risk the school reaching or exceeding its capacity, if pupil numbers were to start to rise significantly.</p>
Viability	<p>Given that there is no longer a requirement to free up space at Sunnybank School, relocating the ASN &amp; Outreach services from the Sunnybank building to the Riverbank building would not provide a solution to the issue of excess unused classroom capacity; it would simply transfer the surplus space from Riverbank School to Sunnybank School, as there would be no alternative use for the vacated space at Sunnybank School. For this reason, coupled with the disruption likely to be caused to both the ASN &amp; Outreach services and Riverbank School, this option is not considered viable.</p>
Other Points	<p>None identified.</p>

**Option 3 – Relocation of Autism Outreach Service Plus Early Intervention Space (Preferred Option)**

Description

This option would involve the Autism Outreach Service, currently based at the former Ashgrove Children’s Centre building, relocating to the new Riverbank School building, from where they would operate an early intervention service within their current resources. The space at Riverbank would also provide for a very small number of children from across the city to attend on site to access intensive support, where this might be of benefit.

This option would provide an opportunity to trial a new approach to supporting pupils with additional support needs, as outlined within the recent report from the Education Psychology Service, which recommended establishing an early intervention space supported by ASN Outreach, as a test of change for supporting pupils across the city, and working and learning collaboratively from this.

The Service could occupy up to four of the surplus classroom spaces (1 room to be used as an office space for staff, and up to 3 rooms to be used for supporting pupils on site, and as a test for an early intervention space). The rooms would allow staff to provide outreach services to pupils across the city, and also to support up to 10 young people on site at any one time initially, to test and evaluate the effectiveness of this model of early intervention.

Children would remain on the roll of their own school and attend the unit at Riverbank to develop strategies to allow them to cope better in their mainstream school. It is recommended that the unit is established initially for a trial period of two years.

The spaces at the new Riverbank School are considered to be more suited to providing this type of support, compared with the rooms currently used by the Service at the Ashgrove Children’s Centre building. The majority of rooms at the Ashgrove building are currently used to accommodate early years classes from Orchard Brae School.

Given that existing staff would be relocating to the Riverbank building, there would be no staff costs involved in adopting this option. Some minor reconfiguration of the existing building design would be required however, to provide a dedicated toilet and changing facility adjacent to the unit. The four classrooms would be largely self-contained within one end of the Upper Stages wing of the new Riverbank building, with a secure entry door between the unit and the rest of the school, and direct access to a secure garden and play area.

Expected Costs	<p><b><u>Capital Costs</u></b></p> <p>Additional cost to the Riverbank School capital project (for reconfiguration and provision of toilet and changing space) – these costs will be incorporated within the overall project budget.</p> <p><b><u>Annual Revenue Costs</u></b></p> <p>There would be a cost implication for packing and relocating equipment, furniture etc from Ashgrove Children’s Centre to the new Riverbank School building, estimated at <b>£5,000</b></p>
Expected Benefits / Disbenefits	<p><b><u>Benefits</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides an alternative use for some of the surplus classroom space at the new Riverbank School building, whilst retaining flexibility in the use of remaining spaces should these be required to form additional classes at short notice</li> <li>• Allows the Autism Outreach Service to relocate to more suitable premises and the opportunity to test and evaluate the use of an early intervention unit, to provide specialist support to young people for a targeted amount of time, with a view to them then returning to mainstream education</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Disbenefits</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires some retrospective changes to be made to the design and specification of the new Riverbank building. This could compromise to a limited extent the original intended design and flow of the new school building.</li> </ul>
Risks Specific to this Option	None identified.
Viability	This option would provide a solution to the surplus classroom space at the new Riverbank School building, whilst providing valuable specialist support to pupils with additional support needs. It is considered to be viable and is the recommended option.
Other Points	If the option is approved, work would be undertaken over the remainder of this school session to plan the relocation of the service and how the new unit will be operated, and to identify pupils who would benefit from attending initially. It is anticipated that the unit would open from August 2025.

**Option 4 – Permanent relocation of Orchard Brae School pupils and staff from Ashgrove Children’s Centre**

<p>Description</p>	<p>This option would involve the relocation of pupils and staff from Orchard Brae School which are currently based within the Ashgrove Children’s Centre building, to the new Riverbank School building.</p> <p>Currently, Orchard Brae School uses four classrooms at Ashgrove Children’s Centre for children with complex additional support needs (three nursery classes and one class for primary aged children), along with staff office space and touch down spaces for outreach staff.</p> <p>The building provides spaces for up to 34 children and 34 members of staff who are permanently based at Ashgrove, with 20 further outreach staff who spend some of their working week in the building.</p> <p>Under this option, at least 6 of the surplus classrooms at the new Riverbank School building would be required to be repurposed to accommodate the Orchard Brae classes and staff.</p> <p>The Ashgrove Children’s Centre building would then be considered for alternative uses, or potentially for disposal if it is deemed to be surplus to requirement, and could therefore deliver an overall saving to the Council.</p>
<p>Expected Costs</p>	<p><u>Capital Costs</u></p> <p>Due to the special and complex needs of children attending the Orchard brae nursery classes, It is likely that significant costs would be involved in making physical changes to the design and layout of spaces and entrances in the new Riverbank School to accommodate the Orchard Brae classes, and to create suitable office space and facilities for staff. The Riverbank classrooms have been designed and built to accommodate children in P1-7 year groups, and significant alterations would be required to make them suitable for use as ASN nursery classes. Such changes would be permanent, and should there be a requirement in future for the spaces to be put back into use as P1-7 classrooms, further work would be required, at additional cost.</p> <p><u>Revenue Costs</u></p> <p>There would be a cost implication for packing and relocating resources, furniture etc from Ashgrove Children’s Centre to the new Riverbank School building.</p> <p>As this option was discounted as unviable at an early stage, for the reasons outlined below, detailed costs for this option have not been obtained.</p>



Expected Benefits / Disbenefits	<p><u>Benefits</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides an alternative use for some of the surplus classroom space at the new Riverbank School building.</li> <li>• Allows the potential disposal of the Ashgrove Children’s Centre building, if it is deemed to be surplus to requirement, resulting in a revenue saving to the Council and potential capital receipt.</li> </ul> <p><u>Disbenefits</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires significant retrospective changes to be made to the design, configuration and layout of the Riverbank building, to provide appropriate, separate and secure space for the Orchard Brae nursery classes and staff. This could significantly compromise the original intended design and flow of the new school building and reduce the positive impact that the building will have on learning and teaching.</li> <li>• Creates significant disruption to the Orchard Brae nursery classes, if they were required to relocate to the new building.</li> </ul>
Risks Specific to this Option	<p>Implementing this option would require most of the surplus classroom spaces at the new Riverbank building to be permanently repurposed for use by the Orchard Brae nursery classes. This would remove any flexibility in the use of these spaces and risk the school reaching or exceeding its capacity, if pupil numbers were to start to rise significantly.</p>
Viability	<p>Given the significant work which would be required to convert the existing P1-7 classroom spaces into specialist ASN nursery provision and staff office space, for which no budget has been identified, this option is considered to be not viable.</p>
Other Points	<p>None identified.</p>

**Option 5 – Temporary relocation of St Peter’s RC School to new Riverbank building, for duration of St Peter’s Capital Works**

<p>Description</p>	<p>Following approval by Committee in November 2023, a project is under way to substantially extend and refurbish the existing St Peter’s RC School site, and the pupils and staff at St Peter’s are due to move temporarily to the existing Riverbank School building for the duration of those works, commencing from Summer 2025 (after the existing Riverbank School has relocated to its new building). Upon completion of the refurbishment work, expected to be in Winter 2026, St Peter’s pupils and staff would move back to the St Peter’s site.</p> <p>This option considers the possibility of temporarily relocating St Peter’s RC School to the surplus classroom spaces in the new Riverbank School building, for the duration of the refurbishment works at the St Peter’s site, as an alternative to the planned move to the existing Riverbank School site.</p> <p>The pupil roll at St Peter’s RC School is currently 187, and there are eight separate classes. All eight of the surplus classroom spaces at the new Riverbank School building would therefore be required to accommodate the St Peter’s pupils.</p>
<p>Expected Costs</p>	<p><u>Capital Costs</u> No additional costs identified</p> <p><u>Revenue Costs</u> No additional costs identified</p> <p><u>Revenue Saving</u> This option would remove the need to continue running the existing Riverbank School site to accommodate St Peter’s School, and would therefore allow an immediate saving to be made on the running costs for the existing Riverbank building, which amount to approximately <b>£293k per year.</b></p> <p><u>Potential Earlier Capital Receipt</u> Proceeding with this option could result in the existing Riverbank site being declared surplus to requirement, and it could then be disposed of, leading to a potential capital receipt at least 18 months sooner than would be the case if St Peter’s School were to occupy the building for the duration of the St Peter’s refurbishment works.</p> <p>As this option was discounted as unviable at an early stage, for the reasons outlined below, an updated valuation for the Riverbank school site has not been obtained.</p>

Expected Benefits / Disbenefits	<p><u>Benefits</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides an alternative use for all of the surplus classroom space at the new Riverbank School building.</li> <li>• Allows the potential earlier disposal of the current Riverbank School building, if it is deemed to be surplus to requirement, resulting in a revenue saving to the Council and potential capital receipt.</li> </ul> <p><u>Disbenefits</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires all eight of the surplus classroom spaces at the new Riverbank School building to be put into use as classrooms for St Peter's School, until Winter 2026, effectively making the building full to capacity. If the pupil rolls at either Riverbank School or St Peter's School were to rise significantly in that time period, it may not be possible to accommodate all pupils within the building.</li> <li>• This option would require two schools to operate from one building, requiring them to share ancillary spaces including playgrounds, dining and gym halls, assembly hall, reception area etc. This may create logistical difficulties which could create disruption to school management and to learning and teaching.</li> </ul>
Risks Specific to this Option	As detailed above, there would be a risk of the building reaching full capacity and removing any flexibility to create more teaching space, should pupil numbers at either school rise significantly.
Viability	Given that all of the available surplus space at the new Riverbank School would be required to accommodate St Peter's School, and due to the complexities and potential disruption which may be caused by running two schools from within one building which is not designed for that purpose, this option is not considered to be viable.
Other Points	None identified.

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## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education & Children's Services
<b>DATE</b>	26 November 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Behaviour Action Plan
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	F&C/24/322
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Eleanor Sheppard
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Shona Milne
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Emma Powell, Shona Milne
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	1.1.1, 1.1.2,1.1.3

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report responds to the instruction to the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to review the adequacy of the current allocation of pupil support staffing and provision of specialist placements across the city; consider the output and report options for consideration back to the Education and Children's Services Committee within three cycles.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Note the continued hard work undertaken by Aberdeen City schools to provide creative, learner-centred support for learners across the city;
- 2.2 Instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to develop a proposed operating model for a cost neutral time limited Early Intervention provision, to be based at Riverbank School for up to 10 primary children, and bring a firmer proposal to Committee for approval within 2 Committee cycles; and
- 2.3 Instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to work with Head Teachers to identify a solution that will allow Pupil Support Assistants to be released for professional learning.
- 2.4 Instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to append a summary of progress against the ASL Review recommendations and a summary of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Additional Support for Learning to the report being presented to Committee within 2 cycles.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 In order to comprehensively respond to the instruction to review the adequacy of provision for those with additional support needs, officers have undertaken a deep dive into the data held by the service (Appendix A), commissioned the

Education Psychology Service to undertake a detailed exploration of learner need (Appendix B) and have also drawn key themes from recently published HMLe reports (Appendix C) to ensure that external opinion is also taken into account. All three sources of evidence have been triangulated to inform the development of recommendations presented to Committee.

### **3.2. DEEP DIVE INTO SERVICE DATA**

- 3.2.1 An analysis of centrally held data (Appendix A) was undertaken to consider the current range and volume of specialist provisions across the city, changes in learner need, current provision of Pupil Support Assistants, the professional learning offer, support for families and the levels of pupil attendance.
- 3.2.2 Data shows that there is a broad range of specialist provisions and specialist services available across the city, with the volume of provision thought to be in keeping with national averages, and far greater than some who have very limited provision. When children and young people have been allocated a full-time placement in a specialist provision, very few children and young people then transition onto a less supported provision, this impacts on the spaces available in specialist provisions on a yearly basis. Based on current arrangements, there is clear evidence that demand will always be greater than the number of places available and that there will continue to be a level of prioritisation required.
- 3.2.3 One provision (The Language Units) offers very targeted support for a time limited period before children and young people return to their mainstream settings. More children referred to this resource are able to access the service.
- 3.2.4 There is evidence that the complexity of additional support needs experienced by our learners has been steadily increasing, partly due to advances in medical science. As a result, the composition of learners in specialist provisions, and mainstream, has changed over time. There is also clear evidence that recent world events have impacted on our children and young people across all provisions and school settings.
- 3.2.5 In the absence of a change in national policy on a presumption of mainstreaming (and associated funding) there is a need to think about how best to mitigate a further increase in referrals for placements in specialist provisions. There is much to be learned from the operation of our Language Units where a short-term intervention is offered prior to transitioning back to mainstream, particularly to help address some of the increased demand identified in the early stages of primary.
- 3.2.6 The number of children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) has increased significantly from 34.6% in 2018/19 to 39.67% in 2023/24, this is in keeping with the national picture. Deprivation is a factor in the spread of additional support needs across the city. There is evidence that some of the whole city approaches utilised over the last few years are impacting positively.
- 3.2.7 The increase in learner needs following the pandemic triggered the planning of a high number of bespoke interventions for individuals with 10.70% of learners having an Individual Education Plan (IEP) in 2021. By 2023 this had reduced

to below pre pandemic levels, with only 7.99% of learners having an IEP. This suggests that interventions put in place immediately following the pandemic were successful for most children and young people.

3.2.8 The percentage of learners requiring an education-initiated Child's Plan has started to marginally increase. This supports other data sets suggesting that ASN learner needs are becoming more complex and in need of multi-agency action. Additional Support Needs will be given consideration as we develop our Family Support arrangements.

3.2.9 The number of Pupil Support Assistants in schools increased by 10% post pandemic, driven by the increase in school rolls. Head teachers have control of how they deploy the allocation. There is a very small resource allocated through the Child's Planning Forum to support transition identified through the Child's Plan. Requests for assistance data would suggest that our schools would easily deploy additional resource.

3.2.10 Pupil support assistants support learning, carry out first aid and administer medicine in line with policy. They work closely with learners with ASN and support them to develop academic and social skills under the guidance of the class teacher. Quality Assurance observations would highlight the level of skills in many, although as would be anticipated this is not consistent. There are opportunities for additional training to increase the capacity and capability of support staff, however these can be limited due to the working hours of PSAs aligning with learning hours for learners. There may be a need to consider how to improve induction arrangements and the accessibility of training opportunities to further build the capacity and capability of school teams.

3.2.11 We currently offer universal online support for all our families through our Parent Hub and information pages on the city website. The signposting is not always clear for parents/carers. There is a need to create a single source of information which is regularly updated.

3.2.12 Attendance levels are above national and all other Urban local authority averages, however they are still below pre pandemic levels (at 92.2% as opposed to 93.3%). Headteachers and central officers regularly review attendance data to help target groups or individuals who would benefit from further investigation.

3.2.13 When parents are reminded about the importance of attendance, we can see this has an impact on attendance levels. In order to improve this further a focus group of Head Teachers and central staff are reviewing our guidance and practices against Emotionally based school Non-attendance approaches.

### **3.3 EXPLORATION OF LEARNERS NEEDS**

3.3.1 The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) undertook an Exploration of Learners Needs. This was to gain a further understanding of how the learning needs of children and young people are met across schools and insight in lived experiences. Full analysis can be found in Appendix B.

- 3.3.2 Analysis of Secondary School data tells us that schools are experiencing an increase in both complexity and number of learners' with Additional Support Needs in their mainstream settings, most clearly seen in the early stages of Secondary education. Secondary Senior Leaders referred to the changing picture of emotional presentation of learners' post pandemic, with factors such as Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA) and emotional dysregulation seen in their settings. A perceived reduction in support from external support partners was a difficulty identified by Secondary leaders. A key factor identified as important to support learners was both the capacity of staff and the physical environment. Secondary Senior Leaders shared their appreciation for the many school staff that go above and beyond their remit to support the needs of learners across their settings.
- 3.3.3 The flexibility of Secondary schools to meet the complex range of Additional Support Needs was demonstrated through a range of creative approaches to maximise limited resource, this included looking more holistically at structural changes (e.g., increasing curricular offers). Embedding universal offers and approaches, such as relational approaches were also shared as helpful. Leaders in each secondary setting were asked what their three most effective interventions/approaches were. The four most frequently named were:
- Improved curricular offer
  - Internal outreach support
  - Circle – a universal & targeted approach for the learning environment for learners with neurodivergence
  - Internal Support Base
- 3.3.4 Analysis of the data from Primary Schools tell us that they are experiencing more learners in their settings with Additional Support Needs, and more complexity in the range and breadth of needs they are supporting. This is most noticeable in the early stages of Primary school. Primary Senior Leaders expressed that there could be challenges with ensuring capacity of their support staff and felt that that this could impact on staff wellbeing. Staff working in Primaries are highly valued and their work is appreciated. It is recognised that many school staff go above and beyond their remit to support the needs of learners. Opportunities for supporting and upskilling support staff can be limited due to their contracted hours and staff would welcome a solution to this. Primaries shared that current support levels depended on resourcing continuing. Primary schools are using a range of creative approaches to support learners including adapting their environments, creating enhanced areas, and prioritising staff resourcing to meet the needs particularly of those with dysregulation difficulties, or sensory needs.
- 3.3.5. Some primaries discussed the benefits of strong and effective partnerships and the value and support this brings them. Associated School Group partnerships were a helpful resource to support creativity and problem solving for some. Primaries shared that the buy-in from staff for approaches and interventions was integral to their successful implementation. Primary senior leaders were asked what their three most effective interventions/ approaches were, the most popular were:
- Creation of enhanced area



- Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA – a PSA training & ongoing support programme delivered by the EPS)
  - Circle – a universal & targeted approach for the learning environment for learners with neurodivergence
  - Trauma informed approach
  - Relational approach
  - Emotion Works – a way of talking about emotions and emotional regulation – universally or targeted.
- 3.3.6 All teaching and support staff in schools were given the opportunity to complete an anonymous online survey. As there were only 54 responses, generalisations across the workforce cannot be made but insights into the experiences of those working in schools can be seen. Staff shared concerns about the increasing complexity and levels of Additional Support Needs seen and the impact of learning environments for some learners (e.g. sensory or dysregulation). Staff shared that they see schools as welcoming of learners with Additional Support Needs and the diversity this brings. They reported that schools are adapting and changing practice with inclusive spaces, relational approaches and differentiated learning. That professional learning offered alongside support from Education and external services partners are all valued. These all help to mitigate some of the challenges.
- 3.3.7 Focus Groups took place with appropriate groups (including parents of children and young people with ASN, and Trade Unions) whose views were not gathered in the first 3 strands of the exploration. There was consensus across the various groups of what makes practice most effective in relation to supporting learners with ASN. Effective collaboration and partnership working with schools, families and internal and external partners was at the core of success, alongside clarity and streamlining of roles and support processes. Challenges were seen when these things were not in place. The embedding of strong universal supports, alongside continued capacity building and creative approaches were also valued as key for successful experiences and placements. It was agreed that when required intensive wrap-around support with partners can make the difference for some learners with complex ASN. These groups also discussed the increasing pressures of increased additional support needs in schools.
- 3.3.8 A Case Study approach was utilised to shine a light on some of the exemplary practice taking place across Aberdeen's schools, with Case Studies available in Appendix B. Four settings were involved, representing different stages, and localities in education. Strong pedagogical approaches were firmly embedded by teachers and support staff and creativity was seen across practice. Effective use of physical spaces to provide relational approaches, connections and collaborations with learners, and creation of a sense of belonging all contributed to the most effective learning experiences.
- 3.3.9 Finally, 160 learners from Primary, Secondary and Specialist provision across Aberdeen selected cards to indicate their own and perceptions of classmates' feelings regarding different topics related to wellbeing in school. Within the 'Wellbeing' theme more learners selected they sometimes could find the school environment overwhelming (noise/busyness/crowds) and worried at break times. But most learners rated they 'could show their true feelings in school'

and did not 'worry about coming into school'. Learners, through the cards they selected, rated the themes of 'Sense of Belonging', 'Relationships with Adults', and School' the most highly.

3.3.10 Undertaking this detailed exploration of learners' needs has highlighted how our schools are responding to increasing levels of complexity. For the most part, our school have responded extremely positively. To further strengthen our arrangements there is a need to:

- Carefully consider the physical space helpful to support learners, and take the need for such space into consideration when establishing new school capacities
- Establish further mechanisms to share practice, especially with how to adapt internal and external spaces across Associated School Groups and with the wider workforce
- Strengthen induction arrangements for support staff, and consider how best to release more staff more often to engage in high quality professional learning
- Influence the simplification of partnership referral processes
- Progress current plans to enhance arrangements for support to those with Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA)

### **3.4 THEMES FROM PUBLISHED HMIe REPORTS**

3.4.1 HMIe undertake inspections of schools and share their findings in a report with school staff, parents and local authority officers. Analysis of the reports with a supporting learners' lens has identified 4 common strengths:

- High quality relationships with learners, parents, staff and across school communities
- The nurturing environments within our schools
- Leadership of schools
- Engagement and communication with parents

Schools with all these key strengths have the ideal conditions for supporting learners' needs. The good practice within the schools has been shared across staff networks and will continue to be used to support improved practice in others.

3.4.2 Key development areas common across the inspection reports analysed:

- Systems in place to monitor and track progress
- Appropriate level of challenge for learners
- Systems to support attendance
- Consistency of learning and teaching across settings
- Staff application of skills and knowledge

These key areas will be reviewed with head teachers to determine the adequacy of plans currently in place to address them.

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

3.5.1 Officers were instructed to evaluate the adequacy of current provision and Pupil Support Assistant resource and report their findings, and the next steps deemed most appropriate for consideration by Committee.

- 3.5.2 In reviewing the three sources of evidence holistically, and considering what is known about schools through quality improvement visits, officers conclude that the current level of fixed specialist school placements is appropriate in the context of current national policy.
- 3.5.3 The rise in complexity of need, at times triggered by recent world events, does however require consideration of different working practices. Officers conclude that it would be helpful to design an Early Intervention Provision, which mirrors arrangements in our Language Units and supports the positive return to mainstream school, for our youngest learners in primary school following a period of intensive support. It is proposed that such a model be fully scoped with a small-scale cost neutral operating model brought back to Committee within 2 cycles for approval. It is thought that operating and evaluating the impact of a small test of change could be invaluable in longer term planning.
- 3.5.4 In terms of provision of Pupil Support resource, all schools would report being able to utilise additional resource. There is evidence of highly skilled practitioners ably supporting and nurturing learners. However, there is also evidence that further professional learning could be beneficial in building the capacity and capability of some of the workforce further. There are currently difficulties releasing Pupil Support Staff for some professional learning given current contracts. It is proposed that a solution be identified to address this issue.
- 3.5.5 Members will be aware Scottish Government published the outcome of an Additional Support for Learning (ASL) Review, undertaken by Angela Morgan on behalf of Scottish Government, in 2020. The ASL Review confirmed that the intention of additional support for learning legislation and policy was right. However, it highlighted that improvements are necessary to ensure effective delivery across Scotland. Progress against a shared Plan, agreed between COSLA and Scottish Government, is routinely reported to COSLA.
- 3.5.7 In late 2023 the Education, Children and Young People Committee of Scottish Parliament agreed to undertake an inquiry into Additional Support for Learning (ASL). The inquiry, which ran between November 2023 and May 2024, focused on the following themes:
- the implementation of presumption of mainstreaming, meaning that, where possible, children and young people with additional support needs should be educated in mainstream schools alongside other pupils, rather than in special schools
  - the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on additional support for learning
  - the use of remedies as set out in the Act - these are dispute resolution options that are used when someone wants to dispute whether the provision put in place is adequate to support their child's additional support needs.
- 3.5.8 Both the ASL Review recommendations and the findings of the Parliamentary Inquiry provide further insight for Members. As a result, it is proposed that a summary of progress against the recommendations and of the findings of the Inquiry be appended to the report seeking approval for a draft Operating Model in 2 cycles.

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

#### 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Under the Education (Additional Support for Learning ) (Scotland) Act 2004 every education authority must make adequate and efficient provision for the additional support required by each child or young person having additional needs and monitor and review that support. This Report addresses how these duties can be fulfilled more effectively.

#### 6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

#### 7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	Risk of young people not being appropriately supported and unable to achieve positive destinations	Training for staff and appropriate supports in place for young people. Test of change will reduce potential risk	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Compliance</b>	Risk of not complying with legislation and legal challenge (tribunals)	Mitigated by young people receiving the appropriate level of support	M	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Operational</b>	Staff feeling overwhelmed leading to low morale	Mitigated by offering high quality professional learning to ensure staff can meet their statutory duties under The Education (Additional Support for Learning)	L	<b>Yes</b>

		(Scotland) Act 2004 and the Equality Act 2010.		
<b>Financial</b>	Risk of not having sufficient resource	Mitigated by realigning current services to better meet the needs of our young people in Aberdeen City today.	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Reputational</b>	Risk of not effectively meeting the needs of all learners	Services realigned to better meet the needs of our young people in Aberdeen City.	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	Risk of environmental factors inhibiting positive outcomes for learners	Single service realignment will strengthen universal/targeted support and sharing of best practice, thus preventing escalation of need through strengthened practice and reasonable adjustment.	L	<b>Yes</b>

## 8. OUTCOMES

<b><u>Council Delivery Plan 2024</u></b>	
<b>Impact of Report</b>	
<p><b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b></p> <p><b><u><a href="#">Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</a></u></b></p>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of the following ACC Priorities:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise attainment and achievement</li> <li>• Support improvement in the health and wellbeing of children and young people</li> <li>• Maximise the impact Of Early Learning and Childcare</li> </ul>
<b><u>Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026</u></b>	
<p>Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>The proposals support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 3 - 95% of all children will reach their expected developmental milestones by their 27-30 month review by 2026. Through offering support to all parents and sharing parenting opportunities we will create networks of support for families of children with additional support needs.</p> <p>The proposals within this report also support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 6 – 95% of children living in our priority neighbourhoods (Quintiles 1 &amp; 2) will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026. Through developing</p>

	<p>partnerships and working with families to ensure all young people have access to a positive destination</p> <p>The proposals within this report also support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 8– 100% of children with Additional Support Needs /Disabilities will experience a positive destination by 2026. Through developing partnerships and working with families to ensure all young people have access to a positive destination. Through improving support for parents and supporting young people with an early intervention model.</p>
<p>Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>The proposals in this report seek to ensure the best use of resource in the system, promoting an understanding of the circumstances of individual children and young people to ensure that appropriate and timely personalised support is available to them.</p> <p>Effective use of resources will help to ensure all initiatives and interventions impact positively on all children and young people and are particularly targeted at those who are adversely affected by poverty.</p> <p>Specific links to:</p> <p>Stretch Outcome 4 90% of children and young people report they feel listened to all of the time by 2026</p> <p>Stretch Outcome 6 95% of children living in our priority localities will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026,</p> <p>Stretch Outcome 7 83.5% fewer young people (under 18) charged with an offence by 2026.</p>
<p>Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>Underpinning the work of all schools in Aberdeen City is reducing the poverty related attainment gap and achieving excellence and equity for all.</p>
<p>Community Empowerment Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 16 – 50% of people report they feel able to participate in decisions that help change things for the better by 2026.</p> <p>There will be consultation with parents as part of the process for allocating additional support through the early intervention setting</p>

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

- [Integrated Impact Assessment](#)

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed. - <a href="#">Integrated Impact Assessment</a>
Data Protection Impact Assessment	
Other	

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

### 11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix A – Data held by the service  
Appendix B - Exploration of Learner’s needs  
Appendix C – Inspection analysis

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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## **APPENDIX A - DATA HELD BY THE SERVICE**

### 1.1 **Specialist Provisions in the city**

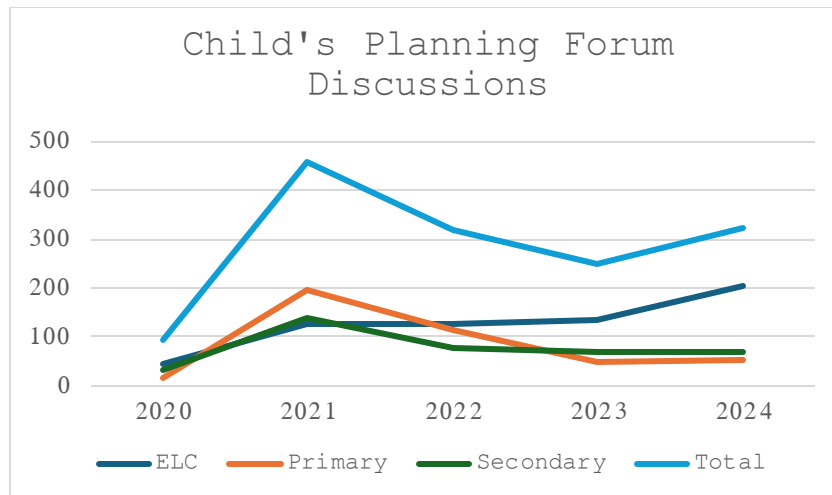
There are currently 9 specialist provisions across Aberdeen. Their composition is shown in the table below.

<b>Setting</b>	<b>Places</b>	<b>Provision</b>
Orchard Brae nursery/Ashgrove	52	ELC
Aberdeen School for the Deaf	11	Primary
Mile End School ASN Wing	78	Primary
Kaimhill School Enhanced Provision	7	Primary
Glashieburn School Enhanced Provision	7	Primary
Bridge of Don Academy Enhanced Provision	7	Secondary
Cults Academy Enhanced Provision	7	Secondary
Bucksburn Academy ASN Wing	96	Secondary
Orchard Brae School	119	Secondary

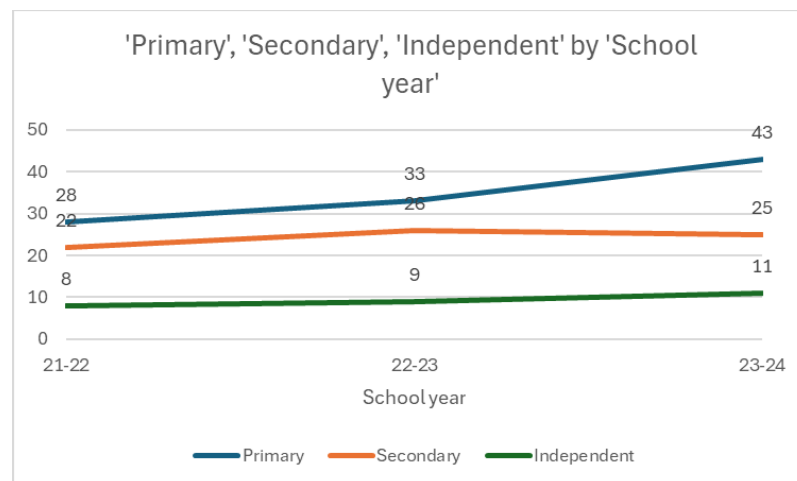
Established  
2021

- 1.2 Orchard Brae is an all through free standing special school for pupils aged 3-18 with profound, multiple and complex needs and currently supports 119 children and young people. Three of the nursery classes are based within Ashgrove Children's Centre. The Children's Social Work Children with Disabilities Team, Autism Outreach Service and Moving and Handling Team are also based at Orchard Brae. The location of the Children with Disabilities team within the provision was recognised as being innovative and impactful during a recent Thematic Inspection of Children's Social Work. There has been one single occasion when a young person from Orchard Brae transitioned to a less supported provision (Buckburn Wing).
- 1.3 Mile End ASN provision and Bucksburn Wing are specialist city wide provisions located within mainstream schools. This model ensures that children and young people can benefit from greater opportunities to be included with their mainstream peers where appropriate. Each provision has distinct ASN class areas and specialist resources but also benefits from those available within the mainstream school. The increase in levels of need across the city has meant that both Mile End and Bucksburn are now supporting children and young people with needs that are more complex than those being supported 10 years ago, as a result, the respective pupil populations less routinely engage with their mainstream peers now. There have been a few occasions where children from Mile End have transitioned back to mainstream.
- 1.4 Aberdeen School For the Deaf is a bilingual (Spoken English and British Sign Language/Sign Supported English) primary school in Aberdeen City supporting Deaf children from Nursery through to Primary 7. The provision is held in high regard by the deaf community. Children transitioning to secondary school are supported by the hearing support outreach team. All children transition to a mainstream secondary school where they are supported by the Hearing Support Service.

- 1.5 Aberdeen's Enhanced Provisions (an ASN class within a mainstream school) were opened in August 2021 in response to the increase in need identified across the city at that time. Each class supports 7 learners. The Glashieburn provision has recently transitioned one learner back into mainstream following the intensive support offered. In almost all cases, children transition to their zoned mainstream school.
- 1.6 Aberdeen operates Language Support Provisions in Sunnybank and Dyce Primaries for learners in P1 - 3 with significant speech and language delay. These provisions offer daily access to Speech and Language Therapists and operate on an outreach model with learners attending the provision fulltime for a maximum of 2 years whilst remaining on the roll of their local school. At the point of transition back to mainstream, the zoned school staff attend sessions in the provision so that they have the skills to support their returning learners, this investment in capacity building helps ensure a smooth and successful transition. This model is particularly effective in supporting a positive transition back into mainstream. More children who are referred to this resource are able to access the service compared to those seeking static places in other specialist provisions.
- 1.7 Nationally there are 149 local authority special schools however the way in which local authorities define special school varies. There is no national list of mainstream schools which contain units specifically for children with ASN. This makes it difficult to compare the volume of our ASN provision to that of other local authorities. We know through discussions with colleagues that we sit mid-range nationally for specialist provisions.
- 1.8 There is considerable anecdotal evidence that the reputation of NHS Grampian's Aberdeen Royal Infirmary (and its provision of medical care across multiple other local authorities) and the proximity of Orchard Brae and Mile End to the hospital results in families often choosing to move to Aberdeen from other parts of Scotland.
- 1.9 Places for all ASN provisions are allocated on a referral basis through the Child's Planning Support Forum. The Forum is a collaborative team of representatives from education, social work and health. This panel meets 7 times a year to review Child's Plans and give recommendations to the named person/lead professionals in the context of the Scottish Government's presumption of mainstreaming.
- 1.10 The number of referrals for a specialist provision peaked in 2020/21 and then decreased steadily to 2022/23. Referrals have remained fairly consistent since. However, the number of referrals is always greater than the places available, and this has always been the case. The pattern for ELC is different with referrals showing a steady increase from 2020/21 to 2022/23, and then a sharper increase between 2022/23 and 2023/24, due largely to referrals from Health Visitors. This would align with qualitative feedback from schools suggesting that the level of need is greatest in the early stages but may also indicate a need to ensure that our Health Visiting colleagues are aware of how our primary schools operate.



1.11 Parents can apply for a place at one of our ASN schools by making a placing request. Requests for places in Secondary provision have been rising in the last 3 years whereas requests for primary are beginning to decrease. This is thought to indicate a higher level of anxiety about transition to secondary. Independent school places (Camphill and Linn Moor) are also sometimes sought. These independent places cost around £40,000 a year per child for a day place.



1.12 The current provision of specialist equipment for those with a range of ASN is provided on a needs basis, irrespective of school, following assessment by an NHS physiotherapist or occupational therapist. Any equipment the learner no longer requires is returned to Bon Accord Care who service the equipment ready for redistribution.

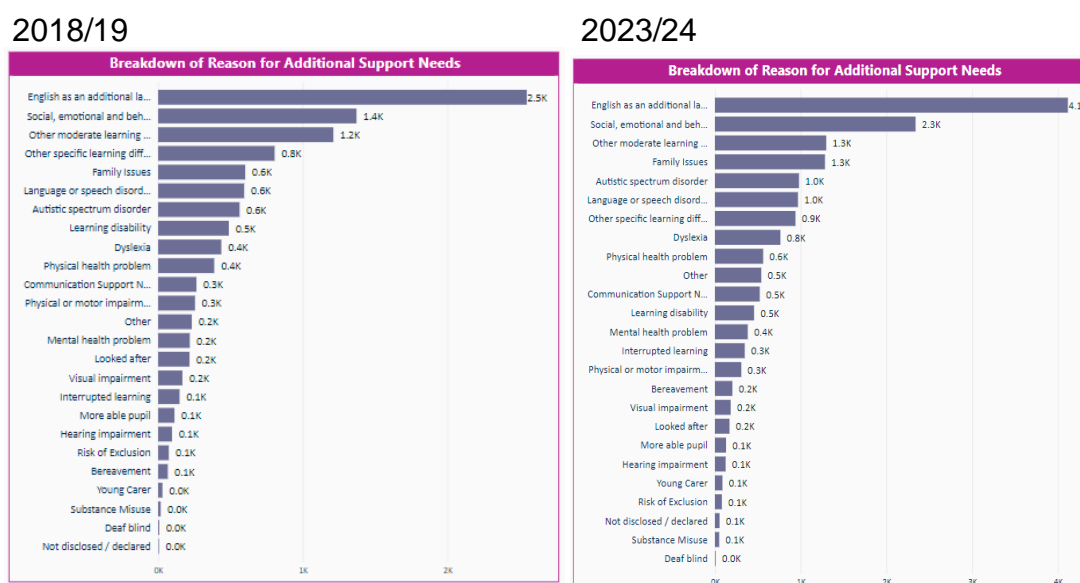
1.13 Schools can also access support from a range of internal Education support agencies: ASN and Outreach (including Dyslexia Outreach, Language Support, Hearing Support, Vision Support, English as an Additional Language (EAL), Educational Psychology, Autism Outreach, Orchard Brae Complex Additional Supports Needs (CASN) Service and the Quality Improvement Team. This support can be bespoke to the needs of the school. Multi-Agency and external support agencies include Fit Like Hubs and Children's and Families Social Work.

1.14 In summary, the current provision of specialist provision is thought to be in line with national averages and Aberdeen City Council is fully aligned to national policy. There is evidence that irrespective of the number of placements, demand will always be greater than the number of places available and require a level of prioritisation.

1.15 Transitions continue to cause anxiety for parents and there is limited appetite for transitioning to a less supported provision. In the absence of a change in national policy (and associated funding) there is a need to think about how best to mitigate a further increase in referrals. There is much to learn from the operation of our Language Units where a short term intervention is offered prior to transitioning back to mainstream.

**2.1 Children and young people with Additional Support Needs (ASN)**

The number of children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) has increased significantly from 34.6% in 2018/19 to 39.67% in 2023/24, this is similar to the national average. This increase can be attributed to the increase in learner needs post pandemic, increased awareness of requirements within Additional Support for Learning legislation, and advances in medical science.



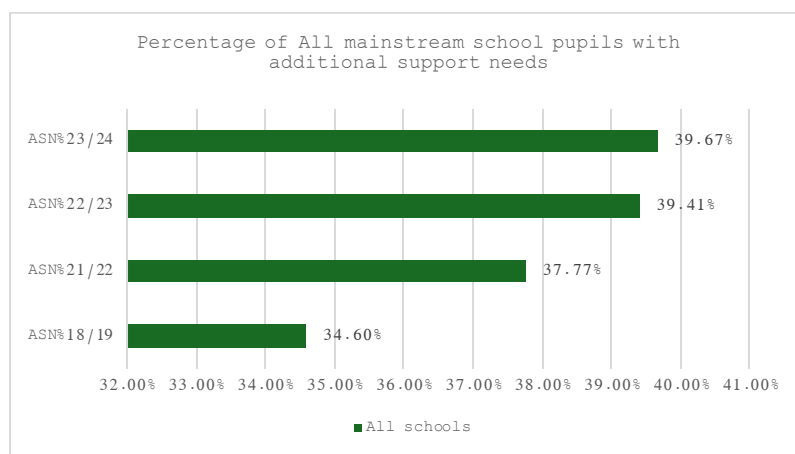
2.2 The greatest increases in identified need since 2018/19 are in English as an additional language which has risen from 2,500 to over 4,000. This is not surprising given the well reported rise in our school rolls. The English as an Additional Language Service has responded positively by offering a more targeted offer to schools to replicate the successful Dyslexia Service Model.

2.3 There would appear to be a rise in the number of children and young people with both Autism Spectrum and speech and language needs. Qualitative data would suggest that this is probably a conservative number and an area that could benefit from further consideration.

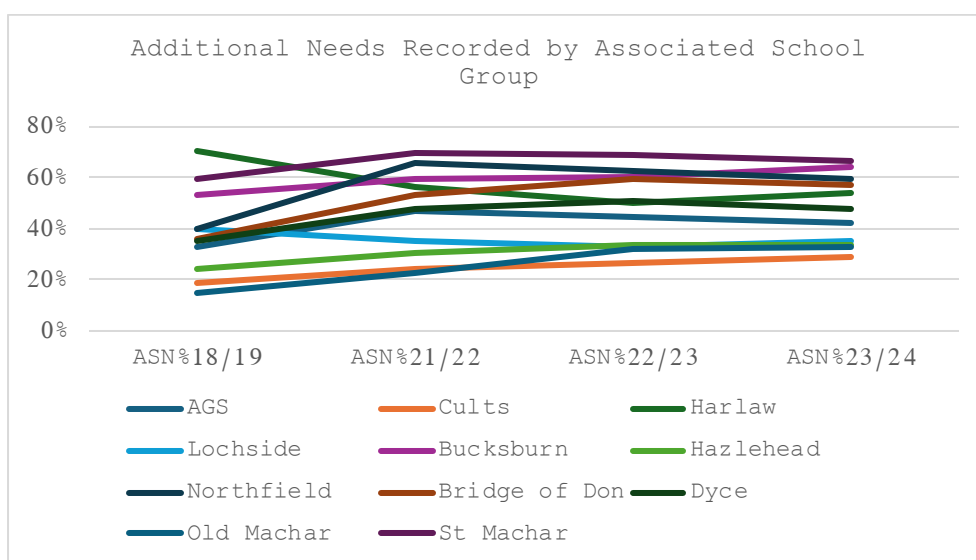
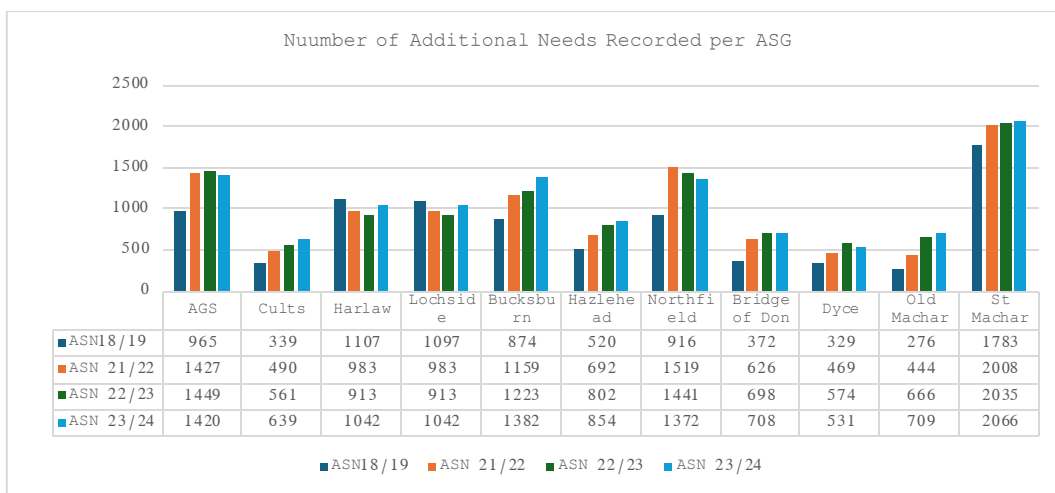
2.4 Social, emotional and behavioural needs have also seen a significant increase with the number of needs reported having increased from 1400 to 2300. This is

most likely linked to the impact of the pandemic and the recent increases in learner and parent anxiety. Staff now have an increased understanding of the impact of trauma on learners and how this may be displayed. Trauma itself would not be recorded as an ASN, but some presenting behaviours, such as emotional dysregulation, sensory presentations, or emotionally based school non-attendance (EBSNA) would be.

- 2.5 To understand where the greatest need is in the city, we need to consider the data by Associated school group (ASG).
- 2.6 The number of additional needs identified within mainstream schools has increased steadily post pandemic with the largest increase (3.17%) between 18/19 and 21/22. This would reflect the impact of the pandemic on learners returning to face to face learning. The rate of increase has reduced significantly between 22/23 and 23/24.

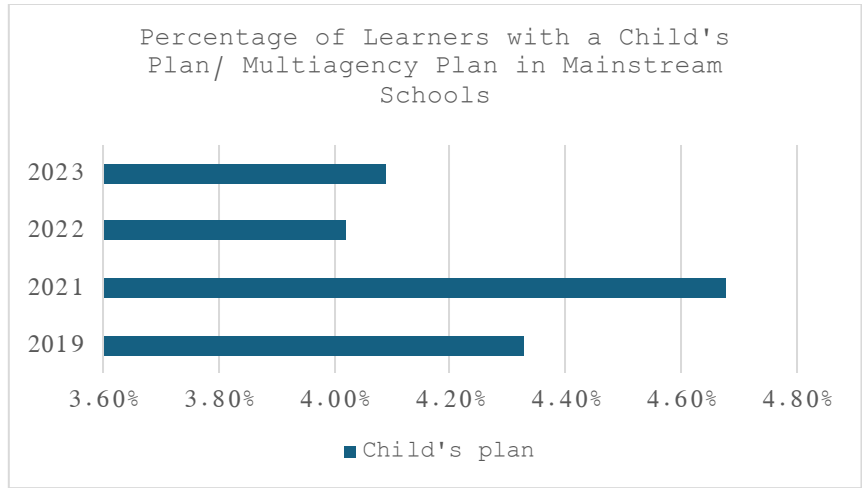


- 2.7 If we break the data down to the number of times an additional support need is recorded by individual ASGs, trends vary due to the individual context of each ASG. The ASG with the highest number of additional support needs recorded is St Machar and this has been consistent for the last 3 years. An individual learner may have one or more additional needs identified, as a result the percentages below do not equate to the number of learners with additional support needs, rather the number of recorded needs (with an individual potentially having multiple needs recorded).

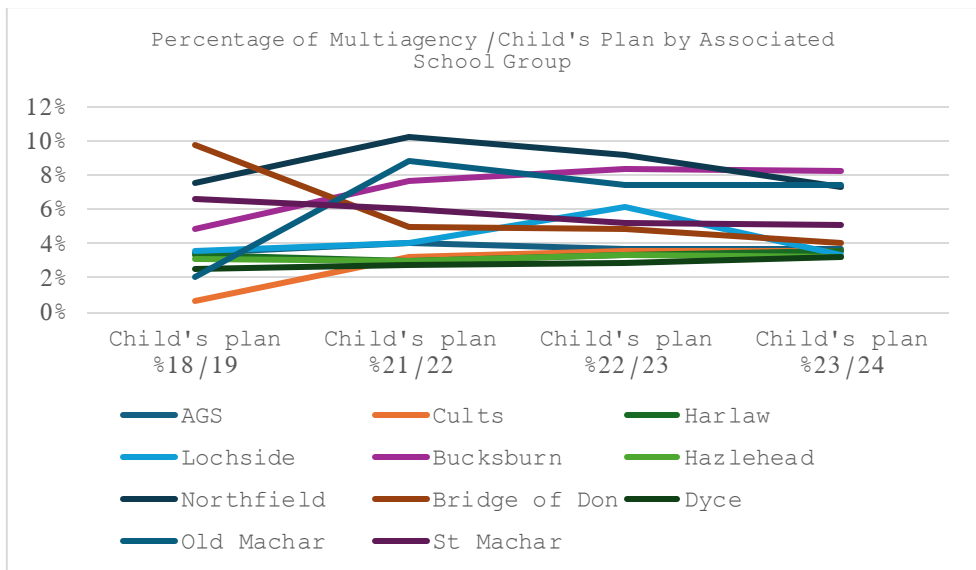
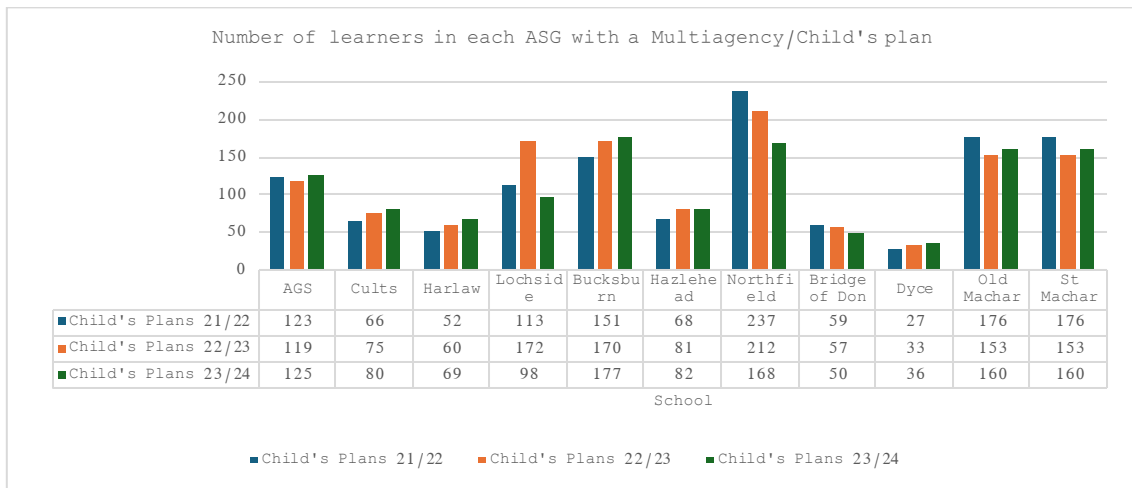


2.8 The very wide definitions of additional support needs within the Addition Support for Learning Code of Practice, means that children who require only small adaptations to thrive, are counted in a similar way to those who require a more detailed level of multi-agency planning. The data in the system does not provide detail on the complexity of needs of individuals. If a learner has more complex needs, they are likely to have multiple agencies supporting their needs and therefore have a Child's Plan and/or Co-ordinated Support Plan (CSP) to help coordinate support for the learner and their family. Analysing the number of multiagency plans allows us to analyse the number of learners with more complex needs with multi-agency support packages in place.

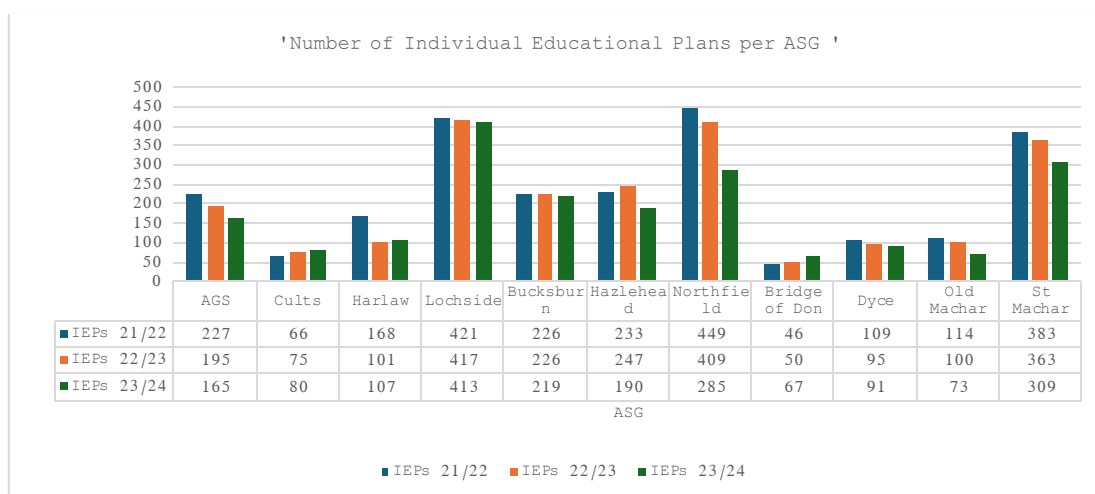
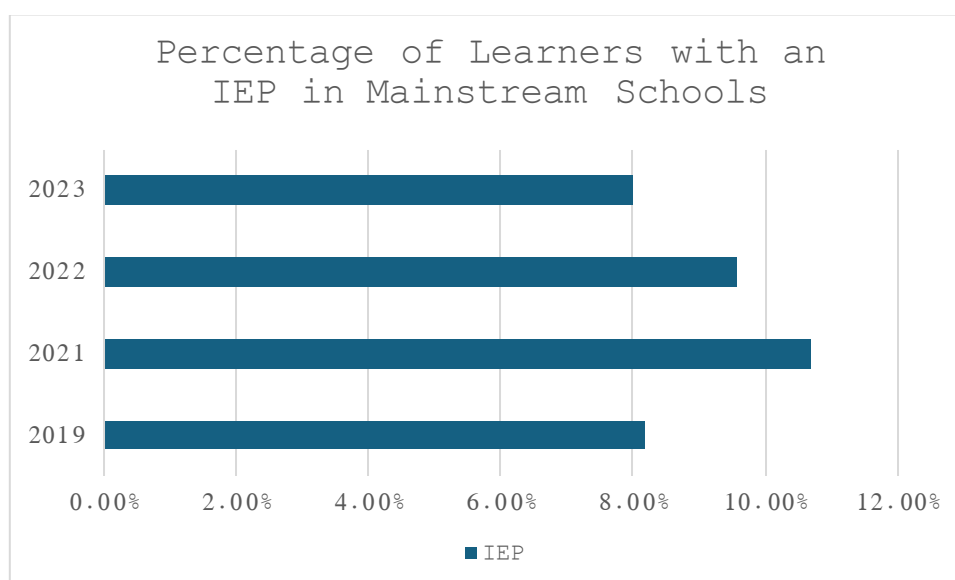
2.9 The majority of ASGs have seen an increase in the number of multi-agency plans over the last 3 years and this would correlate with qualitative information gleaned suggesting an increase in the number of children with complex needs within our schools. This data only shows Plans that have been initiated by education and therefore not those coordinated by Children's Social Work, who have care and protection needs.



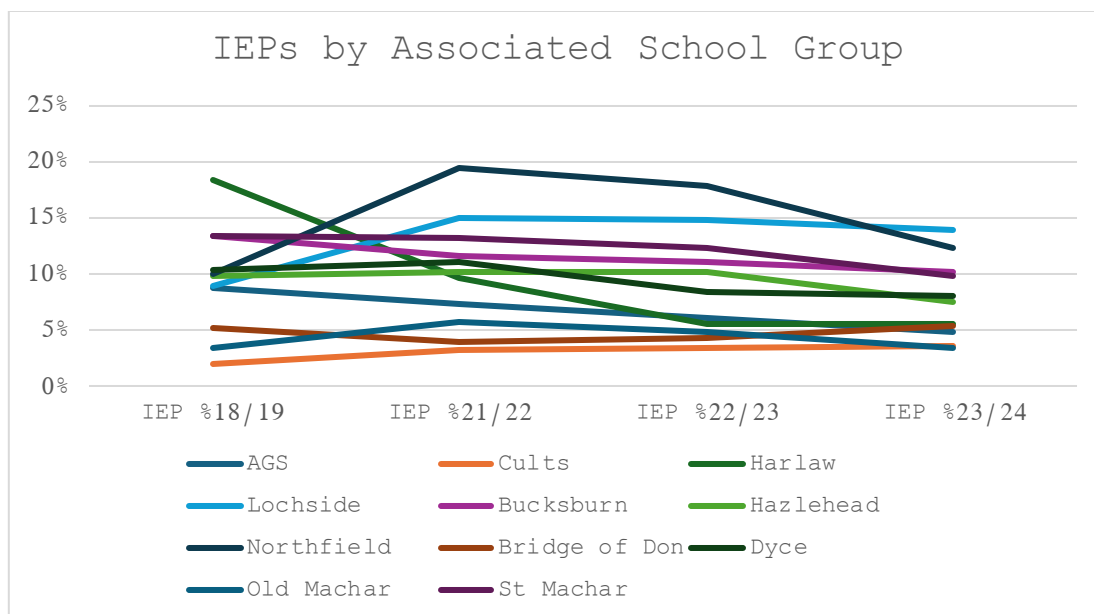
2.10 As can be seen in the data, a high proportion of Child's Plans are in place across Bucksburn and Aberdeen Grammar ASG (due in part to the specialist provisions in place), and also across Northfield and St Machar. The elevated levels across Northfield and St Machar can be partially attributed to known links between levels of deprivation and some additional support needs.



2.11 Schools also have single agency plans, Individual Educational Plans (IEP), for learners where the learner does not require, or meet the threshold for, the support from multi-agency partners. The number of Individual Education Plans varies from school to school however the trend shows a reduction over time in most ASGs. This may be because of the increase in whole school approaches such as utilisation of the CIRCLE framework and Compassionate and Connected Communities. The data for 18/19 has been included, however there were inconsistencies across ASGs at that time which have subsequently been addressed. This data would suggest that a high proportion of learners with additional support needs are benefiting from universal adaptations being made by schools.







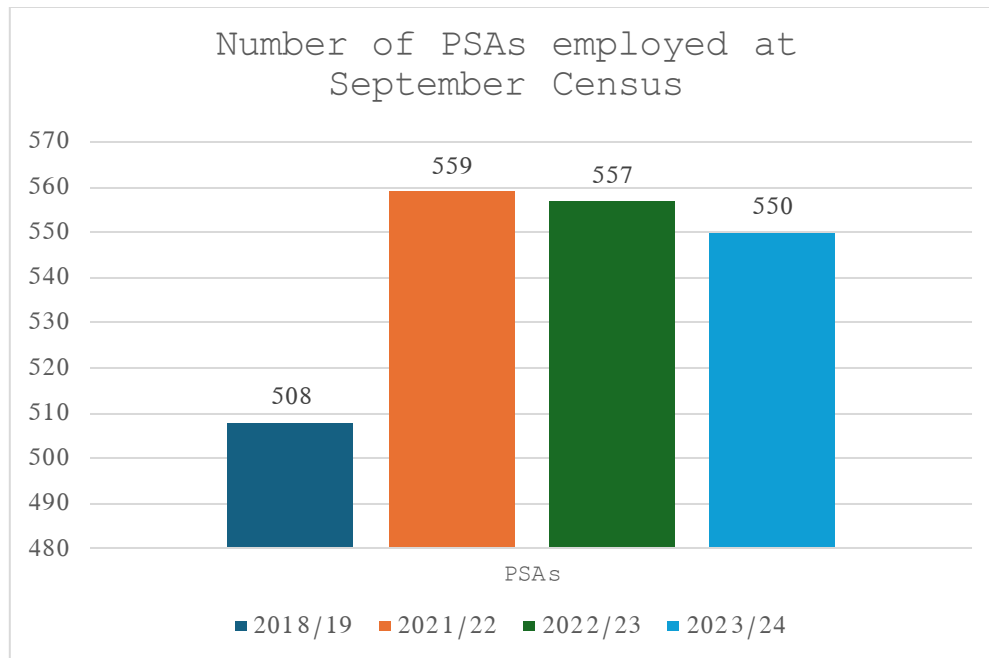
2.12 As with multiagency plans and identified needs, there was a substantial increase following the pandemic reflecting the impact the pandemic had on learners and their families. Single agency plans have reduced below pre-pandemic levels, and this could be an indication of successful short term interventions in schools.

2.13 The number of learners with additional needs in our schools increased following the pandemic. This increase in need triggered a higher number of multiagency and Individual Education Plans to be put in place. The number of Individual Educational Plans has reduced from 10.70% in 2021 to 7.99% in 2023 suggesting bespoke early interventions post pandemic were successful. However, the slight increase in Child's Plans from 4.02% 22/23 to 4.09% for session 23/24 would suggest that ASN learner needs are becoming more complex and require agencies to work closely together to support. This is key learning as we develop our model of Family Support.

### 3.1 Allocation of Pupil Support Assistants

3.2 Each school has a core allocation of Pupil Support Assistants (PSA) based on their school roll. In addition to this there is a small amount of (short-term) flexibility which is allocated through the Child's Planning Support Forum to support transitions or specific needs identified in a Child's Plan. Pupil support staff are not allocated as a one-to-one support for learners.

3.3 The number of PSAs in schools increased by 10% from 2018/19 to 2021/22, in keeping with increases in the school roll, and has remained broadly consistent for the last 3 years. These numbers are gathered from the validated data at census and only represent a moment in time in September each year. The number of PSAs employed at any one period in time will vary throughout the year.



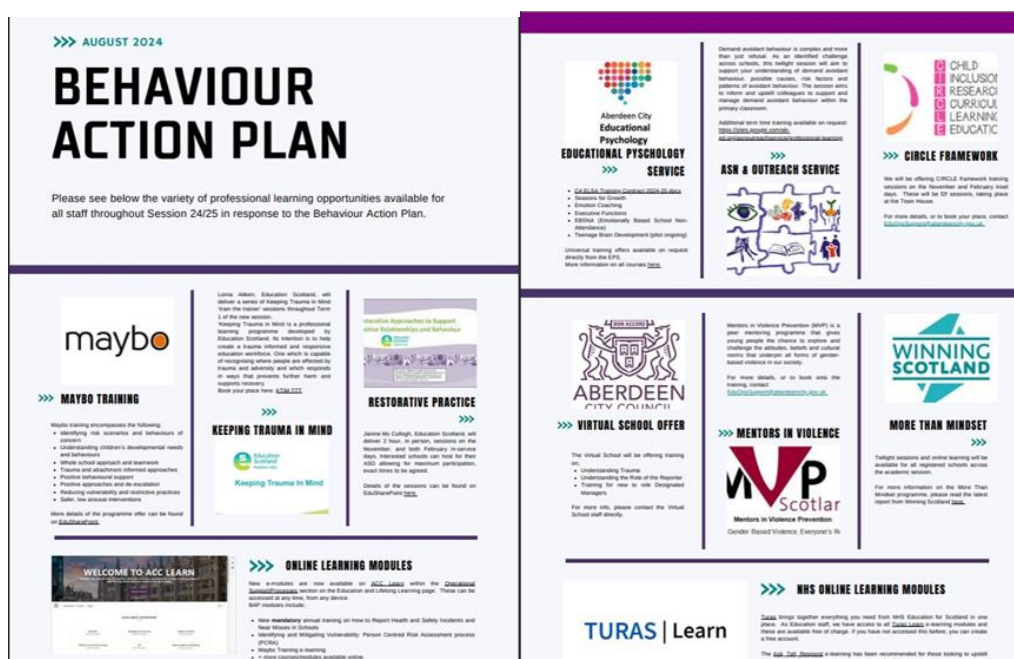
- 3.4 Headteachers decide how they will allocate their PSA provision across the school. Any additionality for transition is to build independence in the learner to allow them to be supported within the school's normal allocation following transition. PSAs are also used to supervise in the playground during break and lunch supporting children with Additional Support Needs with social interactions. In addition all PSAs are trained in first aid and ably assist with the administration of medicines.
- 3.5 The role of the pupil support assistant is to support learners under the direction of the class teacher. There are no formal qualifications required to undertake the role of PSAs and as they are employed for the hours that learners attend school this can limit training opportunities to in-service days. PSAs often build close relationships with the learners they support and training such as ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant training) can enhance the support they offer. Quality Assurance observations would highlight the level of skills in many, although as would be anticipated this is not consistent. There may be a need to consider how PSA time can be released more frequently for professional learning.
- 3.6 The support provided by Pupil Support Assistants often allows learners to become more independent and increase in confidence whether that be academically or socially. Schools are looking at how they can creatively deploy PSAs to ensure maximum impact for learners. The good practice identified needs to be shared across schools to support improvement in outcomes for all learners. Quality Improvement Visits highlight that there are some highly skilled PSAs who could be utilised to help build the capacity of others, in keeping with arrangements in place for other staff groups.

#### 4.1 Professional Learning & Leadership (PLL)

4.2 Aberdeen city's Schools and Early Learning Centres (ELC) have access to an in-depth but focused range of training and development opportunities to support practice.

4.3 Staff undertake mandatory training in line with requirements for all employees, including training in reporting incidents and near misses. In addition to this there is a Professional Learning and Leadership programme which is reviewed annually to align with school improvement plans and National Improvement Framework Priorities. An audit of need has recently been reintroduced.

4.4 The programme for this year has a specific section linked to our behaviour plan for all teaching and support staff.



4.5 The increase in complexity of need means there is a need for additional training to ensure learners continue to be adequately supported. In order for training to take place we need to consider how we support PSA induction as a local authority and at school level.

#### 5.1 Support for Families

5.2 The termly universal newsletter which is sent out to all families is an inclusive one, containing information for all parents and carers, including those of learners with ASN.

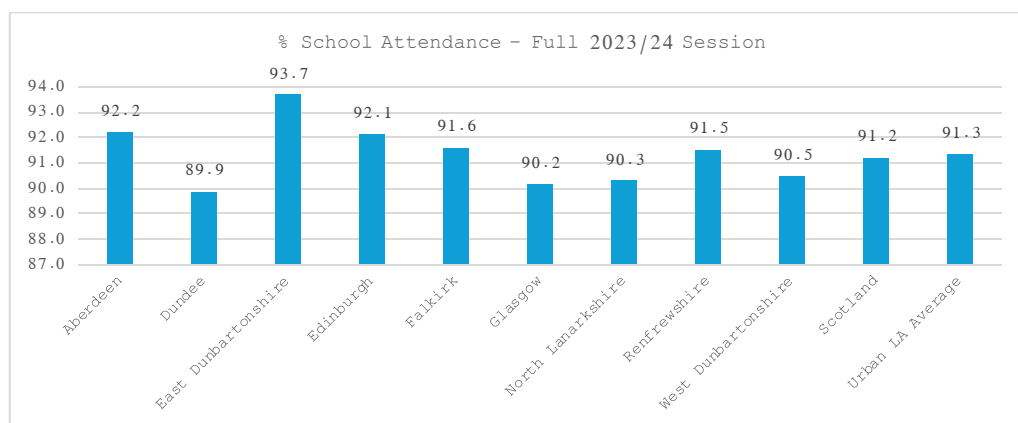
5.2 The Parent Learning Hub website was launched in April 2020 and although originally designed to support Learning at Home, it has continued to support parenting, and signpost families to a wide range of support agencies post

pandemic. It continues to be updated. The site hosts the Stronger Families Series online series of parent workshops which have been received over 1300 views since January 2023.

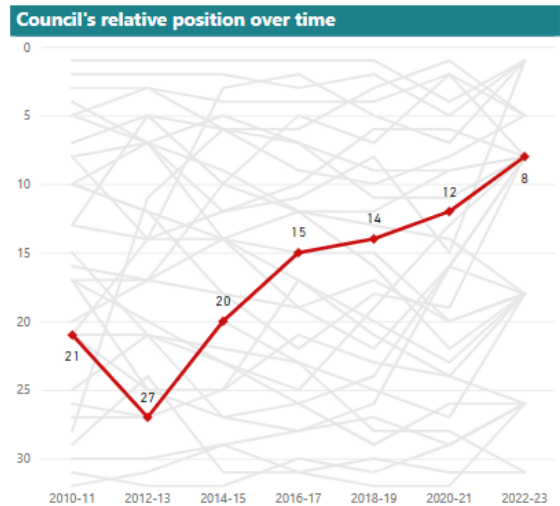
- 5.3 The EPS have a parents/carers section within their EPS Digital Resource Hub. In addition to this there is general information or process information on applying for a place and supports available on the local authority website.
- 5.4 Officers work closely with the We Too service, attending sessions for parents on a termly basis to answer any queries or concerns families may have.
- 5.5 Parents are confused by the terminology and legislation around ASN often struggling to navigate the different sites we manage. There is a need to simplify this through the creation of a single page on the council website to host all information and support available pertaining to Additional Support Needs. As part of the parent involvement and engagement plan a focus group will help inform any further digital support for parents.

### 6.1 Levels on non-attendance in schools

6.1 Attendance levels are falling across Scotland and although our city-wide attendance sits just above national average, there is a continued need for this to increase back to pre-pandemic levels. The most recent validated data for attendance 23/24 shows national attendance at 91.2% and Aberdeen City attendance at 92.2% however this is still below pre pandemic levels of 93.3%. There has been increased scrutiny around attendance from the central team and this is helping to identify target groups for further consideration.



6.2 Our relative position compared to other local authorities has moved from 14<sup>th</sup> place in 2018/19 to 8<sup>th</sup> in 2022/23. Settings across Aberdeen are beginning to explore and develop Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance approaches, and reflecting these in their practice, policies and approaches.



6.3 There is a clear focus on improving attendance at both at authority level and school level. Officers regularly challenge schools on the appropriateness of the curriculum on offer and the length of any flexible pathway in place to ensure there is a plan to return to fulltime attendance. The Educational Psychology Service have a training package, including post training implementation sessions, for school staff on Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance. A group of officers and headteachers will consider roll out of this and are beginning to explore and develop other Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance tools and these will be shared across all settings through Headteacher engagement sessions.

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## Appendix B – Exploration of Learners’ Needs

### INTRODUCTION

To help gain a deep understanding of how the learning needs of children and young people are met across schools in Aberdeen City, the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning instructed the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) to undertake an Exploration of Learners’ Needs. Six strands of exploration were undertaken by the Educational Psychology Service:

- Questionnaires and Semi-structured Interviews with Secondary Senior Leadership Teams
- Questionnaires and Semi-structured Interviews with Primary Senior Leadership Teams
- Staff Survey Questionnaire
- Focus Groups with those not covered by the above questionnaires:
  - Trade Union Groups
  - Parents of Children with Additional Support Needs
  - Quality Improvement Team including Educational Psychology Service
  - Additional Support Needs & Outreach Service
- Learners’ Voice
  - Learners across a range of ages and provisions indicated their feelings about school related areas by using ‘School Wellbeing Cards’
- Case Study approach
  - In-depth look at good practice in four educational settings

More information on each of these six strands and the themes arising from this exploration can be found below.

### EXPLORATION OF LEARNING NEEDS - SECONDARY

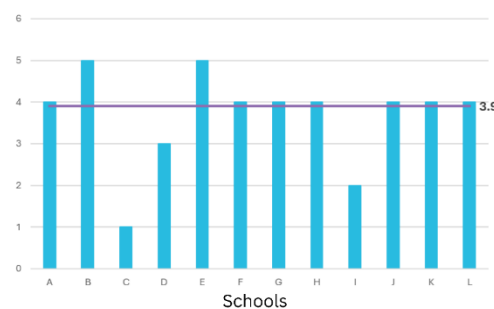
Qualitative data was collected from secondary school Senior Leadership Teams (SLTs) across Aberdeen City Council (ACC). Data was collected via a questionnaire using Microsoft Forms. The questionnaires were followed up with a semi-structured interview with the Educational Psychology Service (EPS). 12 secondary schools (inclusive of specialist provision) completed the questionnaire.

The questionnaire and interview were separated into three sections: Current Picture; Staff Support; and Use of Resource.

#### **Section 1: Current Picture**

##### **Confidence in meeting current learners’ needs adequately:**

Senior leaders were asked to rate their level of confidence in meeting current learners’ needs adequately. A 6-point scale was used where 1 means not at all, and 6 means very confident. The average score was 3.9.

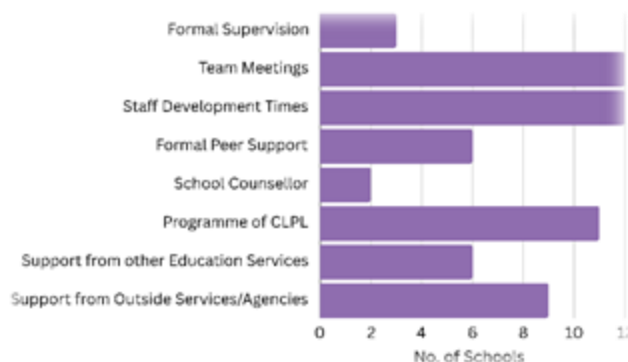


Qualitative analysis indicates that secondary schools are striving to develop inclusion within their contexts and are implementing changes to meet the growing range of needs. Most schools indicated that their current offer can sometimes be challenging due to staffing vacancies or absences. Senior Leaders are

appreciative of staff flexibility at these times. There is some variance seen, but the average score was 3.9, expressing confidence overall as over the halfway line. Two schools rated lower than the average, and one just below average; the Quality Improvement Team will follow-up with these schools around next steps and opportunities to explore further support.

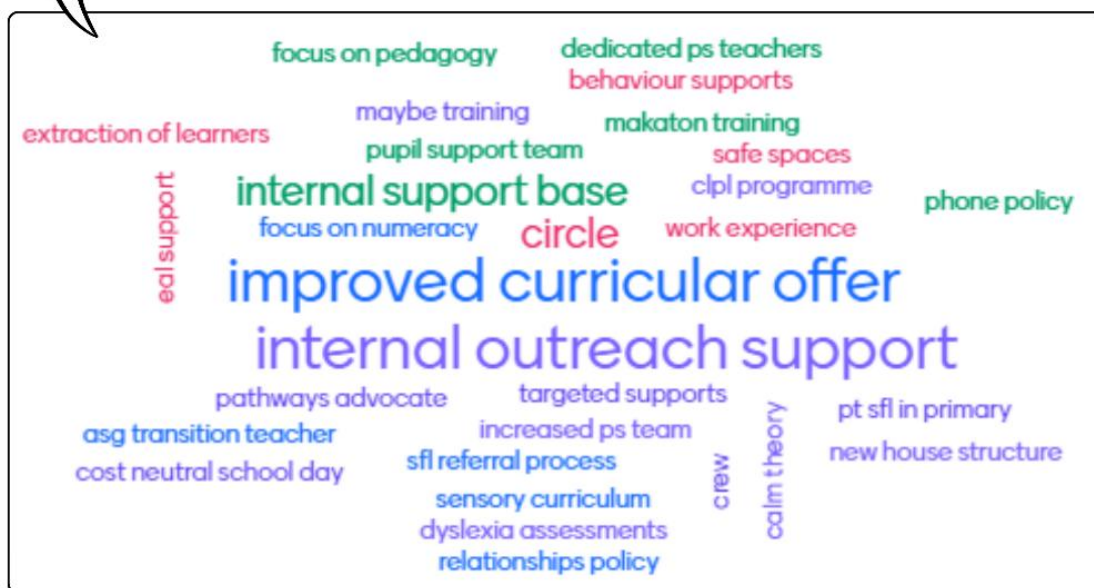
## SECTION 2: Staff Support

Senior leaders were presented with a range of multiple-choice options on how staff are supported. Staff wellbeing and capacity were areas of consideration for most schools. Arrangements for supporting staff varied in terms of methods and effectiveness.



## SECTION 3: Use of Resource

*Three most effective interventions/approaches?*



(The larger the word in the image above, the more times it was listed by Senior Leaders as their top 3 most effective)

## SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW DATA ANALYSIS – SECONDARY

This section contains Qualitative data collected from secondary school Senior Leadership Teams (SLTs) across Aberdeen City Council. Data was collected via a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with the Educational Psychology Service. 11 secondary schools (inclusive of specialist provision) took part in the interviews. Educational Psychologists then applied the six-step approach of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to the qualitative data. CoPilot was used to verify the themes generated.



The questionnaire and interview were separated into three sections: Current Picture; Staff Support; and Use of Resource.

## Section 1: Current Picture

Many schools discussed the rise in mental health needs, and the impact this is having on attendance (of both school and mainstream classes):

**“The growing amount of emotional based school avoidance, coupled with limited resource makes it challenging to respond to these complex cases in a way that brings about desired levels of improvement.”**

Secondary Interview

*“The next step is really understanding the different themes of non-attendance and that is why I'm really interested in Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance [EBSNA: training with the EPS] because that is a key factor in some of our non-attendance.”*

The impact of Covid was suggested by some schools as a contributing factor for an increase in both Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance and learners requiring support with their emotional and physical regulation needs in secondary education.

Some Senior Leaders described experiencing challenges with learners' engagement with and willingness to accept intervention. However, most Senior Leaders described the various ways in which learners are included in the decisions and planning around their own assessments and packages of support.

*“We've just recently added pupil voice more explicitly into [our recording system] saying what the pupils themselves feel that they need in order to access their learning.”*

Some schools detailed how the voice of learners is used more systemically to shape the school environment and the experiences of education for all learners in their secondary schools:

*“I think our LGBT community would feel included. They still feel that there are issues but we are actively supporting them. We've got a BME group as well and they're a really loud pupil voice group, which is really good.”*

One Head Teacher shared that learners influence the professional learning of staff in their school:

*“We have involved young people in delivering professional learning.”*

Many schools emphasised the importance of ensuring that all learners were able to access the curriculum with a focus on inclusive practice and pedagogy. Supporting pupils to achieve qualifications and positive destinations was discussed frequently. There was creativity demonstrated through school staff exploring options with a range of providers to diversify and extend their curricular offer, particularly for learners with Additional Support Needs:

*“If we think about how we meet the needs of learners, I think of the curriculum as your skeleton, your backbone. So you've got to make sure that your curriculum offer meets the needs of all young people [and] we've made a lot of adaptations to [and] extension of the curriculum.”*

## Section 2: Staff Support

A range of external services were accessed by schools to support and upskill staff as detailed in the list below. Some examples are described here:

**“I took part in a six week coaching programme [with the EPS] about helping to get your priorities, filter things out, how are you coping? I found it really helpful.”**

Secondary Interview

*“We’ve got quite a lot of involvement from the EAL service. With us having quite a significant cohort of Ukrainian people, we did get capacity from the [Central Team] for a temporary post where somebody came in and was able to work specifically with that group of young people.”*

Strong links with the Quality Improvement Team were seen as a valuable support for Senior Leadership Teams:

*“We’ve got a good link with our QIO. As a Senior Leadership Team, we often ask him things, and we have that relationship and that culture with him and then filter [the information] to staff.”*

Relational approaches create a positive school climate amongst staff and for young people. This was key to encouraging staff to support each other. In addition to this, an accessible Senior Leadership Team was important to help staff to feel supported:

*“We [in SLT] have a very open-door policy and are accessible at all times to discuss and advise teachers [and] share information.”*

*“The Head Teachers that we’ve had in succession have always had an open door policy so when you have that at the top and you’ve got a Head Teacher that has a ‘come and speak to me’ approach, and that’s encouraged, that filters down. I think the SLT is supportive here and you would always be able to go and speak to someone. There might not always be a solution, but you know they would do their best. You can support staff to find new ways of doing things.”*

### External Agencies/ Trainings providing support valued by Secondary Schools:

- ACIS (Aberdeen Counselling in Action) Counsellor
- ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) Training
- LIAM (Let’s Introduce Anxiety Management) Training
- CCC (Connected & Compassionate Classrooms) Training
- EPS (Educational Psychology Service) Coaching
- Autism Outreach
- Dyslexia Outreach
- EAL (English as an Additional Language) Support
- Emotion Coaching Training
- SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) Training
- Education Scotland Training

### Section 3: Use of Resource

With a growing number of pupils and level of need, many schools discussed the lack of adequate physical space - particularly for schools who had an older building:

*“For those breakout spaces, that’s probably a gap within our provision. We don’t have dedicated space because we’re over capacity [and] any space we’ve got is a classroom. We have got little nooks... that we’re trying to make the best use of. [Head of SfL] has done a great job, with fresh eyes coming in, and looked at the best use of space but, by and large, if there’s a space in this building, it’s got to be a classroom because we’re over capacity.”*

Some Senior Leadership Teams made reference to their school buildings and the barriers that they can create for learners with Additional Support Needs due to the challenges of adapting the physical environment and the inadequate space:

*“I am really concerned that some of the challenges that we have are because of the environment that the young people are in and how contained they are.”*

A range of approaches and interventions are being implemented successfully throughout the secondary schools in Aberdeen. Many are taking a whole-school approach through interventions such as cost-neutral school days, relational approaches, and phone policies. The challenges with implementing whole-school approaches such as CIRCLE (The CIRCLE Framework is a way of organising and supporting input using a staged system of support, beginning with setting up an inclusive classroom) were discussed however, the framework was viewed positively by many:

**A key area for improvement discussed was the need for increased collaboration and support from other agencies and the need for more of a ‘community approach’ to meeting the needs of learners**

*“The explicit nature of the [CIRCLE] Framework has made [class teachers] really focus on what the classroom looks like, how they speak, what they teach.”*

Some schools were opting for developing targeted support bases (such as for Autistic learners) while others were hesitant to extract learners from mainstream classes as this was not viewed as aligning with their view of inclusion. The approach to the inclusion of learners with Additional Support Needs was not consistent across the City. Some Senior Leaders indicated that they operated a more traditional model of using Support for Learning (SfL) to provide support for learners with Additional Support Needs (ASN). However, most Senior Leaders discussed the change in their approach and higher expectations on mainstream Class Teachers to provide support through their inclusive pedagogy:

*“Before, kids would go into SfL... they were then kept in a bubble and that’s not inclusion... So it needs to be a blended approach.”*

Many schools described the benefits of improving and extending their curricular offer internally and by exploring external resources:

**“Consulting with [neighbouring secondary school] just gives a wider curricular choice for young people... and many with ASN learners will now access that. So that's quite good.”**

Secondary Interview

*“When I first came here, there were very few opportunities, particularly beyond S4. So going into the Senior Phase - if you weren't at Higher, [you] didn't stay. So we've changed that. There are opportunities at Level 3, level 4, level 5 for S5 and S6.”*

Having effective systems in place for supporting learners enabled Senior Leaders to deploy their resources across their secondary schools more efficiently:

*“We've got a more robust referral procedure in place [to SfL]. Teachers can access [this] to refer to us and can then approach us.”*

Senior Leaders reported that staff had to resort to more reactive approaches to meeting needs in the absence of effective internal systems.

Staffing changes in Senior Leadership Teams appeared to have an influence on how imbedded and efficient systems were. The increasing level of need of learners, in some cases, has impacted on some staffs' ability to adhere to or adapt their systems appropriately:

*“I think the systems and processes worked before because of the level of need we had and the number of pupil support assistants - what we had by all accounts worked then. But as our roll has gone up really quite quickly [and] as our demographic has changed, our level of need has changed, we've not been able to keep up.”*

Staff having a lack of time was discussed frequently and this impacted negatively on their ability to develop more effective systems to improve the way they meet the needs of learners.

Schools discussed the importance of having good information sharing processes at the primary transition stage and the benefits of having a dedicated Principal Teacher for this role:

*“Having the Principal Teacher SfL in the primary and the Principal Teacher SfL S1 and S2 working really closely together is a good thing. We have got a really good knowledge of the primary sevens coming up this year.”*

Senior Leaders believed that using a variety of methods to measure the impact of support and interventions that were being implemented was important for evaluating the effectiveness of resource deployment and allocation:

**“Those pupils that probably started off being maybe quite upset and dysregulated in classes and weren't able to cope are now in all mainstream classes. Their attendance has increased.”**

Secondary Interview

*“The impact it's had on learners is they've got the confidence in terms of literacy and numeracy and they're also getting the SCQF level qualification as a result of that, which then builds up their confidence.”*

However, the evaluation of interventions was more effective in some secondary schools compared to others. According to Senior Leaders, some approaches (such as relational approaches), which many schools across ACC are implementing, were difficult to measure:

*“It's difficult to show the impact of what you're doing because the staff don't see the impact yet. We know that there is a positive relationship being built one-to-one but you don't always see that in the classroom.”*

With an increased number of individual plans for learners, it was deemed important for staff to have the knowledge and skills to effectively support effective reviewing processes and individual target setting:

*“Making sure that everyone is trained up on how to use the wellbeing indicators effectively and how that then feeds into Single Agency Plans. I think we're better at that and then that feeds into Person Centred Risk Assessments (PCRAs).”*

### **Summary from Analysis of Secondary**

- There is a growing level of need in mainstream education. This was described in terms of an increase in the numbers of learners with Additional Support Needs (ASNs) as well as an increase in the complexity of learners' needs.
- This changing landscape of mainstream education and a perceived reduction in support from multiagency partners external to Education is changing the role of educators.
- Experiencing a perception of services external to Education 'closing the door' on support could lead to increased feelings of responsibility and separation for secondary mainstream education staff.
- There was demonstration of creativity and flexibility in meeting a range of learners' needs through maximising limited internal resource (including physical resource given the increase in school rolls) and exploring alternative options (e.g., to increase curricular offer).
- Strengths were identified in placing learners at the centre and using relational approaches in supporting learners.
- In secondary schools across Aberdeen there is an appreciation for the many school staff that go above and beyond their remit to support the needs of learners.
- The sustainability of the current support offered by secondary schools is dependent on continued adequate resourcing (e.g., financial, staffing, physical environments).



## **EXPLORATION OF LEARNING NEEDS – PRIMARY**

Qualitative data was collected from primary school Senior Leadership Teams (SLTs) across Aberdeen City Council. Data were collected via a questionnaire using Microsoft Forms. The questionnaires were followed up with a semi-structured interview with the Educational Psychology Service. 34 primary schools (inclusive of specialist provision) completed the questionnaire.

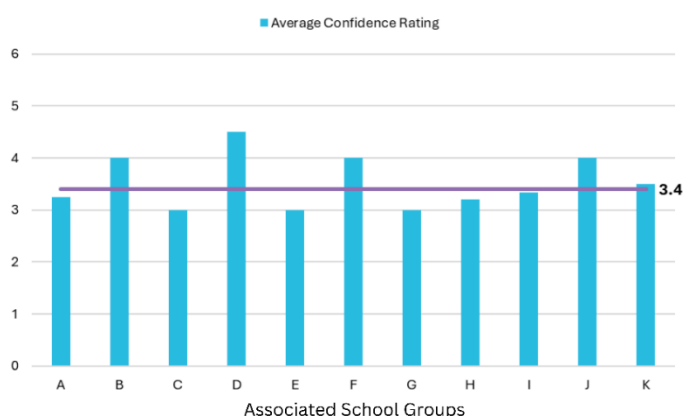
The questionnaire and interview were separated into three sections: Current Picture; Staff Support; and Use of Resource. Further exploration of these key areas can be found by looking at the qualitative data below.

### **Section 1: Current Picture**

#### **Confidence in meeting current learners' needs adequately:**

Senior leaders were asked to rate their level of confidence in meeting current learners' needs adequately. A 6-point scale was used where 1 means not at all, and 6 means very confident. The average rating per ASG was 3.4

Qualitative analysis indicated that many primary schools are creating enhanced areas out of existing resource to meet the growing range of needs. Primary Senior Leadership Teams emphasised that having an adequate number of skilled Pupil Support Assistants (PSAs) was essential to the provision of their current offer.

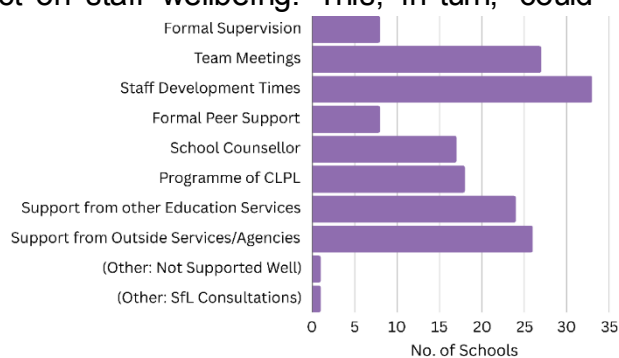


### **Section 2: Staff Support**

#### **Methods used to Support Staff**

Multiple choice options were provided with space for other methods used. Qualitative analysis explored data from section two in more detail.

Qualitative analysis indicated that most Senior Leadership Teams are concerned that the current education context could impact on staff wellbeing. This, in turn, could impact negatively on the wellbeing of Senior Leaders themselves. The ethos and approach of the Senior Leadership Team was key and a supportive factor in supporting their staff. However, there were some barriers in supporting and upskilling Pupil Support Assistants due to the nature of their contracted hours leaving reduced opportunity for professional learning and meetings.



### Section 3: Use of Resource

Three most effective interventions/approaches?



(The larger the word in the picture, the more times it was listed by Senior Leaders as their top 3 most effective interventions/approaches)

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW ANALYSIS - PRIMARY

Qualitative data was collected from primary school Senior Leadership Teams (SLTs) across Aberdeen City Council (ACC). Data were collected via a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with the Educational Psychology Service (EPS). 25 primary schools (inclusive of specialist provision) took part in the interviews with most being represented by their Head Teacher (HT). Educational Psychologists applied the six-step approach of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to the qualitative data. CoPilot was used to verify the themes generated.

## SECTION 1: Current Picture

Senior Leaders from across the city reported that learners' needs in schools have changed significantly over the past few years. All schools reported a growing level of complexity of need in mainstream schools and discussed the challenges of meeting these needs:

*“The main challenge is the significant amount of ASN that we've got across the school. We're now up to 54.5% of our school community having an identified ASN.”*

In addition to reporting a growing number of learners with Additional Support Needs, many Senior Leaders discussed the difficulties they can face in meeting the wide range of needs, with increased range of learning levels seen across each stage:

*“Across every class you've got a diversity [range] from pre-early or even foundation milestones, right through to 3rd level.”*

Some Senior Leaders discussed how limitations in their physical environments could at times be barriers to supporting increased needs in relation to regulation and personal care:

*“Personal care is a significant issue where we are staffing a large amount of nappy changes daily in P1-3 and the numbers requiring personal care is rising significantly.”*

Universal approaches for inclusive practice are embedded in schools including dyslexia interventions such as Dyslexia Passports and tools for learning trolleys in classes. Schools across the city are at various stages of implementing the CIRCLE framework (The CIRCLE Framework is a way of organising and supporting input using a staged system of support, beginning with setting up an inclusive classroom) to support inclusive practice. Many schools believed the framework to be beneficial in helping staff to meet the needs of learners:

*“CIRCLE has definitely helped along with the support from the [Central Team] in implementing it. [ESO] is consistently reaching out to the leaders and we have an identified lead who is amazing... our SfL Teacher has really embraced it and is helping staff to use that as a tool to support.”*

**“We've got our positive relationship policy embedded in the classrooms and the use of this and appropriate language and restorative conversations with children.”**

Primary School  
Interview

Positive relationships in schools were crucial for creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Most Head Teachers discussed the value of implementing relationships policies to support with this:

Having an inclusive school ethos was important for many Head Teachers. Some schools discussed how assemblies and whole-school initiatives were used to celebrate a variety of cultures and languages and to raise awareness of



different Additional Support Needs (ASN). These positively contributed to the development of their school ethos.

The way schools assess need was discussed including how they involve learners and their parents/carers in the assessment and planning. Well-embedded child's planning processes were supported by having clear expectations of staff. These processes supported flexible and responsive approaches to targeted interventions:

**“Everyone is welcome at [our school] and we want all pupils to feel part of the school community and work hard to ensure this is the case.”**

Primary School Interview

*“I think there's certain individuals that we're not getting it right for. One size doesn't fit all and it's trying to work out actually what can we do.”*

Senior Leaders discussed staged approaches to interventions and how they strive to meet learners' needs within their settings. The implementation of CIRCLE has supported this:

*“[CIRCLE] has been really useful in terms of helping staff to refresh their understanding of what lies within the scope of the class teacher and PSA staff, what lies within targeted [support], and what lies within the scope of specialist services.”*

Most Senior Leaders described the various ways in which they are striving to promote inclusion and develop staff's skills in inclusive practice. This was supported by the implementation of the CIRCLE Framework and relationships policies:

*“The positive relationships policy has had a big effect on the understanding of restorative conversations and compassion. Teachers [are] becoming more trauma informed. I think that has helped a lot of our PSAs to not jump to conclusions, to understand that there's no behaviour out of the blue.”*

**“I think we're very creative and we are very good. We don't give up on anybody.”**

School Interview

Effective implementation was important to seeing the success and value of interventions and approaches.

Many Senior Leaders described how they had already adapted their approaches for parent/carer engagement to improve communication, understanding, and to include them in their processes:

*“We add on 10 minutes to the parents night appointment to share the IEP and to have discussions. We then invite the parent to have a longer meeting.”*

*“Some [learners have been] working at early level for four years ... so breaking that down for parents and helping them understand that your child is making progress.”*

Many schools discussed the challenges faced by parents of learners with Additional Support Needs. One school described their approach to supporting parents:

*“We decided that we were trying to stop the families feeling isolated and feeling alone, we were going to start a parental support group ... My depute led that [and] the thinking behind it was [to] get a network of parents who could work together.”*

Senior Leaders across the city reported that they have different tracking systems in place to ensure transparency and clear understanding amongst staff of learners' needs. This allowed for higher levels of support to be offered to staff in relation to meeting learners' needs:

**“We are trying to be more data-driven so when we get that data we can then work as a team...”**

Primary Interview

*“We’ve got our internal referral system that the staff know about and we regularly remind staff of that.”*

These systems and processes were supporting a staged approach to intervention:

*“Everybody has a clear idea and process that we follow and don't just suddenly start working with the Support for Learning teacher. There is a staged procedure before that.”*

*“We have a targeted support referral form that staff complete if they want to raise a concern or are looking for more support for children in their class. It outlines the universal support that they currently provide in the class and then specifically what they're looking for and what will make a difference.”*

Many Senior Leaders spoke about offering staff different avenues to raise and discuss their concerns:

*“We meet with staff every term and look at [how they] meet learners' needs, so there's the support there where they've got a team and we discuss what could possibly be done within school.”*

*“It's a joined-up approach. If staff have a concern or something they're worried about they can discuss it at a planning and tracking meeting and then come and find a solution.”*

Most schools also recognised the importance of having regular meetings with staff. This was supportive to consistency, developing shared understandings, and ensuring staff views are taken into account:

*“PSAs have weekly meetings where part of the agenda is discussing child protection concerns, but also concerns or queries for learners.”*

Many schools also reported having internal quality assurance systems, involving school staff. Involvement in these systems can support staff confidence and increase understanding around different learners' needs:

**“[As] part of our quality assurance calendar we would go in and have individual observations of class teachers, we do jotter sampling, we'd use HGIOS and we get the learners opinions of what's going on in class.”**

Primary School  
Interview

*“We've got robust tracking, so we look at that. With our tracking meetings, management are all part of that. We report to the [central team] about [our tracking]. The data is shared with teachers and we're building up their confidence in analysing the data. So, there's a whole quality assurance programme around the data.”*

Having adequate internal resource was important to Senior Leaders to provide opportunities for all learners to succeed and develop by offering alternative options, opportunities, and pathways for their learning:

*“It's lovely to see them because what you see in them is untapped talent. And you know that if you have the resources to give them baking, if you have the resources to do woodwork you could ...give them that sense of pride.”*

Schools are currently striving to meet the needs of learners by adapting their environments and resources to provide appropriate learning spaces and support. For example, some schools have adapted ancillary spaces into sensory areas and used library spaces as breakout areas to accommodate learners with Additional Support Needs. Many Senior Leaders described increasing their use of outdoor space:

*“We've got lot [of space] and we've adapted [spaces]. We've released staff to develop outdoor learning because we recognise that children's behaviours change in the outdoors. So we've done that as a school, there's a big focus on outdoor learning.”*

Additionally, flexible and creative use of resource was important for meeting the needs of all learners.

The deployment of Pupil Support Assistants (PSA) was varied depending on the needs of the setting and whether or not the school had created an enhanced area. Some schools were using their Pupil Support Assistants to provide individualised support, but most Senior Leaders discussed the importance of flexible staffing to target learners effectively. This was difficult to achieve with an increase in needs that require staff support:

*“Very tight timetabling of PSAs to allow for growing personal care needs, behavioural needs, and learning needs, significant prioritisation of personal care and behavioural needs over learning needs as H&S requirements dictate this.”*

**“We don't have capacity to be able to take them out of class and give them the training that they need.”**

Primary Interview

Many emphasised that this was a challenge due to complexity of need across the school, and a finite staffing budget:

*“Again, that goes back to the support and never feeling that you have that delicate balance of prioritising your PSAs and support staff as best you can.”*

Much of the discussion with Senior Leaders was focused on how school systems were adapted to meet the growing level of need and promote inclusion whilst empowering and supporting staff. Staff having a shared understanding and clear roles and responsibilities was important:

*“We've really developed that so that teaching staff are a bit more empowered as well, so that they're coming and saying I think we need to explore this or I would like to try this.”*

*“We've asked them to go down the route of doing the CIRCLE Participation Scale for individuals and then they use that to refer to an internal system, so that [SLT] then go and check in and then we decide together what the best intervention needs to be put in place.”*

Embedded effective systems for supporting learners with Additional Support Needs were crucial for learners and staff. Additionally, many Head Teachers discussed how they have adapted school systems to increase support for staff and promote collaborative working:

*“We've put ourselves [into] critical friend trios... so everybody's got somebody that can go to in a buddy. I've built in extra time to the working time agreement... we've tried to create a system where staff feel empowered that they're the agents of change as well.”*

*“We're adapting our procedures so that, for example, our staff sign-in sheet has different colours that they can sign in on. So if they're feeling nervous about something or they're apprehensive about something there's a little speech bubble so that we know as management, we've got to go and check in on them.”*

## **SECTION 2: Staff Support**

### **Supporting Staff Internal & External, Getting the Values Right:**

#### **Internal:**

The majority of Senior Leaders talked about having an open-door policy, where staff can come to speak to management at any time about their emerging concerns:

*“We also just naturally have an open-door policy where staff can pop in, as well as [staff] surveys.”*

*“We have an absolute open door policy in the school where staff can come at any time to talk about situations.”*

Many Senior Leaders spoke about the importance of their Support for Learning (SfL) Teacher in helping to support staff members and to develop their knowledge around different resources:

*“Our Support for Learning Teacher goes absolutely above and beyond to work with staff, to make time out with the school day to meet, to source and resource for staff, to engage them with the CIRCLE framework, but also then do a bit of more in-depth work herself to support the class teachers with what they are either struggling with or want a bit of support or advice on.”*

Some Senior Leaders also highlighted the importance of practice sharing, collaboration and praise in building staff knowledge and confidence:

*“We try and buddy them up, always with somebody more experienced. I try carefully within stages to make sure there's somebody who's got a bit more experience to try and help build that kind of confidence.”*

**“At the end of last term, which was quite nice, everybody had a sheet and they had to put positive comments about each staff member on it. And then they got presented with that at the end of term. And it was actually really nice, it was nice to see their smiles.”**

Primary Interview

*“We also offered staff opportunities to have their practice observed. About half took us up on that and it was simple feedback of two stars and a wish. They chose what they wanted feedback on, so we gave them nine comments of what do you want to be looking at using your initiative communication, relationship, anything. They then put it into a diamond nine and then from that chose two that they wanted feedback on.”*

The role of Senior Leadership Teams in developing a supportive, collaborative and inclusive ethos was highlighted. This was an important support for staff wellbeing:

*“I'd like to give them the understanding that is really important and I think that school ethos is really vital and it's probably going to become more and more important as the challenges on wellbeing continue.”*

*“I feel as a leader that I try really hard to make sure that support network is there for each other. And I think that goes a long, long way. If staff have it modelled that there is kindness and support, I think if they are encouraged to be supportive of each other, we have a really collegiate way of working across the school.”*

Importance was also placed on establishing positive, trusting relationships between staff, as well as between school and families. This was seen as an important part of Senior Leadership Team's role in supporting staff:

*“I did say to them genuinely that actually as a team, they are really, really supportive of each other and to keep that going.”*

*“Prioritising collaboration is part of our values... it's making time for staff to come together to speak about needs.”*

*“I am very, very fortunate that I have a fantastic leadership team. They are amazing people. They're very kind and thoughtful about my own remit, as well as their own remit. I think it's a kind of mutual respect.”*

*“I think just supporting staff to build those relationships with our families. It does feel like a family here. We do say that the minute you come in the door, parents and children, you're part of that. That helps with rapport. If you are having to support that child and they know that no matter what the behaviour is that you're seeing, it doesn't make you think any less. We think of them as ours as well as they're your child. I think supporting and prioritising parent and teacher relationships is really important.”*

Having a caring and supportive Senior Leadership Team was seen as important for supporting staff:

*“I think there's this real strength of that within our school. It matters to me that my staff are all doing OK. I think my Deputes do a really good job and check in every day.”*

**I guess it's about continuing to value people and try and really show that what we're doing is making a big difference.”**

School Z Interview

As previously discussed, most Senior Leaders emphasised the importance of them being visible and approachable to staff. Additionally, having clear roles and responsibilities for Senior Leadership Teams was positively viewed:

*“We try and be as present as possible and we try and have open-door policies. I would say that probably almost all staff feel that they can come and speak to us.”*

*“We have really clear rules and remits in terms of SLT, but we also absolutely have an open-door policy.”*

*“One of our Deputes has the specific remit for personalised support, so tries to keep a strategic oversight of what that looks like across school.”*

**“We need to look after our staff first to be able to look after the young people.”**

School D Interview

Some Senior Leaders also spoke of the importance of ensuring that staff's views are sought and heard meaningfully:

*“I'd like to think that people will come and tell me there's a problem, and that you know that all SLT will listen.”*

*“Obviously anything I'm doing, I bring the staff along on the journey with me... and then they tweak it before we agree on it.”*



- **External Agencies/Trainings providing Support valued by Primary Schools:** ACIS (Aberdeen Counselling in Action) Counsellor
- ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) Training
- LIAM (Let's Introduce Anxiety Management) Training
- CCC (Connected & Compassionate Classrooms) Training
- EPS (Educational Psychology Service) EICs (Early Intervention Consultation)
- Autism Outreach
- Dyslexia Outreach
- EAL (English as an Additional Language) Support
- Head Teacher Book Group
- AFC (Aberdeen Football Club) Community Trust

Many Senior Leaders also spoke about ensuring staff awareness around accessing services that offer counselling or mindfulness to staff, ensuring the school's focus on staff wellbeing:

*“Staff know that they can access counselling services from Aberdeen City Council.”*

*“We've had third sector coming in and doing mindfulness and things with the children and the staff... modelling it to the staff.”*

### SECTION 3: Use of Resource

#### Creation of enhanced areas:

Creation of enhanced areas using existing internal resources was deemed necessary by many Head Teachers to better meet the needs of learners with Additional Support Needs who were finding mainstream classes challenging. These areas are used differently across the settings, with some learners accessing them all of the time, and others accessing the areas for some parts of the day. Many discussed the benefit of this for deploying support staff for the learners with Additional Support Needs but this has pulled support staff away from the rest of the school:

*“We have had to make our own ASN classroom ... These are children that were not accessing [the] mainstream classroom at all. We allocate [PEF funded PT Sfl] full time and two PSAs are allocated to that room. It works successfully, but it is to the detriment of our support across the school.”*

However, the structure and organization of enhanced areas can be challenging due to the variety of need amongst learners:

*“The problem with that is that children have clashes in their needs which result in them not being able to access the room. So because one child's accessing it, another child can't access it because not just the needs clash, but their personalities clash.”*

#### External Supports:

Amongst the Senior Leaders, there was a general feeling of positivity about the support received. Many Senior Leaders reported that they have worked closely with different Aberdeen City's Outreach services, establishing positive relationships:

*“We'll work really closely with Autism Outreach and that's had a real impact, particularly around the modelling of practice.”*

*“When we have very difficult situations in school, [the Central Team] were phenomenal and you know the EPS were absolutely superb and we had staff training.”*

*“All the services we've worked with, it's not a judgmental process... It's what are the unmet needs and how could we work together to support them.”*

*“We've got good relationships with outreach services and we try and use the benefit of their knowledge in our setting.”*

Primary Interview

Senior Leaders also spoke about external agencies helping to build capacity within the school by providing support and increasing staff's knowledge around different approaches:

*“Last year we had a huge number of learners that are EAL [English as an Additional Language] here. So we worked with our EAL colleagues. They came and delivered a staff meeting, they worked 2 1/2 days here so there's opportunities for staff to collaborate with them.”*



*“[The EPS] support that was provided to our [Enhanced Area] team was really, really important because they were genuinely dealing with something that was brand new, setting up a whole new model.”*

*“Barnardo's did some input and... they've got phenomenal knowledge about supporting children with need and nurture approaches, so they've done some training work with staff.”*

Some Senior Leaders also spoke about the benefit of collaboration with other schools, having book clubs, inputs from specialist provisions or allowing staff to observe other provisions:

*“... allowing some staff to go and observe other schools as well was really effective.”*

*“A really amazing piece of professional development I did was the book group with a staff member from another school around good Autism practice for teachers.”*

While the overall perception of support provided by external agencies was positive, there were some challenges identified that some schools highlighted, including capacity issues and changes to service delivery models.

The effective deployment of staff and ensuring clear roles and responsibilities was important for supporting staff to meet the needs of learners:

*“We've changed remits to make sure that the staff have got a clear line manager, and areas to go for support. One Depute is very closely working with Nursery and P1 and looking at early level, our other Depute is looking at first level and I'm second level along with the PT who does P7.”*

Additionally, many Senior Leaders emphasized the importance of staff working collaboratively and explained the ways in which they promote this:

**“Our staff are our biggest asset.”**

School T  
Interview

*“Our support for learning teacher will work with staff on how to use that resource in their classroom or how to support them in the classroom setting.”*

*“Prioritising collaboration which is part of our values, so it's making time for staff to come together to speak about needs.”*

Achieving staff buy-in was seen as the most important factor in achieving successful implementation and the embedding of approaches:

*“It's staff buy-in first and foremost, and that comes from a shared understanding and that staff feel they've had an input into decision making.”*

*“CIRCLE - upskilling the staff, building staff confidence and building staff autonomy to get that buy-in from them. So it's not me standing at the front of a staff session going right, we're going to do this, this and this. It's about discussion...and if there's no discussion around it you're met with a brick wall.”*

A range of targeted interventions are used across primary schools in Aberdeen for learning needs and some Senior Leaders explained how they were using technology in universal and targeted ways to support learners:

*“We’re using technology to try and plug those gaps for the daily practice, for children who are not reaching expectations in terms of decoding.”*

Many Senior Leaders discussed the use of programmes such as Let’s Introduce Anxiety Management (LIAM) and Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) to meet the social and emotional needs of learners:

**“ELSA is huge for us. We’re really, really proud of our ELSA work, [we have a] fully embedded full time ELSA in our school.”**

Primary Interview

A range of interventions and approaches are being used and valued across Aberdeen’s primary schools:

*“Messy play, which is not really a programme, but it’s been the most successful thing by a country mile.”*

*“LIAM [has had] a big impact because that filled in a huge gap that we maybe weren’t supporting as well before.... and that’s something that we can offer rather than a child going on a waiting list for with another agency.”*

*“I think our biggest thing at [our school] that impacts everything we do is Emotion Works, to be honest. Just in how our staff communicate and also help to co-regulate children.”*

Senior Leaders discussed the importance of developing knowledge and practice in supporting sensory needs, as well as providing appropriate resources and spaces:

*“Sensory can be really hard for some of our children and the resourcing around sensory is really important to make sure we’re getting it right, particularly quiet spaces or having different resources that support the sensory needs of children.”*

Many Senior Leaders emphasised the importance of effective implementation of interventions and approaches to get the best results:

*“The main thing wasn't having something fancy or twiddly, it was consistency and making sure that we all as a staff understood what that should look like and that it was consistent in each of the rooms.”*

*“What I'm trying to do in my action plan this year is to do less things... I want to make sure that I don't do too many interventions, but that we're doing them really well.”*

*“Being data-driven as well helps. Looking at the SHINE surveys, the Health and Wellbeing surveys of pupils. We do our own surveys in school as well that helps us to be more data-driven and to understand what our pupils are looking for.”*

Senior Leaders indicated varied Associated School Group (ASG) partnership practices across the city. Where this was more embedded, the collaboration and support within Associated School Groups was valued:

*“We do look outwards. We talk about it at ASG meetings. Because what we are dealing with is quite similar as the ASG. So, I know the developments my ASG schools are doing.”*

Many Senior Leaders gave positive examples of engaging with external services to provide support and resource. These examples were mostly with other Aberdeen City Education Services:

**“So a mitigation [of challenges in education] would be us supporting parents. So one of the ways around that we found is working with the Family Learning team.”**

Primary School Interview

*“Working with some partners to look at what our provision looks like – [Autism Outreach staff member] has been outstanding at advising and supporting us.”*

Many Senior Leaders expressed hopes that the partnership working across Aberdeen could be further improved:

*“I think it basically comes down to creativity and partnerships and just thinking outside the box.”*

This was discussed in relation to partnership working between schools:

*“I think some people have that good practice in their schools, but either keep it to themselves or don't realise it's good practice or actually are worried that it's not good practice. So I'll keep it internally to myself... everyone's in their own bubble with their own problems and it can become really difficult to see the bigger picture.”*

*“There are some real opportunities to work creatively within partner schools and within ASGs. I think people are scared to; I think.”*

Additionally, some Senior Leaders indicated a need to improve partnership working with and increased engagement from external agencies across the city:

*“There might be opportunity for there to be more consistency across the city and within localities about when it might be appropriate to refer on a concern to other services and Education partners so that the resources available are most effectively used.”*

Improving relationships and communication with parents supported schools to implement changes and mitigate challenges:

### Summary of Analysis of Primary

- The increase of learners with, and range of complexity of Additional Support Needs (ASNs), could impact on the ability to meet the needs of all learners. Most Senior Leadership Teams indicated that staff and other resources are being prioritised for supporting learners with regulation to promote safety. Many Senior Leaders were attempting to mitigate this challenge by creating enhanced areas.
- Primary schools across Aberdeen are adapting their environments, providing resources, and engaging in professional learning to better meet the growing levels of sensory needs amongst their learners.
- In primary schools across Aberdeen there is an appreciation for the many school staff that go above and beyond their remit to support the needs of learners
- Achieving staff buy-in was emphasised in factors influencing the successful implementation of interventions, approaches and changes.
- Having in place strong school systems, and a Senior Leadership Team who model good practice and approaches with staff was seen as a key factor in managing support needs.
- Most primary school Senior Leaders indicated some challenges with ensuring capacity of their support staff. Opportunities for supporting and upskilling them could be limited due to their contracted hours.
- Most Senior Leaders were concerned that increased levels of Additional Support Needs could impact on staff wellbeing.
- Across primary schools there was an appetite for increased opportunity for practice sharing and upskilling across Associated School Groups (ASGs) and the city.
- Partnership working with external partners, including families, was seen as fundamental by primary schools for supporting the Additional Support Needs of learners.
- The sustainability of the current offer that primary schools have is dependent on continuation of resourcing (e.g., financial, staffing, physical environments).

**“One of the mitigating factors is being us speaking to parents more and recognising that open communication supports. So definitely a mitigation or a way around some of the challenges is for us to keep working with parents to help them to understand where they can support and actually where their role lies as parents and what's within their scope and what's within our scope and capacity of the school to support.”**

Primary School Interview

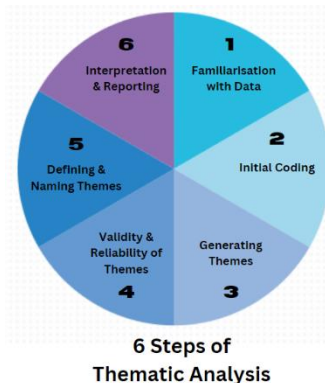
## STAFF SURVEY

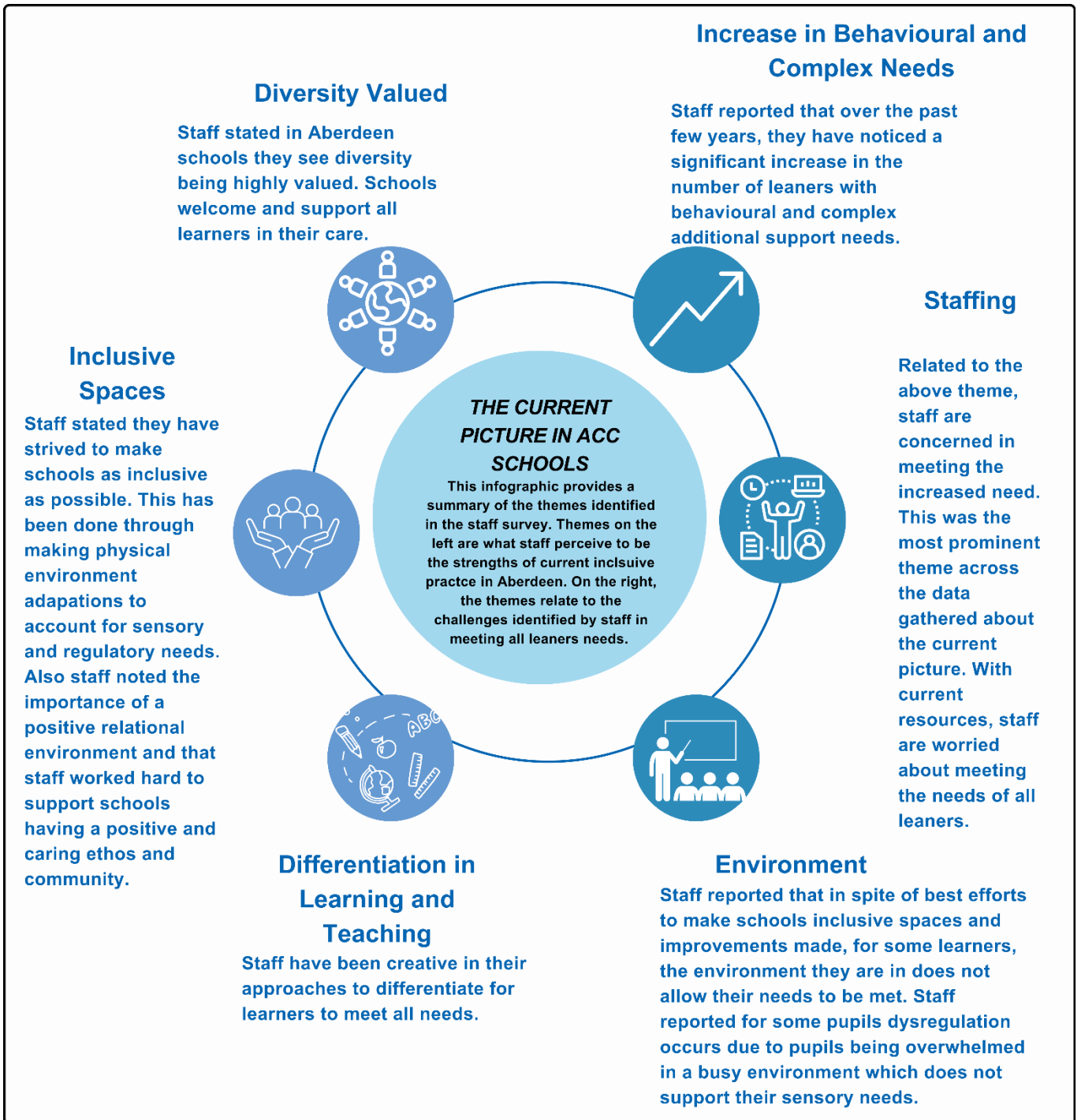
A Microsoft Forms Questionnaire Staff Survey was sent out to all Aberdeen City's Education staff. Trade Unions were encouraged to share with their local members. The purpose of the survey was to explore staff perceptions of learners' needs and support being met in Aberdeen's schools.

The data presented is based on the 54 responses gathered and was analysed using a six step process of Thematic Analysis.

The number of responses to the survey means that results should be interpreted with some caution in terms of representation of the wider population.

The questionnaire explored staff views on: The Current Picture, Staff Support and Effective use of Resource. Each of these topics has been thematically analysed and overarching themes included.





**Supportive Professional Learning & Leadership Opportunities**

Respondents to the survey were asked to provide details of the types of professional learning they have accessed to support the needs of learners. Their responses have been organised into the following themes:

**Professional Learning & Leadership Opportunities on Specific Additional Support Needs:** Most frequently mentioned within this theme was training from the Dyslexia Outreach Team and staff also mentioned personal reading and webinars on specific Additional Support Needs.

**Professional Learning and Leadership (PLL) Opportunities to support development of Inclusive Classroom Environment:** Most frequently mentioned within this theme was Emotion Coaching training by the Educational Psychology Service and the CIRCLE framework.

**Support from Outside Services/Agencies:** Staff stated targeted and universal support from Educational Psychologists, Physiotherapists, Speech and Language therapists, and School Nurses were supportive. The Autism Outreach team were frequently mentioned and staff highly valued how this team came in and worked alongside staff, demonstrating strategies and getting to know the unique content of the school and learner's needs

It is important to mention that respondents, whilst being very positive about the opportunities for professional learning from Aberdeen City, expressed that a challenge with successfully implementing their learning to support inclusion was having the staffing to deliver the strategies and interventions with integrity.

**Summary of Analysis of Staff Survey:**

- Staff reported they see schools as welcoming of learners with Additional Support Needs and the diversity this brings, and that schools are adapting and changing practice with inclusive spaces and relational approaches.
- Staff have worries regarding the picture of increasing complexity and levels of Additional Support Needs in their schools, and impact of learning environments for some learners (e.g. sensory or dysregulation).
- Creativity of approaches, use of Professional Learning offers (such as Emotion Coaching & CIRCLE), and support from Education and Health partners all contribute to high quality differentiation of learning taking place which can mitigate some challenges across their schools.

## FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups were held to explore how learners' needs are met within Aberdeen City schools. Focus groups took place with groups of associated staff not already covered in the Questionnaires & Semi-Structured Interviews above. Focus groups were held with Trade Union Representatives, Parents & Carers, members of the Quality Improvement (QI) Team & Educational Psychology Services (EPS), and Additional Support Needs (ASN) Outreach Services. The latter group consisted of representatives from Vision and Hearing Support, Dyslexia Outreach, Autism Outreach, the Fit Like Hub, and the EAL (English as an Additional Language) Service. The lowest attendance at a focus group was the Additional Support Needs parents/carers group. Several dates were offered to various parental groups by the Quality Improvement Team, and spaces for up to two different focus group sessions were available.

Each focus group consisted of 4-8 participants. Groups were facilitated separately, except for the Quality Improvement and Education Support Officers and Educational Psychology Service teams who partook in a joint Quality Improvement group. Focus Groups were hosted by a member of the Aberdeen City's Quality Improvement Team, with facilitation and scribing undertaken by two Educational Psychologists per focus group.

Discussion was structured using the Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan 1954, as presented by Tombs 2019). The technique aims to explore and identify the common themes underpinning different "incidents", with a view to identifying the characteristics within them that may have led to positive or detrimental outcomes. The ask was for participants to describe at least two examples of practice over the last two years: one they would define as effective in terms of meeting learners' needs, and one they would define as ineffective.

The following questions were then posed for discussion within each focus group: "How are learners' needs met in schools? What is working well? What is not working well?"

Educational Psychologists used the Critical Incident Methodology to code and theme the different examples of practice shared within the discussions.

As is the case with all focus groups, the small number of participants enables the rich capture of information, at the expense of a broader overview. The analysis should be interpreted with this understanding and considered alongside the wider data gathered as part of the Exploration of Learners' Needs.

Despite the differences between the roles and perspectives of participants, there were similarities in some of the themes identified within multiple focus groups:

### **Practice is most effective when the following is taking place:**

- Partnership Working
  - Between parent/carers & school
  - Between schools & external agencies
- Effective/transparent communication
- Embedded universal supports
- Staff capacity building
- Learner at the centre
- Flexible curricular offers



- Strong community links/connections

**It would be helpful to have a website specifying what different services do, what a child's plan is, what is realistic in terms of supports and what is not" - improving transparency and increasing clarity on who/where to ask for advice**

Focus Group Theme

**Taking a "team around" approach, as opposed to individuals working in silos" - improving disjointed communication and inter-agency working**

Focus Group Theme

### **Practice is least effective when the following happens:**

- Ineffective partnership working
  - Between parents/carers & schools
  - Between schools & external agencies
  - Disjointed communication
- Inconsistency of practice
  - Between educational settings
  - Within educational settings
- Lack of clarity on who/where to ask for advice
- Lack of awareness of the role of external services
- Ineffective or lack of external service support
- Inflexibility of curricular offers and/or approach
- Detrimental impact on wellbeing

### **Summary of Analysis of Focus Groups :**

- There was consensus across the various groups of what makes practice most effective in relation to supporting learners with Additional Support Needs.
- Effective collaboration and communication between schools, internal and external, and families supports successful educational experiences for learners with Additional Support Needs.
- There is still some inconsistency of practice/support across settings, including engagement with or support from external services.
- Embedding strong universal supports, alongside continued capacity building is key for success.
- Creative and adaptive solutions to challenges are required and valued across all groups.
- Intensive wrap-around support in partnership with key staff/settings can make the difference for some learners with complex Additional Support Needs.

## **CASE STUDY APPROACH**

Case studies were held to explore how learners' needs are met within Aberdeen City schools. Four case studies were conducted in September-October 2024, lasting approximately 3.5 hours each; the case studies took place in two primary schools, a secondary school, and an early years centre. These settings were selected by members of the Quality Improvement team.

Two Educational Psychologists conducted each case study and employed naturalistic observations (observations in real-life settings with minimal intervention from the observer). It is common for naturalistic observations to be used in case studies relating to children and young people to better appreciate the role of real life context on their behaviours, thoughts and emotions (Coolican, 2017). Between 4-7 locations were observed in each case, e.g., classrooms, cloakroom, complex needs provision, and playroom.

An observation schedule was created from analysing Educational Psychologists' listing of good practice in schools that they had observed. It was felt that the case study would be a suitable technique to explore the current good practice in Aberdeen City schools and identify the strengths of its staff. Therefore, the observers recorded only good practice, and descriptions of moments which promoted inclusion, learning, and regulation. The observation schedule covered six areas: relationships, language, physical space, maximising supports, pedagogical approaches, and collaboration and belonging.

The case studies were analysed for each of these areas. Firstly, a list of codes was created which referred to items within an area. Secondly, these were ordered by frequency to acknowledge the good practice which was used across locations. Finally, themes were generated. To ensure that examples of good practice were not lost in generating overall themes, the thematic analysis was completed by area.

As with many qualitative methods of research, the case study approach enables the rich capture of information and offers deep insight into meeting learners' needs, but care should be taken when generalising conclusions to other schools that were not observed. The analysis summary should be interpreted with this understanding and considered alongside all the data gathered as part of the Exploration of Learners' Needs.

A summary of the applications that can be taken from the good practice observed and analysed is on the next page. This does not contain the 'how' as this will be unique for each setting and their context and will be based on other good practice and recommendations from throughout this Exploration.

## Relationships

1. To establish emotionally secure environments, staff should employ open body language, demonstrate active listening and engage with learners through interactive and playful communication styles.

Consistent check-ins are highlighted as important to support learners in feeling engaged, thereby fostering a supportive relational climate.

2. Emotional regulation strategies could be embedded into the daily structures and routines in classrooms and schools.

Learners benefit from designated calming spaces which are supported by regulatory activities to support sensory modulation. Adults can best support learners' emotional regulation through empathetic and attuned responses.

3. Relational approaches are best supported by setting clear and co-constructed boundaries and expectations with learners, to support feelings of structure and psychological safety. Through adopting a curious approach to presenting behaviours, staff can support learners to provide insight into underlying needs.

## Physical Space

1. Learning environments should be designed with a child-positioned perspective.

2. Regulation activities are most effective when pupils can access them without gatekeeping by adults. Staff reflect on the utility of the resources available & make changes.

3. Use of naturalness in colour scheme, lighting, sound, and outdoor access. Multiple sources of low lighting in class was used to support regulation.

## Language

1. Curious questioning can be used in place of directive statements, when necessary, to open a non-confrontational dialogue with pupils or support their own reflection.

2. Adults can use their intonation dynamically; e.g., to emphasise empathy with pupils by matching their affect, or to encourage engagement in learning activities.

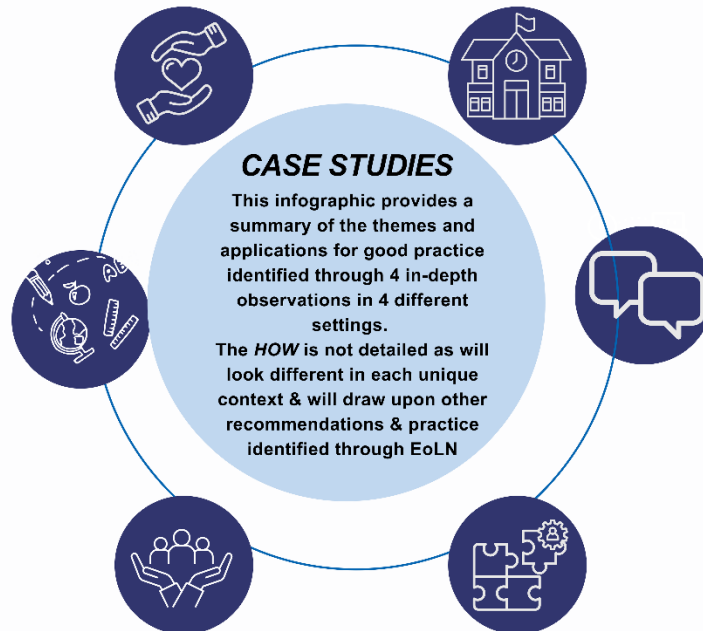
3. Staff's verbal communication can be very effective during joint activities, such as learning tasks or play. When adults are involved in an activity with pupils, their language has greater meaning.

## Pedagogical Approaches

1. positive verbal encouragement and routines are practices that should be used constantly as a foundation for other approaches.

2. Multiple strategies can be used at once to better promote pupil engagement. This is supports multi-modal learning as well.

3. Staff can effectively use questioning to bridge current learning to previous experiences, and possible future situations.



## Collaboration and Belonging

1. Pupils benefit when staff have an opportunity to plan forward collaboratively, and can share their experiences and knowledge of pupils with each other, keeping everyone informed.

2. Promoting pupil belonging requires daily opportunities to participate in groups, such as in learning tasks, games, and break times. These opportunities need to be communicated and accessible.

3. Positive relationships and communication is modelled by every adult and child interaction.

## Maximising Supports

1. Anticipating learners needs and applying early intervention strategies are essential to ensure that all learners are able to access the curriculum and to experience success. The sharing of information on individual learners and their needs is important to foster staff collaboration, and to ensure that practitioners can be responsive to individual needs.

2. Practitioners can support and enhance learner engagement through personalised strategies, differentiated materials and timely unconditional positive reinforcement. In doing so, staff support learners to remain engaged in learning and foster a sense of autonomy in learning.

3. Reinforcing familiar routines is a key aspect of fostering independence and psychological safety in classrooms.



### **Summary of Analysis of Case Studies:**

- Rich examples of good practice were seen across Localities and across school stages in Aberdeen City Schools.
- Relational approaches, connections and collaborations with learners, and creation of a sense of belonging all contributed to the most effective learning.
- Creative and considered use of physical spaces to reinforce the above approaches supported learning and inclusion in these settings.
- All learning observed was grounded in strong pedagogical approaches which were firmly embedded in practice by teachers and support staff.

## Learners' Voice

Data was collected from learners across Aberdeen City as part of the Exploration of Learners' Needs. 155 children and young people took part: 116 learners from primary settings and 39 learners from secondary settings (inclusive of specialist provisions).

Data was collected from an activity using the School Wellbeing Cards (Dr Jerrica Holder, Educational Psychologist, Horizon). This pack of 30 cards is grounded in resilience research and reflect common risk and protective factors that underpin connectedness, belonging and wellbeing. 18 cards specifically relevant to school experience were selected for the activity.

Each card shows an image, and a statement designed to explore learners' school experience. E.g. "I enjoy learning and new topics", "I worry about break times", "I feel included in school." Learners placed the cards to show whether each statement was "True About Me" or "Not True About Me" to indicate their own experience of school. The task was then repeated with the same cards, but this time learners selected whether the statements were "True About Others" or "Not True About Others" to reflect how they perceived other learners' experience of school.

Learners were invited to take part by a member of their school staff. Learners took part individually, with a known school adult who was supported in the task by an Educational Psychologist. Depending on learners' preferences and needs, they could read the cards for themselves or with adult support, or the adult could read or sign to them.

The results are below. Where findings were similar across primary and secondary stages, the overall finding is shown. Where findings differed, they are shown separately for primary and secondary stages.

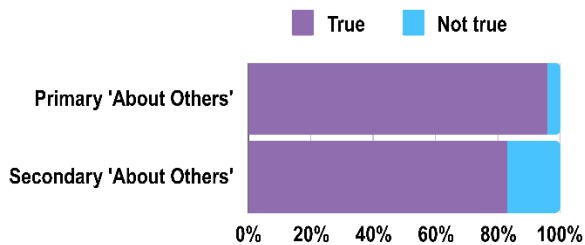
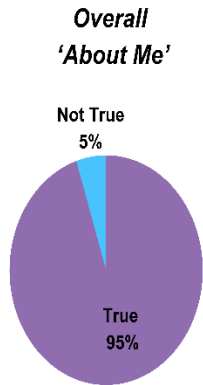
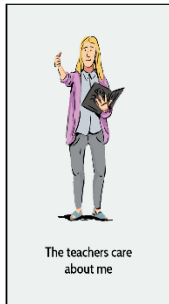
The data is quantitative and indicative only - the number of cards selected as true or not true was recorded. The adults often asked questions to increase engagement or check understanding. (e.g. *What does included mean? Who helps you in school?*) but this qualitative discussion was not recorded or analysed. The data should be interpreted with this understanding and considered alongside other data gathered as part of the Exploration of Learners' Needs.

# Relationships with Adults

Card Statement: "The teachers care about me"

95% of learners indicated that the teachers care about them.

When asked about others' perceptions, 96% of primary learners and 83% of secondary learners thought other learners would say teachers cared about them.



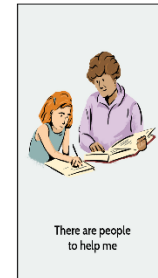
There was a strong message that most learners viewed relationships with adults positively. Almost all learners said that the teachers care about them. Almost all primary learners and most secondary learners thought others would also say that the teachers cared about them. Almost all learners across both primary and secondary settings said that there are people to help them in school and that other learners would say there are people to help them too. Almost all primary and most secondary school learners said there is at least one adult that they and others can talk to at school about their worries.

Card Statement: "There are people to help me"



97% of learners said that there are people to help them in school.

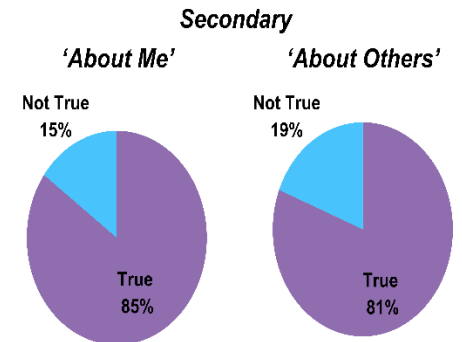
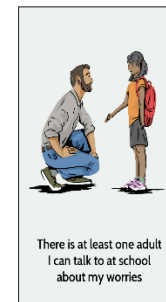
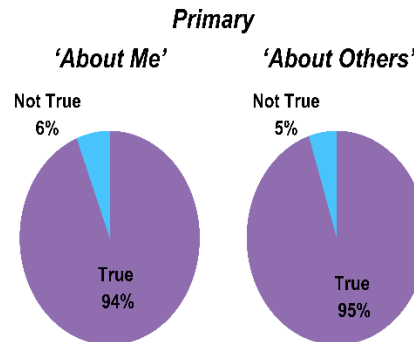
98% thought that others would say there are people to help them too.



Card Statement: "There is at least one adult I can talk to at school about my worries"

94% of primary learners thought it was true that there is at least one adult they can talk to about their worries and 95% perceived others would think so too.

This was lower in secondary settings, where 85% of learners reported that this was true for themselves and 81% indicated that others would say there is at least one adult they can talk to at school about their worries.



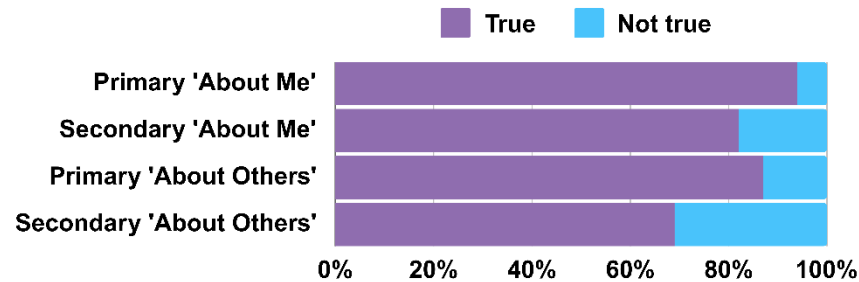
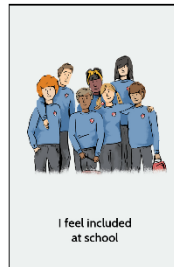
## Sense of Belonging

In primary settings, almost all learners said they feel included in school, and most also thought that others feel included.

In secondary settings, most said they feel included in school, but some thought that other learners in their school might not feel included.

When considering if sometimes they feel like they don't belong, some learners indicated that that this is true for them, with many secondary learners thinking this might be true for others.

### Card Statement: "I feel included in school"

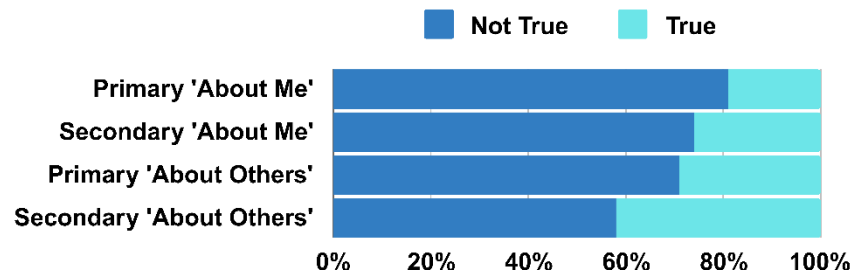


*In primary settings, 94% of learners indicated that they feel included in school; and 87% thought that others would also feel included in school.*

*In secondary settings, 82% of learners reported that they feel included; and 69% indicated that others would feel included in school.*

Figure 6:

### Card Statement: "Sometimes I feel like I don't belong"



*19% of primary learners and 26% of secondary learners indicated that sometimes they feel like they don't belong.*

*29% of primary and 42% of secondary learners perceived others may sometimes feel like they don't belong.*



# School

Most learners indicated that they want to come to school and that they and others feel safe in school.  
Some learners thought there were other learners who do not want to come to school.

Figure 1:  
Card Statement: "I want to attend school"

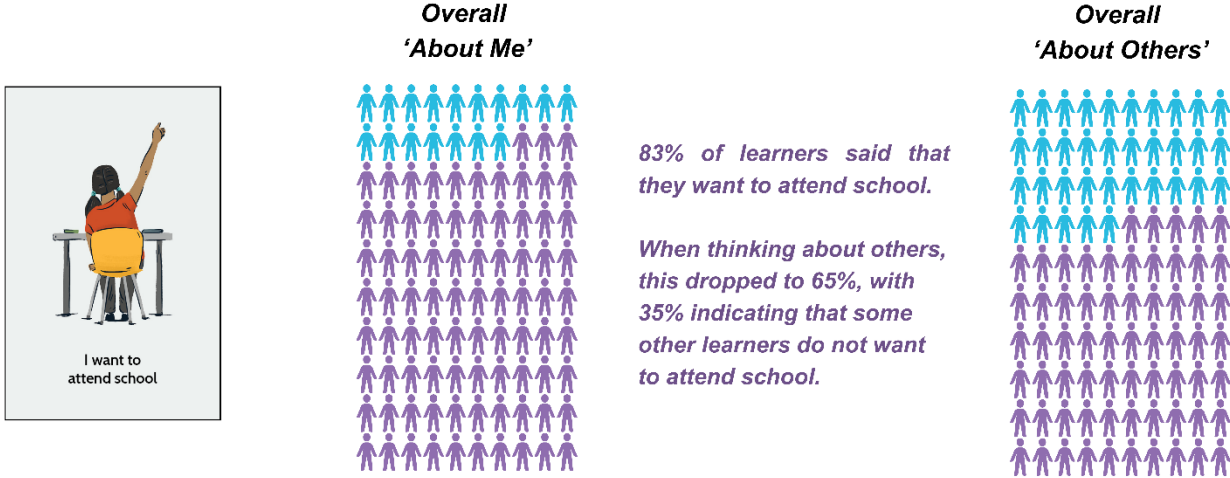
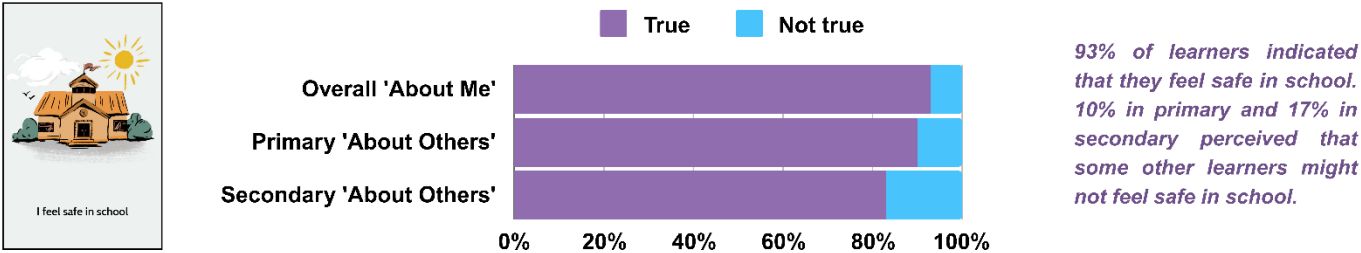


Figure 2:  
Card Statement: "I feel safe in school"



# Wellbeing

Most learners in primary and secondary identified that they can show their true feelings at school. However, some learners were aware that this might not be the case for others.

Many learners reported the primary and secondary school environment can be overwhelming for themselves and others.

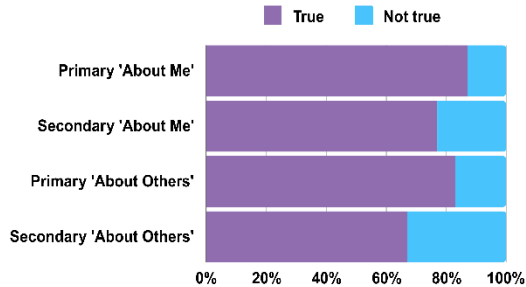
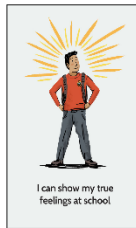
Only a few primary learners worry about coming into school, but more of them are aware that some other children worry about coming into school. Some secondary learners shared that they worry about coming into school and more thought that some other young people might worry about coming into school.

When considering how they feel while they are at school, some primary learners shared that they feel worried at school and more thought that others feel worried in school. Some secondary learners shared that they feel worried at school and when asked about others, many thought that some other learners feel worried at school.

When asked about breaktimes, almost all learners from primary and secondary shared that they don't worry about break times and most did not perceive others to worry about breaktimes either.

**Figure 14:**  
Card Statement: "I can show my true feelings in school"

Most learners in primary (87%) and secondary (83%) reported being able to show their true feelings in school. Some thought this was not true for everyone, particularly in secondary school where 33% of secondary learners thought some learners cannot show their true feelings in school.



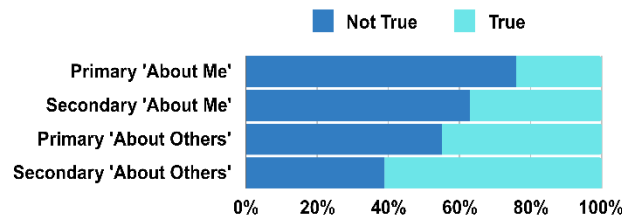
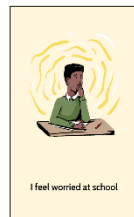
**Figure 17:**  
Card Statement: "I worry about break times"



The results in primary and secondary settings were similar for this card. When thinking about themselves 89% of learners said that they don't worry about break times. This dropped to 77% when thinking about others, leaving 23% of learners thinking that others could worry about break times.

**Figure 18:**  
Card Statement: "I feel worried at school"

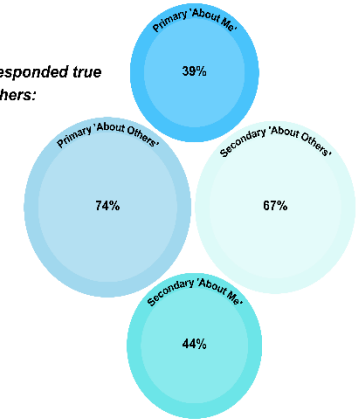
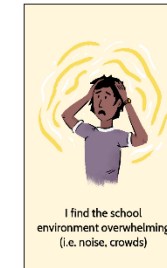
There were differences in the responses to this card for primary and secondary, as well as for view of self and others. 24% of primary learners and 37% of secondary learners shared that they can feel worried at school. This increased when thinking about others perspectives: 45% of primary learners and 61% of secondary learners thought that some other learners others might feel worried at school.



**Figure 15:**  
Card Statement: "I find the school environment overwhelming (i.e. noise, crowds)"

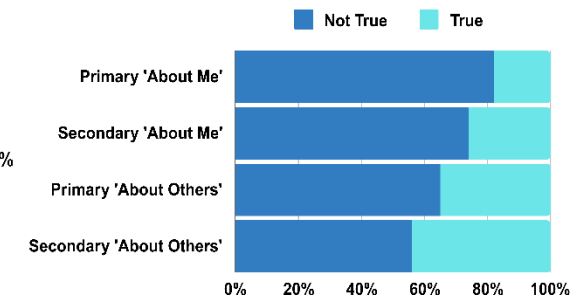
Over 39% of primary learners and 44% of secondary learners shared that they sometimes find the school environment overwhelming. 74% of primary learners and 67% of secondary learners thought there are other learners who could find the school environment overwhelming (busy, noisy, crowded).

Percentage of learners who responded true about themselves or about others:



**Figure 16:**  
Card Statement: "I worry about coming into school"

18% of primary learners sometimes worry about coming into school and 35% think some children could worry about coming into school. 26% of secondary learners sometimes worry about coming into school and this increased to 44% who said some other young people could worry about coming into school.



### **Summary from Analysis of Learners' Voice:**

- Through the cards selected, learners across Aberdeen rated key aspects of school life positively.
- Through the cards selected, learners rated their own experiences more positively than their perceptions of how some of their peers might experience something – showing empathy and consideration for their peers.
- Within 'Wellbeing', through the cards they selected, more learners shared they sometimes find the school environment overwhelming (noise/crowds). But most learners rated they 'could show their true feelings in school' and did not 'worry about coming into school' or about break times.
- Learners, through the cards they selected, rated the themes of 'Sense of Belonging', 'Relationships with Adults', and 'School' the most highly.
- The cards selected indicated that most learners want to come to school, feel safe in school, enjoy learning and feel included.

### **Summary From Across the Exploration of Learners Needs:**

Within the data above, there are multiple examples of good practice that can be built upon and developed to ensure more learners with Additional Support Needs receive the high standards of experience expected and ensure that the staff working in schools can have positive experiences within their work. Key aspects of approaches were identified, such as relational approaches, and approaches that develop and support emotional regulation, such as Emotional Literacy Supports Assistants (ELSA), Emotion Coaching or Emotion Works.

Effective systems and approaches are already in place across education settings in Aberdeen. The most effective systems give school staff meaningful involvement within the system that has strong supportive leadership at its core. Within these systems, strengths and learner-centred approaches are prioritised.

Continuing and greater partnership working emerges as a strong theme – between professionals who work to support schools, but also within Associated School Groups, and between schools and partner agencies. The opportunities for schools and school staff to work more closely alongside specialist services and external partners to build capacity and provide supportive collaborative working around a learner are positive and important.

Promoting the clear pathways for parents to access support and find the information they need will remove stress from that part of the system, and so reduce pressure that families of learners with Additional Support Needs may experience.

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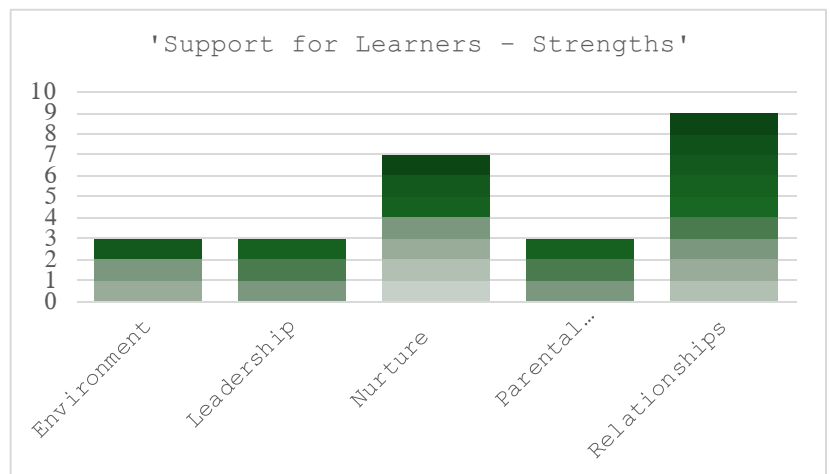
## Appendix C : Evidence from recent HMIE Inspections

External scrutiny from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education provides inspection and review which supports improvement in schools through providing assurance and public accountability. Their findings are then considered by schools and officers to examine effective practices, areas for improvement and actions to support these.

The most recently published 10 HMIE Inspection reports have been reviewed to identify common themes emerging.

### Key strengths to meeting learner needs identified:

- High quality relationships with learners, parents, staff and across school communities
- The nurturing environments within our schools
- Leadership of schools
- Engagement and communication with parents



Following the inspection each school is provided with a record of visit (ROV), this is a detailed report on what was seen during the inspection. The comments below relate to the strengths identified in relation to supporting learners' needs from the last 10 school inspections within Aberdeen City. There were 8 Primary and 2 Secondary Inspections.

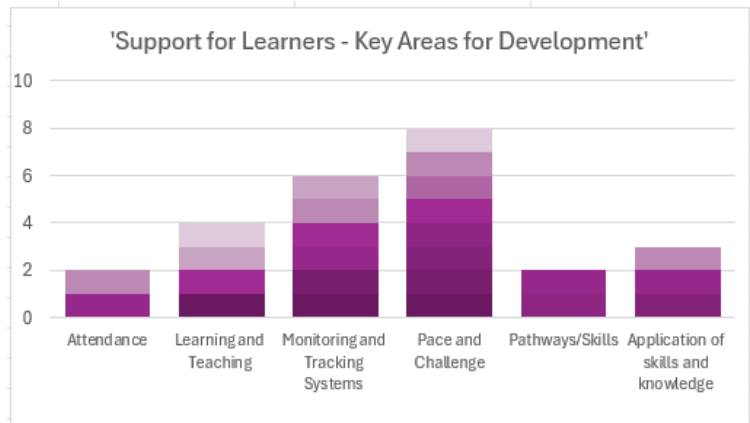
- *Across the school and nursery, children are motivated to learn in a highly inclusive and diverse learning environment*
- *The highly effective leadership of senior leaders and staff at all levels has established a caring and nurturing environment for children.*
- *Friendly young people who enjoy positive relationships with staff across the school. They demonstrate the school values of responsibility and respect around the school and in lessons*

High quality learning environments were also highlighted in some of the schools inspected.

## Areas for Development

### Key areas for development included:

- Systems in place to monitor and track progress
- Appropriate level of challenge for learners
- Systems to support attendance
- Consistency of learning and teaching across settings
- Staff application of skills and knowledge



Suggested areas for development from the ROV include.

- *Develop more robust systems to monitor the attainment and progress of all young people.*
- *Staff should develop and implement approaches to track children's progress, attainment and achievements more effectively. This will help them to better monitor children's progress and evaluate the impact of interventions to remove barriers to learning.*
- *Staff should continue to develop consistent approaches to high quality learning and teaching to provide all children with the right level of challenge.*

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education and Children's Services Committee
<b>DATE</b>	26 November 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Learning outcomes from Care Inspectorate Thematic Review – Disabled Children and Young People's experiences of Social Work Services
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	F&C/24/330
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Eleanor Sheppard
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Graeme Simpson
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Carol Davie
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	1.1.6

### 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. To update the Committee on the findings of the Care Inspectorate Thematic Review, August 2024, in relation to Disabled Children and Young People's experiences of Social Work Services and of the actions being taken by the service to address the findings.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 2.1. note the Thematic Review;
- 2.2 approve the Action Plan (at Appendix A) developed to address findings and instruct the Chief Social Work Officer to report progress on delivering on the Key Findings in Autumn 2025, and
- 2.3 note that multi-agency learning from this Thematic Review will be used to inform the refresh of the Children's Services Plan.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1.1 The National Review of Services for Disabled Children (2011) highlighted the need to deliver better outcomes for disabled children and young people, as well as their families.
- 3.1.2 In 2021, the Scottish Government produced the [Disabled Children and Young People \(Transitions to Adulthood\) \(Scotland\) Bill](#). The aim of the Bill was to improve outcomes for disabled children and young people in their transition to adulthood.
- 3.1.3 The Scottish Government published the Transitions to Adulthood Strategy for disabled children and young people: a statement of intent, in September 2023.

The strategy embedded the commitment to the seven [Principles of Good Transitions](#) - ARC (Association for Real Change).

3.1.4 In May 2023, the Care Inspectorate announced its intention to undertake a thematic review of the social work services involvement in relation to ensuring that disabled children receive timely care and support, and that their rights are respected. The Care Inspectorate aim was to explore and concentrate upon the overall experiences of children and young people with disabilities, who have Social Work involvement.

### **3.2 Care Inspectorate – Disabled children and young people’s experiences of social work services: a thematic review.**

#### **Methodology**

3.2.1 Information was gathered from social work teams across all thirty-two local authorities in Scotland. A survey focusing upon staff perspectives was utilised, as well as related data from information and recording systems. Additionally, publicised data, research, and literature were scrutinised.

3.2.2 The Care Inspectorate noted their desire to undertake a more in-depth review of four local authority areas and sought volunteers from across the country. Aberdeen City Council volunteered to be part of this process. Greater scrutiny of our service would, we believed, offer not only an opportunity for reflective learning but an independent perspective of whether we were meeting the needs of the children and young people in line with the research, and key national strategies.

3.2.3 As part of the “deeper dive” into local practice, the Care Inspectorate chose thirty children who were recorded as having a disability on our recording system. These were children supported via the Children with Disability Team, as well as our three Permanence and Care Teams. They scrutinised records for each child and met with the professional teams around the children and young people, including representatives from our service, health, education, and our commissioned services.

3.2.4 A children’s rights-based approach was adopted and the participation and engagement of children, young people and their families was central to the review. The views of the child and parents/carers were sought via a survey, and in order to gain a greater understanding of how families view the service, six families from the thirty within the local study group, were chosen and consented to engage more fully with the Care Inspectorate.

3.2.5 Staff Focus Groups, with representatives from all four areas engaging in the more in-depth work, which included Dundee City Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council and the Western Isles Council, took place. These offered an opportunity to share practise experiences, benchmark performance and contrast urban versus rural social work intervention, for children and young people with disabilities.

### **3.3 Data**



3.3.1 The overall national sample involved the reading on 117 children's records, of which 30 were from Aberdeen. Neurodiversity was the main category of disability across all four local authorities.



3.3.2 The Care Inspectorate met with the Service prior to the publishing of their report, to offer insight into the national findings, but predominately to provide verbal feedback in relation to the more in-depth exploration of service delivery to children and young people with disabilities, in Aberdeen. Their high level feedback is outlined at paragraph 3.5.

3.3.3 [The Care Inspectorate published their overall findings in August 2024.](#) An animated [version](#) is also made available for children and young people.

### 3.4 KEY NATIONAL MESSAGES

3.4.1 Eleven key national messages were identified. These were:

1. *Respectful relationships were key to building a culture of listening to and respecting children and young people's views. This ensured they were engaged in decisions about their care and support.*
2. *Too many disabled children and young people's views feelings and wishes were not being heard.*
3. *When children and young people received the right support at the right time from social work services, this helped them to grow and develop.*
4. *Increasing complexity of need and high demand for services was outweighing the availability of supports.*

5. *Children and young people were not always provided with meaningful choices about the support they received.*
6. *Parents and carers routinely provide a significant level of care and support. Their wellbeing must be promoted and protected.*
7. *The quality of social work assessments, plans and reviews were variable and were not always properly addressing all the child or young person's needs.*
8. *The experience of transitioning into life as a young adult continues to be characterised by unpredictability and uncertainty for too many disabled young people.*
9. *Compassionate and dedicated social work staff were helping to improve the lives of children and young people. High workloads and recruitment and retention of staff significantly challenged staff teams.*
10. *The social work role was not always easily understood by families and/or other professionals.*
11. *Reliable data and a shared definition of disability are not available to inform future planning or to support the setting of budgets.*

### **3.5 KEY LOCAL MESSAGES**

In relation to Aberdeen, the Care Inspectorate shared the following key messages:

- 3.5.1 Relational practise with children and families is at the core of practice in Aberdeen and key to building a culture of listening to, and respecting children's views.

There is a need for us to continue to prioritise building relationships with the children we are involved with. We will work closely with our colleagues within the Speech and Language Service, and Specialist Occupational Therapist at Child and Family Mental Health in order to utilise appropriate communication tools to engage with children and young people and ensure that all staff working with children and young people with disabilities are trained in the use of Makaton.

We will also work alongside our colleagues within the Children's Rights Service and Who Cares.

- 3.5.2 An organisational structure with a designated Children with Disabilities team offers a level of expertise when communicating with children and young people with a disability and transferring that to needs led assessment. There is a need to maintain this arrangement, and build upon the level of expertise via multi-disciplinary working.
- 3.5.3 The co-location of the Children with Disabilities Team within a school for children with additional support needs (Orchard Brae) is innovative and allows for timeous responses to critical need and the protection of children. There is a need to maintain this arrangement and develop other co-location opportunities across the city.

3.5.4 The dedication of the key personnel within the social work and education service and their investments in the children they mutually care for, were regarded as the catalyst for positive working relationships amongst professionals and with families. We must therefore continue to build upon our collaborative approach to supporting children with disabilities and those who care for them.

3.5.5 There is evidence that timely help and support has a positive impact on the outcomes and that progress is being made in making support available more quickly. There is a need, therefore, for us to sign post and enhance awareness of community supports. We are working collaboratively with our colleagues in education to develop access to information for families in relation to available community based supports, the eligibility criteria of statutory provision, education services, and transitions to adulthood, and financial matters. We aim to utilise the Aberdeen City Council Website, and news letters to parents. We will also build upon the already successful parents information evenings arranged within ASN provision in the city.

3.5.6 Fit Like Hubs were recognised as a key component to timely support, and unique to service delivery, offering community-based support and enabling families to do so, without any requirement for a referral to statutory services. However, in keeping with the national picture, the volume of complex need across the Local Authority outweighs the support available. This drives an increase in referrals to services below the threshold for intervention by social work, saturating them, which ultimately results in statutory intervention, often at the point of crisis.

There is a need to think strategically about thresholds, with a collaborative approach, alongside health, and the third sector, to meeting needs, reduce higher level demand and prevent intervention being crisis led. This will be driven within our Children's Services Board and the work within the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, stretch outcome 8.

3.5.7 Aberdeen has one key commissioned service offering outreach and short break support, (Aberlour Children's Charity) and one key commissioned service via Autism and Neurodiversity, offering holiday playscheme. As a result, choice can be limited, and often children have. The restricted number of, and access to mainstream services has also led to families using their own families and community supports.

There is a need to further enhance community support, and we are working alongside our key service providers to consider how to expand the provision they offer.

We also wish to incorporate a Specialist Occupational Therapist and a trained Counsellor, to be shared across children and adult services to equip families to care for the children and young people within their own family and community support systems.

3.5.8 Whilst limiting choice, working with one key service provider has enabled strong working relationships, shared values, and goals. This, was regarded as being key to service delivery at a high standard, as evidenced, within the thematic review and the Care Inspectorates Inspection of Aberlour Services. We therefore will continue to work closely with our third sector colleagues to ensure that children and young people with disabilities have better outcomes.

- 3.5.9 Nationally the quality of record keeping, and reports were variable, however, within Aberdeen, the majority of Child's Plans were good or better. Child's plans were reviewed more frequently through formal review processes, and there is evidence of very well-established multi-agency working. There is a need to continue such practice and to think progressively about information contained within the Child's Plan, and how this is presented in a manner that will ensure appropriate planning for the child/young person.
- 3.5.10 Parental views were recorded more than that of children within the information systems and reports. There is a need to amplify the voices of our disabled children and young people, utilising communication systems to achieve this.
- 3.5.11 Nationally, the experience of transitioning to adult services can be unpredictable and destabilising for children, young people, and their families. In Aberdeen, transition experiences were variable, however there was an acknowledgement that we had recognised this, and have developed a multi-agency approach to improving transitions, and developing a protocol in line with the Scottish Government Transitions to Adulthood Strategy for disabled children and young people strategy.
- 3.5.12 Nationally, there is no reliable data and no shared definition of disability. We must therefore consider [Celcis](#) findings in this regard, and embed the following into our data collection practises across all cross-sector stakeholder partnerships - *"The collection of good quality information about disabled children is critical to increasing and ensuring the awareness and visibility of disabled children and their needs and experiences is present among national and local policy-makers and services so that the support needs of disabled children are understood and can be met with the right support and investment."*
- 3.5.13 The Care Inspectorate commented that locally there was a dedicated work force, who go, "above and beyond" in terms of commitment to the children and young people and to providing support which will have meaningful impact to them and their families. There is a need therefore to ensure that staff health and wellbeing are a priority and we work within the parameters of the [Setting the bar](#), to avoid staff burnout, and ensure enhanced service delivery.

## **3.6 Implementation of key learning**

- 3.6.1 The Care Inspectorate noted that, *"the responsibility for improvement sits with us all. The actions noted...will require a shared approach across Scottish Government, local authorities, national and local organisations, and public bodies, including the Care inspectorate."*
- 3.6.2 The learning from this thematic review will be discussed with both the Children's Services Board and the Child Protection Committee and taken into account of programmes of work are being developed. An Action Plan has been developed to drive new actions against the key learning (Appendix A). It is proposed that an update on progress be presented to the Education and Children's Services Committee within one calendar year.

## **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

## 6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1. There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

## 7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve. Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	Many of the key messages from the thematic review are already in place in practice in the city. The remaining areas are already incorporated into strategic planning.	The Local Outcomes and Improvement Plan and Children's Service Plan are well governed by the Chief Officer Group. They will be ensuring that the terms of the thematic review are incorporated into current and future strategic planning.	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Compliance</b>	No significant risk identified	Services across all multi-agency partners will be aware of the key messages and requirements and ensure compliance.	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Operational</b>	Required improvements and developments in practice are not identified and actioned.	Leadership supports participation and planning across the multi-agency partnership in the delivery of changes required as a result of the findings.	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Financial</b>	No significant risk identified			<b>Yes</b>
<b>Reputational</b>	Organisational failings in	The public can be assured that: the	M	<b>Yes</b>

	relation to children with disabilities can bring significant media interest and scrutiny of services delivered to children and young people.	Council ensures compliance with legal requirements, national standards, and guidance; partners respond to self and external scrutiny; and identified areas for improvement are addressed.		
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	No significant risk identified			<b>Yes</b>

## 8. OUTCOMES

<b><u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2024-2023</u></b>	
	<b>Impact of Report</b>
<b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b>  <a href="#"><u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u></a>	The contents of this report have no impact on the Council Delivery Plan.
<b><u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u></b>	
<b>100% of our children with Additional Support Needs/ Disabilities will experience a positive destination by 2026.</b>	Children's Services partners deliver on the outcomes of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan Prosperous People (Children & Young People) Stretch Outcome 8 and to ensure our children with ASN/disabilities and their families receive the support they need in a timely manner.
<b>Regional and City Strategies</b>	The work is relevant to the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, the Children's Services Plan. Local stakeholders progress the findings and expectations of the Thematic Review

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	This report to introduce members to the key findings of a Thematic Review conducted by the Care Inspectorate and does not require a full Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment to be completed.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	No assessment required. I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with Ali McAlpine, Lead Service Manager, Integrated Children & Family Service

<b>Other</b>	
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## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

NA

## 11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix A – Action Plan

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

<b>Name</b>	Carol Davie
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Actions required as set by Care Inspectorate	Action Plan in place	Stakeholder Involvement	Action Aligned to
1. The views of disabled children and their families must be considered as part of service mapping, understanding unmet need and service planning.	<p>Analysis of parental questionnaire to inform service planning.</p> <p>All staff working with Children and Young People, with disabilities across children's services, trained in Makaton.</p>	<p>Education</p> <p>Children's Services</p> <p>Adult Social Work</p> <p>Community Partnerships</p> <p>Health</p> <p>Third sector providers</p>	<p>Local outcome improvement plan stretch outcome 8 – <i>Key Driver - Ensuring our children with ASN/disabilities and their families receive the support they need</i></p>
2. We must take action in response to the views of disabled children and their families to ensure gaps in service provision are addressed.	<p>ACHSP to identify a link Occupational Therapist to support families and offer strategies in caring for a child with disabilities.</p> <p>Explore options to enhance mental health and wellbeing support to parents and carers of children with a disability.</p> <p>Bench marking with other local authorities</p>	<p>Children's Services</p> <p>Adult Social Work</p> <p>Community Partnerships</p> <p>Health</p> <p>Third sector providers</p>	<p>Local outcome improvement plan stretch outcome 8, <i>Key Driver - Ensuring our children with ASN/disabilities and their families receive the support they need.</i></p>

<p>3. A robust approach to gathering and analysing data on disabled children and young people must be implemented, both in social work services and wider. This must be used effectively to inform service planning and improvement.</p>	<p>Continue to collaborate with partners at a local and national level, to identify a shared definition of disability.</p> <p>Further develop within Transitions workstream, an agreed approach to data gathering and information required for single and multi-agency purposes.</p> <p>Bench marking with other local authorities.</p>	<p>Children's Social Work</p> <p>Adult Services</p> <p>Health</p> <p>Education</p> <p>Community Partnerships</p>	<p>Local Outcome Improvement Plan</p> <p>Stretch Outcome 8, <i>Key Driver - Ensuring our children with ASN/disabilities and their families receive the support they need.</i></p>
<p>4. The role of social work services in providing care and support to disabled children must be clearly defined and understood across agencies. Clear and accessible information should be available and communicated to children and their families. This should include eligibility criteria.</p>	<p>Support the workforce to further consider how we ensure children and families and partners better understand the remit of Children's Social Work. This should take account of the individual communication needs of children and young people.</p>	<p>Children's Services</p> <p>Adult Social Work</p> <p>Community Partnerships</p> <p>Health</p> <p>Education</p> <p>Third sector providers</p>	<p>CSW - Workforce Development Plan</p> <p>Local Outcome Improvement Plan</p> <p>Stretch Point 8 - <i>Key Driver - Improving pathways to education, employment and training for our children with ASN/disabilities.</i></p>
<p>5. Opportunities for effective early intervention should be strengthened.</p>	<p>Development of information sites to sign post parents/carers, young people, and other professionals to community supports which would not</p>	<p>Children's Services</p> <p>Adult Services</p> <p>Health</p>	<p>Local Outcome Improvement Plan. Stretch Outcome 8. <i>Key Driver –</i></p>

	involve the need for intervention with, nor a referral from statutory body.  Continue to develop our Family Support Model that provides early and preventative support for all families that mitigates against the need for statutory social work intervention.	Community partnerships  Third Sector	Development of a Family Support Model will be driven by the Children's Services Board.
6. Opportunities for play and friendships, along with other areas that are important to children, should be maximised. This will need to be collective and holistic response.	Opportunities to maximise children with a disability to build friendships will continue to be explored with community partners.	Children's Social Work  Education  Community Partnerships  Voluntary agencies	Local Outcome Improvement Plan. Stretch outcome 8. <i>Key Driver - Ensuring our children with ASN/disabilities and their families receive the support they need.</i>
7. Adequate resourcing must be made available to enable services to develop and improve.	Resources will continue to be allocated to children and their families with the greatest need and vulnerability. The development of early and preventative support that mitigates against escalation of risk and vulnerability will be a focus for our Family Support Model in the coming year.  We will continue as a partnership to ensure our workforce are supported to develop the skills and knowledge to	Education  Children's Services  Adult Social Work  Community Partnerships  Health  Third sector providers	Local Outcome Improvement Plan, Stretch Outcome 8. <i>Key Drivers - Improving pathways to education, employment and training for our children with ASN/disabilities. Ensuring our children with ASN/disabilities and their families receive the support they need</i>

	<p>support children with complex and enduring needs.</p> <p>Opportunity for frontline workers to work alongside Specialist Occupational Therapist to enhance practice delivery.</p>		
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## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education & Children's Services Committee
<b>DATE</b>	26 November 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report 2023/24
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	F&C/24/334
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Eleanor Shepherd
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Graeme Simpson
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Graeme Simpson
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	2.5

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present Elected Members with the Chief Social Work Officer's Annual Report for year 2023/24. The report is to inform Members of the role and responsibilities exercised by the Chief Social Work Officer; to provide information on the delivery of statutory social work services and decision making in the period; and to give a progress report on key areas of social work provision within Aberdeen City.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the content of the Annual Report, as attached at Appendix 1.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The role of the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) is a statutory post in accordance with the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, as amended by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994. This requires Local Authorities to appoint a CSWO for the purposes of listed social work functions.
- 3.2 The required qualifications of the CSWO are set out in regulations and the post holder must be able to demonstrate senior strategic and operational experience. National Guidance on the role was published by the Scottish Government in 2009, revised in May 2017. It provides an overview of position, outlining the responsibility for values and standards, complex decision making, particularly in relation to deprivation of liberty decisions and professional leadership. The guidance also covers accountability and reporting arrangements.
- 3.3 The CSWO provides advice to the Council on social work matters; undertakes decision making in respect of statutory functions and provides professional governance, leadership and accountability for the delivery of social work and social care services, whether they are provided by the Council or on behalf of the Council by another agency.

3.4 In its 2016 report on Social Work in Scotland, Audit Scotland outlined the increased complexity of the role: “*With integration and other changes over recent years, the key role of the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) has become more complex and challenging. Councils need to ensure that CSWOs have the status and capacity to enable them to fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively*”.

3.5 This report has been requested by the Scottish Government’s Chief Social Work Advisor to assist with ensuring that, on a national basis key issues are highlighted, and information and learning is shared. This report is consistent with the content and formal guidance laid down by the Chief Social Work Adviser. The annual report cannot provide a complete account of social work activity over the year. It provides an overview of the range of services and initiatives in social work and social care and to highlight key achievements and challenges. On receipt of reports from all 32 CSWO’s, the Chief Social Work Advisor prepares a national overview.

**4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no financial implications arising out of this report.

**5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no legal implications arising out of this report.

**6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

**7. RISK**

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	No significant risks identified			
<b>Compliance</b>	No significant risks identified			
<b>Operational</b>	Required improvements and developments in practice are not identified and actioned.	This report provides assurance on the quality of social work services delivered to those who meet the threshold for social work support and intervention.	L	Yes

		<p>Service users have the opportunity to complain about the quality of social work services directly or via the SPSO. A learning approach is actively taken to all complaints.</p> <p>Service users also contribute to inspections via various feedback opportunities enabling them to know that their views are listened to and considered.</p>		
<b>Financial</b>	No risks identified			
<b>Reputational</b>	Organisational failings in relation to the provision of social work services can bring significant media interest and scrutiny.	The delivery of effective social work and social care services is critical to the protection and care of vulnerable children and adults. Failure to discharge our statutory duties effectively can bring significant media interest and scrutiny.	L	Yes
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	No risks identified			

## 8. OUTCOMES

<b><u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u></b>	
<b>Impact of Report</b>	
<b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b>	The delivery of social work and social care services is aligned to the Integrated Joint Board's strategic plan and the Partnership's Children's Services Plan/ Child Protection Improvement Plan. There is clear and direct alignment with the Council Delivery Plan and the Working in Partnership for Aberdeen Policy Statement.
<b>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</b>	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	Aberdeen City Council's social work and social care services are central to supporting and assuring that the multi-agency Children's and Adult Services partnerships deliver on the LOIP – Prosperous People (Children and Young People) Stretch Outcomes 3 to 8 and to Prosperous People (Adults) Stretch Outcomes 9 – 12.

	In addition the work of the Adult & Child Protection Committees is highly relevant to ensure our children and vulnerable adults are safe from harm. Children, young people and adults families who are adequately protected from threats to their health, safety and economic wellbeing are more likely to prosper than those who are not.
<b>Regional and City Strategies</b>	The work of Aberdeen City Council's regulatory care services is relevant to Aberdeen City Council Delivery Plan, the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, the Children's Services Plan and the IJB Strategic Plan.
<b>UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Care Service Bill</li> <li>• Delivery of The Promise/Plan 21 -24/Plan 24 - 30</li> <li>• Whole Family Wellbeing Support</li> </ul>

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Impact Assessment</b>	As Chief Officer, I confirm that an impact assessment is not required for this report.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required for this report.
<b>Other</b>	Not required for this report.

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report

## 11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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# Aberdeen City Council's Chief Social Work Officer's 2023/24 Annual Report

## 1. Foreword

I am delighted to present my sixth Annual Report as Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) for Aberdeen City, for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The Scottish Government's Chief Social Work Advisor has requested this report to ensure key issues are highlighted on a national basis, and information and learning shared. Upon receiving reports from all CSWOs, the Chief Social Work Advisor prepares a national overview.

In recent years, unprecedented and unforeseen challenges - a worldwide pandemic, global conflict, austerity cuts and a cost-of-living crisis have led to increased need for our most disadvantaged citizens. The increasing complexity of presenting need requires more resources to respond and effectively support children, vulnerable adults and families. At a time when the needs of our families have escalated, the financial climate is dictating that we must deliver more, with less.

Social work has always excelled in dealing with uncertainty, ambiguity, and crises. Our communities have never needed the professional knowledge, skills, and experience of social workers more. I am acutely aware of the significant pressures social workers face due to increasing workloads and the more complex needs of those they support.

This operational context coincides with noticeable changes to the legislative and policy context relating to social work. In particular the proposal to establish a National Care Service, and the potential structural changes this will require, creates much uncertainty. These changes are occurring at a time when the overall size of the profession, particularly in children's services, has decreased due to continuing budget pressures.

The publication of Social Work Scotland's 'Setting the Bar' (2019) and subsequent report 'Taking the Wheel' report (2022) highlighted the need to train and employ more social workers, provide enhanced professional and wellbeing support throughout social work careers, and ensure the voice of practitioners influences and shapes service design. Recruitment and retention challenges are widely recognised, so it perhaps not surprising that there has been a reduction in the applications to study social work. These obstacles are faced whilst adapting to key legislative changes, notably the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019, Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024.

It is therefore unsurprising that Aberdeen City, like other local authorities, has experienced challenges in recruiting and retaining social workers. While Justice Social Work frequently reports a lower level of vacancies, this is not the case for key services; Mental Health and Learning Disability within Adult Social Work and across Children's Social Work. Social Work teams often carry vacancies for extended periods, placing added demands on the remaining staff who are already carrying full caseloads.

Despite these challenges, I continue to be hugely impressed by the capacity and skills demonstrated by colleagues working across all social work areas. Social Work staff in Aberdeen City continue to show genuine compassion, empathy, and resilience to protect and promote opportunities for children, young people, and adults to improve their lives and outcomes. As Chief Social Work Officer, I am extremely proud, grateful and inspired by their endeavours.

## **2. Governance, Accountability and Statutory Functions**

### **The Role of the Chief Social Work Officer**

There is a statutory requirement for all Local Authorities to appoint a professionally qualified Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) registered with the Scottish Social Service Council (SSSC). The CSWO's role includes providing professional advice and guidance to Local Authorities, Elected Members, and Officers in the provision of Social Work Services, managing overall performance and improvement, and identifying and managing corporate risks related to Social Work Services.

The CSWO promotes professional practice values and standards, ensuring that only registered Social Workers undertake functions set out in legislation. The role helps ensure the local authority and its partners understand the complexities of social work service, including corporate parenting, child protection, adult protection, mental health and managing high-risk offenders

Social work services in Aberdeen City are governed across two structures: Children's Social Work within Aberdeen City Council's Children's Social Work & Family Support Cluster, and Adult Social Work, including Criminal Justice, within Aberdeen City's Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), overseen by the Integration Joint Board (IJB).

Audit Scotland noted the complexity of the CSWO's role following the establishment of HSCPs, identifying challenges in providing independent, professional oversight and challenge across two complex structures. These challenges have been highlighted in Inspection Reports undertaken by the Care Inspectorate as well as via the Scottish Governments intimation to undertake a Thematic Inspection of Social Work Governance in 2024/25. The CSWO maintains very close working relationships with the HSCP Chief Officer, Chief Officer for Adult Social Work, and other managers across Adult Services.

Following the publication of the National Care Service (NCS) Bill, leaders from Aberdeen City Council and the HSCP continue to proactively plan for the anticipated NCS and its implications for existing governance arrangements. They have engaged with the Scottish Government to share local progress, particularly on the public protection agenda.

### **Adult & Child Protection**

Aberdeen City continues to engage a single Independent Chair for its Adult and Child Protection Committees. Through this, we have deliberately sought to better align governance, structures and system oversight as well as our approaches to risk assurance. We continue to seek ways to further extend this approach in order to ensure greater consistency across all public protection forums, including our Violence Against Women and Alcohol and Drugs Partnerships.

The activity of the Chief Officer Group is data and risk led, with Risk Registers and data reports being presented to and considered by them consistently. We continue to build on the strength of this activity and our collective leadership in relation to public protection, following our positive evaluation within the latest Adult Support and Protection Inspection in 2022.

### **Quality Assurance**

Across all aspects of social work, we actively promote a culture of continuous learning. We ensure feedback from the people we work with informs our planning and development of staff and services. This includes utilising complaints resolved at stage 1 or those that escalate to Stage 2 of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

There remains commonality in the areas of complaints across children and adult social work with the majority being in relation to the complainers views on the quality of service and staff communication. We have worked hard to address the challenges in engaging with a small group of our service users by noting that services are finding it difficult to engage with them, instead of using the previous term

"non-engaging family/adult". Progress has been reported over this period with a sustained reduction in number of families with whom we have found it harder to engage with as shown in our child protection statistics.

Significant progress has been made in the year to 31 March 2024 in relation to the monitoring of service quality and performance across the Service. The extended use of data, risk registers, service standards and the continued use of a quality assurance framework have all supported the identification of what is working well and what needs improved. We have a well-established practice of quality assurance across social work teams, which is supported by service wide quality assurance data reporting and analysis.

The multi-agency Quality Assurance Framework, led by Children's Social Work, continues to provide a multi-agency approach to quality assurance across services to embed a culture of service improvement and learning which is consistent and strong across partner agencies. These audits are commissioned by the Child Protection Committee (CPC) and Children's Services Board (CSB). They utilise The Care Inspectorate "A quality framework for children and young people in need of care and protection – November 2022" to support self-evaluation.

The focus of audits is data led. This year multi agency audits focused on:

1. The transition between Nursery and Primary 1 - The purpose was to seek assurance as to the quality of information shared between NHS Grampian (NHS-G) and Education at the transition point into primary 1. This reflects the remit of the 'Best Start in Life' Group. It links to the Children's Services Plan 2023 – 2026 with this transition being a persistent issue which has arisen in Initial Case Reviews and Serious Case Reviews both locally and nationally.
2. In response to a spike in the number of children who become 'looked after' in the autumn of 2023 an audit sought to understand the reasons and any learning. This audit highlighted that there was strong embedding of GIRFEC processes and intervention focused on keeping children within their family network where safe to do so. However, it also highlighted a need to consider how the mental health needs of parents were supported by services. Learning we will take into our developing approach to whole family support.

### **Risk Oversight**

Risk management is a fundamental aspect of social work, and in Aberdeen City, managers across the service are all committed to ensuring the ongoing protection, welfare and wellbeing of those we serve. Both adult and children's social work services monitor and report risks using Risk Registers, which are then presented to either the Council Committee or the Integrated Joint Board (IJB)'s Clinical and Care Governance Board. In addition, and as part of the Council's Risk Management arrangements, the Council's Risk Board reviews the Children's Social Work and Family Support risks and the Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership's Strategic Risk Register on a quarterly basis.

Chief Officers own the cluster risk registers and Directors review them monthly. These registers outline risks that might hinder the delivery of essential services, commissioning plans, and strategic goals. Operational risk registers are managed by individual teams within Clusters, containing risks specific to those teams, and are overseen by team managers and leaders. Should risks on the Operational risk registers escalate in severity, they can be transferred to the cluster risk register.

The IJB has implemented a Board Assurance and Escalation Framework to ensure there are structures, behaviours, and processes in place for setting risk appetite, identifying significant events and trends, assessing and mitigating risks, and establishing effective controls and assurances.

The Strategic Risk register, primarily owned by the Chief Officer, assigns specific risks to members of the Leadership Team as appropriate. This register is reviewed quarterly by the Risk, Audit and Performance Committee (RAPC) before being updated and presented at the next IJB meeting, ensuring regular, thorough scrutiny of identified risks and mitigation strategies. The pandemic and financial pressures have intensified this scrutiny, promoting a holistic approach to managing risk within our social work services.

The Council and its partners have robust public protection arrangements in place. These have been positively evaluated by external scrutiny arrangements. The Chief Officers Group take an evidence-based approach to deliver on their oversight of these arrangements. They receive relevant data, risk registers and reports from the Child Protection Committee, Adult Protection Committee, Alcohol and Drug Partnership, Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership and from Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements.

Under the oversight of the Independent Chair of our Adult and Child Protection Committees along with the CSWO we have brought together the Lead Officers for our public protection forums to bring a greater level of connectivity and consistency to our public protection activities. In doing so we have identified opportunities to collaborate and integrate these activities, this reflects that rarely do the needs of vulnerable children, young people, adults and families fall under one public protection forum. It is our intention to further develop this approach during the coming year.

### **3. Service Quality and Performance**

#### **CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORK**

As noted above Children's Social Work sits within the Council's Children's Social Work and Family Services cluster. A restructure of the Council structure early in 2024/25 saw this change. The cluster sits under the 'Families and Communities' Function and includes the Education & Lifelong Learning cluster, Housing cluster and Corporate Landlord cluster.

This arrangement enables opportunities to integrate to be maximised particularly in relation to supporting our most vulnerable children and families with a variety of complex needs, but also how we provide early and preventative support to families that mitigates the need for children to be referred to social work. Children's Social work provides support from pre-birth through to 26 years of age for our care experienced young people.

Our data tells us that locally the demand for social work assessment and intervention remains high. Work within our Intake Service, comprising our Joint Child Protection Team, Children's Reception Team and our Aberdeen Maternity Hospital team, responds to all new referrals. The largest number of new referrals is received from Police Scotland followed by Education. Initial assessment and intervention is offered, aimed at allowing families to exit any statutory social work service at the earliest juncture. This year has seen an increase in new and increasing areas of work including –

- migrant families/UASC who arrive spontaneously or with minimal time for planning
- increasing numbers of young people arriving in Aberdeen, due to criminal exploitation,
- high levels of substance misuse amongst young people and parents
- Increased numbers of children with additional support needs (ASN), significantly those who are neurodiverse and are often referred at a point of crisis.

#### **Child Protection**

Child protection processes and administration are well embedded, understood and utilised across all partners in Aberdeen City. Our last Joint Inspection in 2019 noted "Recognition of, and responses to, children and young people at immediate risk of harm were very effective and staff were confident in their role, leading to a positive impact on children's and young people's safety". We continue to strive for the very highest standards of service delivery in this area, despite challenges particularly at a time of economic crisis and many associated issues, not least child poverty and displaced persons, which have continued to be evident throughout 2023/2024.

Aberdeen City's Child Protection Committee follows the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021-23. After using a national self-evaluation tool, we found that we broadly align with the new principles. However, we acknowledge the need for better child-friendly communication materials

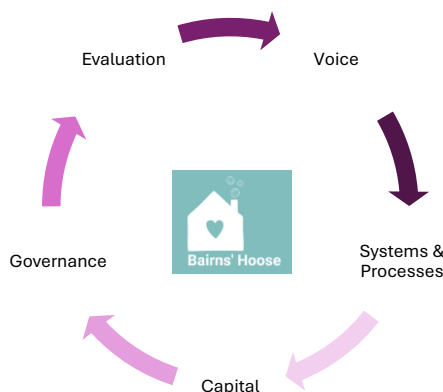
and greater focus on contextual safeguarding. The [Child Protection Committee's annual report](#) illustrates some of the improvement activities that have been undertaken in 2023/2024.

## Key Priorities for the Child Protection Committee

### Bairns Hoose

In November 2023, the Aberdeen City Partnership was awarded Pathfinder status to be one of six pathfinder sites in Scotland for a Bairns' Hoose. The objective of a Bairns' Hoose is to provide integrated support tailored to the needs of children and young people who have been abused or have witnessed violence, as well as children under the age of criminal responsibility (currently 12 years old) whose actions have significantly harmed others. A central goal of this model is to minimise the number of times children must recount their experiences whilst ensuring aligned support from the point of investigation of harm through to recovery.

A Bairns' Hoose Delivery Group was established in 2023 and has 5 workstreams,



Some key achievements by the group include:

- Successful bid for Scottish Government Funding
- Identifying a location for our Bairns' Hoose
- Inviting young people to help inform the design with the Council's architects and partners,
- The development of a pathway to recovery services
- Journey mapping with children/families to better understand their experiences

As a pathfinder site, we have much to develop and learn in creating a Bairns' Hoose. Our goal is to provide children and young people with the recovery support they need and integrate Bairns' Hoose principles into our practice. We plan to open our Bairns' Hoose in July 2025 but much of the work has begun already and builds on improvements we have made in relation to our child protection processes. Pivotal to this, is ensuring proportionality in relation to our use of formal information sharing and decision-making fora such as our Interagency Referral Discussions, our progression to Child Protection Planning Meetings and our referrals to SCRA.

### Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM)

In response to Scotland's commitment to implement the Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM) for children who are victims of, or witness to abuse or neglect, staff in Aberdeen City have worked with colleagues from Aberdeenshire, Moray, Police Scotland 'A Division' and NHSG to make improvements to key child protection processes in preparation for a North East roll out of SCIM. This included a refreshed IRD template, furthering enhancing the way we elicit and record essential preliminary information, building on the strength and learning gleaned from our IRD quality assurance measures. An options appraisal over 2022 determined how one SCIM model could operate across the 3 local authorities, taking account of the differing governance arrangements but also the diversity of geographical and demographical challenges. The North East SCIM team went live in November 2022.

In 2023/2024, the SCIM team undertook 91% of interviews for children requiring interview. This greatly exceeds the initial commitment to undertake 60% of all Joint Investigative Interviews using this improved model. Our work on SCIM will form the backbone to future planning in relation to Aberdeen City's adoption of a Bairns Hoose. The COG committed to this in November 2022 and a Delivery Group was established in March 2023, to drive forward our planning and implementation.

### **Learning Event – Parental Substance Use & Safe Sleep**

Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, and Moray's Child Protection Committees identified an increase in the number of deaths of babies over the last 2 years, associated with parental substance use and unsafe sleeping practices when using substances. A learning event was delivered for practitioners across the North East. Its purpose was to help prevent significant harm to children and young people, and further adopt a culture of collaborative multi-agency working. The learning objectives for the event were to:

- more consistently consider and involve male carers in the plans for children.
- increased knowledge of parental substance use, particularly cannabis, and the impact parenting on parenting capacity.
- understand safe sleep practices, particularly where there is known parental substance use.

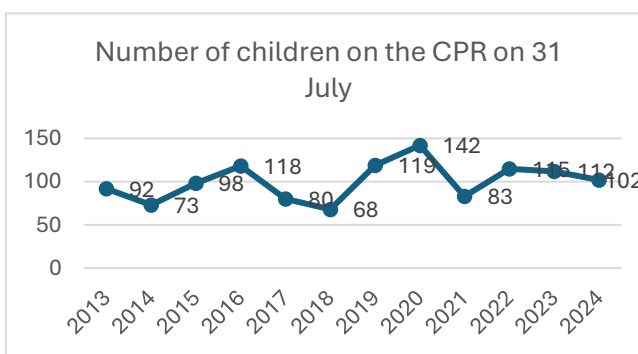
The event was attended by over 200 practitioners, and nearly 100 watching live online. The event was recorded and has also been viewed by many practitioners unable to attend. Learning from this event has been factored into our continually evolving Child Protection Improvement Plan.

Capacity for improvement is a fundamental pillar of our Child Protection Committee, and our improvements are driven by our Child Protection Improvement Programme. The CPC have begun to look ahead to our programme for 2024-2026, where some of our priorities will be child protection & parental substance use, exploitation, and child protection and domestic abuse. The CPC have developed a more collaborative and integrated approach with the Alcohol & Drug Partnership and the Violence Against Women Partnership to deliver on our priorities.

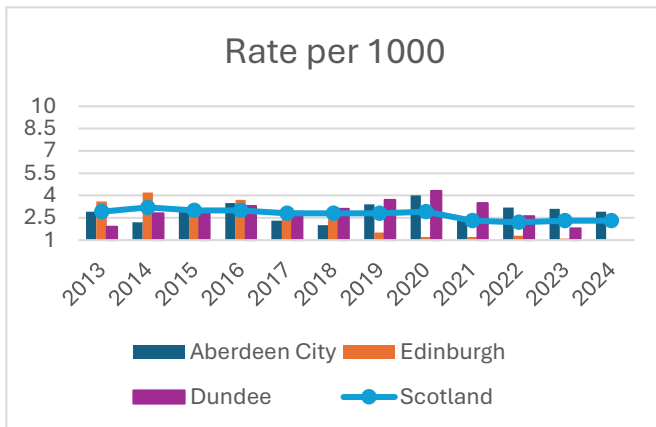
### **Child Protection Registration Data**

We continue to make improvements in relation to the identification, collation, reporting and analysing of child protection data both on a single and multi-agency basis. We adhere to, and go beyond, the requirements of the national minimum data set for CPC. Detailed consideration of our data takes place at service level and in the multi-agency CPC environment where data reports are scrutinised quarterly.

Numbers of children whose names feature on the child protection register in Aberdeen City has remained relatively static (see graph on the right). The published Children's Social Work statistics contains extensive local and national data up to July 2023. Aberdeen City are broadly in line with the national average in relation children registered on the Child Protection Register with a previous registration period which occurred more than two years ago. Neglect and Parental Mental Health are the predominant concerns recorded when a child's name is placed on the Child Protection Register. Where Aberdeen City differ from the national averages is in the rate of registrations on the Child Protection Register.



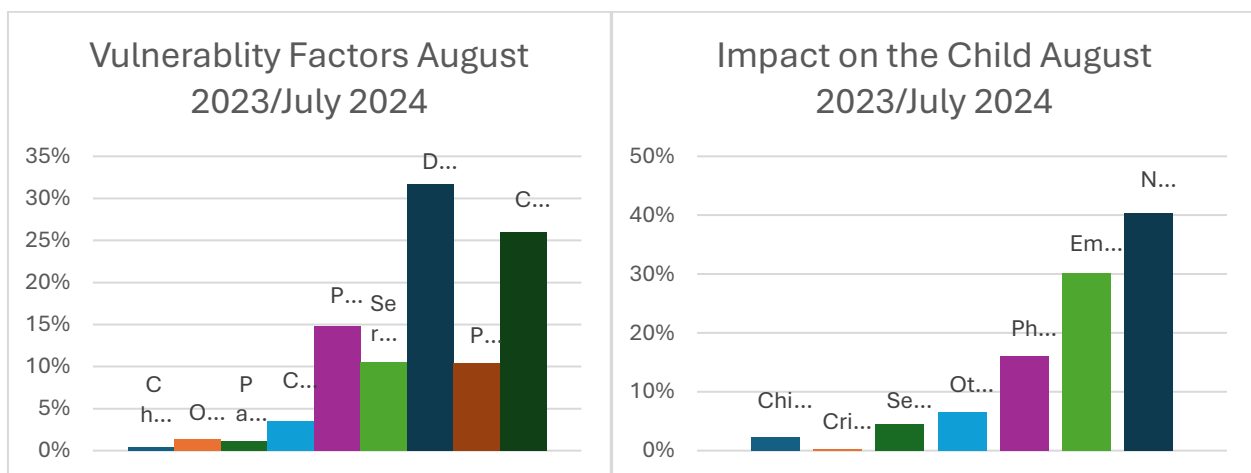




Placing a child’s name on the Child Protection Register (CPR) is a significant decision in a child’s life. Such a decision is always based on individual circumstances and the professional judgement of the multi-agency team around the family. Local data tells us that in 2022 – 2023, 93% of children subject to an initial Child Protection Planning Meeting (CPPM) were placed on the CPR. The high conversion rate demonstrates our threshold for deciding to convene an initial CPPM is aligned to our thinking within that subsequent meeting,

The concept of significant harm is one which is framed by professional experience and judgement. We recognise that within discussions focussed on risk, professionals seek to do all they can to mitigate against future harm. Whilst registration is a recognition of the need for multi-agency child protection planning it is not the process in itself that reduces risk. We also know that parents can feel shame and feel judged by the decision to place their child’s name on the CPR. In recognition of this and Aberdeen City’s higher rate per 1000 children on the CPR (see bar chart above), we continue to challenge all professionals across the wider partnership to be clear that registration is necessary, i.e. that we are only utilising CPR for children where there is a clear risk of ‘significant harm’ and a multi-agency child protection plan is required. Understanding this variation this will be a focus in 2024/25.

Across Scotland, domestic abuse, neglect, and parental mental health are most recorded concerns at registration, and the same trend is seen in Aberdeen City (see Bar Charts below). The data in the charts, in addition to our learning and self-assessment will inform the activities to deliver on our priorities set out in the CPC’s Child Protection Improvement Programme 2024-2026.



### Trauma informed practice

Children’s Social Work has continued to carefully consider the psychological trauma in the lives of children who use our services. Such recognition emerges from the understanding that while Children’s Social Work provides services to support children’s recovery, they equally possess the risk of exposing children, parents and carers to processes, approaches and interventions that may cause them to re-experience earlier adversities. The workforce is committed to ensuring that positive supportive relationships are at the heart of interventions.

We have a) conducted a self-assessment of staff knowledge and confidence revealing most of the workforce feeling they were at least *Trauma-informed* or *Trauma Skilled* and b) completed a literature review on supporting implementation of these approaches to Social Work systems. As a result, we recognised that the workforce needs to be supported to be at least trauma skilled and informed. Therefore we:

1. Supported the workforce to undertake the *Trauma Skilled and Informed* level training as a core requirement. NQSW's are supported to undertake this training as part of their induction.
2. Developed a bespoke pilot trauma programme for the *Trauma-Enhanced* level. 11 practitioners undertook this during 2023/24. An evaluation of this pilot and the findings were aligned with our workforce development plan, including supervision.

A primary driver for this model is to enable staff to articulate the difference between risk and actual harm, and to understand that risk is not static but can be reduced by the skilled intervention of knowledgeable and confident practitioners. Feedback from families and professionals has illustrated that this approach has encouraged a more ethical and empowering collaboration between service users and professionals.

### Corporate Parenting

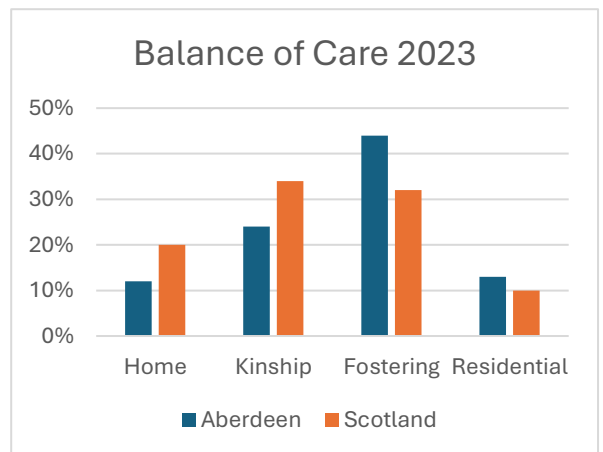
In Aberdeen City, we believe that corporate parenting is not merely a responsibility but also a privileged opportunity to enhance the futures of our children and young people, ensuring they receive the love, security, and opportunities every child deserves.

Aberdeen City's Corporate Parenting Group has responsibility for:

- delivery of the Corporate Parenting Improvement Plan,
- collation and monitoring of data and quality assurance in relation to care experienced children and young people,
- delivering on identified aims set out in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP)
- driving the implementation of The Promise across the Partnership.

The Corporate Parenting Group engages with our children, young people and young adults with care experience and seeks to ensure all improvement activity takes full account of their voice, views and lived experiences. Specifically, the group has oversight of LOIP Improvement Project Stretch Aim 5; *“By meeting the health and emotional wellbeing needs of our care experienced children and young people they will have the same levels of attainment in education and positive destinations as their peers by 2026”*

In 2023/24, Aberdeen City had an average of 500 infants, children and young people who were 'looked-after' in various care settings across the year. We are committed to reducing the number of children and young people coming into the 'care system' and are working to support more children and their families to remain together within their own community.



In 2023/24, the diversity of children and young people with care experience has grown, as seen in those placed by the National Transfer Scheme (NTS). Locally, we've formed a best practice group to address the cultural, language, and trauma needs of our New Scots. 53 young people who came from either the NTS or were 'Spontaneous Arrivals' are either in care or receiving Aftercare support. To maintain inclusive support, we set up a two-year New Scots/Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers Project Team to build infrastructure and undertake age assessments – 22 age assessments have been undertaken, with the majority (16) confirmed as children.



We have been supported by partners to build an infrastructure which has included:

- North East of Scotland College offered an 'English as a second language' short course
- a designated contact point in CAMHS;
- 30 new Scots attended a health assessment/clinic session, where they received updated immunisations and health advice.

This remains an area of high demand, and we are building confidence and expertise, with 12 members of the CSW workforce undergoing Age Assessment Training to improve our response to anticipated legal challenges arising from disputed age assessment results.

In 2023/24, we successfully supported care-experienced young people outside formal systems. We worked on improving pathways and increasing diversions from prosecutions for 16/17-year-olds, resulting in a 26% rise in Diversions from Prosecution (DfP), with 95 diversions completed. Available data indicates that children have continued to be held within the Children's Hearing System which is appropriate for their age. For the period May 2023 to April 2024, of the 39 jointly reported 16/17-year-olds, only 2 were retained by the Procurator Fiscal (PF), marking this as a significant improvement from previous years.

Workforce development sessions aimed at improving practitioner's understanding of pathways, systems, and interventions for children in conflict with the law, were conducted throughout 2023/24. Over 60 members of the multi-agency workforce attended awareness-raising sessions regarding jointly reported young people.

Local preparations for the Children's (Care and Justice) Act 2024, have started. The key initial focus is stopping under-18s from being placed in Young Offender Institutes. Presentations have been made to the Children's Services Management Team, and guidelines have been shared with the multi-agency workforce through roadshows and written materials. We continue to explore across Justice SW and Children's SW, how we can best implement the changes to the legislation to ensure those children and young people who come in conflict with the law are best supported and protected.

## **Secure Care**

After an extended period where no child or young person from Aberdeen City had been placed in secure care, we have this year had four young people who have met the stringent criteria for secure care. All four children had, prior to their move to secure care, been living at home or within wider family networks, or in the case of one, living semi-independently in the community. Due to their complex needs and associated risk, in the period preceding their move to secure care, none of this group had been able to access mainstream/specialist education provision. All were open to CAMHS &/or specialist health services. The majority of intervention was by way of intensive wrap around social work support. For all four individuals, the lack of sufficiently safe therapeutic environments was identified, which might have avoided the need for secure care.

This context strongly aligns with the findings of the Thematic Inspection – Secure Care Pathway Review, autumn 2023. We are challenging ourselves to consider the supports that might be needed to minimise the need for restriction of liberty measures for any of our young people as we continue to develop practice in light of the Thematic Inspection.

## **Family Support**

Reducing the number of children we place in out of authority placements remains a service priority, reflected in our Children's Services Plan and the LOIP. In addition to the statutory reviewing processes, senior managers in Education and CSW scrutinise the quality and planning of individual placements. In addition to our in-house targeted resources, we commission Includem who work in partnership with our Craigelea Intensive Support Service to provide intensive support to prevent children being placed out with the city but also to support young people who return to the city

Over the past year we have developed the Northfield and Lochside Pilot Projects. These two projects have been established within two designated secondary schools where there was an identified need

to provide targeted whole family intervention. Multi-agency Teams including Family Learning, Social Work and Youth Work and Education, provide targeted intervention to meet identified needs and to improve overall outcomes in relation to engagement and achievement. The projects are funded by the 'Whole Family Wellbeing Fund' and are in their second year of evaluation.

PEEP (learning programme) has marked 20 years of service in Aberdeen. Working to deliver a LOIP outcome to increase by 40% the number of PEEP programmes delivered by multi-agency partners by 2025. The Peep team, along with other trained practitioners and volunteers, provides around 26 universal and peer support groups for families with children aged 0-5 years. These groups encourage attachment-based activities to improve relationships and enhance the home learning environment.

The peer support groups offer antenatal assistance and aid to families where English is an additional language, refugees, mothers experiencing low mood or anxiety, and children who need extra support. The PEEP programme includes assisting families with care-experienced children and groups for adopters, kinship carers, and foster carers. This has been extended to include individual sessions during family time contact to support a rehabilitation plan for returning to parental care. PEEP has innovatively broadened its offerings to families in Aberdeen by collaborating with multi-agency partners to develop and deliver Intergenerational Peep and a new programme called Healthier Families Peep.

## **Family Time**

Our Family Time Hub offers a supportive and trauma-informed environment where supervised or supported family time (contact) sessions are assessed, to contribute to wider decision making for children, young people and their families. The service provides tailored assistance and support to individual children and their families. In response to feedback from kinship carers a new post was created to focus on developing resources and support available to kinship carers who are supporting family contact arrangements. This post funded by the 'Whole Family Wellbeing Fund' offers the opportunity to develop a service that meets our commitments to The Promise, contributing to the intensive support available to kinship families and supporting children and young people to sustain meaningful and loving relationships with them.

## **Kinship, Fostering and Adoption**

Reflecting our priorities the Kinship, Fostering and Adoption Service provides loving and nurturing care for children and young people where they are unable to remain with their birth parents. At present the Service currently support:

- 281 children and young people living with 227 kinship families. Of this 104 families caring for 123 looked after children. There are 129 families caring for 152 children, of whom, 28 have secured Kinship Care orders and no longer have active social work involvement.
- 90 children and young people are currently living in 74 registered ACC fostering households. There are a further 140 children accommodated with Independent Fostering Agencies. We recognise this imbalance and continue to make every effort to grow our fostering capacity.

Our priority remains keeping children and young people within their family network and as such, continuing to scaffold and support Kinship families is a priority. Collaboration between the service and third sector agencies, including a partnership with CAMHS, has bolstered the provision of skilled, trauma-informed support to Kinship families. This effort follows the successful completion of 2023 LOIP activities aimed at enhancing multi-agency support for kinship families, which in turn has created additional opportunities for collaborative work.

An ongoing emphasis this past year has been promoting wellbeing across all who deliver intervention and support to those who need our services. We ensure that our carers are well supported and that they have access to a range of training and knowledge hubs to help them meet the needs of the children they care for.

Despite nationwide challenges in recruiting new foster carers, our Fostering recruitment has experienced a slight rise in applications this year. There are 9 assessments currently being undertaken and a further 5 households attending the 'Skills to Foster' training which forms part of the pre-assessment stage of the recruitment process. A new position has been established within the team to enhance connections with external placements and foster stability. Despite being introduced just 6 months ago, there is clear evidence that early intervention during placement instability has effectively prevented breakdowns.

Over the past year Permanence plans were made for 24 children: 16 for adoption (including one sibling group of 4 children) and 8 children with permanent foster care plans (including 1 sibling group of 4 children). There have been 14 adoptive matches made. No sibling groups were matched. 5 permanent foster care matches have been made (including 1 sibling group of 3 children).

### **Children's Residential Care, Care Leavers**

Our residential care service continues to focus on promoting recovery from trauma. Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) continues to be our primary framework. Our residential service is founded on a strong ethos of care, which informs our admissions process and includes comprehensive, systemically based matching considerations. Young people are supported to 'Stay Put', reflecting their Continuing Care Status. As of 31 March 2024, half of our young population was comprised of 16 and 17-year-olds, and an additional 6 individuals were aged 18 or above.

It is normal for young people in our care to have an average stay exceeding 24 months. We have maintained high levels of sustainment with minimal disruption. We employ a systemic planning method to ensure that transitions to and from our services are neither traumatic nor anxiety-inducing. Our establishment of the Residential Aftercare support team, which assisted 16 young individuals in transitioning, offers an enhanced level of relationship-focused Throughcare and Aftercare services.

The demand for local residential children's home provision in 2023/24 has remained consistent with that of 2022/23, continuing to exceed our available supply. Twenty four referrals were made in 2023/24 (20 children) for matching considerations, and 10 of these children were matched with available provisions. Among the young people placed locally, 40% were returning to Aberdeen from out-of-authority placements. In 2023/24, all our children's homes reached full capacity.

The demand for placements consistently exceeds both availability and the capacity to adequately care for children with increasingly complex psychological and trauma needs. Without careful matching to suitable provisions, there is a risk of overwhelming staff teams and disrupting children who are already well-placed. Staff recruitment remains an ongoing challenge with only 50% of vacancies filled. At this point, 5 positions remained unfilled for 2023/24, resulting in a capacity shortfall. This is in line with other 'hard to fill' areas of children's social work being picked up in our workforce development planning.

We maintain a relational approach to recruitment, incorporating lived experience as part of our established model. Efforts to provide workforce support and ensure residential practitioners are well-prepared for their roles continue to advance. Reflecting our workforce's dedication and our investment, we support practitioners to enrol in the Strathclyde University MSc in Residential Childcare. One worker achieved this qualification in 2023/24, and four others are in the process of completion.

The Care Inspectorate transitioned from annual inspections, with the single inspection in 2023/24 resulting in a very good grade. In 2023/24, we cared for 6 young Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People (UASYP) across our children's homes, with 4 still in provision. Those who moved on have robust Aftercare support and individual care and pathway plans, mostly managed by the Youth Team (Care Leavers) and our partner, Action for Children. Overall.

As the need for children to be safe and protected within their communities keeps increasing, local assessments have been conducted to explore the possibility of adding another children's home to our current provision. The former children's home in the city's south has been deemed unsuitable due to high refurbishment costs and recruitment challenges. Approximately 12% of young people in care are placed in residential settings, with local children's homes making up about 4% of this group.

## **Youth Justice**

In spring 2023, the LOIP stretch outcomes were updated, assigning the Youth Justice Improvement Group to new stretch outcome 8: "83.5% fewer young people (under 18) charged with an offence by 2026" and its related charters. We continue our collaborative commitment to support the number of care experienced young people (CEYP) who are in conflict with the law by agreeing the following:

- Reduce by 15% the number of CEYP reported missing from Children's homes to Police Scotland by 2024. This has been effectively completed.
- 90% of 16/17-year-olds appearing at Sherriff Court will have had an assessment of their community support needs by 2025. This is ongoing and is facilitating consideration of practice in anticipation of CCJ legislation.
- Increase by 5% the number of 16/17 year olds who are diverted from prosecution by 2025. We are on track to exceed this target with an almost 30% increase within this timeframe.
- By 2025 reduce by 15% the number of in youth anti-social behaviour calls to Police Scotland

Brief guides to the Children (Care and Justice) Scotland Act 2024 were distributed through Children's and Justice Social Work. They are intended to be quick reads that highlight important practice changes and developments, and nearly half of the Children in Need teams have attended accompanying presentations.

We work closely with Police Scotland for our young people who come into conflict with the law, with particular focus on those cared for in our local children's homes. Our collaboration includes support sessions for about 20 police personnel over 2023/24, focusing on developmental trauma awareness. The Youth Justice Management Unit's report shows an overall trend in a decreasing number of crime files linked to our children's homes in the past two years, with 7 recorded in 2023/24, (up from none in 2022/23 but down from 13 in 2021/22).

## **Throughcare & Aftercare**

Approximately 150 young people open to our Youth Team are entitled to statutory Aftercare, out of a total of around 223 in Aberdeen. Some do not need or want the support. Most of those receiving support are aged between 18 and 24, with 63% living in rented social housing.

The recent inclusion of a Housing Support Officer co-located within our Youth Team structure has enabled earlier identification of housing needs, helped prevent housing crises, and resulted in a low number of unsustainable tenancies. Young People transitioning and moving on from care have been part of a national focus within Plan 21-24, with 100 days of listening taking place early in 2024, a number of Aberdeen young people shared their experiences within these national forums.

Ongoing challenges related to poverty, living expenses, and fair access to opportunities continue to be prevalent among our care leavers, so this remains a key focus of improvement work. We have provided young individuals under 18, and a few over 18, who depend on the Local Authority for their income, a rate slightly higher than the DWP allowances. We note however our food pantry and essential provision services are overwhelmed due to the high demand from this group. Monthly connection and belonging groups are co-hosted with the Aberdeen Care Experience network where care leavers keep in touch and are invited for a meal.

Health and wellbeing issues are significant, evidenced by self-reports and a high engagement level with Adult Health Services for mental and emotional support. The service also promotes digital inclusion and access for the group through the following:

- Digital Inclusion needs are assessed as part of Pathway planning. In 2023/24, 22 Wi-Fi/MiFi devices, 33 iPads, laptops, and 30 mobile phones were distributed to care leavers.
- The ACE Facebook page continues to be utilised for communication, boasting 581 followers, while the Youth Team Facebook page has 555 followers.
- 146 young people with care experience and 200 professionals have Mind of My Own (MOMO) accounts.
- The bidding process for Choices Housing is dependent on digital access and is encouraged.
- The Youth Team successfully completed Circuit Digital Inclusion Training, which provides Digital Inclusion Rights Training for professionals.

## **Children with Disabilities**

Our dedicated Children with Disabilities Team, hold case responsibility for children with the most complex of health and disabilities needs. The team provide social work support to 130 children with complex and enduring needs. The needs within this group are multi-faceted, including assessing need in relation to Self-Directive Support being provided or those of unpaid carers (family members) and/or for care and protection concerns.

Fundamental changes have been made to the processing of referrals in relation to children with disabilities. Previously, all new referrals were triaged by the Children's Reception Team. It was recognised this arrangement saw families waiting before a detailed assessment was carried out. The expertise within the disability team ensured a more timely assessment being undertaken, enabling the earlier provision of intervention, support, or signposting to services. These changes have seen a significant improvement in the time between initial referral and needs assessments being completed.

We recognise that autism and neurodiversity are incorporated within the spectrum of disability. To support these children and their families, many of whom experience extended periods on a CAMHS waiting list. Our local partnership secured Scottish Government funding in relation to the implementation of the National Neurodevelopmental Specification. A Test of Change was developed to implement aspects of the Standards and Principles of Care and has focussed on engaging with children and families alongside key stakeholders who have a role to play in referral, assessment, diagnosis, and support. This has seen families signposted to appropriate community supports at the earliest juncture.

The Care Inspectorate initiated a Thematic Review of Disabled Children and Young People's Experience of Social Work Services across all 32 local authorities. Aberdeen City was one of four local authorities, who experienced 'a deeper dive' as part of the inspection. A small selection of children, families and carers, were interviewed as part of this process. We await the findings of the inspection but initial feedback from Inspectors comments upon the high level of commitment from practitioners across children's services. Undoubtedly there will be learning for us to take when the report is published later in 2024. These will be incorporated into our improvement planning.

Children and families continue to tell us that the transition for children 'aging out' of children's services remains a time of anxiety. We recognise further improvement is required. The Scottish Government's Transition to Adulthood Strategy, September 2023, has captured the recent research, and engagement, on the experiences of children transitioning to adulthood. Close collaboration is taking place between Adult Social Work and Children's Services, as well as partners, to understand the challenges fully and to implement improvement.

To support families better understand the available resources, an information evening was arranged. This offered insight into the transition phase, services available during this process and beyond. Feedback from families highlighted the success of the event. The Education Service, as part of their Improvement Plan, has a focus on improving Pathways for children which has seen the introduction

of parents information evenings at Bucksburn Academy, Additional Support Needs Wing. The Children with Disabilities Team support these events cementing growing collaboration.

## **Rights, Voice & Participation**

Aberdeen City Council's promotes a rights-respecting approach in its practice. The concept of 'Voice' is fundamental to this approach, as evidenced by the advocacy and support offered by our 'Young Person's Rights Service.'

Building on the input from children, young people, and young adults regarding what is important to them, two priority improvement areas for the Rights Service have been carried over from the previous year. These priorities (below) were further emphasised during my 2023 engagement with the workforce to discuss the aims and consequences of the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024.

- Further develop inclusive ways of observing and communicating with, and/or on behalf of children, young people, and young adults which support their rights, participation, and voice.
- Further raise awareness and promote rights through the provision of learning opportunities that translates rights into practice.

Improvement efforts include more individualised, non-instructive advocacy for the voices of pre-birth babies, infants, and neurodivergent individuals. This not only protects their rights and involvement, but also captures a meaningful snapshot of their lives. An inclusive communication workshop is provided 3-4 times annually. The workshop combines theoretical and experiential learning with a 'take-away starter pack' to build on. Both examples will feature in the UNCRC National Learning Framework materials due for publication later this year.

Participation grants children, adolescents, and young adults their basic rights. We have continued to use a broad range of methods to engage with, listen to, and act upon what our children, young people and young adults tell us. This informs the work of the Corporate Parenting Group to bring about change. We achieve meaningful engagement through our Aberdeen Care Experienced (ACE) network and with our practitioners in various ways, from raising awareness and providing guidance daily to offering active individual and group participation opportunities and experiences, such as:

- Continuation of themed events including 'Warm Space' gatherings, an advent countdown leading up to Christmas, and a sit-down Christmas lunch before the big day.
- Annual Care Day celebration in February 2024, with the theme of 'Participation'. Attended by over 30 young people and their supporters as well as others from across the workforce. This simultaneously launched the Bright Spots research Programme.
- The SPSO launched their child friendly complaints Principles and Guidance. Aberdeen was the only local authority to take part in the pilot from July 2023 to test the process, review the guidance and to provide feedback.

In 2023, we decided to create an Engagement and Participation Officer post. This will develop our focus on CEYP as part of developing our Rights Service. Previously, this role was provided by Who Cares? Scotland. The goal of the post is to ensure that people with care experience have meaningful interactions that boost their capacity and sense of belonging. The post also has a specific focus on workforce development, supporting increased understanding of how the UNCRC applies in practice, through providing learning opportunities in relation to the principles of participation, and empowerment. The post started in March 2024, and I am looking forward to seeing how this evolves.

## **ADULT SOCIAL WORK**

2023/24 has been a busy year for our adult and justice social work services. These services support adults from age 18 to end of life. We work to ensure that everyone we support is treated as an individual with their own experiences and personal challenges. Adult services is a complex landscape but staff

strive to work to our overall vision for adult social work - ***“The vision for adult social work in Aberdeen is based on a prevention and early intervention model, working in collaboration across sectors and services to prevent, intervene and deliver services to those who require it.”***

This is in line with the challenge set by Derek Feeley to shift the paradigm of care. As we continue to fulfil our statutory responsibility to address the needs of people in crisis, we encounter increasingly complex needs that necessitate statutory interventions, care, and support.

The Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership's (ACHSCP) Strategic Plan outlines the actions being taken as a partnership to tackle these challenges. The dedication of our justice and adult social work teams has a significant impact on achieving the overall aims of the ACHSCP. We are engaging well with individuals and their families who need assistance, fulfilling our statutory obligations, delivering positive outcomes and supporting the recruitment and ongoing development of our capable, effective and professional workforce.

To achieve our Strategic Plan ambitions, we needed a shift in care balance and a targeted approach to prevention and early intervention. Integration and community planning have supported more joined-up working, but further efforts were required to fully integrate our services and embed our shared vision. This involved team ownership, collaboration, and system-wide working. We viewed adult social work as a whole system to align resources, deliver services, achieve outcomes, and meet strategic ambitions. The first step was redesigning services through early intervention, prevention, and community empowerment. Over the past year, we have continued to design future adult social work services by aligning teams into localities, fostering locality ownership, multi-agency and multi-disciplinary collaboration, and true system-working. Our goal is to have teams that protect, promote, and ensure a human rights-based approach within our communities, empowering those who need support, utilising community assets, and placing supported individuals at the centre of care planning to achieve their goals and desired outcomes.

Within Aberdeen City we consider ourselves to be at the forefront of developing our digital ambitions and technology enabled care (TEC). This supports us with developing and delivering high quality, reliable and efficient services into the future. ACHSCP are committed to promoting the use of digital technology to explore alternative methods of care provision within the city. Using a “TEC First” approach during the assessment process, consideration is given to the use of technology to either replace or compliment in person care.

#### Key Successes in 23/24

- In September 2023, we held a TEC 'Meet the Suppliers' event with attendees from Grampian and the Scottish Government Digital Office, featuring talks, workshops, and demonstrations on TEC and social care.
- We launched Aberdeen City's TEC Delivery Plan 2023-25 and established a TEC Project Board to oversee its implementation.
- In 2023, we launched the Digital Support Hub pilot project, testing a new model combining technology and face-to-face care.
- A TEC library opened in Aberdeen, allowing the public and professionals to borrow equipment and receive support for their health and care needs. Road shows and staff training were also conducted. You can find a short information video here - [TEC Library](#).

This collaborative approach to TEC has delivered positive outcomes in relation to the resource demands on care services through effective use of technology in new models of care delivery.

Significant efforts have been made to provide national reporting data and ensure practitioners are skilled in using the system. This area will continue to evolve with changing requirements and data

needs. An example of this being to add ability into the system to meet the requirements of the new Adult Support and Protection National Minimum Dataset introduced in April 2023.

We continued to experience increasing demand and high levels of need across all adult social work services in 2023/24 with 2153 new assessments of need completed across all client groups. This need varies and requires different support for each client group.

Our learning disability teams are seeing more children with complex care requirements transitioning to adult services. There is also an increase in Local Authority and Private Guardianship orders, indicating higher complexity and the obligation for social work staff to monitor these orders. We participated with other HSCPs and the Scottish Government as a pilot site for the Dynamic Support Register (DSR), recommended by The Coming Home Implementation Report. The DSR will improve monitoring of people with learning disabilities and complex care needs, providing robust data for current and future demands with greater visibility for strategic planning. We are already seeing benefits through our commissioning of new builds.

Within Aberdeen city, as is seen across the country, people are living longer. However, evidence shows that there is a significant gap between healthy life expectancy, the period of life where we live in good health, and actual life expectancy. There is also variation in life expectancy for those living in more deprived areas whose health outcomes are poorer. In 2022 Dementia was the leading cause of death for women in Aberdeen and the second most common for men. These factors have implications for the delivery of social work and social care services for older adults in Aberdeen.

As with Children's Services, the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis continue to impact on the health and wellbeing of our population. There has been a continuing increase in the overall workload of our Mental Health Officer (MHO) service which is very much in keeping with the national picture.

Our Justice service experienced challenges in meeting the demand for increasing statutory supervision orders because of the court backlog during the COVID-19 pandemic however we are beginning to now see this return to pre-pandemic levels. The increased prison population has reached crisis levels during this year with an increasing percentage of remand prisoners. Scottish Government and the Scottish Prison Service continue to reduce numbers by promoting Supervised Bail as an appropriate alternative. There is evidence that the use of Bail Supervision, whilst not reducing the number of Aberdeen remand prisoners, is preventing an increase.

Self-directed Support (SDS) underpins social work activity across a significant proportion of our children's and adult services. We are cognisant of the fundamental aim of giving individuals greater choice and control over their social care support. We strongly believe that a pragmatic, person-centred approach is key to fulfilling this outcome. We aim to proactively develop adult social work, social care, and justice services to reduce risk and need, prevent harm, and help people live healthier for longer. I am pleased to outline a number of areas of work where we have been able to progress this during 2023/24.

**The Grampian Gathering** - We collaborated with partners across Aberdeen to deliver the 'Granite City Gathering 2023', attended by 29 community groups and 167 people aged 45+. The event promoted active ageing, lifelong learning, retirement planning, end-of-life planning, and ensuring wills and Power of Attorney are in place. It also highlighted our 'Stay Well, Stay Connected' programme, helping people remain healthy and connected as they age.

**Power of Attorney (POA)**- We recognise the importance of having POA in place and have increased promotion via online platforms and across council and NHS premises. We have promoted POA at the Aberdeen City Vaccination Centre (ACVC), Aberdeen GP practices, hospital sites, and within wards. Posters in Council buildings and workplaces are updated periodically. Our service manager POA lead



is active in the national strategy group, with a local action plan to increase awareness. National POA Day on 21st November 2024 will be promoted at the Aberdeen Community and Vaccination Centre and across community groups, as well as at 'The Gathering' and the local carer's group.

### Carers Support

The ACHSCP Carers Strategy 2023-26, developed with unpaid carers, aims to ensure that they receive the right advice and support when needed. Recognising their vital role, we collaborated with Quarriers to support carers. This led to a 10% increase in those feeling supported by 2023, through a range of projects including those within the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) like the 'Respality Bureau' and 'Time to Live.'

Over the past year, the Older Adults Care Management team worked to increase day opportunities for older adults in locality settings, reducing social isolation. A stakeholder group co-designed "The Wee blether," a model offering companionship, meals, and various activities, which has positively impacted mental health and community connection. This model is now being expanded with additional funding.

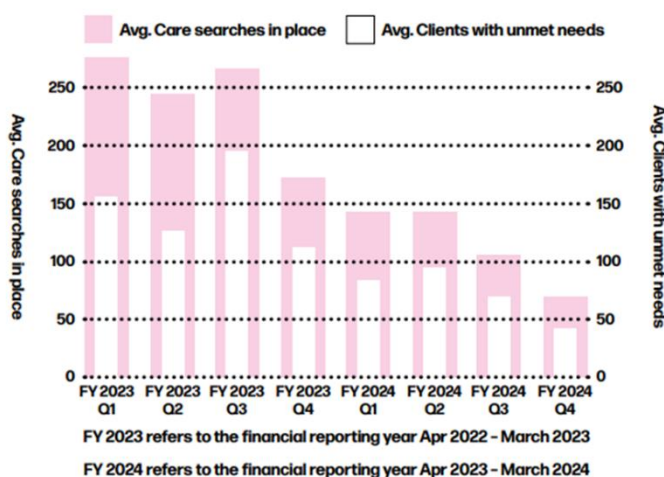
Under the strategic umbrella of "Stay Well, Stay Connected," we reviewed and commissioned residential respite and day opportunities to address gaps in services for those under 65 and those needing specialist dementia care. The Kingswood day centre, run by Bon Accord Care, provides a specialist environment for older adults with dementia, while the Chapelton respite flat offers flexible support options in a retirement village setting.

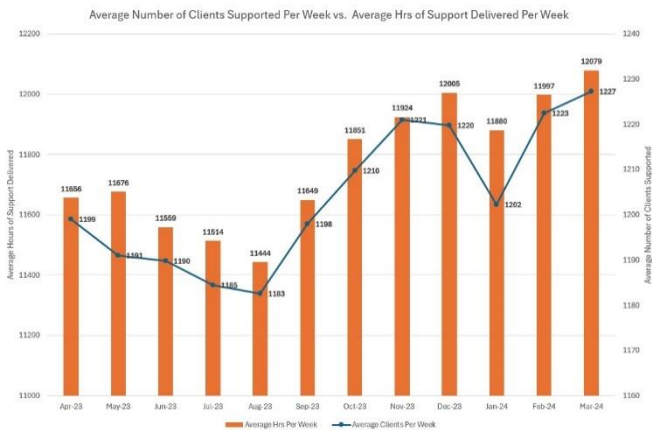
### Supporting our older people and those with physical disabilities

As part of our ACHSCP delivery plan commitments, we have taken a programme management approach to our strategic review of specific social care pathways. We did this utilising the Getting it Right for Everyone (GIRFE) multi-agency approach, and have developed an implementation plan for improving accessibility and coordination. The Programme Board leading this is a multi-sector group chaired by the Chief Officer for adult social work, who is responsible and oversees various projects that contribute to the strategic review including.

- Reviewing the approach to Social Work assessment within the hospital.
- Working collaboratively with multi-disciplinary teams, and independent and third sector partners. This has included being a pathfinder area for the Scottish Government's GIRFE approach.
- Incorporating Technology Enabled Care (TEC) as a project with its own project board structure.

There has continued to be a strong and sustained emphasis on addressing the waiting times for an assessment and the subsequent levels of unmet need within our older people and physical disability teams. Practitioners are utilising an enablement approach and encouraging TEC first. Through targeted screening and intervention our goal is to complete assessments within 4 weeks of referral. System pressures can make this challenging to achieve however we consistently meet the 6-week national standard for those deemed high.





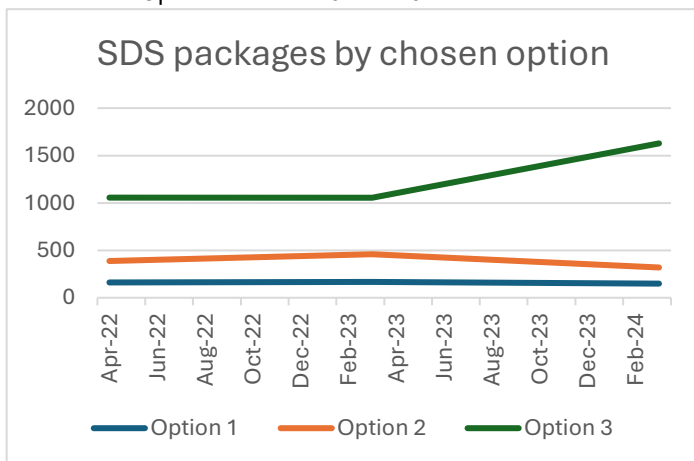
We recognise the importance of early intervention and preventative care to keep people at home longer, and the negative impact if care is delayed. In 2022, an Aberdeen study showed that 30% of those waiting for assessed care had at least one hospital admission. Many clients eligible for social care continue to choose SDS Option 3, reflecting the national trend.

Graph: SDS Option 3 provision from Granite Care Consortium

We have also seen a marked increase in the requirement for complex care and the number of hours that is required to keep people safe in their own homes. Due to this our unmet need increased last year, so additional providers were sourced to address the waiting list. Although this was positive in terms of reducing unmet need, this is no longer a viable option due to budget constraints and our now laser focus on using TEC to create capacity.

The impact of this additional capacity is demonstrated in the graph below. It can however also be noted that significant work has been undertaken with care at home providers and by changing contracts to give them much more control in terms of step down and step up in care, this has resulted in more capacity being created within the system. We have also used our TEC first approach to ensure that needs can be met in alternative ways rather than traditional face to face care.

Table: SDS Option Volumes 2022 – 2024 <sup>1</sup>



Our SDS option 1 packages remain steadily at approximately 150 packages. SDS Option 2 packages increased in 2023 to 459 but have reduced in 2024 to 319. This may be linked to the increased capacity within Option 3.

The hospital social work team has prioritised addressing significant and sustained flow pressures over the past year. We are committed to balancing hospital flow with the needs of vulnerable individuals in the community, by exploring new activities and initiatives to tackle admission avoidance and

<sup>1</sup> Information based on adult social work packages only. Option 3 packages only include those delivered by Granite Care Consortium for Care at Home and inclusive of Additional provider contract to address unmet in 2024. This includes double-up care packages which are on average 95 packages per year.

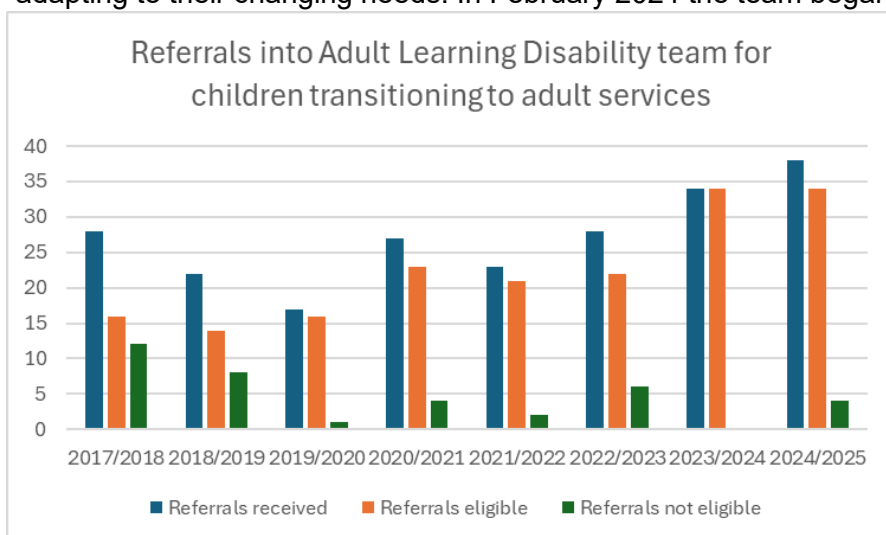
hospital discharge challenges. While our delayed discharge numbers remain below the national average, we acknowledge the ongoing capacity and financial challenges faced by NHS Grampian.

We maintain a collaborative approach with care homes by setting broad terms of reference and high-level priorities, enabling our Collaborative Care Home team to support providers when needed. Regular conversations help us understand capacity and ensure beds are fully utilised. If beds are not utilised, we identify the reasons and necessary support. We work through care home waiting lists to ensure accuracy and quick admissions. Care home occupancy levels have remained high (>90%) over the past year, with swift placement into vacancies and very few enforcement actions.

Unfortunately, one of our Care Homes, informed us that their landlord was not renewing their lease, leading to the closure of a nursing home. Although this presented us with a challenging and distressing situation for residents, families and staff at the home, thanks to the joint working between ACHSCP and the Care Home management and staff, the closure and resident transition to other homes was completed efficiently, and with dignity for all involved.

### Supporting adults with learning disabilities

The Learning Disability team has faced increased demand and complexity over the past year, resulting in high caseloads for social workers. We support adults with learning disabilities throughout their lives, adapting to their changing needs. In February 2024 the team began to encourage and support clients



and providers to work collaboratively in preparation for Learning Disability Awareness week which recognises the contributions and achievements that adults with a learning disability make to society.

We work closely with Children's Social Work to ensure smooth transitions to adult services, starting engagement from age 14. Since 2021, there has been a steady increase in young

individuals transitioning to Adult Services. We are also working to improve service provision for young adults with complex health conditions, recognising that current housing and support models may not meet their needs.

Despite pressures on service delivery and waiting times, we have maintained a 2-5 day waiting time for critical assessments, and 2 weeks for urgent referrals. 'High needs' referrals are prioritised, while medium or low needs may wait up to 12 weeks. Social work students help us meet these targets. We continue to support our commissioned Learning Disability Providers as they too face challenges whilst delivering services. Towards the end of 2023, a National Provider chose not to renew three contracts, leading to the transfer of supported individuals and staff teams to other social care providers under Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) or TUPE. This process, which took six months, required support from the Care Management and multi-disciplinary teams due to the complexities and communication needs of those involved. The care and support safely transferred over to other social care providers successfully.

Over the past two years, the increase in private and local authority Guardianships has challenged our statutory reviewing responsibilities. This year, we have over 300 Guardians, with 61 being local authority. We currently allocate Private Guardianship supervision on a duty basis, aiming to review

235 by the end of 2024. Our goal is to complete all Guardianship supervisions by the end of 2026 as per our statutory responsibilities. We expect the number of Guardianships to rise annually due to the increasing complexity of our clients' needs.

## Mental Health

The Social Work/Mental Health Officer teams are now embedded within the new mental health locality model based at Royal Cornhill Hospital. The service continues to deliver on its statutory responsibilities under a variety of legislations including the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 and Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000.

The level of mental health high acuity cases remains high. This is evidenced by the overall workload of our Mental Health Officer service. Although there is a national shortage of MHO's, we remain fully staffed and continue to invest in the MHO Training with 4 new MHO's qualifying in September 2024.

Due to sustained investment in our MHO service, we have been able to continue to fulfil our statutory obligations to the required standards and within the required timescales.

Table: MH Hospital Detentions 2016-2024

Detention in hospital intervention	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Community Treatment Order (CTO)	82	53	70	57	106	113	119	112
Emergency Detention in Hospital	40	50	53	42	34	31	28	56
Short-Term	241	203	209	245	222	228	218	222

We now have two part-time MHOs within the Hospital Social Work Team, to oversee Guardianship applications affecting discharge. Involving Social Work from admission allows for early collaborative discharge planning for those lacking capacity. The aligned MHO streamlines this process. The Scottish government has recognised this as excellent practice and a model which other areas are keen to replicate. This model is successful and means there is no MHO waiting list for AWI Delayed Discharge cases.

A new Aberdeen Suicide Delivery forum has been established which feeds into the Northeast Suicide Prevention Leadership Group. This group is chaired by Mental Health social work representatives. This group is in its infancy but takes its lead from Scotland's Suicide Prevention Strategy (Creating Hope Together). Part of this group is also implementing elements of Scotland's self-harm strategy (Supporting with Compassion).

The Mental Welfare Commission (MWC) presented their 2023 end of year scorecard and highlighted several areas for improvements. One area was to improve the number of Emergency Detention Certificates (EDC) that were being granted. A short life working group has been established and is working with all stakeholders to consider how EDC numbers can be reduced. Another working group has been created to look at increasing the number of Social Circumstances Reports (SCR's) that are submitted.

In early 2024, the MWC carried out an AWI audit looking at Private and Welfare Guardianships. This highlighted areas of improvement for the MHO service. A Short Life working group was created and continue to work on their action plan.

The MHO service also carried out a service wide training event to promote good AWI practice. This was delivered over 12 sessions and was attended by all adult social work staff. This coincided with the MWC's AWI Masterclass roll out which complemented our own training sessions.

### **Substance Misuse Services**

Social work staff continue to support the Substance Use Service's (SMS) implementation of the Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) standards across various sites in Aberdeen. In line with the standards, social workers have adapted elements of their practice to support and enhance the service managing to deliver these standards daily.

Social Workers within SMS lead on the new Residential Rehabilitation (RR) Panel. This has led to 22 supported individuals entering different residential rehabilitation sites across Scotland. The panel members have also been working closely with the new Phoenix Futures (RR) development in Alford which is due to open in November 2024.

Social Work staff continue to be instrumental in the implementation of various SMS training events including Naloxone training for various professions across the health and social care partnership. SMS social work staff are also leading the Trauma Informed Champions and Motivational Interviewing leads in the northeast.

### **Adult Support and Protection**

The revised National Code of Practice for Adult Support & Protection came into force on 28 July 2022. In response, we have updated our local procedures, processes, and training. We conducted a self-evaluation to identify necessary changes and actions, developing new guidance in consultation with key stakeholders.

Our participation in the National Code of Practice Implementation Group has influenced our local policies, including advocacy, the use of chronologies, self-evaluation, and clarifying Council Officers' roles in inquiries

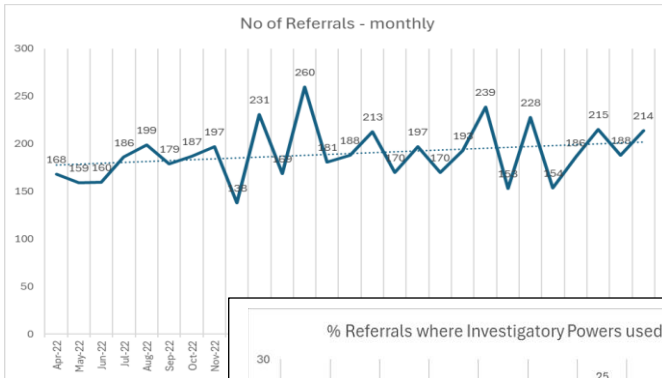
Several actions have been taken to improve responses to people at risk of harm. This includes development of systematic audits of casework to benchmark and evaluate the status of current adult support and protection performance. This includes a revised quality assurance tool that will increase efficiency and build confidence in practice standards, as we identify areas for further improvement.

We have taken several actions to improve responses to people at risk of harm, including developing systematic audits and a revised quality assurance tool. A Grampian-wide Capacity Pathway, endorsed by NHS Grampian's Public Protection Committee, has been designed for professionals involved in capacity assessments. This pathway includes the Grampian Decision Specific Capacity Screening Tool, with awareness-raising resources and training being developed.

Trauma Informed Practice is now included in Adult Support & Protection training and is a standing item on the Grampian Adult Support and Protection Group Agenda. Further training opportunities are being explored.

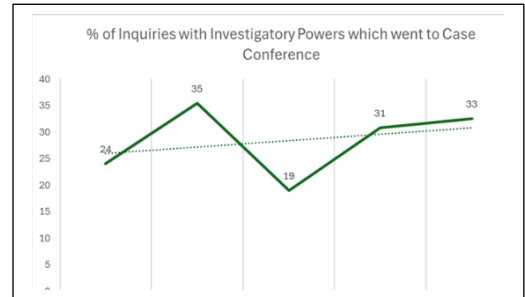
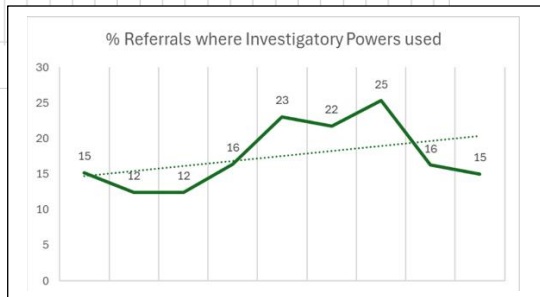
### **Adult Protection Social Work Team (APSW)**

The APSW team is the first point of contact for adult protection referrals and police welfare concerns. They handle crisis intervention, the rights and welfare of vulnerable adults in police custody, those with no recourse to public funds, and immediate safeguarding needs. The team collaborates with other



services to ensure the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable adults. Since April 2022, ASP referrals have increased, likely due to greater awareness, the cost-of-living crisis, rising poverty levels, and reduced availability of other services due to over-arching increases in demand on services across the board.

Health services submitted the highest number of referrals in 2023-24, followed closely by Care Homes.



From Q1 2022-23 to Q1 2024-25, there has been an increase in referrals requiring Investigatory Powers, reflecting their complexity, and more cases are moving to Case Conference. A higher proportion of cases resulted in ongoing Adult Support and Protection work where Investigatory Powers were used, indicating that this intervention was often the most appropriate action.

### Local Learning

We are very keen to showcase any and all of our initiatives and developments with local and national partners. We recognise the value of these collaborations given the common challenges that we all face.

Our Care at Home commissioning model, the Granite Care Consortium (GCC), is a collaborative group of providers meeting care needs across the city. Established in 2020, it focuses on improving outcomes, building a skilled workforce, and ensuring market stability. We frequently receive requests to share the GCC journey and achievements, which emphasise relationship-building and trust. In May 2023 Aberdeen City HSCP and Aberdeen City Council welcomed officials from Scottish Government for a study visit as part of the planning for the proposed National Care Service. There was particular interest in the consortium model which is line with commissioning recommendations made in the Independent review of Adult Social Care in Scotland.

### New ways of working

Adult social work is an essential part of the wider health and social care system. Many of our developments in new ways of working have involved us taking a proactive stance in building relationships across the sector for the benefit of the community we serve.

During 2023 we reviewed our Hospital Social Work Team. The Hospital Social Work Team operate across Aberdeen Royal Infirmary (ARI), Woodend Hospital and Rosewell House. The aim of the review was to explore the demands and requirements for the service with a more embedded whole-system response to hospital admission, assessment and discharge planning. Several challenges were identified by Social Work and ward staff during the review with one of the main challenges being communication and developing relationships between Social Work and ward staff.

In October 2023 the Hospital Social Work Team were realigned to identified areas within the hospital. This change aims to make Social Work staff more visible and integrated into the ward team as well as



encouraging a more preventative, whole-system approach. This change has been welcomed by both the Social Work team and their colleagues on the wards.

“With [social work] attendance at the MDT the information is free flowing and care input can be confirmed quickly. Excellent... team working, very much seen as part of our team”  
(Hospital ward staff member)

“We have a more in depth understanding of patients’ needs and health status whilst embedded in the Multi-disciplinary Team”  
(Hospital Social Work Staff member)

In 2024 we established Support Worker roles within the Learning Disability team. This was primarily to enable us to focus on early intervention in relation to young people who were or would be transitioning into adult services. However, due to service pressures, this role has evolved and become essential in enabling us to be able to respond at short notice to crises, Adult Support and Protection, prevention of hospital admissions, and minimising the demand on other essential services such as Police Scotland and A&E.

Over the past year, Support Workers have provided vital care to individuals without family support, assisted clients at home due to reduced care capacity, and taken on community support roles for young clients. They have attended court, supported homeless clients, and provided additional support during assessments and funding processes. These roles have been crucial for crisis intervention and ensuring safety.

In February 2024, we restructured the adult support and protection service to better communicate the value of learning and development and involve stakeholders in planning high-quality, adaptable training. We recruited a Practice Development Officer to develop and deliver training, support the Adult Support & Protection Learning & Development Framework, evaluate current practices, and contribute to strategic developments.

Aberdeen City HSCP is one of nine ‘Getting it Right for Everyone’ (GIRFE) pathfinder HSCPs in Scotland. GIRFE, a Scottish Government project, aims to develop a multi-agency approach to support from young adulthood to end-of-life care, linking with GIRFEC and any future National Care Service. As a pathfinder, we work with practitioners and clients to identify strengths and areas for improvement locally and nationally. Using the Scottish Approach to service design, we are developing ideas for the multi-agency approach, positioning us at the forefront of development and preparing for the full implementation of GIRFE in 2025.

### **Outcomes**

There is significant evidence of positive collaborations, effective interventions and good outcomes across adult social work. We strive to develop our approach through listening to the voice of lived experience through engagement, reviews of support and feedback including complaints.

We received a small number of complaints related to “poor communication” from families involved with our learning disability services. We are responsive to learning from complaints and have achieved positive outcomes by doing so including;

- Forming a short life working group to improve the transition process, including creating an information document for parents, schools, and professionals.

- Implementing a risk enablement process in response to a complaint within our inhouse service, leading to a supported person moving to a prompt/assist medication system, which has reduced errors and increased the supported person's autonomy in this area of their life.

In response to unmet need, we identified a gap in services for young people with chaotic lives who struggle to engage positively with care providers. Over the past year, we collaborated with ACC housing and a housing association to design a new building with 24/7 care and support. Dennis Court, which opened in December 2023, supports 8 young people aged 18 to 29. A video describing the impact of the service on the young people is available via [this link](#).

In April 2023, because of recommissioning an existing service, we also opened a new housing support with care at home service, providing 24/7 care and support to five adults. The Dynamic Support Register, as outlined earlier in this report, is an important new tool to aid our planning for future provision for adults with learning disabilities in Aberdeen.

Moving individuals who have been living in hospital into the community also requires meticulous planning. We have been working closely with NHS colleagues and a provider on the transition plan for someone who has been an inpatient for eighteen years. A new home has been identified and the care provider staff are working in the hospital ward, so that they can learn how best to support the person when discharged to their service by the end of 2024.

Our MH services are responsive to user feedback; they get a lot of queries, concerns and complaints channelled through local Councillors/MSPs, but there is robust governance around these issues and weekly learning events are held to take on board all feedback – good and bad – that has been received. We have now introduced 1-day audits on ward sites at Royal Cornhill Hospital. Findings from this help formulate a work plan on issues that the audit has highlighted. A new Delayed Discharge weekly meeting was also set up to ensure people were not kept in hospital longer than they needed to. We have worked hard to ensure our delayed discharge figures remain as low as possible, but this has become more difficult over this year due to the number of those with very high complex needs.

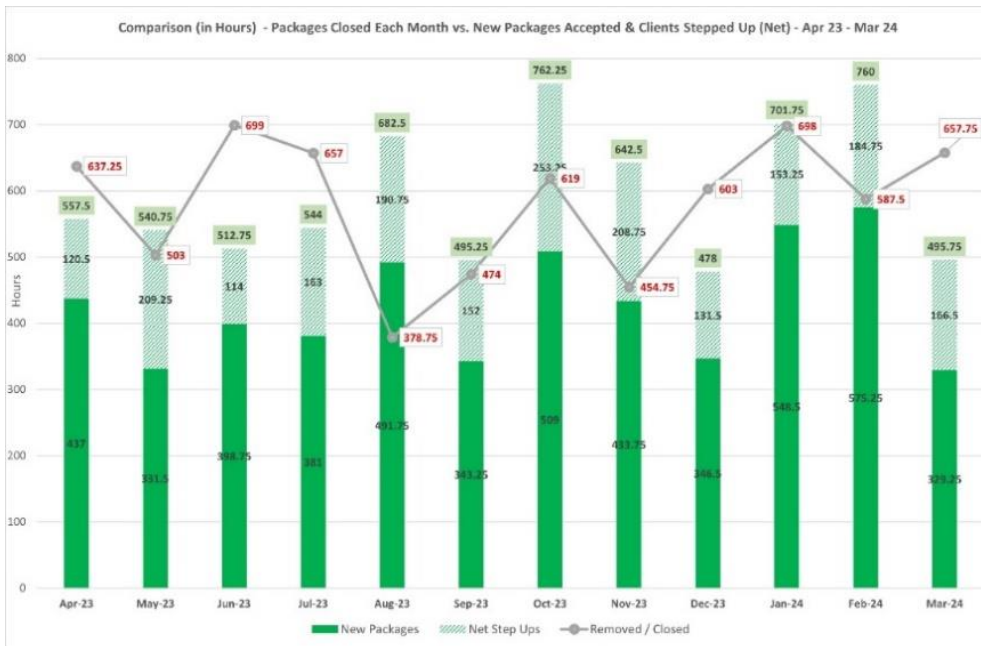
Following our 2020 inspection of Adult Support and Protection, we established a Lived Experience Forum two years ago, to improve advocacy access and gather service feedback. Supported by our independent advocacy service, the forum has developed a 'Best Practice' document, created visual materials, worked on a peer support video, consulted on Learning Review guidance, and participated in academic research by Kate Fennell of Napier University on the voice of the adult in Case Conferences.

From an Oversight and Review perspective, we deliver better outcomes by gaining insights into provider strengths, weaknesses, and service delivery risks. Facilitating provider forums for care home and care at home services has improved relationships and collaborations, leading to quicker issue resolution. These forums also enhance provider and market intelligence sharing, enabling more effective contingency planning.

On an individual level there is more significant and current data available in respect of number of reviews undertaken and outcomes achieved that can be taken with confidence into other discussions about the impact of our social work activity for example, do 6-week reviews show individual's need for step-up/step-down or has care been set at the required level. The graph below demonstrates the responsiveness of our option provider to closure of packages, new packages and step up and step down.

Graph: SDS Option 3 provision from Granite Care Consortium





Winter pressures and the demands that were placed on the workforce in terms of crisis management were challenging. Staff have worked hard to prevent individuals being admitted to hospital, support timely discharges, and keep people safe in the community. Examples of this include adult social work reinstating daily huddles to allow for real time planning and crisis response via

exchange of information.

There are still evident pressures and challenges with respect to the sustainability and resilience of our local care provision, primarily due to staffing and recruitment difficulties. There have been examples of providers leaving the area which then leads to additional demands being placed on the remaining providers. The ability to maintain flow out of hospital for those with complex mental health support needs is also impacted by gaps in resources to meet their needs in the community.

There is an increased number of individuals needing care with increased complexity of need and levels of care required. These challenges are not only the preserve of an older demographic who are living longer with multiple chronic health issues, but also many younger individuals with extreme, complex physical and mental health conditions coming into adult services and for whom significant planning requires to be undertaken so that their needs can be met safely and appropriately.

Work has been undertaken by ACHSCP and ACC during 2023/24 to develop an Independent Living and Specialist Housing Provision Market Provision Statement for Aberdeen City. This aims to provide information to the market on our current and future needs to support development in the sector.

### No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

We have seen an increase in those presenting with NRPF. Single adults and families require support in circumstances where they are not able to access public funds they often present to social work to avoid destitution. This support can last for extended periods. We are also seeing community court disposals being used for those who have NRPF. This results in social work having to provide financial support for the duration of the court order. There is evidence that different local authorities respond to this need in different ways. We are therefore seeking to refresh our local guidance to ensure a consistent and proportionate response.

### Improvement activities

We recognise we need to do things differently by having a stronger preventative emphasis and supporting earlier interventions as well as putting in place alternatives such as self-management, technology enabled care, extended family support networks etc. Our improvement and innovation projects show how committed we are to finding appropriate and effective solutions to these challenges. We are keen to be recognised as an innovative and high-performing social work service that consistently delivers better experiences and outcomes for individuals and their families.

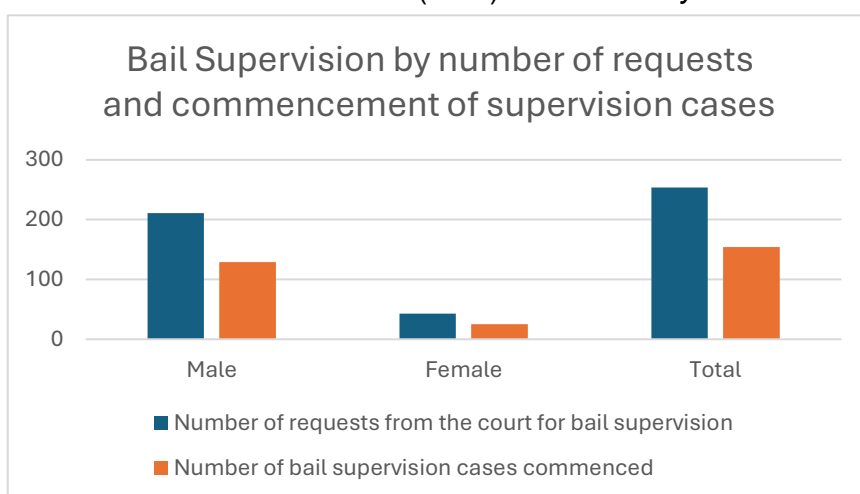
Our portfolio of improvement initiatives and activities in the past year includes:

- Continued promotion of the ‘Home First’ model where possible, ensuring patients are discharged home or to an interim placement as soon appropriate to do so.
- New Corporate Appointee-ship Practice Document to enhance financial practice by social work staff.
- New Adults with Incapacity channel and procedures documents.
- Increased Rehabilitation and Enablement Options – our Bon Accord Care Interim Care at Home service is an enablement-focussed project providing an effective alternative to bed-based rehabilitation, getting the individual back to their home, helping reduce the amount of care they will require.
- Initial Point of Contact project looking to streamline points of referral into community services (including Social Work) to improve client experience and maximise staff capacity.
- Implementation of the Mental Health Modernisation plan aligning Mental Health Social workers and Mental Health Officers to localities.

## JUSTICE SOCIAL WORK

Our JSW Delivery Plan 2021-2024 sets out our Justice Social Work (JSW) vision: *“Every client achieves the best possible outcome because we respond to the needs and risks of our clients in a trauma-informed way, intervene early where possible, are a professional highly motivated team and work in collaboration with partners”*.

The Delivery Plan is currently being reviewed, with the new Plan expected to be in place for 2025-2029, in line with the Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan timescales.



Delivery of statutory supervision was a huge challenge during the pandemic. Following a backlog of cases coming to Court in 2022/23, we are now seeing a return to pre Covid caseloads. There continues to be an increase in Diversion, Bail Assessments and Bail Supervision, as well as an increase in Supervised Release Orders. All of which means an increased level of demand for the service.

The continued increase in Diversion from Prosecution is very positive, as it enables individuals who have committed offences and have significant underlying needs to be diverted into support and ideally, out of Court involvement and further offending at an early stage. It is very noticeable that Diversion cases are becoming increasingly complex and, due to concerns regarding some of these cases which attracted media attention, this issue is being addressed nationally by the Social Work Scotland Justice Standing Committee. The number of Structured Deferred sentences (including those imposed in the Problem-Solving Court) are now also increasing. Structured Deferred Sentences are similarly intended to be a lower level, albeit intensive, alternative to custody.

‘Unpaid Work’ is requested by the public and often involves ground maintenance of local parks and, more recently, the development and maintenance of smaller community gardens and sustainable food allotments. Referrals are also received from schools, nurseries, youth clubs etc, to help produce equipment, renovating flats for refugee families. We have restarted (since the pandemic) our shopping bus to support some of our elderly and vulnerable city residents.

Currently the service is offering approximately 255 allocated outdoor placements a week. In addition to that, 50 full day and 30 half day placements per week are offered at our Indoor Light Seated Duties Workshops, including Adult Learning and Women Only sessions, totalling approximately 335 allocated

placements a week. Individual placements are also available in charity shops, community centres, churches etc. The number of individual placements has however decreased considerably due to changes in insurance cover and health and safety for some previous providers.

In the fiscal year 2023 / 2024 we received a total of 52 requests for service from the public – 37 requesting removals. 9 related to paint jobs and 6 related to ground maintenance.

The prison population has reached crisis levels during this year as a result of longer remands, longer sentences and recalled prisoners. This results in the increased use of Supervised Bail and/ or Electronic Monitoring as appropriate alternatives to remand. We are required to screen and assess suitability of all those for whom bail is opposed, which is labour intensive as only 60% of assessments result in Bail Supervision. Consequently, the pre-disposal team workload has increased, and we now have a Senior Support Worker, and two Support Workers based in the Court specifically to assess for and manage Supervised Bail Orders. There is evidence that the use of Bail Supervision, while not reducing the number of Aberdeen prisoners, is preventing an increase in those held on remand.

Domestic abuse permeates much of our work. Caledonian assessments and resulting orders are now above pre-pandemic levels. 138 Caledonian assessments were undertaken for suitability of the programme. 41 Caledonian Programme requirements were imposed as part of Community Payback Orders, and we had an average of 90 men undertaking the programme during the year. This is an increase from an average of 80 the previous year meaning just over 10% increase. The service completes Caledonian assessments for most cases of domestic offending and victims are referred to the Caledonian Women's Service for support from a Women's Worker. We are exploring the possibility of developing and piloting a lower-level Domestic Abuse programme.

We continue to provide the Moving Forward Making Changes (MFMC) programme for sex offenders which involves a 3-year CPO Programme Requirement. This programme is currently transitioning to the 'Moving Forward 2 Change' Programme with training being rolled out. 87 assessments were undertaken for the programme, 18 were imposed, 34 had the 'Aberdeen Sex Offender Programme' imposed as an alternative, and 35 had no requirement imposed as a result of the assessment. On average we have between 30 and 35 people on the MFMC programme at any time due to it being a three-year programme and people joining and leaving the programme throughout the year.

The majority of lower level/non-contact sexual offending will not meet the criteria for the MFMC programme and, where this is the case, the lower level/shorter programme, the 'Aberdeen Sex Offender Programme' will be proposed to the Court.

Justice Social Work continue to work in close collaboration with the Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Co-ordination Unit and with our partner agencies such as Health, Housing, Police Scotland, Scottish Prison Service, Care Management and Children's Services. The revised guidance implemented in May 2022 has been incorporated into practice resulting in clearer processes and co-ordination of multi-agency services being taken forward. Thus, ensuring that access to appropriate housing and primary care services are in place when prisoners are released.

Throughout the year 2023/24, Justice Social Work reported 10 initial notifications of potentially serious incidents between MAPPA and the Care Inspectorate with none of those reported proceeding to a Serious Case or Learning Review which indicates the ongoing appropriateness of our interventions and balancing statutory obligations, public protection and the needs and rights of those we work with.

The Alcohol & Drugs Partnership /Justice Social Work (ADP/JSW) Development Worker has continued to work closely with the commissioned Assertive Outreach service to support individuals who leave prison, and to reduce the risk of drug related deaths. This colleague has also been involved in the collation of information and representation of JSW on the Drug Related Death reviews forum, SURGE and facilitated substance misuse training for JSW staff, regular and mandatory Naloxone training for staff, service users and across other services where appropriate.

The JSW service was involved in the pilot of the new Court Report template for shorter and more concise reports which has now been rolled out nationally. Aberdeen JSW now has a Senior Social Worker participating in the working group with the Scottish Government to review the National Guidance for Community Payback Orders.

### **Challenges**

Last year we reported on the difficulties for the Justice workforce due to post-pandemic related backlogs and managing the increasing demand for services. Staff were tired and this was further compounded by the national risk management tool (LS/CMI) being off-line and paper based for 18 months. There were also challenges implementing a new data recording system. As reported earlier, whilst the use of D365 has greatly improved, with support from a dedicated product owner, it remains a challenge to practitioners and managers.

New Bail Supervision legislation has resulted in a very significant increase in workload for the Pre-Disposal Team and more widely across the JSW service which we are still coming to terms with. Release from custody via virtual Courts, whilst a good innovation, presents some difficulties for those on whom CPOs are imposed in respect of meeting with, engaging and inducting individuals being released from establishments across the country.

Numbers of Unpaid Work Requirements have now surpassed pre-pandemic levels. The service is already having to cope with changes in premises, problems with the vehicle fleet, difficulties in recruiting Task Supervisors, reduced availability of individual placements, and an increasing number of clients who can only undertake indoor or seated tasks. Increasing workload is yet another challenge.

### **4. Resources**

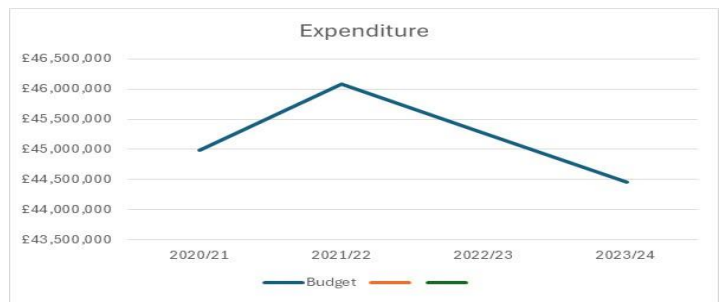
Aberdeen is the third largest city in Scotland with an estimated population of circa 230K. It is, per head of population, the second lowest funded council in Scotland. The significant downturn in the oil industry as well as the impact of austerity and the cost of living crisis has significantly impacted on the economic wellbeing of the city.

In recent years, the City's population has increased. As a result of world events, Aberdeen City has welcomed significant numbers of displaced persons from war affected countries. Aberdeen being a city with two universities, our population has been impacted by a high volume of international families coming to the city to study. Since 2019 there has been a 14% increase in the school roll. This change has unsurprisingly seen an increase in the demand for social work intervention.

As a result of high inflation, increases to employee salaries and commissioned services as well as increasing demand, all aspect of the Council and HSCP budgets continue to experience unrelenting pressure. The Council's medium term financial plan shows these pressures are likely to persist, impacting our ability to meet the needs of service users. We also recognise the continuing impact of the COVID pandemic - increased family fragility, poor mental health, delays in the Court system, and pressures on the health system, are all continuing to directly impact on social work services.

Given this context, it is crucial that new national policies and legislative duties receive full funding. In order to fulfil its statutory duty to deliver a balanced budget, all Council Services in 2023/24 were required to identify savings across head count, contracts and assets.

We continue to acknowledging the interconnected nature of social work. Most children come to the attention of social work due to care and protection issues arising from difficulties in their parents' lives. This reinforces our continuing efforts to explore opportunities to integrate planning and delivery of services that support the whole family. This concept will be core to our developing Family Support Model. The graph shows changes to the Children's Social Work budget over the past four years.



2023/24 - Gross expenditure on Adult & Justice Social Work was £184.5m

### Critical Service Pressures

The welcome progress in medical treatments and medication has resulted in individuals living longer with more complex needs. This complexity necessitates higher levels of care and support, which require greater resource. Service providers are also facing heightened expectations from clients, driving performance metrics such as waiting times. The ongoing cost-of-living crisis in 2023/24 has highlighted the link between poverty and the demand for social work intervention. Those accessing money advice services and emergency food provisions report daily survival struggles and the detrimental impact on their confidence and mental wellbeing.

Having enough practitioners in all service areas to undertake statutory social work tasks is essential. It is crucial to focus on person-centred interventions to keep children and vulnerable adults safe at home for as long as possible.

Our [Children's Services Strategic Plan 2023-26](#) reinforces the continuing need to ensure families have access to early and preventative support that mitigates the need for social work intervention. Building a strong Family Support Model is a multi-agency responsibility. The varied funding for Tier 2 family support services brings both challenges and opportunities. Families have told us they want to more easily access early and preventative support without relying on professionals. These principles will be at the core of our developing Family Support Model.

Our Children's Services Strategic Plan is closely aligned with the HSCP's Strategic Plan. As a partnership, we have made significant efforts to align various strategic documents including the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, Child Poverty Plan, Carers Plan, and Corporate Parenting Plan. This endeavour enhances our strategic coherence and optimises our resources to achieve crucial shared priorities.

As a service we are committed to supporting children to remain within their family, where it is safe to do so, without the need for compulsory measures. However, to do this on a sustained basis can often require significant and sustained multi-agency resource to scaffold around families. As a consequence of these efforts our care population has reduced by circa 15% over recent years. This reduction is welcomed but we strive for it to reduce further. There has been a noted reduction in our foster care population and those looked after at home. As we continue to enhance support for children to remain within their family network, we have seen an increase in children placed in a kinship arrangement as well as a marginal increase to those in residential care. Given the average cost of a specialist residential placement is circa £300k per child annually, any increase has a significant budgetary impact.

The single biggest cost pressure for Children's Social Work continues to be the cost of specialist care for children who have experienced significant harm and abuse. The national shortage of foster carers is a challenge. We are working hard to build our internal fostering capacity. The cost of specialist residential care has increased well beyond Council budgets. This contributed to an overspend of circa



£2.5m in the year 2023/24. Internal Audit identified that there was robust governance to the decision making and review of placing children in specialist residential care.

While the level of protection afforded by the Scottish Government to the funding of adult social work services is welcomed, there are recognised and significant cost pressures within the system as a result of service demand and inflationary pressures. The primary areas of budget pressure relate to the growing demand and complexity of demand to support older adults, as well as those with adults with complex mental health needs and with complex learning disabilities. Work is progressing at pace to develop local community housing options that will enable several adults living out of the authority to return to be near family members and their local community whilst also mitigating budget pressures.

### **Use of Technology**

Recognising that budgets will remain challenged, the use of technology has to be part of planning to do more with less. This report references examples of this already in place – Technology Enabled Care; Mind of My Own apps are already positively contributing to service delivery.

In October 2022, in partnership with Microsoft, Aberdeen City Council launched ‘D365’ - its own data system across social work. This system was designed by social workers for social workers. It utilises the existing suite of Microsoft tools but has added functionality and capacity to support real time data reporting. The system has an iterative development programme directly informed by the experiences of those who use it. This flexibility ensures the system can respond at pace to legislative and policy change.

One of the key benefits of D365 is its capability to deliver on the Scottish Governments aspiration, as outlined in the NCS Bill - that there is a single health and social care record. The realisation of this for frontline practitioners cannot be understated. At a time when we all need to do more with less the integration of key client data in real time will improve planning and decision making and potentially save lives.

Our partnership with Microsoft will continue to allow us to explore evolving opportunities. Currently we are exploring how the use of Microsoft’s digital tool co-pilot can support us to reduce the administrative burdens faced by frontline practitioners.

### **Charging policy**

Within Adult Social Work application of charging policy for chargeable services is an important means of generating income. This year we have carried out a review of how our charging policy works, which identified instances where charges were not applied when they should have been, e.g. Housing support services and meals provision. We have worked with finance colleagues, social work staff and clients to understand the reasons for this and the changes needed to ensure that charging policy is always applied in a fair and consistent manner. This will inform a revised charging policy and contribute to ongoing sustainability of care provision in 2024/25 and beyond.

## **5. Workforce**

The Setting the Bar Report (2019), and its sister report ‘Taking the Wheel’ (2022) whilst welcomed, brought no surprises emphasising that effective social work provision is going to need an increase in social workers who are suitably skilled and trained to undertake the complex roles that they fill. We are aware of the increasing pressures on social work staff, as they strive to offer high quality service to our most vulnerable groups of children and adults. This recognition has prompted us to further explore with our People and Organisation colleagues how to build increasing psychological resilience in a workforce who are at risk of vicarious trauma on a day-to-day basis.

I held a number of engagement sessions with the workforce in March 2024, coinciding with World Social Work Day. Practitioners told me of the emotional toll the work took on them. This was not said in a manner that was bemoaning, but reflective of the internal conflict they felt, undertaking a role they were proud of, but not always feeling they had the time to fully meet their client’s needs. Some workers

cite this issue as being a reason they have changed careers due to burnout/work stress. Aberdeen sits marginally higher than the national data which illustrates one in four social workers do not make it to 6 years in the profession, with a high percentage of newly qualified workers only remaining with us for between 1 and 4 years. We will work hard to ensure that our NQSW programme is meeting the needs of early years social workers, who we would wish to nurture at this crucial phase of their career.

Efforts to support and develop the workforce include creating a climate and culture conducive to social work values, which helps preserve and protect the workforce. Enabling a culture that encourages the agency of social workers, to learn from our mistakes and willing to take risks. To promote a relational approach to our practice, ensuring we give authentic effect to listening to the voice and views of our service users are important expectations we ask of all our staff.

Recruitment and retention in social work, particularly in some areas of Adult Social Work and across Children's Social Work present significant challenges. We want to continue to develop our 'grow our own' approaches to recruitment and to succession planning, providing opportunities for non-social work qualified staff to undertake professional learning to obtain a social work degree as well as supporting staff interested and able to take on "acting up" duties.

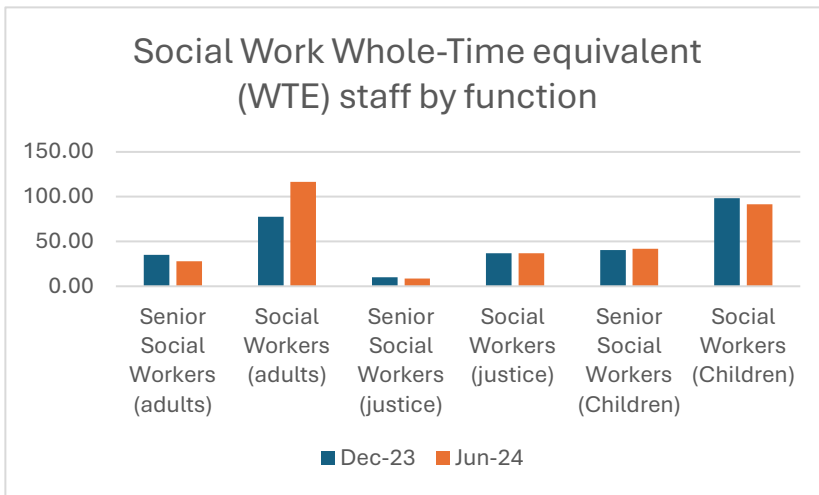
In April 2024, our [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion policy](#), was refreshed to reflect changes in legislation and the expectations of our citizens. As a significant public sector employer in our city, we want to lead the way in our commitment to diversity and inclusion. While the majority of our workforce identify their ethnicity as 'white-Scottish', the next highest category being 'white – other British' our data also tells us there is a growing diversity to our workforce. This data largely mirrors the ethnicity of those we work with.

We recognise the benefits of this greater diversity across our workforce as it enriches and enhances service delivery. We are clear that social workers who share cultural backgrounds with their clients can better understand and address specific challenges, fostering trust and effective communication as well as creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for those we serve to protect. We are conscious of national reports reflecting on the racism challenges that minority ethnic social workers continue to experience at work, and are committed as a service to ensuring that everyone is included, empowered, and treated with respect. Our [Diversity in Recruitment](#) report will be taken to the appropriate Council committee for approval in the early part of 2024/25.

### **Professional Learning & Development**

In November 2022 the IJB approved the [HSCP Workforce Plan 2022 – 2025 - Aberdeen](#) with its key priorities for recruitment and retention, mental health and wellbeing, and growth and development opportunities. We recognise the need to ensure the needs of our social work workforce are aligned to this plan, and that the voice, experience and needs of social workers are considered in wider HSCP workforce discussions.

The above priorities are similarly reflected in the Children's SW Workforce Plan which will be formally approved in 2024. We continue to celebrate the achievements of our staff both externally through further development as Mental Health Officers, Practice Teachers and the MSc in Residential Childcare. Internally through ceremonies like the Star Awards where we have seen social work staff winning awards including for Inspirational Leadership and whole system transformation activities.



All areas of social work continue to experience high demands. For this reason, recruitment and retention of our workforce continues to present challenges.

Moving more experienced social workers to areas that are harder to recruit to is not deemed to be feasible as ultimately it results in leaving another area with need. Social work vacancies are often attracting NQSW, and we recognise the first 2 years in these posts are a steep learning curve.

Our priority is to ensure our NQSW's are afforded the necessary support and mentoring whilst they put knowledge into practice and build up their skills. Doing so is essential if we are to keep them in this demanding area of work beyond these early years of qualified practice. Success in doing also needs to ensure their learning is paced appropriately, with a focus on supervision (formal & informal), learning and development and peer support. As reported, if our staff remain with us over those challenging initial years many remain with us for much of their career. With most of our workforce being female and many also becoming parents, maternity leave and requests for flexible working are commonplace and require sufficient staff to ensure services continue to be safe and effective.

That said, our recruitment and retention work continues to pay dividends with our vacancy factor having slightly reduced across fieldwork services over the past 2 years. Whereas some areas previously required to rely heavily on the additional skill base and experience brought about by agency social work staff, we have made considerable improvement to reduce this reliance. This shift is part of a broader strategy to create a more stable and consistent workforce, which is essential for building trusting relationships with service users. This was not only a budget driven change but one influenced by our service users and their families, who told us frequent changes in worker was detrimental and unhelpful in planning their care and support.

We recognise the interconnectedness of our Social Work staffing challenges with those of our health, independent and third sector partners we engaged in a broader HSCP job fayre in November 2023. The event included "How to" sessions to encourage awareness of completing applications, including hints and tips for applications and interviews. These events were held every hour and fully booked throughout the day. There were over 260 attendees at the fayre and 100 direct applications made to organisations on the day.

To promote career opportunities, we continue to host an open day for final year students studying at Robert Gordons University. Practitioners from across the service, including early career social workers, are available to share their experiences of working in social work. We are clear these events continue to support recruitment activities and dispel continually held myths of working in a statutory social work setting.

As welcome as these developments have been, we are mindful that many colleagues continue to hold large caseloads with an increasing complexity of need. They also have significant statutory obligations that require appropriate decisions and effective interventions, to ensure that needs are met, and associated risks are reduced. We support staff with their wellbeing in different ways including:

- flexible working opportunities to support staff wellbeing, while ensuring service delivery
- service and team wellbeing events
- signposting to psychological resilience supports.
- refresh of our Staff Supervision Policy
- counselling support to staff who have experienced particularly traumatic events



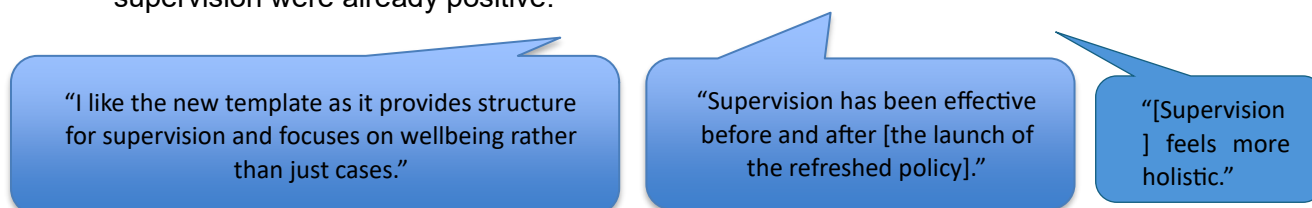
- continuing to give effect to the “Roadmap for Creating Trauma-Informed and responsive change” and adopting trauma-informed and staff wellbeing supports.

The HSCP and CSW workforce development plans emphasise the importance of quality professional supervision, learning and development opportunities, and peer support. Frontline practitioners directly contributed to refreshing the supervision policies for children’s and adult services. Subsequently this was highlighted as a Case Study available via [this link](#) on the Improvement Service website.

Feedback from adult social work staff in January/February 2024 was highly positive.

82% of those who responded indicated that they had looked at the policy:

- 89% had used the revised Supervision Template.
- 33% of those who responded indicated that they felt it had improved their experience of supervision. 66% felt it had no impact, however comments indicating their experience of supervision were already positive.



The weekly online staff Forum for all adult Social Work staff, together with the weekly staff bulletin, continues to be a real strength. It provides an opportunity for directed learning as well as creating a culture of peer support and advice. The success of this has been evident through positive feedback from staff.

Across all social work domains over the past year, there has been a continuing focus on staff wellbeing. This has included:

- Utilising Scottish Government Adult social work funding to develop a partnership with our local college to offer access to appropriate training courses, e.g., pre-MHO development training, well-being treatments.
- Facilitate access to yoga for staff to take a break for their role during the workday.
- Journalling workshops
- Enabling staff to self-identify wellbeing activities to support their wellbeing.
- Council led wellbeing events and opportunities.

We have a well-established multi agency child and adult protection learning and development (L&D) programme. The programme is consistently quality assured which helps to measure the impact training has had on practitioners’ confidence and capabilities in supporting and improving outcomes.

Efforts to improve our learning and development offerings across children’s social work services have persisted throughout 2023/24. These efforts include providing L&D opportunities for all staff, facilitating and supporting student placements, establishing a comprehensive learning programme for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW), and spearheading improvements in whole service induction, supervision, and implementing the NQSW Supported Year.

A training needs analysis undertaken with service managers, identified key learning and development priorities for the year as:

- Risk assessment and management of harmful sexual behaviour
- Recommencement of the Post Graduate Certificate in Child Welfare and Protection
- Trauma awareness and recovery principles
- Supervision skills
- Leadership and Management

The development of the Children's Social Work Events and Training Calendar on the Intranet and Learning and Development site makes it simpler for staff to see available L&D opportunities and to book a place.

At the beginning of 2023 the Adult Support and Protection Team set up a multi-agency Practitioner Forum to support practitioners working with people at risk of harm from self-neglect and hoarding. A range of professionals attend this forum and an in-person workshop, involving approximately 25 members was in September 2023. The aim of this was to consider our 'pathways' for support around this complex area. The output from this workshop significantly informed a refresh of our Aberdeen City Self Neglect & Hoarding Guidance which is due to be considered by the Adult Protection Committee in April 2024. Evaluation feedback following the workshop evidenced it had been well received, and that specific learning had been taken away by practitioners.

Teams across adult social work have collaborated to develop a programme of Induction and Core Skill training and this is available to new and existing team members. The training incorporates a number of key areas including finances, trauma informed practice, TEC, supporting carers in addition to specific content on each individual service area. It is hoped this will have a positive impact in terms of core learning for all staff and improve staff retention as all team members will have a basic understanding of the functions of each service area.

We are consistently ensuring the addition of new Mental Health officers with four completing the PG Cert with Robert Gordon University in 2023/24 and three further trainees identified for 2024/25. This additional capacity will mitigate the widening MHO shortage that we foresee over the coming years.

## **6. Looking ahead**

The policy and legislative landscape as it relates to social work is a fast changing one. This brings opportunity and challenge in equal measure. Opportunity to develop and evolve practice to support delivery of improved outcomes for those we support. However, the capacity of the workforce to absorb the pace of change and deliver on the policy changes, in addition to the resource pressures, is a real and significant challenge. As I look ahead this reality is likely to persist:

### **A. National Care Service**

The Scottish Governments intention to establish a National Care Service is potentially the most significant change to directly impact on social work for many years. Whilst a National Care Service has the potential to offer new opportunities, it will also bring a significant upheaval for the social work and social care landscape.

The findings of the Independent Reviews commissioned by the Scottish Government perhaps unsurprisingly don't provide clarity on the way ahead. The Reviews reinforce it is the capacity of local leaders that is key to delivering system cohesion and improved outcomes as opposed to structural arrangements. Aberdeen City established a multi-agency National Care Service (NCS) Board in 2022. The NCS Board will continue to engage with the development of the NCS, associated legislation, and policy development to help influence the final shape in a manner that supports the delivery of better outcomes for Aberdeen's citizens. It will also work to ensure that the transition to an agreed NCS is done in as considered a manner as possible.

As CSWO I welcomed the opportunity afforded to practitioners to contribute to the Independent Reviews and the workshops held in relation to establishing a National Social Work Agency. I know they did so honestly and with thought. The continuing uncertainty as to the final shape of a NCS is creating uncertainty and confusion for the workforce. This lack of clarity is unhelpful.

## **B. Workforce**

I have unstinting respect for the commitment and dedication social work practitioners demonstrate on a daily basis support to our most vulnerable citizens despite significant and sustained operational challenges. I do not take their efforts for granted.

The volume and complexity of the work as well as the emotional toll impacts on the resilience of the workforce. The risk of burnout is high. Managers and leaders work hard to mitigate the effects of these through high quality professional supervision as well as other measures to support wellbeing. While this has mitigated some risks, the length of a social work career for some is worryingly short.

Critical vacancies continue to be experienced particularly in Learning Disability, Children's Fieldwork, Residential Services and Mental Health services. I share the aspiration of the proposed National Social Work Agency (NSWA) to promote the role of social work and consider what kind of social work service we want for Scotland going forward.

We welcome the intention to develop an Advanced Social Work Practice Framework. This will hopefully ensure greater access to high quality learning and development opportunities for practitioners. In turn this will hopefully contribute to retaining social workers in the profession and to ensure we have a pipeline of future social work leaders.

The major pipeline for staff to join the social work profession comes from Robert Gordon's University (RGU). There has been a noticeable reduction in applications to undertake the Social Work degree courses in the current year. Additionally, financial pressures have seen a restructuring at RGU this has seen a dilution of profile of the social work school. This presents a concern for future recruitment opportunities reinforcing our efforts to "grow our own".

## **C. Social Care resilience**

Significant work has been progressed to support and strengthen the resilience of the social care market in Aberdeen City. However, we continue to recognise its vulnerability. Demand for care homes, care at home support and personal assistants outstrips capacity. The national spotlight on how we value carers reflects remuneration as well as the societal status given to caring roles.

A number of care contracts have been under review in 2023/24 including supported living, care at home and our contract with our arm's length organisation (ALEO) Bon Accord Care. All new contracts are being developed with consideration of ethical commissioning, TEC and GIRFE principles in mind. We are working collaboratively with providers, our workforce and service users to focus on sustainability and resilience in the sector.

We continue to respond proactively to the system challenges of hospital discharge delays. The Scottish Government continues to place a strong focus on this area due to the potential for negative impacts on patients who experience unnecessary delays in hospital. Any noticeable changes in delayed discharge numbers, both positive and negative, are heavily scrutinised for the purpose of gleaning learning to understand and support practice across Scotland.

We remain mindful of overly focusing on one area at the expense of other equally important areas that don't demand the same level of Government scrutiny. Working through this over the forthcoming Winter and beyond will continue to challenge.

## **D. Legislative & Policy Landscape**

The current policy and legislative context in which social work operates is fast changing with increasing complexities for the workforce to navigate. The pace of change is daunting for social work professionals. As leaders we need to ensure that our support to them responds with equal

pace. For a range of reasons including reduced funding, resource capacity and policy clarity this is not always possible to the extent we would want.

The Independent Care Review, [The Promise](#), and the Adult Social Care Review acknowledged the complexity of the social work task, and the challenges faced by staff delivering services to vulnerable individuals and families.

The incorporation into Scots Law of the UNCRC is welcomed as is the proposed Human Rights Bill. Enabling vulnerable children and adults to fully claim the rights they are entitled is central to social work values. (*“Human rights and social justice serve as the motivation and justification for social work action. In solidarity with those who are disadvantaged, the profession strives to alleviate poverty and to work with vulnerable and oppressed people in order to promote social inclusion.”* (BASW Code of Ethics) The implications for social work of this legislative policy agenda are still to be determined. Similarly, while we welcome Children’s (Care and Justice) Bill, clarity on the Bill and the funding that is required to delivery this is uncertain.

I note the intention to establish a National Public Protection Leadership Group in 2024. Bringing an enhanced level of multi-agency leadership to the public protection landscape is welcomed. Reflective of social work activity the public protection policy agenda is by its nature is cross cutting and reflects we need to see public protection through the lens of the whole family. Moving from a siloed policy approach to one which is more coherent and integrated is welcomed.

## **E. Financial Constraints**

The increasing complexity of service demand alongside increasing budget pressures are likely to escalate in the coming year(s). This is compounded by the cost-of-living crisis and the impact of poverty. The fiscal pressures on Local Authorities and Health and Social Care Partnerships are unrelenting. Reflecting the cross sectoral needs of individuals and families reinforces the importance of closer collaboration/integration across social work services.

Work at a local level continues at pace to develop early and preventative support to children, young people, vulnerable adults and families that mitigates the need for social work intervention. Unsurprisingly, these have yet to evidence the full intended impact. Demand continues to outstrip the capacity of social work services. Inevitably this causes frustration for families which can lead to complaints. It also causes frustration to the workforce and an internal conflict with their professional values.

Given the fiscal pressures on social work will continue over the coming years, it is essential we retain a clear focus on our strategic priorities. Ensuring we to listen to our children, young people, families and vulnerable adults will continue to ensure we develop and design our services according to their needs. It will also ensure individuals and families are able to access support in a manner that feels more integrated and relevant to their needs.

I have highlighted throughout this report many examples of effective, innovative, and creative ways of working and service evolution which are delivering high quality care and support to Aberdeen City’s most vulnerable citizens. The success of these is down to the commitment and determination of social work colleagues delivering social work and social care, despite the challenges, on a day-to-day basis. Their passion to empower and support others to improve their lives of others and improve our communities inspires me as their Chief Social Work Officer.

**Graeme Simpson**  
**CSWO/Chief Officer Children and Family Services**  
**October 2024**

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education & Children’s Services Committee
<b>DATE</b>	26 November 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Keeping the Promise – Year 3 Evaluation
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	F&C/24/337
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Eleanor Sheppard
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Graeme Simpson
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Graeme Simpson
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	2.1; 2.1.1

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To report progress of our partnership’s implementation of the Scottish Government’s Plan 21-24 to keep The Promise.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Committee:

- 2.1 Notes the local progress made in Year Three of Plan 21-24 as outlined in the appendix report (Appendix 1);
- 2.2 Instructs the Chief Officer of Children and Family Services to provide a report to Committee on the delivery plan for Plan 24-30 when it is published and on the proposed reporting arrangements for delivery of this plan; and
- 2.3 Instructs the Chief Officer of Children and Family Services to provide a report to Committee updating the partnership’s Corporate Parenting Plan to take account of the delivery plan for Plan 24-30 and for this to include the voice and views of Aberdeen City’s care experienced children and young people.

**3. CURRENT SITUATION**

- 3.1 In 2020, The Independent Care Review published ‘The Promise’ narrating a vision for Scotland, recognising that the whole landscape of systems and services that interact with children and families needed to change.
- 3.2 The Promise is responsible for driving the work of change drawn from the findings of the Independent Care Review and makes clear the extent of change required, however, the outcomes that Scotland needs to achieve are simple and reflect Scotland’s existing commitment that all children “grow up loved, safe and respected so they can fulfil their potential.”
- 3.3 The Scottish Government’s Promise team translated the findings of the Care Review into The Plan for change which will be phased across ten years from 2020-2030. Plan 21-24 is the first Promise plan and was published in April 2021. Plan 21-24 focuses on the period from 1 April 2021 until 31 March 2024 and outlines a series of outcomes.

- 3.4 The five priority areas for Plan 21-24 are: • The right to a good childhood • Whole family support • Supporting the workforce • Planning • Building capacity
- 3.5 A report on progress over years one and two of Plan 21-24 was presented to the Education and Children's Services Committee in November 2022 and November 2023. The Committee requested that the Chief Officer of Children and Family Services provide an annual report on the progress in delivering Plan 21-24. Locally our refreshed Children's Services Plan and Corporate Parenting Plan have been carefully aligned to Plan 21-24.
- 3.6 Led by Aberdeen City Council, colleagues, under the auspices of the Children's Services Board, have now undertaken a further self-evaluation of progress in Year Three of Plan 21-24 (Appendix 1). This evidences how children's services in Aberdeen are supporting the change agenda to keep the Promise. The evaluation presents an overview of activity to date and of our level of confidence that changes will be implemented and embedded by the end of the lifetime of Plan 21-24.
- 3.7 Our evaluation broadly mirrors the findings of the Promise Oversight Board who found that some areas are likely to take longer to embed with some of these areas reliant on changes at Scottish Government level or from the Children's Hearing System. Our self-evaluation demonstrates there is a lot of positive work that is being undertaken that is making a difference to the lives of children and families with experience of care. This must be celebrated but our focus must continue to build on and further embed our change activity as we transition into Plan 24-30.
- 3.8 The Promise Oversight Board, which reports on the progress made at a national level to keep the Promise, has reported a need to prioritise some key areas – Moving On/Homelessness; Education; and Brothers and Sisters. Whilst we have made significant progress locally in all three of these areas, we agree that improving the educational outcomes for our looked-after and care experienced children and young people, keeping brothers and sisters together and connected, and ensuring young people leaving care have everything they need, remain local priorities too.
- 3.9 The Thematic Inspection in relation to Moving On currently being undertaken by the Care Inspectorate will provide a further focus to support and drive change.
- 3.10 Alongside these priorities, we remain committed to developing and embedding a local Family Support Model to deliver on early and preventative support to children, young people and their families. With the aim of increasingly preventing children and young people from coming into our care at all. The Committee had a report shared with them on this activity at the previous meeting.
- 3.11 The Promise Oversight Board has acknowledged the challenging context within which The Promise and Plan 21-24 was launched, referencing the impact of the Covid pandemic and cost of living crisis on people and organisations. The Board was realistic in stating that due to these circumstances and the current pace of change, they do not believe that delivering the original aims of Plan 21-

24 is realistic by 2024. However, they reiterated that The Promise is non-negotiable and must be kept by 2030.

3.12 This commitment was reiterated at the launch of Plan 24 -30 in June 2024. This plan continues to emphasize the importance of the five priority areas (3.4). Plan 24 - 30 currently sets out **WHO** needs to do **WHAT** by **WHEN** to #KeepThePromise by 2030. Promise Scotland acknowledged in launching Plan 24 -30 that work to progress the **HOW** was ongoing. They intimated further information on the HOW would be published in the autumn of 2024. This update is still awaited.

3.13 The Promise Oversight Board have intimated that at a local and national level there is an inconsistency as to how Scotland is evidencing its commitment to deliver The Promise. To address this it is proposed that a more standard reporting approach be adopted in relation to Plan 24-30. The format of this is still awaited. Aberdeen City's reporting on the evidential progress it has made over the past three years places us in a positive position to respond to this expectation.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, the scale of reform anticipated by the Independent Care Review will trigger a need for finance to be pooled more routinely across the partnership.

4.2 The Promise has called for a move away from using resources to deal with the consequences of the current care system towards building a better system, focused on keeping children in their families wherever safe to do so by providing earlier, whole family support.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The Promise and Plan 21-24 impact upon a range of statutory duties in relation to vulnerable and care experienced children, including those contained in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011, Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 and the Children (Scotland) Act 2020.

5.2 Some aspects of the Independent Care Review, as articulated in The Promise and Plan 21-24, have been or are anticipated to be, enshrined in statute. The Scottish Government have indicated their intention to bring forward a Promise Bill in 2025.

5.3 The Children (Scotland) Act 2020 has implications for local authorities as it brings the law further into line with children's rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), in particular:

- Supporting relationships between brothers and sisters
- Making sure children have greater opportunity and means to have their voices heard.
- Providing better advocacy and support for children
- Developing rules for contact centres where children, parents and other people in the child's life can meet.

## 6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

## 7. Risk

7.1 The assessment of risk contained within the table below is considered to be consistent with the Council's Risk Appetite Statement.

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) <small>*taking into account controls/control actions</small>	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	Many of the requirements of Plan 21- 24 are already built into a variety of strategic plans. It is expected that gaps will emerge as the Council and partners scrutinise the requirements of Plan 21- 24 in detail.	The Children's Services Board and Community Planning Management Group have oversight of the delivery of the relevant strategic plans in this respect. They are ensuring that the terms of Plan 21-24 are incorporated into current and future strategic planning.	M	Yes
<b>Compliance</b>	No significant risks identified.	Services across all multi-agency partners are aware of legislative requirements and ensure compliance	L	Yes
<b>Operational</b>	The aims of Plan 21-24 are ambitious and will require our people, equipment and buildings to change in order to drive on the plan. This may impact on morale as the change process is undertaken.	Leadership supports participation and planning across the multi-agency partnership in the delivery of Plan 21-24 to best ensure operational support for changes identified.	M	Yes
<b>Financial</b>	No significant risks identified		N/A	Yes
<b>Reputational</b>	No significant risks identified	The Council and partners are committed to keeping The Promise and implementing Plan 21-24 .	L	Yes
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	No significant risks identified		N/A	Yes

## 8. OUTCOMES

**COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN**



Impact of Report	
<b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b>	<p>Plan 21-24 has direct relevance to the delivery of the following policy statements contained within the Council Delivery Plan for People:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the Council follows best practice as a corporate parent to get the best outcomes for looked-after young people, those in kinship care and those with additional support needs such as autism, developmental disorders or mental health problems.</li> <li>• Continue to seek to support young people to receive care in Aberdeen, through fostering, adoption and other services and seek to reduce “out of authority” placements.</li> <li>• Work with the city’s universities, North East Scotland College and businesses to increase educational and training options and the number of care experienced young people and young people from deprived communities, going onto positive destinations, including further and higher education, vocational training and apprenticeships</li> </ul>
<b>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</b>	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	<p>Plan 21-24 has direct relevance to the following stretch outcomes in the LOIP and will help support delivery of these:</p> <p>3. 95% of children (0-5 years) will reach their expected developmental milestones by the time of their 27-30 month review by 2026.</p> <p>4. 90% of children and young people report they feel listened to all the time by 2026.</p> <p>5. By meeting the health and emotional wellbeing needs of care experienced children and young people they will have the same levels of attainment in education</p>
<b>Regional and City Strategies</b>	Plan 21-24 is relevant to Aberdeen City Council’s Delivery Plan, the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, the Children’s Services Plan and the Corporate Parenting Plan.
<b>UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes</b>	<p>Ensuring the effective planning for children and young people is central to the planning for all children and young people open to Children’s Social Work.</p> <p>Implementation of Incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots Law; The Children (Care &amp; Justice) Act and the impending “Promise Bill” (which will incorporate legislation in relation to the Children’s Hearing system) are all relevant to our collective commitment to #KeepthePromise.</p> <p>This wide ranging and ambitious programme impacts on a range of statutory duties on the Council in relation to vulnerable and care experienced children including those contained in the Children(Scotland) Act 1995, Children’s Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011, Children &amp; Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 and Children (Scotland) Act 2020.</p>

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
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<b>Impact Assessment</b>	It is confirmed that no Integrated Impact Assessment is required.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required.
<b>Other</b>	Not required.

**10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**11. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1

**12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS**

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**the promise**  
**scotland**

# Is Aberdeen Keeping the Promise?



**Community  
Planning  
Aberdeen**



## INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR



[The Promise](#) made following the Independent Care Review made it clear that the current ‘care system’ in Scotland isn’t working and that families need earlier, preventative supports which are easy to access, support children to remain in their communities, and where that is not possible, that support is provided in ways that do not feel stigmatising. It recognised the impact of poverty but also the need to embed a trauma informed and rights based approach to service delivery.

The Promise can only be kept by Community Planning Partners working together. As a result we have organised all of our work to keep the Promise in our partnership Plan for children. Our Children’s Services Plan is one of a suite of Statutory Plans supporting delivery of the [Local Outcome Improvement Plan](#) (LOIP).

Our [Children’s Services Plan 2023-2026](#) takes full account of the foundations of The Promise and of the Priority Areas in Plan 21-24. Partners represented at the Children’s Services Board assume collective responsibility for delivery of The Promise and routinely monitor progress. This report is a product of our most recent monitoring of progress.

In June 2023, The Promise Scotland assessed that Scotland was unlikely to fully deliver on Plan 21–24 by March 2024. Within their assessment they acknowledged the impact of the pandemic on staff and services as well as the impact of the cost of living crisis. Outstanding elements of Plan 21 -24 will therefore be carried forward into the next national plan (Plan 24-30) which is anticipated to be published in Spring 2024. Publication of the new Plan will trigger a further review by the Children’s Services Board to ensure that our work remains fully aligned.

In evaluating our progress to date, we have reviewed the impact of work undertaken over the past year, which was steered by earlier evaluations against Plan 21-24, heard from those with lived experience and considered the findings of our own evaluation activity to help provide a clear sense of where we are at as we transition to Plan 24-30. The Scottish Government has committed to bringing forward a “Promise” Bill within the lifetime of the Parliament. This will incorporate change to the Children’s Hearing System, and the regulatory framework for children’s services. We also await the details relating to the implementation of the Children’s (Care & Justice) Act. These changes are critical to being able to fully drive the change Plan 21 – 24 requires.

We are proud of the changes we have made but recognise there is more to do.

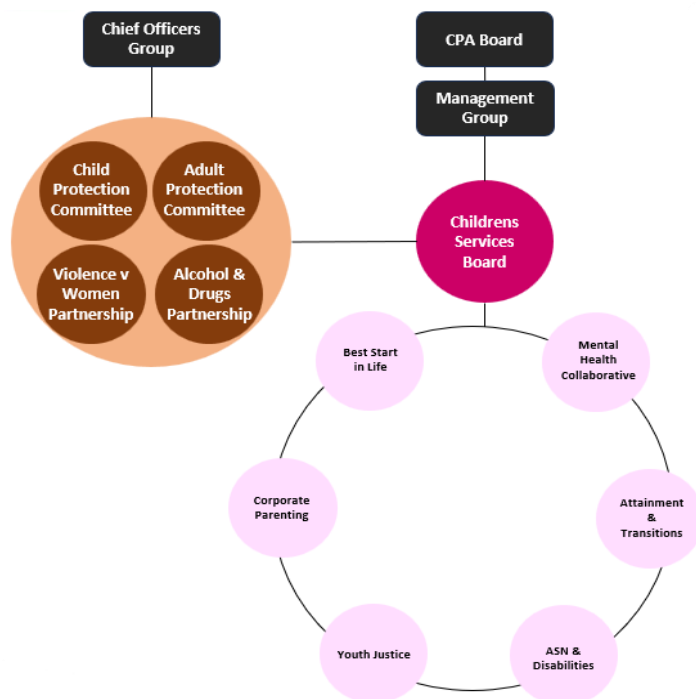
**Graeme Simpson**

Chief Social Work Officer and Chair of the Corporate Parenting Group

The Community Planning partnership has a range of highly effective governance arrangements in place including our Chief Officers Group (COG), Child Protection Committee (CPC) and Children’s Services Board (CSB). These arrangements, where candor, curiosity and accountability between partners is actively encouraged, has significantly aided more common practice and a shared and ongoing culture of improvement around public protection.

The Children’s Services Board is governed by and accountable to the Community Planning Management Board, which in turn is accountable to Community Planning Aberdeen (CPA). The Children’s Services Board has responsibility for:

- The delivery of the Children’s Services Plan and associated Stretch Outcomes 3-8 of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan
- Working together as a Community Planning Partnership to improve outcomes for children and young people within Aberdeen City
- Leading the implementation of national policy and legislation pertaining to children and young people including The Promise



The work of the CSB directly aligns to that being driven by a number of other Outcome Improvement Groups within the CPA

Structure. These linked priorities have guided the partnership to bring the stands of public protection closer together to enable more effective delivery of a whole family approach. This shift has triggered an increase in shared learning events and on-going work to align learning and development programmes. The CSB has particularly strong links with our Alcohol and Drugs Partnership, Anti-Poverty Group, and Violence Against Women and Girls partnership.

Actions that support delivery of The Promise are embedded within the Action Plans of each of the Children’s Services Board Sub Groups. As a result, each Sub Group has a direct responsibility in delivering The Promise. More detail on our CSB subgroups can be found here on the CPA Website on the [Children’s Services Board Webpage](#).

### Corporate Parenting Group

Aberdeen City’s Corporate Parenting Group is a Sub Group of the Children’s Services Board. It has responsibility for delivering on aims set out in the LOIP and associated Children’s Services Plan under Stretch Outcome 5, and coordinating our evaluation of progress against The Promise. The Group leads on the delivery of the Corporate Parenting Improvement Plan and quality assurance activity in relation to children and young people with care experience.

The Corporate Parenting Group aims to ensure that; *“95% of care experienced children and young people will have the same levels of attainment in education, health and emotional wellbeing, and positive destinations as their peers by 2026”* and established a number of Improvement Projects (in bold below) to deliver this aim over the lifetime of the Children’s Services Plan. Improvement projects are progressing well.

**Project aim - Reduce by 5% the number of children entering the care system by 2024.** The number of children in the care system has slightly reduced in 2023/24, but is less than hoped reflecting an escalating need/risk profile and the capacity of services to hold children within their family. We remain committed to ensuring ‘where children are safe in their families and feel loved, they must stay’. This will remain a priority as we transition into Plan 24-30.

**Project aim - Ensure that 100% of children and young people leaving care are offered a health assessment to identify gaps in their health provision and needs by 2024.** Work is progressing at pace to develop a pathway to ensure all care leavers are offered a health assessment and we anticipate this will be embedded by the end of 2024. Learning from these assessments will inform future improvement activity.

**Project aim - Increase the number of young people with care experience by 10% receiving multi-agency throughcare/aftercare support by 2023.** This improvement project has been successfully completed and the aim achieved.

**Project aim - Reduce the number of children being permanently removed from parents with care experience.** The remit of our Family Nurse Partnership has extended to intensively support pregnant care experienced parents. The outcomes of this work will continue to be monitored.

**Project aim - Ensure that 80% of the identified multi-agency workforce successfully complete Corporate Parenting training aligned to the Promise by 2025.** The updated Corporate Training module has been launched. Tracking of completion rates will be actively monitored to ensure completion of the project.



## Our Progress in delivering Priority 1, A Good Childhood

The Promise made a number of commitments to children and young people and Plan 2021-24 highlighted 25 priority areas for action over the lifetime of Plan 2021-24. We have listed the policy context and then evaluated our progress against this context to help identify areas to be further progressed as we transition to Plan 24 – 30. Readers should note that there is some crossover between the 25 priorities for action.

**On a Good Childhood, The Promise says,** ‘Children who have been removed from their family of origin and live in and around the ‘care system’ will have a good, loving childhood. Ensuring that children in Scotland’s ‘care system’ feel loved, their needs are met, and their rights are upheld is a priority for 21-24. This change is urgent, it must be a focus for all organisations that have responsibility towards care experienced children and young people’.

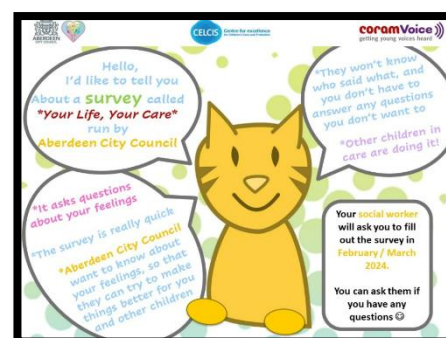
**On support, Plan 2021-24 says,** ‘Every child that is ‘in care’ in Scotland will have access to intensive support that ensures their educational and health needs are fully met. Local Authorities and Health Boards will take active responsibility towards care experienced children and young people, whatever their setting of care, so they have what they need to thrive’.

### BRIGHT SPOTS:

Through the later part of 2023/24, children’s social work entered into a partnership with the Centre of Excellence for Looked After Children’s Care and Protection (CELCIS) and Coram Voice to initiate our widest reaching participatory activity with our care experienced community in order to determine the extent to which our children and young people experience a good childhood and have the right supports in place.

‘Bright Spots’ is a research and service improvement project set up by Coram Voice to understand what is important to children in care and care leavers and share learning about what makes life good for them by measuring subjective well-being.

Having demonstrated our strategic buy in and commitment to embedding the voice of children in local decision making processes, 2 cohorts were surveyed. The ‘Your Life Your Care’ survey was presented to 345 children/young people aged 4 – 17 years, and ‘Your Life Beyond Care’ to 227 young people aged 16 – 26 years.



Over the first 3 months of 2024, concerted efforts by the two cohort leads has helped gain responses from a very high proportion of children and young people meaning we can have confidence in the survey findings and use them to support our planning as we move to Plan 24-30. The initial findings and areas for consideration and improvement are detailed below. These need to be read with a health warning and it is important that assumptions are not made while we work with CELCIS over the coming months to dig into the data to better understand the

responses given by our children and young people. This activity will also support us to ensure we target our improvement activities on the correct areas.

### Your Life, Your Care (for those aged 4 – 17 years)

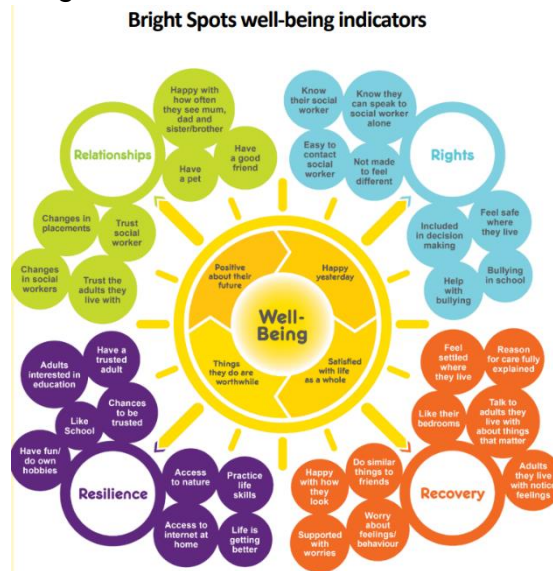
249 children in care responded to the survey from a total eligible population of 345: a response rate of 72%. This is very high compared to the national average.

Positive findings include:

- More than half of children and young people (11-17yrs) in Aberdeen had the same social worker over the last year and significantly fewer children and young people had three or more social workers in this period compared to the Bright Spots comparator group.
- 70% of young people gave high or very high scores (7 to 10) for happiness with the way they look. This is significantly higher than the proportion of the Bright Spots comparator group (61%).
- Six out of seven (86%) children and young people in care (8-17yrs) felt their lives were getting better.
- 61% of all children aged 8-11yrs with brothers and sisters felt that the time they were able to spend with them was 'just the right amount', higher than the Bright Spots comparator group (47%).
- Almost all (99%) of young people (11-17yrs) in Aberdeen felt that they had an adult who they trusted and who sticks by them no matter what; a significantly higher percentage than the average (91%) of the Bright Spots comparator group of local authorities.
- All of the youngest children (4- 7yrs) trusted the adults they lived with, and all children aged 8-11yrs trusted the adults they live with 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'. 95% of 8-11yrs and 94% of 11-17yrs indicated that the adults they lived with showed an interest in their education 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'.
- 93% of children and young people (11-17yrs) in Aberdeen always felt safe where they lived, this is significantly higher than the percentage of the Bright Spots comparator group (86%). Unusually, this is also higher than the percentage for the youngest children (4-7yrs) in Aberdeen (87%)
- The proportion of children and young people in Aberdeen City who spent time outdoors in nature more than once a week (88% of children (8-11yrs) and 89% of young people (11-17yrs)) was higher than the general Scottish population (67%).
- 92% of 8-11yrs 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes' felt listened to when decisions were made about their lives, and this was even higher for young people (11- 17yrs) (94%).

Areas for consideration stemming from the survey responses from those aged 4-17:

- Fewer children and young people in Aberdeen had received an explanation about why they were in care and did not want to know more when compared to children and young people in the Bright Spots comparator group. (48% to 65% for 8-11yrs, 69% to 78% for 11-17yrs).





- As children and young people in Aberdeen got older, fewer reported having a pet at home (78% of 8-11yrs and 56% of 11-17yrs), and significantly less children and young people (11-17yrs) had a pet when compared to the Bright Spots comparator group.
- The proportion of young people (11-17yrs) with a really good friend was well below that of the general population (91% to 97%).
- A quarter of children (8-11yrs) and one in ten of children aged over 11yrs did not know they could ask to speak to their social worker on their own. These proportions are both significantly above those for the Bright Spots comparator groups
- Many of the comments from children and young people across all age groups related to their relationships with parents, and brothers and sisters. Children and young people (8-17yrs) reported mixed views and experiences of family time, and the complexity of many family arrangements came across, such as children seeing some of their brothers and sisters but not others. Just over a third (34%) of children aged 8-11yrs reported that the amount of time they spent with their mum was 'just right' and 18% felt time with their dad was just right. Of young people aged 11-17yrs , more children (45%) felt time with their mum was 'just right, but just 20% thought time with their dad was 'just right'.
- A significantly higher proportion (43%) of children and young people (8-11yrs) in Aberdeen reported being afraid of going to school because of bullying when compared to the Bright Spots comparator group. Of those who were afraid, most were getting help.
- Whilst the majority (87%) of children (4-7yrs) said that they 'always' felt safe at home, when compared to the Bright Spots comparison group, a higher proportion of children (4-7yrs) in Aberdeen said that they didn't always feel safe where they lived.

The proportion of young people (11-17yrs) in Aberdeen City giving positive scores was significantly above the Bright Spots group for several key wellbeing indicators:

- Very high/high scores for feeling that the things they do are worthwhile (76% to 65%).
- 'Very happy' yesterday (44% to 35%).

Very high scores for feeling positive about the future. (45% to 36%)**Your**

### Life Beyond Care (for those aged 16-26)

156 young people responded to the survey from a care leaver population of 227: a remarkable response rate of 69%. This is very high compared to the national average. Positive findings include:

- Two-thirds (66%) of comments about Youth Team Workers or Social Workers were very positive. More care leavers than children and young people (11-17yrs) in care in Aberdeen trusted their worker (79% to 69%) and found it easy to get in touch with them (75% to 58%). Workers came second only to friends as providers of emotional support identified by care leavers.



- 43% of care leavers had a pet, which is a significantly greater proportion than the 28% of the Bright Spots comparator group. Over half (54%) of care leavers with pets felt they were a source of emotional support.
- More than nine in ten of care leavers (92%) who answered felt that they had a person who they trusted, who helped them and stuck by them no matter what. This is significantly above the proportion for the Bright Spots comparator group (86%). 96% had a person who listened to them. 90% had a person who believed they would be a success. 88% had a person who told them when they'd done well.
- Care leavers (94%) in Aberdeen more often had access to the internet at home compared to young people (83%) in the Bright Spots comparator group.

Areas for consideration stemming from the survey responses from those aged 16-26:

- Three in four young people with experience of care felt that where they lived now was right for them. One in four did not. 30% did not 'always' feel safe in their home and 36% did not 'always' feel safe in their neighbourhood. 41% did not 'always' feel settled in their home.
- One in five (22%) care leavers felt lonely 'often/always', over twice the rate for young people in the general population. This was more than seven times the rate for young people in the general population (3%). One in six care leavers (17%) did not have at least one good friend. This is more than eight times greater than the rate for young people in general population (2%).
- Over a third (35%) young people indicated that they had a long-term health problem or disability, and over half (27) of those providing further information mentioned mental health conditions (most commonly depression and anxiety).
- Nearly half (47%) of care leavers in Aberdeen were not in education, employment or training compared to just 13% of 16-24 year-olds in the general population. The proportion finding it difficult to get by financially was almost three times that of the general population of 16-24 year-olds.
  - Almost a third of care leavers (31%) gave low scores for happiness with their appearance. The Bright Spots comparator group figure was 28%.
  - 54% of care leavers reported high or very high happiness the previous day compared to 75% of young people (16-24yrs) in the general UK population. Care leavers in Aberdeen also had greater levels of anxiety the previous day, with almost a third of care leavers (31%) giving high anxiety scores compared to 22% of the general population.

Over a third of care leavers gave low anxiety scores, and this rate was just under that of the general population (35% to 37%). One in five care leavers (21%) gave very high scores when asked to what extent they felt things they did in their lives were worthwhile.

There was a degree of polarisation in Aberdeen, with wellbeing indicators suggesting some care leavers doing very well, and others doing much less well. Wellbeing findings in Aberdeen were broadly similar to the Bright Spots comparator group. There are indications from the survey, that the structural inequalities that exist for our young care leavers disproportionately impacts on them. We recognise that as a partnership we need to continue our efforts to mitigate these inequalities and support our care leavers to maximise their potential.

As noted the above findings require to be read with caution. It is important that assumptions are not made while we work with CELCIS over the coming months to dig into the data to better understand the responses given by our young people. This activity will also support us to ensure we target our improvement activities on the correct areas.

This project has encompassed the ethos intrinsic to the Promise 5 Foundations having provided our care experienced community the opportunity to share their voice, and feel they are genuinely being listened to. The findings will be fully considered as we transition to Plan 24 – 30 and as we refresh single service and multi-agency Plans such as our Children's Services Plan.

### **Undertaking Strategic Analysis 23/34**

We have continued to work together as a Community Planning Partnership, exploring factors contributing to children and young people being placed within the care system to enable shared work to prevent escalation where possible. We continue to focus on the children and young people on the edges of care, those in conflict with the law, those who experience multiple traumas and children with disabilities. These are intrinsic to our Children's Services Plan.

Collaboration has taken place, led by NHS Grampian and children's social work, to engage with our Care Experienced Community regarding their wellbeing experiences in order to improve health access. We know those leaving the care system, reflecting their often complex health needs, intrinsic to trauma they experienced in early childhood can struggle to access key health services. Work is underway to develop an equitable access pathway for our care experienced community in terms of their health and wellbeing needs. This process has incorporated consideration of the transition process from children's to adult health services, which our young people tell is remains an area where improvement is required. This also recognises research that evidences health outcomes for care experienced young adults are among the poorest of all groups. We anticipate this pathway being in place by 2025. This is of critical importance given that over a third (35%) young people indicated in a recent Brights Spots survey that they had a long-term health problem or disability, and over half (27) of those providing further information mentioned mental health conditions, most commonly depression and anxiety.

A formal mechanism has been established for the Aberdeen City Council Executive Director Families and Communities and Chief Officers to review any proposals for out of authority placements for children and young people. This process is helping to identify vulnerabilities in our system contributing to children entering the care system and will support our system shift towards prevention.

### **Improved systems**

All children in care have access to a social worker and a multi-agency plan ensuring health, care and educational needs are actively addressed. The Bright Spots survey results tell us that more than half of children and young people (11-17yrs) in Aberdeen had the same social worker over the last year and significantly fewer children and young people had three or more social workers in this period compared to the Bright Spots comparator group.

There are well-established formal review processes which have been enhanced following the adoption of D365. Our Educational Psychology Service has now moved over to the platform with plans progressing for the Housing Service to transition to D365 too. Adopting the same system

will help remove some of the challenges faced in joining data sets from different data platforms and help build an accurate and up to date chronology, this should help us to plan and support care leavers more effectively.

### **Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)**

NHS Grampian has set up a specific clinic to complete Initial Health Assessment (IHA) for UASC under the age of 18 in response to the rise increasing presentations. Children and young people attend with support from a trusted professional and the support has been well received with attendance sitting at 90%. A part-time nursing post that is currently advertised to support the growth of this clinic and there are efforts to identify a budget to enable medical input, making the clinic a one-stop appointment.

### **Delivery of Intensive Support**

Our Craigielea Intensive Support Service supported 52 young people as an alternative to care in 2023/24. The impact of poverty continues to be recognised among this group and our support included ensuring families basic needs were met. Funding provided by Tiny Changes supported a continuing focus on family wellbeing. Along with our 3rd sector partner Includem and other community partners including SHMU and Sport Aberdeen, children, young people and families achieved a range of positive outcomes across academic subjects, award programs and community initiatives. Outdoor group work activity sessions were facilitated and young people supported to prepare for independent living. There are plans in place for staff to undertake training to support an increased provision of dynamic youth awards for our young people moving forward.

Support plans are holistic and utilise relational approaches. Systemic discussions with young people, their family, and a range of professionals - social workers, teachers family resource workers, family aid and a mental health practitioner ensure planning is very much led by the identified needs of the young people.

The service continues to provide whole family support, preventing breakdown, while maintaining and nurturing relationships. Over 80% of the young people who have engaged with Craigielea support have been supported to remain within a community setting. There has been a significant increase in the number of young people referred for support, in diverse circumstances. Group work has been identified as a need for families. This includes an adults wellbeing group, peer mentoring opportunities, peer group work offering socialisation to isolated young people, family art sessions focusing on nurture, achievement, capacity building as well as relational based work and community networking. This work will be maintained.

### **Further progress on establishing our Bairns Hoose**

Aberdeen City was awarded Bairns Hoose Pathfinder status in November 2023 and this has provided a focus to developing a multi-agency collocated provision to support children and young people who have experienced harm and abuse. This provision will be well connected to our wider family support offer but will ensure the child's recovery is at the forefront of our intervention from the outset. We have partnered with the University of Edinburgh to evaluate our implementation of our Bairns Hoose. An early Pathfinder activity was to undertake a self-assessment of our current practice against the Bairns Hoose Standards. This will be repeated at different stages of the Pathfinder phase. The Pathfinder phase will run up to 31/3/26.



Our Bairns' Hoose Delivery Group (BHDG) is a multi-agency oversight group, preparing and progressing our changes under 5 intrinsically linked work streams, VOICE, SYSTEMS & PROCESSES, CAPITAL, GOVERNANCE, and EVALUATION. The group meet regularly to progress the work required to deliver our Bairns' Hoose, learning from our children, their families and all professionals working in this area what is currently working well, and where improvements must be made.

The building we have identified as our Bairns Hoose offers flexibility in terms of the physical space required for a Bairns Hoose as well as good transport links. Central to delivery of a Bairns Hoose is the Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM), introduced across Aberdeen City in November 2022. Once building works have been completed the Aberdeen City SCIM trained staff (Police and Social Work) will relocate to the Bairns Hoose.



Building on our existing partnership and alignment with the Fit Like Service, Children 1st will work to develop a trauma recovery service. Children's Rights and advocacy will be central to this role. This activity will build on the ongoing efforts to capture the voice and views of children, young people and families going through child protection processes. Their voices have directly influenced the planning for the design of the proposed Bairns Hoose.

Our achievements within this reporting period so far have included:

- A structural 'trauma flow' for the Bairns' Hoose was finalized, and approved by full Council.
- Police Scotland and Social Work capacity has been enhanced to ensure all joint interviews utilise the SCIM.
- Advocacy Workers were recruited and inducted, and an organizational development plan for the Bairns' Hoose team was developed
- Work was initiated to ensure alignment of existing processes and practices to the Bairns' Hoose Standards. Operational guidance with clear roles and remits is being developed.
- Learning from the Year 1 evaluation of SCIM delivery was integrated into BH planning.
- A communications plan to engage across the Children's Services workforce was developed.

We look forward to opening our Bairns' Hoose in 2025.

### Development of a Family Support Model

Extensive multi-agency planning is well underway to develop our approaches to Family Support ensuring preventative intervention mitigates the escalation of children, young people and families from a crisis. Our proposed Family Support Model (FSM) will be holistic and seek to bring greater coordination of whole family support activity, with a particular focus on the joining of children and adult services. Through our work as a Fairer Futures Partnership, we will develop a systems

learning approach and seek to utilise the lived experiences of individuals both in terms of shaping the support offer as well as providing support to others. The Bright Spots learning that a higher proportion of those aged 4-7yres who said that they don't always feel safe where they live is a key consideration for those leading the work.

Scottish Government has committed to providing practical support to enhance the development of this approach and to capture learning to share nationally. We will test our planning in a specific neighbourhood within the City over the coming 12 months. Our approach recognises the importance of establishing a community space that is accessible without 'referral' and provides an environment that is welcoming and trauma informed. Strong links will be established to our Child Poverty planning and supporting parents routes back into employment. Learning from this approach will inform the scaling up of this approach across our City.

### **Recommissioning Family Support Services**

As an authority we have recommissioned key family support services from our valued 3rd Sector partners. Our model ensures early and preventative support to families including services they can access directly. The shape of these services was directly influenced by feedback on the experiences of families and young people as well as from stakeholders.

We have adopted an approach that supports a stronger alignment for our family support services. This will ensure greater flexibility and collaboration by services as well as a responsiveness to demand and need as opposed to one which is restricted by contracts. This will minimise service duplication and identified gaps are quickly responded to.

**In summary,** we are pleased that the Bright Spots survey found that six out of seven (86%) children and young people in care (8-17yrs) felt their lives were getting better and believe this reflects positively on the work we have undertaken to deliver on the Promise. Our young people have told us that they value the stability of having the same social worker. Our focus on relational practice is central to delivery of support and improving outcomes.

Work is well underway to define and establish our model of Family Support through our Fairer Futures Partnership with Scottish Government, this will include the support provided to children, young people and families via our Bairns Hoose and focus heavily on transitions between children and adult services. As evidenced by our participation in Bright Sports we actively seek and respond to feedback, and take pride in taking an agile approach to respond to emerging need as is evident in our work to support UASC. This agility will continue to be important as we move to delivery of Plan 24-30.

### **Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:**

- Scale up Edge of Care Pilots as part of our emerging model of Family Support (Fairer Futures Partnership)
- Conclude activity to ensure all children and young people leaving care are offered a health assessment to identify gaps in their health provision and needs.
- Remain focused on reducing the number of children entering the care system.

- Continue to ensure the design and delivery of our Bairns Hoose is informed by the voice and views of children, young people and their families. Utilise StART Tool to evidence embedding Bairns Hoose Standards across our partnership.
- Respond positively to the Bright Spots feedback

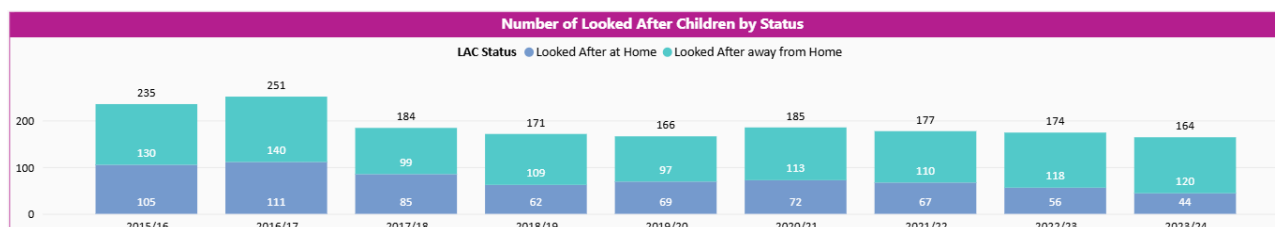
### On a right to education, Plan 21-24 says:

- Care experienced children and young people will receive all they need to thrive at school.
- There will be no barriers to their (CEYP) engagement with education and schools will know and cherish their care experienced pupils.
- School improvement plans will value and recognise the needs of their care experienced pupils with robust tracking of attendance and attainment so that support can be given early.
- Care experienced young people will be actively participating in all subjects and extra-curricular activities in schools
- The formal and informal exclusion of care experienced children from education will end.
- Schools will support and ensure care experienced young people go on to genuinely positive destinations, such as further education or employment.

### School Improvement Plans and Tracking

All School Improvement Plans now recognise the needs of their care experienced. Significant time has been invested in improving the tracking of care experienced young people. Data is collected at 3 points during the year and the progress of care experienced young people is an agenda item on all school attainment reviews. Headteachers are now asked to share plans in place for supporting improvement in attainment for care experienced learners. The new pupil tracking system being adopted by all secondary schools which links to the systems already in place for primary schools, will allow us to extract live data on the progress of all care experienced learners and plan appropriate interventions to support increased attainment, including ensuring sufficient breadth of curriculum.

The number of children who have a looked after status in our schools has decreased.



### Role of the Virtual School

The Virtual School continues to support children and young people. Direct work is primarily focused around children and young people within our Children's homes in the city with a focus on working towards re- engagement with school or moving into a positive post school destinations. The Virtual School toolkit is in the process of being reviewed given emerging vulnerabilities in some attainment and positive destinations data. A recent Bright Spots survey tells us that nearly half (47%) of care leavers in Aberdeen were not in education, employment or training compared to just 13% of 16-24 year-olds in the general population. The proportion finding it difficult to get by financially was almost three times that of the general population of 16-24 year-olds. This would suggest that our supports require to be reviewed to support improvement in the longer term.



The Council have recently restructured and now have education, children's social work, housing and corporate landlord sitting in the same directorate. Chief Officers are currently collaborating to determine the resources required to coordinate the work of all Clusters as they prioritise the needs of those at risk of/who have experienced care. It is thought that this will lead to more integrated teams supporting those who have experienced care both during school years and beyond.

### **Skills Development Scotland (SDS)**

Data sharing arrangements with Education means that those who are care experienced are flagged on the SDS database. Validation meetings (with guidance teams) take place to enable the changing needs of individual pupils to be considered on an ongoing basis. This information provides the basis for SDS targeted services, providing more intensive support through a coaching approach, which is delivered on a 1:1 basis. SDS continues to embed a coaching approach to building relationships with care experienced young people through our CIAG services, utilising feedback and research to drive continuous improvement

### **ABZ Campus to broaden the curriculum**

Following the launch of Phase 1 of ABZ Campus in Session 2023-24, planning swiftly commenced for the introduction of Phase 2 in 2024-25. Key additions to ABZ Campus through Phase 2 were:-

- An increase in the range and scope of school-based and partner-led courses from 31 2023/24 to 54 2024/25.
- An introduction to greater regional working between Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.
- An introduction of a new suite of 14 anytime/twilight courses to be available across Aberdeen City and 'Shire young people, delivered by partners and schools.
- Continued commitment to the importance of listening to our young people and their experiences of our ABZ Campus Courses
- The piloting of an ASN Employability experience for young people with more complex needs.

For session 2024-25, we have successfully increased the range of courses to support the delivery of a broader range of pathways more suited to some. Over 1200 applications were



received for the 54 Phase 2 ABZ Campus courses offered for session 2024-25, an increase in applications of around 300. This resulted in a total of 846 places offered to young people. 15 of these places were taken up by Care Experienced young people.

Regular reporting on our progress with [ABZ Campus](#) evidences how we continue to listen to our young people about their experiences of ABZ Campus. Work to broaden the offer continues in addition to consideration of further partnerships with local business in order to offer bespoke work experience packages for young people to complement the work experience placements offered by the Council.

There is evidence that our children and young people are accessing a broader range of experiences and courses in school. Bespoke programmes have been established to provide opportunities to develop navigation and hillwalking skills as part of their youth achievement and John Muir awards, as well as 6 week courses to learn about vehicle mechanics. Our care experienced young people are offered the opportunity to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's awards as a supported group as well as through school channels and this will continue.

**NESCOL**

NESCOL works closely throughout the academic year with local authority social work teams to ensure opportunities exist for transition support into College. The College also works closely with regional universities to ensure that support from college to university is seamless and supportive.



**Sport Aberdeen**

Sport Aberdeen provide a leadership programme for Care Experienced Young People over school holidays, which has resulted in some participants volunteering within universal Active Schools programme. Over the last year, 40 bikes and safety equipment have been allocated to care experienced young people in partnership with Angus Cycle Hubs and young people have benefited from a targeted Learn to Swim programme funded by Scottish Swimming. Access to volunteering for young people was also made available through a horse care course at Hayfield Riding Centre which led to 5 young people achieving a national progression award from the University of Highlands and Islands for Horse Care.

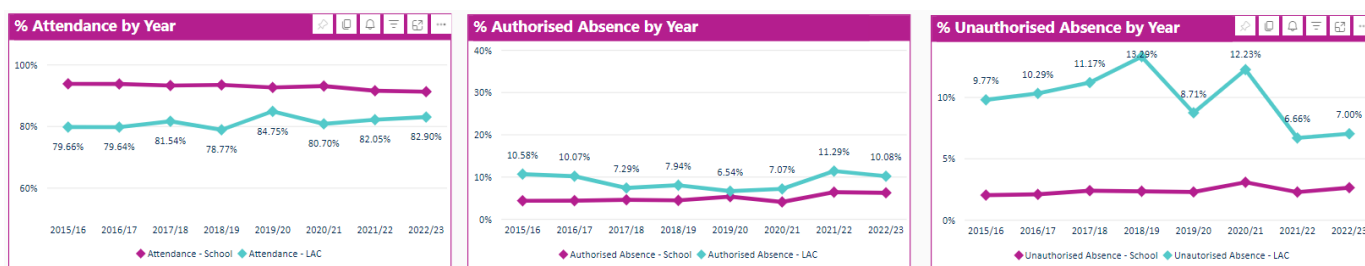


## Pathways for those with additional support needs

A wide network has been established to support the development of the #WHATif (Inspiring Futures ) pathway pilot. The pilot will offer 5+ participants (some of whom will be care experienced or have experienced care) the opportunity to develop and apply life and employability skills in a workplace which is of relevance to their personal motivators, skill sets and future aspirations. These include Aberdeen North Foodbank, King’s Church Foodbank Warehouse, The Bridge Cafe, Dyce ELC, Dyce Primary, Instant Neighbour and Bon Accord Care – Kingswood Court Day Centre.

## Attendance

The attendance for those looked away from home has increased and is now 90.99%, almost in line with their peers 91.14% . Attendance for children and young people looked after at home has increased over the last 3 years from 80.70% to 82.90%, however this is still significantly below peers and below pre pandemic levels of 84.75%.



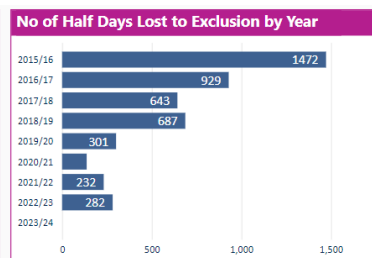
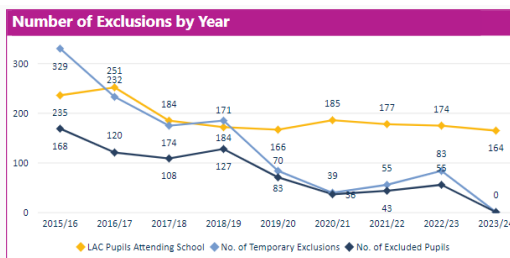
Attendance is tracked monthly and an increased focus on the recording of attendance has resulted in more accurate reporting of our Looked After Children who are on flexible pathways which involve input from 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector and other partners. We recognise the need to continue to focus on improving attendance.

## Exclusion

The number of exclusions has risen slightly for the second year following a steady reduction over the previous 5 years. Validated data shows that children who are looked after at home continue to be more likely to be excluded than those Looked After away from home. The number of primary age Looked after young people excluded has steadily reduced over the last 5 years and is at the lowest it has been in the last 8 years. There has been a rise in the number of secondary Looked After Young people excluded for the second year running, further emphasising the need to broaden the curriculum further.

There is a need to broaden the curriculum at individual school level in order to offer a wider range of courses to suit all learners. This requires to be done alongside the work on Phases 2 and 3 of ABZ campus.

Academic Year	Temp. Exclusion	No. of Pupils Excluded	No. of Half Days Lost	No. of Days Lost
2015/16	1,400.00	714.89	6,263.83	3,131.91
2016/17	924.30	478.09	3,701.20	1,850.60
2017/18	945.65	586.96	3,494.57	1,747.28
2018/19	1,076.02	742.69	4,017.54	2,008.77
2019/20	500.00	421.69	1,813.25	906.63
2020/21	210.81	194.59	740.54	370.27
2021/22	310.73	242.94	1,310.73	655.37
2022/23	477.01	316.09	1,620.69	810.34



There are no informal exclusions of care experienced young people, however a few children are not able to attend school full time and this is being addressed by the service as there is evidence that this practice is increasing the likelihood of children entering the care system.

The legislative framework around exclusion does not support delivery of The Promise aspiration and this could compromise full delivery of this action. The service will update the Minimising Exclusion Policy and guidance when Included, Engaged and Involved is refreshed by March 2025.

### Mental health and wellbeing

The mental health of our children and young people is improving. All settings continue to participate in the Schools Health and wellbeing Improvement Network ([SHINE](#)) mental wellbeing survey and the ACC Physical Health and Wellbeing survey to support our understanding of the needs of all P6/7 and Secondary learners across our settings.

The interventions provided and work undertaken across our settings has led to an improved data picture. Positive improvements were seen in a number of areas compared to the previous two survey returns (March 2022 & November 2022). Of particular interest were the following:

- reduction of pupils reporting low mood and at risk of depression
- improvements in the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) which measures mental health difficulties
- increases in reported self-confidence levels and optimism
- improvements in physical health
- improvements in feelings of safety, inclusion, good health, aspects of sleep, and being listened to.

Generally, Aberdeen City outcomes now sit above national comparator data, although interrogation by Looked After status of not possible. That said, there is correlation with the Bright Spots data feedback where 70% of young people gave high or very high scores (7 to 10) for happiness with the way they look. This is significantly higher than the proportion of the Bright Spots comparator group (61%). The Bright Spots data also showed that the proportion of children and young people in Aberdeen City who spent time outdoors in nature more than once a week (88% of children (8-11yrs) and 89% of young people (11-17yrs)) was higher than the general Scottish population (67%). The service will continue to monitor the strength of wellbeing support available in our schools and continues to explore a means of capturing data by group within the SHINE survey.

## **Ensuring the appropriateness of environments**

School Circle Framework leads continue to support implementation of the Circle Framework in order to improve the quality and accessibility of learning environments. All schools have engaged in the development with between 60 and 70% of schools attending regular online network meetings. Qualitative feedback from Quality Improvement visits indicate that there has been impact, with an improved quality of learning environments reported in Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland inspection reports. Staff confidence and knowledge continues to grow.

During session 23/24 we increased our partnership working with the NHS Speech and language service through delivering joint sessions and ensuring there is consistency of language and appearance of learning environments. Further collaboration with Speech and Language, health visitors and other allied health professionals is planned for session 24/25.

## **Understanding groups, including the care experienced and those experiencing poverty.**

Updated school profiles and a new PowerBi Broad General Education tool, help school leaders drill down into data by SIMD profile, by demographic information and cohort. As a result, Head Teachers have easier access to information allowing them to determine the gap in their school by identifying target groups/pupils experiencing disadvantage. The use of these tools will be monitored over session 2024/25 to help drive more consistent usage.

At authority wide meetings over session 2023/24, several sessions have focused on effective use of data, case studies, attendance and opportunities to have professional dialogue whilst building knowledge and confidence. Head Teachers have also benefitted from sharing good practice with colleagues in a similar sector as well as across an Associated School Group. The findings of a recent review of the adequacy of our provision for all children with additional support needs will be used to support the further identification of next steps.

## **SPACE (Supported Physical Activity for Care Experienced) programme**

The Virtual School team works closely with Sport Aberdeen through the SPACE programme, to reduce barriers to engagement with extra-curricular activities. This provides children and young people with meaningful active and social activities, which contribute to building capacity, confidence, resilience and a forming a sense of community. In addition, SPACE aims to align with and deliver on Sport Aberdeen's commitment to keep the promise.

To achieve its outcomes and objectives, SPACE delivers the following provision:

- 1-2-1 and small group sport and physical activity interventions as part of the school day.
- Opportunities to achieve SQA accreditation through activities e.g. National Progression Award – Level 4 Horse Care with University of Highlands and Islands.
- Partnership working with Virtual School Aberdeen, CSW and 3rd sector organisations.
- Support access to sport and physical activity for ACC care experienced children and young people who are placed in another authority.
- Provide opportunities for parent and caregiver engagement with the service.
- Support access to a range of activities through the Active Schools universal, targeted and specialist framework.

Those who have experienced care will continue to have priority access to Active Schools activities. The SPACE programme has supported 33 Care experienced young people with 4 being supported to have a positive destination which made use of sport and physical activity skills.

### **Supporting Our Vulnerable Learners into Positive Destinations**

During session 2023/24 Scottish Attainment Challenge has funded Pathways Advocates who have supported 248 vulnerable young people (202 are care experienced) to choose and engage in pathways to enable their entering a positive post school destination. The number of young people supported in each of the 11 schools has differed according to identified need with the number supported ranging from 9 to 57 per school.

Attendance, positive relationships and progress in school are tracked for each young person, with these fluctuating across the session for differing reasons and often signalling a need for intervention. Of the 27 young people who have been closed to the Pathways Advocate, 25 have moved into a positive destination with the other 2 who have been identified as moving into a negative destination, having identified supports beyond school through Skills Development Scotland. Building on the successes of this year funding allocation for Pathway Advocates has been increased for next session with all schools having a minimum of 0.2FTE and additional resource allocated proportionally based on need.

SDS continues to look at ways to support more care experienced people into apprenticeships. Recognising that care experienced young people may take longer to make sustained positive transitions after leaving school, and may require more attempts to do so, SDS worked with Scottish Government to extend enhanced contribution rates for care Modern Apprentices from age 19 up to the age of 29.

SDS continue to support care experienced young people to access opportunities, services, and support through additional financial support. Local teams undertook work with SAAS on the Care Experience Bursary to ensure that SDS was added to a list of signatories, enabling careers advisers to confirm an individual's status as care experienced. All of this work aims to ensure that the routes and pathways we fund are genuinely open to everyone.

### **Preventing children from experiencing poverty wherever possible**

Schools continue to address child poverty at school level with a range of approaches in place to mitigate the impact of the cost of living crisis on families. We continue to work with other services across the Council and other agencies to share data and information on child poverty appropriately.

Schools provide free breakfast provision/clubs, promotion of the uptake of free school meals, clothing grants and other benefits, school uniform and clothing swaps, partnerships with foodbanks and signpost families to the financial inclusion team. We routinely [evaluate](#) the impact of arrangements in order to secure continuous improvement. Close collaboration and joined up working with our Money Advisors and workers who support families in their homes means children and families are able to be signposted to the most appropriate source of support and interventions are more timely and effective.



The Support for Families Information Booklet is shared 3 times per year electronically through school communication channels and hard copies are available in schools for staff to issue e.g. to new families enrolling. The week following the email being sent in July 2024 saw:

- 549 calculations completed.
- £135,458.20 per week of new benefits.
- 98.5% of the completed calculations showed an entitlement to benefits.

Money advisors help parents and carers to deal with creditors, negotiate payment plans, apply for insolvency options, and access emergency funds or food banks if needed. Feedback from parents has been very positive.

### **Anti-bullying approaches**

Despite recent work to refresh our Anti-bullying policy, the Bright Spots survey told us that a significantly higher proportion (43%) of children and young people (8-11yrs) in Aberdeen reported being afraid of going to school because of bullying when compared to the Bright Spots comparator group. We are pleased that most of those who reported being were afraid were getting help, but must work to understand this better to help us determine appropriate next steps.

**In summary**, there is evidence of improved quality across all sectors, although a level of variability still exists, particularly across secondary, and this is being prioritised by the education service. Data trends are heavily influenced by the relative size of cohorts, and there will be a need to keep progress under routine review.

Work continues at pace to ensure our care experienced young people are able to fulfil their potential through our work to broaden the curriculum and through an identified Pathways Advocate to help empower and enable young people of secondary school age to be in a position to thrive upon leaving schools. All schools now recognise the needs of care experienced children and young people in their improvement plans and there are central tracking arrangements in place which are being carefully monitored to ensure that they are used as an early warning system to help improve attendance, reduce levels of exclusion in secondary and support all of our young people who have, or continue, experience care into a positive post school destination. Despite all of this, there is clearly more to do.

### **Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:**

- Routinely analyse live outcome data for those who are care experienced to enable a more agile response to increase full time attendance in school
- Scale up our approach to Pathways Advocates
- Broaden the curriculum further through the third phase of ABZ Campus and in individual schools
- Conclude our review our Virtual School Toolkit and establish the team we need to work across the Directorate to support our children and families. Test new approaches with multi-disciplinary partners to help care experienced young people secure positive sustained destinations

- Undertake further engagement to understand those who feel afraid to attend school due to bullying.

#### **On relationships, Plan 21-24 says:**

- All children living in and around Scotland's 'care system' will be maintaining safe, loving relationships that are important to them.
- There will be no barriers to 'contact' and children will be supported to have time with people they care about.

#### **On brothers and sisters, Plan 21-24 says:**

- Scotland will stop the practice of separating brothers and sisters, unless for reasons of safety.
- Relationships between brothers and sisters will be cherished and protected across decision making and through the culture and values of the people who care for them.

#### **Supporting relationships that are important**

We acknowledge that the national shortage of foster carers, including carers (and adopters) with capacity to care for large sibling groups remains is a challenge. This continues to impact on our balance of care but also our capacity to always place large sibling groups in the same setting. Although the instances when we have do so are small we want to reach a position where this is not the case. Although reducing, the number of children and young people placed with external fostering agencies requires us to think carefully about how we support children and young people to maintain contact with people that are important to them.

The Bright spots survey illustrated that almost all (99%) of young people (11-17yrs) in Aberdeen felt that they had an adult who they trusted and who sticks by them no matter what; a significantly higher percentage than the average (91%) of the Bright Spots comparator group of local authorities. All of the youngest children (4- 7yrs) trusted the adults they lived with, and all children aged 8-11yrs trusted the adults they live with 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'. 95% of 8-11yrs and 94% of 11-17yrs indicated that the adults they lived with showed an interest in their education 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'. This illustrates that despite the challenges, our children are broadly well supported.

The Bright Spots survey also tells us that two-thirds (66%) of comments about Youth Team Workers or Social Workers were very positive. More care leavers than children and young people (11-17yrs) in care in Aberdeen trusted their worker (79% to 69%) and found it easy to get in touch with them (75% to 58%). Workers came second only to friends as providers of emotional support identified by care leavers.

The continued recruitment of nurturing carers, within the Council's fostering resources is essential to help ensure children are only separated from their siblings because that is in their best interest and not due to limited resources. The same applies to keeping children in their home area.

## **Supporting brothers and sisters**

Following on the development of a Brothers and Sisters position statement, the concept of and the ethos behind the statement continues to be embedded and developed across and throughout children's social work. Our planning for children continues to take a child centred approach. Independent Reviewers ensure the voice and views of our young people are central to their planning. This includes capturing and monitoring their contact with people that are important to them. Encouragingly, 61% of all children aged 8-11yrs with brothers and sisters felt that the time they were able to spend with them was 'just the right amount' in the Bright Spots survey, significantly higher than the Bright Spots comparator group (47%). However, the Bright Spots survey also highlights that children between 8 and 17 reported mixed views and experiences of family time, and the complexity of many family arrangements came across, such as children seeing some of their brothers and sisters but not others. There is a need for us to continue to be guided by the voices of our children and young people.

Data collection in respect of brothers and sisters is highly complex and nationally and locally requires further development. We continue to engage with Scottish Government and CELCIS to support our continuing development and this will inform our next steps. Our emphasis is on social work practice to promote and record sibling relationships. This ensures that even when brothers and sisters cannot live together their care plans promote maintaining relationships in a meaningful manner.

There are challenges without clear nationally agreed definitions to drive consistency. The Scottish Government recognise the complexity of this data, which can be held across a number of systems. Accordingly the plan for reporting on this data is one which will continue to evolve over the coming years. A monitoring of the number and type of placements where siblings who lived together are separated with further clarity required regarding the performance of the local authorities to maintain relationships is considered essential to support monitoring of this priority.

## **Family Time Hub Service**

Family contact can be a significant stressor for kinship placements. Consequently we have aligned support from the kinship service with the Family Time Hub Service (our setting that supports family contact). Our approach has sought to capture the voice of children, young people and kinship carers/families to identify priority areas for support and service development. We have developed a suite of helpful information for children, young people and families to promote positive family contact. This, we believe, will reduce barriers to children being able to maintain safe and loving relationships with those important to them and also for the need for the Service to be involved in their facilitation.

Our approach will continue to be developed in line with feedback from our kinship families and the voice of our children and young people to iteratively create support that meet their needs. Reflecting our duty to minimise the intervention of the state into family life we will continue to embed a more flexible and supportive approach to managing family time arrangements for children and young people living in kinships families. Understanding and quantifying the demand and range of contact that is facilitated to prioritise the assessment element, will inform our future planning and increase our use of data to support reporting in relation to brothers and sisters.



### **Support for Kinship carers**

The Kinship Team continue to build relationships with Third sector organisations to augment and enhance the offer of support accessible to carers. In doing so we have raised the profile of kinship carers and their needs to ensure the support is effective and easy to access. A Community Planning Improvement Project enabled a 900% increase in the number of Third Sector partners offering support to kinship carers. Kinship carers have told us that this activity has made them feel more connected to each other and to the wider support community in our City.

### **Support from the Adoption Team**

The Adoption team promote family time between adopted children and their siblings as routine. The team also promotes children maintaining links to care givers once they move to adoption. The Fostering team support foster carers to promote and maintain significant relationships in a child's life. This can include arranging 'play dates' with friends, maintaining contact and communication with previous carers, supporting contact with brothers, sisters and external family members or promoting and recognising special events such as parents or siblings birthdays with a card or gift. This practice will be maintained.

### **Our Children's Houses**

Our local residential children's homes and Throughcare/Aftercare service continues to be developed with and for young people and all continue to be highly evaluated by the Care Inspectorate (very good evaluations across all themes). The sense of safe relationships as key to making successful transitions continues to be developed.

We are proud that there have been very few non-sustained tenancies; very few instances of homelessness or negative accommodation outcomes due largely to the enduring relationships as a key aspect of aftercare support.

We recognise that our capacity to provide long term local residential care for children with complex disabilities/enduring needs is very limited. As a consequence we are looking with one of partners to develop a small residential provision for four young people. This we envisage will support us to bring some young children back to the city who are currently placed out with, while also preventing young people going out of the city in the first instance.

### **Supports from the Third Sector**

Avenue have developed a priority referral route for care experienced children and family to access a Family Time service, Avenue support families with financial barriers regarding travel costs and some flexibility to increase access for families.

**In summary**, our work to support relationships is well developed. When brothers and sisters cannot live together we ensure that their relationship is maintained through regular and bespoke contact arrangements. The reducing number of young people placed Independent Fostering Agencies foster carers is welcomed. We want to continue to grow our internal fostering/adoption capacity to ensure brothers and sisters can remain together where such is in their best interests but also local to other family members who are important to them.

Our investment in kinship care supports continues to pay dividend and is enabling families to manage family time in a manner that is beneficial to the child/young person. This is an area we want to build on further.

We await the Scottish Governments response to the Children’s Hearing Review but are ensuring our practice locally takes full account of the capturing the voice and views of children and young to ensure they continue to have meaningful relationships with people that are important to them.

#### **Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:**

- Aligned to the Government’s response to the Hearings System review, further improve decision making to ensure that maintaining relationships for children and young people is aligned to the needs of the child
- Continue to embed feedback from children, young people and kinship families to ensure our support offer continues to meet need.
- Expand our local foster care provision to address the balance of care.
- Expand local residential provision for children with disabilities/complex needs.
- Continue to engage with Scottish Government in relation to data collection in respect of brothers and sisters.

#### **On youth justice, Plan 21-24 says:**

- The disproportionate criminalisation of care experienced children and young people will end
- 16-and 17-year-olds will no longer be placed in Young Offenders Institutes for sentence or on remand
- There will be sufficient community-based alternatives so that detention is a last resort
- Children who do need to have their liberty restricted will be cared for in small, secure, safe, trauma-informed environments that uphold their rights.

#### **Diversionsary Work 23/24**

Considerable multi-agency and diversionsary work continues to take place across the Partnership between Children’s Social Work (CSW), Justice Social Work, Police Scotland, SCRA and our court system in the city. We have had no under 18s placed in young offenders institutions (YOI) in the last year and no young person has been placed in secure accommodation on offence grounds. Robust processes are in place which continue to flag under 18’s appearing in court to the relevant supports. Effective communication is well developed across the relevant systems to ensure information is shared in a timely manner, helping to ensure no child has been remanded unnecessarily.

Extensive work has been undertaken preparing for the implementation of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024. The planning includes consideration of community-based alternatives to deprivation of liberty required to ensure that children aren’t placed in secure accommodation or YOI unnecessarily. The Children’s Social Work team are well connected to the CYCJ team leading on the Act. We have also participated in national work on “redesigning secure care”, joining practitioners and senior managers groups/workshops, aimed to seek views

on what secure accommodation model is required to meet the needs of our children and young people. We await the Scottish Governments response to this consultation.

Our next steps will feature reviewing established processes to minimise the risk of a child being placed within YOI. Continuing to develop communication links between police, justice social work and children's social work to ensure that relevant information is shared to inform suitability for a child to be given bail conditions or supervised bail as an alternative to remand.

Police Scotland have employed Early Intervention Workers who to carry out intervention with C&YP in conflict with the law. Disposals which are a diversion from prosecution are used, such as referral to these Early Intervention Workers. Police have an appropriate age of criminal responsibility suite in Aberdeen City, where young people can be seen by Police in a more age appropriate setting. If a young person is to be held for court the next day, this will not be in a cell - a safe space will be made available. The Police continue to have a dedicated Children and Young People team who have developed relationships with children's homes, in order to minimise the unnecessary charging of care experienced young people residing there by implementing processes which don't involve all crimes being reported to the Police.

Our Bairns Hoose will give full effect to all intended expectations including the capacity to support young people under the age of criminal responsibility whose behaviour has been harmful to others. This recognises that in most instances these young people are likely to have experienced abuse and harm themselves. In accordance with the Scottish Governments intention to increase the age of criminal responsibility we have future proofed to the design of our Bairns Hoose. Our Bairns Hoose will include a suite which will enable all young people to give remote evidence to a court. We have engaged with colleagues from SCTS, COPFS and our local judiciary in relation to ensure our design incorporates court expectations and they remain highly supportive of this development.

**In summary,** over the past year we have invested time to ensure we are well placed for the enacting of the Children's (Care & Justice) Bill. There remains uncertainty as to the final shape of the Bill and the funding that will accompany it to allow agencies to give full effect to it.

Our focus on diversion remains strong although aspects of this will move to a new provider in the coming year. We welcome the continuing intention of the Scottish Government to increase the age of criminal responsibility and our developing Bairns Hoose takes full account of this intention.

#### **Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:**

- Continue to prepare our workforce for the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill. Undertake a self-analysis of resource required to give effect to the provisions of the Bill.
- Support commissioned Diversionary Service
- Move forward with our plans for a local Bairns Hoose

### **On advocacy, Plan 21-24 says:**

- All care experienced children and their families will have access to independent advocacy at all stages of their experience of care.
- Advocacy provision will follow the principles set out in the promise.
- Care experienced children and young people will be able to easily access child centred legal advice and representation.

### **Access to Advocacy 23/24**

Children and young people continue to access independent advocacy. The requirement to consider advocacy needs is increasingly embedded into our multi-agency systems. Independent advocacy is provided through the Children's Hearing System and via our Aberdeen Young Person's Rights Service. Aberdeen children, young people, and young adults aged 0-26 years old, who are care experienced/involved in child protection processes, can access the Rights Service. Improvement activity includes increased individualised non-instructive advocacy including pre-birth babies, babies, infants, and those who are neurodivergent. As well as safeguarding their rights and participation, this helps tell their story and becomes a relevant 'snapshot' of their life at that time.

The Rights Service works closely with the local Advocacy providers (Who Cares? Scotland and Advocacy Services Aberdeen). All 3 services are committed to ensuring that children can express and make informed and relational choices about who they want to advocate for them. Individuals are signposted to other provision where their need for advocacy falls outside the remit of these services. The 3 services are equally committed to workforce development. Ensuring those with experience of care are able to access lifelong advocacy will be informed by the national Scoping and Delivery Report due to be undertaken in the coming year.

### **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People (UASYP)**

A multi-agency group led by Children's Social Work, continues to meet to plan to plan for the needs of UASYP. Planning takes onboard feedback from young people who have arrived in Aberdeen via the National Transfer Scheme (NTS). A new and emerging group are spontaneous arrivals who are contesting the age attributed to them by immigration services. The national Guardianship Service supports all UASYP including those who arrive spontaneously and claim to be minors. Recruitment to a small UASC specialist team commenced in Jan 2024. The team support our expanding community of UASC. The team plans to extend their network linking in with community and 3rds sector resources to help support the complex needs of this community, and sharing idea's with teams in other area's practicing in this specialist area.

### **Those in custody**

If arrested and in Police custody, young people are provided the right to have a solicitor and a responsible person present during formal police processes. If they have psychological impairment which inhibits their understanding, a local authority appointed Appropriate Adult will be present.

## Hearing our children and young people

A recent Bright Spots survey highlighted that 92% of 8-11yrs 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes' felt listened to when decisions were made about their lives, and this was even higher for young people (11- 17yrs) (94%). We are proud of this and will continue to ensure that the voices of our children and young people guide our practice.

**In summary**, continuing progress is being made to support and enable children to fully claim their rights. The full implications of the UNCRC is still being determined as we work through the self-assessment process suggested in the recently published Statutory Guidance. It is likely however, that it will require the Courts to determine the parameters of the incorporation for some young people.

The route map to provide care experienced people access to lifelong advocacy is unclear. The Scottish Government have recently intimated their intention to consult on what a lifelong advocacy service will look like.

Locally we have difficulty accessing legal representation for children and young people which has created delays whilst provision is sought from legal services in the central belt. There is a lack of specialised legal and justice professionals who understand children and young people's behaviour and developmental needs.

### Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:

- Fully engage with the Scottish Government's consultation on the development of a lifelong advocacy service for care experienced young people.
- Assess ourselves against the Statutory Guidance on the UNCRC to ensure that our young people are enabled to fully claim their rights
- Continue to work with others to support UASC
- Continue to work to secure legal representation for those who need specialist advice

### On moving on, Plan 21-24 says:

- Decisions about transitions for young care experienced people who move onto independent living or need to return to a caring environment, will be made based on individual need.
- Each young care experienced adult will experience their transition as consistent, caring, integrated and focussed on their needs, not on 'age of services' criteria
- Housing pathways for care experienced young people will include a range of affordable options that are specifically tailored to their needs and preferences.
- Youth homelessness will be eradicated

## Housing support

Our data indicates the growing numbers of looked after young people remaining in placement on a Continuing Care basis, thus promoting their opportunities for successful transition. The

Throughcare Housing Protocol is well embedded and recognises the statutory duties to care experienced young people and the requirement to support access to housing resource, reducing the risk of homelessness and associated vulnerabilities which can be lifelong. We have developed an integrated model with a Housing and Support Officer collocated in the Youth Team. This supports care experienced young people and UASYP to access housing in a proactive manner. The Bright Spots survey highlighted that three in four young people with experience of care felt that where they lived now was right for them. One in four did not. It also illustrated that:

- 30% did not 'always' feel safe in their home
- 36% did not 'always' feel safe in their neighbourhood; and that
- 41% did not 'always' feel settled in their home.

There is a need for on-going work in this area.

Aberdeen City has been selected to be part of the Prince of Wales Homeward project which aims to eradicate Homelessness. Homeless presentations by young people continue to feature in our data. While the pathway for young people transitioning from care to independent living is well established there are likely to be some young people with a historical episode of care who present as homeless. Addressing this is a focus of the Homeward Project.

### **Young parents with care experience**

Linked to outcomes identified in our LOIP, CSP and Corporate Parenting Plan, The Family Nurse Partnership is now working with care experienced pregnant young parents (mothers and fathers) to provide bespoke support to ensuring they feel confident in becoming parents. As of March 2024 the programme was working with 7 participants known to be Care Experienced, with initial positive feedback. We need to build on this initial engagement to better understand our next steps and scale up this support offer.

### **Learning from the Care Inspectorate Thematic Review**

The Care Inspectorate initiated a [Thematic Review of Disabled Children and Young People's Experience of Social Work Services](#) across all 32 local authorities. The Care Inspectorate were keen to undertake a more in-depth review of four local authority areas. Aberdeen City Council volunteered to be part of this process in order to gain an independent perspective of whether we were meeting the needs of the children and young people in line with the research, and key national strategies. Our participation has provided some key local learning outlined below.

Inspectors noted that relational practise with children and families is at the core of practice in Aberdeen and key to building a culture of listening to, and respecting children's views, but in keeping with partnership audits of practice previously undertaken, the range of communication systems deployed can be a barrier to hearing the voices of disabled children. Children's Social Work will now work closely with colleagues within the Speech and Language Service, and Specialist Occupational Therapist at Child and Family Mental Health to utilise appropriate communication tools to engage with children and young people and ensure that all staff working with children and young people with disabilities are trained in the use of Makaton.



The children's social work organisational structure with a designated Children with Disabilities team was commended. The co-location of the Children with Disabilities Team within a school for children with additional support needs (Orchard Brae) was recognised as innovative and allows for timeous responses to critical need and the protection of children. The dedication of the key personnel within the social work and education service and their investments in the children they mutual care for, were regarded as the catalyst for positive working relationships amongst professionals and with families. We must therefore continue to build upon our collaborative approach to supporting children with disabilities and those who care for them.

There is evidence that timeous help and support has a positive impact on the outcomes and that progress is being made in making support available more quickly. There is a need for us to signpost and enhance awareness of community supports. Fit Like Hubs were recognised as a key component to timely community-based support without any requirement for a referral to statutory services. In keeping with the national picture, the volume of complex need across the Local Authority outweighs the support available and this drives an increase in referrals to services below the threshold for intervention by social work which can result in statutory intervention, often at the point of crisis. There is a need to think strategically about thresholds, with a collaborative approach, alongside health, and the third sector, to meeting needs, reduce higher level demand and prevent intervention being crisis led. This will be driven within our Children's Services Board and the work within the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, stretch outcome 8.

Aberdeen has one key commissioned service offering outreach and short break support, (Aberlour Children's Charity) and one key commissioned service via Autism and Neurodiversity, offering a holiday playscheme. There is a need to further enhance community support.

Nationally the quality of record keeping and reports were variable. However, within Aberdeen, the majority of Child's Plans were good or better, this correlates with our own previous audit activity. Parental views are recorded more frequently than those of children. There is a need to amplify the voices of our disabled children and young people, utilising appropriate communication systems to achieve this.

In Aberdeen, transition experiences are variable, however the Care Inspectorate acknowledged that we had recognised this. Our children and families continue to tell us that the transition for children 'aging out' of children's services remains a time of anxiety. Despite work being undertaken, our recent Bright Sports survey highlighted that almost one in five care leavers in Aberdeen did not know who their Youth Team or Social Worker was, compared to less than one in ten of the Bright Spots comparator group. Almost a third had had more than one worker in the last 12 months, and 13% had not had a worker during this time. Significantly fewer care leavers (72%) in Aberdeen said they were involved in their pathway planning compared to young people (87%) in the Bright Spots comparator group. There is clearly more work to be done.

The Scottish Government's [Transition to Adulthood Strategy, September 2023](#), captured recent research, and engagement, on the experiences of children transitioning to adulthood. Work is actively progressing between Adult Social Work and Children's Social Work, Health and

Education services to fully understand the challenges and to implement improvement over the coming year.

Improvement activity required to address the local findings of the Thematic Review will be taken forward both on a single and multi-agency basis.

**In summary,** work is underway to improve the experience of disabled care experienced young people transitioning to adult services and supported living arrangements. This will incorporate the Transition to Adulthood strategy. Supporting to prepare pregnant care experienced young people will remain a focus and contribute to supporting them to manage their housing needs in a manner that protects their child and themselves. Our participation in the Homewards project will support our learning to how we as a City work to eradicate homelessness. This includes youth homelessness some of who will have historical experience of care.

#### **Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:**

- Continue to improve the transition experience for young people with disabilities and those with complex health needs.
- Continue to explore learning from the Homewards Project to support planning for all young people at risk of homelessness.
- We want to develop our understanding the impact our FNP is having to support care experienced parents to reduce the number of children who are removed from care experienced parents (mothers and fathers).

#### **On physical intervention, Plan 21-24 says:**

- All care experienced children, wherever they live, will be protected from violence and experience the safeguard of equal protection legislation.
- Restraint will always be pain free, will be used rarely, and only when required to keep a child safe
- There will be well communicated and understood guidance in place that upholds children's rights and reflects equal protection legislation.
- The workforce will feel supported to respond to behaviour in a trauma informed way that reflects a deep understanding of the children in their care

Our residential care service continues to focus on promoting recovery from trauma with Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) as our core reference point. Our ethos of care does not require any physical restraint to be taught to staff. Membership in the Scottish Physical Restraint Action Group (SPRAG) helps us both contribute to and be informed by its activities which are designed to positively reduce and/or eliminate the use of physical restraint within residential care provision. We continue to develop understanding on the use of physical restraint across every form of care. Reporting procedures are clear for residential care e.g. to Care Inspectorate, however, development is required to ensure oversight across every setting (including Police, Education, Health, etc.). We await imminent national guidance on the use of restraint and seclusion in schools. In preparation for the updated education guidance, there is a formal



recording mechanism in place. We will also be focusing on developing oversight of the use of restraint in fostering and kinships settings as a priority area.

All Police officers are trained in EP legislation as well as various forms of restraint, of which, the training is refreshed annually. All physical intervention must be legal, necessary, proportionate and justified. Restraint will be used when required to keep a young person safe but also protect others including police officers. All officers access mandatory training in being trauma informed, ACRA and UNCRC.

**In summary**, we are beginning to develop a means of better understanding the use of physical intervention, and other restrictive practices, across the partnership and have ensured that our local policies and guidance promote alternatives and trauma informed care. We are still awaiting the national guidance on the use of restraint and restrictive practices in schools and hope that publication will enable delivery of this action within the coming months.

**Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:**

- Implement the education guidance when it is published and monitor compliance and emerging trends to inform service delivery
- Develop means of understanding the use of physical restraint and reporting arrangements across every form of care, particularly with external providers and across every setting (incl. Police, Education, Health).

## Our Progress in delivering Priority 2, Whole Family Support

**The Promise says,** 'All families need support at different times of their lives and family support is a crucial emphasis for 21-24. The United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises family as the fundamental group in society and the natural environment for growth and wellbeing. Supporting families is a children's rights imperative. 'Families' means all families including families of origin, kinship, foster and adoptive families. Support will not be predicated on the setting of care. Supporting families to stay together and thrive was an imperative before the pandemic and is of even greater import now.'

**On Family Support, Plan 21-24 says:** The 10 principles of intensive family support will be embedded into the practice (planning, commissioning and delivery) of all organisations that support children and their families, directly or indirectly.

- Holistic and relational
- Therapeutic
- Non-stigmatising
- Patient and persistent
- Underpinned by children's rights
- Community Based
- Responsive and timely
- Work with family assets
- Empowerment and agency
- Flexible

### Preparing for a whole system model of Family Support

This year our extensive multi-agency planning has become more developed and work is underway to improve our approaches to Family Support ensuring preventative intervention mitigates the escalation of children, young people and families from a crisis. Our planned approach will be holistic and seek to bring greater coordination of whole family support activity. Adopting a systems learning approach and seeking to utilise the lived experiences of individuals both in terms of shaping the support offer as well as providing support to others.

This approach has been shared with the Scottish Government who have indicated an enthusiasm for the proposed approach and provision of practical support to enhance the development and to capture learning to share nationally. More information on the model can be found here: [Community Planning Aberdeen: Family Support Model Development Plan \(April 2024\)](#)

We will test our planning in a specific neighbourhood within the City over the coming 12 months. This approach recognises the importance of establishing a community space that is accessible without 'referral' and provides an environment that is welcoming and trauma informed. Strong links will be established to our Child Poverty planning and supporting parents routes back into

employment. Learning from this approach will inform the scaling up of this approach across our City.

### **Understanding demand and need**

During COVID we introduced a Request for Assistance (RfA) process to respond more flexibly and timeously to emerging need. We recognise the limits of the current system. Accordingly with partners we are in the process of creating one single pathway for families to access family support services. Ensuring the voices of parents, children and young people are fully captured in the process our service standards were developed in keeping with principles of the Family Support Model.

This year has seen the roll out of Phase 1 of the testing. The RfA prototype system has been shared with partners for comment and suggested improvements have been incorporated where possible. The resource will be integrated into our existing systems to allow a single point of truth for those supporting families as well as a single point of referral. We are looking towards phase 2 where families will be able to self-refer.

### **Further development of our Edge of Care Pilots**

The Pilots have now been operational since November 2022. Our evaluation of their impact indicates that they have had a positive impact on the lives of the young people and families. This can be seen through a range of quantitative and qualitative data which indicates improvements in relation to levels of 'engagement/inclusion' and 'achievement'. The learning and feedback from young people and families indicates that the 'pilots' offer valuable support to young people and families who have an escalating need and risk profile. Adopting a whole family approach has been essential. It is also recognised that levels of need and risk are not static however. How we support families to move up and down the continuum of support without experiencing multiple changes of people supporting them, continues to be an area to work through.

Feedback from staff working in the pilots, strongly supports the value of a co-located and integrated approach to delivering enhanced support to young people and their families. Adopting a relational approach is central to the support offer and staff have been able to build meaningful relationships with young people and families who had become wary and distrusting of professionals. However for many families change takes time and periods of progress can be interspersed with periods of regression. Consequently perseverance and tenacity are key elements to the skill set of staff.

Support being available all year round is considered important by families. Feedback from the young people and families speaks positively of this and the connection staff maintain during holidays. This provides a context to strengthen family relations and for the young people to experience different opportunities with different young people than their normal peer group. It enables progress to be maintained preventing regression.

We have learned that the shape and delivery model needs to be iterative to reflect the needs of the community. Accordingly the size and shape of each Edge of Care Pilot team will vary also recognising that need is not static. Through necessity staff have at times had to work across Pilots and while this can work for a time limited basis it is also important that funding for the Pilots enables staff to be recruited on a permanent basis. Re-aligning the priorities of the Looked After

Children Attainment Fund and the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund will enable us to deliver more certainty to the structures.

The Edge of Care Pilots have positively contributed to the outcomes being experienced by young people and their families. As such this type of support is essential to support young people with complex needs who are on the edges of school and care to prevent them being accommodated outwith their family network.

### **Integrated working**

The Kinship Service has developed a partnership with CAMHS to provide wellbeing support to kinship families. Assistant Psychologists, as part of their development, are undertaking extended placements with the kinship service. In doing they provide preventative psychological support as well as group support to kinship families. This model not only enhances the support offer to kinship families but strengthens professional relationships and understanding of each other's role/service. Evaluating this model will be a focus in the coming year.

PEEP continues to be hugely successful in Aberdeen and the team have developed specific groups for Kinship, Fostering and Adoption teams. They are well attended and feedback from carers is that they enjoy the play approach and the relationships forged. PEEP also participates in an Intergenerational group, exemplifying social values and inclusion. The Kinship and Adopters PEEP groups are consistently attended and are co-run by PEEP and staff from the respective services. This model enables adoptive families to forge positive links with other adopters, enhancing their support network and allowing them to share and discover new community resources.

Our Birth Parents Project, led by NHS Grampian, continues. This projects engages with birth parents whose children have been removed from their care on a permanent basis. Through this vastly increased self-awareness, self-confidence and future aspirations have been observed. The birth parents have produced two videos - one describing their lived experience and the second discussing how the recommendations from the project will have a positive impact.

Trauma informed weekly sessions are being delivered to mothers in prison who do not have their children in their care. This work has demonstrated increased supports being made available for some involved and is building the skills and capacity by those who have engaged with the project.

### **Integrated Working at Locality Level**

We have been scaling up new ways of working to support our early intervention work. Continued investment in Youth Workers, Family Learning and Financial Inclusion services through schools is helping deliver early preventative work. The delivery of collaborative and creative approaches to address and meet the needs of children, young people and families across the city continues to be the focus for this resource which is contributing to:

- Increased and easier access to Access to Money support
- Reduced levels of exclusion
- Increased levels of attendance
- Increased levels of parental engagement
- Increased levels of attainment

Learning from this way of working will contribute to the development of our Family Support Model. This resource continues to have a clear remit for intervene early and target support to those children, young people and families most at risk of disengaging from education. Data and feedback from schools, children, young people and families indicates that the resource is proving successful in achieving planned outcomes and is sufficiently agile to be able to respond to emerging needs in a timely manner.

### **'Fit Like' Family Wellbeing Service 23/24**

The multi-agency Fit Like Family Wellbeing service continues to respond to children, young people and families where wellbeing concerns have been identified by professionals. Families are able to self-refer and are doing so in increasing numbers. In the past year 599 new requests were made with 378 (63%) new families offered support.

On average, the Fit Like team provide scaffolding for approximately 400 families. A sample of 115 families who moved on from Fit Like help saw, 76% families went on to engage in universal support, 13% families required social work support and 9% families accessed a service from CAMHS. We saw a variation of the time that families engaged in support ranging from less than 6 months 30%; 6-12 months 33%; 12-18months 20% and 18+ months 17%.

The level of need experienced by families over the past year has intensified with parental mental health, poverty and child and adolescent emotional and mental health being saturated themes in the requests for assistance. The service continues to evolve to respond to the increasing demand for support and complexity prevalent in families lives.

*Getting support from the FitLikeHubs was so scary at the start, luckily for me I was given someone who has been absolutely amazing. She's supported me with so much, I don't know where I'd be if it wasn't for her support. She's literally saved my life, which sounds extreme but when someone is so low and life's so difficult and someone comes in and makes such a big impact on how they support you, it can be life changing. To have someone come in and show you so much respect, not judge you and listen to you has not been something I am used to but [worker] has done all this and showed me that I can trust her. She's not given up on me when I thought I wasn't worthy of any support, she's allowed me the time to feel comfortable to be open and honest to her. I feel I still have lots to work on with [worker] but I am so thankful for how much she taken me on with her advice and support and continues to allow me to move forward. [Parent]*

The Fit Like service have developed a range of group work programmes for parents / carers / children and families in the areas they tell us they need help with: Parent Led CBT – helping parents support their anxious children, Distress to Success – helping parents understand and respond to their child's distress behaviour, Stay and Play – giving families the opportunity to come together in a relaxed family friendly environment which offers support and guidance when needed, Girls Group – a rights led group.

Throughout 2023/2024 178 parents/carers have engaged with our groups. Feedback included: *I felt the group covered a lot of what we go through as a family. And how to handle certain situations whether its meltdowns, sleeping, mood swings, hitting. I feel I have learned so much*

*coming to the group and will try what I have learned and hope that it works for my son and family. Thank you so much [Parent : Distress for Success Group]*

*All the information provided was great, great topics, presentation was great as it was so relaxed but professional. The environment felt safe, the ladies made me feel welcome. There was also a few new videos for me that have really stuck with me. [Parent: Distress to Success]*

LIAM (Lets Introduce Anxiety Management) Groups have been introduced in schools, with 9 schools reaching up to 90 children throughout 2023/2024. Young people told us: *I feel I was listened to and able to speak. I feel I have improved a lot. [Young person attending the LIAM Group]*

The Fit Like Hubs in partnership with Children Social Work and Education colleagues have developed a local child protection pathway, to support families where there is escalating need to get the right support from the right service at the right time. This pathway has been further developed with the integration of other Tier 2 services, allowing services to respond to family's needs in a timely way, preventing overlap and duplication and providing opportunities for effective collaboration. This has allowed for a co-ordinated, integrated approach to supporting families and minimises the need for families to keep repeating their stories to various professionals.

Our data and evaluation of the Fit Like Hubs has consistently demonstrated that support delivered in a non-stigmatising and trauma informed manner often enables families to feel held emotionally and their needs deescalated to universal/community based supports mitigating an escalation into Children's Social Work or CAMHS.

**In summary**, delivery of family support, aligned to the needs of families, is increasingly the norm for our partnership. Demand however continues to outstrip capacity and children continue to escalate into statutory provision more than we would want. We recognise the need for a greater level of consistency to service provision and we want families to independently access support at times they need. We continue to recognise the impact of poor parental mental wellbeing on children and the need to work with adult colleagues to align support to meet this gap.

Our family support model will seek to deliver this and build on the significant learning to date. The model will continue to ensure alignment to the 10 principles advocated in The Promise.

#### **Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:**

- Ensure we have early, accessible and aligned support services for parents and carers in place which complement our family support model
- Develop a family support model in two 'test' sites which draw on the accumulated learning and is aligned with the 10 principles of Intensive Family Support.
- Develop and deliver on a Bairns Hoose
- Continue to explore and develop models of integrated and colocated partnership working.

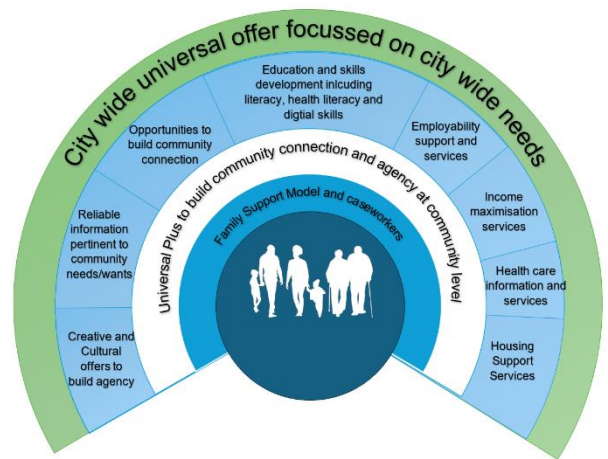


**On peer and community support, Plan 21-24 says:** There will be a consistent, national approach to ensure there are places in every community for parents of young children to meet other local parents, to stay and play with their children, and get support and advice

## Future Libraries Model

Considerable work has been undertaken to look at a future libraries model for the city by taking a co-design approach with library users and key stakeholders. The output of our Co-Design work guides the establishment of city wide universal offer based on city wide needs and a linked Community Hub Model offering support designed around the needs and wants of individual communities.

Work is currently progressing to offer a more preventative model. A city wide universal offer, based at the Central Library, and through a dynamic on-line presence, will enable our citizens to access traditional and non-traditional services in a less constrained and more vibrant library environment. This triggers the need to look at the use of physical space in the central library to ensure it offers a welcoming environment that can be used for a wider range of purposes. There is also a need to think of spaces that families can access together. This will include opening the café space, ensuring there is a suitable mix of quiet and more social zones for different purposes and ensuring that the use of private rooms across the Central Library are considered. The participation of library users in this process will be important.



Additional supports available will be maximised through collaboration with partners to take a whole systems approach in order to offer more comprehensive programmes and activities for all age groups. It is thought that the offer available would broadly reflect the areas of focus in the visual above:

- City wide creative and cultural offers (and exhibitions) which could be linked to the ACC Cultural Investment Framework
- Reliable information (including about city wide needs such as smoking cessation and healthy diet)
- Opportunities to connect with others, develop participation and voice in order to create a Civic Engagement Hub
- Education and skills information and signposting
- Employability information and signposting
- Income maximisation information
- Health care information
- Information on housing support services and signposting

In addition, a Place Based approach will be developed which will be aligned to our testing of our Family Support Model. A Community Hub model is proposed to prioritise strengthening agency and community connection for communities with higher levels of need. This would see a range

of multi-agency partners co-locate in communities with a significant health gradient and work collaboratively to address the gradient through delivery of a shared plan based on the needs and wants of the community. The level of programmed support available would be relative to the challenges facing communities and the co-location of services would make extending library opening hours more feasible.

A bespoke programme, co-designed with the community to address community needs and wants would operate from the Community Hub. The programme would ultimately be designed to address the health gradient and gap evident across the community. In addition to a traditional library service, areas of focus for the programme are likely to include partnership and whole system delivery of:

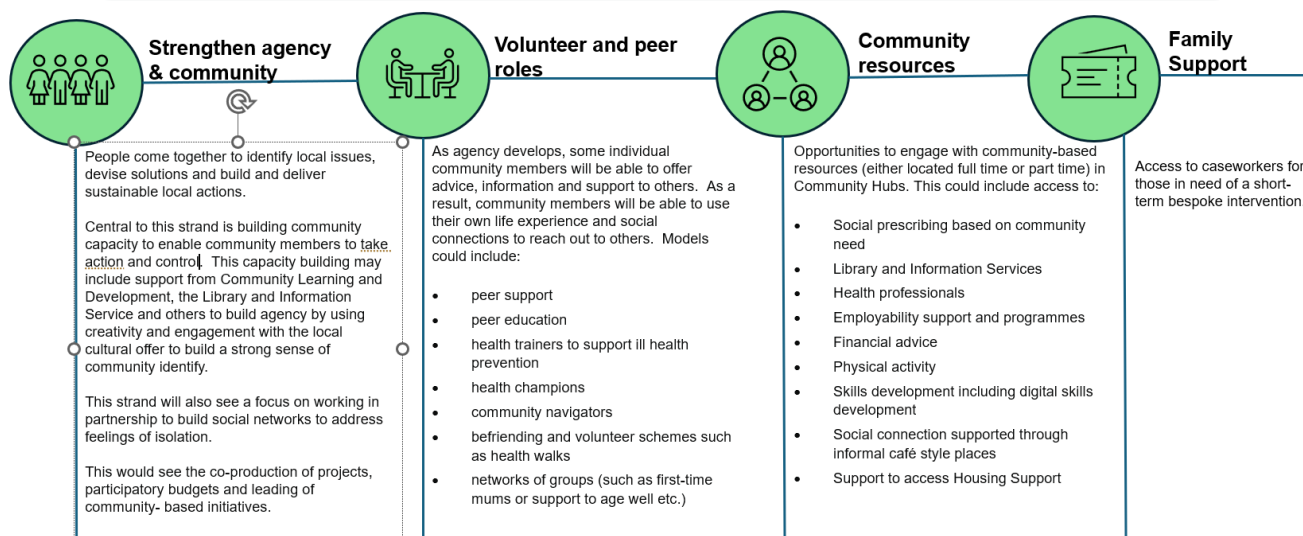
- Access to support and reliable information around particular needs across a community, including planned programmes of support (for example diabetes, healthy diet)
- Frequent opportunities to connect with others to build agency, voice and a sense of control. Creative and cultural offers will be utilised to build agency and the insight gleaned used to inform the local programme, develop participation and a sense of community connection/activism.
- Education and skills information and support, including programmes with a particular focus on literacy, health literacy and digital skills
- Employability information and support through the delivery of tailored programmes
- Income maximisation support
- Health care information and delivery of targeted programmes
- Housing support
- More bespoke home service, for example the offer for residents in care homes etc.

It is proposed that as agency is developed in members of the community, they would be encouraged to develop skills through a planned programme of volunteering. It is thought that some of those community volunteers would be offered opportunities for further training to support their progression into the paid role of 'Case Worker' linked to our Family Support Model. Case Workers would have a key role in helping members of a community navigate the supports available to them, which would complement the work of the Library and Information Service staff. The research would suggest that the use of those with lived experience can be a powerful means of supporting those most in need of our help.



## Placed Based Approach

Place based plans are designed based on community outcome data and community insights. A bespoke programme is put in place for each community and delivered by Community Planning and Third Sector partners in collaboration with and the communities themselves.



This work is now being coordinated through our Fairer Futures Partnership.

### Easter in the City 23/24

Our In the City programmes continue to be made available to children and young people across Aberdeen City over the school holiday period. The programmes, shaped by the feedback of young people and their families, includes a range of short, half-day and full-day activities ranging from sport, art and outdoor activities to drama camps, and science sessions. In line with previous years, the programme was delivered across three strands; universal activities, activities designed to support children/young people with additional support needs, and a programme for young people who directly, or through their family, identify as part of a 'priority group' this included children who are looked after or at risk of becoming looked after. Sport Aberdeen's, We Too and community assets were heavily involved in delivering the programme.



Partnership social media channels were used to highlight the programme and available places to maximise uptake. The average enjoyment rating as given by children and young people who attended the activities was 9.6/10. This high rating was consistent with the previous programmes.

### Increased collaboration

Utilising Corra funding ACVO (TSI) have appointed a Promise Lead. The value of this post has been increasingly felt over the past year. Relationships between the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector and public sector have strengthened and there is a stronger alignment to our collective endeavours to supporting

families and delivering support that meets their needs. An event was held in summer 2024 to recognise and celebrate the contribution of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector to #keepthepromise. As well as showcasing activities, it provided a further opportunity to connect and strengthen our aligned endeavours.

### **Provision of holiday programs for Care Experienced Young People**

We asked our care experienced young people to review the range of activities available to them so that we could have confidence in our offer. The report was compiled by nine care experienced young people who attended a range of groups/activities. Their report shared resonating, useful, and insightful suggestions and views, which are helping guide our work in this area.

The Summer holiday period saw a range of gatherings for our Care Experienced Community including summer activities for our the older age range of our care experienced community, with a series of activities for children, young people and their families.

A calendar of Christmas events including a switching on the Westburn Christmas Lights, a seasonal YPR service walk, Christmas crafts and a Christmas lunch where staff cooked and shared a meal with invited Care experienced young people and their families. Care Day in Feb 2024 was celebrated along with the Bright Spots survey launch and a custom written rap, performed live by our artist in residence who is also a member of our care experienced community, which received local press coverage. Young people also engaged with many of the activities on offer including percussion workshops held SHMU and a graffiti project.

At the beginning of 2024 we moved to appoint a Participation & Engagement officer. This post was previously occupied by Who Cares? Scotland, however after valuable learning from previous sessions and feedback from our young people it was positioned within our Rights Service. Following interviews which included care experienced young people our Participation and Engagement Officer took up post at the end of March 2024.

Despite progress made, the Bright Spots survey highlighted that one in five (22%) care leavers felt lonely 'often/always', over twice the rate for young people in the general population. Almost a third of care leavers (31%) gave low scores for happiness with their appearance.

**In summary**, there is growing local network of support that is accessible to families that enables them to access support in the manner they need at the time they need. The strengthening relationship between with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector is welcome recognising they are exceptionally well placed to form instigate these connections.

### **Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:**

- Further develop our use of communities and volunteers to support preventative activity aligned to learning from our Bright Spots survey.
- Implement our Future Libraries Model
- Continue to seek feedback from our children, young people and families

**On service integration, Plan 21-24 says:** Scotland's family support services will feel and be experienced as integrated to those who use them.

Throughout this report we have demonstrated that integrated and wherever possible collocated working is increasingly the norm as to how we deliver support to children, young people and families in Aberdeen City. There are numerous examples including but not restricted to: The Fit Like Service; Youth & Family Learning workers delivering preventative support in schools; the delivery of SCIM and development of our Bairns Hoose; the Edge of Care Pilots and how we support kinship families.

These efforts and successes will be further enhanced by the plans to develop a Family Support Model across the city. While initially starting off in two communities learning will be captured that will allow us to iteratively scale up the offer to the whole city. The shape of this model will draw on learning for our endeavours to date but by adopting a systems learning approach seek to ensure the voice and views of children, young people and families shaping the support offer.

### **Shared policies and goals**

We have highly effective multi-agency partnerships and governance arrangements in place:

- Chief Officers Group (COG)
- Community Planning Aberdeen Board (CPA Board)
- Child Protection Committee (CPC)
- Children's Services Board (CSB)
- Alcohol & Drugs Partnership (ADP)
- Adult Protection Committee (APC)
- Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership (of which the COG has an oversight role).
- Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

We are increasingly adopting a whole system approach. The needs of all children, young people and families are on a continuum of need and vulnerability and as such we ensure there is a strong connection between the work of the Children's Services Board and the Child Protection Committee. In keeping with the establishment of the National Public Protection forum, we are now focussing our efforts on improving the linkage between children and adult services.

**In summary,** considerable progress has been made to ensure that services are experienced as being more joined up. This will be further developed as we continue to develop our Family Support Model.

### **Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:**

- Continue to develop the planning for our Family Support Model to delivery early and preventative support to families in their communities.
- Continue to explore and maximise opportunities for integration
- Continue to align activities and integrate services across the Public Protection landscape.

**On family therapies, Plan 21-24 says:** All families will have direct and clear access to family therapies and specific support across a range of issues, so that accessing support is seen as something that a range of families may need throughout life.

An Aberdeen approach to Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) is being considered as part of our improvement work and a number of staff within the Fit Like service having been trained. We recognise there is a need for such an aligned approach where intensive intervention is required to help support and sustain a child within their family network. This will be a focus during the coming year.

### **Bairn's Hoose / SCIM**

Work to progress delivery of a Bairns Hoose in Aberdeen City continues at pace. Building on our partnership with Children's 1<sup>st</sup> they will deliver a recovery service as part of the Bairns Hoose model. Work has commenced to recruit recovery workers and to develop pathways to support early intervention to assist a child's recovery from harm/abuse.

We want to eradicate/minimise system harm that can often compound the abuse/harm a child experiences. Ensuring a child, young person and their parents/carers understand the child protection and justice system is central to this aspiration. Ensuring a rights based approach will be central to the delivery of our Bairns Hoose which will:

- Provide trauma-informed recovery, support and justice
- Ensure appropriate pathways to CAMHS
- Ensure that delivery of trauma recovery support aligns to the wider Family Support Model
- Ensure that trauma recovery lens is central to the delivery of IRD's (Interagency Referral Discussions) and SCIM (Scottish Child Interview Model) interviews.
- Deliver a trauma-informed remote Court facility for children and young people.

### **Therapeutic care**

Aberdeen City Council has an established therapeutic approach to provision in our residential children's homes that is based on the Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP). DDP is used to help children and young people who have been traumatised by hurt and/or neglected within their families in their early years, making it difficult for them to feel safe and secure. The approach aims to help children and young people address difficulties with attachment (finding it hard to feel safe with parents or in primary relationships) and inter-subjectivity (finding it hard to give and take relationships). Theraplay training is provided to kinship & foster carers with the Family Network Team offering intensive therapeutic family support.

There are a range of therapeutic supports across Universal services and within the Third Sector that families can access. This includes but is not restricted to school counselling services; delivery of LIAM in schools; access to school nursing as well as accessing support via the Fit Like and other family support services.

## **Sport Aberdeen**

Sport Aberdeen offered 5 Family Fun Days to provide opportunities for children and young people to develop friendships with peers. In addition a Christmas event was held for 40 families who enjoyed participating in a range of activities on offer. In addition, 700 free Sport Aberdeen memberships have now been given out to care experienced young people and their carer / parent - dependant on their circumstances.

**In summary**, work is well developed and in some places embedded to ensure a therapeutic response to children who have experienced harm/abuse. These will continue to be developed in the year ahead and as our Bairns Hoose opens. We note the references to FGDM in the Children's Hearing Review and await the Scottish Governments response to this. We however want to further develop our thinking in relation to FGDM to empower families identify ways they can better protect and safeguard children within the family network.

### **Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:**

- Test and develop trauma recovery pathways in and around our Bairns Hoose
- Further consider the thinking around FGDM to support families who require intensive intervention.
- Ensure trauma recovery and a rights based approach are incorporated into the planning for our Family Support Model.
- Strengthen links with CAMHS to support children and young people access appropriate psychological supports.

## Our Progress in delivering Priority 3, Supporting the Workforce

**The Promise says,** Children experience the 'care system' through people. Over Plan 21-24, support for people who care and continue to care if times get tough, will improve. There will be consistency of approach, values and understanding across Scotland's workforce.

**On workforce values, Plan 21-24 says:** There will be a national values-based recruitment and workforce development framework in place and adhered to by all organisations and professions involved in supporting children and their families.

### One Good Adult

Aberdeen City Council is currently involved in piloting the 'One Good Adult' resource developed in partnership with NES, Scottish Government and Children in Scotland. Senior Leaders and Service Managers are encouraged to make reference to this as part of the application and interview process and a series of engagement sessions were held in schools to gather feedback and to inform our approach to implementing this within our recruitment processes for adults working in our schools. The children and young people involved in these engagement sessions developed a range of questions about the areas that they felt were important linked to the themes of:

- Mental Health
- Be(ing) Kind
- Open-mindedness
- Equality and Inclusion
- Reliability
- Encouraging Success

This has provided children and young people with an opportunity to influence decision-making and support the appointment of staff in our schools and senior roles across the Local Authority where applicants often comment that the panel of children presents the toughest challenge. Children and young people form a panel in all head teacher recruitment processes. Pupil panels were also part of the recruitment process for the Executive Director Families and Communities, the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning and other senior Council positions.

### Multi-agency planning for the workforce

Aberdeen City's Corporate Parenting Group has responsibility for the delivery of the Corporate Parenting Improvement Plan, collation and monitoring of data and quality assurance in relation to children and young people with experience of care, delivering on identified aims set out in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) and driving the implementation of The Promise across the Partnership.



One of the improvement projects aligned to Stretch Aim 5 focused on the need to update and refresh our Corporate Parenting training and for this to be available to all local partners to bring a greater consistency to our language and understanding of the duties of being a Corporate Parent. An updated Corporate Parenting online module was developed. To test and refine the module in person training was delivered to 2 cohorts of newly qualified social workers and 2 years of probationary teachers. The finalised online module was launched in May 2024. The module will feature a music video, with bespoke lyrics written and performed by our artist in residence and member of care experienced community.

As previously noted work has commenced to bring a strong alignment and integration to our public protection activity. Our Child Protection Committee's Learning & Development Sub Committee is leading work to develop a Workforce Development Framework in line with the recently published Child Protection National L&D Framework. This framework will influence all future L&D activity for the whole public protection partnership and ensure the training needs of the various workforce groups in Aberdeen are accurately, consistently met.

Write Right About Me (WRAM) is a programme of work that supports the entire children's service workforce reflect on how we write about and record information about children and young people. It abouts a trauma informed and rights based approach but also ensures their life long needs are considered when we write about them. A WRAM reflective learning e-resource has been developed setting out key principles of Rights, Voice, Participation. Development of Essential Knowledge for workforce (family brothers and sisters, rights, voice and participation, etc.).

### **Children's social work**

Online guidance has now been made available for social workers presenting children's permanence plans to panel to clarify the responsibility to "listened to and meaningfully and appropriately involved in decision-making about their care, with all those involved properly listening and responding to what children want and need." A development session was also facilitated for panel members with the Children's Rights Service with a view to supporting their understanding of their duties in line with the above.

The children's social work workforce have access to a broad spectrum of learning and development opportunities through the CSW Training Calendar and access to CareKnowledge. The training is easily accessible and ensures that our regulatory responsibilities are met, and that the workforces is equipped with the skills and knowledge to carry out their roles. Since last year the CSW induction programme has continued to evolve moving from an overly skills based competency to relational recruitment model. Recruiting on a muti agency basis, involving those with lived experience; candidate genograms; and onsite visits, aimed at ensuring candidates are able to show a rounded understanding of the needs of care experienced children and young people and opportunity to engage with young people staff and environments before entering the job.

### **NESCoL**

While NESCoL has made significant strides in meeting the workforce values set out in The Promise, there are still areas where further change is needed to fully align with the principles and

commitments of the Promise. This includes full organisational roll out of Trauma Informed Practice Training for staff and Managers at NESCol. Nescol continue to support the Students' Association to capture the "Student Voice" ensuring meaningful and relevant support is provided to our Care Experienced Learners.

## **ACVO**

ACVO put in place a Development Officer post with a particular focus on capacity building and support for Third Sector partners in understanding their role to deliver The Promise as well as better understanding how their existing work connects to its priorities. This has involved linking in with national Promise Scotland representatives; speaking directly to Third Sector partners through the Children and Young Peoples Forum; as well as providing a number of information sessions. Future plans to engage with Third Sector will include events and online resources related to The Promise for Third and Public sector colleagues.

## **Professional Learning available through the Educational Psychology Service**

In session 23/24 the educational psychology service increased the training offers available to school staff, including new offers of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA), Executive Functions, Teenage Brain Development. These new packages have been well received, with growing interest and positive feedback, all training offers contain follow-up implementation coaching for the setting.

Further investment in the ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) programme has taken place, increasing the number of ELSA trained staff in schools and ELCs to over 50. This programme has received positive evaluations and cohort 4 will run in session 24/25. Additionally, an ASN ELSA programme was created and piloted, to develop ELSAs with 'Emotionally Connected' expertise in class teams working with some of the most vulnerable children across the city. This had an introductory cohort of 11 (reduced by staff absence). This was very positively evaluated by those in attendance, and using the ELSA model, career long support and development for those trained will continue.

Training by the EPS of school staff as 'companions' in the Seasons for Growth programme (a programme to support bereavement, loss and change) has increased the number of learners receiving support in school by 56 this year to 147. These training packages will inform the priority area of the EPS to work alongside key partners to assist schools in supporting the needs of all learners but new materials and packages are also being developed.

In response to the changes in legal status of UNCRC and The Promise, the EPS has collated and developed resources for accessing and capturing the voices of Children and Young People in Consultations and practice. These resources will guide EPS practice alongside operational guidance to support consistent and supportive practice in the involvement of Children and Young People.

**In summary**, well established systems are in place and these continue to be kept under review to ensure that our efforts to support the workforce reflect national best practice. In recognition



that staff in CSW experience increased risk of vicarious and secondary trauma and burnout, more targeted support is being offered to the workforce. This support is probably most widely seen within the practice of supervision. Training that will complement and build on supervisor's experience, knowledge and skills will be delivered early 2025; with initial commitment to roll this out to line managers across our service. We welcome the anticipated establishment of a National Social Work Agency in the coming year. This will ensure a more consistent approach to staff learning and development on a national basis. Although this may not be fully established by 2024.

**Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:**

- Roll out Corporate training module on a multi-agency basis
- Deliver enhanced support to practitioners to combat the risk of vicarious trauma.
- Develop a suite of child protection e-modules to support self-guided learning.

**On trauma informed, Plan 21-24 says:** Organisations that have responsibilities towards care experienced children and families and those on the edge of care will be able to demonstrate that they are embedding trauma informed practice across their work and within their workforce.

Ensuring our multi-agency workforce is trauma informed and where necessary trauma skilled is a priority of our Corporate Parenting Plan. Every member of the children's services workforce has a role to play in understanding and responding to peoples affected by trauma.

Utilising ring fenced funding we have developed trauma informed resources, accessible to all multi-agency partners. To support greater awareness of these and ensure a greater level of consistency across our workforces we intend to develop a role to support partners further consider how they can enable staff to be trauma informed and to think about how well our services are aligned to the [Roadmap for Creating Trauma-Informed and Responsive Change](#).

We are embedding the national child protection guidance, which is aligned to trauma-informed principles, and there is ongoing work in relation to building trauma-informed universal workforce development plan, drawing upon existing national tools and applying a local lens, this will include simplifying some of the language used to describe different training packages. All of our multi agency child protection training courses now discuss trauma informed practice in depth during training, sign posting attendees to the NHS Trauma Training Programme along with additional toolkits, videos and guidance documents.

Our workforce continue to utilise taurus; Beacon House resources; DDP levels 1 and 2 as well as specific development opportunities attached to specialist roles. Within Health services practitioners continue to undertake NES training on Trauma Informed practice in order to have a trauma informed lens. There has been a good uptake on this.

Our Kinship Adoption and Fostering Service facilitates training for staff and carers to ensure a trauma informed approach to caring for children. Teams have staff who are skilled in Theraplay interventions and this features in mandatory training for carers as well as direct individual support. The Teams have staff trained in Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy Level 1, and also Systemic Family Therapy. The aforementioned approaches feature in children's transitions to adoption as well as in direct support with foster and kinship carers.

NESCoI have produced a Trauma Informed Practice training program to ensure that everyone understands the impact of trauma and can respond in ways that are sensitive, supportive and effective. In addition, NESCoL are rolling cycles of mandatory Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting Training all our staff to ensure they are aligned with the values of The Promise. Feedback from staff have been very positive with staff reporting feelings of empowerment.

Skills Development Scotland career coaching is based on relationships. Most staff have completed Trauma Skilled (Practice Level 2) via TURAS and there is now a need to audit confidence. SDS staff are trained in career coaching approaches and models, all of which have core skills of being person centred, non-judgemental, impartial and active listening. The coaching

nature of our delivery means individuals often disclose significant personal information. Whilst SDS do not have professional supervision for staff, SDS do however support staff through fortnightly reflective practice, Team Leader monthly My Contributions, Employee Assistance Programme and a range of wellbeing initiatives. The SDS Evaluation and Research team is currently undertaking research with staff on being trauma informed and have a Trauma Informed Practice Team Leader Facilitator guide to help this learning be embedded.

Scottish Children's Reporter Administration are currently rolling out Transforming Connections Trauma Skilled Training programme to support their ambition to become a trauma informed and responsive organisation. This training is part of the National Trauma Transformation Programme (NTTP) available to support all members of the workforce. The sessions are mandatory to all staff and training dates have been identified for every Locality. Locally, this is being delivered as two sessions in Aberdeen. The first date took place in September 2024, with the second date in May 2025. Additionally, separate events are planned for all managers and Senior Practitioners with a focus on supporting front line staff to practice in a trauma informed manner.

The Children's Third Sector Forum has identified a number of Third Sector partners that are actively engaging in trauma awareness training. This has included but is not limited to Turas Training and other NHS offered training opportunities; as well as external providers. Training has involved supporting organisations to more readily recognise signs of trauma, improve knowledge of sign posting and referral processes; as well as how to develop environments for service users that also take into account the impact of trauma

Following a audit of practice, a key part of our refreshed LOIP Projects has seen the development of multi-agency Neglect training and a toolkit published through ThingLink that to date this has seen 428 users. The aim of this project and associated training is to support early intervention by increasing 'confidence in identifying and taking action on harm'. Practitioners will often try and reduce/stop the harm from continuing soon after it has already happened. But the aim of this project is to increase the knowledge and confidence of staff to enable them to support children and families not already known to the social work service and therefore have not yet reached that need for social work intervention. Increasing practitioners confidence is key to enabling them to identify neglect sooner and provide early intervention/support to a child/family. Having access to the right tools and resources in order to reduce the long term impact of neglect. This will potentially reduce the length of time that support from external agencies is required, with families receiving support quicker.

**In summary,** work is well developed. This growing capacity is building our confidence and resilience to meet the needs of care experienced children and families including those on the edge of care. The Children's Services Board recently completed a Trauma Informed Readiness Self-assessment across the six dimensions identified in the Roadmap for Creating Trauma Informed Responsive Change, this highlighted the need for greater consistency but also the need to do more to ensure the physical spaces in which we invite families to engage with services need to become more trauma informed while also removing barriers that enables families to access directly/self-refer into services.

## Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:

- As far as possible ensure key buildings are designed through a trauma informed lens – Bairns Hoose, community spaces to deliver the Family Support Model.
- Further embed understanding of trauma informed approaches across the public sector.
- Deliver support to services to bring enhanced awareness to trauma practice tools and resources, ensuring workforce plans have trauma informed practice at their core.
- Involving children and families in planning, policy and guidance development and continue to raise awareness of the importance of Child Voice.

**Of on-going relationships, Plan 21-24 says:** There will be no blanket policies or guidance that prevent the maintenance of relationships between young people and those who care for them. Settings of care will be able to facilitate the protection of relationships that are important to children and young people.

Many of our services now function on basis that allows children and families to re-engage with them once their involvement has come to an end. This will be replicated by the recovery service in our Bairns Hoose and Family Support Model.

Craigielea Intensive Support Services practice an open door policy for those who have been supported by the service. Staff maintain an agreed level of contact with young people following instances when they are accommodated out with their family in recognition of the intensive relationship built prior to accommodation. This helps maintain links with their community recognising many return to their community in future.

Creation of a Children's Residential Aftercare Service has supported a growing number of young people to receive Aftercare support from those with whom they enjoy established and trusting relationships. The model has been adopted by locally commissioned services. This approach is part of the ethos of care set out clearly in how we plan and deliver care across our children's home service.

We are aware that many of our foster carers continue to maintain a strong connection with young people they have cared for. This connection can include providing emotional and practical support including inviting them back for special family events. Much of this occurs contact occurs in a manner outside the radar of professional oversight. This is entirely appropriate reflecting the relationships that exist. Foster carers also demonstrate such when children move to adoptive families and provides the child with a live connection to their own history.

Relational approaches are well embedded across our care services with many young people maintaining relationships with staff and foster carers. Relational approaches are embedded across fostering service via increase in continuing care numbers and relationships being sustained beyond formal arrangements. Police Scotland, as Corporate Parents, uphold our NE Divisional Pledge to support any care experienced young person should they seek advice in

respect to personal and home safety when moving into their own home for the first time. This is also extended to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children who are new to the area and require extra support.

A review of policies, confirmed that there is no policy framework which prevents the maintenance of relationships between young people and those who care for them. Adopters, kinship and foster carers' training has been enhanced to include supporting relationships for children and young people in care and maintaining relationships.

**In summary**, practice is well embedded in this area.

**Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:**

- Continue to explore why adopters have been unable to maintain relationships for children and young people to better inform our guidance and support.
- Take account of learning from the thematic inspection in relation to children with disabilities and from our Bright Spots programme.

**On workforce support, Plan 21-24 says:** A new framework of support will be in place to ensure people involved in the care of care experienced children and young people feel valued, encouraged and have supportive relationships for reflection with high quality supervision and environmental conditions.

Children's Social Work have refreshed and strengthen their workforce development plan to consider the development needs of the workforce as well as their wellbeing needs ensuring they feel valued and supported to undertake their role. Following a staff survey on supervision practices in spring 2023, a supervision working group was established to develop supervision guidance that aligns to operational delivery and prioritises wellbeing. The development of our newly qualified social workers (NQSW) programme has endured strong alignment to the changes proposed from the introduction of the NQSW Supported Year due to come into effect in autumn 2024.

Within our residential service additional professional development is being progressed based on 'consolidation foundations to practice' incrementally building on a repertoire to allow trauma enhanced skills to take root.

Skills Development Scotland staff are trained in career coaching approaches and models, all of which have core skills of being person centred, non-judgemental, impartial and active listening. A central aspect of coaching is around understanding self and strengths and the impact of mindset, not just with our customers but also as individuals employees. The coaching nature of our delivery means that individuals often disclose significant personal information. Whilst we do not have professional supervision for our staff, we do support staff through fortnightly reflective practice, Team Leader monthly My Contributions, Employee Assistance Programme and a range of wellbeing supports.

**In summary,** good progress has been made in this area and effective systems are in place. The NSAW will support delivery of the Advanced Practice Framework for social work. This will have a focus on staff professional development as development of their self to sustain resilience to deliver services to children and families with complex needs.

**Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:**

- Further develop workforce wellbeing supports
- Implement the social work workforce plan.

## Our Progress in Delivering Priority 4, Planning

**The promise says,** There needs be a different approach to investment and planning. National partners have a significant role to play in ensuring a new context for funding, investment and planning. Children and families live in local communities and use local services. It is important that their experiences and outcomes are not determined simply by which local community they live in or local service they use. Planning and investment should be nationally coordinated to ensure that children and families get what they need. Whilst the majority of the promise relates to matters which are reserved to The Scottish Parliament, the English Independent Review of Children's Social Care has relevance in respect of cross-jurisdiction issues.

**On planning, Plan 21-24 says:** Scotland will have a national, strategic planning process in place that ensures that children who are cared for away from their family of origin 'belong to a loving home.'

The planning process will reflect the needs of Scotland's children and young people whilst operating with the expectation that more children will remain with their families. It will reflect the principles of the promise ensuring:

- Scotland's most vulnerable children are not profited from,
- Standards of care are consistent
- End to the selling of care placements to Local Authorities outside Scotland
- Acute and crisis services are phased out to promote early intervention and prevention

### Reviewing commissioned services

We have undertaken a review of our commissioned services and expanded our support offer to Kinship and Foster Carers emphasising the importance of love and trauma recovery.

### National policy changes

We broadly welcomed the Hearings System Working Group's recommendation report. As the report recognises, there is significant work already underway, through existing groups, such as the Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership, or through new policy, legislation and practice development. These include, but are not limited to, the introduction of Bairn's Hoose, the incorporation into Scots Law of the UNCRC; updated Child Protection Guidance, GIRFEC refresh, Secure Care Redesign, and the Children's Care and Justice Bill, alongside the proposed National Social Work Agency, amongst others. This rapidly changing policy landscape/improvement work must be seen in the context of improving systems and practices for and with children, young people, and their families and all will have a positive impact on the children's hearing system, directly or indirectly.

We await the Scottish Government's response to the Hearing's System report and recognise that many of the recommendations, if accepted, will require substantial legislative change.



Additionally we welcome the introduction of the Scottish Recommended Allowance for foster carers and kinship carers. This will bring greater consistency and provides a statutory footing to the love, care and support they provide children and young people.

We have actively contributed to the redesign work in relation to Scotland's Secure estate. We are conscious that the present financial climate may impact the progress of this work and indeed other legislative change. Unless legislative change is adequately resourced then there is a risk it will not deliver the expected change and undermine the confidence of the care experienced community that we collectively are committed to #keepingthepromise.

Despite work undertaken to date, the Bright Sports survey has highlighted that significantly fewer children and young people in Aberdeen had received an explanation about why they were in care and did not want to know more when compared to children and young people in the Bright Spots comparator group. (48% to 65% for 8-11yrs, 69% to 78% for 11-17yrs).

**In summary**, work is underway locally. We welcome the national changes being proposed and continue to reflect the direction of travel advocated in The Promise in our commissioning arrangements. Considerable work continues to be required at a national level and this need to be reflected in Plan 24 – 30.

**Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:**

- Continue to develop local services which promote early intervention and prevention
- We recognise that there remain differences between the care provided in Aberdeen City versus the care provision we commissions externally e.g. we do not use restraint in any of our local care settings, however, further work is required to embed this change nationally
- It remains challenging to set out our next steps in the absence of a lack of clarity as to the time line associated with legislative and national policy change. What is required moving forward is a cohesive and joined up approach to improvement, across local and national government.



**On investment, Plan 21-24 says:** Investment in the lives of children and families will be considered strategically and holistically in the context of their experiences. The Human and Economic Cost modelling that underpinned Follow the Money and The Money reports will be embedded into organisational and budgeting processes across Scotland. That process will have involved organisations working together to spread investment and align budgets.

Continuing progress has been made in delivering services in an integrated and colocated basis. This reflects knowledge that the sum of our efforts is greater than the individual parts. There are positive examples across universal and targeted services of co-designing and delivering services to vulnerable groups. We need to ensure as public finances become even more stretched we remain focused on developing collaborative ways of supporting children, young people and families to maximise the use of available partnership resource. The commitment from all partners to resource the Bairns Hoose reflects our continuing commitment. This approach will be further developed as we progress our Family Support Model.

Partnership commissioning principles have been agreed. All grants for children are overseen by the Children's Services Board.

**In summary,** work is well underway. We continue to focus on developing early and preventative support to prevent an escalation of harm and involvement in statutory social work services. We recognise this is not only the right thing to do but mitigates the subsequent risk of high cost intervention.

#### **Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:**

- Continue to review the impact of resource allocations to inform future investment and planning.
- Continue to invest in early and preventative supports.
- Continue to ensure the voice of children and families informs the design of our services.

**On information sharing, Plan 21-24 says:** Organisations with responsibilities towards children and families will be confident about when, where, why and how to share information with partners. Information sharing will not be a barrier to supporting children and families.

#### **GIRFEC arrangements**

Well established GIRFEC arrangements are in place and the workforce has a clear understanding of when and how to share information in line with legislation. Operational Guidance reflects updated national guidance. Audit activity continues to evidence GIRFEC is well embedded.

#### **Data sharing arrangements**

The partnership has existing data sharing agreements that enable the routine sharing of appropriate data to produce multi-agency data sets. CELCIS have engaged with the data reporting of our Child Protection Committee to inform national approaches to data reporting.

Challenges remain in complex organisational systems which create barriers to identifying and sharing information and data.

### **Records of Involvement**

Social Care Database - a record of all planning and decision making forums are recorded on the child's record in D365. Checks can be made on whether they attended or how their views were provided. Aberdeen City Council are actively collaborating with the national My Care Record project to develop digital access to records. Work is progressing to migrate other services over onto the Platform

**In summary,** there are well established systems in place across the Community Planning Partnership. While there will always be a need to consider improvement opportunities this area will not form a prominent focus in plan 24 – 30.

### **Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:**

- Implement the Request for Assistance process to enable us to better analyse the impact of services supporting children and families.
- Capitalise on opportunities to enable providers to utilise D365 to create a single record for the child/young person.

## Our Progress in Delivery Priority 5, Building Capacity

**The Promise says:** Over the next 3 years, there will be a focus on work that ensures that the structural underpinning of the 'care system' is orientated to the needs of children and families. This work to build capacity and coherence reflects the planned obsolescence of The Promise Scotland. It will not always be there to provide oversight and accountability and the structures need to move to ensure that the scaffolding around the 'care system' facilitates and upholds children's rights

**On legislation, Plan 21-24 says,** Over the course of the next Parliamentary term, there will be identifiable progress made towards ensuring Scotland's legislative framework around the breadth of the 'care system' is coherent and cohesive, upholds the conclusions of the Independent Care Review and is compliant with the UNCRC.

The Children's Services Board is alert to and tracks proposed legislative change. A local review of policies and guidance has been undertaken to ensure UNCRC compliance and strategic planning is informed by and aligned to upholding the UNCRC.

Planning, at a local level to consider the implications and requirements of the Care and Justice Bill is ongoing and we are well connected to the CYCJ.

We have an established multi-agency group (CSW, SCRA and CHS) to support local improvement and delivery of Children's Hearings, that are child-centred. This forum enables practice issues to be raised adopting an active learning approach. Through this we are beginning to explore some of the changes identified via the Children's Hearing review that don't require legislative change. It also will provides a forum that can actively support to deliver the change required from new legislation.

**In summary,** effective arrangements are in place locally, however change is required at a national level. It is anticipated much of this will be carried into Plan 24 – 30.

### **Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:**

- Continue horizon scan for legislative change and work to consider what this will mean at a local level.

**On the Children's Hearing system, Plan 21-24 says:** The Children's Hearing System will have gone through a redesign process.

That redesign process will bring together children and families, and organisations that hold the responsibility, to rethink the structures, processes and legislation that underpin the hearing system.

The aim will be to ensure there are coherent, cohesive and collaborative proposals on an operating framework for The Children's Hearings System that has been designed with children and families.

That redesign process will be underpinned by:

- giving effect to the promise;
- ensuring compliance with the UNCRC,
- upholding the original intention of The Kilbrandon Review that children involved in offending need care and protection; and
- ensuring The Children's Hearing System and The Courts can facilitate child friendly justice that upholds children's rights and enables their effective participation.

We broadly welcome the [Hearing Systems Working Group's Recommendation report](#). Whilst we await change at a national level we continue to work closely with local and national colleagues from SCRA and CHS. Grampian-wide tests of change are being taken forward.

Practice and culture change is being promoted to consider how we will best support 16 and 17 years olds, in line with proposed changes to the Children's Hearings system and legislation anticipated from the Care and Justice Bill.

**In summary**, as a partnership we continue to be proactive but change is required at national level. It is anticipated much of this will be carried into Plan 24 – 30.

**Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:**

- Await the Scottish Government's formal response to the HSWG review
- Explore change at a local level to improve our processes, practice and culture.

**On inspection and regulation, Plan 21-24 says** A new, holistic framework for inspection and regulation that values what children and family's value, will have been scoped and developed. It will understand the necessary legislative change required to focus on children's experiences and will be underpinned by the principles set out in the promise and give full effect to the secure care pathway and standards.

We have a local interface with our Link Inspector and participated in a number of Thematic Inspections Secure Care Pathway Review; Children with Disability Review. The findings from these will be considered by individual services and at a partnership level so that learning can be built into our annual Children's Services Plan update. There is an increasing focus within these inspections to ensure the voice of children and young people are central to them. We will also in the coming year step up our planning for a strategic inspection given that our last one was in 2019.

**In summary,** change is required from the Care Inspectorate and we will take learning from national thematic inspections but also look at best practice from other published inspections. The findings of the Secure Care Pathway review recognises that unless there is investment from Scottish Government many of the key messages cannot be fully delivered.

**Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:**

- Conversations with the Care Inspectorate and at a national level to continue
- Reflect on and embed learning from thematic reviews into local practices and processes

**On policy coherence, Plan 21-24 says:** There will be cohesive alignment in the policy initiatives and frameworks across Scotland. Policy development across Scotland will reflect the realities of people's lives and create a coherent policy environment. The focus of the 21-24 period will be on implementation and alignment not inquiries and reviews.

All policies across education and children's services, reflect what is known about incorporation of the UNCRC and The Promise. exploring ways to meaningfully engage young people in our governance and planning structures as well as establishing an assurance process to ensure that children and young people are involvement in decisions and design of services that affect them.

Our LOIP, Children's Services Plan, Child Poverty Plan and other local and national strategic plans have been aligned with The Promise and UNCRC. Locally we have convened a National Care Service (NCS) multi-agency group to ensure early planning and consideration of decisions made in relation to NCS.

**In summary,** work is advanced in this area. We continue to proactively plan for changes in policy and welcome greater coherence nationally. There will be a need to continue to monitor how the UNCRC is interpreted by the Courts.

### Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:

- Policy coherence across the partnership will be supported by local development and implementation of the Bairns Hoose model
- We intend to align reporting of the child protection improvement plan to children's services planning to further support coherence

**On data mapping and collection, Plan 21-24 says, Scotland will have a cohesive central picture of all data on the processes and systems that directly and indirectly impact on children and their families, including wider socio-structural factors. The data picture will have been used to fully align data systems, collection and analysis methodologies to what matters to children and families, and the needs of those who take decisions on how best to support children and their families.**

A suite of multi-agency data to support the monitoring of children's services activity and tracking of trends for our children and young people across the partnership has continued to develop and mature. Better consistency of data is required at a national level to support benchmarking and a review of what data is collected and reported upon, and whether this really matters to children and families.

**In summary,** good progress has been locally. It is acknowledged that the maturity of our collection and use of data will need to evolve in accordance to legislative and policy change. However we are confident in our capability to respond to these changes.

### Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:

- Continue to engage with the Local authority social work services children and families group and Promise Scotland to inform national change
- Our corporate parenting data largely relates to looked-after children. We want to continue to develop routine collection of care experienced data to help us better understand a child/young person's experiences and outcomes beyond care better.
- The use of data at both a quantitative and qualitative level will drive the development of our Family Support Model.

**On governance structures, Plan 21-24 says, All public appointments to any of Scotland's Boards and Public Bodies which have an impact on the 'care system' will ensure that the values of the promise are embedded in recruitment frameworks. The governance landscape around the various Boards, networks and groups that sit around the 'care system' will be rationalised to enable effective and accountable shared working around the lives of children and families.**

The Aberdeen City Community Planning partnership has a range of highly effective governance arrangements in place including our Chief Officers Group (COG), Child Protection Committee (CPC) and Children's Services Board (CSB). These arrangements, where candour, curiosity and accountability between partners is actively encouraged, has significantly aided our practice and

contributed to an ongoing culture of improvement around public protection. As noted we welcome the intention to establish a National Public Protection Leaders Group.

The Children's Services Board is governed by and accountable to the Community Planning Management Board, which in turn is accountable to Community Planning Aberdeen.

Principally the actions in this area are for the Scottish Government to progress. Locally we continue to ensure that the aspirations of The Promise run throughout our Children's Services Plan and other strategic plans. There remains a strong commitment from partners to deliver the cultural and system change required to improve the outcomes of all children, young people with experience of care.

**In summary**, sound governance arrangements are in place locally. It not anticipated that national governance arrangements will be fully delivered by the end of the lifetime of Plan 21-24.

**Next Steps as we transition into Plan 24 – 30:**

- Remain engaged with partners at a national and local level to prepare for timeous implementation of change locally as national direction becomes clearer

## APPENDIX A – PROMISE DATA SET

Plan 21-24 action	RAG rating	5 year trend
<b>Priority 1 – A Good Childhood</b>		
Support		<p><b>Increasing trend</b> in the no. of Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) engaging in Active Schools activity.</p> <p><b>Increasing trend</b> in the no. of CEYP accessing free leisure from 294 in 2019 to 647 in 2024 (the number includes adult members who enable engagement)</p> <p><b>Decreasing trend</b> in the percentage of young people who started treatment in CAMHS within 18 weeks of referral from 93% in 2018 to 46% in 2023</p> <p><b>Increasing trend</b> in the no. of families accessing financial support from 295 in 2018 to 1040 in 2022/23.</p> <p><b>Stable trend</b> in the no. of children and young people supported universally by the Educational Psychology (EP) Service (407 over 2022/23 and 406 2023/24). Total number of Requests for assistance 2022/23 206 and 210 2023/24)</p> <p><b>Increasing trend</b> in the no. of children and young people who were supported through specialist Educational Psychology involvement or assessment throughout the year (26 in 2022/23 and 28 in 2023/24).</p> <p><b>Stable trend</b> in the no. children and young people looked after in residential care from 12% (67) in 2022/23 to 12% (64) in 2023/24</p>
A right to education <i>(to be updated following publication of national verified data)</i>		<p><b>Improving trend</b> in reducing levels of unauthorised school absence from 6.93% in 2017/18 to 3.70% in 2022/2023 for all Looked After Children and Young People.</p> <p><b>Improving trend</b> in the attendance rates of Looked After Children and Young People from 87.28% in 2017/2018 to 88.36% in 2022/23.</p> <p><b>Improving trend</b> in reducing the exclusion rates of Looked After Children and Young People from 184 temporary exclusions in 2018/2019 to 83 in 2022/23.</p> <p><b>Stable trend</b> in the attainment of Looked After Children and Young People in Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) (combined P1,4 and 7).</p> <p><b>Improving trend</b> in the % of Looked After Children and Young People achieving Early Level Numeracy by the end of P1 from 66.67% in 2018/19 to 90.91% in 2022/23.</p>



**Improving trend** in the % of Looked After Children and Young People achieving First Level Numeracy by the end of P4 from 30% in 2017/18 to 62.5% in 2022/23.

**Improving trend** in the % of Looked After Children and Young People achieving Second Level Numeracy by the end of P7 from 40% in 2018/19 to 60.0% in 2022/23.

**Improving trend** in the % of Looked After Children and Young People achieving Third Level or better Numeracy by the end of S3 from 33% in 2018/19 to 50% in 2022/23.

**Improving trend** in the % of Looked After Children with 1 or more qualification at SCQF Level 3 from 81.82% in 2018/2019 to 88.24% in 2022/2023.

**Decreasing trend** in the % of Looked After Children with 1 or more qualification at SCQF level 4 from 72.73% in 2018/2019 to 64.71% in 2022/2023.

**Decreasing trend** in the % of Looked After Children achieving a literacy qualification at Level 4 from 72.73% in 2018/2019 to 58.82% in 2022/2023.

**Increasing gap** between % of Looked After Children leavers and the local authority average attaining a Level 4 qualification in literacy from 19.4% in 2018/2019 and 34.59% in 2022/2023.

**Increasing gap** between % of Looked After Children leavers and the local authority average attaining a Level 4 qualification in numeracy from 20.26% in 2018/2019 to 36.10% in 2022/2023.

**Decreasing trend** in the % of Looked After Children achieving a literacy qualification at Level 5 from 36.36% in 2018/2019 to 23.53% in 2022/2023.

**Decreasing trend** in the % of Looked After Children with 1 or more qualification at SCQF Level 5 or better from 40.91% in 2018/2019 to 29.41% in 2022/2023.

**Decreasing trend** in the % of Percentage of Looked After Children with 1 or more qualification at SCQF Level 6 or better from 18.18% in 2018/2019 to 5.88% in 2022/2023.

**Decreasing trend** in the % of Looked After Children with 1 or more qualification at SCQF Level 7 or better from 4.55% in 2018/2019 to 0% in 2022/2023.

**Decreasing trend** in the average tariff points achieved by Looked After Children and **increasing gap** between those who have experienced care and their peers.

**Increasing trend** in the % of school leavers who were Looked After away from

		<p>home in positive initial destinations from 81.82% in 2018/2019 to 88.24% in 2022/23.</p> <p><b>Increasing trend</b> in the % of school leavers who were Looked After at home in positive initial destinations from 63.64% in 2018/19 to 83.33% in 2022/2023.</p> <p><b>Increasing trend</b> in the % of Looked After Children and Young People considered for a Coordinated Support Plan from 3% in 2019 to 49% in 2023 in the city.</p> <p><b>Increasing trend</b> in the staying on rates of those who are cared for compared to their peers for S4, S5 and S6</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">S4/S5 Staying on Rates</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th>2016/17</th> <th>2022/23</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>All</td> <td>83.34%</td> <td>87.02%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>All Looked After</td> <td>44.8%</td> <td>62.5%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">S5/S6 Staying on Rates</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th>2016/17</th> <th>2022/23</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>All</td> <td>65.54%</td> <td>62.43%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>All Looked After</td> <td>14.3%</td> <td>30%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	S4/S5 Staying on Rates				2016/17	2022/23	All	83.34%	87.02%	All Looked After	44.8%	62.5%	S5/S6 Staying on Rates				2016/17	2022/23	All	65.54%	62.43%	All Looked After	14.3%	30%
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Relationships		<p>We will commence annual reporting of the no. of children who were not placed with their brothers and sisters at the point of placement start date</p> <p><b>Decreasing trend</b> in the no. of children placed with ACC Foster Carers from 15% (81) in 2018/19, to 14% (73) in 2022/23.</p>																								
Brothers and sisters		<p><b>87% (467)</b> of looked after children and young people are placed with siblings (2023 new measure)</p> <p><b>13% of looked after children</b> and young people are separated from a sibling (2023 new measure)</p> <p><b>Stable trend</b> in the no. of foster carers who take sibling placements</p> <p><b>Improving trend</b> in the no. of Kinship Carers receiving multi-agency support</p>																								
Youth justice		<p><b>Decreasing trend</b> in the no. and % of young people in secure accommodation due to criminality (2023: 1/&lt;1%)</p> <p><b>Increasing trend</b> in the no. and % of complex young people in secure accommodation due to SCRA decisions</p> <p><b>Improving trend</b> in the no. of offences linked to young people in local children's homes (nil over reporting period)</p>																								

		<b>Improving trend</b> in the % of young people charged with an offence
Advocacy		<p><b>Increasing trend</b> in the % of CEYP accessing independent advocacy</p> <p><b>Increasing trend</b> in the no. of children and young people accessing Young Person's Rights Service who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care experienced (Jun 2023: 14)</li> <li>• Involved in child protection processes (Jun 2023, Legal Status = Promotion of welfare of children in need: 4)</li> </ul>
Moving on		<p><b>Improving trend</b> in the no. of CEYP working with a mentor from 0 in 2019 to 52 meeting mentors (MCR) and 4 supported by the Pathways Co-Ordinator (MCR) in Jan 2024.</p> <p><b>Consistently high trend</b> in the no. of care leavers with a pathway plan from 100% in 2018/19 to 100% in 2021/22.</p> <p><b>Increasing trend</b> in the no. of young people in continuing care placements from 16 in 2018/19 to 31 in 2022/23.</p> <p><b>Stable trend</b> in the provision of pathway plans. 92% of all young people eligible for a pathway plan have one (2023)</p> <p><b>Decreasing trend</b> in the no. of youth homelessness applications from care leavers (0 in 2023)</p> <p><b>Increasing trend</b> in the no. of young people not paying Council Tax up to 26 years due to Council decisions</p>
Physical intervention		<p><b>Reducing trend</b> in the no. of restraints used in local children's homes (1 in 2023)</p> <p><b>Reducing trend</b> in the no. of restraints used in education</p> <p>CSW will implement guidance on recording of the use of restraint for all CEYP placed in out of authority placements and other community settings in 2024.</p>
<b>Priority 2 – Whole Family Support</b>		
Family Support		<p><b>Stable trend</b> in the no. of care experienced 2–5-year-olds attending ELC:</p> <p>2020/21 - 74 (31 – 3-5s and 49 Eligible 2's)</p> <p>2021/22 - 70 (25 – 3-5s and 45 Eligible 2's)</p> <p>2022/23 - 42 (19 – 3-5s and 29 Eligible 2's)</p> <p>2023/24 - 26 (19 – 3-5s and 6 Eligible 2's to date – January 2024)</p> <p><b>Stable trend</b> in the no. of care experienced parents applying for Eligible 2's ELC place for their child(ren):</p>

		<p>2021/22 - 2 2022/23 - 4 2023/24 - 2</p> <p><b>Stable trend</b> in the no. of % of care experienced parents engaging with the Family Nurse Partnership</p> <p><b>Improving trend</b> in the no. of CEYP living with Foster Carers on continuing care arrangement from 8 in 2018 to 24 in 2023.</p> <p><b>Stable trend</b> in the no. of families accessing the Fit Like Family Wellbeing Service (585 referrals in 2022 of these 335 (57%) new families accessed support; 599 in 2023 of these 378 (63%) new families accessed support.</p> <p><b>Stable trend</b> in the number of families who identified that their circumstances/risks had improved as a result of support provided by Includem - 15 in 2022, 12 in 2023.</p> <p><b>Increasing trend</b> in the number of kinship care breakdowns from 4 in 2018/19 to 8 in 2022/23</p> <p><b>Increasing trend</b> in the No. of kinship carers accessing multi-agency support.</p> <p><b>Stable trend</b> in the recruitment of new foster carers with a steady average of around 10 per year (in 2023 12 new foster carers were approved from 6 households).</p> <p><b>Stable trend</b> in the no. of kinship care assessments undertaken, the average for the preceding three years is 22 kinship assessments per year.</p> <p><b>Increasing trend</b> in the no of families supported through the Links Hub. In Year 1 of Links Hub opening, 2022/23, 33 families were identified as in need of intensive support, and 45 families are currently being supported in Year 2, 2023/24. Issues include poverty, domestic violence and alcohol and drug misuse.</p>
Peer and community support		<p><b>Increasing trend</b> in the no. of families being support by Community Learning</p> <p><b>Increasing trend</b> in the no. of families the Family Learning Team are engaging with from 236 in 2017/19 to 621 in 2022/23.</p> <p><b>Increasing trend</b> in the impact of Family Learning. In 2018/2019 88% of respondents reported an improvement in confidence and 90% improvement in skills &amp; knowledge. In 2022/2023 91% of respondents reported an improvement in confidence and 98% an improvement in knowledge &amp; skills.</p> <p><b>Stable trend</b> in the no. of families being supported by Barnardo's young carers service. (2022 - 144 young people/123 families; 2023 152 young people/131 families).</p>

		<p>The average length of engagement with the Young Carers Service is <b>stable</b> at 2-3 years.</p> <p><b>444 parents and families with complex needs</b> were supported by organisations accessing grants from the Fairer Aberdeen Fund. 70% of families agreed risk had been reduced and 4 families no longer required Social Work support.</p>
Service integration		<p>Evidence from multi-agency thematic audits undertaken highlight a positive and <b>stable trend</b>. In 2022 63% of cases audited were evaluated as good or better in 2023 this was 80%. (Not directly comparable due to audit sample, focus and questions.)</p> <p><b>Increasing trend</b> in the no. of shared services delivered (7 on-going collaborations with Children's Social Work)</p>
Family therapies		<p><b>Stable trend</b> in the length of engagement with the Fit Like Family Wellbeing Service: less than 6 months 24%; 6-12 months 28%; 12-18months 19% and 18+ months 18%.</p> <p><b>Stable trend</b> in those moving on from the Fit Like Service. In 2023 of the 113 families who moved on from the Fit Like Wellbeing Service 76% were supported by universal services; 12% were supported by CSW and 11% were supported by CAMHS.</p> <p><b>Stable trend</b> in the no. of families accessing support from Includem. In 2022 Includem engaged with 42 young people, in 2023 this was 45.</p> <p><b>Stable trend</b> in the average length of engagement Includem had with young people. 49 weeks in 2022, 43 weeks in 2023.</p>
<b>Priority 3 – Supporting the Workforce</b>		
Workforce values		<b>Increasing trend</b> in the % of the children's workforce, chief officers, elected members and all corporate parents who complete Corporate Parenting training aligned to The Promise
Trauma informed		<b>Increasing trend</b> in the % of children's workforce has undertaken trauma awareness training (100% for ACC), 80% of frontline children's social work practitioners have completed the 4 TURAS Trauma Skills modules
On-going relationships		There are <b>no local policies</b> which prevent on-going relationships
Workforce support		<b>Increasing availability</b> of staff wellbeing supports.
<b>Priority 4 - Planning</b>		
Planning		<p><b>A reducing trend</b> in the % of care experienced children with 3 or more placements from 6% in 2017/18 to 5% in 2021/22</p> <p><b>A reducing trend</b> in the % of care experienced children with more than 1</p>

		placement in the past year from 21.7% in 2017/18 to 18.8% in 2021/22.
Investment		<p><b>An increasing trend</b> in the number of households experiencing poverty (1 in 5 children now live in poverty)</p> <p><b>An increasing trend</b> in the number of families supported to claim all benefit entitlements</p>
Information sharing		<p><b>A stable trend</b> in the number of IRDs held from 417 in 2018/19 to 350 in 2021/22.</p> <p><b>A declining trend</b> in the % of IRD leading to Child Protection Planning Meetings from 64% in 2018/19 to 24% in 2022/23</p> <p>Evidence from multi-agency thematic audits undertaken highlight a positive and <b>stable trend</b> in relation to information sharing to protect children from harm. In 2022 80% of cases audited were evaluated as good or better in 2023 this was 75%. (Not directly comparable due to audit sample and focus.)</p>
<b>Priority 5 – Building Capacity</b>		
Legislation		
Children's Hearing System		
Inspection and regulation		
Policy coherence		<b>Improved alignment</b> of national policy (local arrangements)
Data mapping and collection		<b>Improved access</b> to data through D365
Governance structures		<b>Sound local governance arrangements</b>



## PRIORITIES FOR ACTION



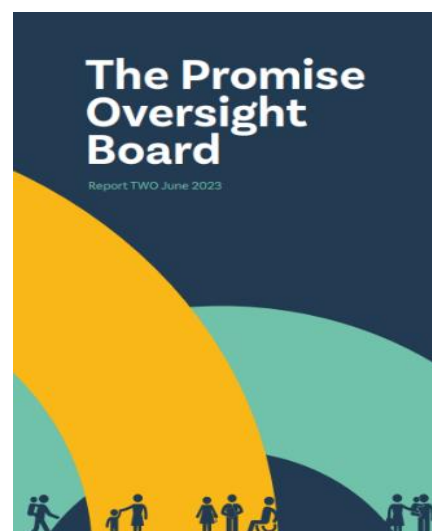
### Local and National Context

We are now 3 years into our journey to #KeepThePromise and Plan 21-24 is coming to an end. Plan 21-24 was intended to be the first of three intended plans that we ensure Scotland delivered on its promise to care experienced children and young people. #keptthepromise.

In its second report, The Promise Oversight Board, acknowledged the challenging context within which The Promise and Plan 21-24 was launched, referencing the impact of the Covid pandemic and cost of living crisis on people and organisations. The Board was realistic in stating that due to the worsening circumstances and the current pace of change, they do not believe that delivering the original aims of Plan 21-24 is realistic by 2024. However, they reiterated that The Promise is non-negotiable and must be kept by 2030.

As our self-evaluation reflects, there is a lot of positive work underway that is making a difference to the lives of children and families which must be celebrated and built on.

To help deliver this Promise Scotland intimated their intention to prepare a six year plan – Plan 24 – 30 – which is to be published in June 2024. They also intimated there needed to be a more consistent approach to determining the extent to which Scotland, at a local and national level, was #keepingthepromise. As such there is intended to be a more consistent approach to reporting on future progress. The structure of this report is as yet unclear, however our work to date puts us in a strong position to respond positively to this ask.

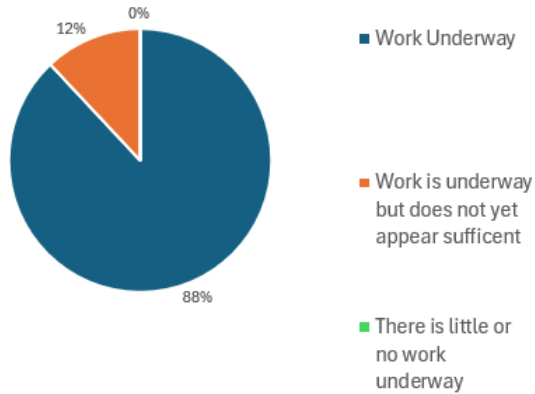


## Summary of Progress

In 2023, we reported our progress against the 25 priority actions from Plan 21-24 as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

### Aberdeen Children's Services Year 2 of Plan 21-24: Status of Work

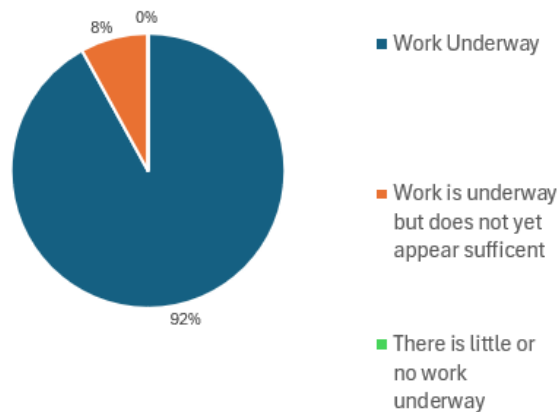
31st March 2023



From this year's self-evaluation against the 25 priority actions from Plan 21-24 we can see that progress has continued over the last year. We have identified no areas where there is 'little or no work underway'.

### Aberdeen Children's Services Year 3 of Plan 21-24: Status of Work

31st March 2024



While the pie chart for Year 3 is broadly similar to the previous year this belies the strong evidence of continuing progress made over the passed year. Much of the change and improvement activity has moved from "underway" to being "embedded". We have however stuck to the same reporting format given this is aligned to the national reporting model and it also provides for consistency at a local level. The priority actions - planning, legislation and governance structures, where we have identified '*work is underway but does not yet appear sufficient*' require change at a national, systems level e.g. by the Scottish Government or Children's Hearings system, before a local response can be made.



<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education and Children’s Services Committee
<b>DATE</b>	26 November 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Aberdeen City’s Child Protection Committee Annual Report 2023-24
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	F&C/24/312
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Eleanor Sheppard
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Graeme Simpson
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Amy Anderson
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	2.1, 2.2, 2.3

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To share Aberdeen City’s Child Protection Committee (CPC) Annual Report 2023-24 to provide assurance that the work of the CPC is effectively helping reduce risks to children and young people.

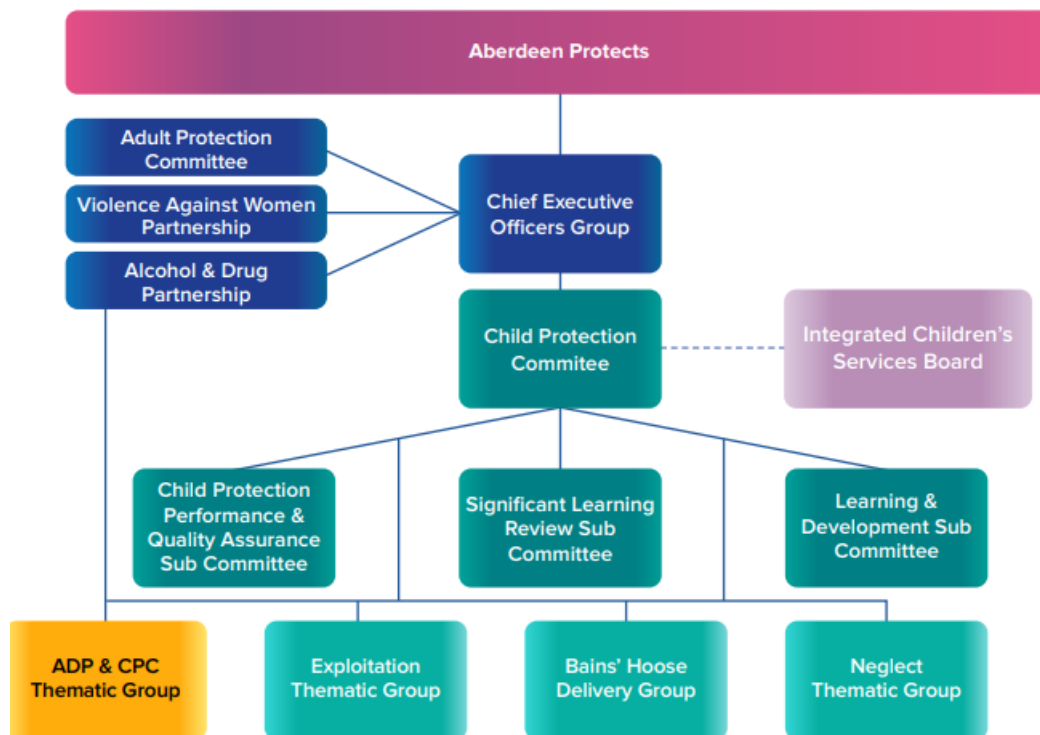
**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 notes the content of the CPC’s Annual Report 2023-24, including the conclusion of the Child Protection Programme 2021-2024; and
- 2.2 instructs the Chief Social Work Officer to provide Committee with a further report in November 2025 detailing the continuing impact and effectiveness of partnership work in relation to child protection.

**3. CURRENT SITUATION**

- 3.1 Aberdeen City’s Child Protection Committee (CPC) is a multi-agency strategic partnership governed by the Chief Executive Officers of Aberdeen City Council, NHS Grampian and the Police Commander for the area. It is committed to providing individual and collective leadership and direction for the management of child protection services in the Aberdeen City area. Areas for improvement which are identified through self-evaluation are driven through the Child Protection Programme.
- 3.2 The CPC works collaboratively with other strategic partnerships in the City such as the Children’s Services Board, Aberdeen Violence Against Women & Girls Partnership (particularly in relation to child protection and domestic abuse), Adult Protection Committee, Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership under the banner of Aberdeen Protects as is outlined in the visual below.



- 3.3 The CPC routinely analyses and evaluates the impact of our collaborative work to keep children safe. Areas for improvement are detailed in the CPC Child Protection Programme 2021-24 which aims to improve the safety, wellbeing and life chances of vulnerable children and young people. Improvement activity is reported to and monitored by the CPC through its connected sub committees which are; the Significant Learning Review, the Performance & Quality Assurance, and the Learning & Development sub committees. Improvement activity set out in the Child Protection Programme 2021-2024, is and will be subject to the inspection scrutiny of the Care Inspectorate.
- 3.4 The CPC produces a statutory Annual Report to demonstrate the work of the CPC over a full year in both leading and improving child protection arrangements. The report is informed by the now well embedded Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) and audit programme.
- 3.5 The Annual Report highlights many achievements including the development of our Bairns' Hoose following our successful pathfinder application, the delivery of a Learning Event for practitioners across the North East on parental substance use and safe sleep practices, and self evaluation activity.
- 3.6 The Child Protection Programme 2021-24 concluded in July 2024. The programme was informed by and aligned to national expectations flowing from the independent care review and as set out in The Promise. The CPC priorities set out in the Child Protection Programme 2021-24 were:
- To increase workforce confidence and knowledge to respond to child protection issues arising among children with disabilities
  - To improve multi-agency recognition and response to indicators of cumulative neglect

- To raise awareness and develop a multi-agency understanding of, and response to, all forms of child exploitation and children who go missing
  - To implement a whole system approach across the City in relation to child protection and domestic abuse, and support the delivery and embedding of the Safe and Together model alongside the Violence Against Women Partnership
  - To consider the revised National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland and ensure the required changes are implemented to help support and improve practice
  - To build on our trauma informed and strength based practice approaches ensuring children and their families are engaged with appropriately, and that their voices are heard when they are involved in child protection processes
  - To improve the multi-agency recognition and response to equality, diversity and inclusion from a child protection perspective. This includes Female Genital Mutilation, Gender Identity, Prevent, Honour Based Abuse and Forced Marriage in the field of Child Protection.
- 3.7 The CPC completed a national self-evaluation tool for the implementation of the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021. This was submitted to Scottish Government in October 2023. This self-evaluation activity has supported the identification of areas requiring further improvement, and the measures required to address these.
- 3.8 In anticipation of inspection, the CPC established a Multi Agency Self Evaluation Group to take forward further evaluation activity based on the Care Inspectorate's quality indicators for children and young people in need of care and protection.
- 3.9 The CPC have ensured that the significant changes that were identified in refreshed National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021-2023 are either already embedded or have since been implemented.
- 3.10 The CPC have introduced the [Child Protection Improvement Programme 2024/26](#). Our priorities have been informed by data, Learning Reviews, and our self evaluation activity, The CPC priorities for 2024/26 are:

- Neglect
- Child Protection & Parental Substance Use
- Exploitation
- Child Protection & Domestic Abuse
- Interdisciplinary multi agency working
- Learning & Development

- 3.11 Feedback from our Care Inspectorate Link Inspector, who attends CPC meetings, continues to reflect very positively on the work of the partnership.

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

## 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

## 6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

## 7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	No significant risks identified			
<b>Compliance</b>	No significant risks identified			
<b>Operational</b>	Required improvements and developments in practice are not identified and actioned.	Children, young people, their families and the professional workforce can be assured that services in Aberdeen City are continually appraised in order to improve the quality of locally delivered services.	M	Yes
<b>Financial</b>	No significant risks identified			
<b>Reputational</b>	Organisational failings in relation to child protection can bring significant media interest and scrutiny of services delivered to children and young people.	The public can be assured that: the Council ensures compliance with legal requirements, national standards and guidance; partners respond to self and external scrutiny; and identified areas for improvement are addressed.	M	Yes
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	No significant risks identified			

## 8. OUTCOMES

<b>Council Delivery Plan 2024</b>	
<b>Impact of Report</b>	
<p><b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b></p> <p><u><a href="#">Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</a></u></p>	<p>The work of the CPC is aligned to other strategic partnerships, namely the Children’s Services Board, Violence Against Women &amp; Girls Partnership, Alcohol and Drug Partnership, and the Adult Protection Committee, whose aims are aligned collectively to the Council Delivery Plan 2024 and the Working in Partnership for Aberdeen Policy Statement.</p>
<b>Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026</b>	
<p>Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>The functions of the CPC are central to supporting and assuring that the multi agency Children’s Services partners deliver on the outcomes of the LOIP – Prosperous People (Children and Young People) Stretch Outcomes 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, and 12 to ensure our children are safe from harm. Children, young people and families who are adequately protected from threats to their health, safety and economic wellbeing are more likely to prosper than those who are not.</p>
<p><b>Regional and City Strategies</b></p>	<p>The work of the CPC is relevant to Aberdeen City Council Delivery Plan, the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, the Children’s Services Plan and the Child Protection Improvement Programme</p>

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	No assessment required. I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with Graeme Simpson, Chief Social Work Officer, Families & Communities – Children’s Social Work on 11 October 2024.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required for this report
<b>Other</b>	Not required for this report

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None

## 11. APPENDICES

11.1 Aberdeen City CPC Annual Report 2023–2024

11.2 CPC Improvement Programme 2024-26

**12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS**

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# Aberdeen City Child Protection Committee

## Annual Report 23/24





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## Preface from Chief Officers

The Chief Officer Group are pleased to present the tenth annual report, which highlights the significant achievements of the Child Protection Committee over the past year. Our dedicated workforce have worked tirelessly to ensure the safety and well-being of children in our community. Their resilience and unwavering commitment have been instrumental in navigating the challenges we have faced.

The Child Protection Committee has made remarkable strides in enhancing our child protection systems and processes. Through collaborative efforts, we have implemented innovative strategies and initiatives that have significantly improved our ability to protect vulnerable children, namely our success in becoming a Bairns' Hoose Pathfinder, and children & young peoples experiences of being interviewed by our SCIM interviewers.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to our focus on improvement activity. We will continue to build on our successes, striving to enhance our services and support for children and families. Our ongoing efforts to ensure that children & young people are encouraged to participate in the delivery of services for them, and to ensure that their views are listened to when making decisions about them.

The Chief Officers Group are delighted to endorse this report and look forward to another challenging year ahead.



Angela Scott  
*Chief Executive*  
*Aberdeen City Council*



Adam Coldwells  
*Interim Chief Executive*  
*NHS Grampian*



Graeme Mackie  
*Divisional Commander*  
*Police Scotland*



## Introduction from Independent Chair

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I am pleased to bring you the tenth annual report for the Aberdeen City Child Protection Committee. The CPC is a key local body for developing, implementing, and improving child protection strategy across the City and beyond. The CPC performs several crucial functions to jointly identify and manage the risk to children and young people. It also ensures the functions are carried out to a high standard and are aligned to national strategies. Local delivery however can only be provided through strong partnership working right across our communities.

The past year has seen significant challenges, particularly in relation to the economic crisis and the many associated issues, not least child poverty and displaced persons. Notwithstanding these challenges the CPC has remained steadfast in its determination to ensure that all children and young people remain safe across Aberdeen City. This can be evidenced, in detail throughout this report and in particular the completion of the current Child Protection Programme and the significant progress in relation to the Aberdeen City Bairns' Hoose.

I would wish to take the opportunity to sincerely thank everyone across the partnership, both statutory and voluntary, who amid the challenges faced, strive selflessly to keep children and young people safe. I would also wish to thank Amy Anderson, our CPC Lead Officer for her significant contribution to the work of the CPC over the past year.

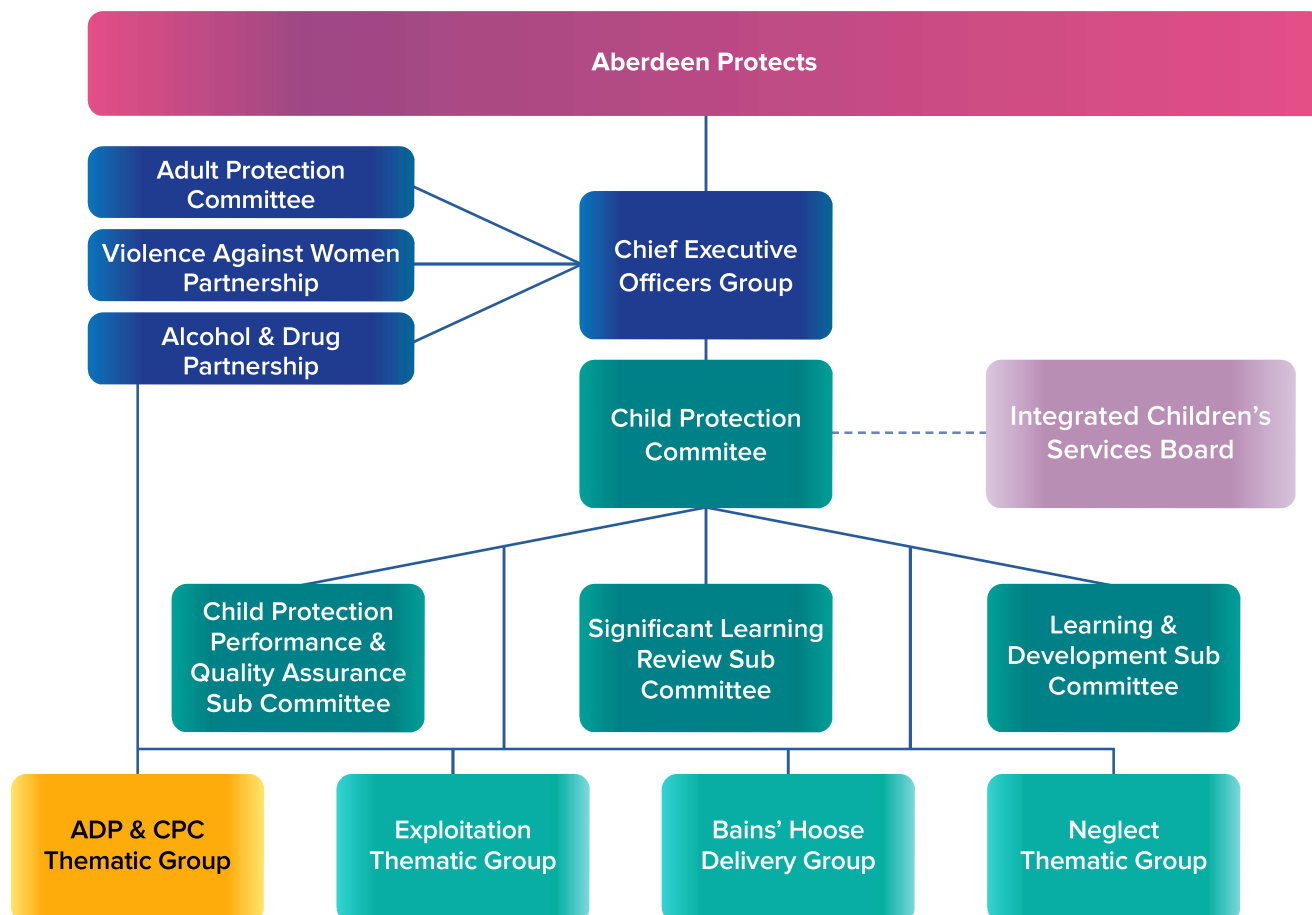
Although the report reflects our performance over the past year it is important, we continue to improve moving forward. It is pleasing to see the development of our Child Protection Programme 24–26; the mature approach to Learning Reviews through the joint Alcohol and Drug/Child Protection thematic group to develop preventative strategies to protect the most vulnerable; and the better alignment of Learning and Development strategies across the public protection arena, contributing to a more effective and efficient workforce.

Finally it is pleasing to see the contribution from children and young people to this report, we must continue to listen to their voices to ensure we continue to deliver better outcomes for all.

Campbell Thomson QPM  
*Independent Chair of Child Protection Committee*

## CPC Leadership & Management

The CPC structure for 2023/2024 can be found below



### Leadership

The Aberdeen City Child Protection Committee (CPC) is the key local body responsible for implementing and improving child protection strategy across and between agencies, bodies and the Aberdeen community. The CPC has a crucial role in identifying and managing risk to children and young people, monitoring and improving performance and promoting the ethos that, **“It’s everyone’s job to make sure I’m alright.”** Its role, local structures and membership, provide leadership and direction for the management of child protection services across Aberdeen City.

As illustrated above, the CPC is governed by the Chief Officers Group (COG) who have clear responsibilities set out in the [Protecting children and young people: Child Protection Committee and Chief Officer responsibilities guidance](#) published by the Scottish Government in February 2019.

The Aberdeen City COG is well established as is the relationship between the COG and CPC. The structure also illustrates the connectedness through the COG of the CPC with the other strategic partnerships in the City, namely APC, VAWGP, and ADP, all working together under the banner of Aberdeen Protects to take forward child protection policy and practice across the local area and across Scotland. Strong links exist between the CPC and Aberdeen City’s Children’s Services Board (CSB) through the [Children’s Services Plan 2023-2026](#).

## CPC Management and Strategic Links

The CPC adheres to the [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021-23](#), and our journey to full implementation and self assessment is covered within this report. The CPC fulfils its core functions through this structure and the multi-agency Child Protection Improvement Programme 2021-2024, which is covered in this report.

The CPC benefits from an Independent Chair who also chairs the Adult Protection Committee, bringing alignment to processes to systems and processes, along with senior representatives from partnership agencies across Aberdeen.

The CPC meets four times a year to discuss data, learning, national policy and business of continuous improvement. In addition to CPC business meetings, two CPC development sessions are held each year attended by members of the sub committees and thematic groups. In 2023/2024, our autumn development session focused on our achievements from 2022/23, identifying our areas of improvement, findings from an audit, and how we know we are improving outcomes for children and young people. In spring 2024, the CPC and the Alcohol & Drug Partnership held a joint development session, this focused on how we can work in a more holistic whole family way to support children and families where there is known parental substance use.

Aberdeen City COG, comprising the statutory agencies (ACC, NHS and Police Scotland), determine the budget and resource for the ongoing work of the City CPC. This is required to meet staff costs, anticipated local expenditure to carry out the child protection work which includes learning reviews, priorities identified in this report and the CP Programme 2021-2024. The staffing complement for Aberdeen City CPC is the Independent Chair, Lead Officer, and multi-agency Learning & Development coordinator.

The Child Protection Partnership (CPP) is a North East partnership consisting of the three Lead Officers from Aberdeen City CPC, Moray CPC, and Aberdeenshire CPC. The primary activity for the CPP is the management of the North East Child Protection Register. Activities and staffing costs are funded by Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Moray Council, NHS Grampian and Police Scotland.

Out with the North East of Scotland, the CPC has broader strategic links with the Care Inspectorate, Central & North Scotland CPC Consortium, Scottish Government, and CPC Scotland to help inform our continuous improvement planning.



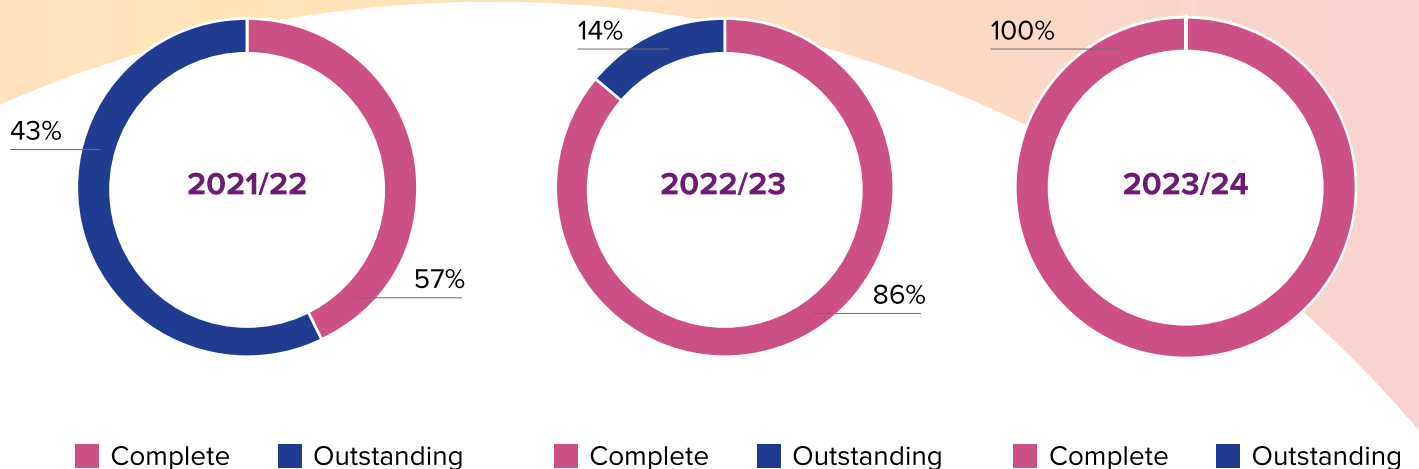


## CPC Activity in 2023/24

Over the course of the year the CPC, and all those working across the partnership, have worked towards delivering on the many initiatives and improvements striving to supporting and improving outcomes for children, young people and families.

- The development our Bairns' Hoose following our successful pathfinder application
- Learning event for practitioners across the North East on parental substance use and safe sleep
- Conversion of some our multi agency child protection training into accessible e-modules
- Stronger interface with other local public protection strategy
- Evaluation of our implementation of the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021, and the 2023 refresh
- Our multi agency support in pregnancy pathway
- The evolution of or IRD processes and documentation
- A review of our first year of the Scottish Child Interview Model
- Implementation of the audit findings around children referred to services under physical abuse
- Establishment of our multi agency self evaluation group
- Conclusion of our Child Protection Improvement Programme 2021-2024
- Development of our Child Protection Improvement Programme 2024-2026.

### Child Protection Programme 2021-2024 – Yearly Progress



## Sub Committees & Thematic Groups

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Sub Committees and Thematic Groups are multi agency in representation and have met regularly through 2023/2024, with each delivering on specific improvement priorities.

### Performance & Quality Assurance Sub Committee

#### Why this is important

The P&QA sub committee provide and present quarterly data and scrutiny reports to the CPC. The data reports are structured around the national minimum data set version 2 and additional local indicators, which were adopted by the CPC in November 2022. The data and scrutiny reports help us identify emerging areas of child protection that the CPC need to focus on. The data helps illustrate the child protection landscape in Aberdeen City (Appendix 2).

#### What we've done

The P&QA sub committee receive child protection data from a number of sources, namely children's social work, Police Scotland, and Health and use PowerBI to present the data in a linear format. The use of PowerBI allows us to see an interactive journey of a referral into children's social work service, for example the source of the referral, the presenting issues, and the destination and initial outcome of the referral. Our data collection over the past year has been impacted by D365, a new data recording system for social work. Since its inception in October 2022, many of the challenges that come with a transition of this scale have been overcome and the focus now is how we can draw on the advanced technology of D365 to help us be more data informed.

#### What we've still to do

Looking ahead to 2024/2025, the P&QA sub committee intend to continue the development of data to illustrate the journey through the child protection processes beyond outcome of the referral to child protection registration and de-registration.

In June 2024, the CPC endorsed the topic of our next audit to be undertaken using our multi agency quality assurance framework. The remit was later revised to incorporate and support the work of the multi agency self evaluation group. The purpose of this audit is to review the impact that services have upon the lives of children and young people in need of care and protection and the outcomes achieved. The findings from this audit will be presented to the CPC in December 2024.

The P&QA sub committee will support the activity of the Child Protection Improvement Programme 2024-26, in particular data around children registered on the Child Protection Register under neglect. The sub committee will continue to challenge the data to ensure the accuracy and consistency of record keeping across the partnership.

### Significant Learning Review Sub Committee

#### Why this is important

The SLR Sub Committee are mandated by the CPC to consider and carry out Learning Reviews on its behalf. The SLR Sub Committee adhere to the National Guidance for CPC's undertaking Learning Reviews, recently refreshed in 2023. Learning Reviews are an opportunity for in-depth analysis and critical reflection in order to gain greater understanding of inevitably complex situations and to develop strategies to support practice and improve systems across agencies. Decisions regarding any cases considered for review are reported to the CPC and the COG for final ratification.

#### What we've done

Initial notifications for a Learning Review have been considered over the course of the year where the CPC decided not to proceed to a Learning Review, but instructed the L&D Sub Committee to plan and deliver an Learning Event focusing on Parental Substance Use and Safe Sleep. The event took place in Autumn 2023. Where the criteria is not met for a Learning Review, but learning can still be derived from a case, other Aberdeen City Review Processes can be utilised.

The SLR Sub Committee continue to consider national Learning Reviews where learning from other areas in Scotland are considered through a local lens, and any areas identified are taken forward.

#### What we've still to do

In 2023/2024, the SLR Sub Committee will review our local guidance to support practitioners in initiating our review processes. The Sub Committee will also look to improve communication with practitioners who have been working with the family of the child or young person, ensuring all opportunities for learning are captured and disseminated appropriately.



## Learning & Development Sub Committee

### Why this is important

The role of the L&D Sub Committee is to identify and address areas where multi agency child protection learning will benefit professional's practice across Aberdeen City and help improve outcomes for children and young people.

### What we've done

Over the course of 2023/2024 the L&D Sub Committee has:

- Developed a suite of multi agency child protection e-modules
- Reviewed our multi agency child protection guidance, adopting the National Guidance for Child Protection 2021/23
- Collaborated with the public protection development officer to apply an Equally Safe, gender based lens on our guidance
- Supported and delivered the Safe & Together Core Training
- Supported the planning and delivery of the Learning Event on Parental Substance use & Safe Sleep.



The CPC's Learning & Development Coordinator has delivered 40 live training sessions to over 500 multi agency practitioners.

### What we've still to do

The CPC are acutely aware that learning & development opportunities play a crucial part in building and maintaining the knowledge, skills and confidence of the workforce, and thus continue to explore the workforce's development needs. The CPC will undertake a staff survey, of which the workforce will tell us what is working well for them, and what they would like more of. The L&D Sub Committee will consider the responses over the next few months.

The results from the survey will help inform a L&D Workforce Strategy, which will be developed in collaboration with other areas of Public Protection.

## Exploitation Thematic Group

### Why this is important

The Exploitation Thematic Group supports the co-ordination of the multi agency response to exploitation. The group, and the CPC, recognise that all identifying, preventing, and responding to all forms of child exploitation is a priority for Aberdeen City, and nationally.

### What we've done

The group have continued to gather data to help evidence the extent of child sexual exploitation (CSE) in Aberdeen City, this has been a collective effort with Education, Police & Children's Social Work bring pieces of data to build a bigger picture. Members of the group have elicited positive feedback from practitioners who have been using our [Multi Agency Child Sexual Exploitation Guidance](#), and the guidance has been amended accordingly. This guidance was also very positively received by Police Scotland's National Child Exploitation Forum.

Police Scotland, on behalf of Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, and Moray's CPC commissioned Future Voices to deliver a workshop for County Lines to over 200 practitioners across the North East in January 2024.

97%

said that the training would increase confidence in the assessment and intervention with children, families and networks affected by exploitation

### What we've still to do

The Exploitation Thematic Group will be focusing on the development of our multi agency Child Criminal Exploitation Guidance. Improvement activity will also be undertaken over the next two years to develop, review and disseminate guidance and other awareness raising materials in relation to sextortion and other relevant forms of exploitation.

## Neglect Thematic Group

### Why this is important

Our Neglect Thematic Group was re-established in 2022 following the findings and recommendations from a quality assurance framework audit. Neglect is one of our priorities because we know that neglect is the most prevalent concern for children on our Child Protection Register.

### What we've done

The Neglect Thematic Group have supported the Local Outcome Improvement Plan outcomes aligned to stretch outcome 7, *Identifying & Taking Action on Harm (children with additional support needs & children with disabilities)*. A focus group, comprising of practitioners from across the partnership, was established and were asked to complete a survey to understand their confidence levels in talking about neglect with families, and to understand any barriers they faced in doing so. The group then completed the multi agency child protection & neglect training module. The focus group then completed the survey again. Results of this will be shared in the next annual report.

### What we've still to do

The Neglect Thematic Group will be completing their work with the focus group over the next few months. The thematic group will also be developing a video on the importance of naming neglect.

The group will consider adopting a tool and will undertake a critique of the Graded Care Profile and the Home Conditions Tool, which is currently being used in Aberdeenshire.

The group will make connections with the Best Start in Life group to explore and develop a neglect pathway that mitigates the escalation into child protection processes.

## Bairns' Hoose Delivery Group

### Why this is important

In November 2023, Aberdeen City Partnership were notified that we were one of the 6 pathfinder sites in Scotland for a Bairns' Hoose. The aim of a Bairns' Hoose is to deliver integrated support to best meet the needs of children and young people who are victims of abuse or have witnessed violence as well as children under the age of criminal responsibility whose behaviour (currently 12 years of age) has caused significant harm to others. A key aim of the model is to reduce the number of times children have to recount their experiences.

### What we've done

A Bairns' Hoose Delivery Group was established in 2023 and has 5 workstreams, VOICE, SYSTEMS & PROCESSES, CAPITAL, GOVERNANCE & EVALUATION. Some key achievements by the group include

- Successful bid for Scottish Government Funding
- Identifying a location for our Bairns' Hoose
- Inviting children & young people to the site to help inform the design
- With the Council's architects and partners, designing our Bairns' Hoose
- Collaborating with the University of Edinburgh to undertake evaluation activity
- The development of a pathway to recovery services
- Journey mapping with families to better understand their experiences through child protection processes.

### What we've still to do

As a pathfinder site, there is still much to do and learn in our development and construction of a Bairns' Hoose. We want to ensure that children & young people can access the recovery support they need through a Bairns' Hoose, and we want to embed the principles of a Bairns' Hoose throughout our practice.

**Our Bairns' Hoose is expected to open in Spring 2025.**





## Learning Event – Parental Substance Use & Safe Sleep

Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, and Moray's Child Protection Committees identified that an overarching theme in tragic deaths of babies over the last 2 years were associated with parental substance use and the risks of unsafe sleeping practices when under the influence of substances. The three CPC's delivered a learning event to practitioners across the North East, its purpose was to learn from the experiences to help prevent significant harm to children and young people, and to adopt a culture of multi-agency working that can be translated into practice.

The learning objectives for the event were:

- For front line staff to consistently consider and involve male carers in the plans put in place for children.
- To ensure frontline staff have increased knowledge of parental substance use, particularly cannabis, and the impact on their capacity to parent a child under the influence.
- For front line staff to understand safe sleep practices, particularly where there is known parental substance use.

### Three keynote speakers presented at the event

**Elie Godsi**, a Consultant Clinical Psychologist specialising in adult and forensic mental health as well as public and child protection. Elie's presentation focused on his paper Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel Review of Non-Accidental injuries in children under the age of one, and interviews with men – what can we learn?.

**Adam Mellis**, Harm Reduction Officer from Police Scotland, and Carol Muir, Project Manager – Community Justice Alcohol & Drugs. Adam and Carol's presentation focused on the demographics and drug use in Aberdeen City and across the North East.

**Dr Gill Burton**, the Education Manager for the Scottish Cot Death Trust. Gill's presentation focused on the current landscape and risk factors of SUDI in Scotland, substance use and SUDI risk, alcohol, cannabis and SUDI risk, and Safe Sleep messages.

The event was attended by over 200 practitioners, and nearly 100 watching live online. The event was recorded and can be viewed on [Aberdeen Protects](#).

Attendees were provided with an e-resource pack which includes various links to resources for supporting practitioners to work with families where there is parental substance use. Attendees were also asked to complete an evaluation of the event.

They told us:

**86%** said their knowledge of the role of male carers improved

**79%** said their knowledge of drug use across the North East had improved

**69%** said their knowledge on safe sleep had improved

Following the event, Aberdeen City CPC and Aberdeen City's Alcohol & Drug Partnership (ADP) held a joint development session identify how services can work in a more preventative and whole family way where there are drug and alcohol concerns. The CPC & the ADP agreed to establish a joint thematic group to lead on delivering the activities identified in the table discussions. The CPC/ADP thematic group will first meet in September 2024.



## Capacity for Improvement & Looking ahead

Capacity for improvement is a fundamental pillar of our Child Protection Committee, and our improvements are driven by our Child Protection Improvement Programme.

In 2024, the CPC and the workforce concluded the activities set out in our 2021-2024 improvement programme (appendix 1).

### CPC's Child Protection Improvement Programme 2024-2026

The CPC now looks ahead, and in July 2024 introduced our [Child Protection Programme 2024-2026](#). Our priorities over the next 2 years are

- Neglect
- Child Protection & Parental Substance Use
- Exploitation
- Child Protection & Domestic Abuse
- Interdisciplinary multi agency working
- Learning & Development

### Multi agency self evaluation group

Over the past 12 months, the CPC has undertaken several self evaluation activities, namely our self assessment on our implementation of the National Guidance for Child Protection In Scotland 2021, and an evaluation of our current position in respect of the eleven Bairns' Hoose Standards.

In March 2024, the CPC agreed to formulate a working group to take forward further evaluation activity based on the Care Inspectorate's quality indicators for children and young people in need of care and protection.

So far the group have;

- Undertaken a review of, and identified learning from recently published inspection reports
- Published a staff survey to elicit the views of the workforce on our capacity and capability to deliver our services
- Prepared a remit for the CPC to undertake an audit

**The purpose of the audit will review the impact that services have upon the lives of children and young people in need of care and protection and the outcomes achieved**

What the group plan to do;

- Hold a joint development session with the Children's Services Board in Autumn 2024' to consider our data, our achievements, and our areas for improvement
- Undertaken the audit
- Present the findings and recommendations from the audit and the staff survey to CPC
- Develop an implementation plan for identified improvement activity.
- How children & young people have helped us to improve our services for them and how it's helping improve outcomes for them

## How children & young people have helped us to improve our services for them and how it's helping improve outcomes for them

Voice of the Infant:  
Best Practice & Infant  
Pledge (March 2023)

UNCRC

Review of methods for  
communicating and  
getting feedback  
from C&YP

Workshops with children  
& Families to help design  
our Bairn's Hoose

Working with families to  
hear their experiences of  
our protection, justice &  
recovery processes

Young People supported  
the recruitment of our  
Bairns' Hoose Advocacy,  
Rights & Recovery  
Workers

Implementation of the  
Lundy Model

Incredible Quines –  
A rights group for girls

FitLike Wellbeing Tool

A care-experienced  
young person is helping  
make our space for Child  
Protection Planning  
Meetings & Looked After  
Child Reviews more  
welcoming

Children have chaired  
their own Looked After  
Reviews and told us they  
enjoyed it and they felt  
more central to their  
planning process

Mind of My Own App





We have listened to children & young people and considered how they want their meetings, in person or virtual

In development to produce child friendly letters and action plans in collaboration with children & young people

Child Friendly Complaints Process

Annual Care Day Celebration 2024

Bright Spots survey to 345 children to find out how they feel about their lives.

72% responded telling us what was working well and what we could improve on

Feedback from a child interviewed under SCIM  
What they said:

*"The cameras made me feel uncomfortable"*

What we do now:  
We ensure we better explain the process, the equipment, and where appropriate the child can help set up the interview room

Age appropriate feedback forms

*"Thank you again for getting in contact with me, I really appreciate your consideration of (Child) communication difficulties and how you have put their best interests at the centre of this."*

Speech & Language Therapist to SCIM Team

Feedback from a child after a SCIM interview:

*"It was great, I was a little nervous. The room is safe and great"*

Feedback from a Social Worker after the CPC's Domestic Abuse Training - January 2023  
Has this training led to improved outcomes for the children and young people you work with?

*"Yes it has. I introduced one young person to the 'worry jar' and it's worked really well for him. It's empowered him to use his voice and discuss more difficult topics with his foster carer which has also helped him build his relationship with them. Using the worry jar actually led him to disclose something that was happening to him at school and we were able to act on this disclosure because of him using the jar. I think this has helped him feel more listened to and know that things will be acted upon when he tells us things."*

				2022	2023	2024
<p>top and deliver comprehensive agency neglect package to ensure workforce competence and edge</p>	<p>Consult and work with specialist teams and national colleagues to develop this comprehensive package to ensure it meets workforce needs</p>	<p>This package will be benchmarked, quality assured, and reviewed through well established procedures already in place through the L&amp;D sub committee</p>	<p>Jul-23</p>	<p>Child Protection and Disability module launched August 2021</p>	<p>Child Protection and Disability module launched August 2021</p>	<p>Child Protection and Disability module launched August 2021</p>
		<p>Effective data recording and analysis of IRD and CPPMs through quarterly data and scrutiny reports</p>		<p>Reported quarterly to CPC</p>	<p>Child Protection and Disability module launched August 2021</p>	<p>Child Protection and Disability module launched August 2021</p>
		<p>QAF audit to investigate how well we engage and support children and families affected by disability</p>		<p>QAF Audit - February 2022</p>	<p>QAF Audit - February 2022</p>	<p>QAF Audit - February 2022</p>
<p>the recommendations of the 2021 joint agency neglect are embedded practice</p>	<p>Re-establish the multi agency neglect thematic group to progress the recommendations</p>	<p>Adherence to the multi agency guidance and thorough analysis of the neglect data from quarterly data and scrutiny reports</p>	<p>Jan-23</p>	<p>Reported quarterly to CPC</p>	<p>Reported quarterly to CPC</p>	<p>Reported quarterly to CPC</p>
	<p>Develop and implement the multi agency reflective discussions guidance</p>	<p>Review of the multi agency reflective discussion guidance</p>		<p>Developed and launched in February 2022</p>	<p>Developed and launched in February 2022</p>	<p>Developed and launched in February 2022</p>
	<p>Consider the need for a specific neglect toolkit for the multi agency workforce</p>			<p>In development</p>	<p>Local toolkit developed and published on Aberdeen Protects. Further evaluation required for Neglect assessment tool</p>	<p>Local toolkit developed and published on Aberdeen Protects. Further evaluation required for Neglect assessment tool</p>
<p>in partnership with the VAWP to give the multi agency recognition response to equality, diversity and inclusion from protection perspective. This includes: FGM, Gender Identity, Honour Based Abuse and Forced Marriage in the field of child protection</p>	<p>Ascertain the local statistical picture in comparison to national data in relation to the various issues identified by Supporting the VAWP in the creation and development of a Performance Framework.</p>	<p>Subsequent Data and Scrutiny reports will identify reported cases where FGM, Gender Identity, Prevent, Honour Based Abuse, and Forced Marriage are considered and help identify areas for improvement and good practice.</p>	<p>Jul-24</p>	<p>CPC interfacing with VAWP in relation to the development and reporting of relevant dataset.</p>	<p>Through the Public Protection Leads group, data and scrutiny reports from VAWP will be shared with PQA for consideration.</p>	<p>Through the Public Protection Leads group, data and scrutiny reports from VAWP will be shared with PQA for consideration.</p>
	<p>Multi agency training to be developed for staff in relation to these themes and quality assurance measures put in place to measure impact on staff confidence and practice</p>			<p>Digital training modules are available as part of the routine CP L&amp;D programme</p>	<p>Digital training modules are available as part of the routine CP L&amp;D programme</p>	<p>Digital training modules are available as part of the routine CP L&amp;D programme</p>
	<p>Multi agency policy and guidance is developed, where required, and followed equally and consistently for all children and young people regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religion or background</p>			<p>National Guidance has been adopted by CPC and is available on Aberdeen Protects</p>	<p>National Guidance has been adopted by CPC and is available on Aberdeen Protects</p>	<p>National Guidance has been adopted by CPC and is available on Aberdeen Protects</p>

<p>support the delivery of a Safer Model alongside the Police Against Abuse Partnership</p>	<p>the CPC multi agency L&amp;D coordinators is supported in the 'train the trainers' approach to ensure consistency</p>	<p>calendar</p>					<p>is now expected September 2023, The Multi Agency L&amp;D Coordinator has been accepted on to this course, and once trained will be able to deliver the Safe &amp; Together training to the multi agency workforce.</p>	
	<p>Key strategic posts identified and resourced to ensure; that an Equally Safe lens has been applied to policy and guidance; a Whole Family Approach is taken in relation to domestic abuse and a Whole Systems Approach is taken to address the needs of young people involved in offending; and by commissioning Cybersafe Scotland to carry out a needs-based assessment before providing direct support to protect children, young people and families</p>	<p>Equally safe outcomes become a part of our policy and guidance and quarterly updates from the VAWP and Cybersafe in relation to the engagement with children and their families (including perpetrators and survivors) in a consistent, multi-agency approach which demonstrates the support individuals and families receive to make positive, long term changes. As this progresses, it will also be visible and demonstrated through the CPC data and scrutiny reports</p>			<p>CPC receives progress updates from VAWP and Cybersafe Scotland</p>		<p>In July 2023, a Development Officer for Public Protection was recruited. The Development Officer will scrutinise key strategies across the public protection landscape, with an Equally Safe lens.</p>	
<p>ing on the a Informed strength based approaches fully embedded CPC will ensure children and families have say in decisions them and engaged with appropriately when are involved and protection sses</p>	<p>IRDs and CPPMs will make relevant referrals for advocacy and actively engage with the children's rights service to ensure the rights and views of children and their families are kept central and are fundamental to these processes</p>	<p>The referrals for advocacy and to the children's rights service will increase and IRDs and CPPMs will be able to evidence this via their revised documentation</p>	<p>Jul-24</p>		<p>IRD process &amp; documentation revised to prompt appropriate referrals to advocacy and children's rights service. Gathering of data is in development.</p>		<p>IRD process &amp; documentation revised to prompt appropriate referrals to advocacy and children's rights service. Gathering of data is in development.</p>	
	<p>The implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM)</p>	<p>The establishment of a performance framework and quality assurance process of SCIM which will include the experiences of families and children to inform ongoing improvement</p>			<p>Expected November 2022</p>		<p>SCIM implemented November 2022</p>	
	<p>The creation of a children and families consultation group working in partnership with the APC, VAWP, ADP, CSB, Community and Youth Justice</p>	<p>The views and feedback from children and families will help shape and improve the policy and guidance produced for multi agency staff to ensure it is family friendly and meets the needs of our most vulnerable children and families</p>			<p>The expectations of The Promise require the voice of children and families to be at the heart of all processes. CPC and all partners have adopted this approach and will continue to monitor impact.</p>		<p>Bairns' Hoose reference group established in 2023</p>	
	<p>The Mind Of My Own app, already an essential component of the approach to supporting digital inclusion and training, will continue to be shared across the partnership for wider support in championing this opportunity for young people as well as for consideration of wider roll-out.</p>	<p>Direct feedback from children via the Mind of My Own app</p>			<p>MOMO app is utilised well across the City. Data from MOMO is reported to CSB.</p>		<p>MOMO app is utilised well across the City. Data from MOMO is reported to CSB.</p>	
	<p>Support the Write Right about Me Project to: - ask children and their families to provide feedback about how we represent their</p>	<p>Standards for good recording will be developed that will be widely adhered to across the partnership as evidenced in quality assurance audits</p>			<p>This supports the implementation of The Promise and is reported to the CSB. The CPC will</p>		<p>The WRAM working group continue to develop initiatives to encourage practitioners to</p>	

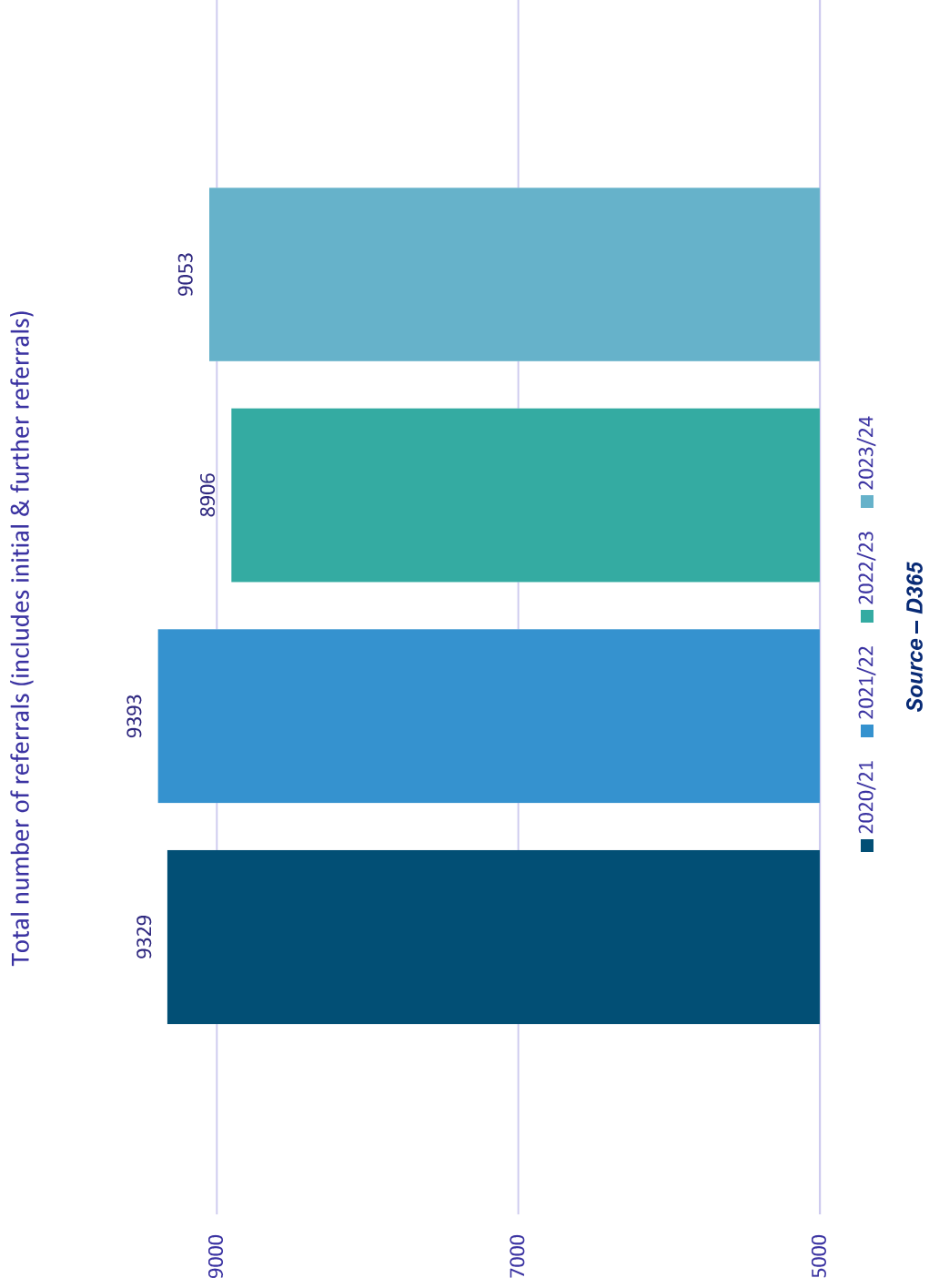
<p>ership with CSB. This will consist of one annual CPC only and one annual audit with the most relevant and selected priorities</p>	<p>in these audits. Auditors will be trained accordingly using the established QAF process. This process will result in the CPC being presented with the final report from each audit with recommendations as required</p>	<p>each audit and ensure these recommendations are disseminated and embedded in practice updates as required. This will be carried out through the sub committee and thematic groups structures associated to the CPC</p>		<p>around routine audits is well established. Remits are authored by the CPC &amp; CSB. Findings are reported to CPC &amp; CSB and implementation of recommendations are monitored by CPC &amp; CSB.</p>	<p>around routine audits is well established. Remits are authored by the CPC &amp; CSB. Findings are reported to CPC &amp; CSB and implementation of recommendations are monitored by CPC &amp; CSB.</p>	
<p>nder the revised national guidance for protection and ongoing reviews and any changes required are in place to help protect and improve practice</p>	<p>The CPC will consider the revised national guidance for child protection at the appropriate local CPC development day(s) and supporting national forums to provide a summary report to COG in relation to the key changes from the 2014 guidance and how this will be applied locally</p>	<p>Any changes or amendments required to local policy, guidance, or practice will be updated and evidenced accordingly in those areas. These updates will be provided to the CPC and monitored through established quality assurance processes</p>	<p>Sep-23</p>	<p>In depth self-evaluation was undertaken. CPC have commenced implementation of identified changes and expect to have completed within timeframe (September 2023).</p>	<p>Full self-evaluation of implementation due for submission to Scottish Government in October 2023</p>	
	<p>The SLR sub committee will ensure that three routes for case reviews are established; multi agency reflective discussions, practice reviews through the CSB, and significant learning reviews. These will be supported by local overarching guidance which explains clearly to multi agency staff when each review process should be used and how to carry out those reviews</p>	<p>The overarching guidance will be provided to the CPC and monitored by the SLR sub committee. Each review and its progress will be reported either through established quality assurance processes, the CSB, or the SLR sub committee. The learning identified from these reviews will continue to support improvements to practice and inform the work of the CPC through the Child Protection Programme, the QAF, the L&amp;D framework and associated sub committee structures</p>		<p>Routes for case reviews is established and outlined on Aberdeen Protects. National Guidance for SLRs has been adopted by the CPC.</p>	<p>Routes for case reviews is established and outlined on Aberdeen Protects. National Guidance for SLRs has been adopted by the CPC.</p>	
				<p>Local guidance in relation to all 3 case review processes in development.</p>	<p>Reflective Discussions implemented in 2022/23. Local quality assurance of Learning Reviews agreed by SLR subcommittee.</p>	
<p>all multi agency staff have access to relevant protection training in line with the priorities identified in the CP Programme: Child Protection Visibility</p>	<p>Develop and deliver an annual CPC multi agency training calendar, in partnership with Aberlour, which comprises of all priority areas contained in the CP Programme and any learning or improvements identified through the QAF, sub committees or thematic groups</p>	<p>The L&amp;D sub committee will provide an annual multi agency L&amp;D report to the CPC together with evidence provided through their established quality assurance processes. This will demonstrate and provide a bank of evidence which measures the impact of the training on practice and subsequently for children and families</p>	<p>Jul-24</p>	<p>2021 – July 2022 annual report is complete and outlines L&amp;D activity throughout this period.</p>	<p>2021 – July 2022 annual report is complete and outlines L&amp;D activity throughout this period.</p>	



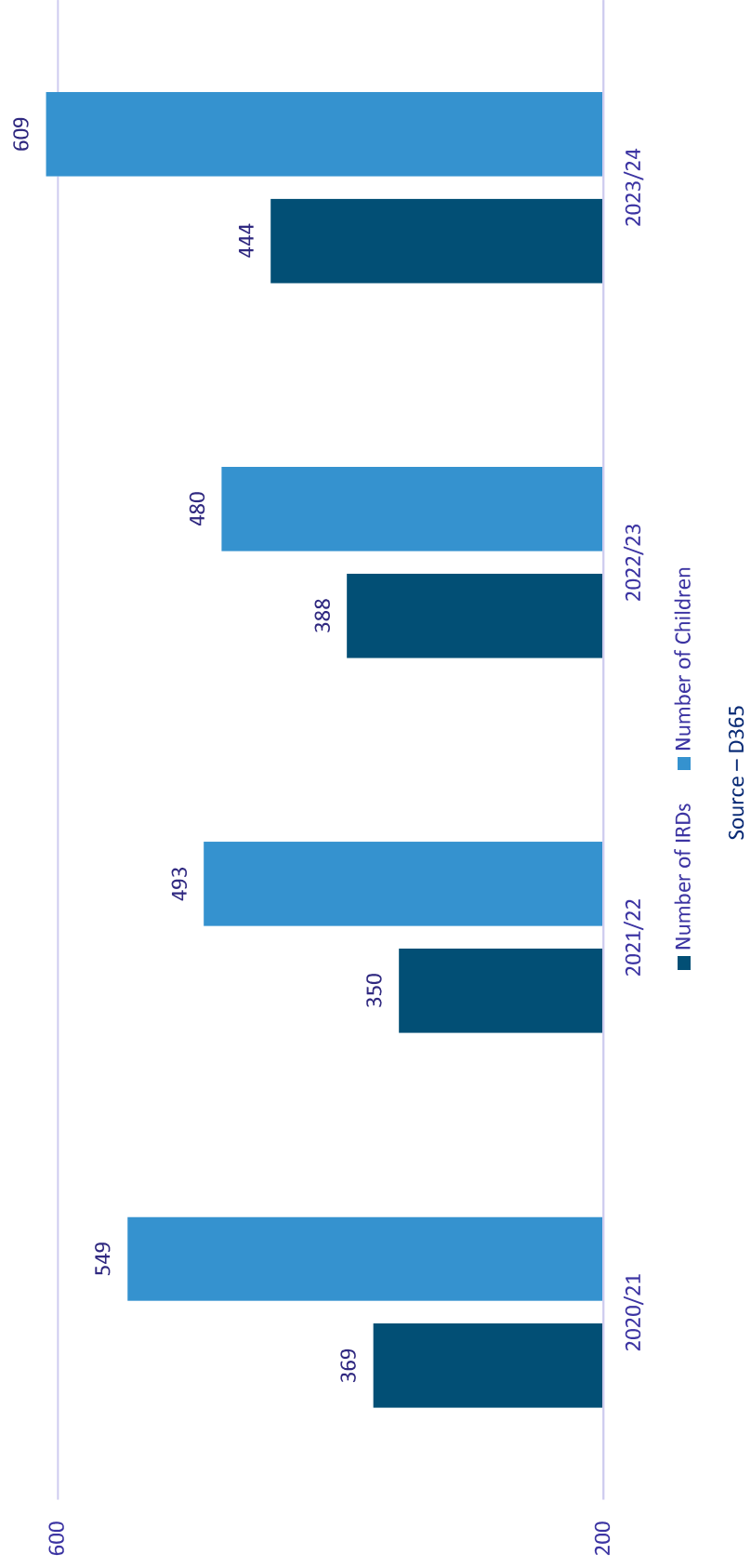
<p>ed), to work oratively with strategic ers in to ensure g strategic pment ontinuous vement of ild protection es</p>	<p>national guidance, local improvement plans, and core datasets), CPC Scotland and other national groups</p>	<p>these key areas of business together under the COG</p>				
	<p>Ensuring this programme is annually reviewed by CPC and approved by COG</p>	<p>Annual CPC development days and the annual CPC report</p>			<p>Development sessions were held on 18/11/21 &amp; 15/02/22. CPC annual report published on Aberdeen Protects</p>	<p>Development sessions were held on 18/11/21 &amp; 15/02/22. CPC annual report published on Aberdeen Protects</p>
	<p>Ensuring effective links with other strategic partnerships including the ADP, APC, VAWP, MAPPA, CSB, Community &amp; Youth Justice</p>	<p>Membership across these strategic partnerships represented by the CPC and a Leads group set up to progress, where relevant, areas of cross over that would benefit from a collaborative approach within each of the strategic partnership priorities</p>			<p>Public Protection Leads group established</p>	<p>Public Protection Leads group established and a forum for collaborating and sharing information across the Public Protection landscape.</p>

<p>awareness evelop a agency standing of, esponse to, ms of child tation and en who go ng</p>	<p>Develop, review, and disseminate multi agency guidance in relation to all forms of exploitation including child trafficking, sexual exploitation, and county lines</p>	<p>Developed or updated guidance will be presented to the CPC and disseminated on a multi agency basis. The impact of the guidance will be measured through established quality assurance processes</p>	Jan-24		<p>Child Sexual Exploitation guidance expected early 2023</p>		<p>Child Sexual Exploitation guidance published June 2023</p>	
	<p>Improve single agency gathering and reporting of information, to support the multi-agency analysis of data in relation to all forms of child exploitation</p>	<p>The data and analysis provided to the P&amp;QA sub committee from the Exploitation thematic group will be multi agency, succinct, and demonstrate the prevalence of children and young people at risk of exploitation. This information will identify gaps and highlight areas of good practice</p>				<p>Ad-hoc data is received by the P&amp;QA sub committee and reported to the CPC. Routine data reporting is in development.</p>		<p>Challenges around capturing data in early stages prior to meeting thresholds for CP. Looking to Education to support this from schools systems.</p>
	<p>In line with the national missing persons framework, work in partnership with the Missing People charity to; improve the quality of return home discussions and their impact on children and young people, and also map the journey of children through our processes when they go missing to help identify areas that can be improved or highlighted as good practice</p>	<p>Journey mapping workshops for staff with the Missing People charity to help identify areas for improvement and also good practice. Specific training will be provided by the Missing People charity in relation to effective return home discussion for all missing person coordinators and champions. This will see an improvement in our engagement with children and families when children go missing and also improve our return home discussions through a supportive lens. This will be evaluated, monitored and its impact reported directly to the CPC.</p>				<p>Outcome &amp; recommendations from journey mapping workshops reported to CPC in March 2022.</p>		<p>Outcome &amp; recommendations from journey mapping workshops reported to CPC in March 2022.</p>
					<p>E-module (Return Discussions) available on Aberdeen Protects</p>		<p>E-module (Return Discussions) available on Aberdeen Protects</p>	
					<p>Routine data reporting in relation to missing children is in development.</p>		<p>Routine data reporting in relation to missing children is now captured and analysed in PQA.</p>	

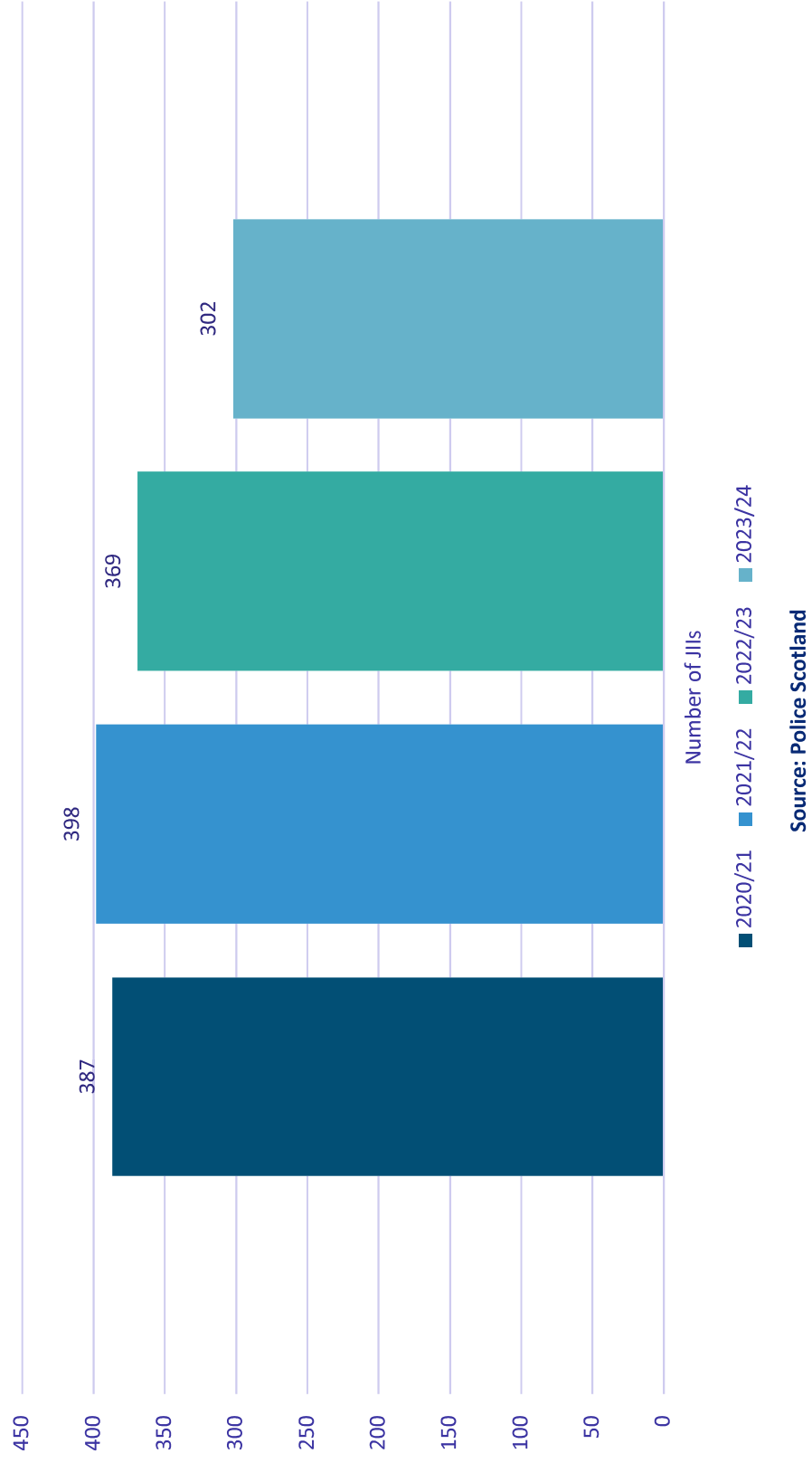
### Total Number of referrals to Children's Social Work



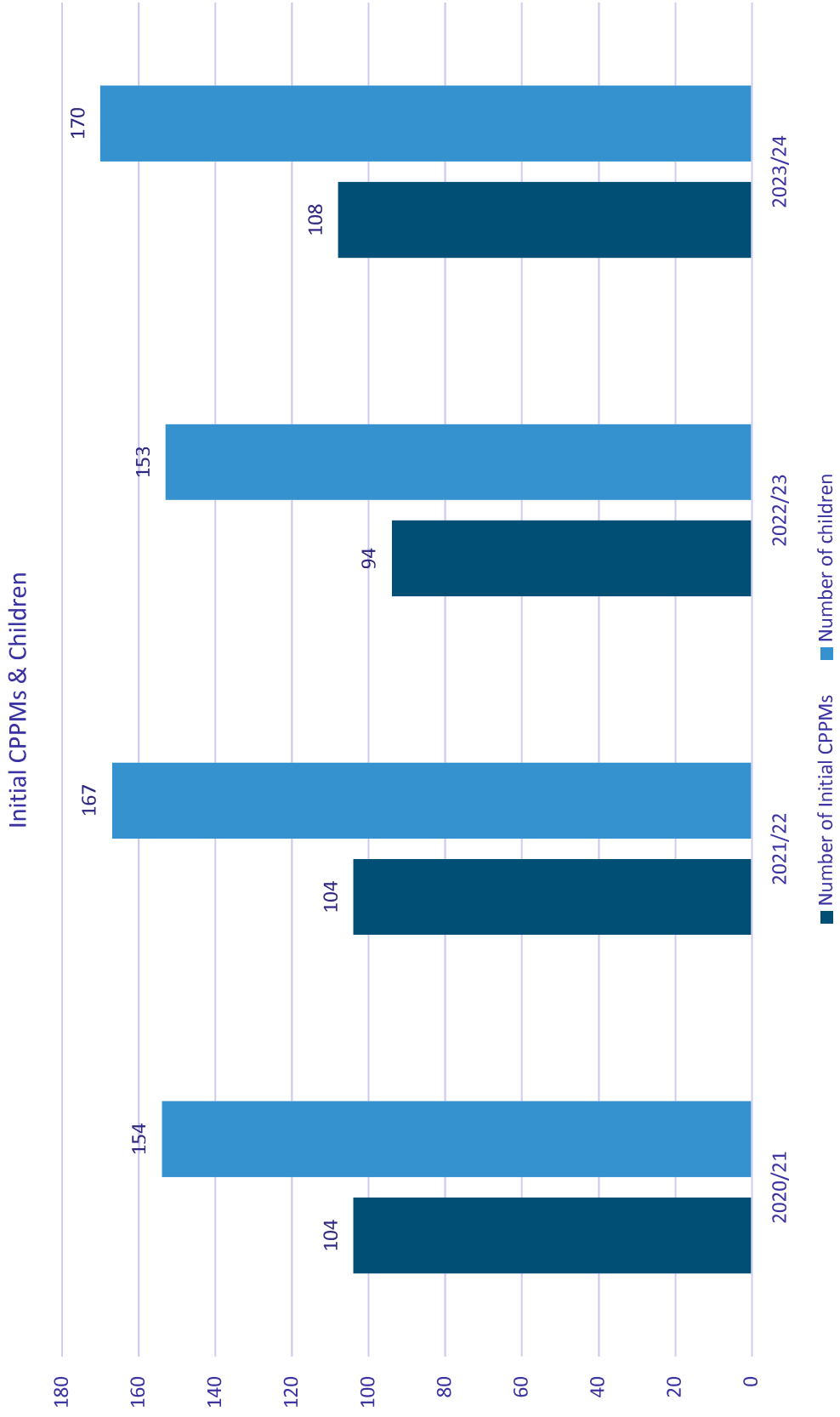
## Number of IRDs & Number of children



## Number of JIIs



## Number of initial & pre birth initial CPPMs and number of children

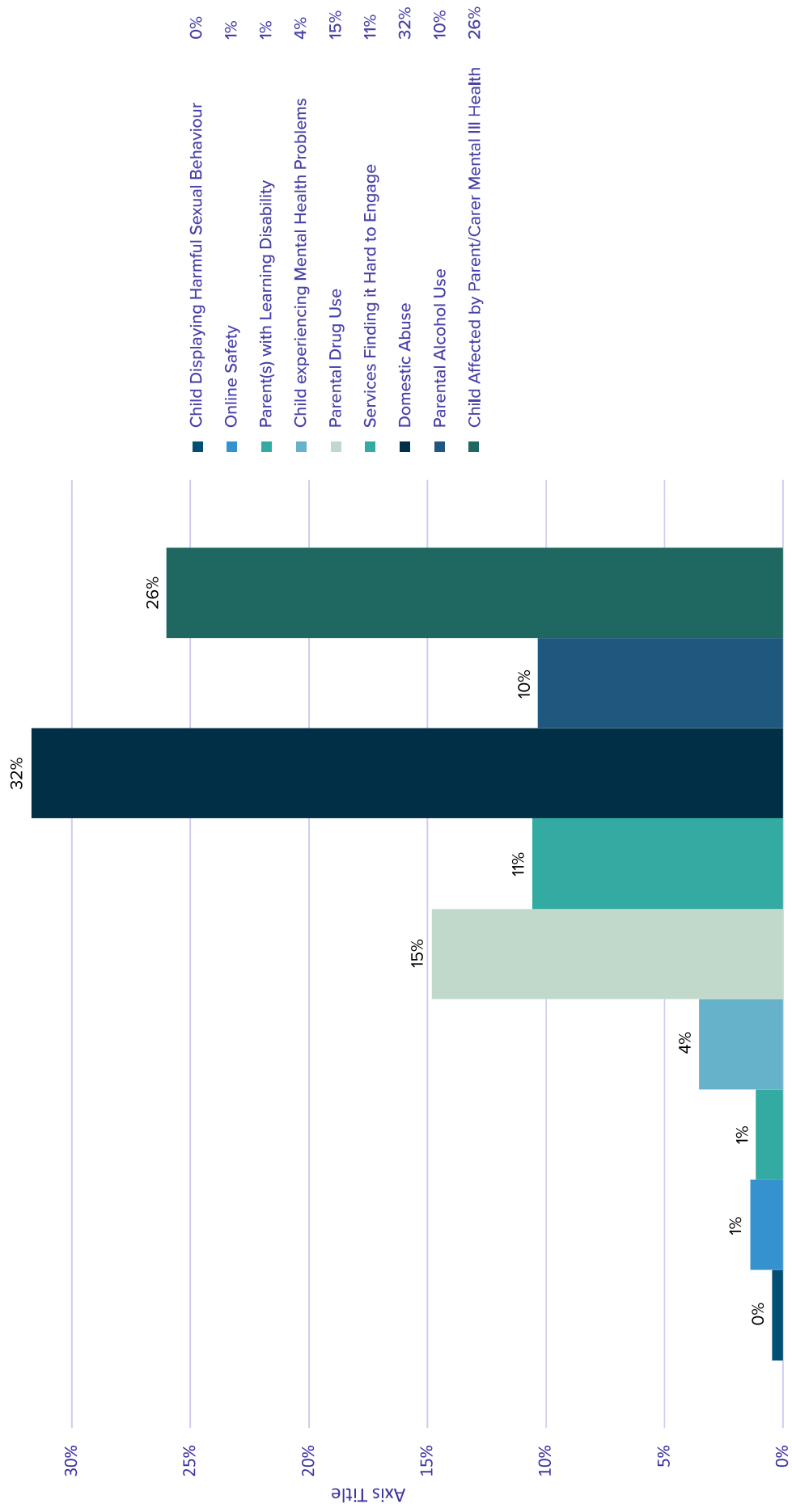


## Children on the CPR – Rate per 1000

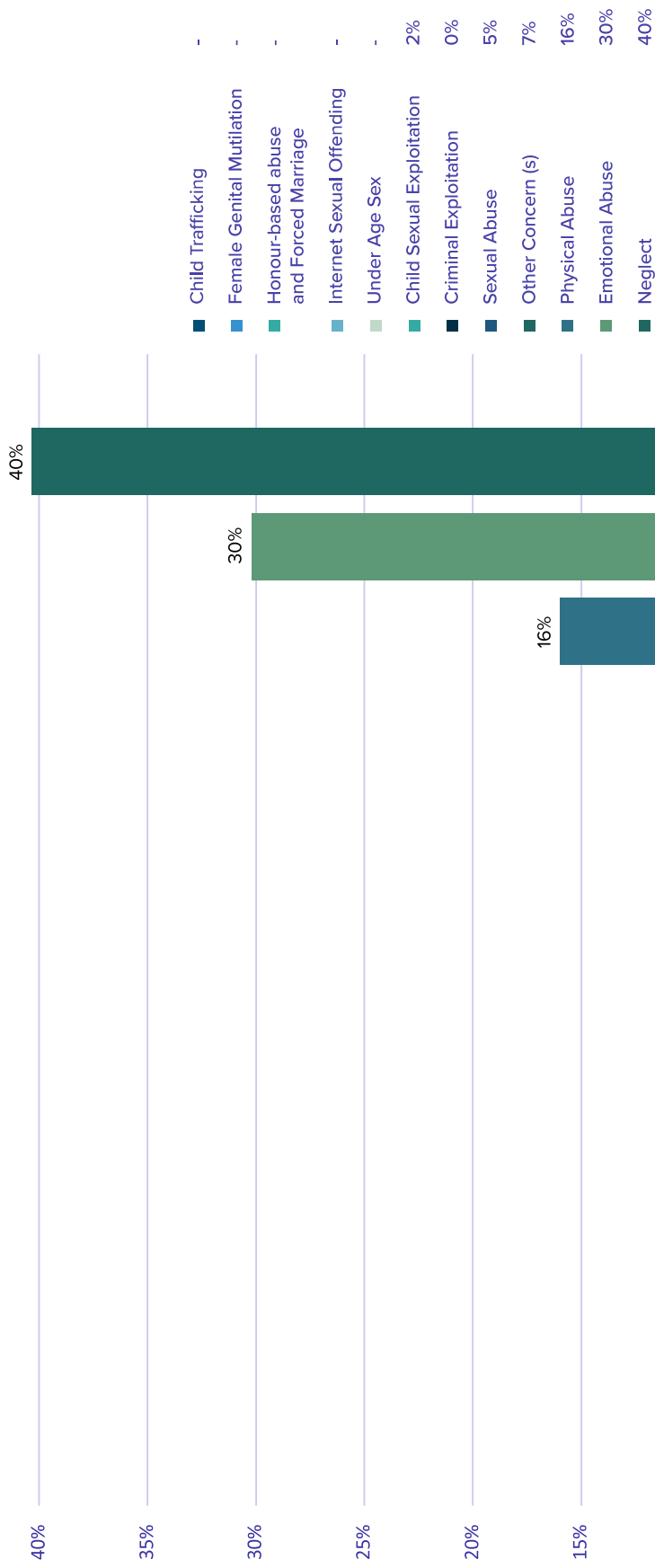


Source – CPR Team & published national statistics

## Vulnerability Concerns for children on our CPR



## Impact on the child concerns on our CPR





# Aberdeen City Child Protection Committee Improvement Programme 2024-2026



Aberdeen City Child Protection Committee (CPC) is a multi-agency strategic partnership governed by the Chief Executive Officers of Aberdeen City Council, NHS Grampian and the Police Commander for the area. It is committed to providing individual and collective leadership and direction for the management of child protection services in the Aberdeen City area. Improvements are driven through the Child Protection Programme.

The CPC works alongside Integrated Children's Services in Aberdeen to ensure that improvement areas are aligned. In this way we ensure the best and most effective use of resources. The CPC also aims to work collaboratively with other strategic partnerships in the City such as the Children's Services Board, Aberdeen Violence Against Women & Girls Partnership (particularly in relation to child protection and domestic abuse), Adult Protection Committee, Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership.

Progress on improvement activity is reported to and monitored by the CPC through its connected sub committees which are; the Significant Learning Review, the Performance & Quality Assurance, and the Learning & Development sub committees. The CPC produces an Annual Report which is made widely available across agencies and demonstrates the work of the CPC through these connected structures.

## CPC Improvement Aims

The Child Protection Programme aims to improve the safety, wellbeing and life chances of vulnerable children and young people. As a partnership we achieve this by

- recognising and responding when children and young people need protection
- helping children and young people stay safe, healthy and, for those who have experienced abuse and neglect, to recover from their experiences and
- providing strong and effective collaborative leadership to deliver the Child Protection Programme ensuring the CPC is ready to adapt and adjust as required to both local and national developments

## Improvement Activity

The Child Protection Programme includes and is aligned to improvement activity identified by:

- Local self-evaluation through data analysis, case file auditing, local and national learning from Learning Reviews, and the collaboration of multi agency professionals in the City,
- National initiatives driven by legislation and other Scottish Government priorities and
- Local priorities identified in the Children's Services Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

This programme will be delivered on a phased basis, building on the trauma informed and strength based practice approaches used across the City. All improvement priorities are a multi-agency responsibility and sit collectively with the agencies and members of the CPC. This will ensure and support the embedding of improvements in practice as well as realistically enabling the CPC to deliver on the programme with the resources available. It is acknowledged that, whilst this is a comprehensive programme, it requires to be sufficiently flexible to be adjusted as needs arise, such as from the findings of case reviews, audits, joint inspections as well as developing areas identified in the LOIP or by Integrated Children's Services.

## Our priorities in the programme 2024-2026

- Neglect
- Child Protection & Parental Substance Use
- Exploitation
- Child Protection & Domestic Abuse
- Interdisciplinary multi agency working
- Learning & Development

## Alignment to LOIP 2016-2026

The delivery of the CPC improvement programme directly supports the delivery of the [LOIP](#), in particular stretch outcomes that relate to children, young people and families (SO3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10,11, and 12)

Priority	What will we do?	How will we do it?	How will we know?	Lead Group	Period
<p><b>Neglect</b> (This is a priority because Neglect is the most prevalent concern for children on our Child Protection register and also has featured within Learning Review activity)</p>	<p>Increase practitioner’s skills and confidence in preventing, identifying, and addressing neglect. This will recognise the correlation between poverty and neglect.</p> <p>In collaboration with the ADP/CPC thematic group, explore our messaging and approaches to safe sleep practices.</p>	<p>Review &amp; refresh the remit of our multi agency thematic group.</p> <p>Establish a multi agency workforce group to identify and mitigate the barriers to naming and responding to neglect.</p> <p>We will seek to understand the lived experience of children, young people and families who have experienced neglect.</p> <p>Consider the use of the Graded Care Profile.</p> <p>Explore the development of a neglect pathway that mitigates the escalation into child protection/statutory processes.</p>	<p>Review of the multi agency Neglect training.</p> <p>Monitor data around neglect and children re-registered under neglect.</p> <p>Children &amp; families will tell us that they are receiving early and preventative support.</p> <p>Data from our audit and learning review activity.</p>	<p>Neglect Thematic Group</p> <p>Clear links with Best Start In Life</p>	<p>Throughout 2024-2026</p>
Priority	What will we do?	How will we do it?	How will we know?	Lead Group	Period
<p><b>Child Protection &amp; Parental Substance Use</b> (This is a priority because it has been identified Learning Review activity, and through our data &amp; scrutiny reports. Parental substance use continues to feature prominently in our CPR registrations)</p>	<p>Ensure an aligned framework for understanding &amp; risk of</p> <p>Develop an escalation pathway for young people exhibiting early indications of problematic drug/alcohol use</p> <p>Explore the interconnectivity of related child protection and substance use activity to develop a more cohesive and preventative approach to whole family support.</p>	<p>Establish a joint thematic group with Aberdeen City’s Alcohol &amp; Drug Partnership</p> <p>Thematic group will determine the priorities for improvement activity to drive the ‘what will we do’ activity.</p>	<p>The escalation pathway will be implemented across the workforce</p> <p>Quality Assurance Framework audit</p> <p>Children &amp; families will tell us that they are receiving early and preventative support.</p>	<p>ADP/CPC Thematic Group</p>	<p>Throughout 2024-2025</p>

	In collaboration with the Neglect thematic group, explore our messaging and approaches to safe sleep practices.				
<b>Priority</b>	<b>What will we do?</b>	<b>How will we do it?</b>	<b>How will we know?</b>	<b>Lead Group</b>	<b>Period</b>
<b>Exploitation</b> (This is a national and local priority. Our exploitation thematic group share this position and recognise, like the rest of Scotland, there are few children on our CPR under this category)	<p>Increase practitioner’s skills and confidence in preventing, identifying, and responding to all types of exploitation</p> <p>Consider how we communicate with the public to raise awareness of the risk of all types of exploitation.</p>	<p>Develop, review and disseminate local multi-agency guidance, or other awareness raising materials in relation to Child Criminal Exploitation, Sextortion, and other relevant forms of exploitation</p> <p>Improve data gathering in relation to all forms of exploitation, particularly in universal services</p> <p>Develop and disseminate a contextual safeguarding e-module.</p>	<p>The guidance or other materials will be developed and disseminated across the workforce. The impact will be measured by engaging with the workforce</p> <p>The data from universal services will illustrate the prevalence of children and young people at risk of exploitation in Aberdeen and the impact of preventative interventions.</p>	<p>Exploitation Thematic Group</p> <p>(Establish links with Youth Justice, and the Corporate Parenting Groups)</p> <p>L&amp;D Sub Committee</p>	Throughout 2024-2026
<b>Priority</b>	<b>What will we do?</b>	<b>How will we do it?</b>	<b>How will we know?</b>	<b>Lead Group</b>	<b>Period</b>
<b>Child Protection &amp; Domestic Abuse</b> (This is a priority because it has been identified through Learning Review activity and through our data & scrutiny reports)	We will undertake a joint learning & development session in collaboration with the Violence Against Women Partnership to explore the interconnectivity of related activity to develop a more cohesive and preventative approach to supporting women and girls who experience violence and abuse.	Establish a joint thematic group with the Violence Against Women Partnership to deliver on improvement priorities in relation to violence and abuse experience by women and girls.	<p>Improvement priorities will be identified through the joint development session. This will include quality assurance activity</p> <p>Women and girls will tell us that they are receiving early and preventative support.</p>	VAWP/CPC Thematic Group	Throughout 2025-2026

Priority	What will we do?	How will we do it?	How will we know?	Lead Group	Period
<b>Interdisciplinary multi agency working</b> (This is a priority because services to children and families need to be more holistic)	<p>Align strategies and procedures to the fullest extent across public protection</p> <p>Provide whole family support where there are children &amp; young people at risk of significant harm, or are at risk of causing significant harm</p> <p>Ensure children, young people and their families have their say in decisions made about them and that they are listened to.</p>	<p>Review practitioner guidance in relation to the transition from child to adult services</p> <p>Continue to explore opportunities to integrate and collaborate via the public protection leads group</p> <p>Review our local child protection operational guidance ensuring that the family's journey through our child protection processes is proportionate</p> <p>Develop and open our Bairns' Hoose.</p>	<p>Young people will be supported by the service that best meets their needs</p> <p>Develop a work programme for the public protection leads group</p> <p>IRD quality assurance, P&amp;QA data and conversion rates</p> <p>Evaluation of our Bairns' Hoose.</p>	<p>CSB/IJB (CPC/APC)</p> <p>PP Leads Group/CPC Lead Officer</p> <p>P&amp;QA Sub Committee</p> <p>Bairns' Hoose Delivery Group</p>	Throughout 2024-2025
Priority	What will we do?	How will we do it?	How will we know?	Lead Group	Period
<b>Learning &amp; Development</b> (This is a priority because it is a fundamental part of the learning and development function required from the CPC)	<p>Ensure all multi-agency staff have access to appropriate learning and development resources in relation to our child protection improvement priorities</p> <p>Develop our Learning &amp; Development strategy to the <a href="#">National Framework for Child Protection L&amp;D in Scotland 2024</a>.</p>	<p>Undertake a learning needs analysis to identify the learning &amp; development requirements of the workforce, and refresh our L&amp;D plan</p> <p>Communicate with the workforce in relation to child protection improvement activity</p> <p>Consider how we communicate with the public in relation to child protection improvement activity</p> <p>Further develop the Aberdeen Protects website.</p>	<p>Develop and deliver a workforce learning &amp; development strategy, in collaboration with other strategic public protection groups to meet the learning requirements of the workforce</p> <p>Issue quarterly CPC bulletins to the workforce reflecting local and national priorities and activity</p> <p>The workforce will tell us.</p>	<p>L&amp;D Sub Committee</p> <p>CPC Lead Officer and L&amp;D Coordinator</p>	Throughout 2024-2026



# IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME 2024-2026



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## CPC Improvement Aims

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## Our Priorities in programme 2024-2026

Neglect

Child Protection & Parental Substance Use

Exploitation

Child Protection & Domestic Abuse

Interdisciplinary multi-agency working

Learning & Development

**To find out more about our improvement priorities and the activity to deliver on these, read our full programme [here](#)**



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## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education and Children's Services Committee
<b>DATE</b>	26 November 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Children's Social Work; Workforce Development Plan (2024-2030)
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	F&C/24/331
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Eleanor Sheppard
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Graeme Simpson
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Alison McAlpine
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	1.1.1 and 1.2

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents a Children's Social Work Workforce Plan (Appendix A) designed to build the capacity we need to meet demand based on our analysis of current and future need.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee: -

- 2.1 notes that the Workforce Plan available in Appendix A aligns with the vision, values and goals of the children's social work service, and is in line with the Children's Services Plan 2023-2026;
- 2.2 notes the focus on employee wellbeing as a necessary component to ensure the workforce grows in confidence and competence to meet the increasingly complex needs of our most vulnerable children and their families;
- 2.3 instructs the Chief Officer for Children's Social Work and Family Support Services to align the service Learning and Development programme to the workforce plan; and
- 2.4 instructs the Chief Officer for Children's Social Work and Family Support Services to present an evaluation of progress against the workforce plan to Committee in 2027.

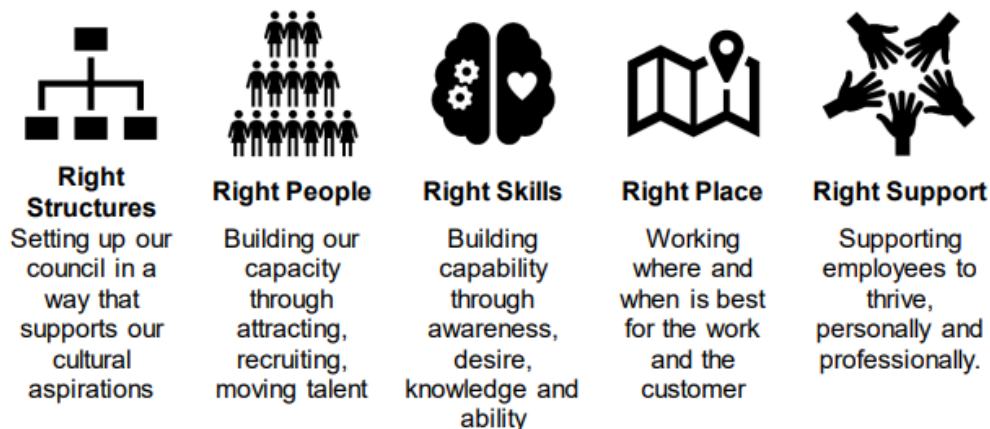
### CURRENT SITUATION

#### 3.1 Background and context

- 3.1.1 Children's Social Work (CSW) provides statutory services from pre-birth to 18 years of age, extending to 26 years of age for care experienced young people in line with legislative responsibilities and supported by national and local policy and guidance.

- 3.1.2 In recent years, unprecedented, unforeseen challenges from a worldwide pandemic and global conflict, austerity cuts and a cost-of-living crisis have led to increased need within those who were already among our most disadvantaged in the city. This escalation of need and vulnerability has impacted on children's services locally and nationally at a time when there are considerable constraints on Local Authority resources. This has triggered a need to consider how we can maximise the impact of our most valuable resource, our staff.
- 3.1.3 A report to the Staff Governance Committee in April 2024 entitled "[Workforce Deep Dive – Approach to Workforce Capacity and Hard to Fill Roles](#)" identified many posts in CSW as being "hard to fill". Operationally this presents significant challenges to service delivery.
- 3.1.4 In 2022 Social Work Scotland commissioned independent research to examine the challenges facing the social work service. The report '[Setting the Bar](#)' (2019) and the follow up report '[Taking the Wheel](#)' report (2022) highlighted recruitment and retention challenges, the impact of excessive workloads, the fast pace of policy and legislation change and public portrayal of social work as challenges. The challenges faced by CSW were deemed to be more acute than those faced by other social work sectors; in recognition of the high levels of emotional challenge associated with this work, the report also proposed indicative maximum caseloads.
- 3.1.5 The current policy and legislative context in which CSW operates is fast changing (*Appendix B*) with increasing complexities for the workforce to navigate which can be daunting. We need to consider how best to mitigate this.
- 3.1.6 The Independent Care Review, [The Promise](#), acknowledged the complexity of the task, and the challenges faced by staff delivering services to children, young people and their families. The Promise highlighted the duty on employers to provide 'scaffolding' for the workforce; quality professional supervision, learning and development opportunities to equip them for their role whilst also recognising the mental wellbeing needs of a workforce who are exposed daily to the impact of abuse and trauma. **'Scotland must hold the hands of those who hold the hand of the child.'** - The Promise.
- 3.1.7 The Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection (CELCIS) undertook research in relation to delivery of children's services alongside a proposed introduction of the National Care Service (NCS), and to adhere to the service transformation commitment made within 'The Promise'. In December 2023 CELCIS published [Children's Services Reform Research](#). It acknowledges the current climate; too many children experiencing the effects of poverty; the implications of the cost-of-living crisis; the rippling impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on health and wellbeing; and the increased demand for social work and social care.

- 3.1.8 The research identifies a range of elements that create the optimal conditions needed to enable success in improving the lives of those who need the support of services. This includes a focus on supportive, trusting, consistent relationships; rights; sufficient and skilled workforce; structures that provide needed help and support; measures to combat poverty; simplified legislative landscape; and an approach to change that gives cognisance to the complexity of human relations and systems.
- 3.1.9 The proposed CSW workforce development plan (Appendix A) takes cognisance of all known local and national challenges. It is aligned to Aberdeen City's [Local Outcome & Improvement Plan](#) (LOIP), [Children's Services Strategic Plan](#) and our [Child Protection Improvement Plan](#).
- 3.1.10 The Plan also takes full account of the Council's [Workforce Delivery Plan](#), approved by Staff Governance Committee in January 2023, which identified five key levers to delivering workforce transformation. Each of these levers have been used to help support the development of the Plan.



## 3.2 Right Structures

- 3.2.1 As part of the planning for a National Care Service (NCS) the Scottish Government have committed to establishing a National Social Work Agency (NSWA). The proposed NSWA will have responsibility for a range of elements that will directly impact on the profession. This is likely to include pay grades, workforce planning, training, development, and qualifications. Our Workforce Plan will need to evolve to take account of the creation of an NSWA as well as the development of the Advanced Social Work Practice Framework being introduced. Both these national structural changes are due to come into effect in the coming years.
- 3.2.2 CSW sits within the Family and Community Services Function, alongside Education and Lifelong Learning and the Housing Service. This arrangement enables opportunities for integration to be maximised, particularly for children who need targeted and specialist support. Responsibility for delivery of a Family Support Model sits with the Function. Collaboration with others is crucial in terms of how we provide early and preventative support to families to mitigate

the need for statutory social work intervention. New ways of working will require to be adopted and CSW will require to be open to new more integrated structures being established over time. This will include helping build the capacity of community caseworkers as part of our model of Family Support.

- 3.2.3 Intervention focussed on keeping children within their families and community has been a key priority for many years now; with legislative, policy and practice drivers endorsing this ethos at pace both nationally and locally. Timely support aims to provide effective intervention at the right time, ultimately reducing the need for children to come into the care of the local authority. This will see changes in how the range of services from across the Community Planning Partners work together to support families to prevent and mitigate risk.
- 3.2.4 Despite the current provision of universal and targeted supports, demand for social work assessment and intervention remains high:
- Around 400 children are newly referred into our Intake services every month. The highest referral route being from Police Scotland, followed by Education.
  - We also receive new information of a care and protection nature for around 350 children already open to our service.
- 3.2.5 Most new referrals leave the service after short-term intervention, but longer-term cases go to locality teams based in the three localities across the city. Complex cases that require strong assessment and intervention are handled by frontline social workers, who often act as Lead Professionals, a crucial part of our fieldwork services. There is a need to ensure that our frontline workers have the scaffolding and casework size they require to work confidently. This may have implications for our structure.
- 3.2.6 Crucial enhancement to service delivery is afforded by professionals across CSW, with a diverse range of knowledge, skills, qualifications and experience, who hold risk through intervention identified within individualised Children's Plans. These children will very often be at risk of falling into crisis, may require alternative family, care or housing settings, and some are known to be struggling to access education, training or employment due to their complex needs. Recognising that these children, young people and families will require a multi-agency plan to meet their needs and keep them safe continuing to develop collaborative and colocated opportunities will be essential going forward.
- 3.2.7 Professionals within our Fostering, Kinship and Adoption Teams are a vital component of our service delivery. Staff prioritise identifying, recruiting and supporting carers who can offer high quality care to children who cannot safely remain in the care of their parents. Residential staff work 24/7 across our local children's homes to offer therapeutic care to our children and young people, all of whom have experienced adverse childhood experiences. All children require extremely patient, reparative care each and every day.

3.2.8 Across all areas of service, demand is greater than service capacity resulting in workers and their managers striving to balance the competing needs of children and families in order to mitigate the deficit between resource availability and demand. For this reason, workforce risks are recognised in our service cluster risk register and will continue to be mitigated by supporting the professional development of staff in an agile and responsive manner. This recognises the changing shape of demand and complexity that have been very prominent in recent years.

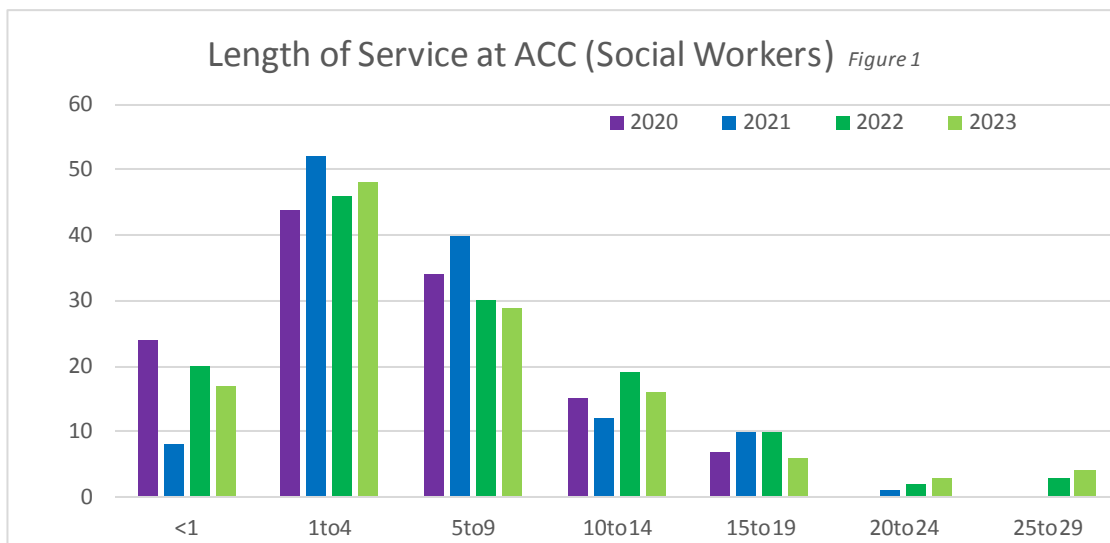
3.2.9 We broadly welcome the intention to establish a NSWA and the focus this will bring to the professional development of social workers. We also recognise the intention of The Promise to ensure families have ready access to early and preventive family support. As we develop our integrated Family Support Model the knowledge and skills of social workers will be critical to shaping the model and ensure the principles of intensive family support, outlined in The Promise, are fully considered in our next steps.

### **3.3 Right People**

3.3.1 We are exceptionally proud to have a dedicated and committed workforce who work hard to deliver skilled assessment and intervention to our most vulnerable children and their families. We recognise our staff are by far our most precious asset, and we are committed to supporting and developing them, creating a climate and culture that is conducive to the social work values we are shaped by. We know this will best preserve and protect our workforce but also maximise their collective capacity to deliver highest quality of service provision.

3.3.2 The total number of CSW employees has decreased by 5% since 2019 as a result of budget contraction and service redesign. Given the on-going financial challenges facing Local Authorities our model of delivering statutory social work services will need to continue to evolve. Ensuring the voices of those who access our services as well as those who deliver front line social work services will be central to shaping the design of services going forward.

3.3.3 Our CSW workforce is comprised of approximately 384 employees across all service areas (December 2023.) The average length of service of qualified children's social workers is 6.6yrs (*Figure 1.*) This is considerably lower than the average years of service of the wider children's social work workforce which sits at 10 years.



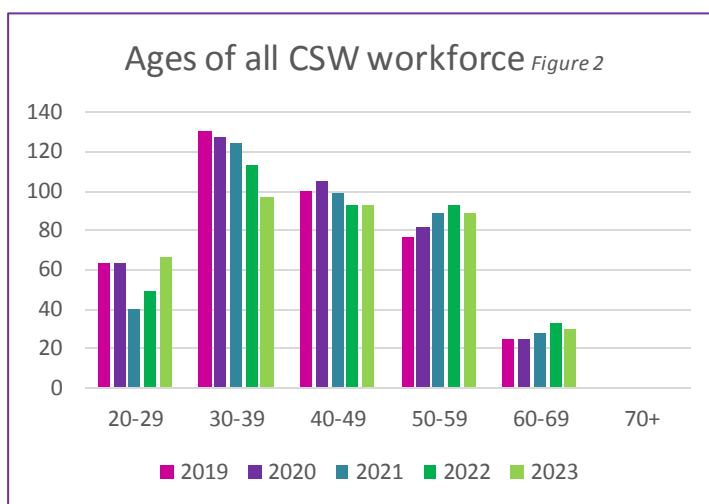
3.3.4 We recognise the challenge we have in retaining social workers in statutory services. This is both a local and national challenge. This is particularly challenging where workers fulfil the role of Lead Professional as well as those within our residential services. By nature, these roles are challenging, require specific knowledge, skill and crucially, demand considerable resilience. We are clear that when the right people are recruited into these posts and are subsequently nurtured, supported and afforded the required training and development opportunities, the rewards are reaped by both staff themselves and by our children and families.

3.3.5 One in four graduating social workers do not make it to 6 years in the profession. In Aberdeen, our data tells us that when our workers do remain in the service beyond their initial years, many actually remain in the longer term, their years of service offering us a robust skill and experience base. There is a need to do all we can to retain our people. We plan to carefully scrutinise exit interview records so that we can take action to address identified risks.

3.3.6 Alongside the benefits of retaining staff in our service in the longer term, we are then challenged by a workforce that in some areas, is ageing in keeping with the national position. 19% of our workforce are approaching retirement age. Succession planning is therefore as much a key factor as is our ensuring effective recruitment and retention within the service. To support our employees to reach their potential, consideration to what training and development is most appropriate for staff takes place within supervision sessions with staff, and as part of the continuous review and development (CR&D) process. We work hard to ensure our service training budget suits the variety of development needs of our workforce. This includes allocating funding, in collaboration with colleagues in People & Citizen Services, to post qualifying training staff in key roles who evidence commitment to enhancing service delivery. The next steps in this are detailed in the action plan, that the Learning & Development Officer and CSMT management carry out an audit of training needs annually and training needs are logged, reviewed and contribute to future planning of service wide training

requirements. We also review the current CSW workforce demographic and actively promote leadership and shadowing opportunities and have a clear structure and progression plan.

3.3.7 The average age of our Children's Social Work workforce has increased from 37 to 38 years, over the past five years, with the average age of male social workers increasing to 50, and females to 37 years old. There are currently more Children's Social Work employees aged between 40-44 years old, than in the other age brackets. Compare this to the 2019 data, where the biggest



group of employees were those aged between 30-34 years old. Currently, there are no employees under 20 years old, and only one aged between 70 – 74 years old. We recognise that 20% of our CSW workforce are in their 20s, but within our qualified social workers, this age group make up 30%, with a significant proportion in frontline services. Due to this, additional care is required and factored into our Action Plan to support this group.

3.3.8 We want to do all we can to recognise and retain experience within our service through offering flexible working wherever possible. Alongside this, it is also critical to develop a pathway to help recruit, develop and retain , young people into our wider service, so that we can continue to address the significant numbers who exit the profession prematurely. There is a need to work closely with the Education and Lifelong Learning, People and Citizen Services and the Employability team to develop this pathway.

3.3.9 A measure to support our recruitment challenges is our ‘grow our own’ approach to succession planning. Currently we have 8 trainee social workers within the service. These are all internal employees, who were in non-qualified roles within the organisation who evidenced a desire to progress as well as displaying the necessary experience, transferable skills and a strong alignment to social work values. Recognising the transferability of skills and knowledge from related disciplines i.e. Community Learning and Development and Early Learning and Childcare our grow our own opportunities extend beyond the CSW workforce.

3.3.10 Our newly qualified social workers (NQSW) are in the main, recruited from the Robert Gordon University (RGU) (19 at August 2023). Undoubtedly this local connection endorses a need for a close partnership, as well as realising the benefits of offering social workers in training a valuable placement experience that will inspire and encourage their motivation to work in CSW in Aberdeen. In order to strengthen our partnership with RGU, we will continue to hold recruitment events that will raise awareness of CSW among social work



students, we aim to increase the number of student placements on offer, and will develop our communication and discussions with the RGU social work department, to ensure that CSW is promoted and encouraged as a career path.

3.3.11 The vast majority of CSW employees are female (*Table 3*) and are dispersed as follows. 93% social workers, 85% Team Managers, and 75% Senior Managers. More female employees work part-time, however most Team Managers and all Senior Managers work full-time. The number of male employees working part-time has increased in recent years. In recognition of the needs of our staff and to encourage retention, we have embraced flexible working options, where this can fit with the exigencies of the service. This option will continue to be promoted across the workforce.

Employees	Female	Male	Total
2023	331	46	377
2020	346	57	403
2019	340	56	396

3.3.12 The majority of CSW employees identify their ethnicity as ‘white-Scottish’ (45%), with a further 27% identifying as ‘white – other British’ (2022.) This data largely mirrors the ethnicity of the children and young people our service works with. Given the increasing diversity in the city we recognise that greater diversity across our workforce would enrich and enhance service delivery. Social workers who share cultural backgrounds with their clients can better understand and address specific challenges, fostering trust and effective communication as well as creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for those we serve to protect. We are conscious of national [reports](#) reflecting on the racism challenges that minority ethnic social workers continue to experience at work and are committed to ensuring that everyone is included, empowered, and treated with respect. Our [Diversity in Recruitment](#) report which was approved at Council on 11<sup>th</sup> of October 2024, details how we will progress this. Implications for CSW include attracting candidates from groups that are underrepresented, ensuring that managers have training and guidance that address barriers such as unconscious bias and language, and that everyone within our workforce is welcomed from the outset and has a strong sense of belonging. This can be further strengthened within the new professional supervision guidance and training that will be delivered across the service.

3.3.13 We have looked more closely into the volume and context surrounding vacancies across service given the impact that vacancies has on service delivery. Our vacancy factor has improved (18 social worker vacancies out of 102 as at December 2022 to 10 vacancies in June 2024.) Improvements in capturing relevant data allow us to factor learning into workforce planning; for the 26 social workers who left the role during the most recent SSSC reporting period 5 December 2022 to 4 December 2023:-

- 31% (8) moved ‘sideways’ to another role within social work,
- 1 reached the end of their fixed term contract,
- 1 was promoted,
- 1 retired early,
- 1 left through Voluntary Severance / Early Retirement,
- 12% (3) resigned



- 1 very sadly passed away.

Feedback from staff who have moved to other social work roles indicates that the emotional impact of the work of children's social work is a primary driver for them to explore alternative employment options. This is particularly prevalent for social workers in frontline social work roles who are in the role of lead professional. We are committed to maximising the opportunities offered by technology to reduce unnecessary administrative burdens to make the best possible use of staff time and expertise.

3.3.14 Previously, we have had to rely on the additional supply pool and experience from external recruitment agencies. This reliance is cost prohibitive and the short term nature of agency contracts is not conducive to the relational working practice we promote within our workforce. We have made considerable improvement reducing from over 15 agency workers in 2011, to 5 in December 2019 and as of July 2024, just 1. This is a shift we are committed to sustaining.

3.3.15 In September 2024, the absence rate amongst children's social work was 9.9 days. This is lower than the ACC average of 12.05 days for the same period. In recent years, there has been a move to take more cognisance to providing scaffolding to the workforce, working in a trauma informed way, and to the complexities of working day-to-day within social work, therefore the professional supervision training will aim to better equip supervisors to respond to absences and aid returning to work.

3.3.16 Challenges in recruitment are similar to national trends. Moving experienced social workers to service areas with gaps is rarely feasible. Ultimately it can result in leaving another area with need and does not recognise there are some roles that require a particular skill base or motivation that is not universally held. We have however worked hard to cultivate a culture that recognises we are greater than the sum of our individual parts. This ethos has allowed us to be more supportive, where we can, to the internal movement of staff where this will benefit overall service delivery, whilst working on strengthening links with RGU and providing sessions for students to attract them to the CSW service.

3.3.17 Getting the right people managers is critical given the role they play ensuring our most vulnerable children and young people are able to claim their rights. Our workforce plan notes the development of selection tools for promoted posts in terms of interview format, selection and assessment. This includes ensuring that our care experienced children and young people and others who have lived experience of receiving services are part of our decision-making process.

3.3.18 Our action plan includes our continued commitment to learning and development; building workforce resilience and openness; retaining staff; 'growing our own'; reducing vacancies and absence rates amongst our Social Workers; reviewing and adapting our services; and attracting workers from underrepresented groups.

### **3.4 Right Skills**

3.4.1 Social work intervention aims to enable families to leave statutory services as soon as possible. The expertise and proficiency of our workforce significantly

influence how swiftly families can be supported to do this. There is an inextricable link between this Workforce Plan and our learning and development programme.

- 3.4.2 The CSW learning and development programme is aligned to service priorities, self-reported areas for development, compliant to statutory and regulatory responsibilities and is managed in-house or via the corporate training budget within People & Citizen Services. In addition, there are multi-agency training sessions offered via [Aberdeen Protects](#). CSW also now have access to CareKnowledge, a professional development platform that provides access to expert, evidence-based information and resources/tools that help maximise learning and development opportunities for staff. Staff report that whilst time constraints can compromise usage of this, when they do, they find it informative for their roles. There is a need to continue to ensure that staff dedicate time to their own learning and development through our supervision arrangements and continue to ensure that platforms such as CareKnowledge are available to our staff to respond to the individual needs of our staff in order to continue to build a highly knowledgeable and proficient workforce.
- 3.4.3 In recent years, we have seen an increase in areas of work including migrant families and unaccompanied asylum seeking children who arrive spontaneously or via the National Transfer Scheme. We have also seen an increased volume of older children who arrive in the city, often from England, having become involved in criminal exploitation; high levels of substance misuse with an associated high level of drug related deaths. Also, the numbers of children with additional support needs (ASN) and complex disability has increased year on year, significantly those who have autism or are neurodiverse who are often referred when the family is in crisis. As a result of on-going changes in need, there is both a need for our workforce to benefit from the skills of others (for example specialists in neurodiversity) and work with other staff across the organisation and group (such as those supporting families impacted by drugs and alcohol). As a service, we will diligently seek opportunities to learn from others and extend reciprocal offers.
- 3.4.4 Data shows an increase in the number of referrals requiring medium to longer term social work intervention. Employees tell us that this can feel relentless and exhausting. There is a need to focus on the wellbeing of our staff.
- 3.4.5 Whilst our remit focusses on the needs of unborn babies, children, young people and those for whom we have a statutory duty to provide throughcare and aftercare services, we acknowledge the majority of children's needs are codependent or interrelated to the needs of their parents/carers, their wider family, and communities around them. Work is ongoing to work collegially with partner agencies to see the family as a holistic unit and expertise is offered to provide whole family support, by those best placed to intervene.
- 3.4.6 Nurturing positive multi and inter agency relationships in a climate where demand exceeds resource availability remains challenging for all. Learning and development for all staff on the importance of this, as well as targeted focus on professional supervision development and training is a crucial area of our

Action Plan. We strive for all of our leaders to be highly skilled and able to bring staff, and indeed multi-agency partners together to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people at risk of significant harm or those for whom we have corporate parenting responsibilities.

- 3.4.7 Our action plan focuses on specific areas of improvement for building workforce capacity, including the need to develop better communication on promoting CSW values, opportunities for personal continuous learning and development, along with tools and information to help navigate the ever evolving day-to-day challenges faced in CSW.

### **3.5 Right Place**

- 3.5.1 In July 2024, there were approximately 1,600 children open to our service, with varying levels of need, including just under 500 'looked-after' children and young people. Of the 1600 children circa 60% live in SIMD 1 & 2, where unsurprisingly there is a greater level of generational trauma, unemployment and lone parent households. These factors increase the vulnerabilities for families and have implications for all services whilst correlating to lower outcomes in attainment within the city's education data.

- 3.1.1 The Care Inspectorate recently noted the strengths of the co-location model in operation for our Children with Disabilities Team. They noted that this model is helping to keep children safer and address wellbeing needs. Plans are in place for social work staff to move into a community resource aligned with a school. While recognising the potential benefits of colocation the needs of delivering statutory social work services need to be carefully and fully considered.

- 3.1.2 Collaboration with partners across the public, voluntary and the private sector is crucial to how we provide early and preventative support to families that mitigates the need for children to be referred to the social work service. Working collaboratively with multi-agency partners is critical to delivering flexible and responsive support that recognises the holistic needs and vulnerabilities of all family members.

- 3.1.3 This is as much the case when children's social work do require to intervene in order to ensure that those in need are able to access the services and support they require at the point they require it. As noted above, timely support aims to provide effective intervention at the right time, ultimately reducing the need for children to come into the care of the local authority.

- 3.1.4 CSW continues to review and re-design services for the benefit of children, young people and families we work with. Aims within our action plan include co-designing and improving services with the children, young people and families we work with, along with enhancing our communication, co-working, and opportunities offer with our partners.

### **3.2 Right Support**

- 3.2.1 Our CSW workforce development plan is driven forward by our Children's Services Management Team, led by the Chief Social Work Officer, supported

by the Lead Service Manager and six Service Managers, each with strategic oversight of respective interdependent and related areas of service.

- 3.2.2 There is a relational, strength and value based approach to practice within CSW. This is as important for our children and families as it is for our workforce. The contribution from all staff to ensure that all colleagues feel supported and respected is fundamental to effective operational delivery of services. Whilst modelling this is a particular focus for those in leadership positions, this is as relevant for every one of us. This is vital to helping create a culture that maximises benefits for all, as well as in building resilience and promoting wellbeing. We will strive to ensure this golden thread permeates all elements of our Workforce Development Action Plan.
- 3.2.3 Ensuring all our staff have the knowledge and skills they require to undertake their respective roles is vital. Central to our delivery of statutory functions is of course, the role of our qualified social workers. We recognise that for this group, their initial post qualifying years form a career blueprint which can either make or break whether they remain within their roles.
- 3.2.4 NQSW make up the highest proportion of our applicants to social work posts. We have been running a successful programme of support for NQSW for a number of years now as part of our commitment to ensuring this group have our particular focus whilst they put new knowledge into practice and build up their skills and experience. We are clear that when we provide the necessary support and development opportunities many remain with us for much of their career. Our NQSW programme is now led by clinical practitioners with expertise in systemic practice. We welcome the mandating of the NQSW Supported Year (October 2024) and are pleased that current practice in Aberdeen is aligned to this pathway from qualification through to advanced practice.
- 3.2.5 We acknowledge the impact that every member of the CSW workforce makes on our children, young people, families as much as on each other. We are proud of the support those in leadership positions afford our staff and we will continue to ensure a visibility of managers at all levels, to ensure that the workforce feels connected and supported.
- 3.2.6 We equip key staff with tools from the field of systemic family therapy and social learning theory; supporting them with expert and intensive case supervision; business support; reduced bureaucracy; and devolved decision making, so that families get the right support, at the right time, to make and sustain change.
- 3.2.7 A foundation of our action plan is promoting mental health and wellbeing by supporting healthy work-life balance; effective supervision, and developing a culture that promotes mental health and wellbeing.
- 3.2.8 Whilst recognising the importance of visibility and connection, we embrace the benefits of technology alongside hybrid working. We have embraced flexible working provisions which have seen some of the workforce adopting different working patterns, within areas where service delivery can benefit from delivery

over longer days. These arrangements can help to maximise wellbeing and recovery from stressful working whilst supporting workers to manage their own family commitments.

- 3.2.9 In recognition that people who work in CSW experience increased risk of vicarious and secondary trauma and burnout, more targeted supports are offered to CSW workforce. This support is probably most widely seen within the practice of supervision, offered for almost all posts through 1-1, regular individualised sessions to employees by their line manager. Following a service wide survey on professional supervision, a working group reviewed feedback highlighting several areas of good practice and some areas for improvement. In developing supervision guidance, the practitioners reviewed current supervision practices, within ACC and other Local Authorities, taking into account deficiencies highlighted by recent inspection findings; and analysed different supervision models. Training that will complement and build on supervisor's experience, knowledge and skills will be delivered early 2025; with initial commitment to roll this out to line managers across our service.
- 3.2.10 Our focus on wellbeing will remain a significant feature of workforce development planning. This approach was formally launched in March 2023, when our Practice Improvement Day, coinciding with National Social Work Day, highlighted our ongoing commitment to ensuring that in Aberdeen, mental health/wellbeing is prioritised. Staff feedback overwhelmingly illustrated that this emphasis was welcomed across all levels of our organisation. Further supports for our staff now range from wellbeing sessions and resources targeted at social work staff as a group, such as weekly guided journalling sessions, to more specific clinical supervision, support and training for specialist practitioners undertaking specific roles. We point our staff towards ACC's [Employee Assistance Programme](#) when counselling sessions might be beneficial, and bespoke arrangements when particular circumstances deem this more appropriate. In April 2023, we introduced an initiative for our employees, to consider ways that they can prioritise their wellbeing, in discussion with their manager, through individualised self-care or learning activities that will enhance mental and physical wellbeing. This initiative has been very well received by staff and we will continue to measure the impact of this via annual feedback.

### **3.3 WORKFORCE PLANNING**

- 3.3.1 Our workforce development plan (*Appendix A*) will be delivered in accordance with our [Aberdeen's Children's Services Strategic Plan](#) and the Workforce Delivery Plan (as detailed in the [Workforce Deep Dive – Committee Report \(April 2024\)](#)). It sets out our aims over the next six years, crucially, how we are going to measure the impact of what we develop and deliver.
- 3.3.2 The aims of this workforce development plan are to ensure a high-performing, diverse and resilient local children's services workforce that can meet the current and future needs and expectations of those for whom we have a duty to care for and protect. As such, our objectives are to:

- Attract and retain diverse talented and committed staff who share our values and vision.
- Develop, nurture and enhance the skills and competencies of a staff group who we acknowledge will be working in a highly complex and demanding area of service, to enable them to perform their roles effectively and to adapt to changing demands.
- Ensure a high level of support and guidance is offered to our workforce in line with their respective needs.
- Support and empower staff to achieve their potential and career aspirations, whilst ensuring a healthy balance of their work and personal lives.
- Promote and celebrate the inclusion and diversity of our staff, always offering equal opportunity to progression and other training opportunities and ensuring they are treated fairly and respectfully.
- Foster a culture of excellence, innovation and collaboration amongst our staff that extends to the wider city partnership and delivers best practice to the children, their families and our wider community within the city

3.3.3 Our workforce development plan is split into three sections, recruitment and retention; supervision to support mental health and wellbeing; and growth and development opportunities.

3.3.4 The plan details the specific actions and measures of how we will achieve the aims stated. In addition, each aim is linked back to foundations of the Promise (Family, Voice, Care, People, and Scaffolding), so that we can monitor our progress with implementation of the Promise, and focus on the key challenges that are facing our sector.

## **4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Improved learning and development opportunities, high quality supervision and wellbeing support for employees should improve retention of social workers and attract more potential applicants to come and work within CSW in Aberdeen. In order to ensure that we comply with our regulatory duties under the SSSC Codes of Practice, effective learning and development opportunities alongside wellbeing support to staff will be critical.

## **5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

## **6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications from this report.

## 7 RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	Many of the improvements required to support and retain social workers in the city are part of the workforce development plan	In line with the Children's Services Plan 2023-2026	M	Yes
<b>Compliance</b>	Risk that ACC can't provide service that complies with legislative duties.	This is managed through the Cluster Risk Register	M	Yes
<b>Operational</b>	Risk that ACC cannot recruit/retain social workers	This is managed through the Cluster Risk Register	M	Yes
<b>Financial</b>	No direct financial impact		L	Yes
<b>Reputational</b>	Organisational failings in relation to child protection can bring significant media interest and scrutiny of services delivered to children and young people.	The public can be assured that: the Council ensures compliance with legal requirements, national standards and guidance; partners respond to self and external scrutiny; and identified areas for improvement are addressed.	M	Yes
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	Not applicable for this report			



## 8 OUTCOMES

<u><a href="#">COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 24-25</a></u>	
	<b>Impact of Report</b>
	The information in this report has no impact on the Council Delivery Plan but is in line with the aims of the Children's Services Plan
<u><a href="#">WorkinginPartnershipPolicyStatement.pdf (aberdeencity.gov.uk)</a></u>	
<u><a href="#">Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan (refresh April 2024)</a></u>	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	<p>The report seeks to provide an update on how CSW plans to develop and support its workforce.</p> <p>In line with the delivery of the Children's Services Plan and associated Stretch Outcomes 4-9 of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working together as a Community Planning Partnership to improve outcomes for children and young people within Aberdeen City</li> <li>• Leading the implementation of national policy and legislation pertaining to children and young people</li> </ul>

## 9 IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required
<b>Other</b>	Not required

## 10 BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 [Children's Services Strategic Plan 2023-26](#)

## 11 APPENDICES

Appendix A - Children's Social Work; Workforce Development Plan '24-30  
Appendix B – Key Recent Changes to Children's Services Landscape

## 12 REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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**Appendix A (DRAFT)  
Children's Social Work; Workforce Development Plan 2024-2030**

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION		
Aim	How will we know	By when / link to <a href="#">The Promise?</a>
<p>Aberdeen's Children's Services Management Team are committed to providing scaffolding for the workforce by setting the conditions which will ensure our workforce feel safe and held whilst working in an extremely challenging context.</p> <p>Ensure that caseload allocation is carefully carried out via line manager discussion, based on type of work, intensity and experience of employee with recognition of their wider caseload.</p> <p>Developing our induction, support and supervision of social workers in training who are undertaking placements with Children's Social Work.</p> <p>Continue to deliver and develop our Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW) Supported Year programme, ensuring that it aligns and adheres to national commitments i.e. Supported Year.</p> <p>To raise awareness of job and career opportunities within CSW (CSW) to as wide a pool of applicants as possible, including creative recruitment campaigns, attending job and careers events, links with local and national learning provides etc, in collaboration with colleagues in People &amp; Citizen Services</p> <p>To encourage retention of our existing CSW workforce and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased recruitment and retention across CSW services leading to fewer vacancies reported. Reduction in the number of absences across the service.</li> <li>Cease use of Recruitment Agency staff, due to improved recruitment and retention.</li> <li>Increased numbers of social workers who have undertaken student placements within Children's Social Work, seeking permanent or fixed term posts.</li> <li>Seek feedback from all new appointments to feedback whether the following were positive influences in their applying for a post; CSW publicity via RGU, recruitment events; positive communication shared by the wider partnership; social media; positive encouragement from CSW workforce.</li> <li>Increase in number of diverse staff recruited.</li> <li>Continue to support the succession planning pathways to develop trainee social workers from our internal workforce, via collation of data on number of trainee social workers who successfully complete and move into Social Work roles.</li> <li>Higher numbers of social workers in training and NQSW's reporting feeling confident and who aspire to secure and remain in permanent roles?</li> <li>Increase in our qualified social workers stepping into management roles.</li> </ul>	<p>People, Voice, Care</p> <p>May 2026</p>

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<p>further provide scaffolding by offering a range of continuous professional development and other development opportunities as well as career progression opportunities to encourage employees to develop either broader experience or into management roles.</p> <p>Work closely with stakeholders to increase awareness of CSW values, priorities, and future recruitment opportunities so that new recruits with potential and talent are aware of the high expectations we hold and are motivated and inspired to join our services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the number of interviews where young people who have lived experience of services are able to make a meaningful contribution to the recruitment process.</li> <li>• Caseloads will be protected dependent on experience, role and other key factors.</li> <li>• NQSWs will be offered protected learning time, peer support and mentoring.</li> <li>• NQSWs will meet their NQSW core learning elements during their supported year, including mandatory learning activities as part of their CPD.</li> <li>• Seek feedback from NQSWs, advanced years practitioners, wider workforce to give evidence as to whether they have received the right levels of supervision and support for their professional development and learning, from ACC and from peers and colleagues.</li> <li>• Increase the average length of time of all who work within CSW.</li> </ul>	
<p>Support the development of the 'grow our own' approach and ensure future career pathways are available within CSW for example the Trainee Social Worker pathway, working in collaboration with colleagues in People &amp; Citizen Services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement in retention – data showing an increase the average length of service of qualified social workers.</li> <li>• Increase % staff who report they have received training and development for their future development.</li> <li>• Review and maintain system of overview of staff training to inform workforce development and shape L&amp;D budget.</li> <li>• Staff survey on satisfaction with supervision.</li> </ul>	<p>People, Scaffolding</p> <p>December 2025</p> <p>December 2025</p>

Develop and enhance an induction programme geared towards new CSW staff who are not newly qualified social workers—this can follow the format of the NQSW induction programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Induction evaluations and summary feedback from staff who attended</li> </ul>	People, Scaffolding, Care, Family, Voice July 2025
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SUPERVISION TO SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING		
Aim	How will we know	By when / link to Promise?
<p>Staff are supported to achieve a healthy work/ life balance through flexible working where practicable and in line with exigencies of the service. This will include taking regular breaks that they are entitled to, and planning and taking holidays/annual leave across the year.</p> <p>To further develop scaffolding of the workforce, staff can access a range of flexible working options to suit their home and work commitments, and these will be accommodated where possible to support employee mental health and wellbeing, encourage retention, and reduce absences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of employees will use all their allocated number of leave days within the calendar year.</li> <li>• Staff who work flexible working patterns will feedback accordingly the positive benefits they feel this affords them.</li> <li>• Staff will feedback that the focus on wellbeing across CSW has impacted positively on their wellbeing.</li> <li>• Absence rates will indicate that MH&amp;W is not a growing feature.</li> </ul>	People, Scaffolding December 2024
<p>CSW will provide scaffolding to ensure staff will all feel they are safe, supported and have autonomy to do their job day-to-day. This support will come from a variety of means, formal and informal supervision, team, peer and colleague support; leadership and management support; access to training; and support to live a healthy lifestyle.</p> <p>Our workforce will forge positive, compassionate and supportive professional relationships with children and families, as well as with each other and the wider children's services partnership in Aberdeen City, which will foster a climate of increased levels of safety for children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-reporting that can be monitored through an annual short 'staff wellbeing survey'.</li> <li>• The number of children listed on the child protection register, whom we have no./ted we are finding it hard to engage with, will stay below the national average</li> </ul>	People, Scaffolding, Care, Family, Voice July 2025

<p>CSW Values will be displayed at all times towards those we are serving to protect, but also towards each other.</p> <p>We will address discrimination experienced by any of our workforce.</p> <p>To further develop effective scaffolding, a firm focus on the importance of mental health and wellbeing will be widely promoted and incorporated into practice.</p> <p>Staff feel that supervision has a clear mental health and wellbeing focus, and they will feel empowered to seek support they require it, including encouragement to access support outside of their workplace to maximise this.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This will become a cultural norm within CSW, with inclusion in supervision, team meetings, structures, service wide communication and communication with the children and families we work with.</li> <li>• QA supervision practices.</li> <li>• Self-reporting of staff via an annual wellbeing survey.</li> <li>• Numbers of staff taking up L&amp;D opportunities and taking up promoted positions within the service.</li> </ul>	<p>People, Care, Scaffolding</p> <p>December 2025</p>
<p>Further develop CSW 'keeping us informed' approach, that will keep the workforce updated on service, local, and national updates, including the opportunity to recognise and celebrate achievements of staff.</p> <p>Staff are involved in decision making and are aware of service demands</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from staff directly via team meetings and 1 to 1 discussion.</li> <li>• Self-reporting of staff via an annual wellbeing survey.</li> <li>• Number of staff being 'recognised' for good practice.</li> <li>• Number of suggestions received via the 'suggestion box'.</li> <li>• Star Awards?</li> </ul>	<p>Scaffolding, Voice</p> <p>December 2025</p>

GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES [Taking stock and moving forward]		
Aim	How will we know	By when / link to Promise?
<p>Explore available and emerging technologies in order to support CSW infrastructure and development to reduce demand on the system and ensure our resources are focused</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data collected on completed forms/sections on D365.</li> <li>• Staff self-reporting effectiveness of technologies</li> </ul>	<p>Scaffolding</p> <p>July 2025</p>

<p>on where they are required, including CSW continue to influence the development of D365 and the testing and early adoption of MS Copilot to explore how this could support the workforce.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All staff involved in Copilot testing will offer constructive feedback to inform future planning.</li> </ul>	
<p>Re-design, adapt, and improve services where required for the benefit of staff, children and families, aligned with QAF and in light of ongoing changes in need, developments in our Family Support Model, and insights from our workforce data.</p> <p>To offer growth and development opportunities and enhance workforce scaffolding, for all our staff, to enhance their experience of working for us, but also to encourage them to progress to promoted posts.</p> <p>Specialist teams are a source of knowledge which can be accessed by workers across our service. We will further develop ways of rolling this expertise out wider, to enhance the skills and knowledge across our workforce.</p> <p>Services are co-designed with feedback from staff, children and families to deliver the best possible outcomes and support.</p> <p>Opportunities to integrate services will be maximised to the benefit of children, young people and families. Including, further development of opportunities with our key partners (Education, Family Learning, Housing, NHS, AHSCP, Third Sector), in delivering a Family Support Model across services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update from CSWO annual report and self-reporting from staff via annual wellbeing survey.</li> <li>Children and Young People self-reporting regarding feeling that CSW have listened and adapted and made improvements to services and lives of children and young people.</li> <li>Number of children and young people using Mind of My Own as a platform to provide feedback.</li> <li>Number of sessions held to raise awareness of specialist teams.</li> <li>Staff reporting feeling more knowledgeable and skilled in dealing with specialist areas.</li> <li>Number of opportunities where services are integrated.</li> <li>Number of integrated services actively delivering a Family Support Model.</li> </ul>	<p>People, Care, Scaffolding, Voice, Family</p> <p>December 2025</p>
<p>Review and set the CSW learning and development plan aims and learning needs for the future [1yr / 5yrs / 10yrs]. Training needs are logged, reviewed and contribute to future planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of training courses delivered/purchased. Number of attendees. Feedback from training sessions.</li> </ul>	<p>People, Scaffolding</p> <p>May 2025</p>

<p>of service wide training requirements. Review the current CSW workforce demographic and actively promote leadership and shadowing opportunities – have a clear structure and progression plan.</p> <p>All staff are supported to increase their learning on the current and changing policy and legislation, via workshops, learning sessions and in-house training, and the use of CareKnowledge.</p> <p>CareKnowledge used to develop workforce knowledge &amp; skills.</p> <p>Staff continue to be supported to complete Mandatory Training as per the L&amp;D strategy. This will help foster a learning and improvement culture, embed values and learning practices.</p> <p>Incorporate WRAM into Mandatory Training offer. Ensure workforce is engaging with the National Trauma Framework and receive the appropriate level of trauma training for role/team.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of staff benefitting from CareKnowledge platform.</li> <li>• Staff self-reporting of feeling more confident and knowledgeable.</li> <li>• Feedback from attendees at development discussions/sessions held by teams.</li> <li>• Number of staff reported to have completed training [via 1-2-1/Manager survey]</li> </ul>	<p>October 2024</p>
<p>Staff are kept informed of national and local policy and legislative changes including updates from The Promise, etc.</p> <p>Review CSW wide induction – welcoming new staff, providing an opportunity for orientation, and introduction to CSW.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff self-reporting of feeling more informed, valued, and supported via annual survey.</li> <li>• Data from evaluation forms completed by new recruits.</li> <li>• Time new staff stay in post after joining CSW.</li> </ul>	<p>People, Care, Scaffolding, Voice, Family</p> <p>December 2025</p>

## Appendix B

Changes to landscape of Children's Social Work including, not exhaustively:

<b>Recent Changes (ie last 2 – 3 years)</b>	
<b>Policy / Legislative Area</b>	<b>Description of changes</b>
<a href="#">The Promise</a>	Following the findings of the 'Independent Care Review', Scotland made a promise to care experienced children and young people; so that they will grow up loved, safe and respected. The Annual Reports on this this highlight the challenges facing local authorities and within ACC we would concur that we need sustainable funding to address local needs and that key to success here will be on supporting our workforce.
<a href="#">Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024 (legislation.gov.uk)</a>	changes to the law in relation to the care of children and the involvement of children in the criminal justice system. The Act provides enhanced protection and support for children by recognising that anyone under the age of 18 as a child and introducing supportive reforms. The Bill became an Act on 4 June 2024.
<a href="#">Re-design of the Children's Hearing System</a>	The redesign process is underpinned by giving effect to the Promise, ensuring compliance with UNCRC, upholding the original intension of the Kilbrandon Review and creating a system that can deliver child friendly justice system upholding rights and ensuring effective participation.
<a href="#">National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021</a>	updated in 2023.
<a href="#">Whole Family Support model</a>	A route-map and national principles of holistic whole family support were launched in 2022. It promotes consistent standards of practice across Scotland which will help deliver improved outcomes for children, young people and families.
Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) and child trafficking	There have been national policies relating to UASC and child trafficking; focusing on the delivery of the National Transfer Scheme.
<a href="#">United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024,</a>	Scotland incorporated the UNCRC that directs policy, law, and decision making to take account of children's rights ensuring that all children have a voice and are empowered to claim their rights.
<a href="#">Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM)</a>	The development of the SCIM for joint investigative interviewing, has provided national training for child interviewers to ensure that the risk of potential further trauma for child victims and witnesses is reduced, and aims to improve the quality and consistency of interviews.

<a href="#">Transitions: The Association for Real Change (ARC) Principles into Practice Framework</a>	Guidance to help improve the experiences of disabled children, young people, and their families during the period when young people develop from children to young adults.
<a href="#">Self Directed Support (SDS)</a>	In 2024, the revised SDS standards were published, along with a suite of practice resources.
<b><u>Future Changes</u></b>	
<b>Policy / Legislative Area</b>	<b>Description of changes</b>
<a href="#">Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence Bill</a>	The Learning Disability, Autism and Neurodiversity Bill is a proposed legislation by the Scottish Government to protect the rights of people with learning disabilities and autistic people, as well as people with dyslexia, ADHD, and other neurodivergent people. The Bill will aim to ensure that these people are respected and protected in areas such as education, health, social care, and justice.
<a href="#">Plan 24 – 30</a>	Plan 24 – 30, is Scotland’s route map to #KeepThePromise by 2030. It sets out who needs to do what by when. It is organised around the five foundations of The Promise. It is a markedly different approach to planning and implementation building on the previous Plan 21-23. It was designed to be used from its launch in June 2024 and will continue to evolve to be of use right through until 2030.
<a href="#">‘Bairns’ Hoose’</a>	Scotland also set a commitment for all children to have access to ‘Bairns’ Hoose’, that offers holistic, child centred support to those who have been victims or witness of abuse or for those under the age of criminal responsibility who have caused significant harm to others; Aberdeen is currently one of 5 pathfinders nationally for Bairns Hoose.’
<a href="#">National Care Service</a>	A NCS will be established to improve care services in Scotland, to ensure the delivery of consistent and high standards in health and social care services.
<a href="#">National Social Work Agency for Scotland</a>	The planned NSWA will play a key role in improving working conditions for social workers with key reforms and ensuring that the voice of the profession is heard. The new agency will be in charge of workforce planning, pay grades, terms and conditions, the training and development of social workers, and social work qualifications. We acknowledge that alongside some noted advantages here, geographical location of Aberdeen and cost of living challenges specific to this area may mean national standardisation of pay may pose additional challenges in Aberdeen compared to other parts of Scotland.
<a href="#">‘Moving on’ from care into adulthood: consultation - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)</a>	The consultation seeks views on the support available to young people as they transition from care to adulthood. It covers areas such as planning, preparation, Continuing Care,



Aftercare, health, wellbeing, education, and housing. It is about ensuring that young people leaving care and moving into adulthood have the right scaffolding of support available to ensure they thrive.

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