

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services Committee
DATE	20th February 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Aberdeen City Integrated Children's Services Strategic Plan Annual Report 2023/24
REPORT NUMBER	CFS/24/046
DIRECTOR	Eleanor Sheppard
CHIEF OFFICER	Shona Milne and Graeme Simpson
REPORT AUTHOR	Eleanor Sheppard
TERMS OF REFERENCE	2.1 and 2.4

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This Annual Report outlines work undertaken by the Children's Services Board over 2023/24. The report also proposes changes to the agreed Aberdeen City Integrated Children's Services Strategic Plan to support Community Planning Partners to positively respond to changes in published data and national policy intent.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 note the progress made in delivering the Aberdeen City Integrated Children's Services Strategic Plan from April 2023 to date;
- 2.2 note the changes evident in data sets released over the reporting period;
- 2.3 approve the Aberdeen City Integrated Children's Services Strategic Plan Annual Report 2023/24;
- 2.4 delegate authority to the Interim Director Children's and Family Services to submit the Annual Report to the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee for further review and thereafter to the Community Planning Management Board for ratification;
- 2.5 delegate authority to the Interim Director Children's and Family Services to submit the Annual Report to Scottish Government.
- 2.6 Instruct the Interim Director Children's and Family Services to report back to the Education and Children's Services Committee within 2 committee cycles on proposed approaches to progressing:

- more family centric approaches to support families facing complex challenges living in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation(SIMD) 1; and
- a whole system approach to addressing obesity.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1. Part 3 (Children's Services Planning) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 requires every local authority and its relevant health board to jointly prepare an Integrated Children's Services Strategic Plan in respect of a three-year period. The current Aberdeen City Integrated Children's Services Strategic Plan was approved by the Education and Children's Services Committee in March 2023.
- 3.2 The legislation also requires every local authority and its relevant health board to jointly prepare a report on the impact of plans on an annual basis, and to submit these Annual Reports to the Scottish Government for review.
- 3.3 The agreed Aberdeen City Integrated Children's Services Strategic Plan is one of a suite of Statutory Plans which support delivery of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan. In preparing the Plan in March 2023, considerable work was undertaken to align reporting arrangements in order to better integrate the full range of statutory Plans. Better integration of Plans is supporting delivery of more integrated services, helping make the best use of time and resources and providing a clearer insight into the needs of children and families.
- 3.4 As a result of this integration, this Annual Report includes the annual Child Poverty Plan Action Report (LCPAR) which is required to comply with the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017.
- 3.5 In addition, this Annual Report responds to the Committee's request (formerly Public Protection Committee) for an annual report on the progress of our Corporate Parenting responsibilities outlined in Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. It also helps deliver our duty to report to Scottish Government Ministers every three years on how the Local Authority is meeting its corporate parenting responsibilities as detailed in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.
- 3.6 More integrated evaluation and reporting is helping Officers identify the issues to be addressed more clearly than is possible when looking at policies in an isolated way.

Approach taken to developing the Annual Report

- 3.7 In preparing this annual report we have reviewed data published since March 2023 to identify any emerging changes from the data reviewed comprehensively a year ago. The Board has also reviewed the current Community Planning Population Needs Assessment and benefited from reviewing the themes emerging from the extensive engagement undertaken to inform the refresh of our Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP). Reviewing both data and insights has helped us draw firmer conclusions on the activity

most likely to realise improved outcomes over the final two years of the Plan and therefore assess the adequacy of the current Plan.

- 3.8 Although undertaking the annual review has broadly confirmed the appropriateness of the current plan, some new risks are evident which will require additional action to be taken.

Internal evaluation of the work of the Board

- 3.9 In addition to our planned improvement work and work supporting delivery of national policy, the Children's Services Board has continued to keep abreast of impending legislative changes to ensure readiness for what lies ahead. This has seen the Children's Services Board participate in planning for The National Care Service (NCS) through our local Programme Board, be selected as a Bairns Hoose Pathfinder to help us build on the existing co-located Police Scotland and Children's Social work Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM) team and monitor the progress of the anticipated Children's Care and Justice Bill. The Board has extensively engaged in education reform consultations and currently awaits the publication of the Statutory Guidance on the incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to ensure our work aligns with expectations. The Board also continues to give consideration to the findings of the Secure Care Review to ensure readiness for delivery.

- 3.10 The Children's Services Board has invested time in considering how best to track progress against our ambitious plan. This has led to the implementation of an agreed tracker to help improve transparent tracking of progress and is helping to highlight emerging risks and issues. This greater visibility is enabling the Board to take swifter action when required. These changes are helping to build a culture of collective responsibility and candour amongst Board members. The current approach will be maintained.

- 3.11 In addition to providing leadership to our Sub Groups, the Children's Services Board has collaborated to evaluate progress on a number of key policies. This has included our evaluation of progress towards delivery of Plan 21-24 in October 2023. Our discipline of on-going evaluation on key policies is helping improve our collective understanding of the challenges facing our children and families and helping us take a more holistic and agile approach. As we move forward, more annual reports will be embedded into this Annual Report so that the connections across different policies are fully aligned. This approach reflects the best practice described in recent national non statutory guidance issued to support delivery of the UNCRC.

- 3.12 The Board has benefited from closer working with the Child Protection Committee (CPC) this year and now works in collaboration to deliver shared audits and quality assurance activity. This has seen the Board review the effectiveness of arrangements to support children and young people who have experienced harmful sexual behaviour and to review the circumstances which trigger a referral to services under the category of physical abuse. The Board also collaborated with the CPC to plan delivery of our Bairns Hoose as part of a national pathfinder. We look forward to working with the national Bairns Hoose team over the coming year as the capital works get underway

and the team starts to be established. This alignment will be maintained and likely develop further over the next reporting cycle.

- 3.13 A refreshed Request for Assistance (RfA) process has been developed and will soon be delivered to help us monitor demand and the impact of services in real time. This second version of the system will enable us to look at how effectively different interventions support the mitigation of risk and help inform our future commissioning, data from this second version will inform the next Annual Report.
- 3.14 The quality of our evaluation is improving. Further development of a robust evaluation framework which helps assess the strength of all three tiers of our Tiered Intervention Framework (Family Support Model) as outlined in the Annual Report will help us decommission services which are not aligned to The Promise and facilitate the shift of resources towards prevention and early intervention. We continue to benefit from close collaboration with our local Health Determinates Research Collaborative (HDRC). The HDRC have also committed to working in collaboration with the University of Edinburgh to help us evaluate the impact of our local Bairns Hoose.
- 3.15 Those represented on the Board continue to support a high proportion of displaced children and young people including those fleeing conflict and unaccompanied asylum seeking children. After Glasgow, the city welcomes the highest proportion of displaced people. Services continue to respond with agility although this has placed considerable pressure on local services.
- 3.16 The Board successfully implemented updated GIRFEC Operational Guidance over the reporting period. Unfortunately there was no appetite to develop a more regional approach to support colleagues working across the Health Board. Work is ongoing to secure greater alignment between GIRFEC and GIRFE for those who have a disability. Revisions have been proposed to our agreed Child's Planning format based on feedback from children and young people and this feedback will be retained as we await an updated national position.
- 3.17 Over the course of the year, the impact of poverty on children and families has become even more evident. The Children's Services Board has agreed content for a child poverty training course to ensure practitioners remain alert. Station House Media Unit (SHMU) has been commissioned to help develop the training course to ensure consistent messaging and understanding of the issues facing our families.

Internal evaluation of the work of our Sub Groups

- 3.18 Considerable time has been invested in the development of Improvement Project Charters. This has supported new groups of staff from across the Community Planning Partnership to join forces to work on shared projects aligned with our Plan, the progress of each charter is routinely reported to the Community Planning Aberdeen Board. A total of 34 Improvement Projects have been agreed and all are now making good progress, we expect to see the benefits of this collaboration clearly over the next 12 months.
- 3.19 With the exception of one Sub Group, all Groups have benefited from a consistent Chair who has overseen work within agreed timescales and

ensured delivery of the agreed Plan. Discussions are on-going with NHS Grampian to identify a replacement Chair for Stretch Outcome 9 with short term additional capacity being provided by Aberdeen City Council.

Learning from the data review

- 3.20 There are considerable differences in trend data at ward level. It is therefore important to consider how to better utilise locality based staff to ensure that our approaches reflect the unique context of each community and the complexity of individual families rather than presume the centrally designed supports will meet needs.
- 3.21 It is proposed that a new approach to support families with complex and multi-faceted challenges be designed and tested across a small number of communities to establish how best to address the considerable variation in outcomes.
- 3.22 Given the clear disparity in outcomes for those living in SIMD 1 evident from the data review, it is proposed that resource from the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund be used to secure a data analyst to better support our identification and tracking of outcomes for those in SIMD 1. This will help inform our evaluation of new approaches outlined in paragraphs 3.20 and 3.21.
- 3.23 There is also a need to consider how best to address obesity given that obesity impacts on long term health outcomes. Concerning trends are becoming apparent in both children and expectant mothers and it is important to address these timeously. Discussions with partners, including Public Health, will be important in shaping a strategic approach to addressing obesity. It is suggested that a clear proposal of how to address obesity be presented to Committee for approval within 2 committee cycles.

Learning for future planning

- 3.24 There is a need to consider how we could better align the work of the Children's Services Board with Locality Plans to maximise all integration opportunities as we move forward. This will help fully utilise the knowledge of community assets who help shape Locality plans. This should be progressed as far as possible this session and in future planning cycles.

Next steps

- 3.25 The Plan put in place a year ago continues to be relevant. A number of key areas have been identified for further work. They are to:
- Re-design how we support families with complex and multi-faceted challenges in a family centric way and continue to develop our use of data (with a particular focus on SIMD 1)
 - To work with Community Planning Partners to develop a whole system approach to addressing obesity.
 - Review arrangements in light of anticipated Statutory Guidance on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
 - Implement the recommendations of the Secure Care Review.
- 3.26 The Aberdeen City Integrated Children's Services high level plan has been amended to take account of these additions (changes shown in red).

Strategic Stretch Outcomes					
Increase the number of 0-5s who meet developmental milestones by 2026	Improve the mental health and wellbeing of children and families by 2026	Improve the attainment, health and wellbeing and positive destinations of our care experienced by 2026	Improve the attainment and positive destinations of our children and young people by 2026	Reduce the number of young people charged with an SCRA by 2026	Increase the number of children with ASN or disability who secure a positive destination by 2026
Strategic Priorities					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Improve the health outcomes of expectant and new mothers ➤ Improve uptake of benefits ➤ Improve access to emergency formula and food for infants ➤ Address early speech and language needs ➤ Increase the uptake of immunisations ➤ Improve the quality of ELC provision and maintain uptake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Focus on prevention and early intervention ➤ Provide access to joined up services and bereavement support • Respond quickly in a stigma free, needs and rights led way • Increase levels of physical activity • Increase the provision of child friendly environments within local communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a Balms Hoose • Delivery The Promise • Increase the provision of health assessments for the care experienced • Continue to close the gap between those who have care experience and their peers • Increase the no. of foster carers available locally • Keep brothers and sisters together • Ensure adequate provision of legal advice and advocacy • Implement the recommendations of the Secure Care Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implement refreshed guidance on the use of restraint ➤ Better track those who are in or on the edge of the care system ➤ Improve learning transitions from P7 to S1 ➤ Deliver ABZ Campus to widen the range of courses ➤ Deliver Aberdeen Computing Collaborative to ensure long term employability ➤ Delivery of Tier 2 services to close the gap through SAC funding ➤ Continue to address the cost of the school day and child poverty in schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reduce levels of anti-social behaviour ➤ Deliver Mentors in Violence Prevention across all secondary schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Delivery of neurodevelopmental pathway ➤ Establish better assurance systems ➤ Increase the number of Young Carers receiving support ➤ Improve transition planning from child to adult services ➤ Ensure that the voices of children (including those who use alternative communication systems) are central to processes and Plans ➤ Decrease the number of children not accessing full time education
Enabling Priorities					
Access to services	Increase integration	Reduce risks	Commissioning	Data	Workforce
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implement a single Request for Assistance process ➤ reduce the number of access points to information and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Build on the integration models including that at ELC Links ➤ Establish an assurance system to test the strength of the system ➤ Improve alignment between children and adult services ➤ Develop a Target Operating Model for children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Better understand why children are placed OOA ➤ Understand the long term impact of ELC on outcomes for families ➤ Agree and implement a whole system approach to addressing obesity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Aligned to the 10 principles of family support ➤ Jointly respond to the needs of those displaced ➤ Evaluate readiness for implementation of the UNCRC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Improve knowledge of the 6 groups by co-designing with service users and children ➤ Improve data matching ➤ Improve the tracking of the outcomes of those most vulnerable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase knowledge poverty agenda and of benefits ➤ Increase knowledge of trauma and risk ➤ Develop ways of working (SIMD1) to better support the provision of rights

3.27 With Committee approval, plans of how to address obesity and to developing different ways of working to support those living in SIMD 1/improved tracking of the outcomes of those living in SIMD 1 will be considered in greater depth with proposals presented to Committee for approval within two committee cycles.

3.28 It is proposed that this Annual Report be presented to the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee for further review in March 2024, and to Community Planning Aberdeen for formal ratification in April 2024. The Annual Report will be submitted to Scottish Government thereafter.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Closer alignment of services could help realise efficiency in the longer term.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Section 8 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 requires the Council and NHS Grampian to prepare a Children's Services Plan every 3 years and to keep that Plan under review under section 11. Section 13 of the Act provides that as soon as practicable after the end of each 1 year period, a local authority and the relevant health board must publish (in such manner as they consider appropriate) a report on the extent to which children's services and related services have in that period been provided in the area of the local authority in accordance with the children's services plan. This Report and Appendix satisfies these duties.
- 5.2 The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 (the Act) fully entered into force on the 1st July 2019. The Act sets out steps required to be taken by the Scottish Government, Local Authorities and Health Boards to tackle child poverty. The Act creates a requirement for Local Authorities and Local Health Boards to annually agree and publish a Child Poverty Action Report. Following ratification the Report must be submitted to Scottish Ministers.
- 5.3 The Corporate Parenting duties included in Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 are designed to ensure that the attention and resources of various organisations are explicitly focussed on the task of safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of looked after children and young people, and care leavers. This part extends the duties of corporate parents and the reporting responsibilities of local authorities.
- 5.4 Aberdeen City Council has a duty to report to Scottish Government Ministers every three years on how it is meeting its corporate parenting responsibilities as detailed in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.
- 5.5 Section 59 of the 2014 Act provides that corporate parents must prepare a plan for how they propose exercising their corporate parenting responsibilities and must keep this plan under review; corporate parents must consult with one another before preparing or revising the plan and must publish the plan or revised plan.

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	*Does Target Risk Level Match
----------	-------	---	--	-------------------------------

			controls/control actions	Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Risk of not changing our local system to reflect changes in national policy.	Delivery of the Children's Services Plan and regular review of the appropriateness of the Plan to ensure maximum impact.	L	Yes
Compliance	Risk of not complying with legislation	This Annual Report complies with the Statutory Guidance and legislative requirements.	L	Yes
Operational	Risk that we make a lesser impact by working to a high number of strategic plans	The Plan pulls all strategic Plans together to help maximise impact.	L	Yes
Financial	Risk that we don't have sufficient resource to meet the needs of priority groups	The Plan will help us make best use of available resource by ensuring partners work to a common purpose.	L	Yes
Reputational	Risk that we don't prioritise those in greatest need.	Mitigated by undertaking a detailed strategic needs assessment and looking at the data by group before drawing conclusions.	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	No risks identified			

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
<p style="text-align: center;">Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</p> <p>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,</p>	<p>The needs of children and young people most often require a strong multi-agency</p>

<p>going onto positive destinations, including further and higher education, vocational training and apprenticeships.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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</p> <p>Commit to realising the potential of each individual, by seeking to widen curriculum choice and implement progressive choices.</p>	<p>response. This Plan will support the further integration and collaboration across services supporting children and families to help realise improved outcomes.</p>
<p><u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u></p>	
<p>LOIP stretch outcome 4: <i>95% of children (0-5 years) will reach their expected developmental milestones by the time of their child health reviews by 2026</i></p> <p>LOIP stretch outcome 5: 90% of children and young people will report that their experiences of mental health and wellbeing have been listened to by 2026</p> <p>LOIP stretch outcome 6: As corporate parents we will ensure 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.</p> <p>LOIP stretch outcome 7: 95% of all our children, including those living in our priority neighbourhoods, will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026</p> <p>LOIP stretch outcome 8: 30% fewer young people (under 18) charged with an offence by 2026</p> <p>LOIP stretch outcome 9: 95% of our children with disabilities will experience a positive transition to adult services by 2026</p>	<p>This Plan details how Stretch Outcomes 4 – 9 will be realised over the next 2 years and will help to coordinate our work across the Community Planning Partnership.</p>
<p>Regional and City Strategies</p>	
<p>Regional Cultural Strategy</p>	<p>The Children's Services Plan</p>

Prevention Strategy Children's Services Plan National Improvement Framework Plan	prioritises prevention and is closely aligned with the National Improvement Framework. The Plan is designed to bring all statutory Plans for children into one Plan to improve service delivery.
--	--

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed
Data Protection Impact Assessment	No
Other	None

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Aberdeen City Integrated Children's Services Plan 2023-26](#)

[Aberdeen City Child Poverty Action Report 2022/23](#)

[Aberdeen City Corporate Parenting Plan](#)

11. APPENDICES

Appendix A - Annual Report April 2023 – March 2024

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Name	Eleanor Sheppard
Title	Interim Director Children's and Family Services
Email Address	esheppard@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Tel	01224 522707