

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Anti Poverty and Inequality Committee
DATE	11 March 2026
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Draft Aberdeen City Children's Services Plan 2026-31
REPORT NUMBER	F&C/26/039
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Eleanor Sheppard, Executive Director, Families and Communities
CHIEF OFFICER	Graeme Simpson, Chief Social Work Officer
REPORT AUTHOR	James Simpson, Performance and Strategy Development Officer
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1, 2.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents the draft Children's Services Plan 2026-31 for the Committee's feedback as part of the consultation which ends on 20 March 2026. The Plan will be taken to Education and Children Services Committee on the 28 April 2026 for formal approval, and will be considered by the Community Planning Aberdeen Board on 11 June 2026.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee: -

- 2.1 Provide feedback on the draft Aberdeen City Children's Services Plan 2026-31 presented in Appendix 1

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 a Children's Services Plan in respect of a three-year period.
- 3.2 The Children's Services Planning process aims to improve outcomes for all children and young people in Scotland by ensuring that local planning and delivery of services is integrated, focussed on quality and prevention, and dedicated to safeguarding and the promotion of child wellbeing to prevent need from escalating.
- 3.3 Recognising the greater challenges faced by some children and young people in achieving their potential, the plan also provides information on the targeted work we intend to provide to support those most in need including those living in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation Quintile 1 and those children and young people who are Care Experienced or have Additional Support Needs/Disabilities.

- 3.4 While overall responsibility for children's services planning rests with a Local Authority and its relevant Health Board, it is expected that Community Planning Partnership partners, as well as with children, young people, and their families, will help inform the development of the Plan.
- 3.5 Staff from across the Community Planning Partnership have consistently raised concerns about delivering multiple plans with different timescales for delivery. To ensure coherence across plans, the decision has been taken to extend the time period of the Children's Services Plan from 3 to 5 years so that the Plan dovetails seamlessly, thanks to the flexibility afforded to use through our participation in the Fairer Futures Partnership, to the refresh point of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan. This will ensure that the reporting cycle of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2026-36 and Children's Services Plan 2026-31, are directly aligned.
- 3.6 The actions, activities and outcomes of the Plan will remain under review through our Children's Services Plan Annual Reporting cycle.

Developing the Children's Services Plan priorities

- 3.7 The draft Children's Services Plan 2026-31 (presented in Appendix A) is the product of work started in June 2025 when the Children's Services Board first began developing priorities for inclusion in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2026-36.
- 3.8 The gathering and analysis of evidence has been directly aligned with the development of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, drawing from the [Aberdeen City Population Needs Assessment](#) published in May 2025, and community feedback from the [Your Place, Your Plan, Your Future](#), including the views of 587 children and young people. Views from Care Experienced children and young people have been drawn from the Bright Spots Survey undertaken in 2024. Further support to evaluate evidence and data has also been provided through, Community Planning Aberdeen's ongoing involvement with the Collaboration for Health Equality in Scotland and the Aberdeen City Health Determinants Research Collaborative.
- 3.9 Using the analysis, two Children's Services Board workshops were held across June and July to identify core priorities and system changes that would provide maximum impact on improved outcomes for children and families. These draft priorities/system changes were presented to the Fairer Futures Conference on 27 August 2025 for wider stakeholder feedback.
- 3.10 More extensive detail on the process and procedure for the development of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan Stretch Outcome is provided in the cover report for the Draft Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2026-36, also on the agenda so not repeated.
- 3.11 Following review of data, public and stakeholder feedback the following priorities, system changes and improvement aims were identified for the Children's Services Board:

Children, Families and Life Long Learning		
Priority	Improvement Aim	System Change
Best Start in Life	Increase by 12% the percentage of children reviewed in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 1 neighbourhoods meeting their developmental milestones by 2031	Personal Case Workers for Vulnerable Families and Support for Families Awaiting Neurodevelopmental Diagnosis. Provide personal case workers for vulnerable families who need help to access the services they are entitled to, and a better co-ordinated support experience for families waiting for a neurodevelopmental diagnosis
Empowered and Resilient	Increase by 5% the number of young people who report always feeling safe in their school, community and home by 2031	Safe, co-designed spaces for at-risk young people offering onsite support, person centred activities, and healthy relationship programme. Co-design an integrated programme that provides safe, supportive spaces, targeted interventions and individual support opportunities for young people who are at risk of harm from substance use or child criminal exploitation, including support for boys to form healthy and respectful relationships.
Attainment and Transitions	Increase by 10% the tariff scores for pupils in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 1 neighbourhoods and other vulnerable groups by 2031	Individualised support for young people at risk of not completing school and sustained work experience. Support programmes for young people at risk of not completing school and sustained work experience opportunities as part of the curriculum offer

3.12 The Plan has a core focus on supporting families from Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation Quintile 1 communities, in addition to those who are Looked After or Care Experienced, disabled and minority ethnic groups. Each of the system changes noted above are interventions intended to maximise our targeted support to those families in or at risk of poverty by adopting a prevention/early intervention approach.

Content of the Children's Services Plan

- 3.13 In line with the [statutory guidance part 3](#) of the Children and Young Peoples (Scotland) Act 2014 the Children's Services Plan expands on the summary content provided in the draft Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2026-36 to provide more detail on the specific system changes and how they will be implemented.
- 3.14 Many of the system changes are currently being driven through the our developing Support Model through our Fairer Futures Partnership.

Delivery of the Plan

- 3.15 Delivery of the Plan will be overseen by the Children's Services Board with progress against the system changes and preparations for legislation being reported to Community Planning Aberdeen. Initiation of the multi-agency improvement aims, and progress reporting will align with Community Planning Aberdeen 2026-36 reporting arrangements as they develop, with our established annual review of progress continuing over the lifetime of the Plan.
- 3.16 At this time, the Children's Services Board will retain its current governance structure to ensure that remaining Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26/Children's Services Plan 2023-26 activity is effectively transitioned into the new Local Outcome Improvement Plan.
- 3.17 The Children's Services Board will undergo a review of its role, remit, and wider governance arrangements in line with the proposed Community Planning Aberdeen governance review scheduled for March/April 2026, to ensure that relevant partners at an appropriate strategic level are present at the Board and any associated delivery subgroups.

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 each local authority and the relevant health board to jointly prepare a Children's Services Plan for the area of the local authority in respect of each 3 year period. Section 9 of the Act provides that a children's services plan should be prepared with a view to achieving the aims of providing children's services in the area in a way which: best safeguards, supports or promotes the wellbeing of children; ensures that any action to meet needs is taken at the earliest appropriate time and that, where appropriate, action is taken to prevent needs arising; is most integrated from the point of view of the recipients; and constitutes the best use of available resources.

5.2 Section 11 of the 2014 Act states that local authorities and the relevant health board must jointly keep the children’s services plan under review and as a consequence of that review may prepare a revised plan whereas section 12 of the Act deals with implementation of the Plan and provides that, during the period to which the children’s services plan relates, the local authority, the relevant health board, the Scottish Ministers and each of the other service providers in an area must, so far as reasonably practicable, provide services in accordance with the children’s services plan for that area. Section 13 requires publication of an annual joint report on the extent to which children's services and related services have in that period been provided in accordance with the 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 controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Risk of not aligning our local systems to reflect national policy and local priorities set out through the Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2026-36	Delivery of the Children’s Services Plan	L	Yes
Compliance	Risk of not meeting our statutory duties	The Plan ensures that we comply with the Statutory Guidance.	L	Yes
Operational	Risk that we make less of an impact by working to a high number	The plan draws on and links to all of our strategic plans, ensuring joint resource and planning is aligned	L	Yes

	of Strategic Plans	to the same core priorities		
Financial	Risk that we do not 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. Community Aberdeen Partners have committed to resourcing delivery of the priorities set out in this Plan and the associated Local Outcome Improvement Plan	L	Yes
Reputational	Risk that we do not prioritise those in greatest need	Mitigated by undertaking extensive review of evidence and data on our current population and service's needs. In addition to wide public and stakeholder consultation (which remains on going) This will be further mitigated as the plan progresses through the ongoing evaluation and Annual Reporting cycle noted in section 3 of this report	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	No risks identified			

8. OUTCOMES

COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2025-26	
Impact of Report	
<p>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</p> <p><u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u></p>	<p>The Plan will aid in the delivery of the following aspects of the Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement:</p> <p>Improving Educational Choices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to realising the potential of each individual, by seeking to widen curriculum choice and implement progressive choices.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the city’s universities, Northeast 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 <p>Creating a Better Learning Environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to ensure that every school community provides a safe and respectful environment for young people and staff. <p>Caring for Young People:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • 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. • 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. • Work with the Scottish Government to expand free early learning and childcare to one- and two-year-olds from low-income households.
Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
<p>Prosperous People: Children</p>	<p>Development of the Children’s Services Plan 2026-31 has included review of the Stretch Outcomes from the Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26. Taking into account the actions and improvement the associated projects have made in achieving the outcomes, to inform the revised proposals for new Stretch Outcome in the draft Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2026-36</p> <p>As indicated in section 3 of this report the Plan provides extensive and expanded detail on the priorities and system changes identified in the draft Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2026-36 under the Children Families and Lifelong Learning Section.</p>

	<p>In particular the proposed, revised Stretch Outcome for the Children, Families and Lifelong Learning Section:</p> <p>“95% of young people in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 1 and vulnerable groups achieve a positive destination on leaving school by 2036”</p> <p>The plan as a whole focusses heavily on the delivery of the actions to achieve this Stretch Outcome.</p> <p>Additionally, much of the additional work and strategic priorities outlined in the Plan will directly link to or support the delivery of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan</p>
<p>Regional and City Strategies Regional Cultural Strategy Prevention Strategy The Children’s Services Plan National Improvement Framework Plan</p>	<p>The Children’s Services Plan prioritises prevention and is closely aligned with the National Improvement Framework. The Plan is designed to link all of our Plans for children to improve service delivery</p>

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not Required
Other	None

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None

11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix A Children’s Services Plan 2026-31

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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