

Dumfries and Galloway

Children's Services Plan

2023-2026



Joint Annual Report
on Year 1 (2023-24)

Dumfries &

Galloway

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Introduction

This is our first Joint Annual Report on our 2023-26 Children's Services Plan. It covers the reporting period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The report is prepared jointly by Dumfries and Galloway Council, and NHS Dumfries and Galloway with involvement of other services including the Third Sector.

The Children's Services Plan is our overarching plan for services that are used by children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway. These include services provided by the Council like Education, Youth Work and Social Work, and services provided by the NHS like Health Visitors, School Nurses and Mental Health Services. It also includes other services like the Police, the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) and voluntary/ independent services (the third sector).

All services have their own plans, but the Children's Services Plan is where we agree the most important joint priorities in Dumfries and Galloway for children and young people's services. These priorities are those where the Council, NHS and other services have to work together if we are to get it right for children and young people. In our Children's Services Plan, we focus on children and young people who might need extra support in order to prevent problems arising, or to stop existing problems getting worse. In our plan, we are prioritising:

- Early intervention – by identifying needs and providing support at the earliest opportunity.
- Improving outcomes for children and young people most in need of support.
- Meaningful engagement with, and involvement of children and young people.

To deliver these priorities, we have six workstreams. These are:

- Family Support
- Disabled Children with Complex Care Needs
- Mental Health
- Corporate Parenting
- Child Poverty
- Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC)

The purpose of this report is to say:

- How we have worked together over the last year to achieve the priorities in our Children's Services Plan.
- What we delivered
- How this made a difference to children, young people and families
- What worked well, what didn't work so well, and why.
- What else we need to do, and what we might need to change in our plan next year.

This is a statutory report, so we send a copy of it to the Scottish Government, and we publish it so that communities in Dumfries and Galloway can see what we are

doing to improve outcomes for children and young people – especially those who are most in need of support.

Over the last few years, there have been significant factors that have affected the lives of children, young people and families both locally and nationally. These include: the ongoing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Cost of Living, and the increase in Child Poverty. There have also been national developments that impact on children and young people's lives, and how we plan services. These include the development of The Promise and the introduction of legislation on Children's Rights in Scotland. We are delivering our Children's Services Plan within the context of all these local and national factors, and this is discussed in the following section of the report.

Context

Local Context

The Covid-19 pandemic has had ongoing impacts on children and young people. We are still seeing an increased demand for services, particularly for mental health supports. We have seen an increase in the number of children in primary school who have unregulated/distressing behaviours.

Our work to tackle child poverty in Dumfries and Galloway takes place in the context of a rural local authority, with a low-wage economy – the lowest average weekly rate in Scotland. Poverty is dispersed through the region, with the majority of income-deprived people in Dumfries and Galloway living outwith the most deprived datazones. The increased cost of living, and especially the increase in energy charges, hit particularly hard in an area where many households are off-grid for mains gas and are dependent on other forms of fuel, and need to run a vehicle to access employment and services.

National Context

The UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 has supported a renewed focus on Children's Rights. In Summer 2023 Dumfries and Galloway Council and NHS Dumfries and Galloway worked collaboratively with the Dumfries and Galloway Youth Council to undertake a self-evaluation in relation to the UNCRC and readiness for incorporation using the related Improvement Service Framework. The Youth Council designed an engagement activity with a specific focus on rights and in November 2023 practitioners from across the partnership facilitated in person focus group sessions involving 771 children and young people. Both the self-evaluation and engagement informed the development of a joint Rights Report for 2020-2023 which was agreed by the Council and NHS in February 2024 along with specific actions for each organisation to progress. Progress in this area will be reported alongside the Joint Annual Report on the Children's Services Plan in 2024-25 in 2025, and then as part of a standalone 2023-26 Rights Report in 2026.

The Promise Scotland is a national initiative to support care experienced children and young people in Scotland. It was inspired by the Independent Care Review, which exposed the failures of the current care system. **The promise** is that Scotland's children and young people will grow up loved, safe and respected. In Dumfries and Galloway, our Vision will ensure that we strive to make sure every child, young person and their family in Dumfries and Galloway have what they need to thrive. Care, support, and love for our children will be at the heart of everything that we do.

In 2022, the Scottish Government introduced **Whole Family Wellbeing Funding** (WFWF). The aim of this funding is to help keep The Promise by investing in preventative action. The aim is to transform services so that provide the right kind of support to families to enable them to thrive and stay together. In Dumfries and

Galloway, our Family Support Workstream is leading this work. We have also invested Whole Family Wellbeing Funding on:

- Upscaling the Family Support service operated by Social Work Services
- A Primary Inclusion Project
- Recruitment of a Parenting Co-ordinator.

Effectiveness of our partnership approach

This section of the report is about how we work as a multi-agency partnership, and our planning structures, and how effective these are in supporting the delivery of our plan. Children's Services planning in Dumfries and Galloway is led by our Children's Services Strategic and Planning Partnership Executive Group (CSSaPP Executive).

A feature of Dumfries and Galloway, is that as a rural authority with a low population density, we have relatively few key members of staff who can take part in planning and development work, and there are capacity issues with this.

In 2023-24 we decided to look at the entire children's services planning landscape in Dumfries and Galloway. This had grown quite complex over time, with new groups forming in response to new initiatives from Scottish Government. We mapped out every single group at every level from operational up to executive. We looked at everything that each group was working on, and who they reported to, and we identified all their members. Through this exercise, we were able to demonstrate that there was duplication of activity; and we had key members of staff who were sitting on multiple groups. In response to these findings, we developed a more streamlined planning and delivery structure, ensuring that we avoid duplication and reduce the number of group meetings that staff are involved in.

An example of change involved our Promise Partnership. We previously had a Promise Partnership that involved many of the same members as a number of other local multi-agency groups, with an overlap of activity between these. It was agreed to stand down the Promise Partnership, with the work of the Promise Partnership being incorporated into that of a number of other groups including the Corporate Parenting and GIRFEC Leadership Groups. CSSaPP Executive took on leadership responsibility for oversight of delivery of The Promise.

Our focus on having clear roles and responsibilities, and avoidance of duplication is reflected within our Children's Services Plan itself. In previous plans for example, we had included keeping children safe as a priority. However, in our current plan, we decided that while child protection was still a priority in Dumfries and Galloway, it was being planned and led by our Public Protection Committee, so we could confidently not include it within our Children's Services Plan and focus on our identified priorities. Other multi-agency work, for example work led by Public Health sits outwith our Children's Services Plan, but supports and complements the actions in our plan.

Reporting arrangements for our Children's Services Plan involve the Leads of each Workstream Group reporting to CSSaPP Executive Group who carry out a scrutiny role. The Leads also meet together every 4 to 6 weeks and are leading the development of multi-agency performance and quality assurance arrangements. Regular updates on our Children's Services Plan are also provided to our Community Planning Board.

The following section of the report describes the work of each workstream over the last year, with successes, challenges, and a summary of progress.

Delivery of our Workstreams

Workstream 1: Family Support

Introduction

The Whole Family Support workstream is linked closely to the Promise which was the Scottish Government's response to the Care Review conducted in 2016 which highlighted that the current care system was not working. The Promise recognises that families should have access to support when they need it, there was already an understanding that early support and prevention was important. The Promise has a focus on Family Support, this includes universal family support that should be available to all families in the communities where they live and Intensive Family Support that supports children on the Edge of Care to remain within their family where it is safe for them to do so. Universal Family Support includes pre-school support, parenting groups and mental health support.

The explicit aims of intensive family support must be to:

- keep families together and avoid children going into care.
- interrupt and address intergenerational cycles of trauma.
- sustain meaningful and loving relationships.

Our Whole Family Support workstream covered the spectrum of Whole Family Support, recognising that to meet the needs of children we also need to support their wider network.

The workstream adheres to the principles of the Promise and is closely aligned with the UNCRC, the views and rights of children are at the heart of our plan.

Our workstream initially had 4 areas of focus:

- Service Integration
- Peer and Community
- Family Support
- Parenting Programmes

Following the review of our planning structures described in the previous section, from 2024 our workstream plan will be focused on Family Support and Parenting Programmes and the other areas are being addressed through other existing groups.

Actions

We initially undertook an evaluation of Family Support in Dumfries and Galloway which enabled us to develop our Improvement Plan.

Action 1: Develop appropriate means to ensure all children and families, and staff are aware of all current holistic family support across the Region.

What we did: Following a scoping exercise to identify all Family Support service available to families across Dumfries and Galloway, including statutory and 3rd Sector provision, the Service Integration group considered how we could best make both professionals and families aware of service available. This was two-fold, involving Practice Sharing events for professionals, the first ones taking place in Dumfries and Stranraer with others to follow and the development of a Children's Services website which will be available to professionals and members of the public, a test site was made available in April 2024, and feedback on this will inform further develop before the site is publicly launched in August 2024. This work will continue to be developed by the GIRFEC Leadership group.

Action 2: Introduce mechanisms and approaches to ensure engagement of all children and families in co-designing family support services that area accessible in local communities.

What we did: Families were given the opportunity to complete a questionnaire via a QR code, this was available at summer events in communities throughout the summer of 2023 and through schools, social work and other forums. The information collected is informing our development of parenting groups, we are working closely with NES (NHS Education for Scotland) to develop groups in the right geographical areas, focussing on the most needed age groups and focussing on areas of need identified by parents, groups will be available online or face to face depending on the needs of families and challenges of travel, work commitments and school collection times.

Action 3: Family Support: Improve Family Support flexibility and access out with office hours to suit children and family and family needs.

What we did: We are committed to reducing the barriers to families accessing support, this includes travel, childcare, timing of when supports are available so that if a family needs support with bedtime routines or structures at weekends then supports are available at these times.

Action 4: Implement evaluation techniques to allow for measuring impact of family support and ensure processes for family engagement in shaping Dumfries and Galloway Children's Services Plan.

What we did: We have experience of asking families to evaluate the family support they have received through Social Work early intervention; this has informed the development of our service. We are aware that many services are asking for feedback from families, and we are looking at the best way to do this. The Parenting groups through NES have set evaluation processes built into the training programme.

Action 5: Support families to access supports within their local communities.

What we did: Our Peer and Communities group helped to develop these links and awareness of available services; this part of the plan has been moved to other parts of the Children's Services plan due to the connection with service integration. The information about services on the website will help us direct families and support them to use these services.

Action 6: Develop crisis Family Support within Children and Families Social Work for children who are on the Edges of Care to enable where it is safe to do so that they can remain within their family network or within their foster placement.

What we did: This team is under development and aims to reduce the number of children who need to live in residential care or out with Dumfries and Galloway.

Action 7: Increase commissioning and procurement activity

What we did: we are reviewing the third sector provision commissioned by Dumfries and Galloway with the aim of ensuring the provision of support is consistent across the area. We would like to involve families to ensure their interests in service quality are considered.

We have made a lot of progress in our plan and have had good multi-agency involvement. We have developed excellent links with other services and areas of the Children's Services Plan. Our plan for 2024-25 is being updated to have a greater focus on Family Support and Parenting Programmes.

Family Support

The Family Support Service led by Children and Families Social Work supported 148 families in 2023-24 which included direct support for 306 individual children. The support included school attendance and mental health concerns, managing children's behaviour and setting routines and boundaries, and issues for parents such as mental health, alcohol and drugs misuse and domestic abuse.

Supports are provided both in the home and elsewhere, including at school and in the community. Supports are provided at all times of the day including early morning, daytime, after school and evenings and weekends. The service aims to keep children with their families, to help families build their networks and to increase the supports they have in the community.

Parenting Groups

Engagement with families: Over the course of 38 weeks from the design of the survey to the launch, to the closing of consultations (June 2023 to March 2024) we:

- Attended 80 roadshows which were attended by 839 parents and 1735 children

- Received 978 completed surveys from parents living within every area of Dumfries and Galloway
- Completed 10 face to face group consultations across Dumfries and Galloway, engaging directly with 64 parents
- Engaged directly with at least 306 individual services, groups, organisations and agencies across the Council, Third Sector, Health, Education, Youth Work and Social Work. This includes at least 27 individual partners/organisations, 107 Community Councils, 98 Primary Schools, 16 Secondary Schools and 58 private nurseries and Childminders.

Peep Learning Together Programme

Over 100 practitioners currently been trained between Lifelong Learning service and Early Years team. The Peep Organisation - a charity that supports parents with children's learning have received Whole Family Wellbeing Funding from the Scottish Government which allows them to roll out training. Our Lifelong Learning staff in Dumfries and Galloway are qualified to train practitioners. The offer of training is -

- 25 antenatal places (online training)
- 50 Learning Together Pathway places (face to face training)
- 50 Pathway and 50 Practitioner Accreditation (online training)

Lifelong Learning are working with both Social Work and Health to take this forward.

In developing the supports that families need, we maintain close links with the Council's Youth Work service, and we have used the findings from consultations with young people (10,000 Voices, and Youth Matters) in our development.

Key Successes

The appointment and introduction of a Parenting Co-ordinator, funded by the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund has allowed for a consultation with families and for the Parenting Programmes that families need. The training and delivery of Peep across Dumfries and Galloway. The involvement of partners to develop support families need when and where they need it including access to housing. Benefits and education.

The number of children and families receiving early help and family support preventing further Social Work involvement. In Children and Families Social Work with help from the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund we were able to upskill our family support workers to enable them to undertake assessments and develop plans with families to enable more support to be offered at an earlier stage. We have redesigned our service to be regionwide rather than locality based, meaning that there is a consistency in delivery of family support across Dumfries and Galloway and support is available locally as family support hubs have close links to education cluster areas.

Demonstrating impact with evidence

Over the next 2 years we are confident we will be able to measure and demonstrate more clearly the number of children and families receiving early help and family support and we will be able to report on the delivery of training to staff and the availability of and attendance at parenting groups across the area.

Challenges/Issues

We have faced challenges in staffing and recruitment across services, and this is an issue that is not confined to this workstream. We can also experience challenges with logistical issues like venue availability and travel, and this is a feature of a very rural authority such as Dumfries and Galloway.

Conclusion and Next steps

As a group, we have made a lot of progress over the last year, latterly we have made some changes to allow the focus of the work to be in the right areas and to reduce the overlap of work between different groups.

We are developing our plan for 2024-25 and hope to increase our measuring of service provision to enable better data for next year. We hope to work closely with third sector providers of Family Support and plan some tests of change in areas where there is limited access to resources. We will report on the group work being undertaken at an early level by Family Support Teams, Youth Justice and the Young People's Transitions Team that supports young people living independently.

Workstream 2: Disabled Children with Complex Needs

Introduction

The Disabled Children with Complex Care Needs Workstream is subdivided into three subgroups each with their own specific aims and actions to provide better outcomes for children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway.

- Healthcare in Schools subgroup
- Neurodevelopment Disorders subgroup
- Transitions subgroup

Each subgroup has multi agency representation from NHS, Education, Social Work and various Third Sector organisations.

The Healthcare in School Subgroup aims for children and young people with disabilities and complex healthcare needs to have their healthcare needs met in education settings, allowing them to fully participate in their learning.

The Neurodevelopmental (ND) Subgroup have responsibility for enabling the improvement of the system around neurodivergent children, young people and their families by reviewing, co-designing, developing and delivering changes with families. The subgroup oversees the work of three working groups each focusing on a different component of our system.

Working Group 1 – Education, are working to the outcome “Neurodivergent children and young people will have their educational entitlement provided in settings skills and equipped to support them to achieve their potential”.

Working Group 2 – Neurodevelopmental Assessment Service (NDAS), are working to the outcome “Children and young people with Neurodevelopmental Disorders will have access to diagnostic assessment to enable them and their families to have a secure understanding of the differences of their brain, their strengths and their support needs.

Working Group 3 – Neurodevelopmental Support are working to the outcome “Children, young people and their families will feel supported in Dumfries and Galloway as part of a system with the child and family at the centre.

The Transitions Subgroup of the Disabled Children with Complex Care Needs workstream aims to improve transitions through childhood and into adulthood for this cohort of children and young people. The subgroup has multi-agency representation from a range of partners and aims to make transition smoother and easier for children and young people.

Actions

Healthcare in Schools- Actions included updating and re-developing the guidance document for Supporting Children and Young People with Healthcare Needs in Education. This is now written and the new policy will be scrutinised by Education and ready for formal launch for the start of the 2024/25 school session. The subgroup have also developed local service-level agreements (SLAs) to manage certain specific healthcare needs in education settings.

Neurodevelopmental Disorders - Each working group has formed and developed its shared purpose and terms of reference. Membership of each working group has been established and adapted as required. The ND Subgroup hosted a family engagement session in October 2023 and findings have been collated, reviewed by all working groups and used as to inform priority areas for improvement.

A family engagement group of 55 members has formed and is hosted on a closed Facebook page, supported by an ND Subgroup member with a remit for supporting participation and engagement. This group will be consulted on all proposals and developments of the three working groups and will come together to support specific developments ensuring a model of co-production.

Each working group has scoped their system and engaged with key stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of improvement aims and change ideas which will form the basis of the 2024-2025 plan.

Working Group 2 are developing their use of service user feedback to information the improvements of the Neurodevelopmental Assessment Service (NDAS). They have worked on feedback from families about the NDAS Assessment Report to ensure the report template, purpose and style of writing meets the expectations of service users. They are developing resources to support families and young people to understand diagnostic conclusions. They are offering a follow up appointment to support families to navigate the transition from assessment to support.

Working Group 3 have developed three priority areas related directly to the feedback from the family engagement session. These centre around:

- Supporting the children's services workforce to be well informed about Neurodevelopmental disorders, neurodivergence and neuro-affirming practice.
- Providing accessible information and support for families to understand their child's neurodivergent brain and to manage the impact of these differences in everyday life.
- Developing a single point of access for families when they have concerns or need support to allow services to work together with a focus on easy access and early intervention.

The Transitions subgroup was later in development in year one, however has now met to agree their approach to taking the work forward. The aims are to identify good practice (what is working well), and what needs to get better in relation to transitions and make recommendations for the way forward. At the initial meeting, it was agreed to form subgroups to reflect the different transition points:

- Nursery to Primary School
- Primary to Secondary School
- Secondary to Post-School
- Child to Adult Services

Working group chairs have been appointed and allocated people to each group. The groups are now meeting regularly to look at how to identify what is working well.

The actions in this workstream contribute to the realisation of children's rights in the following ways:

The Healthcare in Schools work is key to article 28- the right to education.

Children's rights are at the heart of the work of the Neurodevelopmental Disorders Group. We are working to ensure our improvements support neuro-affirming beliefs which are non-discriminatory. Improvements are considered to be in the best interests of the child with a focus on supporting parents to ensure their children develop to their full potential.

The work on Transitions helps to realise children's rights in relation to Article 23 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child – Children with a Disability

Key Successes

Healthcare in Schools - A key focus for the revised document has been where complex medical procedures have not been deliverable due to criteria set out in the policy. To date these matters have been quickly escalated to senior management for resolution. An escalation/ resolution process, which is effectively already operational, is the significant change to be implemented in the revised policy.

Neurodevelopmental Disorders - The family engagement session set the direction of travel that the work of our ND subgroup and the three working groups have the families and young people at the centre.

Having a newly formed family engagement group supports us to maintain this priority throughout the duration of this plan.

Bringing together a multiagency group at all levels of our work has created opportunities to identify where improvements could bring benefits to all of our individual services so offering opportunities for efficient and effective ways of working together while also improving person-centred care and accessible support.

Transitions - this subgroup of the wider Disabled Children with Complex Care Needs has just started work, but it is successful that working groups are now formed and are beginning to gather information and use it to inform recommendations about improvements to transition.

Demonstrating impact with evidence

Healthcare in Schools - Children have been able to maintain their education in the early learning or school setting with certain procedures being carried out by health staff as part of the recently developed Service Level Agreement (SLA).

The current healthcare in schools 3-18 policy continues to provide a safe framework for the provision of healthcare in schools, in respect of schools discharging their duties in supporting the healthcare needs of children and people whilst we await the publication of the revised guidance in the next academic year.

Neurodevelopmental Disorders - Year one has been focused on co-producing a plan with a shared vision and achievable aims for year two. The impact of working in this way can be evidence through the feedback from the family engagement event and the information about our family engagement group. There is not yet evidence about the impact this work has had on the ambitions of this group in terms of achieving our key outcomes.

Challenges/Issues

Healthcare in Schools - Due to capacity within education and the need to prioritise other pieces of work the scrutiny of the new guidance document is taking longer than planned.

Challenges are noted for healthcare staff supporting the specific needs of children managed through the SLA due to the vast geography of early years or school placements, some children needing support twice per day being covered by 4 part time staff.

Neurodevelopmental Disorders - our group is aiming to ensure that the development and delivery of improvements is realistic and achievable within existing resources, so we are contributing to a sustainable model of service for the future. This requires us to work at a pace that reflects conflicting demands. The motivation and energy of the members of all groups has prevented this causing a problem to delivery of our plan to date.

There has been a sustained increase in demand for Neurodevelopmental assessment which is consistent with other areas in Scotland, however services are

available to provide support to children and their families based on needs and regardless of diagnosis status.

Transitions - The main challenge to progress thus far has been the availability of stakeholders to meet and come together. Competing priorities with day jobs has meant that the workstream has not progressed as much as hoped. However, we are now set up and have regular meetings scheduled to take forward the workstream.

Conclusion and Next steps

Overall, the strategic group and subgroups believe that steady progress has been made, we require to measure this progress against 10,000 voices and Youth Matters report over Summer 2024.

Next steps for Healthcare in Schools are to publish the revised guidance, and commence a system to monitor the quality of children's healthcare plans.

For Neurodevelopmental Disorders, year 1 aims have been achieved and all groups have planned aims and actions for year 2. Resources will remain a priority to allow these to be tested during year 2 and scaled up through year 3.

Plans for 2024-2025 include:

- Establishing a baseline for Education settings to understand current needs and priority areas for support.
- Embedding the work of a focus group of teachers who undertook Levelling Up training by developing plans to develop and scale up this work.
- Training a targeted group of teaching staff on the use of the Social Communication, Emotional Regulation, and Transactional Support (SCERTS) approach to autism education, and developing an implementation plan to see the initial testing of this enhanced in Dumfries and Galloway.
- Scaling up the use of Learning about neurodiversity at school (LEANS) in Schools across Dumfries and Galloway to develop a culture of Neuro-affirming practice across pupils and staff.
- Developing and testing an ND Friendly classroom/school framework.
- Developing and testing parent training and information sessions on topics identified by families.
- Developing a minimum mandatory training programme for staff on Neurodiversity and supporting Neurodivergent service users as well as a competency framework for those who need enhanced knowledge and skills in this area.
- Developing a proposal for a model of single point of access for support.

With regard to transitions - in 2024-25 we aim to conduct surveys, consult research, and speak with stakeholders to identify good practice and areas for improvement. We will then begin the process of formulating a number of recommendations for improvement to transition arrangements in Dumfries and Galloway.

Workstream 3: Mental Health

Introduction

In surveys carried out in 2019, pupils across Dumfries and Galloway highlighted mental health as an issue that we needed to focus on. In response to this, we prioritised mental health in our previous Children's Services Plan, and we have continued this in our current plan. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, demand for mental health support has increased both locally and nationally. Since the pandemic, we have seen more referrals to the School Nursing Service on mental health grounds, and we have more children and young people who are not attending school for anxiety-related reasons.

There are different levels of mental health support for children and young people that include:

- Provision of information to children and young people (eg web-based, or leaflets).
- Support and training for staff to raise awareness and understanding of mental health, and help them to develop whole-school approaches to mental wellbeing.
- low-level mental health support in schools delivered by Youth Work services and/or School Nursing
- Targeted, Specialist, and Urgent Intervention services like CAMHS and the Child and Adolescent Clinical Psychology Service.

Our approach to mental health provision in Dumfries and Galloway is based on prevention and early intervention in line with our first priority in the Children's Services Plan - early intervention, with needs identified and support provided at the earliest opportunity. This work contributes towards children and young people's rights to high quality health care, including preventative health care services. To achieve this, we are delivering the actions below.

Our Actions

1. To ensure that all children and young people have access to the mental health and wellbeing support that they need when they need it. This includes a breadth of access, close to home and in a timely manner, matched to the needs expressed. This includes:
 - Development of a Mental Health Pathway
 - Development of web-based resources based on engagement with children, young people and parents/carers
 - Addressing national priorities including the implementation of a range of low-level mental health and psychological approaches.
2. To ensure the recognition and early intervention for perinatal mental health issues and to improve access to psychological and mental health services. This includes:

- Development of an integrated care pathway that addresses identified gaps in specific areas – this is about addressing identified gaps, like support for birth-trauma and baby-loss, and working with service-users to identify further gaps and shape services.

The first action is led by our Mental Health in Schools Group. This has representatives from Education, Health, Youth Work Services and Social Work, and focuses on actions that require partnership working to achieve.

Mental Health Pathway

A key action has been the development of a Mental Health Pathway which aims to ensure that children and young people get appropriate support from the right person or service at the right time. The Pathway provides clarity about all the different levels of mental health supports and services. It is designed to build on things that are already happening for young people in schools – for example the Health and Wellbeing Curriculum, focus on positive relationships, pupil support and peer support.

The clarity provided by the Mental Health Pathway is very important. This is because there are so many different types and levels of mental health support, but many people might only be aware of a few of them, like Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for example. This means that children or young people can be referred to CAMHS when this might not be the right service for the child or young person, or the right service at that time. If we can refer children or young people quickly to the right service, it doesn't just help them: it also means that our services operate more efficiently. This is because doctors and other clinicians are not having to spend lots of time dealing with paperwork and emails in order to direct referrals to the right place.

The position at the start of this Plan in April 2023, was that the Mental Health in Schools Group had decided what needed to be in each tier of the Mental Health Pathway, but the group needed to do more work with Primary and Secondary Schools on how the pathway would work in practice.

Throughout this reporting period, the group have been meeting with all 16 secondary schools in Dumfries and Galloway, and many primary schools to find out what schools wanted the pathway to look like, and what support or training they might need on it. Schools said that they wanted to see anonymised case studies. These are anonymous examples of situations involving children or young people with mental health needs, where a school might find it difficult to work out what tier of support they needed. It is planned that the pathway will be launched at the end of June 2024.

The Mental Health in Schools Group is involved in the development of an Inclusive Practice Platform. This will provide links to staff in schools to a range of resources that they can use to support children and young people's mental wellbeing.

During the reporting period, the group has also worked to make links with all the different projects and activities across services for children and young people that support mental wellbeing.

Counselling in Schools

Our Low-Level Mental Health in Schools ('Counselling in Schools') project was developed jointly as a partnership between Youth Work Services and Educational Psychology, with oversight provided by a strategic group of managers from both services. This provision is committed to deliver flexible responsive early intervention and low-level mental health support for young people in Dumfries and Galloway.

At the start of this reporting period, 1,000 young people had accessed counselling in schools. Bi-monthly reports on the project are published, containing data on the number of young people using the service. In 2023, the project won a National Youth Work Award, and the Principal Educational Psychologist and Team Leader Youth Work Services gave a presentation on the project at a National Conference. A key strength of the project is our local approach in which we worked with young people locally to understand their needs. As a result of this engagement, rather than bringing in outside specialist support, we trained staff locally, building capacity to deliver the support that young people wanted.

Annual reports on the project are published, and the project has been independently evaluated using researchers from St. Andrews University. The aim of the evaluation was to answer two key questions - what impact the Low-Level Mental Health in Schools Project has on young people, and how that impact was achieved. The evaluation found that young people taking part in the Low-Level Mental Health Support Project in Dumfries and Galloway benefit by developing skills for wellbeing, increased confidence and self-esteem - and building improved attitudes about and attendance at school. The report on the project is available [here](#).

The reporting period has seen an increase in the number of young people attending the project who are not attending school. We know that since Covid, we have seen an increase in anxiety-related non-attendance, but we need to look further into 'anxiety' and carry out an in-depth analysis of reasons for this. The Mental Health in Schools Group is linking with the Attendance Short-Life Working Group to examine this issue.

Websites

The new website for CAMHS was co-produced with young people, and went live in July 2023.

An Education website is in development for teachers as a capacity-building platform. We are looking at the collective use of websites and how they cross-reference and complement each other, and this is an ongoing task.

Mental Health in Schools Group - Current and Future plans:

The Mental Health in Schools Group (MHIS Group) had an action that was originally about parental feedback – parents wanted information about how they could support children with anxiety. The group had operated two pilots which were well-evaluated by parents, but involved a narrow range of parents. For 2024-25, the group will be looking at whether the right actions are in place to support parents, and how to support all parents – including those who might not generally access support through schools. The Whole Family Support Group are looking at how to support the parents of teenagers, so we need to make links across workstreams and carry out scoping to identify the supports that are currently available across our partnership for parents, and the gaps in our provision.

The MHIS Group will be jointly analysing data from individual services in order to inform ongoing shared priorities. Our new Children's Services website is in development (currently in the testing stage) and the Mental Health Pathway will be available on this site. The next meeting of the MHIS Group will consider next year's plan, and high-level reports from each service. The group is also looking to work more closely with work on Trauma training in the Council and NHS.

The MHIS Group will also receive updates on other work agreed in early 2024 including engagement with the national See Mee project and the development of the 'Feeling Shit' programme for community use in Dumfries and Galloway.

During this reporting period, the Single Point of Contact (SPoC) was in place for specialist mental health services. The SPoC reduces duplication for parents and young people, meaning that they only need to tell their story once. The SPoC also includes School Nursing, allowing referrals to be passed to the most appropriate tier for mental health support.

Peri Natal and Infant Health Services

An important strand of our approach to mental health support in Dumfries and Galloway is the development of peri natal and infant mental health services.

Over the reporting period, actions have focused on recruitment and engaging with service-users to help shape the service development.

The service has successfully recruited a 0.5 WTE Maternity and Neonatal Clinical Psychologist to offer assessment and intervention to women accessing maternity services, and/or have a baby on the Neonatal Unit.

A 0.2 WTE Paediatric Occupational Therapist has been recruited in the Infant Mental Health Service – Wee Minds Matter, and there has been an increase in Occupational Therapist hours in Perinatal Mental Health.

The service received funding for an additional 0.2 Mental Health Nurse in Perinatal Mental Health and recruitment was successful in April 2024.

The service is advertising for the recruitment of two Lived Experience Volunteers in Perinatal and Infant Mental Health to support service development.

The service has completed an Integrated Care Pathway for Perinatal Mental Health which aims to ensure a standardised and quality-assured approach to women who have, or who are at risk of developing perinatal mental health problems.

The Infant Mental Health service is rolling out training to staff on the Lanarkshire Infant Mental Health Observational Indicator Set. This is a work-practice oriented, infant observation based, set of indicators of infant mental health. It is intended for use with infants aged 0 to 3rd birthday. This indicator set helps staff to identify any signs of potential mental health issues in the parent-infant relationship.

The Infant Mental Health Service has provided an 8-week group programme of Circle of Security (on parent-infant relationships) at Action for Children at Kelloholm. This involved 8 group sessions for parents/carers to understand their relationship with their infants aged under 6 years, and also to promote attachment, and help parents/carers develop greater understanding of their own parenting experience. The programme initially targeted women engaged with Action for Children in Kelloholm who were potentially at higher risk of ruptures in the parent/infant relationship.

Training on Introduction to Infant Mental Health has been provided across Dumfries and Galloway by the Infant Mental Health Service to NHS, Social Care and Third Sector staff to increase awareness of Wee Minds Matter as a service to support infants and their care-givers.

Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Services continue to meet quarterly with local Third Sector groups to promote joint working and increase awareness of each other's projects and supports. Bi-monthly Link Worker meetings take place with PIMH champions in different mental health and women and children's services to update on service development and identify themes for further training.

Reflective Practice sessions for Midwives and for Health Visitors have been launched. These introduce a forum to reflect on professional practice and themes that arise that could benefit from a supportive space to discuss the impact upon staff and also to develop a wider perspective on the families that they are working with. The aim of this is to improve practice and to support staff in what can be a challenging area.

Training in Perinatal Mental Health is being provided to newly qualified midwives. The aim is to increase awareness and confidence in working with mental health difficulties within the perinatal population to staff at the start of their career journey.

Solihull training continues to be provided to practitioners across Social care/ Mental Health and the Women and Childrens Directorates.

Public websites and information leaflets are in development for the Perinatal Mental Health Team/ Maternity and Neonatal Psychology and Wee Minds Matter
All services are promoted at shared learning events in Dumfries and Galloway.

Admissions to our Mother and Baby Unit and Mid-Park Hospital admissions are being monitored. There is a requirement nationally to review requirements for additional Mother and Baby Unit beds, but this is also an important statistic for us locally. Historically, we have had very low in-patient admissions in Dumfries and Galloway, but this has increased, so we need to closely monitor this and also to capture whether the severity of illness is increasing.

The development of Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Services was an action in our Mental Health Plan, but these services are operational now, so this action is now complete and we can close it.

Key Successes

Across our children's services partnership, there are many activities that contribute towards supporting mental health and wellbeing. For the Mental Health in Schools Group, a particular success has been to make the right links across the partnership and get the right people together. As Education is a universal service, it is especially important that the right connections are made with existing groups and other priorities in order to ensure that stages 1 and 2 of the Mental Health Pathway reflect all the work being done in the curriculum and across our partnership. As new activities develop, these can then be incorporated into the Pathway.

Our Counselling in Schools project has received national recognition, and a national award. It reflects our innovative approach in Dumfries and Galloway and our commitment to engaging with young people and using their views to shape services.

Our CAMHS website, which was co-produced with young people.

Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Services have been successful in engaging with women who have used the services, and their views have helped shape the service development.

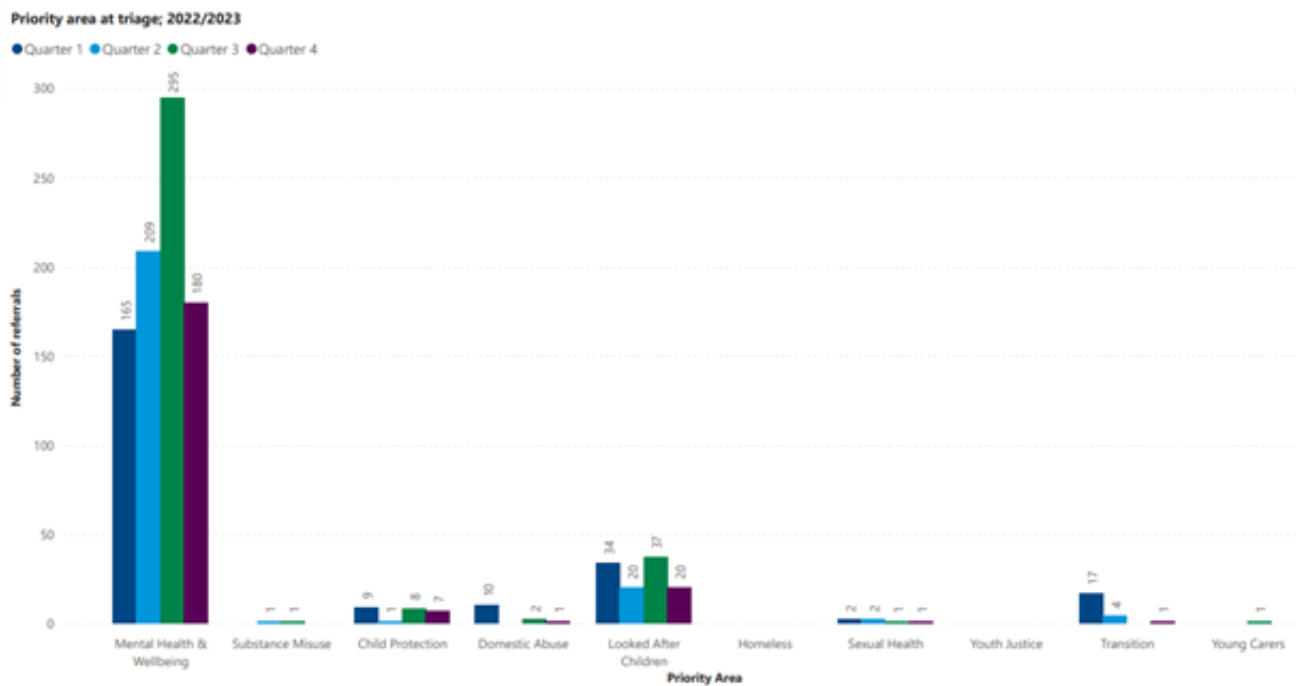
Demonstrating impact with evidence

The graph below (from the School Nursing Service) shows the number of referrals that were made to School Nursing in 2022-23. This gives an indication of the amount of need for mental health support in our school-aged population, and also the amount of support that we are providing at a lower level.

By far the largest number of referrals were to support mental health and wellbeing with 849 referrals over the school year. This shows an increase in referrals for the mental health and wellbeing pathway of 541 in 2020/21 and 737 in 2021/22.

All referrals are triaged, and following triage a lower number of children are seen by School Nursing (484 in 20/21, 627 in 21/22 and 663 in 22/23). This takes into account that some children are already known to service such as CAMHS or Psychology and there would never be a duplication on health services involved; and also that since 2021, weekly Multi-disciplinary meetings have been in place with School Nursing/CAMHS and Psychology to review referrals into each service to direct to the most appropriate service.

We need to do more work to analyse the amount of lower-level work that we do, and how this affects the number of referrals that go on to higher-level services like CAMHS and Psychology.



Challenges/Issues

We need to look at mental health provision for 3-5 year-olds and how this is being addressed. There are lots of different pieces of work taking place that aim to support children and young people with emotional non-attendance, but we need to develop a plan for how we work together and tackle this in a cohesive way.

Conclusion and Next steps

We have a complex landscape in Dumfries and Galloway with regard to supports for mental health. As a result, it has taken some time to make the right links and connections across our partnership, but we are now confident that we have the right links in place. We now need to reinforce the message across our partnership that

any new ideas for shared projects/activities need to be brought to the partnership table for joint consideration and to get support.

Recruitment has long been a challenge across services in Dumfries and Galloway, but we have successfully recruited to Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Posts, and we hope to recruit lived-experience volunteers to help us continue to engage with service-users to influence ongoing service-development.

Going forward, we need to prioritise:

- Emotional non-attendance
- Crisis presentation
- Transition to adult services.

Workstream 4: Care Experience

Introduction

The legislative framework outlining the roles and responsibilities of Corporate Parents is set out within Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 with statutory guidance published by the Scottish Government in August 2015.

Corporate parenting refers to an organisation's performance of actions necessary to uphold the rights and secure the wellbeing of a looked after child or care leaver, and through which their physical, emotional, spiritual, social and educational development is promoted, from infancy through to adulthood. Part 9 of the Act puts this concept and policy of 'corporate parenting' onto a statutory basis in Scotland. It establishes a framework of duties and responsibilities for relevant public bodies, requiring them to be systematic and proactive in their efforts to meet the needs of looked after children and care leavers.

Effective corporate parenting should result in everyone involved in the looked after child/ young person's life, working together in the best interest of seeking better outcomes for them.

These outcomes include improvements in the following areas:

- Increased stability in placements
- Improved health
- Improved educational outcomes
- Involvement

Corporate Parenting applies to:

- Every child who is looked after by a local authority, and
- Every young person who is under the age of 26, and was, but is no longer looked after by a local authority.

Being a corporate parent means providing secure, nurturing, and positive experiences for children and young people in our care wherever they live. Where a child or young person cannot safely stay at home, it is up to us to provide them with the care, support, love, and stability that they deserve. As corporate parents, we should have the same aspirations for our Looked After children and young people as we would have for children of our own.

In Dumfries and Galloway, we are committed to listening to the children and young people who are, or have been, in our care so that we can ensure that their needs are at the centre of everything that we do. We also recognise the importance of support for parents and carers, as they are key in supporting our children, to grow, develop, and contribute to our local communities whilst they are unable to live at home. Ensuring we have the scaffolding of support around parents and carers will allow this to be sustained in the longer term.

Corporate Parenting is everyone's responsibility – it stretches beyond the role of Children and Families Social Work Services and it is for us all to ask the question: 'Would this be good enough for my child?'

If it wouldn't, then we all have a responsibility to challenge each other and to rise to the challenge ourselves to do as much as possible to give our children and young people the very best services, support and love that they deserve and to help them develop and succeed in whatever path they choose for their future.

Actions

A robust corporate parenting plan aligned with the above areas was developed for the period 2020 - 2023 but its progress was significantly impacted upon by the pandemic. At the commencement of the review and update of the plan in summer 2023, it became apparent that due to significant pressures on all services and the increasingly complex needs of our families, a radical rethink was needed.

A number of workshops were held with the existing membership and other key stakeholders between August and December 2023 to analyse all the information available and identify what needed to be prioritised for care experienced children in Dumfries and Galloway. Children's voices from the Independent Care Review, Bright Spots and 10,000 voices were used to inform this analysis. Discussions within these workshops were intentionally frank and challenging across the partnership, recognising that as a partnership and in the face of current service pressures and challenges, we need to think radically and differently if we are to mobilise ourselves sufficiently to make a meaningful difference in the lives of our children.

As a result, we now have a draft Corporate Parenting Plan for 2024- 2027 that prioritises those areas which we know, based on local information and analysis, need to improve significantly for our care experienced children. Childrens rights have been at the forefront of our thinking as we developed our new plan.

The delivery of the new Corporate Parenting Plan will be undertaken by 4 workstreams (aligned with the 4 key areas of responsibility) reporting to the Corporate Parenting Group. To ensure this plan is successfully achieved the membership of the Corporate Parenting Group has been reviewed and will reflect the strategic and senior leadership that is required to mobilise the necessary resources and oversee delivery.

The Corporate Parenting Plan 2024-2027 focuses on the following.

A safe and stable home

We will improve and increase the accommodation and care options for our care experienced children and young people to ensure they have the right place to live with the right support when they need it. This will increase their opportunities to have stability and consistency which will allow them to access the other help and support they might need and so allow them to live their best lives. We will do this by:

- Reviewing and developing our fostering service
- Reviewing, developing and investing in local residential provision
- Developing outreach services to work intensively where the child is at risk of becoming accommodated or is ready to return to their family
- Reviewing and developing accommodation and housing options for older children to live independently and semi- independently
- Increasing the support to kinship care arrangements
- Improving the quality of care children receive when looked after away from home

Access to Education

We will work together across the partnership to improve and increase the opportunities for our care experienced children to access education in a way which best suits their needs, giving them the best chance for success and preparing them for the future they want and deserve.

We will do this by:

- Reducing the number of care experienced children experiencing reduced and part-time timetables
- Ensuring partnership supports within schools are joined up and making the most of available resources
- Developing of alternatives to school based education
- Developing of educational provision for those children at risk of or returning from out of region placements
- Ensuring transport provision is consistent, stable and reduces stigma

Being healthy

We will work across the partnership to ensure that our care experienced children are able to have their health needs met by attending their health appointments and that health services sufficiently reflect and accommodate the unique circumstances that care experienced children experience.

When care experienced children are in crisis, the partnership will work together better to coordinate joint risk management and planning.

We will do this by:

- Developing a framework to support care experienced children to attend all health appointments
- Developing a strategic framework for partnership planning to ensure joint risk management for stabilisation and safety planning when children are displaying high level risk taking behaviours
- Ensuring health knowledge and expertise is fully incorporated into assessment and decision-making processes for care experienced children moving through permanence

Being Involved and Included

We will ensure that the voices and rights of our care experienced children are meaningfully and systemically embedded across all areas of activity and development that affect them including their rights to a safe and stable home, accessible education and good health. We will do this by:

- Identifying and utilising appropriate platforms
- Developing methods to meaningfully communicate around rights, including standards of care children should receive
- Embedding participation and engagement at all stages moving away from episodic and retrospective models
- Developing more effective feedback loops
- Ensure all participation and engagement activity is connected.

Governance and connectivity

We will develop working arrangements across the partnership to ensure that corporate parenting responsibilities are fully understood and fulfilled through effective leadership and in a way that makes a meaningful difference to our care experienced children. We will do this by:

- Reviewing and developing Residential Placement Group and Oversight Group
- Ensuring membership of Corporate Parenting Group proportionately reflects the seniority and accountability required for the partnership to fulfil its corporate parenting role and responsibilities.
- Ensuring Corporate Parenting Group is sufficiently connected to the relevant strategic planning groups and decision-making forums.

Key Successes

Elected Members are invested in and committed to developing their own role as Corporate Parents, following a seminar in September 2023 and the distribution of a Leaflet specifically outlining their Corporate Parenting duties, roles and responsibilities.

During the review of the Corporate Parenting Plan, it was noted that there was significant overlap between membership and actions of the Corporate Parenting Group and The Promise Partnership – which also overlapped with other areas of strategic planning. Work was undertaken to streamline the multi-agency planning structures which report into the Childrens Services Strategic and Planning Partnership Executive Group and includes the establishment of a new group consisting of strategic Children’s Services Leads to develop a performance and quality assurance framework. The group will be responsible for the collation and analysis of data and development of improvement actions across all delivery groups, operating in a similar way to the Performance, Quality and Improvement Sub-Committee of the Public Protection Partnership. This proposal was agreed by CSSaPP Executive Group in November 2023.

As we have prepared for alignment with the new planning structure we undertook an exercise to map all actions within the Promise Partnership Plan to ensure all those were successfully transferred to the new Corporate Parenting Plan.

Demonstrating impact with evidence

We will develop a multi-agency Performance and Quality Assurance Framework which allows us to measure what difference we are making to the lives of our care experienced children. We will do this by:

- Using the Promise Performance Indicators
- Identifying the most relevant single and multi-agency information
- Aligning this with the development of the broader children’s services performance and quality framework.

Challenges/Issues

At the commencement of the review and update of the plan in summer 2023, it became apparent that membership of the Corporate Parenting Group had, over a period of time, been delegated down which had further impacted upon the progress of the plan and did not reflect the strategic leadership required for this critical and statutory area of work. This has been addressed through the revision and renewal of membership which will now be a senior manager level across the partnership.

Conclusion and Next steps

In addition to the statutory areas, we have included the need for greater governance and connectivity to ensure that we can work most effectively across the partnership, and meaningfully measure progress.

The prioritised areas for action have deliberately focussed on these which as a partnership, we think will make a meaningful difference to care experiences of our children and young people. Fundamental to this is ensuring that they have somewhere safe and stable to live because we know that if they don’t have that, it

will impact in their ability to access and achieve educationally and have their health needs met. Stability must be first and foremost.

The Corporate Parenting Plan 2024-27 will be launched in summer 2024 with a renewed focus and communication strategy for all staff to increase and improve understanding around corporate parenting roles and responsibilities. This will require development and distribution of relevant communication methods most likely to have the desired impact.

The actions identified within the new plan will continue to work towards achieving the high-level outcomes within the Childrens Services Plan but with a renewed focus on how our responsibilities can be met.

Workstream 5: Child Poverty

Introduction

Poverty is recognised as a key area within our Community Planning Partnership in Dumfries and Galloway. The 2023-33 Local Outcomes Improvement Plan reflects an outcome relating to the mitigation of the costs of living and a separate outcome relating to the elimination of child poverty. A Poverty and Inequalities Partnership is in place to deliver on this agenda locally which includes four sub-groups, and Sub-Group 4 has a specific focus on child poverty.

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 introduced an annual requirement for Local Authorities and Health Boards to jointly prepare a Local Child Poverty Action Report (LCPAR) which notes progress and reflects on the work undertaken over the preceding year, and also sets out an action plan for the year ahead. Sub-Group 4 of the Poverty and Inequalities Partnership is responsible for coordinating our LCPAR and the associated activity. As part of the annual LCPAR process a Dumfries and Galloway Child Poverty Action Plan was agreed for the period 2022-2026, aligning with the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026 (Best Start, Bright Futures).

The Strategic Needs Assessment process and separate consultation and engagement activity associated with the development of the 2023-26 Children's Services Plan reaffirmed Poverty as a key issue locally. Poverty was therefore reflected as a key area within the new Children's Services Plan however so as not to duplicate with existing arrangements the strategic group and associated plan are the vehicle being used to make progress in this area.

A wide range of rights align with child poverty including the rights to an adequate standard of living including food, clothing and housing, to education, to the highest attainable standard of health, to legal assistance, to play, to freedom of expression, to benefit from social security, to family life, to alternative care, to protection from all forms of physical or psychological abuse, and a wide range of rights of children with disabilities. In the most severe cases, child poverty can even threaten the child's right to survive and develop to their full potential. It can therefore be said that by delivering on the actions within the Dumfries and Galloway Child Poverty Action Plan there has been a contribution to the realisation of children's rights locally.

Actions

All four Sub-Groups of the Poverty and Inequalities Partnership have an action plan which contribute to the Poverty agenda and may impact on and reduce Child Poverty, however these are subject to separate reporting arrangements. For the purposes of this report the focus will be on Sub-Group 4 and the associated activity.

The objectives of the Dumfries and Galloway Child Poverty Action Plan 2022-26 are:

- To develop, deliver and manage strategic and operational activities that focus on reducing child poverty in Dumfries and Galloway.

- To reduce the number of children living in poverty and mitigate the impact of poverty for low-income families.

The Action Plan includes 58 individual actions however Sub-Group 4 carried out a review of these and identified 15 actions to prioritise, aligning with the three drivers of child poverty reduction.

At the end of Year 1 of the Children's Services Plan 14 of the 15 Priority Actions are 'On Schedule' or 'Complete'. One action that relates to school-age childcare has not progressed to date. Scottish Government are leading the national development of a school-age childcare model. In 2025-26 Scottish Government plan to publish a more detailed delivery plan setting out what a targeted school age childcare offer will look like for families within communities and providing a clear timescale for delivery. This action will be progressed once the delivery plan is published.

A detailed summary of progress in relation to all 58 actions will be published as part of the Local Child Poverty Action Report in Autumn 2024.

Key Successes

The most recent Local Child Poverty Action Report published in October 2023 highlighted the following key achievements:

- A client gain of over £12.2 million through financial advice and information provided by the Council and an associated commissioned service;
- 194.23 tonnes of food delivered through Fareshare which in turn enabled foodbanks to provide essential supplies for over 462,456 meal portions;
- 209 clients with complex issues had a successful intervention which prevented their situation progressing to eviction, with an average Homeless case costing £12K this prevented additional spend of £2.5 million;
- An increasing number of families supported to access Holiday Food Fund;
- An increasing number of families supported to access Bridging Payments;
- School clothing grants provided for 3,903 local children and young people;
- Over 500 children and young people assisted with 'back to school' and separately 'warm winter' clothes, with over 4,500 items collected through donations and redistributed, with free haircuts also available at 'back to school' events;
- Increased opportunities to access free sanitary products across Council, health and third sector partner sites, with thousands of local families benefiting from the service;
- 35,125 leaflets distributed which promote the range of Financial Support and Welfare Services which are currently available within Dumfries and Galloway.

Demonstrating impact with evidence

In Summer 2023 case studies were collated from Employability and Skills, Education, Health Visitors and Family Nurses, Lifelong Learning, Social Work and Welfare and Housing Options, which demonstrated the positive impact that actions are having on families affected by poverty.

Public Health Scotland have agreed to facilitate workshops with local stakeholders in the early part of Year 2 of the Children's Services Plan which will support further development of local key measures of success above and beyond the data already reported as part of the annual Local Child Poverty Action Report.

Challenges/Issues

Despite significant activity locally the most recent data released in June 2023 details that the level of child poverty in the region is 26% which equates to 6,751 local children and young people living in poverty. This is a 3.1% increase on the previous year, and 2.7% higher than the earliest available trend data from 2014-2015.

Sub-Group 4 recognise that the Child Poverty Action Plan for 2022-26 must remain relevant in terms of its deliverable actions, responsive to emerging need, and connected to other strategic priority areas which are being driven forward through the Community Planning Partnership. A review of all actions will therefore be carried out as part of the Public Health Scotland led workshops early in the next reporting year.

Because the needs of some local families are so great many of the actions being progressed relate to the mitigation of poverty however to reduce levels of poverty a continued focus on creativity and shifting to preventative approaches is required.

The Scottish Government identify six priority family groups who are most likely to be impacted by poverty and locally more work is required to understand how well our activity is supporting each of these specific groups, and this will be featured in future planning.

Conclusion and Next steps

Positive progress has been made throughout Year 1 of the Children's Services Plan however continued focus is required on this area given the scale of children, young people and families living in poverty in Dumfries and Galloway.

The planned workshops led by Public Health Scotland involving key stakeholders will be supportive of how we continue to progress this agenda locally. It is anticipated that this work will result in an updated Action Plan which will set out how we meet this challenge.

Workstream 6: Getting it right for every child

Introduction

For many years Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) has been a core element of our over-arching approach to working with children, young people and their families in Dumfries and Galloway, driven by the local application of Scottish Government GIRFEC Policy. Following Scottish Government publication of a revised Policy Statement, as well as Statutory and Non-Statutory guidance in late 2022, and the subsequent Child's Plan Practice Statement in 2023 from, our partnership focus has been on the implementation of this guidance. This workstream and associated activity is important as it contributes to how well children, young people and their parents or carers can access to the right support at the right time. It also has the potential to influence how effectively practitioners and services work together in support of children, young people and parents and carers.

Children's Rights are the foundation of the GIRFEC approach, and there is clear alignment between GIRFEC wellbeing indicators and each of the Articles of the UNCRC. It can therefore be said that by delivering on GIRFEC we will very positively contribute to the realisation of children's rights in Dumfries and Galloway.

Actions

A regionwide workshop with stakeholders in March 2023 identified four GIRFEC themes which were to be a focus for Year 1 of the Children's Services Plan as follows:

- Child's Planning and Lead Professional
- Referral Processes and Pathways
- Locality Groups
- Learning and Development.

Each of the four former districts, Annandale and Eskdale, Nithsdale, Stewartry and Wigtownshire, had existing GIRFEC Locality Groups which involved local practitioners from across the partnership. In order to involve practitioners in this work and to make best use of resources each of the locality groups was allocated one of the GIRFEC themes to progress, to be led by the associated Locality Group Chairs, and supported by a member of the GIRFEC Leadership Group. Existing Locality Group Meeting arrangements were used to consider explore the themes in more detail, identify what was working well, what needed to improve, and some associated headline actions.

A multi-agency workshop was facilitated in June 2023 where each of the respective Locality Groups provided an update on progress and were able to test thinking with a wider partnership group. A further multi-agency workshop was facilitated in October 2023 where the output from each theme was reported and handed back to the GIRFEC Leadership Group to consider and progress.

As part of the development of the 2023-26 Children's Services Plan and other associated activities, feedback from stakeholders suggested that not all practitioners or parents and carers had an awareness of the supports that were available in communities and how to access them. It was agreed that a programme of multi-agency events should be arranged, and work should commence on the development of a public Children's Services website to address this, and this has been addressed over the reporting year.

During the reporting period, the GIRFEC Leadership Group reviewed the suite of local tools, templates and processes that underpin our approach to GIRFEC implementation in Dumfries and Galloway. These local resources included:

- Our process for sharing Police Concern Forms – we revised this process to ensure that Concern Forms are now triaged by the Police, with lower-level concerns shared with the named person.
- Our Child's Plan template.
- Our Child Assessment Report (CAR) template.
- Our Request for Assistance Form (RfA) – this is being revised with the aim of making it easier for services to obtain key information that they need on the RfA.
- Our Information-Sharing Guidance – this has been updated following the release of guidance from Scottish Government and is currently being considered by Legal Services.
- Our Children's Services Escalation Framework – this has been updated and has just been released as the Children's Services Resolution and Escalation Protocol.

We are currently reviewing our GIRFEC Practitioner Guidance, with a small short-life working group updating this.

Key Successes

Two 'Sharing Practice' Festivals were facilitated, one in the West of the region in Stranraer, and the other in the East of the region in Dumfries. Through these events over 500 practitioners from across the public, private and third sector were provided with an opportunity to meet colleagues and learn about the services that are provided from other teams and agencies. These events have received very positive feedback from practitioners with further satellite events planned in the next reporting year.

A directory of all services has been collated as part of the work to develop a Children's Services website. A 'beta' site has been developed and is undergoing testing with stakeholders, with a view to formally launching a new Children's Services website early in the next reporting year.

A test of change has been progressed in the Annan Cluster involving the introduction of a 'GIRFEC Forum' which has brought services together to explore who can provide the right support at the right time for targeted families. This model has been

progressed with the consent of families and is supportive of efficient and effective planning and allocation of resource.

Demonstrating impact with evidence

Following the Sharing Practice Festivals in Dumfries and Stranraer practitioners from across the partnership have reported a better awareness of services and supports that are available and how and when they can be accessed.

Initial feedback regarding the Annan GIRFEC Forum has suggested that this approach has enabled children, young people and their families to access the most appropriate support at the right time. This test of change will be subject to further evaluation in Year 2 of the Children's Services Plan and if shown to be successful the partnership will consider how this could be upscaled.

Challenges/Issues

At this time there is no additional capacity to support the development and administration of GIRFEC related learning and development. Work has continued on to progress in this area however to support the ongoing administration of learning and development it is anticipated that some additional administrative resource will need to be sourced.

Conclusion and Next steps

Good progress has been made throughout Year 1 of the Children's Services Plan however continued focus on this area is going to be required in order to ensure families can receive the right help at the right time, with a joined-up approach from services. The publication of local practitioner guidance and the bedding-in of the website and other developments in Year 2 should support continued progress.

The introduction of a National GIRFEC Forum and an invitation to join the Pan-Ayshire GIRFEC Group presents a great opportunity to explore practice examples in other areas and reflect where else we could make improvements in the future.

Measuring Success

In Dumfries and Galloway, our approach has been to monitor a suite of high levels indicators of wellbeing that have aligned with our priorities and with outcomes of wellbeing (that children and young people are safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included – often referred to as ‘SHANARRI’).

We selected this suite of indicators because taken together, they present a global picture of the wellbeing of our child population. Most of them have data going back a number of years, allowing us to identify trends over time, and most of them allow us to compare our performance with the National position, as well as other local authorities that have a similar profile to Dumfries and Galloway.

This suite of indicators is attached, (see Appendix 1), however, these will be developed further as our Children’s Services Strategic Leads Group are reviewing our performance information and developing a multi-agency performance and quality framework. We will be considering the Scottish Government’s set of Core Indicators that can be used for Children’s Services planning alongside other local indicators, and we are also anticipating a set of Promise Indicators from the National Promise Team, which we will consider.

Our Challenges

There are challenges that we have faced regarding specific pieces of work within workstreams, where progress might have been slower than planned, and there are global ones that we face as a partnership. Recruitment and retention of staff continues to be an issue in Dumfries and Galloway, although we have had some success with recruitment to our Perinatal Mental Health Services.

A significant challenge for us is that demand for services has greatly increased since the Covid-19 pandemic. We have to manage this significant extra demand, while at the same time changing the way that we deliver services to children and young people while at the same time.

Summary and Conclusions

Our effectiveness as a multi-agency partnership

Our position is that we have functioned effectively as a partnership. We identified issues impacting on our effectiveness – such as the overly complex planning landscape, and the pressures on staff involved in multiple planning groups – and we took action to address these. We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of our structures and partnership arrangements. Our CSSaPP Executive Group have agreed to repeat the partnership self-evaluation exercise that the group carried out in 2021, and we are looking at carrying out an evaluation of how well we are working with our partners in the Third Sector.

During the development of our plan, and over the reporting period, we fostered close links with our Youth Council, seeking advice and guidance from them.

Key Successes

Our position is that we have faced various challenges, and some pieces of work may have been slower than planned due to capacity issues, but we have seen positive progress over most areas of our plan with some notable successes, such as our Youth Counselling in Schools Project which won national recognition.

In our Family Support workstream, we have recruited a Parenting Coordinator and successfully engaged many families to identify their parenting needs and shape our provision of supports. Using Whole Family Wellbeing funding, we were able to upskill our family support workers to enable them to undertake assessments and develop plans with families to enable more support to be offered at an earlier stage. We have redesigned our service to be regionwide rather than locality based, meaning that there is a consistency in delivery of family support across Dumfries and Galloway and support is available locally as family support hubs have close links to education cluster areas.

In our Children with Disabilities and Complex Care Needs workstream, our revised Healthcare in Schools Policy will ensure that issues around the delivery of complex medical procedures in schools can be quickly resolved. The work of the Neurodevelopmental group is shaped by engagement with children and families and will ensure that the work of this group continues to be child and family-centred.

In our Mental Health workstream, the development of our Mental Health Pathway will help us to ensure that children and young people get the right level of support at the right time. Our Single Point of Contact for specialist services means that children and young people should only need to tell their story once. Our CAMHS website was developed in a co-productive approach with children and young people. Our Counselling in Schools project won a National award. We have successfully developed perinatal mental health services, shaped by engagement with service-users, and these are now operational.

We have reviewed our Corporate Parenting Plan to focus on actions that will bring about real change for our looked-after and care-experienced children and young people. Governance arrangements are being reviewed to make sure that we get the right level of leadership for this plan.

In our Child Poverty Action Report, we can evidence the amount of support that families have received – including gains arising from financial information, food bank provision, increased school meal uptake, interventions to prevent homelessness and warm winter clothes.

Our Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) workstream is primarily about the systems, processes, guidance and training that we have in place to support our local

implementation of GIRFEC. Successes include our Sharing Practice Festivals, the work to develop a website and Service Directory for families, and the GIRFEC Forum test of change in Annandale.

Impact on children, young people and families

With regard to demonstrating impact, we still have some work to do on how we use performance data, but we can either demonstrate impact across the workstreams, or have confidence that the work in progress will lead to positive impacts.

We have evidence in our Family Support workstream of how families have benefitted from Intensive Family Support, and from involvement in programmes such as PEEP Learning Together. We need to do more work to evidence how involvement with Intensive Family Support is leading to an increase in the number of children on the edge of care are able to stay with their families.

We are confident that the work underway to support Children with Disabilities and Complex Care needs will have direct, positive impacts on children and their families.

The impact of our Low-Level Mental Health Support Project (also known as ‘Youth Counselling in Schools’) has been evidenced by an independent evaluation report which found that young people taking part the project in Dumfries and Galloway benefit by developing skills for wellbeing, increased confidence and self-esteem - and building improved attitudes about and attendance at school. Our perinatal and infant mental health services are improving the experiences of women and infants. We are confident that implementation of our Mental Health Pathway will lead to positive impacts. We need to do more work to analyse and evidence how our low-level mental health supports are impacting on demand for higher-level mental health services.

We can demonstrate the impact of our child poverty workstream on families.

We are confident that the work underway through our GIRFEC workstream will improve the way that families can access support.

Next steps

In 2024-25, we need to continue to monitor our effectiveness as a partnership. We need to continue to develop and agree our multi-agency performance and quality arrangements. We need to continue to work together to address the challenges that we jointly face across Dumfries and Galloway – particularly challenges relating to staff capacity, recruitment and retention, delivery of services across a large rural area, and the increase in demand for services post-Covid.

APPENDIX 1 - Performance Indicators

The indicators below are a high-level suite of indicators that we have monitored over several years. Taken together, they give us a global picture of the wellbeing of our children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway against SHANARRI (Safe, Healthy, Achieving, . We have included these in the first year of our Children's Services Plan. However, they will be reviewed and refreshed in 2024-25.as we are looking at how we can use the Scottish Government's Set of Core Indicators for Children's Services Planning, and we are also awaiting the publication of a set of Promise Indicators.

SAFE

Indicator	Target (if applicable) or direction of travel	Data over time (the year that the data was published)					Comment
		2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Number of children on the Child Protection Register as rate per 1000 population aged 0-15 years	No target.	Rate was 0.8 in 18/2019	Rate was 1.1 in 2019/20	Rate was 1.5 in 2020/21	Rate was 1.8 in 2021/22	Rate was 2.1 in 2022/23	This has risen, but remains lower than our historic figures – in 2013 we had 78 children on the Register and a rate of 3.1 per 1000.
Emergency hospital admissions for Unintentional Injuries for children aged 0-14 (under 15) in Dumfries and Galloway	No target – aim to reduce	2018/19 207	2019/20 181	2020/21 184	2021/22 197	2023/23 169	Unintentional injuries can occur in any age group, but children and the elderly are generally more vulnerable.

HEALTHY

Indicator	Target (if applicable) or direction of travel	Data over time (the year that the data was published)					Comment
		2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Primary immunisation rate by 12 months of age – 5-in-1/6-in-1	Aim to maintain	2018-19-97.7%	2019-20-97.4%	2020/21 97.0%	2021/22 97.4%	2022/23 97.0%	Dumfries and Galloway continues to maintain a high level of vaccination coverage.
Primary immunisation rate by 12 months of age - PVC		2018-19-97.9%	2019-20-97.9%	2020/21 97.8%	2021/22 97.7%	2022/23 97.6%	
Primary immunisation rate by 12 months of age – Rotavirus		2018-19-95.3%	2019-20-94.9%	2020/21 94.2%	2021/22 94.7%	2022/23 93.9%	
Primary immunisation rate by 12 months of age - MenB		2018-19-97.6%	2019-20-97.4%	2020/21 97.3%	2021/22 97.3%	2022/23 96.9%	
The percentage of 27-30 months reviews completed	Aim to increase	2018-19-93.6%	2019-20-95.2%	2020/21 94.1%	2021/22 94.6%	2022/23 92.3%	D&G has a high level of coverage; the Scotland average in 2021/22 was 89.4%.
The percentage of children in Primary 1 at	Aim to reduce	DG rate was 25.7% in 2018/19, National	DG rate was 24.2% in 2019/20 but National	2022 – reviews have re-started but	DG rate was 28.2% in 2021/22	DG rate was 25.8 in 2022/23	No local or national data was captured for primary 1 weight for 2020/21 due to school closures during CoVID19. P1 cohort

risk of being overweight and/or obese		rate was 22.4%.	reviews are incomplete.	we do not have data for 2020/21	(13.2% at risk of overweight, and 15% at risk of obesity)		measurements were taking place from September 2021.
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ACHIEVING

Indicator	Target (if applicable) or direction of travel	Data over time (the year that the data was published)					Comment
		2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Percentage of LAC School Leavers who enter a positive Destination P2C3M05Q&C_PI03	87.2%	66.7% in 2018/19	84% in 2019/20	90.32% in 2020/21	86.21% in 2021/22	87.5% in 2022/23	
The percentage of children meeting developmental milestones at the 27-30 month review. (% with no concerns across all domains, and % with no concerns recorded but some domains incomplete/missing)	80%	84% in 2018/19	85% in 2019/20	84% in 2020/21	79% in 2021/22	79% in 2022/23	

Percentage of young adults (16-19 year olds) participating in education, training or employment.	91.6%	2018/19 – 91.2%	92% in 2019/20	93.1% in 2020/21	93.5% in 2021/22	94.9% in 2022/23 and 94.9% in 2023/24	This is a universal indicator rather than one targeted on vulnerability. These indicators allow us to compare performance for our more vulnerable children and young people with those for all children and young people. All priorities are relevant, because successful delivery of all our priorities should have an overall impact on our population of children and young people.
Proportion of Primary pupils achieving expected levels in all three Literacy organisers		2018/19 - 69%	2019/20 – no data	2020/21 59%	2021/22 62.5%	2022/23 65%	For 2020 the absence of external assessment information, and the Ministerial direction to award estimated grades, led to a different pattern of attainment than we have seen in previous years. The results for 2020 should not be directly compared to those in previous years or future years
Proportion of Primary pupils achieving expected levels in Numeracy		2018/19 - 77%	2019/20 – no data	2020/21 69%	2021/22 72%	2022/23 74%	
Proportion of Primary pupils achieving expected levels in all	68%	2018/19 – 31%		2020/21 – 25%	2021/22 – 31%	2022/23 42%	Education CfE PIs were not recorded in 2020 and S3 were not recorded in 2021.

three Literacy organisers (LAC)							
Proportion of Primary pupils achieving expected levels in Numeracy (LAC)	75%	2018/19 – 41%		2020/21 – 43%	2021/22 – 47%	2022/23 52%	

NURTURED

Indicator	Target (if applicable) or direction of travel	Data over time (the year that the data was published)					Comment
		2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Number and percentage of children being referred to the Children's Reporter on care & protection grounds.	Aim to reduce	484 (of total 588) Children referred in 2018-19. 82.3%	2019-20- 456 (of total 534), 85.4%	2020-21- 538 (of total 587). 91.6%	2021/22 – 620 (of total 659)	2022/23 307 (of total 370) children referred	
Balance of care for Looked After Children: % of children being looked after in the community	Aim to increase	94.2% in 2018/19	93.4% in 2019/20	92.4% in 2020/21	92.7% in 2021/22.	92.6% in 2022/23	In Dumfries and Galloway we continue to have a high proportion of children looked-after in the community. This means that children are looked-after at home with parents/carers; with other

				Rate for Scotland was 90.3%	Rate for Scotland was 89.8%	Rate for Scotland was 89.2%	family members or friends; or with foster carers or prospective adopters.
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RESPONSIBLE

Indicator	Target (if applicable) or direction of travel	Data over time (the year that the data was published)					Comment
		2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Number and percentage of children being referred to the Children's Reporter on offence grounds, Section 67 j grounds.	No target – aim to reduce	2018-19- 148 (of 588). 25.17%	2019/20- 139 (of 534) 26%	2020/21- 107 (of 587) 18.2%.	2021/22: 90 out of 659 (13.65%)	2022/23: 94 out of 370	

INCLUDED

Indicator	Target (if applicable) or direction of travel	Data over time (the year that the data was published)					Comment
		2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Attendance Rate, Primary School, Dumfries and Galloway	94.1%	95.7% in 2018/19	93.58 in 2029/20	2021/22 91.81%	2022/23 92.59%	2023/24 90.31%	We have a Care-Experienced Team in Education who track and monitor attendance (and

for Looked after Children.			94.53% in 2020/21				exclusions) of children and young people on a monthly basis.
Attendance Rate, Secondary School, Dumfries and Galloway for Looked after Children.	85.4%	84.87% in 2018/19	83.23% in 2019/20 87.75% in 2020/21	84.24% in 2021/22	78.25% in 2022/23 87.9% all children	74.09% in 2023/24	
Number of homelessness applications from applicants who were looked after as a child by the local authority within the last 5 years.	20	20 in 2018/19	20 in 2019/20 28 in 2020/21	27 in 2021/22	35 in 2022/23	28 in 2023/24	Reasons for homelessness applications are complex. Legislation was in place to prevent evictions during the pandemic, however there was an increase in homelessness applications due to the breakdown of family relationships.

APPENDIX 2: Whole Family Wellbeing Funding Updates

Whole Family Wellbeing Funding – Annual Report 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

Activity Title

Family Support

WFWF Funding

Total WFWF monies spent on this activity in 2023-24	£883,854
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Activity Description

Extending our Family Support Service in Children and Families Social Work has allowed for early, intensive support to be provided to families to try and support families at an early stage when they first need help and avoid further Social Work involvement and statutory intervention.

The Family Support Service consists of 15 Senior Family Support Workers and 2 Senior Social Workers. The role and remit of the team is to support families at an early stage of referrals to Social Work, to help them with routines and setting appropriate boundaries to help with behaviour challenges. These may have resulted from trauma they have experienced from living in a household where there is domestic abuse, mental health difficulties, drug and alcohol use etc. They may have been referred for neurodevelopmental assessment. Families may require support maintaining their homes to a standard that it is safe for children to live in. Many children have required support to attend or return to education.

900 children and their families were supported in 2023-24. A total of 25,000 hours of support were provided from the workers funded through the WFWF although there are SFSWs in all our C&FSW teams, much of the support is directly supporting families in their own homes or attending meetings, school, health appointments etc.

All referrals to Children and families Social Work come through the single access point, the duty team assess what would be the best support for the family and a worker is allocated who will spend time building a relationship and identifying with the family the supports they need, planning what needs to happen and helping the family identify and develop a support network.

Stakeholders

Children and Families Social Work works closely with partner agencies including NHS, education, Lifelong Learning and third sector providers. Everyone's responsibilities are outlined in the child's plan. Sometimes families need support to engage with services that they have not been able to attend for whatever reason.

C&F SW have redesigned our service to be regional rather than East and West which has enabled families to receive a consistent service wherever they live in D&G. Our service has been informed by our data and evaluations with families. As yet families have not been specifically involved in the design of the service.

WFWF Spend

Senior Family Support Workers, based in Children and Families Social Work throughout D&G to allow for skilled and experienced workers in permanence posts. Recurring funding.

We now have 25 Senior Family Support Workers at Band 8, who provide early help and support, others are based in our Child Protection and Permanence team, Fostering and Adoption Team, Transitions Team, Children with Disabilities Team and Youth Justice Team.

The WFWF has funded 15 workers from the Early support Teams.

WFWF Spend (continued)

Staff costs	£883,854
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WFWF Logic Model outcome(s)

Early (year 1):

- Recruit, train workers and embed within teams, ensure provision is accessible to families across D&G
- Survey parents to identify needs and gaps in services.
- Identify need for better links with families to identify the right supports for children attending the Inclusion Base.

Early (year 2-4):

- Senior Family Support Workers based in hubs across D&G in the Initial Assessment and Family Support Team . Evaluate support delivered and the impact on other parts of SW service.
- Co-ordinate delivery of Peep groups.
Identify staff to train for groups delivering parenting programmes to meet the needs identified in the survey. Co-ordinate, deliver and evaluate groups.

Intermediate:

- Regularly meet and review as part of Early Help and Family Support Group.

Long-term:

- Establish parenting programmes and develop to ensure these are accessible and meet the needs of families depending on current issues.

Progress and Evaluation

- Good feedback from families.
- Most children and families have been supported to address issues at an early stage.
- Many children reaching their permanent goal quicker; either remaining at home or returning home, living with kinship carers/ family network or an alternative permanent home.

We have heard from lots of families what supports they would like with parenting enabling us to develop a clear plan for parenting programmes.

Key success(es)

We have a team of skilled, experienced Family Support Workers. Staff have had training on relationship-based work with families and Safe & Together which has helped with working with families where there is domestic abuse. Most family support workers have now been trained in Theraplay.

Key challenge(s)

There has been an increase in referrals to C&FSW, the main issues have been mental health of young people and carers, school attendance and domestic abuse. There continues to be a large number of referrals relating to neglect. Recruitment continues to be a challenge for SW but not so much for Family Support.

We have realigned our Social Work teams to deliver consistent support across D&G, the challenge is that the structure is still embedding.

Sustainability

The plan is that by the end of the funding the early supports will be embedded within Social Work and we will have less children on statutory orders. This will enable us to further increase our supports at an early stage.

Whole Family Wellbeing Funding – Annual Report

1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

Activity Title

Primary Inclusion Support

WFWF Funding

Total WFWF monies spent on this activity in 2023-24	£30 000
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Activity Description

The creation of personal pathway curriculum rationale provides the skeleton framework for individual learners who are most at risk of exclusion and involves all relevant stakeholders coming together to meet individual's needs in a unique and child centred approach. This skeleton framework is a multiagency approach which will be based in the child's local community enhancing relationships and a sense of belonging and inclusion.

The original plan was to create a centre of excellence in the current Inclusion Hub located in St Teresa's Primary Dumfries. This hub would be the centre of a multiagency support network for learners and their families. Families would come to the Hub for family support, educational experiences, parenting support and therapeutic approaches which different partner agencies could offer in a coordinated, targeted approach. This has been changed to be more reflective of what families say they need and want. It is now locality rather than centrally based.

Stakeholders

Self-evaluation processes involving a range of stakeholders informed the direction of travel. Pupils and parents spoke at length about different perceived barriers and explained the importance and value of being involved and included in their own school and community.

Feedback led us to question the impact of a specific central location given the geographical area of Dumfries and Galloway. Some parents highlighted their own negative experiences of school which impact on their level of engagement in education establishments. They reported that another school like building would not encourage them to reengage and this would not be their preferred way to engage as a family. The cost and environmental impact of travel and transport was also a consideration in terms of sustainability. Consultation and examples of success suggested that we needed to develop a universal offer so that any learner/family within Dumfries and Galloway who, despite a significant amount of adaptation and resource, were still experiencing barriers to inclusion could access an inclusive, multiagency approach which was built around their needs and voice.

We now have active links with our school nurse, Police Scotland colleagues, social work colleagues, SCRA colleagues and Quarriers. These partnerships will support us in providing a creative curriculum which will meet the needs and

interests of our young people wherever their education takes place. Further partnership working opportunities are to be explored i.e. youth work. We have currently started engaging with 8 children and their families. They have basic timetables in place which involve contact with different stakeholders focusing on different skills for life, learning and work. These 8 children are based in the East, Nithsdale and West of our authority. They range from ages 5 to age 14.

We have also used the training which staff have received to target existing resource to specific learners in mainstream schools. So far, we have supported developments within 3 mainstream schools – one East, one Nithsdale and one West. This support has been targeted towards 4 children who are at risk of exclusion, and it is hoped that the impact of 2 interventions, Sensory Circuits and Draw and Talk Therapy, will support these 4 children to maintain their mainstream placements.

WFWF Spend

- VIG training for Inclusion Staff – One staff member has been trained in VIG and has started sessions with 2 families. Early evidence is proving that parents are really engaged with this and committed to analysing interactions with their child/children.
- 0.4 fte Project Manager salary.
- Talk and Draw Therapy Training for 4 members of staff. Early signs of this intervention are really encouraging. Therapeutic approach for children to process emotional pain resulting from trauma.
- Sensory Practitioner Training for 4 members of staff. Early signs of this intervention are really encouraging. Children are highly engaged in these sessions and there is evidence that they are using strategies/activities which have been taught to self-regulate at other times.

WFWF Spend (continued)

Staffing related costs reflected above	£12,360
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WFWF Logic Model outcome(s)

Early (year 1):

- *meaningful and ongoing participation by children, young people and families in service design which ensures choice and control.*

Self-evaluation procedures and processes ensured that stakeholders were able to use their voice to influence the direction of travel so that this project was meaningful, relevant and meets their individual needs. Feedback and consultation evidence has been collated.

- *embedded key principles for holistic whole family support within their own systems and structures*

Curriculum Rationale provides the key structure so that all stakeholders have a shared understanding of what we are trying to achieve and how we will achieve it together.

- removal of barriers to accessing support

Partnership working is reducing barriers. A seamless, joined up approach is beginning to ensure that rather than individual services working in isolation, we are utilising the expertise and contacts/links that exists within each service and providing true multiagency working to support the holistic needs of the family.

- early evidence of improved points of access to service

We have clear links, referral procedures between the Police, School Nurse, Quarriers, Social Work and Education. Multiagency approaches to be further developed year 2 to include Family Support Workers and other relevant agencies.

Early (year 2-4):

- more collaborative work across multi-agency partners including sharing of resources, data, feedback and information – We need to embed links and ensure that all services are using procedures for multiagency approaches.
- support is stigma-free, needs/rights led. Continue to explore how our engagements are non-judgemental and empower our families and young people.

Intermediate:

- development of holistic workforce approach and workforce wellbeing is improved and integral to delivery – Successes and challenges will be used to inform a sustainable way forward. This will inform service design. Evidence will be gathered and used to inform next steps. Impact on learners and their families will form the basis of future discussions and next steps.
- service shift to needs and rights-based planning and participation – Data and evidence of impact will be used to inform next steps. Rights of young people will be central to and at the forefront of planning and design.
- proactive service where families receive whole family support at the right time and delivered where and when suits families – Feedback from pupils/parents/families will support development in this area. Multiagency working so that the family receive timely support from all applicable agencies utilising the expertise which exists individually and collectively.

Long-term:

Through multi-agency working, we aim to provide learners with a personal learning pathway which offers opportunities in and around their local community which will reignite their love for learning, promote success and develop lifelong skills thus enabling learners to reach their full potential.

We will have a multiagency approach in place to offer locality-based solutions to the challenges our families face to improve family wellbeing, reduce inequalities and limit the number of families reaching the need for crisis intervention.

Progress and Evaluation

Project Manager has established a **Curriculum Rationale** which outlines what a multi-agency approach will look for our children and young people. This document has been developed in line with CFE and skills for lifelong learning document using evidence gathered through self-evaluation. This has been shared with some Head Teachers to reflect developments within school communities. Consultation and sharing good practice will be used to inform next steps. This is on track and links to Children and Families at the Centre of service design. The Curriculum Rationale ensures that all stakeholders have a shared understanding, know what we plan to achieve and how we will work together to achieve it.

Whole system approach. We have established multiagency links and pathways, partnership working. Next steps are to develop these links so that we have systems and processes in place to utilise expertise and resource when a family needs multiagency support. This is on track. Next steps are to embed a whole system approach by ensuring that our processes and systems are clear and all stakeholders are involved in a whole system approach.

Impact of Staff training. We have trained specific staff in **Talk and Draw Therapy** and as **Sensory Practitioners**. Early indications are that these interventions are having a positive impact on learners. Evidence of improved ability to self-regulate in 4 young people is very encouraging. We have disseminated the training so that other learners in mainstream settings are also able to benefit from these two interventions. This ensures the sustainability of this investment and will evolve into our core offer within mainstream schools. This is a specialism which is aimed to understand what sits behind behaviour. PTs of Inclusive Practice are now training all nurture teachers in these two interventions which builds capacity and sustainability within our system. This is on track and has been rolled out to schools earlier than planned. The sustainability of these two interventions is surpassing expectations. Next steps are to collect data and evidence impact on learners.

Therapeutic Parenting Approaches - VIG – The two families currently involved in these sessions are given constructive feedback and evidencing successes through their parenting interactions with their child/children. One parents has discussed how empowering this process is rather than it being a judgmental process. They discuss how the answers lie with them rather than a professional coming into tell them how to parent. This links in with support is stigma-free, needs/rights-led. Next steps are to collect data and evidence impact on families.

Attachment Theory – One parent is currently being supported to explore attachment theory. This parent had previously been given information and leaflets around attachment however, she reported that she felt judged and did not really understand the links from the leaflets with the behaviour of her children. Weekly sessions within the family context are proving very successful. Next steps are to collect data and evidence the impact on the family.

Capacity has limited our ability to engage – increase of Project manager time from 0.4fte to 0.8fte should build capacity.

Key success(es)

Creation of Curriculum Rationale has been a key success in terms of having a clear rationale for what we are trying to achieve and how we will achieve it. We have engaged with a wider range of partners and used feedback to edit the rationale so that it is meaningful and relevant.

VIG sessions with one family. Early indications provide evidence that the parents is being supported to analyse interactions with their child. Since starting VIG, there have been fewer reports of violence in the family home and this child has now returned to an inside educational setting which was previously inaccessible due to health and safety concerns.

Parenting Support around attachment theory with one family. Project manager has built a relationship with this family to explore attachment and understand how attachment theory plays out through behaviour in the family setting. Child is now having regular sessions with the parent which is 1:1 time. Parent also managed for the first time ever to take her two children away on holiday herself. This has been a major success for the family and the parent reports that they are growing in confidence.

The enthusiasm and positive working relationships with a wide range of stakeholders. All stakeholders are heavily invested in the potential of this project and are keen to offer creative, solution focussed approaches. This has real potential to make a difference to our young people and families. This potential is recognised by all and it is exciting.

The engagement of some of our young people. One child was not engaging with school at all, barely leaving his bedroom. He now attends school for 2 afternoon sessions, has 2 weekly focussed sessions with mum 1:1, attends community weekly learning activities (fishing is a real highlight), the family have involvement with a dietician, and he is more willing to engage with different professionals (albeit still on his terms).

Key challenge(s)

Family Support Workers. We have still not been able to agree a start date for the family support workers. Social Services are a key stakeholder in this project and very good working relationships exist between key staff in education and key staff within social services. In order to move forward having our family support workers in place would be a major benefit. We have open communication links with our Social Work colleagues and hope to establish a start date within the next month.

The challenges of time. The project manager only working 0.4fte this session has been a barrier to how much progress we have been able to achieve. The 0.8fte allocation for next session should provide much more capacity for implementation and change.

Links with CAMHS. We need to establish a more active working relationship with CAMHS so that CAMHS are active partners in this approach. Capacity and waiting list are a barrier and we need to explore potential solutions.

Sustainability

Sustainability of this project is at the forefront of our thinking in all that we do. The training has been strategically planned so that staff are placed throughout the authority. Early planning is in place for key staff to offer training for other staff. We have close links with other partners within Education (Principal Teachers of Inclusion) who have also been involved with the training and will be ensuring that their team are fully trained as Sensory Practitioners and Talk and Draw Therapist. This test of change will inform discussions around system design. We will be able to evidence and identify the way forward and realign existing resource to maximise impact. As a service, the evidence gathered through this project will identify our direction of travel.

Whole Family Wellbeing Funding – Annual Report

1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

Activity Title

Parenting Coordinator

WFWF Funding

Total WFWF monies spent on this activity in 2023-24	£ 45,000
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Activity Description

A Parenting Coordinator post has been recruited to coordinate and lead the development and delivery of parenting programmes in Dumfries and Galloway. An initial focus will be to evaluate the current position before working to enhance the local offer to better meet the needs of families.

Stakeholders

A Parenting Co-ordinator role is essential as a requirement of NES to implement any parenting programmes in Dumfries and Galloway Council. Psychology of parenting project (PoPP) is developed by NES to work collaboratively with local authorities across Scotland with the aim of improving the availability of evidence-based parent-child relationship focused interventions. This work is funded through the Mental Health Directorate at the Scottish Government.

WFWF Spend

Parenting Co-ordinator Staffing post

WFWF Spend (continued)

Staff post at band 9 plus oncosts	£ 45k
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WFWF Logic Model outcome(s)

Early (year 1):

- Partners begin to develop a holistic workforce approach to WFS.

Early (year 2-4):

- There is a clear and shared understanding of family's needs, and more families receive whole family support.

Intermediate:

- Collaborative and multi-agency support to WFS and there is non-siloed and aligned parenting WFS programmes on offer.

Long-term:

- Linking to all 5 outcomes.

Progress and Evaluation

An extensive survey period has taken place to ascertain the needs of families across the region. This involved a digital consultation, event & group consultations, and partner consultations.

Summary of Engagement –

Over the course of 38 weeks from the design of the survey to the launch, to the closing of consultations (June 2023 to March 2024) we:

- Attended 80 roadshows which were attended by 839 parents and 1735 children
- Received 978 completed surveys from parents living within every area of Dumfries and Galloway
- Completed 10 face to face group consultations across Dumfries and Galloway, engaging directly with 64 parents
- Engaged directly with at least 306 individual services, groups, organisations and agencies across the Council, Third Sector, Health, Education, Youth Work and Social Work. This includes at least 27 individual partners/organisations, 107 Community Councils, 98 Primary Schools, 16 Secondary Schools and 58 private nurseries and Childminders.

An evaluation report has been written with key findings which will be presented to the Early Help and Family Support Group in May 2024, prior to wider circulation.

Given the need for our key requirement to roll out evidence based parenting programmes first we have partnered with the People Organisation to build on our current delivery. Over 100 practitioners currently been trained in D&G between Lifelong Learning service and Early Years team. The People Organisation [People - charity supporting parents with children's learning](#) have got Whole Family Support funding from the Scottish Government to roll out training and Lifelong Learning staff are qualified to train practitioners in D&G The offer of training is -

- 25 antenatal places (online training)
- 50 Learning Together Pathway places (face to face training)
- 50 Pathway and 50 Practitioner Accreditation (online training)

We are currently working with Social Work to begin the first cohort of training.

Key success(es)

- Establishment of working collaboration with NES
- Research of evidence-based programmes available and training requirements.
- Research of current provision.
- Consultation with families and partners re assessment of need.
- Partnership with the People Organisation for the first cohort of training.

Key challenge(s)

- To gain partnership involvement to try and establish a cohesive partnership approach to parenting across D&G.
- Funding to train further practitioners

Sustainability

- Sustainability will need the continued agreement of all partners to be trained and committed to tracking impact.

Whole Family Wellbeing Funding – Annual Report

1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

How have the activities and outcomes been identified, informed by, and/or developed by different stakeholders? (especially third sector partners and children and families)

Many stakeholders have been involved in the in the development of our approach and activities in relation to family support including children and young people, parents and carers, staff, and partners including both the public and third sector. Our most recent Strategic Needs Assessment in Dumfries and Galloway was carried out in 2022. An analysis of the data was used as the basis for a significant programme of consultation and engagement with all of the above stakeholders including a series of public events, digital and web-based engagement activities, and direct face-to-face engagement with both individuals and representative groups, resulting in many hundreds of responses helping us to understand the landscape, current priorities, and areas for action. Family Support was a key theme reflected in feedback and was agreed as a workstream to be associated with our 2023-26 Children's Services Plan. Many other activities with stakeholders have informed and continue to inform our family support-related activities. These included:

- a recent parenting-related engagement programme that included 978 responses from parents and a further 306 responses from other groups, organisations and individuals;
- the establishment of a neuro-developmental engagement group involving 55 local families;
- a pilot of the Bright Spots, an engagement programme for care-experienced children and young people;
- 10,000 Voices, a local engagement programme involving over 10,000 local children and young people; and
- Youth Matters, a conference involving over 100 of our local disabled children and young people.

Please provide a broad overview of what has been achieved to date and how this compares to what was planned (i.e. is the programme on track?), including specific partners who have been involved in delivery, particularly third sector organisations. Where relevant, please indicate how these activities align with other policy priorities (i.e. mental health, child poverty, The Promise).

To date the following has been achieved:

- A health-led app has been developed and is live, offering support to anyone supporting a child with health needs including parents;
- Our local Family Support Service model has been upscaled providing support to 148 families in 2023-24 which included direct support for 306 individual children;
- Our Parenting Coordinator has carried out an extensive programme of engagement with stakeholders in order to inform our future provision for parents;

- A Primary Inclusion Project is providing an opportunity to test new approaches to supporting some of our children and young people in greatest need of support with a view to upscaling activity in the future; and
- Recruitment for a new third sector Lead Officer post in relation to children, young people and families is ongoing which when appointed will support greater connection and collaboration between the public and third sector in this area.

Partners within our Children's Services Planning Partnership have been involved in at least one of the above activities. This has included a small number of local and national third sector organisations and the local third sector interface.

Our activity to date has been broadly supportive of local priorities including The Promise, GIRFEC, mental health, child poverty by supporting the achievement and progression of the associated intended outcomes and improvement aims set out in our 2023-26 Children's Services Plan. The local Children's Services Planning Partnership have a further Family Support focused session planned for September 2024 to further reflect on progress to date and next steps.

Describe the main successes to delivery and how specific factors enabled these successes.

One of the main successes to date has been the volume of engagement with stakeholders which has influenced and continues to influence our actions as reflected previously which can be evidenced by the number and range of participants. This has been achieved through effective planning and collaboration within our Community Planning Partnership.

Another success has been the multi-agency and service involvement and leadership of activities. Social Work, Health, Lifelong Learning, Education and the local third sector interface all separately lead on one of the funded activities. This is supporting an increased capacity across the system and not just in one area.

Describe the main challenges to delivery, and how these have been mitigated or plans to mitigate them. Please include any details on any activities which have not progressed as expected. This is a space to reflect on any lessons learned and how these might inform future work.

Recruitment of staff with has been a challenge given the time taken to recruit to some posts, although this is not exclusive to family support, however this has been managed through continued promotion of vacancies.

Maintaining an awareness of the needs of children, young people and families is an ongoing issue as other needs and challenges emerge and evolve all the time, so we are continuing to reflect how this can be achieved across areas of activity. It is worth noting that a further strategic needs assessment exercise will be progressed in 2025.

Evidencing impact is an ongoing challenge as in some areas it may take a long time for us to be able to identify the impact of what we are doing now. Locally we continue to consider how best to evaluate our progress and this will form part of our discussions at our September 2024 session.

For further information about Children's Services Planning in Dumfries and Galloway, please contact ChildrensServices@dumgal.gov.uk