



Community Planning
Aberdeen



Aberdeen City's
CHILDREN'S SERVICES PLAN
ANNUAL REVIEW
2022 - 2023

FOREWORD BY CHAIR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES BOARD

It is my pleasure to introduce Aberdeen City Children's Services Plan Annual Report 2022-23.

The report highlights the key changes we've made to achieve improved outcomes, as well as areas where further improvement is required.

Considerable gains have been made in integrating services over the last reporting period. Co-location and co-delivery are increasingly evident across the universal services and our multi-agency Fit Like Hubs provide a model for targeted partnership integration and delivery. We now need to build on this positive start to ensure services at universal, targeted and specialist levels of our Tiered Intervention Framework provide effective early and preventative Family Support. We recognise that co-designing more integrated services with service users and their families will be critical to delivery of this Plan. There is also a need to improve the alignment of children's services with adult services in order to take a whole family approach and be well prepared for the introduction of the National Care Service.

Our thanks go to all staff across the partner organisations and to communities for their continued commitment to working together to improve the lives of all. In the report you can see our top priorities for the year ahead and we are eager to see what more we can achieve together. Our children and young people, their families and their communities are at the heart of Community Planning and there are many ways you can get involved.

Looking ahead

In April 2023, a new [Children's Services Strategic Plan 2023-26](#) was approved. This saw six refreshed Stretch Outcomes for children and young people:

- 95% of all children will reach their expected developmental milestones by their 27–30-month review by 2026
- 90% of children and young people report they feel listened to all of the time by 2026.
- By meeting the health and emotional wellbeing needs of our care experienced children and young people they will have the same levels of attainment in education and positive destinations as their peers by 2026
- 95% of children living in our priority neighbourhoods (Quintiles 1 & 2) will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026.
- 83.5% fewer young people (under 18) will be charged with an offence by 2026.
- 100% of our children with Additional Support Needs/disabilities will experience a positive destination.

The revised Plan articulates the outcomes Community Planning Partners hope to realise for children, young people and families by working together over the lifetime of this Plan. Our vision remains to make Aberdeen a place where all children and young people can grow up loved, safe and respected so that they can realise their full potential.

In developing the plan, we have listened to the priorities for our children and young people, their families and those who support them through opportunities to engage with the emerging data informing this Plan and from survey data held across the Community Planning Partnership. The data gleaned from this early engagement was considered alongside a range of wider data sources to help identify priorities for transformation, development and improvement. We formally consulted on our draft Plan from 20th February 2023 and took account of what children, young people and families told us. Meaningful and effective participation will be central to the delivery of this Plan and we will monitor and report on how our children and young people have directly influenced service delivery through Community Planning Aberdeen. A [summary version](#) and a [child friendly version](#) of this Plan are available to improve the accessibility of this Plan.

In this report and the revised Children's Services plan 2023-26 you can see our top priorities for the year ahead and we are eager to see what more we can achieve together for our children and young people, their families and communities.

Eleanor Sheppard

Prosperous Children & Young People

How are we doing?

Stretch Outcomes 4-9		
4	95% of children will reach their expected developmental milestones.	Exceeded
5	90% of children and young people will report that their experiences of mental health and wellbeing have been listened to by 2026.	Progressing
6	95% of care experienced children and young people will have the same levels of outcome as their peers.	Progressing
7	95% of children living in our priority neighbourhoods will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026.	Challenges (Quintile 1) Progressing (Quintile 2)
8	Child Friendly City by 2026.	Embedded
9	30% fewer young people (under 18) charged with an offence by 2026.	Exceeded

Top priorities for 2023/24:

- Continue to address food insecurity including maternal and infant food insecurity
- Better preparing care experienced young people for life beyond care.
- Introducing new ways to close the gap between the attainment levels of those living in poverty from those who do not.
- Supporting children with additional support needs and declared disabled achieve positive destinations.

Headline achievements during 2022/23



Stretch Outcome 4 exceeded with **97.1%** meeting expected developmental milestones of children reaching expected developmental milestones



94% achieved a minimum of SCQF Level 3 in literacy and numeracy and 4 other qualifications



Stretch Outcome 9 exceeded with **40% reduction** in number of under 18s offending



67% decrease in births affected by drugs



52% increase in uptake of parenting support



19% reduction in Looked after Children



23.5% reduction in digital offences



2.6% reduction in youth disorder calls



100% of schools offering counselling and free access to physical activity



13% increase in % of Looked after Children achieving a positive destination



260 members of staff trained in children's rights



11.5% increase in courses aligned to growth sectors



21% reduction in the number of care experienced young people offending



138 children and young people received trauma and bereavement support



17% increase in the total no. of 16-18 remaining in placement





70% increase in 10-16 year olds attending community activities

What our data is telling us?

How to make sense of the data in this report

Under each there within this report there is a section called 'What is our data telling us?' These sections include run charts which have been prepared using the data available for the improvement aims within the Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26. The purpose of the run charts is to display data over time and help us assess visually whether the changes we are making are resulting in improvement.

-  The coloured line shows CPA performance to date.
-  The black line shows the Stretch Outcome aim and improvement aim, where applicable set within the CPA Improvement Programme for 2021/23 so we can assess if we are on track to achieve our improvement aims set for the year. Where there is no black line the data does not relate to an improvement aim or Stretch Outcome and there will therefore be no ragging for that data.

We have also used a traffic light system to help you see at a glance, where we think we are in terms of improvement. The significance of the variation in data over time will depend on the improvement measure **and** population size it relates to. For example, for some improvement measures a 0.5% increase may be very significant, whilst for others it may need to be a 5% increase to be considered significant.

In applying the RAG (Red, Amber, Green) we have taken a rounded view of performance, taking into account subject matter expertise, local context and consideration of progress towards our improvement aims to answer the question:

Are our changes resulting in improvement?



- **Yes (Data shows improving trend and / or achievement of aim)**
- **Getting there (Data shows improving trend and / or on track to achieve aim)**
- **Not yet (Data shows declining trend and not on track to achieve aim)**



Prosperous People

Children & Young People

Our Stretch Outcomes

What we are working towards		How we are doing
<p>SO4 95% of children will reach their expected developmental milestones</p> 	<p>EXCEEDED</p>	<p>97.1% of children having a 27-30 month review met their expected developmental milestones, 2.1% over Stretch Outcome 4.</p>
<p>SO5 90% of children and young people will report that their experiences of mental health and wellbeing have been listened to by 2026.</p> 	<p>PROGRESSING</p>	<p>68% of children and young people report they feel listened to all of the time, up 4% since March 2022.</p>
<p>SO6 95% of care experienced children and young people will have the same levels of outcome as their peers.</p>	<p>PROGRESSING</p>	<p>3.1% reduction in the gap between the % of care experienced young people and all young people achieving a positive and sustained destination.</p>
<p>SO7 95% of children living in our priority neighbourhoods will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026.</p> 	<p>CHALLENGES</p>	<p>3% decrease in the % of young people from Quintile 1 achieving a positive and sustained destination (81.5% in 20/21 compared to 84.5%)</p>
<p>SO8 Child Friendly City by 2026</p> 	<p>EMBEDDED</p>	<p>3.7% increase in the % of young people from Quintile 2 achieving a positive and sustained destination (91.6% in 20/21 compared to 87.9%)</p>
<p>SO9 30% fewer young people (under 18) charged with an offence by 2026</p> 	<p>EXCEEDED</p>	<p>40% decrease in number of young people being charged with an offence (985 in 21/22 compared to 588 in 15/16)</p>



Supporting children have the best start in life

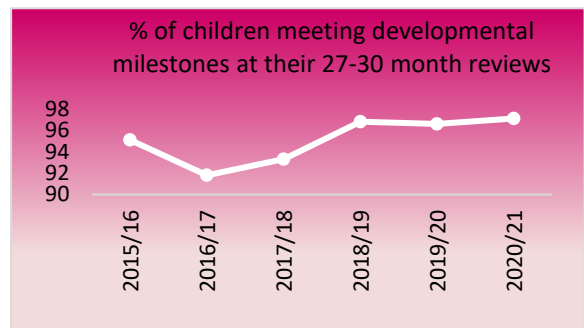
STRETCH OUTCOME 4 EXCEEDED WITH 97.1% OF CHILDREN reached their expected developmental milestone on time



Latest data available at the end of 2020/21 shows that we have sustained and further exceeded our stretch outcome that 95% of children met their developmental milestones at the time of their 27-30 month review, with 97.1% achieved compared to 96.6% in the previous reporting period and 85.1% for Scotland.

Although in the previous period, the stretch outcome had been achieved, CPA recognised that the COVID pandemic had a substantial impact on our children, young people, and their families, with feedback from education and other

early years settings stating that there is an emerging gap in children's development and the skills they have before they begin nursery or school compared to pre Covid 19. We needed to do more to support all children get the best start in life and throughout 2022/23 we focused on implementing new approaches that enable families to receive the parenting and family support they need, both pre birth and post and that developed the confidence of staff and families to identify any issues and enable access to the appropriate intervention at the earliest opportunity.



Reducing preventable harms to children pre and post birth

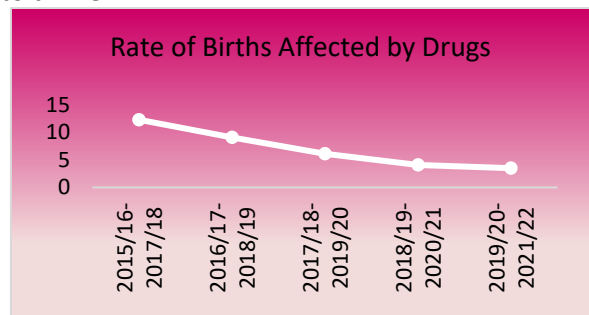
There are many preventable harms, both pre and post birth, that impact on the health and development of a child. Through our improvement activity we are making changes that are focused on early intervention and prevention, with the aim of reducing harm occurring in the first place and creating a safe and supportive environment for children to thrive in.

Improvement Project Aim Exceeded

67%

67% decrease in the number of births affected by drugs.

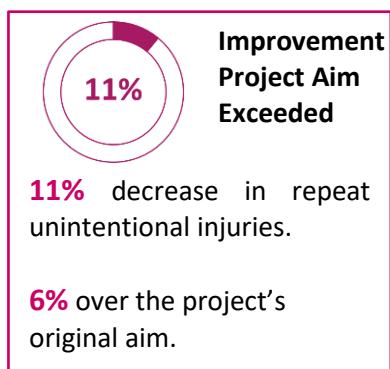
Pre birth, we are supporting maternal health and wellbeing and providing information and resources to enable families to make informed decisions on areas that are



likely to impact on their unborn child such as substance use and healthy eating. Through our **births affected by drugs project**, we have developed and promoted a variety of campaigns to raise awareness of sexual health support available and the impact of substances on an unborn child. Recognising that different approaches are required depending on individual circumstances, we have set up an outreach approach to increase availability of contraception and promotion of choice and control to vulnerable people. Between July and

December 2022, our Sharp Response 'Crisis Intervention' service had scheduled 259 home visits enabling us to engage with people who would be unlikely to engage directly with sexual health services. These improvements have secured a continuous downward trend, with a 67% reduction in the total number of births affected over the 3 year period reducing from 70 (2016/17-18/19) to 23 in 2019/20-21/22. Preventative approaches, such as support and information has also enabled us to achieve a continued reduction in the percentage of women in the City who smoke during pregnancy with latest data showing this to be 12.1% which is again lower than the rates in Scotland of 12.9%.

Preventing unintentional injuries

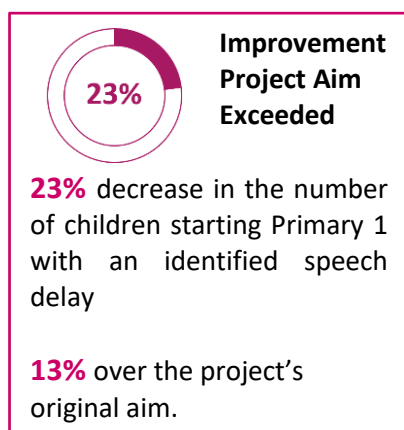


A high proportion of unintentional injuries (UIs) are preventable. Through our **repeat unintentional injuries project**, we are building the capacity of multi-agency staff who work directly with families to identify potential harms and to support parents to also identify and steps to prevent these. Staff have also been provided with Keeping Kids Safe Packs to discuss and provide to families where potential for risk has been identified, with 75 kits issued by Feb 2023. As a result of the changes, the



project has surpassed its aim of a 5% reduction, with an 11% reduction in the number UI repeat admissions between 2017/18 to 2020/21. The data also shows an improvement in the number of overall emergency admissions for UIs in under 5's with a 5.5% reduction between 2016/17 to 2018/19 and 2019/20 to 2021/22.

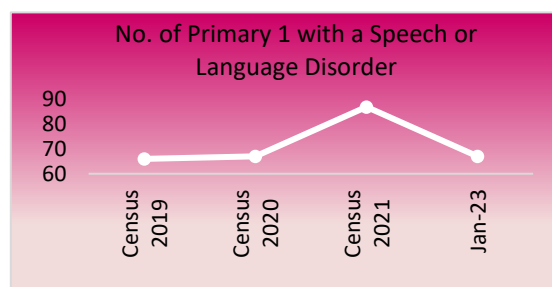
Addressing the impact of the pandemic



Covid-19 restricted social and family interactions, having a significant impact on young children's development, particularly in speech and language delays. Our **reducing the number of children starting Primary 1 with an identified speech delay project** has worked collaboratively across all our early years settings to ensure speech and language is fully integrated in the planning for our children. The Nursery Nurse role is now responsible for identifying developmental issues and a referral pathway has been introduced to ensure children receive the support they need. We have also developed a multi-agency single speech and language parent resource to support parents with early detection and awareness of the pathway for support.


To ensure that

children facing adversity also have equal access, we have built on the partnership between health and (early) education through the Links Nursery and Hub and strengthened our collaboration with weekly integrated planning meetings held that cover all areas of developmental need and with a focus on children facing adversity. The interventions have resulted in a 23% decrease since 2021 in the number of primary 1 pupils



with a speech or language disorder, exceeding our aim by 13%. However, it is recognised that this is early evidence and we continue to monitor the impact of the initiative to ensure the improvement is sustained.

Removing the barriers to families accessing parenting support



Improvement Project Aim Exceeded

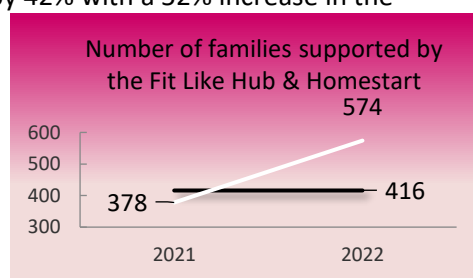
52% increase in the uptake of parenting support in 2022.

42% over the project's original aim.

We understand that online resources and signposting is only part of the support needed by families. Health and education staff have provided feedback that during Covid parents had not engaged with the online support available to the same level as face to face interactions. In response to this, we have collaborated with families and early years services to identify barriers and make improvements. This has included streamlining the referral process for both self referrals and for professionals; prioritising families based on their level of need; and providing opportunities to meet in person. Through these approaches, we have surpassed our aim by 42% with a 52% increase in the

uptake of parenting and

family support between 2021 and 2022, with 574 families supported through our FitLike Hubs and Homestart in 2022, compared to 378 families in 2021. Similarly, we have seen an upward trend in the number of referrals, with a 77% increase in multi-agency support referrals. In 2022, there was a 49% increase in the number of referrals for parenting and family support, with 1515 referrals made across all services.




Developing interventions to support children's mental health

STRETCH OUTCOME 5

PROGRESSING WITH

68% of young people reporting that they feel listened to all the time.



The number of children accessing mental health support and the seriousness of their concerns have increased since the pandemic. We have implemented a range of supports and interventions through our projects, such as counselling being available in all schools. Through October 2022 – December 2022, 330 young people were being supported with counselling and 100% of the 103 children who had completed an end of session questionnaire, reported an improved wellbeing outcome following this support.

As well as counselling, all school nurses are currently trained to deliver LIAM (Let's Introduce Anxiety Management), as are a team of Fitlike staff, as well as staff in 25 schools. pilot of DBI (Distress Brief Intervention) has extended to 6 Secondary Schools in partnership with CAMHS and Penumbra focusing on learners aged 14-16. The latter pilot offering more targeted support for young people who have been identified or self-identify the need for support and helps some of our most vulnerable learners to access trained staff and a pathway to support through Penumbra and CAMHS if required. We are



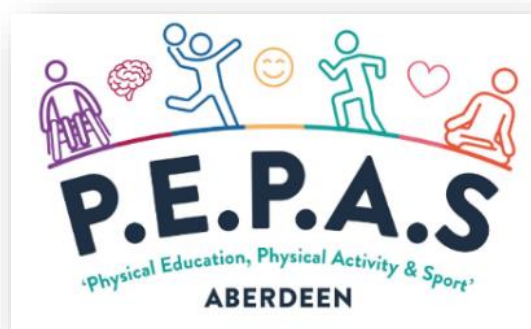
Improvement Project Aims Achieved

100% of schools offering counselling and free access to physical activity

beginning to see early signs of improvement with data in relation to the Who-5 wellbeing index, reporting a 4% reduction in the % of P6 and 7 learners reporting low mood, which may suggest that earlier responsive intervention is supporting young people previously indicating low mood.

Throughout our lives, the number and strength of relationships can affect our mental and physical wellbeing. The benefits of social interactions and good mental health are significant. Being available to listen to children and young people, is essential for supporting individual needs and understanding fully what is required. We are delighted to see positive outcomes across our improvement activity resulting in 68% of young people reporting that they always had an adult in their lives that listens to them about how they are feeling, a 4% increase since March 2022.

We also recognise the huge potential physical activity has to enhance mental wellbeing and that this needs to be available freely for all children regardless of their circumstances. We are delighted that through our improvement activity 100% of all schools are providing free physical activity. Our physical activity improvements have focused on ensuring that the voice and involvement of all children and young people is at the core of the development of activities and promote inclusivity.



This resulted in:

- **3%** increase in young people in S1-S6 reporting that their general health is good or excellent since the last survey in March 2022.
- **13** members on the Active Girls Committee, from 7 (77%) of secondary schools
- **61** care experienced young people through the SPACE (Supporting Physical Activity For Care Experienced) and bespoke programmes and 350 Sport Aberdeen memberships issued
- A Primary PE progression toolkit, providing primary staff with a clear progression of learning in PE and signposts to relevant resource/lessons developed. This is improving the confidence of staff in delivering high quality PE
- **367** volunteers as at Oct 2022 in Active Schools Aberdeen
- Boccia, a sport designed for all, being rolled out in all primary schools and a Boccia Festival where all pupils with disabilities and ASN of all ages taking part is planned for next session.


It helps me concentrate, makes me stay in school and is good for me (Young Person)

My fitness levels have improved and I try new things, I don't play the computer as much. (Young Person)

It is exactly what he needs as it gets him focussing on things away from the classroom (carer)

I have noticed a lot of progress in the young person's confidence, maturity and ability to regulate their emotions since working with you. (Teacher)

Developing staff confidence to support young people



Improvement Project Aim Exceeded

86% increase in number of staff who agree/strongly agree that they can support children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing

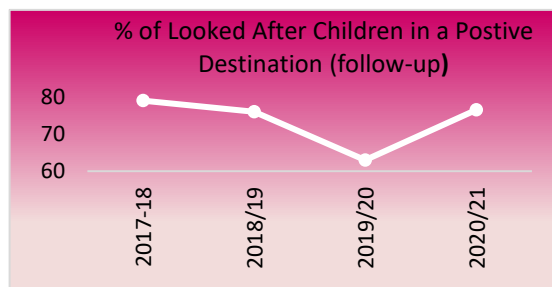
6% over the project’s original aim.

We recognise that our school based staff are crucial for providing direct support, referrals and signposting children and young people to appropriate mental health and wellbeing supports or services. Through our ‘**Staff Confidence in Supporting Children’s Mental**’ project we have developed a variety of supports for staff including new support sessions, both 1-1 and group to allow professionals to share, normalise and develop positive working relationships. This is in addition to the development of whole school e-learning; resources and a signposting framework for practitioners to support children, young people and their families. As a result, we have seen a 31% increase in the number of staff who agree or strongly agree that they can now support children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing, with 86% reporting this.

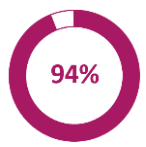
Increasing opportunities to enable all young people to achieve their goals

STRETCH OUTCOME 6
PROGRESSING WITH
76.5% of Looked After Children in a positive destination.

92.1% of children across the city achieved a positive destination in 20/21 the highest ever recorded in the city. We also saw a 13% increase in the percentage of Looked after Children achieving a positive destination in 20/21, with 76.5%, however there remains a considerable gap between their peers and our aim is to remove



that gap by ensuring that there are a range of opportunities and supports available to provide all young people, but particularly our care experienced young people (CEYP) and those living in our priority neighbourhood with the access to the skills and opportunities to achieve their goals and full potential. See above on how we have supported CEYP into employment.

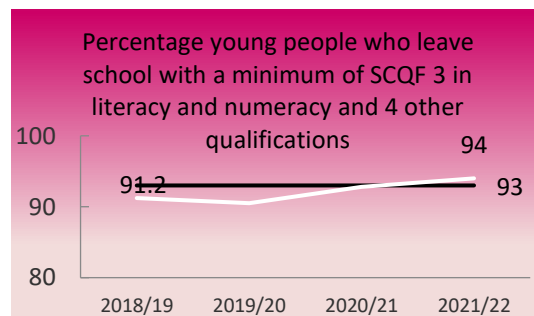


Improvement Project Aim Exceeded

94% of young achieved a minimum of SCQF Level 3 in literacy and numeracy and 4 other qualifications

1% over the project’s original aim.

We have been focused on ensuring that young people have the skills, qualifications and experiences that are necessary to enable them to go on to further training, education or into employment. Literacy and numeracy skills are key to this, better literacy and numeracy for individuals contributes to a more just and equitable society. They also provide the foundation our children need to learn, to navigate every day life and to fully participate in school and their communities and



widen access to job opportunities. Through our **literacy**

and numeracy project in 2021/22, 94.29% young people across the city achieved a minimum of SCQF Level 3 in literacy and numeracy and 4 other qualifications, a 4% increase since 2019/20.

This project introduced a variety of supports focused on family learning which has proven to be a powerful method of engagement and learning, fostering positive attitudes towards life-long learning, promoting socio-economic resilience and challenging educational disadvantage. One of the supports introduced was a menu of activities, to support achieve better outcomes for families through programmes which enable them to improve literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing using an asset-based approach. From which, 120 group sessions have been run, with 5 parents accessing counselling services and 6 residentials held where families got to go away together to develop new skills. We have also rolled out PEEP (Parents as Early Education Partners) groups to support parents as early educators of their children; working with Early Learning and Childcare settings to ensure a strong focus on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. See the impact of our range of parenting supports in the [case study](#) below.



Preparing for the world of work – young people shaping their future

STRETCH OUTCOME 7
PROGRESSING WITH
3.7% increase in the %
of young people from
Quintile 2 achieving a
positive and sustained
destination.

Building on the successful Lift Off, Learner Pathway event reported in the last period, young people have been at the heart of co-designing Lift Off and Grow which was held again in June 2022 with 3805 young people attending, a 154% increase in participants from 2021.



The Lift off events were well received with young people feeding back:

'It was good to gain a sense of the skills that are generally required to work in these industries.'

'Knowing the things that people did and what skills and qualities they needed to develop in order to get where they wanted to be was really helpful.'

'The talks helped to motivate me and told we what to strive for in the future.'

Similarly, the ABZ Works site, which was co-designed with care experienced young people to clarify all of the opportunities available to young people and the pathways into the many different growth sectors, has continued to be developed and is now an established tool used both by schools and employability teams to support increasing understanding of the opportunities that exist for young people moving into the world of work, with a total 3996 hits in 2022, a 24% increase since 2021. Thanks to the co-design approach taken with young people, the website is easy to navigate with a great user experience and a responsive chatbot. The collaboration and partnerships developed from both the Lift Off events and website has resulted in the number of courses aligned to the growth sector increase by 11.5% since 2019/20 and 3.6% since 2021/22%.



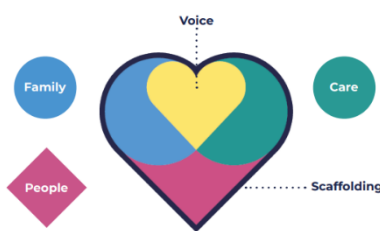
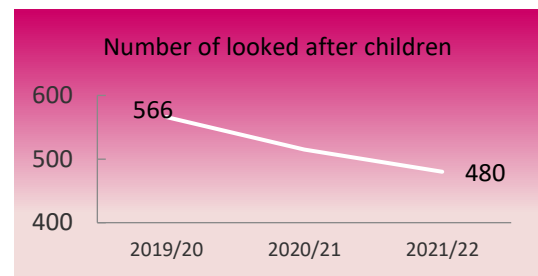
Improvement Project Aim Exceeded

11.5% increase in number of courses aligned to growth sector.

4.5% over the project's original aim.

Supporting more children and young people to live within their family

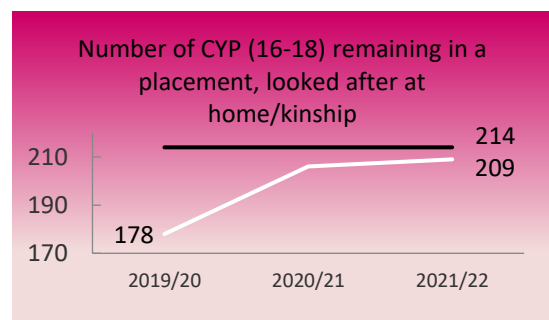
In line with the Promise, CPA is supporting more children and young people, with significant risk factors in their family circumstances, to continue to live within their family with an appropriate multi-agency support plan in place, with the number of looked after children in Aberdeen City fallen by 19%. In 2021/22, there were 480 children looked after by the local authority compared to 590 in 2016/17. This decrease is across all care types mirroring the national trend. However, Aberdeen has a higher % of children and young people placed within a fostering setting compared to the national position and that further improvement is required.



During 2022/23, we have tested improvements to strengthen the support offer to kinship placements, with the view to bolster the longevity and stability of kin placements. Specifically, we provided enhanced packages of support to children when placements were identified as vulnerable, and young people who were facing points of transition. The packages varied depending on the needs of the child and young person and the circumstances of the kinship

placement. Feedback from kinship carers is below and reflected positively on this support and helped them to develop a clear understanding of the needs of the child in their care and the impact of early life events/trauma on their needs and behaviours. This learning will directly feed into how we evolve the role and capacity of the kinship team to support kinship carers going forward.

Through our supporting 16-18 year olds remain in a placement project, we're also seeing positive outcomes, in the stability of placements where they're required, with a 17% increase in the total no. of 16-18 remaining in placement since 2019/20, from 178 (2019/20) to 209 (2021/22), with transitions being elongated enabling more supported transitions. The impact of this practice is seen in the improvement in the level of tenancy sustainment for our care experienced young people. We continue to see a positive trend in care experienced young people accessing and sustaining tenancies with 93 young people accessing tenancies during 2021/22. There was an 82.8% tenancy sustainment rate for those households, which rises to 94.6% when taking into account people who went on to a positive destination after their first tenancy.



"We became carers for our granddaughter in 2021. Dealing with a teenager with various behaviour issues was to say the least a difficult task for two grandparents in their 60's. Without the help of the family network team this may have been beyond us. We found the group & individual meetings a great help not only for the child but for us as carers. The importance of these meetings cannot be understated. On more than one occasion they were the only thing that kept the relationship between us and our granddaughter in place."

Child F wrote a thank you note to her worker simply noting "Thank you for helping me with my problems".

Embedding children’s rights

Children’s rights have been prioritised and intrinsically woven throughout our Local Outcome Improvement Plan and improvement activity. The Partnership recognises the progress that has been made in raising awareness of children’s rights and in order to progress this further, has agreed a new improvement aim under Stretch Outcome 16 “100% of decisions which impact on children and young people are informed by them by 2026” which is overseen by the Community Empowerment Group. This is to ensure that children’s rights are incorporated into all of our improvement activity and not seen as solely the responsibility of our Children’s Services Board. Examples of our children and young people co-designing our projects are shown below.

260 staff trained on children’s rights in 2022/23



Training our multi-agency workforce on children’s rights has been a key improvement activity over the last year 260 members of staff to ensure that our staff have the understanding and confidence to engage with children and young people and to ensure that they’re aware of the impending incorporation of UNCRC.

New and refreshed partnership policies and strategies now explicitly reference children’s rights and these extend beyond those traditionally impacting on children to include those on Net Zero and Master planning for example. Staff report that both direct engagement with young people and consideration of their rights is helping them to be bolder in their recommendations. Approaches to participation are becoming more varied and dynamic and nearly 70% of our children and young people tell us that they more actively participate in decision making now. However, this is a 10% reduction from when the survey was last completed 3 years ago and this reduction is thought to reflect the increased expectation of participation by our children and young people.

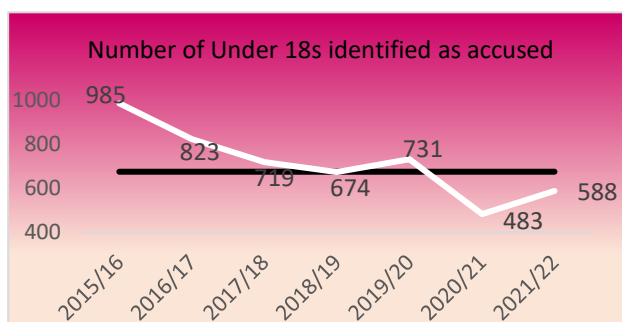
A more detailed evaluation of partnership work to incorporate the UNCRC is available in our [Children’s Rights Report](#).

Keeping children and young people safe and preventing crime

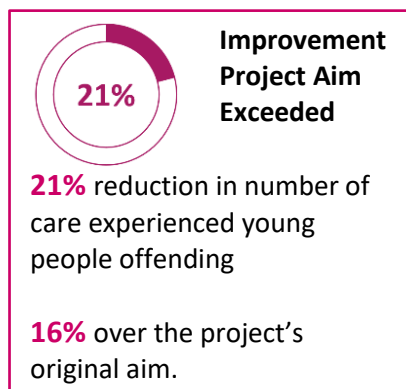
STRETCH OUTCOME 9 EXCEEDED WITH 40% reduction in number of under 18s offending

We are delighted to report that latest data shows we have sustained a reduction in the number of under 18s identified as being responsible for an offence of 40% since the LOIP was first published in 2016. Whilst there has been a 22% increase compared with 2020/21 that period was significantly impacted by Covid-19 restrictions. This sustained improvement from the baseline period is reassuring given the removal of all covid-19 measures in this reporting period.

We recognise that young people in conflict with the law are often the most vulnerable young people in our communities and we are taking forward an early intervention and prevention approach by ensuring that we are providing opportunities for all and being flexible and adaptive in provision of support and responding to need.



Targeted support and access to trauma and bereavement support



Children in conflict with the law experience high rates of bereavement, loss and trauma and although recognised as one of the vulnerabilities for families being referred to our Fit Like Hubs Family Wellbeing Team, it is likely that bereavement is under reported. Recognising that their needs are complex our **trauma and bereavement** project has focused on staff development across all settings to ensure that they're seeing and supporting our children and young people through a needs focused and trauma informed lens and referring into appropriate supports.

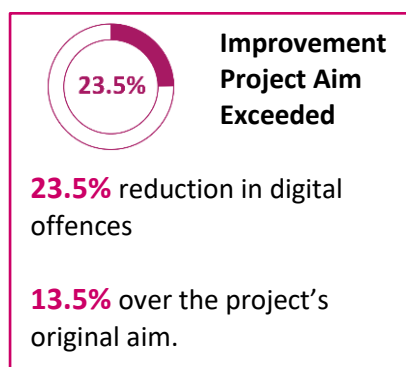
It is important that we are taking an early intervention approach and that young people are not only being offered support at the point in which they came into conflict with the law. To further embed our early intervention approach one of the new pathways for trauma support introduced this year was Seasons for Growth (SfG). SfG is an educational group work programme supporting children and young people who have experienced significant loss and change in their lives. The programme sees a trained group of companions work in pairs to deliver an eight-session programme with two follow up reconstructor sessions for the pupils. Resulting from the development of staff and new pathways, we have seen a 21% reduction in the number of 16/17 year olds with higher support needs offending (96 to 73).

Also, 138 children and young people have received trauma and bereavement support via two pathways, the FitLike Hubs and the Seasons for Growth programme. To increase access to trauma support, we now have 51 Seasons for Growth teachers and support staff Companions across 23 schools trained.

"Each of the children who participated in the group became more relaxed and were able to discuss their feelings more freely by the end of the programme. The children became a support for each other and bonded during the course of the sessions." S4G Companion during evaluation

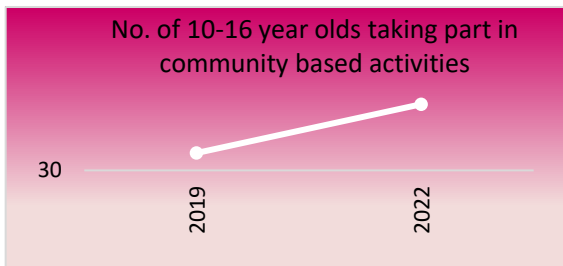


Young people at the heart of co-designing our improvements




Children and young people have supported our digital offences project understand current digital culture and co-designed the content of new digital offending training provided to all schools, young people and their families. From this, we've seen a 23.5% reduction from 81 (digital offences including both sexual and non-sexual) in 2018/19 to 62 in 2021/22 reduction in both the number of offences of child sexual exploitation and the number of 'digital' offences by Young People (Under 18). The young people on the group reported that they felt **"valued having professionals listen to their opinion and try and act on same."**

Through our **youth community activity and reducing anti social behaviour projects** we are committed to developing a range of opportunities for children and young people to get involved in their local community and to support a reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour. However we also know that this needs a multi agency approach, with our communities at the heart of it, for this to be sustainable and to meet the needs of our children and young people. Taking this approach, in 2022 we established a new youth group co-designed with children and young people and developed a volunteer



led youth group model, resulting in a 70% increase in the number of 10-16 year olds who attended community activities from 40 in 2019 to 68; and 3 new youth groups established in priority neighbourhoods. We also saw a 212% increase in overall participation in 2022, with 938 attendances citywide compared to 300 in 2019. Similarly, we

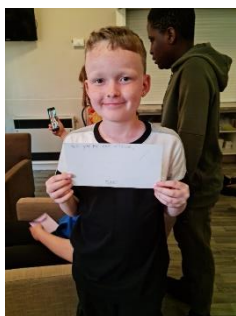
saw a 2.6% reduction in the number of youth disorder calls to the police in 2022. Young people were asked what they enjoyed about their group. They said:



Improvement Project Aim Exceeded

70% increase in 10-16 year olds attending community activities.

20% over the project's original aim.



Opportunities to meet friends and make new ones.

We get to make friends; it's very fun; you get to do art, sports, games and make food.



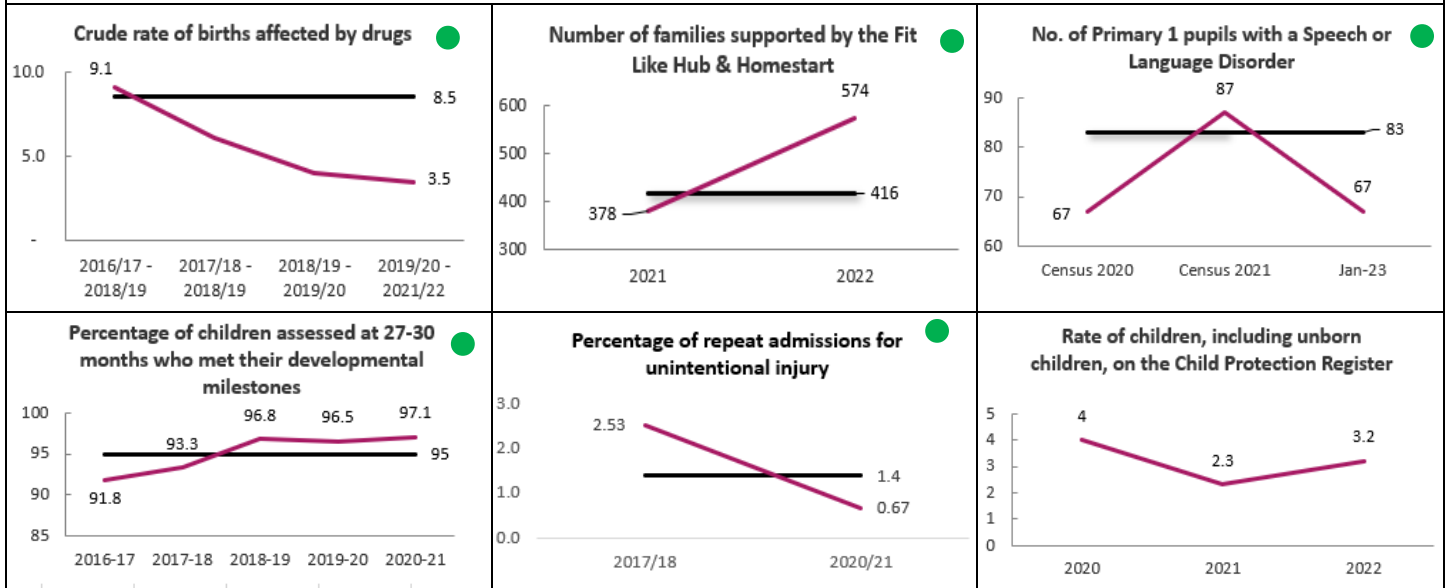
What impact have we had?

22/23 improvement aim

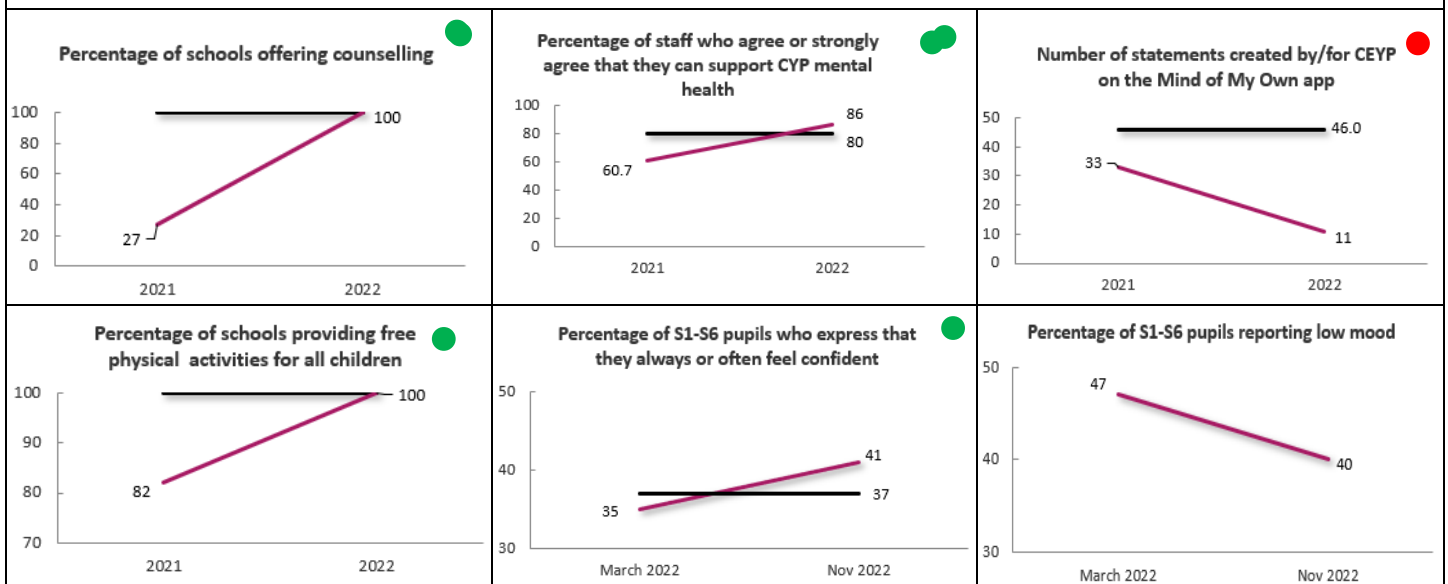
Performance

- Yes
- Getting there
- Not yet

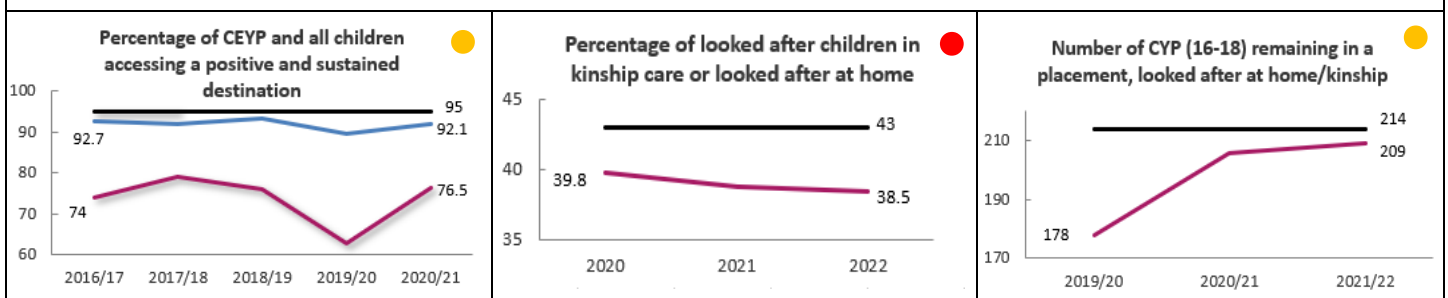
Children have the best start in life

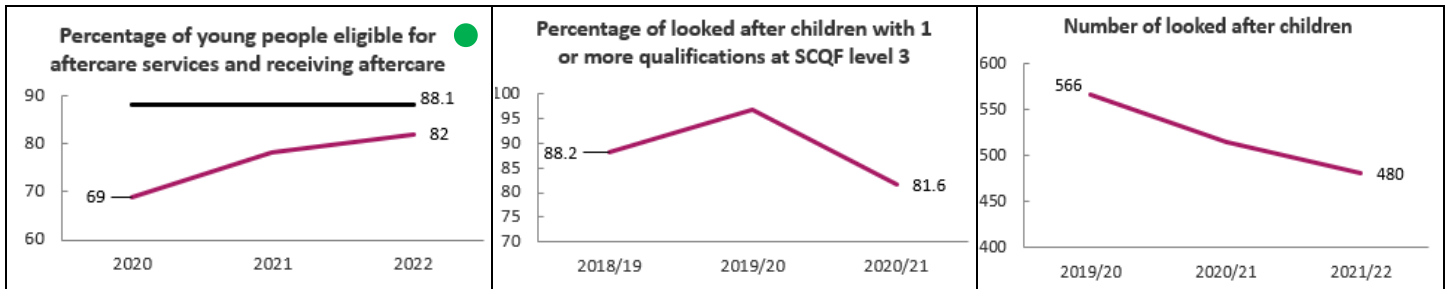


Children are listened to

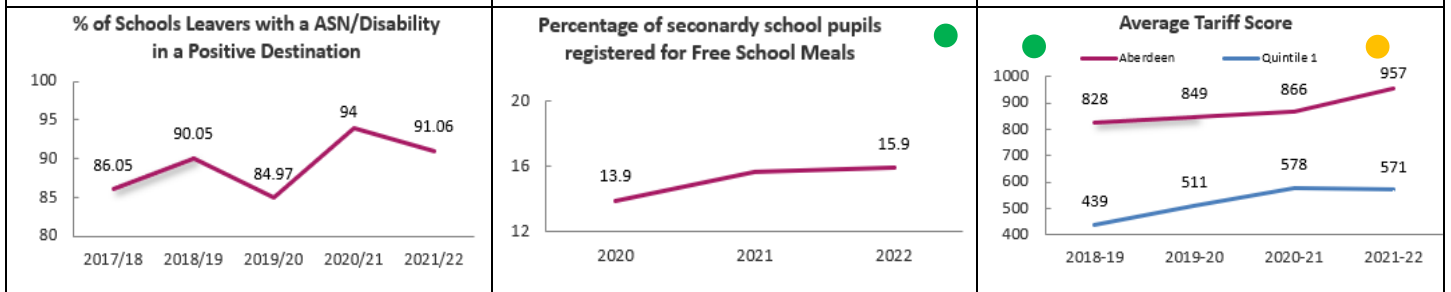
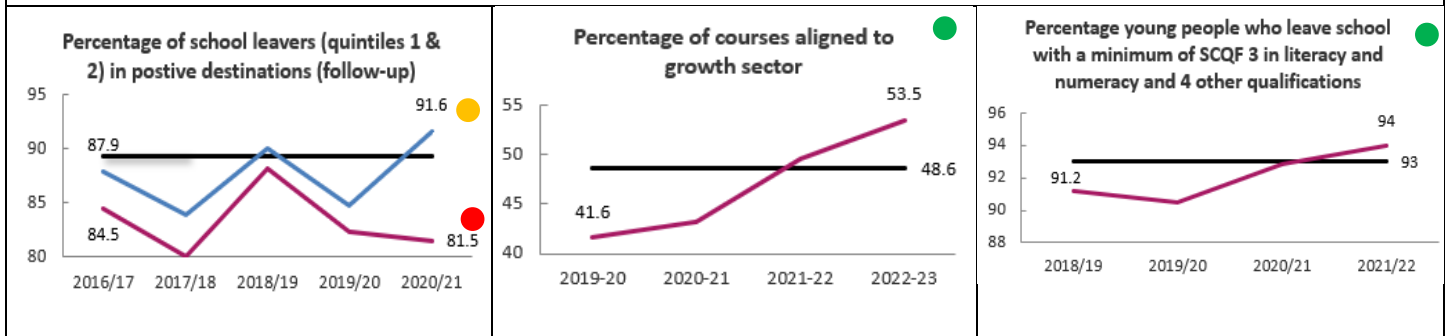


Care Experienced Young People are included and achieving

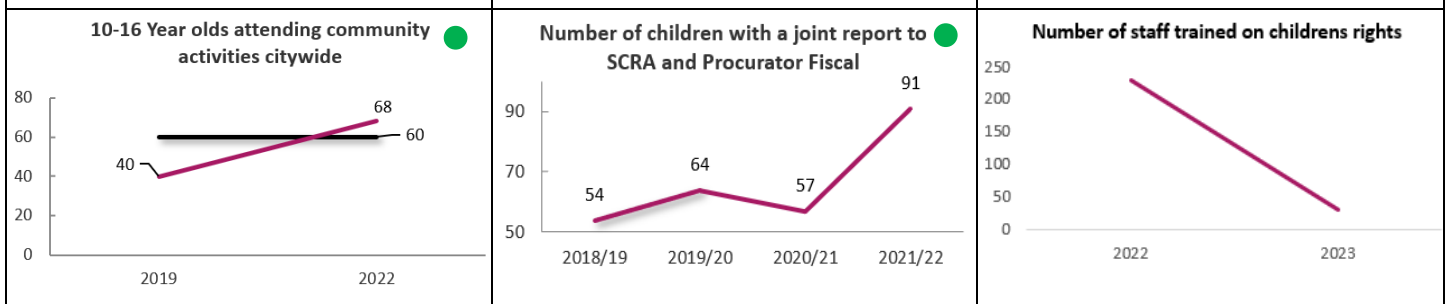
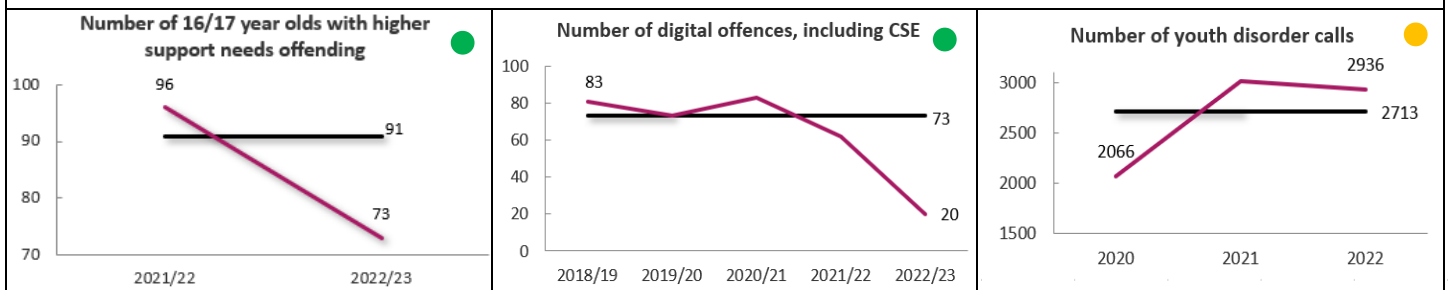




All Young People are achieving their potential



Children are Safe and Involved

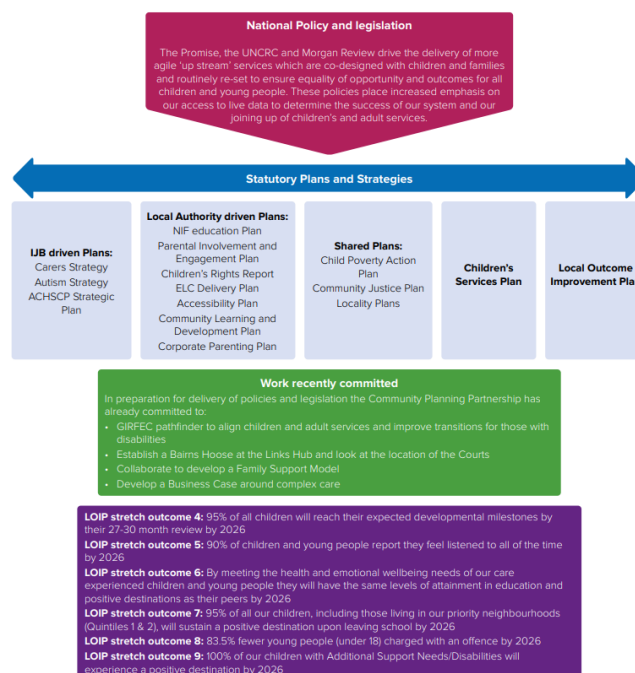


Our Integrated Approach

Integration of our Plans

Our [Children's Services Plan](#) is one of a suite of Statutory Plans which support delivery of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP). Strategic plans for children include our Corporate Parenting Plan, Child Protection Improvement Plan, Children's Rights Report, Aberdeen City's Health & Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan, the education National Improvement Framework Plan, Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan and Accessibility Plan, our Community Learning and Development Plan, Community Justice Plan, Locality Plans and our Child Poverty Plan.

We have worked to integrate the full range of statutory Plans into the new [Children's Services Plan 2023-26](#) and clearly linked the Plan to work being coordinated through the local Autism and Carers' Strategies. As a result of this improved alignment and our desire to clearly state our direction of travel, the improvement activity from the Children's Services Plan has been transposed into the LOIP and essentially become the children's section of the LOIP.



The LOIP has been updated to reflect the refreshed Stretch Outcomes for children and young people approved in April 2023:

- 95% of all children will reach their expected developmental milestones by their 27–30-month review by 2026
- 90% of children and young people report they feel listened to all of the time by 2026.
- By meeting the health and emotional wellbeing needs of our care experienced children and young people they will have the same levels of attainment in education and positive destinations as their peers by 2026
- 95% of children living in our priority neighbourhoods (Quintiles 1 & 2) will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026.
- 83.5% fewer young people (under 18) will be charged with an offence by 2026.
- 100% of our children with Additional Support Needs/disabilities will experience a positive destination.

Work on each of the Stretch Outcomes is driven by a sub group who report to the Children’s Services Board. Each multi-agency sub group is responsible for delivery of associated child poverty actions and Improvement Projects. Taking this approach is helping to ensure that eliminating child poverty is central to all single and multi-agency work and that policies are aligned.

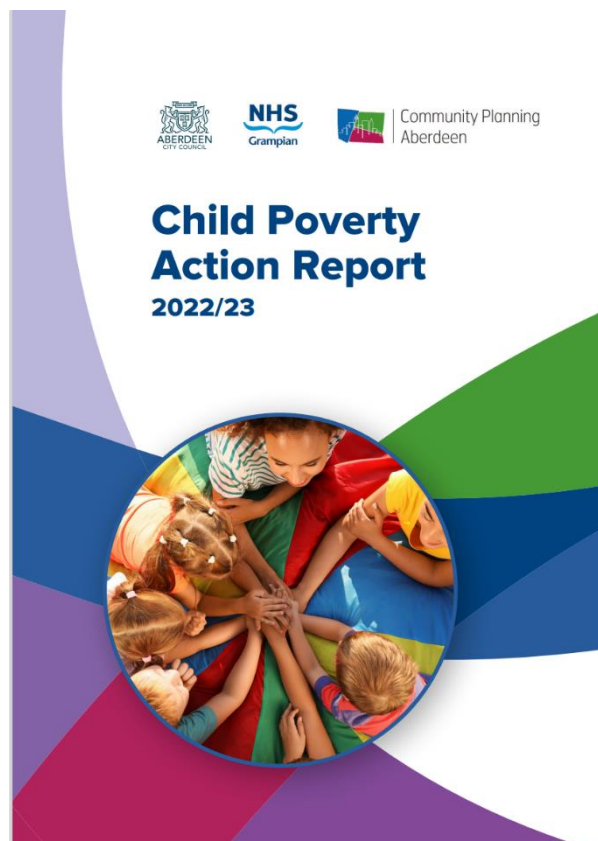
Action to Eliminate Child Poverty

Through the Children’s Services Plan and the Child Poverty Action Plan, the Children’s Services Board has identified several system shifts required to support delivery of the child poverty agenda. This will see the Community Planning Partners work together to:

- simplify access to services
- increase integration
- reducing risks by understanding what actually makes a difference and decommissioning where appropriate
- improving the alignment of our commissioning
- improving the alignment of our data
- building the capacity and capability of our workforce

Progress made over the last year in reducing child poverty is reported in our [Child Poverty Action Plan 2022/23](#).

The elimination of child poverty requires the support of others beyond Children’s Services. Child poverty is part of a wider approach to action to reduce poverty and the inequalities that can lead into poverty and loss of health and wellbeing and tackling the structural areas that need to be addressed to create healthy, financially resilient families within more economically secure communities. The Children’s Services Board are working with Community Planning Aberdeen’s Anti-Poverty Outcome Improvement Group which coordinates elements out with the direct control of Children’s Services.



Improvement priorities 2023/24

In April 2023, following an extensive development process the Children's Services Strategic Plan 2023-26 was approved, refreshing our children and young people's section (Stretch Outcomes 4-9) within the LOIP and the improvement priorities, see the full priorities within our LOIP 2016-26, summarised below:

- Further streamline support pathways and awareness of supports available
- Continue to address food insecurity including maternal and infant food insecurity to help families access the benefits they're entitled to and have pathways to provide emergency access to emergency first stage infant formula milk and nutritional support to ensure that poor child nutrition does not impact on child wellbeing in the longer term.
- Develop approaches to improving levels of dental health in primary 1 with a particular focus on areas of deprivation.
- Establish a mental health collaborative informed by a young person Taskforce, introducing mental health assessment for care experienced young people and looking at supporting young people from our priority neighbourhoods feel safe.
- Better prepare care experienced young people for life beyond care, including preparing them for parenthood.
- Develop a Family Support Model to offer earlier and preventative support and intervention with a particular focus on kinship carers and preventing children and young people from entering care and also to reduce offending rates.
- Consider our enhanced support offer to families at a universal and targeted level that mitigates the risk of neglect and harm and reducing the number of children placed on the child protection register
- Continue to develop a broader range of qualifications and pathways for young people which are aligned to growth sectors to enable them to secure employment in the longer term.
- Introduce new ways to close the gap between the attainment levels of those living in poverty from those who do not, such as Pathway Advocates.
- Increase the number of co-delivered services, such as, an integrated neurodevelopmental pathway improving diagnosis timescales and ensuing timely access to support.
- Supporting children with additional support needs and declared disabled achieve positive destinations by better understanding the lived experiences of this large group and developing our multi-agency continuum of provision more holistically across child and adult services.
- Further tackle child poverty and consider how the needs of the 6 groups identified as most at risk differ in need so that we can respond proactively. Proactive engagement will be important to shape how we respond next.

Ways to Get Involved

There are many ways people can get involved in the work of the Children's Services Board and Community Planning Aberdeen to make things better for children and young people, their families and wider community. Find out more about the different ways you can get involved by clicking on the links below.

[Find out more about Community Planning Aberdeen](#)

[Sign up for community updates](#)

[Join a Locality Empowerment Group](#)

[Join a Priority Neighbourhood Partnership](#)

[Become a member of our Citizen Panel](#)

[Find out about other ways of working with communities](#)

[Learn about our Community Empowerment Network](#)

Or simply get in touch by emailing communityplanning@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Further Information

If you have any questions about this report or Community Planning Aberdeen please contact:

CommunityPlanning@aberdeencity.gov.uk

To find out more about community planning please visit:

www.communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk