



Community Planning
Aberdeen



**Aberdeen City's Children's Services Plan 2023-26 Annual Report
2023/24 - Children and Young People Version**

Who are we?

We are the Aberdeen City Children's Services Board and we work for the city and with other groups that care about children, to make sure children and young people in Aberdeen grow up feeling safe, loved, and respected so they can realise their full potential.

This summary is about what we have done from our plan this year to help children and families in Aberdeen to make sure they grow up healthy and happy.

What have we been doing?

In our Children's Service Plan we set out 6 things we hope to improve for children and young people by 2026:

1. Make sure babies and children between 0-5 years old have the best start in life possible
2. Improve the mental health and wellbeing of children and families
3. Children and young people with care experience have the same levels of education, health and emotional wellbeing and opportunities as their peers
4. Improve how well our children and young people do in school and that they have positive options for when they leave school
5. Reduce the number of young people coming into conflict with the law
6. Increase the number of children and young people with additional support needs or a disability who leave school and go on to college/university, employment, training, personal skills development, or voluntary work

This year we've been doing a lot of work to achieve these aims, here are some examples of the work we've carried out throughout the year and some highlights of our improvements.

1. Make sure babies and children between 0-5 years old have the best start in life possible

All children have a right to life, good food and the right to grow up healthy. We know that these early years are really important in making sure a child is healthy and has good relationships when they grow up.



What have we done?

We've been working to make sure babies, young children and their families get the help they need. There are more groups for families where they can speak to people and get help earlier to stop small problems from becoming big ones

We know some families might be having a tough time because they don't have enough money. Ways have been found to give families help more quickly, especially when it comes to buying food for babies.

Taking care of your teeth is important, working with dentists to make sure everyone has access to a toothbrush and toothpaste to have healthy teeth.

Here are some of our achievements:

- Fewer mums are smoking when they're pregnant, which means healthier babies.
- More babies are being breastfed, which is good for their growth and health.
- There are fewer babies being born too early, which is important because they need more time to develop before they come into the world
- More children have opportunities to learn and play from the earliest possible stage.
- The places for play and learning have been getting good inspection scores
- More children are getting their vaccines, meaning they have less chance of getting serious illnesses.



2. Improve the mental health and wellbeing of children and families

Every child has the right to the best possible health. We want all children to grow up healthy, loved and respected so they can achieve their full potential.

What have we done?

We've been working on a number of projects to help children and young people improve their mental health and to be supported early and in the community so they don't always need to go to the doctor for feeling sad or worried.

We have done some really good things, leading to

- More grown-ups know how to help children when they feel sad or worried.
- More children feel good about themselves.
- More children feel safe where they live.

3. Children and young people with care experience have the same levels of education, health and emotional wellbeing and opportunities as their peers

This year we have been working hard to make sure that those children and young people who need help from social work can remain with their families or a close relative, as well as doing more to help those families get access to the information and help they need

We've been training our staff across different organisations to better understand how to recognise the needs of and help support care experienced young people by becoming better corporate parents.

We've also been improving the way we help young people who are leaving care or going into adult services as they turn 18 to have a support plan in place.

Here are some of our achievements:

Fewer children have had to move to different families many times.

More of our Looked After Children can stay with their own families or someone close to them.

4. Improve how well our children and young people do in school and that they have positive options for when they leave school

Every child has the right to an education. Schools help you learn new things and make friends. We want all children to do well in school and have fun while learning.

What have we done?

This year we have expanded the opportunities for subject choices through ABZ Campus, this has meant we are able to offer subjects to pupils across the city even if that subject isn't taught in their school. We've been able to offer 37 new courses. This has included increasing the number of digital and health courses as well as supporting young people to take on HNCs and Foundation Apprenticeships.

We've also put Pathway Advocates into each secondary school. A Pathway Advocates role is to help support care experienced young people, as well as those with additional support needs and disabilities to get the support they need to succeed in school and when they leave.

Here are some of our achievements:

School Aged Children:

- More primary school aged children are attending school every day, even more than in other places in Scotland
- Children are improving their reading and maths skills, and the gap between those children who live in less well-off areas of the city is reducing
- More schools had a good inspection (good report card)
- More secondary school pupils achieved National 5s or better
- More young people getting a job just after they leave school
- Fewer young people report they have used alcohol and drugs

5. Reduce the number of young people coming into conflict with the law

Children who come into conflict with the law have the right to be treated with respect and in a way that takes into account of their age. Children in conflict with the law are some of the most vulnerable in our communities and possibly most at risk of their rights not being upheld.

This year we've been training our staff to better recognise where children and young people who come into conflict with the law need extra help with a focus on ensuring a rights respecting lens is applied to work with this group of children. If those working with children in conflict with the law for example, police and teachers, can better understand why a young person is behaving in that way then appropriate responses are more likely

We've been tackling anti-social behaviour in the community by putting on more youth clubs and activities for young people in communities. Giving more opportunities for young people to occupy their time

Here are some of our achievements:

- Children who are looked after and accommodated within our local residential homes have accrued no charges within the residential home
- Calls to the police about anti-social behaviour have decreased
- More young people attending community activities
- Increase in the number of children appropriately diverted from prosecution

6. Increase the number of children and young people with additional support needs or a disability leave school and go on to college/university, employment, training, personal skills development, or voluntary work

This year we've done a lot of work to make sure that as far as possible pupils with additional support needs or a disability can remain and be taught in school. Making sure they have the extra supports they need and making sure teachers understand how best to help them. We've also used our Pathway Advocates to help them gain a better chance of a positive destination on leaving school.

Many children are young carers. Providing more support and activities and opportunities for them to work and meet with other young carers has been a key focus. Many young carers still need our help, some may not even realise they are carers or that support is available so we are doing more to try and promote our work to them.

Here are some of our achievements:

- We've set up 2 community hubs to support families with Additional Support Needs and are hoping to set up another one
- 217 young carers supported
- There are less children that have communication support needs

What's happening next?

There are still many areas we need to continue to work on that will make a difference to the areas that children and young people across the city have said matters to them. Here are some of our main goals for next year:

- Do more to help children be healthy and active be working to reduce obesity and promote health and active lifestyles to families
- Give more help to families who don't have enough money or who face other problems to get the support they need.
- Help children whose families don't have enough money, to have better educational opportunities
- Improve the way we involve children and young people meaningfully in our work and support them to better influence decisions that affect them, in all areas of their life