

Midlothian

A Great Place to Grow



Midlothian

Children's Rights Report

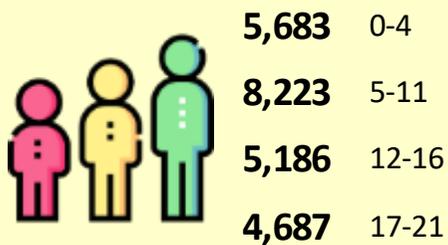
2020-2023

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Children, Young People and Partnership – key statistics

26% of total population 0 -21 years (23,779)

Population by Age Group



8,066 pupils in primary schools
5,999 pupils in secondary schools
102 pupils in special education

pupil -teacher ratio of **15.5** in primary and **11.9** in secondary



40.1% of children and young people with ASN in 2022, increase of 13% since 2018

6.8% of students are black or another minority with

6.5% of students speaking a language other than English at home



Registered for Free School Meals (2022)

13.3% pupils in secondary schools
16.7% pupils in primary schools (P6/P7)

200+ Young Carers



110 households with children presenting as homeless (22/23)
18 single parent households presenting as homeless (22/23)
227 children currently in temporary accommodation

93.40%

Annual 16-19 Participation Measure (2022)

Children with disabilities/long term conditions



123 (2.1%) High School
111 (1.4%) Primary School
97 (95.1%) Special Education

Midlothian Children’s Rights Report 2020-2023

Introduction

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is one of the core international human rights treaties – a universally agreed set of minimum standards setting out the range of rights children should enjoy.

The UNCRC sets out a holistic framework for the rights of all children and the 54 Articles of the Convention cover all aspects of a child’s life. The different articles are interdependent – civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and all have equal status and are indivisible. Governments are expected to do all they can to implement the UNCRC – to make sure all law, policy and decisions which impact on children from birth to 18 comply with their human rights.

The general measures of the Convention include measures which give legal effect to the UNCRC, as well as ‘non-legal measures’ – for example, awareness raising, training, budgeting – or other processes that can be used to progress implementation of the Convention.

Since 1991, the UK has been obliged to give effect to the UNCRC as part of its international treaty obligations. As a result of this, much of our children’s legislation is already compatible with UNCRC. In particular, the focus in most children’s legislation on the best interests of the child as paramount is a well settled feature of our law and is a cornerstone of UNCRC.

Midlothian Council is committed to ensuring these Conventions on the Rights of the Child is incorporated into future planning and embedded in practice.

What are the Rights of the Child?

Every child and young person under the age of 18 has rights, no matter who they are, where they live or what they believe in. Fundamental to those rights is the notion that children are entitled to expect appropriate care, protection and consideration from adults.

The UNCRC is based on four key principles –

- The best interests of the child should be the first consideration for actions that affect him or her
- All children have the right to life, survival and development
- All children have the right to participate
- All rights belong to all children without discrimination or exception

As a child-centred organisation, the UNCRC provides the Council with a platform to help us determine if we are improving and promoting the wellbeing of children.

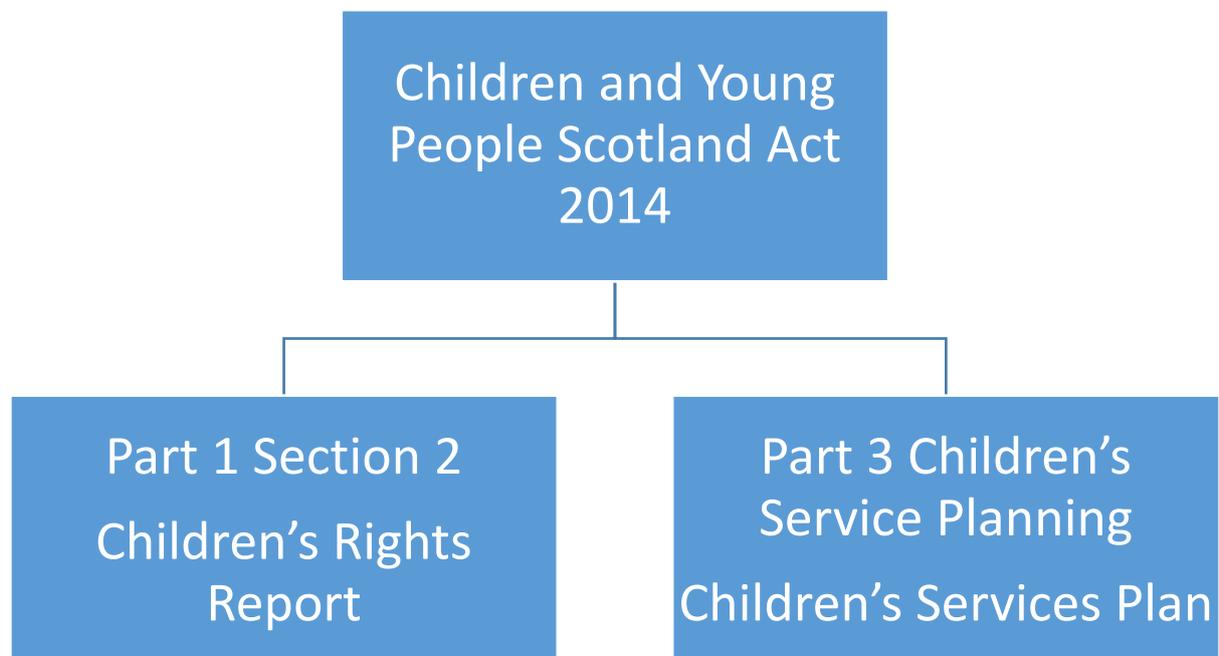
The Convention Rights can also compliment the Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) wellbeing indicators, which are Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included.

The UNCRC has 54 Articles setting out the range of rights that children should enjoy. Following the Scottish Government model, 40 of these rights have been matched against the wellbeing indicators and these are outlined in Appendix 1 and matched against the wellbeing indicators in Appendix 2.

This report documents how Midlothian Council:

- satisfies our duty to report on steps taken to secure better or further effect within our areas of responsibility of the UNCRC requirements; and
- aims to deliver the Scottish Government’s vision of Children’s Rights in Midlothian Council in the context of Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and the United Nations Convention for Human Rights (UNCRC).

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, encapsulates central and local Government duties in terms of children’s rights and is based on the key principles of putting the best interests of the child at the heart of decision making and taking a holistic approach to the wellbeing of a child. In the Act, the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) assessment approach reflects the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This approach supports children and young people so that they can grow up feeling loved, safe and respected and can realise their full potential.



We are a Child Centred Council – children and young people are at the heart of everything we do. Work is ongoing across the Council to improve educational attainment and achievement, improve health and wellbeing outcomes, support parents and carers, reduce our unemployment and ensure the participation of young people.

We are committed to ensuring we “*respect the rights of children, young people and their families and to hear and listen to their voices*”. Throughout this report you will see how children’s rights are currently fulfilled and our planned actions over the next few years.

To make reporting on children’s rights simpler, the UN recommends using clusters. We have adopted this approach for this report. These eight clusters group the rights and protocols under themes:

- general measures of implementation
- general principles of the UNCRC
- civil rights and freedoms
- violence against children
- family environment and alternative care
- basic health and welfare
- education, leisure, and culture
- special protection measures

Cluster 1: General measures of implementation

This cluster focuses on what government is expected to do to implement the UNCRC through law, policy and decisions which impact on children.

1.1 PLANNING

1.2 VISION AND VALUES

COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP SINGLE MIDLOTHIAN PLAN

The Community Planning Partnership Single Midlothian Plan sets out the Partnership’s commitment to realising the children’s rights approach to all of our work and making sure that we embed the principles of the UNCRC. It is also important to note that the three year outcomes for 2020-23 and priorities for action were directly informed by the views of over 500 children and young people.

Our Single Midlothian Plan 2023-2027 sets out the following vision:

By working together as a Community Planning Partnership, individuals and communities will be able to lead healthier, safer,



greener and successful lives by 2030. No child or household need live in poverty. Midlothian will be a Great Green Place to Grow by achieving our net zero carbon ambitions.

The Single Midlothian Plan is the overarching plan for the Council and our Medium Term Financial Strategy, Service Plans and Transformation Blueprint are designed to align with the Single Midlothian Plan.

Rooted in the creation of a wellbeing economy, the vision supported in our strategies and plans focuses on reducing inequalities at the same time as looking after the health of our planet. Specifically we have three main aims:

- Individuals and communities have improved health and learning outcomes
- No child or household live in poverty
- Significant progress is made towards net zero carbon emissions by 2030

PLACE DIRECTORATE MIDLOTHIAN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2

Every Council has to prepare a Local Development Plan for their area. This is a document which sets out proposals and policies for the development and use of land and for the protection and conservation of the environment and amenity. The Local Development Plan is written by the Council's Development Planning Team.

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 places a statutory duty upon the Council to engage with children and young people when preparing a Local Development Plan.

For the next Local Development Plan (Midlothian Development Plan 2), Development Planning Officers have sought to engage with children and young people through the following ways:

- Focus groups in primary and secondary schools
- Youth group drop-ins
- Online surveys hosted by the Council's Consultation Hub, Citizen Space and advertised on Midlothian's Young Scot webpage

Early engagement with children and young people was based on the Scottish Government's 'Place Standard Tool for Children and Young People'. The Place Standard Tool provides a simple framework to structure conversations about place and to help participants identify the assets of a place as well as how that place could be improved.

The views of children and young people who participated in the above activities will be used as part of the evidence in which policies within MLDP2 will be based.

Development Planning will continue to engage with children and young people throughout the preparation of MLDP2, up to its adoption in 2026.

INTEGRATED CHILDREN'S SERVICES PLAN

Our Children's Services Planning includes our Children's Rights Report and our Child Poverty Action Plan. They form our approach to giving Children and Young People in Midlothian the best start in life. A representation of our planning cycle can be seen below.

Local Child Poverty Action Plan
Published annually

Integrated Children's
Services Plan
Published every three years

Children's Rights Report 2020/23
Published every three years

Annual Children's Services and Education Performance Report
Published Annually September/October

The Midlothian's Integrated Children's Services Plan 2020-23, directly linked with our commitment to promoting and protecting children and young people's rights. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 strengthens children's rights and places duties on local authorities, health boards and partner agencies. The plan is written by Midlothian Children's Services and partner agencies who work together as the Getting it Right for Every Midlothian Child (GIRFEMC) Board and our vision is:

All of Midlothian's children and young people should have the best possible start in life and live safe, healthy, active, happy and independent lives

In partnership we work to improve outcomes for every child and young person through promoting, supporting and safeguarding their wellbeing. Children and Young People must be Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included so they can become confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. We also work to reduce equality by delivering public services in consultation and in conjunction with communities to mitigate the impact of inequalities.



The key to making this a reality is working in partnership with children, young people and families to ensure their views are heard and acted upon.

The three-year direction of the Children's Services Plan 2020-23 were:

- More children and young people are safe, healthy and resilient.
- More children and young people receive timely and effective support when they need it, including those who are care experienced.
- Inequalities in learning are reduced.

Delivery of the plan was supported by the following sub-groups:

- Vulnerable Children and Young People
- Early Years
- Children and Young People's Mental Health Strategic Planning
- Equity and Inclusion

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND PARTNERSHIP DIRECTORATE

The Children, Young People and Partnership's service areas while making a meaningful and measurable contribution to the wider Council strategic framework focuses on the following vision:

All children, young people, adults and communities in Midlothian are supported to be the best they can be. This will be achieved through a nurturing, respectful and collaborative approach that promotes wellbeing, equity, inclusion and lifelong learning.

This vision is supported by 12 key principles:

1. We will ensure Midlothian's children and young people have timely access to appropriate emotional, mental health, and wellbeing support.
2. We will ensure Midlothian's children and young people receive the appropriate needs-based support whilst they are assessed for neurodevelopmental concerns
3. We will provide families with holistic support to help to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people and families
4. We will reduce the number of families and children living in relative poverty
5. Partner agencies will work together to commission the services that are needed to fulfil the priorities identified in the Children's Services Plan
6. We will ensure children and young people will where required transition into adult services in a planned, safe, and seamless manner
7. All professionals are appropriately trained and equipped to deliver services in a trauma-informed way
8. We will ensure the rights of every child and young person in Midlothian are upheld by embedding UNCRC into daily practice and processes
9. We will work to ensure families are supported to stay together at home
10. Families are supported in a way that demonstrably improves outcomes for mothers and babies
11. We will strengthen GIRFEC practice and ensure information is shared proactively to aid prevention and early intervention
12. We will ensure children and young people are able to safely and easily make use of facilities and activities across the Midlothian

Our Midlothian Education Service improvement priorities further support this vision through:

1. Raising attainment to ensure that all children and young people in Midlothian achieve outcomes which lead to positive destinations
2. Ensuring all children & young people feel valued & included, and have the same opportunities to succeed

UNCRC articles are being used by schools to underpin and build their vision, values and aims and this is developed through our Children's Rights Strategy.

1.3 INCLUSION AND EQUITY

The Council has a statutory duty to promote equality and to assess the likely impact of Council functions and policies on a range of stakeholders. All new policies and significant decisions taken by the Council, including those undergoing review, are subject to an Integrated Equality Impact Assessment.

A Children's Wellbeing and Rights Impact Assessment will be adopted and integrated into our equality impact assessment process. New or adapted/updated policies and procedures should be impact assessed using this new tool. This will ensure that we are giving priority to children's best interests (Article 3) and ensure that when we are developing policies, planning services or taking financial decisions we are not adversely affecting or discriminating against any of the different groups within our communities and promoting equality and the needs of children and young people.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the wellbeing, education and lives of our children and young people. Partnership working has been critical to providing different supports to meet the changing needs of children and families through and out of the pandemic. The cost of living crisis has exacerbated further the impact of the pandemic on children and families. To ensure our children and young people have every opportunity to succeed we have:



- Developed a robust Youth Justice Partnership founded on the rights of children and young people
- Established a Building Back Better team to address learning gaps as a result of the impact of the pandemic
- Provided every P1- S6 learner with a digital device to ensure equity of access to digital technology and development of digital skills
- Continued to build on our vision of Midlothian as a **Nurturing Authority**, where relationships at each level are strengthened and protected to promote wellbeing and engagement. Nurture leads from across the directorate have worked together to build a Framework for Relational Practice to guide practice, professional learning and service improvement.
- Explored and strengthened our **trauma-informed practice and systems** through leadership forums, professional learning, support and consultation.
- Increased the number of specialists provisions and support for children and young people who require additional support for learning
- Midlothian Council broadened the criteria for discretionary 2 year old funding to support young children and their families.
- Work is currently underway with Secondary School Pupil Support Depute Head teachers around decision-making to promote inclusive practice, which involves

taking a rights-based approach (focusing on articles 2, 3 & 12) to decision-making to support transgender pupils across the secondary schools in Midlothian.

1.4 PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

A Midlothian Professional Learning Academy was launched August 2022 offering universal and bespoke learning opportunities for staff across the Children, Young People and Partnerships Directorate. The Professional Learning Academy has offered bespoke professional learning to central teams and school teams within Midlothian Council. This has helped to provoke discussion about how service areas across directorates can take a rights-based approach to service delivery and practice. By the end of March 2023, 27 sessions will have been delivered across the directorate to groups of staff, including the council wide Leadership Forum, the entire CLLE team and teams within Education and Children's Services. An action plan to support school staff understand the incorporation of the UNCRC and how to embed a rights-based approach (focusing on articles 12 & 29) is currently in development through the Professional Learning Academy. The Council is part of a South East Improvement Collaborative (SEIC) Education UNCRC Network who organised a training session in collaboration with Education Scotland, Communities, Lifelong Learning and Employability (CLLE), and Children's Services staff across the five local authorities.

Further opportunities included:

- Children's Rights collaborative enquiry in primary schools
- Glasgow Refugee Council Staff training for CLLE

In addition we have also developed the following:

- Positive Approaches to Risk-Taking Behaviour Guidance to support frontline workers manage 'risky' behaviours positively using the messages and guidance prompts. The guidance is premised on working parents/carers and adults working with young people whose behaviours can appear to be 'risky', understand risk within a rights context. The Midlothian Young People's Advice Service has been commissioned to develop the second edition of the above guidance.
- Permanence and Care Excellence (PACE) Programme was adopted within Midlothian Children's services to ensure children, young people and families were receiving timely and proportionate interventions.
- The Educational Psychology Service nurturing strategy implemented across our partnerships.

1.5 RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Resources within Children Services are allocated through the Children's Service resource pathways such as the Children's Service Resource Group, Self-Directed Resource Group and the Multi-agency Resource Group to apportion appropriate and timely interventions and/or resources. These groups are premised on our duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their area and, so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of children in need by their families by providing a range and level of services appropriate to the children's needs. A child is in need if he or she is in need of care and

attention and links to the Children (Scotland) Act, 1995, and the 2014 Act, Articles 1, 3, 5, 9, 12, 18, and 20, 23 and 28.

Recognising the need to be more creative in developing a rights based perspective, Midlothian's Education and Children's Service agreed to develop a more tailored and wider reaching Whole Family Support Service (Midlothian Family Wellbeing Service). This was achieved through Education committing monies from both the Scottish Equity Fund (SEF) and Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) to enhance the national funding. This resulted in being able to maximise and utilise our services to include Family Group Decision Making and a Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) appointment to maximise income and support families find their own solutions, articles 2, 5, 12, 27 and 28.

Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) - Meetings have taken place between the Scottish Attainment Challenge lead, Attainment Advisor and Headteachers to support development of impactful and measurable PEF plans. The learning from this process has instigated the creation of a new PEF planning format which will be used to set longer term local stretch aims.

Community Supports Framework funding has been distributed to support children and young people through the provision of services and activities.

Two Tackling Child Poverty Directorate Conferences have taken place with our key partners demonstrating our commitment to work together to ensure resources are allocated to better meet the needs of vulnerable children and young people particularly through listening to lived experiences.

Cluster 2: General principles of the UNCRC

There are four guiding principles of the UNCRC: for rights to be applied without discrimination (Article 2); for the best interests of the child to be a primary consideration (Article 3); the right to live, survival and development (Article 6), and the right to express a view and have that view taken into account (Article 12).

2.1 SERVICE AND POLICY PLANNING

Housing and Homelessness

Housing is a human right and ensuring that every household has an adequate house is one of the key obligations on the Scottish Government and Local Councils.

Housing applicants are 16 years old or older. Homeless applicants can request temporary accommodation at any point whilst they hold an open Homeless Application or are being assessed as Homeless. We aim to provide suitable accommodation as quickly as possible which meet standards relating to the physical properties of the accommodation the physical standard, its proximity to health and education services and it's the safety standard. We aim for no children or persons with access to children or pregnant person to be in a B&B,

hotel or hostel for more than 7 days. We also provide properties as per our corporate parent requirements directed by Children's Services.

We are currently developing a new Youth Homeless and Prevention Support Project. After consultation with the Young persons within our homeless service, the objective of this service is to prevent youth homelessness by supporting young people to remain in their current accommodation, or secure alternative accommodation as part of a planned move. Where this is not possible young people would be supported through their journey and into permanent accommodation.

Children and Young People Services

Restorative practices and positive behaviour policies are in place across our schools. Midlothian Children, Young People and Partnership Directorate appointed a Parent and Learner Liaison Officer to support children and young people to directly influence and inform service planning and delivery.

Library Service

In 2022, after a period of change for the library service due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Midlothian Libraries carried out a service wide survey for Children and Young People to get their feedback on the library service so they could tell us what worked for them and what didn't. The aim was to get a clearer picture of C&YP library usage across the local authority after the pandemic, to see how best we could



engage with young people and what services were most important to them. The work was carried out in partnership with the School Librarians at Lasswade and Newbattle High Schools. Young people who use the libraries were consulted on which questions to ask and to ensure the survey was made by them, for them.

The survey was open for 4 weeks and was available in all library branches. It asked a number of questions about stock, events and activities, and study spaces and clubs and if they were used, enjoyed or what could make them better.

We also wanted to find out if they had their own library card, if they have taken part in the Summer Reading Challenge and what age they are. There was also space to tell us what would make their local library better. This piece of work aimed to give our junior users a voice and support them to put their opinions forward in order to create a service designed and requested by them giving them more autonomy on the library space and embed the message that the library is for everyone.

'I enjoy the library it gives me space from people shouting and running around school' - 12 year old Lasswade High School pupil.

We had 3904 responses which we have used to shape service delivery and planning. It was identified that there was a need for more teen fiction which has resulted in more teen stock being purchased and the school librarians at Lasswade and Newbattle High Schools are encouraged to send any stock requests and ideas to our junior stock buyer for purchase. The survey had an overwhelming support for libraries with over 90% using the library and also engaging with services through school. Going forward we aim to use this piece of work to enhance our offer to children and young people, continue to work collaboratively with both education and the young people themselves and make sure our young people continue to have a voice on library service design and programming.

2.2 RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOL (RRS)

Midlothian is working closely with schools to increase participation in the RRS award and now has in place RRS coordinators across all schools and settings. By the end of academic session 2022/23

- 25 schools were registered
- 6 had achieved bronze
- 8 had achieved silver
- 3 had achieved gold

2.3 INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY

The majority of our workforce, teachers, social workers, learning assistant practitioners and educational psychologists view advocacy as a key function of their role and work with children and young people. The following are some of the examples in place in Midlothian:

- The LAC attainment team worked alongside young people and acted as their advocates when their school attendance had fallen below 50%. The service has now been superseded by the development and implementation of the Midlothian Family Wellbeing Service in line with our Promise commitments. This level of advocacy ensures that the children and young people across Midlothian are encouraged to share their own view and what the barriers are for example to education. This person-centred work also encourages young people to be clear about what their aspirations are for the future and work towards it with the right support in place. This enable the teams working collaboratively with the child to develop creative and innovative care and education packages. Articles 2, 12, 13, 28, 29, 31.
- In keeping with above and Articles 12, 43-54 we also commission independent advocacy for our looked after Children via Who Cares? Scotland who regularly visit our local care homes and work alongside our Young Champs to develop and hone their skills and peer support. We ensure children that are referred to the Scottish Children's Referral Administration (SCRA) are offered independent advocacy through CAPS Independent Advocacy, We also encourage children and families to access local service such as VOCAL and Partners in Advocacy. While the recent Children's Services

data suggest there has been an increase in children and families using advocacy services this is an area we want to strengthen as we go forward

2.4 Additional Support Needs

In Midlothian we are fully committed to our responsibilities outlined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act and therefore committed to ensuring young people claim their right to an education which develops their personality, talents and abilities to their fullest potential.

Our current ASN strategy aims to develop holistic models of support and inclusive practice, within all localities in Midlothian, for children and young people requiring additional support to meet their needs in a more timely way, and with greater impact. This will be in place from early years to post school, supporting skills for learning, life and work.

In order to achieve our aim we have identified four key areas



Embedded throughout all four areas will be Children and Young People's voices as we ensure they remain at the centre.

The Education Resource Group (ERG) was established in August 2022 replacing the Placement Allocation Group and Senior Officers Resource Group. The ERG is a multi-agency group that agrees placements into our ASN provisions and outreach support. Between January-June 2023 the ERG received 248 requests for support for children and young people aged N-S6.

2.5 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS

All children in Midlothian known to Children's Services have an individual child's plan which is in keeping with our Getting it Right For Every Child approach, articles 3, 5, 20,

Within Midlothian Education settings, children and young people with an identified ASN will plan together with their multi-agency teams to devise their Midlothian Learner Plan which will support both their education and/or care needs, articles 2,3,5,12,13,14, 23, 28, 29.

The Champs group provide an opportunity for care experienced children and young people to contribute to practice developments and ensure individual views are taken into account, articles 2, 3, 5, 12, 13.

Midlothian's commitment to the Promise is founded on having and adopting a rights based approach to working with family through listening to the views of children and their families, article 12.

Scottish Child Interview Model

The above model is founded on a rights based, trauma-informed approach and has been embedded into Child Protection practice since April 2022. We currently have one trained social work interviewer trained in this model with plans to expand this over the coming year (article 8, 19, 39).

2.6 APPROACHES TO ENGAGING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Children, Young People and Partnership Directorate has appointed a Parent & Learner Liaison Officer to support the involvement and inclusion of children and young people in service improvement and delivery. Our learners have contributed to a range of national and local consultations including those associated with the National Education Reform Programme. Our Children's Rights network has representatives from across our associated school groups to drive forward our UNCRC implementation.

Cluster 3: Civil rights and freedoms

This cluster focuses on children's civil rights and freedoms including children's right to move freely in public space, to access information and to privacy.

3.1 DIGITAL SAFETY & DATA PROTECTION

Midlothian Council has invested £10.5m in providing every child P1-S6 with a digital device. Robust safeguarding policies are in place to protect learners and ensure safe and responsible use. Additional safeguarding software ensures learners use their devices responsibly. Learners also contribute to development of digital policy through the Children's Rights Strategy Group.



Cluster 4: Violence against children

This cluster focuses on violence against children including abuse and neglect and the right not to be subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

4.1 GETTING IT RIGHT FOR EVERY CHILD

We are currently developing our revised GIRFEC/Children's Services plan for 2023-27. The GIRFEC approach is the practice model embedded throughout Midlothian for everyone involved with children, whether this be at a strategic, operational or individual child level. The approach has been built up from the UNCRC to ensure that we put UNCRC into practice for each child. Fundamentally, the approach promotes practitioners

- to consider each child as an individual with their own needs, risks and right,
- to engage and involve the child as far as practical in discussions and decisions which affect his or her future,
- to seek out and consider the voice of the child,
- to plan and review activity to improve outcomes, based on well-being,

The GIRFEC model is well established in Midlothian and is firmly located within the Community Planning Partnership. In Midlothian the GIRFEC strand is comprised of four strategic sub groups which regularly report to the GIRFEC Board.

The following provide examples of other areas of work we undertake to ensure children remain within their own families and Communities:

Youth Justice

Our robust partnership approach towards youth offending which is contained within the Youth Justice Strategy which supports children and young people in conflict with the law. This Early and Effective Intervention approach brings all partners together to consider supports in a holistic child centred way, utilising local and community supports for diversion. This approach has seen a reduction in youth offences being reported to SCRA securing better outcomes for our children and young people, article 28, 37, 4. Examples of positive diversions include;

- Bounce Project (LAC attainment monies) supported youth justice/offending work
- No knives, better lives training
- Links with The Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice to support learning

Young Carers

In Partnership with our Communities and Lifelong Learning colleagues we have managed to support 228 young carers in Midlothian as well as offer young carers assessments. Young carers receive differing supports depending on their need which range from 1-2- 1:1 and /or groups activities to provide new, exciting and fun experiences, article 27, 29, 36

Safeguarding

The **Safe and Together** model has been embedded into practice in Midlothian since January 2018. This model supports children remaining in the care of the non-offending parent whilst holding the perpetrator to account for their behaviours. A recent Midlothian survey undertaken by the National Improvement Service evidenced that the model is being used effectively in practice and evidencing safer outcomes for children. We remain committed to supporting all workers to complete the Safe and Together core practice training. Midlothian

have also developed a voluntary perpetrator change programme called 'Your chance to Change' although the **Caledonian** programme remains the court ordered perpetrator change programme, articles 3, 6, 8.

Child Protection Guidelines

The National Guidance for child protection 2021 reinforces child protection processes and response as a continuum of GIRFEC. We are currently revising the local child protection procedures to ensure that this is set out in practice. This guidance includes children and young people who are at risk of violent and/or harmful behaviours as well as children been trafficked or exploited, articles, 8, 30, 32, 36, and 37.

We have a joint Public Protection Officer with a neighbouring authority and have developed robust policies and process in a number of areas including;

- Forced marriages,
- Vulnerable Young People at risk of harm,
- Child Sexual Exploitation, and a range of other areas.

In addition we also have a lead officer for education who is responsible for ensuring all appropriate training in undertaken child protection training and quality assuring policy and processes, articles 8, 30, 32, 36, and 37.

4.2 THE PROMISE and CORPORATE PARENTING

Similar to other pieces of legislation and policy in relation to supporting and working alongside Midlothian's children and families, The Promise is founded on upholding the rights of children and families. Paramount to the work is that Scotland must respect, uphold, champion and defend the rights of children and recognise that their rights are most often realised through relationships with loving, attentive caregivers and that Scotland must fully incorporate and uphold the UNCRC.



The following is just a small sample of the services that have been developed to progress our commitment to the Promise;

- Elected members committed to increase resources to strengthen support to kinship carers, Article,3, 6, 26,, 25, 27;
- The Family Group Decision Making service has been developed and strengthened, 2, 5, 10, 12, 27 and 28;
- Developed a Systemic Family service which includes 2 dedicated workers, ,3, 6, 26,27;
- Ensure children and young people are provided with a secure permanent plan within a timely period which is overseen by senior managers' article 3, 6, 25;
- Language of Care working group, article 5, 13;

- Provide good quality care to children and young people in both our local care homes and our foster carers, article 25,27,37;
- A permanent dedicated Participation Coordinator recruited, article 12,14;
- Corporate Parenting training is regularly provided;
- Dedicated Lifelong Links workers to ensure children or young people accommodated away from their birth or kin families are actively encouraged to have links with their families, article 3, 5,6,15.
- Widening the remit of Hawthorn Learning Centre to be a community based, non-stigmatising family learning centre for all parents, article 5, 6,28, 31;
- Working closely with education and 3rd sector partners to provide bespoke curriculum for young people, article 28, 29,39; 31:
- Progressing the Scottish Child Interview Model in Midlothian, article 39, 40

The following are further examples of other projects we have undertaken using a rights based approach:

Midlothian National Housing Project

We have worked in partnership with the Council, the 3rd Sector and importantly young care leavers to develop the nationally acclaimed Midlothian Housing Project in Midlothian which currently work with 30 young people to holistically support.

Nurture and Trauma Informed Workforce

In Midlothian we have fully committed to ensuring our workforce understand the importance of relationship and trauma-informed practice and integrates this into everyday practice. Going forward we intend to expand and strengthen the availability of this training through the partnership articles, 3, 6, 39.

We now have a dedicated trauma informed development officer employed by the Council to further promote and train others in trauma informed practice across Midlothian. Our Educational Psychologists have also played a key role in developing nurture and trauma informed practice across the Children and Young People's Directorate, article 40.

Corporate Parenting

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 defines corporate parenting as "the formal and local partnerships between all services responsible for working together to meet the needs of looked after children, young people and care leavers" Midlothian Council has a proven track record of meeting their corporate parenting duties. We are currently in the process of preparing our 2023-26 Corporate Parenting Plan.

Champions Board

Since 2015 Midlothian has had an active Champions Board consisting of young people from a range of care backgrounds. Regular meetings take place with corporate parents to participate in policy development and looking for ways to improve the care system. To reflect the age distribution of those in care, Midlothian has introduced groups for senior, Junior and mini champs facilitating participation from the very young to those leaving care. Midlothian has employed a permanent care experienced Participation Coordinator to

oversee participation and support the Corporate Parent Board. In collaboration with our young champs, Midlothian has created Care awareness and Corporate Parent Training which is delivered throughout the council and beyond. A recent Champions event resulted in a commitment to them to begin to embed a family approach across the Council which would include meaningful apprenticeships, buddying systems with adult champions with a view to offering employability opportunities, article 12, 29.

To enhance participation opportunities, Midlothian has acquired the Mind of My Own communication app which has adopted technology to provide an alternative means of communication for our care experienced young people.

Foster Carers and Young People's Houses

In accordance with article 6, Midlothian is committed to ensuring that where it is safe to do so, children remain within their own birth or kin families.

However, in some instances this is not possible and children do need to live with alternative families.

When this is the case we ensure children experience high, quality care and support. Some young people

are living in our 2 local care homes. A recent unannounced inspection by the Care Inspectorate into our local care homes awarded 'Very Good' grades and more importantly, commented on the loving and trauma-informed environments the young people received and noting the following key messages:



- Young People were experiencing positive outcomes.
- The service had a clear model of relationship based practice.
- Staff approached care in a trauma informed way.
- Both houses were homely and welcoming environments
- Management have a clear vision for service improvement.

(article 3, 6, 8,9, Article 21 39)

The Independent Reviewing Team ensures the plans for all looked after children are regularly reviewed, in line with statutory guidance. The primary aim is to ensure the child/young person's plans meet and will continue to meet their current and long term/future needs.

All schools took part in nurture audit and this is a priority action in all schools' improvement plans. Every professional working with a child/young person acts as an advocate for children; this includes foster carers.

4.3 SUPPORT TO PROMOTE RECOVERY

Mental Health Strategy:

Midlothian's Children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, prevention and early intervention strategy 2022-2027 aims to enable children and young people to build

their resilience, grow their capabilities to self-manage and improve understanding of where to go for mental health information, help and support. The strategy sets out actions based on 5 key priorities:

- Listening to children and young people and using our data to inform decision making
- Developing a clear offer of mental health training and support, delivered by an appropriately trained workforce, to build resilience and support self-management in children and young people
- Delivering quick and easy access to all levels of support for mental health and wellbeing, primarily through the development of a Single Point of Access, and building capacity at all levels of support in line with what CYP tell us
- Developing pathways for children and young people with neurodevelopmental needs
- Developing services for Looked After Children

Directorate approach to strengthening trauma informed practice: A series of Leadership Forums have enabled leaders across Midlothian to identify strengths and areas to be strengthened or developed in ensuring our services and organisations are trauma-informed. A trauma-informed practice lead has been appointed and is reviewing levels of knowledge, skills and confidence in trauma-informed practice across the workforce and the extent to which systems and processes are trauma-informed. The Trauma Strategy Group ensures this work is aligned with the professional learning and support networks developed within the Nurture Strategy.

4.4 INCLUDED ENGAGED AND INVOLVED

Building capacity within schools through relational approach trauma informed practice: The Nurture Strategy has focused on three key priority areas with the aim of ensuring children and young people feel safe and that they belong within their local communities. The priorities and actions are informed by local data and build on the nurturing foundations already established.

1. Professional learning and networks of nurture leads have focused on strengthening understanding and skills in relational, trauma-informed practice within daily practice and across roles and contexts.
2. Developing our approach to listening to children's views and measuring progress in relation to nurture-related support and intervention
3. Strengthening the practice, professional support and supervision for staff in schools when supporting children presenting with significant distress

Our Included Engaged and Involved policy is being reviewed and replaced by our Inclusion Framework and Inclusion policy which is being created with children and young people. The guidance around managing school exclusions has been updated and work is in progress to create guidance around alternatives to school exclusions.

Cluster 5: Family environment and alternative care

This cluster focuses on the family environment, the right of children to be well cared for if they live apart from their parents, and the right to be protected from all forms of violence and abuse. Earlier sections of this report capture our arrangements to supporting family environments and alternative care.

Examples include:

- Established an internal Young Carers Service
- Children/young people are supported to be brought up with their parents. Parents are supported financially as well as practically and emotionally to address issues which may impact on parenting capacity. This includes ensuring adequate standards of living. Growing up with parents is the preferred plan for all children/young people.
- Who Cares Scotland - strong liaison and working relationship across children's services, e.g. residential services, CHAMPS, etc.
- Children 1st provide whole family support to families where parental alcohol and drug use is a risk factor. While ensuring the children are safe and have the opportunity to thrive there is support for adults to improve their parenting skills. Children 1st works closely with adult treatment and recovery partners to help parents address their substance use.
- Established a Whole Family Wellbeing Service in Midlothian, that provides preventative, needs-based support for families when they need it, and for as long as they need it.



5.1 FAMILY LEARNING

- Our Hawthorn Family Learning Centre (HFLC) supports children and their families to be safe, healthy, happy and to learn together.
- Sessions for parents and carers around the UNCRC have been offered as part of the Equal Midlothian 2022 programme.
- Through parenting support work, parents are encouraged to nurture and promote their children's evolving capacity to make their own decisions as they grow up.
- The Midlothian Family Learning Strategy has been drafted and is out for consultation. The strategy encourages family members to learn together, with a focus on intergenerational learning, and enable parents to learn how to support their children's learning and development. The next step will be to finalise the strategy and then build understanding and opportunities.

5.2 PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

Midlothian parents took part in the Scottish Government's Parental Involvement and Engagement Survey in May 2022. This provided us with data around how we engage our families with their child's learning. A Parental Engagement Strategy has been drafted and is being consulted on. This will ensure that we include our parents and carers in their

child/young person's learning and development in ways that are accessible and relevant to them as well as engaging them within the school community.

We have a Parent Conference planned for October 2023 with a theme of UNCRC and 'Keeping our Children Safe and Well'. We consulted with parents to ensure that our delivery will meet their needs and that our speakers are relevant and informative to maximise the benefit for them.

Our Parent Council network is well established across Midlothian supported by our Parental & Learner Liaison Officer allowing us to meet with our Chair-people regularly. We can share information about our work within the Education team in Midlothian as well as on a National level for them to cascade with their Parent Forum more widely. Consulting with parents efficiently and effectively is key to hearing and listening to their views in a variety of areas, most recently, we discussed local authority budget plans and how they may impact families. Other examples include the Scottish Government's consultation 'The National Discussion' where we were able to talk with parents about the future of education in Scotland and what they thought that should look like for their children.

Parent Working Groups have been created in specific areas and are open for all parents to be involved. This will allow us to work more closely with parents who have particular interests that may be relevant to their family's needs. They are:

- Parent Consultation Group
- Additional Support Needs (ASN) & Inclusion Group
- Equity Group
- Digital Learning Group
- Children's Rights

Our Officer is also a member of the Scottish Parental Involvement Officers Network. Midlothian has contributed to their work on informative and useful resources for parents and carers on platforms such as ParentZone.

5.3 FAMILY WELLBEING/DECISION MAKING

The ethos of Midlothian is that every child and young person is supported to be loved and flourish with their birth or kin families. To make this happen we provide a range of options to support and scaffold families. Parents are supported financially as well as practically and emotionally to address issues which may impact on parenting capacity. This includes ensuring adequate standards of living so that growing up with parents is the preferred plan for all children/young people, article 9.

The statutory element of Children's service intervention is grounded in legislation that is underpinned by children's rights. In an effort to move from structural and statutory intervention, we reconfigured our staffing resource to develop two standalone teams, Systemic Family and Family Group Decision Making Services which are founded on the rights of children and their families:

Systemic Family Intervention Service

The systemic family intervention project has been in operation since June 2021. We currently have two trained family systemic workers. To date 121 children have been referred to the family systemic intervention project, Articles, 3, 12, 39.

Family Group Decision Making service

Family Group Decision Making is a voluntary and strengths based model, which pulls together supports and resources from the extended family. It is based on the belief that when families are given the resources, information and power they will make safe decisions for their children. The 'Promise' notes that Family Group Decision services "must become a more common part of listening and decision making' in Scotland, Articles 3, 5, 20

Midlothian Family Wellbeing Service

This service provides preventative, needs-based, non-stigmatising support for families when they need it, and for as long as they need it. The majority of the staff team have now been recruited. To support families holistically and recognising the impact of poverty on many of our families, the service also offers support from:

- Income maximisation service
- Family Learning Co-ordinator

Surestart Family Support

This service brings together a wide range of services for children (from birth to five years) and their families. They are designed make it easier for families with young children to access a range of, for example, health, learning and child development, family support and support to access work and training services within their communities.

Midlothian Intensive Family Support Service (Together for Positive Change)

The project is closely aligned with the Communities, Lifelong Learning and Employability Service and with the Early Intervention and Prevention Team. The service is targeted at high-risk families with at least one child under 16 that are known to have a recurring need for support and face multiple barriers to moving out of poverty. It involves a holistic whole family approach that tackles intergenerational disadvantage and helps families meet their individual needs. Barnardos provide family support workers who engage with identified families, access to an advice worker and work closely with CLLE to provide employability support and other resources.

Children 1st

Children 1st provide whole family support to families where parental alcohol and drug use is a risk factor. While ensuring the children are safe and have the opportunity to thrive there is support for adults to improve their parenting skills. Children 1st works closely with adult treatment and recovery partners to help parents address their substance use.

Cluster 6: Basic health and welfare

This cluster focuses on the health and welfare of all children and the consideration of disabled children's rights.

6.1 CHILD POVERTY

Child poverty is a key priority within the Single Midlothian Plan over the next 4 years. Significant resources have been accessed to work with external partners including the Improvement Service to identify new outcomes and the actions which will make the most difference in reducing child poverty. These outcomes to reduce child poverty reflect the self-assessment exercise by the improvement service, those with lived experience and the Midlothian Hopkins Report 2023.

The Self-Assessment Identified the following improvement areas:

<p>Understanding local need</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Improvement Statement 1: The partnership will share and analyse relevant local intelligence in order to pinpoint high risk communities and inform shared priorities for action.- Improvement Statement 2: The partnership will map and strengthen its engagement of people with lived experience of poverty to ensure our services and priorities reflect the needs of our population (including the priority groups).
<p>Use of poverty levers and resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Improvement Statement 3: All partners – including housing and transport – are demonstrating a long term, preventative and coordinated approach to tackling child poverty at strategic level.- Improvement Statement 4: All partners are committed to reflecting local child poverty priorities in their own decisions, strategies and service plans.- Improvement Statement 5: Partners take coordinated action to support parents into employment giving particular focus on the role of community planning partners as employers
<p>Understanding our impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Improvement Statement 6: All partners are committed to identifying shared local outcomes and indicators to understand joint progress and inform priorities for action.
<p>Ways of working</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Improvement Statement 7: There is shared commitment and movement towards a person centred, whole systems approach to addressing child poverty- Improvement Statement 8: Governance structures are clear and can provide meaningful, informed scrutiny of the Local Child Poverty Action Reports.- Improvement Statement 9: Governance structures provide adequate scope for service planning and resources allocation supporting a preventative, whole systems approach.

The Child Poverty Action Plan will focus on the areas highlighted above and the views of those with lived experience.

Whilst there are improvements to be taken forward excellent progress has been made in the following areas through the work of the strategic poverty group, cost of living task force and the child poverty action group.

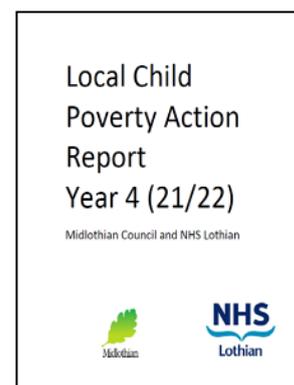
Income from Employment -

- Local Employability Partnership

- Income from Social Security and In Kind -
 - Third Sector Funded Partners
 - Parental Employability Support Fund
 - Social Security Scotland Benefit Campaign
 - Capital Credit Union
 - Trusted Partners 15 providing cash first approach
 - Additional income maximisation staff for CAB
- Cost of Living Crisis -
 - Cost of Living Link and Interactive Support Map
 - Welfare Fund increase/Worrying about Money Leaflet and Online support
 - New Food Pantry Dalkeith and Woodburn
 - Wash and Dry/Reheatable Foods Pilot
 - Nick Hopkins Profile and Findings/ Recommendations
 - Work on Cost of the School Day

Further work is evident across the Children, Young People and Partnerships Directorate including:

- Reducing the cost of the school day
- Increased awareness amongst school leaders about child poverty
- Young People Guarantee paying for basic needs such as passport, bus passes etc.
- Offering hot meals, phone charging at youth clubs
- Hygiene packs for 17/18 year olds



6.2 PROVISION OF EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE (ELC)

- 97% children attend a setting (ELC) that is good or above
- 100% children offered ELC place

To ensure we improve outcomes we need to;

- Improve information sharing with our health colleagues to support children that are identified as not meeting all their developmental milestones
- Collaboratively implement the Circle UP, UP and Away approach as an early intervention for children in their early years who are at risk of language and communication delay
- Up, up and away training continues to be rolled out with settings that take funded two year olds being prioritised. Whole staff teams at settings have been trained. All settings trained in the approach will identify ambassadors who will be the main point of contact for the setting and be responsible for collecting data for the March return and will attend network events.

6.3 ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

The following illustrate some of the approaches to support children and young people to access health services:

All looked after children are referred to the Looked after Nurse to undertake a robust health assessment, article 24. Healthy respect clinic (Tier 3) – School Nursing Priority – sexual health pathway implemented. Health Respect Drop-ins will be rolled out to all Secondary Schools over the next 12-18 months.

- Saltersgate – Services on site include Physiotherapy, Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy and the Looked After Nurse can refer Children and Young People to these services if deemed appropriate.
- School nursing – Work is underway to raise the profile of the school nursing role and develop digital solution to encourage feedback from service users which will inform service design – this is in its infancy. NHS Lothian representation on Champions Board.
- Developed a multi-agency teenage pregnancy pathway commitment paper to monitor and review the services offered to teenagers
- Developed a capacity building programme to deliver HENRY (Health Exercise Nutrition for the really young) approach to families in the Mayfield area. Pilot tier 1 intervention approach towards healthy eating and good nutrition in the Mayfield areas, ensuring a consistent message across services that support families with children under 5

6.4 CHILDREN WITH LONG-TERM HEALTH CONDITIONS

Our primary aim is to ensure the child/young person's plan meets and will continue to meet their current and long term/future needs. With the investment of £10.5m in digital technologies, the digital inclusion and learning team are now actively utilising the use of digital technologies to involve children with long-term health conditions in their education.

6.5 MENTAL HEALTH EARLY ACTION & PREVENTION; GOVERNANCE AND PROVISION

Midlothian Children & Young People's Mental Health Strategic Planning Group is responsible for the creation and oversight of a new Midlothian Children & Young People's Mental Health & Wellbeing Prevention & Early Intervention Strategy 2023 – 2027; and oversees the allocation and delivery of early action and prevention services funded through the Community Support & Services Framework (Mental Health & Wellbeing) – a funding tranche distributed to local authorities from Scottish Government on an annual basis.

The Community Support & Services Framework is funding the following activity for up to 330 children and young people in 2023/24:

- Highly personalised and self-directed developmental placements, and small group work, targeted at CYP designated as being "at risk" and aged 13-24 years old.

- Art therapy for 5-18 year olds
- Mindfulness programmes for 5-14 year olds
- Supported outdoor activities and play therapy for 5-12 year olds.

Further Scottish Government funding is provided for the ongoing delivery of a commissioned School Counselling Service which will provide support for up to 400 CYP with low to moderate support needs in the coming year, through a combination of 121 support, drop-in sessions and small group work.

A 5 year-long National Lottery funded programme – Midlothian Early Action Partnership (MEAP) - due to close in December 23, will continue to provide three Test of Change projects up until that point, one delivering storytelling into a number of local primary schools to support literacy and engagement, a second providing transition support at both a general and targeted level, and the third offering a safe, youth-led space for young people to engage in fun and creative activities at One Dalkeith.

Children and young people are also supported by MELDAP commissioned services to address their own alcohol and drug use and/or to minimise the impact of other's alcohol and drug use on their lives

The Midlothian CYP Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategic Planning Group was successful in securing funding last year for the development of a new Single or Central Point of Access which will aim to deliver quicker and easier access to the right care at the right time for local children and young people presenting with a range of mental health and wellbeing needs, and in so doing will aim to reduce the number of inappropriate referrals to CAMHS. A cross-sector steering group is being set up to take this work forward in line with similar developments across the Lothians.

MYPAS works with young people aged 12-22 to provide information on the use of alcohol and other drugs including support to young people wishing to address their unhealthy use of these substances; primarily alcohol and cannabis.

6.6 ACTIVELY PROMOTE RIGHT OF DISABLED CHILDREN TO ACCESS SERVICES

We have a dedicated Self-Directed Support Planning Officer within the council and also a Self-Directed Support co-ordinator in Children's Services. The Section 23 assessment guidance and budget calculator is being reviewed and updated to ensure consistency in practice. The SDS co-ordinator is actively identifying available resources for children affected by disability within the local community i.e. DR Inclusive, which is the only 'disability only' gym currently in Scotland. We are reviewing how we can expand respite provision for children and their families

An excellent example of working together to develop capacity was during the pandemic when the Directorate and wider Midlothian Partnership came together to offer a range of flexible SDS packages, including one off payments, and the creation of a number of hubs in Midlothian to support vulnerable children and their families, article 2, 3, 24.

Our Accessibility Strategy and Action Plan supports the wider Education and Children's Services Service Plans. Through the strategic objectives set out in the Services Plan, we aim to maximise the opportunities available to all of our children and young people to achieve their potential.

Both our local care home for young people with complex and enduring needs; Pentland Way and Woodburn Terrace, support young people to ensure that their disabilities do not get in the way of pursuing their hobbies and interests and enjoying play within the local community whether this be horse-riding at **Lasswade Riding School**, pursuing physical education using **Solitaire Gymnastics** or DR Inclusive or using the local swimming pools. They also encourage personal hobbies through accessing providers such as **Artlink**, article 2, 3, 24.

Cluster 7: Education, leisure and culture

This cluster focuses on the right of children to have a right to an education that will help them achieve their potential without discrimination.

7.1 ELC ENTITLEMENTS

Scottish Government legislation requires us to provide good quality ELC provision for all 3 and 4 year olds and all eligible and discretionary 2 year olds. 97% children attend a setting (ELC) that is good or above and 100% children were offered an ELC place

Midlothian council met its statutory requirements ahead of the timescales required and almost all Midlothian children now take up an 1140 offer in a variety of settings. These settings include local authority settings, partner providers and childminders.



We work in partnership with the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland to ensure all settings meet the National Standard and provide the best possible start in life for our youngest children.

Up, up and away training continues to be rolled out with settings that take funded two year olds being prioritised.

7.2 CfE ENTITLEMENTS

There is an authority wide 'Equity & Inclusion' group which meets regularly. This group is made up of representatives from health, education, social work and the third sector. The group works strategically and collaboratively to ensure equity and inclusion are the foremost considerations in determining how best to support children and young people at risk of disengaging from their education and/or requiring additional support for learning. As

a result of this collaborative approach, our exclusions have significantly reduced although this remains an area of focus post-pandemic.

Midlothian Council has invested £10.5m in providing every child from P1 to S6 with a digital device. The Equipped for Learning programme has a strong focus on transforming learners experiences and outcomes and equity of access to digital technology for all. A recent HMI inspection of Moorfoot Primary school highlighted the digital skills of learners. The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work.

Children's skills at all levels in the primary school in using digital technology to enhance and support their learning.

During the COVID-19 lockdown period, the Digital Inclusion and Learning Team supported pupils to access learning activities for their stage and age. The roll out of digital devices enabled schools to monitor learner engagement and support children and young people's health and wellbeing. Assistive digital technology is deployed to support children and young people who require additional support with their learning.

The Education Service set ambitious stretch aim targets to ensure all children and young people were reaching expected levels of attainment. The Education Service utilised national education recovery funding to establish a Building Back Better Team to address learning gaps. The support from the team was data informed and responsive to the needs of the learners and staff within each setting. The team supported schools to raise attainment through provision of professional learning, teaching alongside class teachers in schools, the development of Literacy and Numeracy Progressions and support for Moderation activities to ensure the judgements made regarding attainment levels were robust and valid. As a result of a very positive shift in the attainment of children receiving this support budgets have been realigned to maintain a Raising Attainment Team for academic session 2023/24.

7.3 PROVIDE ACCESS TO PLAY AND LEISURE

Our vision for children and young people in Midlothian is to live safe, healthy, active lives and as such we recognise their right to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to their age. Young people attending the Youth Community Planning Hackathon told us that they would like

- more accessible information on support, activities and places
- greater emphasis on wellbeing

These priorities are reflected in the Single Midlothian Plan 2023-2027 and Council Directorate Service plans, including:

- Develop and deliver a partnership approach to Spatial Planning that ensures Midlothian is a place children enjoy growing up;
- Maintain meadowland areas to create greater diversity and continue to develop areas of bio-diversity and foster community support.

- Continue to target key locations within Midlothian for landscape improvements by the design of new parks and other open space sports facilities and play areas, subject to available funding, with an emphasis on inclusive play equipment.

Progress 2020-2023 is evidenced in the examples provided in the High Quality Outdoor Play and Recreation Facilities section below.

Our library services provide a range of free activities and events for children including **Chatterbooks** which is a children's book group, **Lego Clubs, Coding Clubs and Craft Events** alongside author visits, magic shows, Dogs Trust, mini zoo, drama workshop tasters and film screenings.



In 22/23, young people proposed a Test of Change for a youth wellbeing space and were involved in co-designing an open space that is timetabled with a mix of activities.

HIGH QUALITY OUTDOOR PLAY AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Children and young people have access to multiple facilities that provide indoor and outdoor areas. A range of activities is available through Sport & Leisure for children and young people to encourage them to be active and to support their wellbeing. Activities include:

Sport & Leisure

- Corporate Parenting card– provides reduced rate access to gym or swim for Care Experienced young people up to 21 years of age
- Concessions – reduced costs for attending sessions
- Clubs – multi sports clubs using facilities across portfolio
- Teen Zone – Access to gyms with qualified gym instructors, access with a responsible parent/guardian at a reduced monthly cost
- Primary 4 Swimming – Access for all P4 schools groups to attend swimming programs
- Snowsports Centre – Opportunity to attend sessions during the school timetable
- Facilities are all safe and aim to provide an inclusive program

Wellbeing

- Weight Management support in the form of 6 x PT sessions for 12-17 year olds following referral from NHS Lothian Weight Management.
- Midlothian Active Choices (MAC) while never intended for young people has seen an increased ask to support teens with mental health and other health challenges which we are providing – mostly on a 1-2-1 PT basis.

Active Schools / Development Team

The Active Schools programme provides free, inclusive and accessible opportunities to all Midlothian young people before school, at lunchtime and after school in both school and community settings. Sport & Leisure work closely with schools, Community Life Long Learning (CLLE), Home School Practitioners, our facilities and local clubs to remove barriers to participation and provide high quality opportunities.

We ensure that there are pathways and partnerships in place for pupils to move from school to community sport club opportunities, allowing pupils to participate and develop at a level suitable for them.

Eg; Active Schools (free opportunities in schools), Active Midlothian (opportunities in local leisure centres), Sports Clubs



A “play sufficiency assessment” for Midlothian as required by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and the Town and Country Planning (Play Sufficiency Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 is currently being undertaken. The assessment will be completed this year and our Evidence Report submitted to Scottish Ministers for approval in January 2024. The data produced through the assessment will support reporting on Children’s Rights in the future.

Over the last 3 years capital expenditure of £344k for outside spaces, which fall under the remit of our Land and Countryside Service, has delivered a range of facilities such as pump tracks, play area installations and refurbishments.

7.4 ACCESS TO AND CAN PARTICIPATE IN A RANGE OF ARTS AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

All our schools plan for a range of artistic and cultural activities over a school session. Many utilise PEF funding to ensure equity of access to the arts and cultural activities.

Midlothian Library Services work hard to provide the children and young people of Midlothian with a range of arts and cultural activities and opportunities. They have a wide range of free books, eBooks, eAudiobooks and resources. There are no fines or hire charges so there is equal access for all.

During the summer, every library takes part in the annual Summer Reading Challenge and associated programme of free summer holiday events – it is the UK’s biggest reading for pleasure programme for children aged 4 to 11. In 2022, 897 children in Midlothian joined the challenge and as part of the programme libraries hosted 154 events from launching rockets to craft activities which were attended by 2392 children.

Libraries provide safe and trusted spaces to explore a range of free activities including book groups, arts & crafts, coding and lego clubs. Special events are hosted to celebrate events

such as Bookbug Week, World Book Day & Book Week Scotland and school classes and community groups such as Rainbows & Beavers make visits to support their learning and access these activities. In the year 2022-23 libraries delivered and/or hosted 3,415 free events which were attended by 30,643 children and young people. Libraries give support and advice throughout a child's reading journey and provide access to a world of books, learning and fun.

Cluster 8: Special protection measures

This cluster focuses on groups of vulnerable and marginalised children who require special protection.

8.1 ASYLUM SEEKERS/MIGRANTS

Our dedicated resettlement project works directly with ARAP (Afghan) and Ukrainian arrivals alongside government agencies and works to improve outcomes through promoting, supporting and safeguarding their wellbeing under The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. We ensure that children and their families have access to suitable accommodation, education and/or education hub, health services including Trauma supports, leisure pursuits, legal advice and resettlement supports. We also offer benefits advice as well as learning & development opportunities to support reintegration to live independently and reduce the impact of child poverty. We also ensure that all families have access to the appropriate legal advice, article 22, 30, 39.

Unaccompanied asylum seekers

Midlothian employs a designated practitioner specifically for UASC and associated policy in place which ensures all UASC are referred to the Scottish Guardianship Service to ensure appropriate legal support is in place asap. In addition, established ESOL links are in place to ensure UASC can access language support and additional education input either in schools or colleges. Midlothian has identified a range resources to support cultural diversity and equality specific to the individual being supported, article 22, 30, 39.

8.2 LEGAL REPRESENTATION AND FAIR TREATMENT

Youth Justice

As stated earlier in this report we have a robust partnership approach towards youth offending which is contained within the Youth Justice Strategy which supports children and young people in conflict with the law. This Early and Effective Intervention approach brings all partners together to consider supports in a holistic child centred way, utilising local and community supports for diversion. This approach has seen a reduction in youth offences being reported to SCRA securing better outcomes for our children and young people, article 28, 37, 4. Examples of positive diversions include the following:

- Bounce Project (LAC attainment monies) supported youth justice/offending work
- No knives, better lives training
- Links with The Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice to support learning

With regard to asylum Seekers and or migrants, we receive direct legal advice from Scottish Refugee Council & Just Right Scotland for resettlement. We have links with the community Planning Partnership's, Fair treatment - Care for People Subgroup

Our next steps

This report highlights some of the work we have undertaken over the last three-years. This next section shows the steps we are going to take to improve how we put into practice the rights enshrined in the UNCRC, to advance the incorporation of the UNCRC in the work we carry out within our services, with or partners and across our communities. We will monitor this through:

- Our internal Strategic Children's Rights Working Group;
- Feedback from parents/carers, children and young people; and
- Publish an annual update setting out our progress.

A Strategic Children's Rights Group will be established to promote and uphold the rights of children and young people in Midlothian by:

- Raising awareness among professionals, agencies and services about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and how it applies in the UK and Scotland;
- Working with staff within all services within the Council and in partner agencies to ensure that children and young people's rights are promoted and upheld in policy, strategy and service delivery;
- Providing information and advice to children and young people and to professionals about children's rights;
- Supporting children and young people to take part in activities that enable them to influence policy and practice and to express their views to service providers;
- Being the local strategic lead for the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award and supporting schools and pupils to implement rights into the ethos of all schools in Midlothian from early years to secondary schools

A Children and Young People Rights Strategy Group will also be convened to support the council to take a child's rights based approach and support their peers to:

- learn about their right to participate voluntarily in decision making
- be enabled to participate through a variety of ways of expressing their views
- have a say in shaping educational provisions in their setting and beyond
- learn through participating in decisions within a wide variety of context such as wider council service provision activities and processes leading to meaningful impacts and outcomes
- be involved and become effective contributors

We will support our schools and settings, including organisations working in partnership with us to create an action plan detailing how they are taking a child's rights based approach. Schools and settings will be able to evidence learner participation in decisions that affect them. We will expand the number of opportunities for children and young people to express their views and provide feedback on supporting their rights.

We will develop a children's complaints system to ensure children and young people know how to and can make a complaint.

We will continue to implement UNCRC training for all our staff and partners.

The Midlothian GIRFEC Board (Getting it Right for Every Child), who form part of the Community Planning Partnership and include a wide range of organisations who provide services to children and young people across Midlothian have agreed the following priorities to meet our obligations under the UNCRC.

Priority Theme	Outcome	Action
Children's and Young People's Rights	1. The rights of children and young people in Midlothian are respected in everything we do	Ensure UNCRC principles are incorporated in all partnership programmes
	2. Families are supported to stay together at home	Deliver the actions outlined in The Promise and the Midlothian Corporate Parenting plans
	3. Children and young people have improved access to a variety of safe and health-promoting places and spaces in Midlothian	Develop a partnership approach to Spatial Planning that ensures Midlothian is a place where children enjoy growing up
Children's and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing	4. Midlothian's children and young people have timely access to appropriate emotional, mental health, and wellbeing support	Develop a single point of access to efficiently allocate mental health and wellbeing supports
	5. Children and young people receive the appropriate needs-based support whilst they are assessed for neurodevelopmental concerns	Implement a neurodevelopmental pathway in line with the Scottish Government service specification, linking with the single point of access
	6. All professionals are appropriately trained and equipped to deliver services in a trauma-informed way	Implement Trauma Informed Practice throughout the partnership workforce
Whole Family Wellbeing	7. Families receive holistic support to help to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people and families	Implement our whole family wellbeing approach and make best use of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund
	8. Young people transition into services in a planned, safe, and seamless manner	Develop a Transitions Framework to support local services and processes
	9. Families are supported in a way that demonstrably improves outcomes for mothers and babies	Apply a partnership approach to test targeted support during early years to reduce inequalities
	10. Lower numbers of children and young people live in relative poverty	Implement and deliver on the actions set out in the Local Poverty Action Plan
Information Sharing and Commissioning	11. Joint commissioning is in place, to better support our Partnership to identify local needs, resources and priorities to improve outcomes for children, young people and families	Develop robust joint commissioning processes and oversight
	12. Strengthened GIRFEC practice ensures information is shared proactively to aid prevention and early intervention	Strengthen information sharing between partners to effectively support prevention and early intervention measures

Appendix 1 - UNCRC Articles and Children's Rights

We want our children and young people to know their rights. In summary below Governments also refer to Midlothian Council.

1. Definition of a child

A child is any person under the age of 18.

2. No discrimination

All children have all these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what language they speak, what their religion is, what they think, what they look like, if they are a boy or girl, if they have a disability, if they are rich or poor, and no matter who their parents or families are or what their parents or families believe or do. No child should be treated unfairly for any reason.

3. Best interests of the child

When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children. All adults should do what is best for children. Governments should make sure children are protected and looked after by their parents, or by other people when this is needed. Governments should make sure

that people and places responsible for looking after children are doing a good job.

4. Making rights real

Governments must do all they can to make sure that every child in their countries can enjoy all the rights in this Convention.

5. Family guidance as children develop

Governments should let families and communities guide their children so that, as they grow up, they learn to use their rights in the best way. The more children grow, the less guidance they will need.

6. Life survival and development

Every child has the right to be alive. Governments must make sure that children survive and develop in the best possible way.

7. Name and nationality

Children must be registered when they are born and given a name which is officially recognized by the

government. Children must have a nationality (belong to a country). Whenever possible, children should know their parents and be looked after by them.

8. Identity

Children have the right to their own identity – an official record of who they are which includes their name, nationality and family relations. No one should take this away from them, but if this happens, governments must help children to quickly get their identity back.

9. Keeping families together

Children should not be separated from their parents unless they are not being properly looked after – for example, if a parent hurts or does not take care of a child. Children whose parents don't live together should stay in contact with both parents unless this might harm the child.

10. Contact with parents across countries

If a child lives in a different country than their parents, governments must let the child and parents travel so that they can stay in contact and be together.

11. Protection from kidnapping

Governments must stop children being taken out of the country when this is against the law – for example, being kidnapped by someone or held abroad by a parent when the other parent does not agree.

12. Respect for children's views

Children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them. Adults should listen and take children seriously.

13. Sharing thoughts freely

Children have the right to share freely with others what they learn, think and feel, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way unless it harms other people.

14. Freedom of thought and religion

Children can choose their own thoughts, opinions and religion, but this should not stop other people from enjoying their rights. Parents can guide children so that as they grow up, they learn to properly use this right.

15. Setting up or joining groups

Children can join or set up groups or organisations, and they can meet

Appendix 1 - UNCRC Articles and Children's Rights

with others, as long as this does not harm other people.

16. Protection of privacy

Every child has the right to privacy. The law must protect children's privacy, family, home, communications and reputation (or good name) from any attack.

17. Access to information

Children have the right to get information from the Internet, radio, television, newspapers, books and other sources. Adults should make sure the information they are getting is not harmful. Governments should encourage the media to share information from lots of different sources, in languages that all children can understand.

18. Responsibility of parents

Parents are the main people responsible for bringing up a child. When the child does not have any parents, another adult will have this responsibility and they are called a "guardian". Parents and guardians should always consider what is best for that child. Governments should help them. Where a child has both parents, both of them should be

responsible for bringing up the child.

19. Protection from violence

Governments must protect children from violence, abuse and being neglected by anyone who looks after them.

20. Children without families

Every child who cannot be looked after by their own family has the right to be looked after properly by people who respect the child's religion, culture, language and other aspects of their life.

21. Children who are adopted

When children are adopted, the most important thing is to do what is best for them. If a child cannot be properly looked after in their own country – for example by living with another family – then they might be adopted in another country.

22. Refugee children

Children who move from their home country to another country as refugees (because it was not safe for them to stay there) should get help and protection and have the same rights as children born in that country.

23. Children with disabilities

Every child with a disability should enjoy the best possible life in society. Governments should remove all obstacles for children with disabilities to become independent and to participate actively in the community.

24. Health, water, food, environment

Children have the right to the best health care possible, clean water to drink, healthy food and a clean and safe environment to live in. All adults and children should have information about how to stay safe and healthy.

25. Review of a child's placement

Every child who has been placed somewhere away from home – for their care, protection or health – should have their situation checked regularly to see if everything is going well and if this is still the best place for the child to be.

26. Social and economic help

Governments should provide money or other support to help children from poor families.

27. Food, clothing, a safe home

Children have the right to food, clothing and a safe place to live so they can develop in the best possible way. The government should help families and children who cannot afford this.

28. Access to education

Every child has the right to an education. Primary education should be free. Secondary and higher education should be available to every child. Children should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level possible. Discipline in schools should respect children's rights and never use violence.

29. Aims of education

Children's education should help them fully develop their personalities, talents and abilities. It should teach them to understand their own rights, and to respect other people's rights, cultures and differences. It should help them to live peacefully and protect the environment.

Appendix 1 - UNCRC Articles and Children's Rights

30. Minority culture, language and religion

Children have the right to use their own language, culture and religion – even if these are not shared by most people in the country where they live.

31. Rest, play, culture, arts

Every child has the right to rest, relax, play and to take part in cultural and creative activities.

32. Protection from harmful work

Children have the right to be protected from doing work that is dangerous or bad for their education, health or development. If children work, they have the right to be safe and paid fairly.

33. Protection from harmful drugs

Governments must protect children from taking, making, carrying or selling harmful drugs.

34. Protection from sexual abuse

The government should protect children from sexual exploitation (being taken advantage of) and sexual abuse, including by people forcing children to have sex for money, or making sexual pictures or films of them.

35. Prevention of sale and trafficking

Governments must make sure that children are not kidnapped or sold, or taken to other countries or places to be exploited (taken advantage of).

36. Protection from exploitation

Children have the right to be protected from all other kinds of exploitation (being taken advantage of), even if these are not specifically mentioned in this Convention.

37. Children in detention

Children who are accused of breaking the law should not be killed, tortured, treated cruelly, put in prison forever, or put in prison with adults. Prison should always be the last choice and only for the shortest possible time. Children in prison should have legal help and be able to stay in contact with their family.

38. Protection in war

Children have the right to be protected during war. No child under 15 can join the army or take part in war.

39. Recovery and reintegration

Children have the right to get help if they have been hurt, neglected, treated badly or affected by war, so they can get back their health and dignity.

40. Children who break the law

Children accused of breaking the law have the right to legal help and fair treatment. There should be lots of solutions to help these children become good members of their communities. Prison should only be the last choice.

41. Best law for children applies

If the laws of a country protect children's rights better than this Convention, then those laws should be used.

42. Everyone must know children's rights

Governments should actively tell children and adults about this Convention so that everyone knows about children's rights.

43 to 54. How the Convention works

These articles explain how governments, the United Nations – including the Committee on the Rights of the Child and UNICEF –

and other organisations work to make sure all children enjoy all their rights.

Source – www.unicef.org

Appendix 2 – UNCRC Articles and the GIRFEC Well-being indicators

