

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

Community Priorities

The Community Planning Partnership (CPP) draw together public, voluntary and private sector bodies, and local communities to deliver a shared 'plan' to improve the lives of local people based on evidence. In Midlothian, the plan is called the Single Midlothian Plan (SMP). This is a shared partnership plan of how we will meet the needs of our local communities and brings together all the priorities for Midlothian into one place. Our outcomes for the next five years are:

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

In Midlothian the Getting It Right for Every Child Board (GIRFEC) is one of the subgroups of the SMP, and one of the main drivers for the effective delivery of services to children. The GIRFEC Plan also known as the Integrated Children's Service Plan 2023-2026, is a statutory three year plan devised by the local authority and health. The plan develops key outcomes and priority actions which are designed to improve the lives of children, young people and families. The new 3 year plan has now been approved towards the end of 2023.

The plan has 12 shared priority themes, outcomes and actions which sit within 4 subgroups, namely:

1. Children & Young People's Rights
2. Children & Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing
3. Whole Family Wellbeing
4. Information Sharing and Commissioning

We are fully committed to realising a children’s rights approach to all of our work and ensuring that we embed the principles of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) alongside our Promise commitments.

Progress and Achievements

The Promise

The Promise work continues to drive forward our children's service improvements.

Plan 21-24: Priority Areas

A Good Childhood

Whole Family Support

Supporting the Workforce

Planning

Building Capacity

Referrals:

Work has been progressed over the past year to allow us to have a clearer overview and understanding on how referrals come into the service. There is much greater confidence that those referrals coming into children's services are appropriate and for those referrals which relate to early support to prevent escalation, these are directed to the Family Wellbeing Service. This has been a significant piece of work and the impact on the service is that social workers are only involved in working with families who require a certain level of intervention and support.

Within Q4 there has been a 56% decrease in referrals coming into children's services compared to Q1. This should in time ensure that we provide a more efficient and robust service to those most in need. This said the complexity of the referrals coming into the service remains high. Over time it is hoped that the Family Wellbeing Service will be where see an increase in the number of referrals and further reduction in social work referrals.

Number of referrals by Quarter

22/23				23/24			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2,155	2,212	2,023	2,626	2,353	2,067	1,436	1,324

Family Wellbeing Service

The service has had a significant amount of training on offer to the new workforce to ensure they have a good understanding of their role going forward. They are already working with 100 families and 177 children and young people, this equates to 172 referrals over the past year. We

have appointed a permanent new team leader in January 2024 who has a wealth of experience. Work is well underway liaising with our 3rd sector colleagues to agree how we can share some of the allocated funding with them to support a holistic approach to working with families.

Looked After away from home population

The data evidences that our looked after population is fairly static bearing in mind data changes on a daily basis. The differences in the data relate to one or two families coming into care, therefore this needs to be considered within this context. Overall across the past year the data has had no significant change, generally fluctuating from 140 – 152 children. The introduction of Family Group decision making, supports families to devise a plan which promotes families staying together with support from extended family. It is too early to advise if this is reason for the fairly static numbers.

The number of children's names on the child protection register has also remained fairly consistent across the past year however once again a cautionary approach when looking at this data as two families can mean an significant increase in the number. The main reason for registering a child's name on the register is the risk posed by domestic abuse.

Rate per 1,000 of Midlothian Looked After and Accommodated Children

22/23				23/24			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
6.9	6.9	6.8	6.7	6.5	6.6	7.2	7.4

***Scotland Average for 22/23 is 9.7**

Self-Directed Support

We continue to work tirelessly to ensure that families had access to funding if assessed as in need. The summer period is often a challenge for families trying to identify sufficient resources for children with additional support needs. Our aim is to start planning for the summer period now so that families are aware of what resources are available and have choice where their child(ren) can attend. This is a real challenge as most holiday resources do not cater for children with additional support needs, therefore there are only limited spaces available to families.

Trauma Informed Training

We remain committed to ensure all our staff are trauma informed this includes our foster carers. A rolling programme of training is being rolled out across the directorate and Council.

Challenges and risks

National Care Service:

The 'Bill' is progressing to stage 2. There remains no information around whether or not children's services and Justice will be included within the NCS. Many different options are being considered.

Poverty

As families continue to be impacted by the cost-of-living crisis this is expected to lead to an increase in the number of families experiencing poverty. This also applies to workers on low incomes. We are assessing all claims that come into children and families from the Scottish Welfare Fund for early identification of families who may need additional support. We also have income maximisation officers within the service who offer support to families. This has been a very positive approach to supporting families, ensuring they are receiving the benefits they are entitled to.

Workforce:

Midlothian continues to experience the same staffing issues encountered by other Councils. There is a general lack of experienced and skilled staff across the sector, and we are having to increasingly rely on locum workers. As reported in previous quarters, this is a national issue and discussions have started around A National Social Work Agency which would offer the same terms and conditions across Scotland, similar to that of Police Scotland and Education staff. This would benefit Midlothian if this approach were adopted. Workforce is a very live issue and impacting significantly on staff with higher rates of absence due to the stress this issue is causing. We are looking at a recruitment campaign over 3 days around June 2024 to try and attract social workers for children and adult services, social care staff, CLLE staff, teachers and learning assistants to try and bring new workers into Midlothian.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

We continue to work with our Home Office colleagues to try to find a fairer way to share the distribution of UASC who arrive mainly in Kent on small boats. Most local authorities in Scotland are at capacity regarding having no more foster or residential capacity to accommodate these young people. We therefore must think differently around how we are all going to manage this ever-increasing demand.

Increased numbers of children impacted by the delay in neurodevelopmental waiting times:

There is a significant delay in families waiting for an appointment with CAMHS regarding neurodevelopment concerns. Not all cases will require clinical input from CAMHS however we are looking at how we can work together to consider how we best support families whilst on the waiting list. We continue to work with partners to explore how best to meet the current demands and pressure whilst making sure we future proof our services to deliver sustainable options locally for children and young people with ASN and Complex and Enduring Needs. A neurodevelopmental pathway is in the early stages of development.

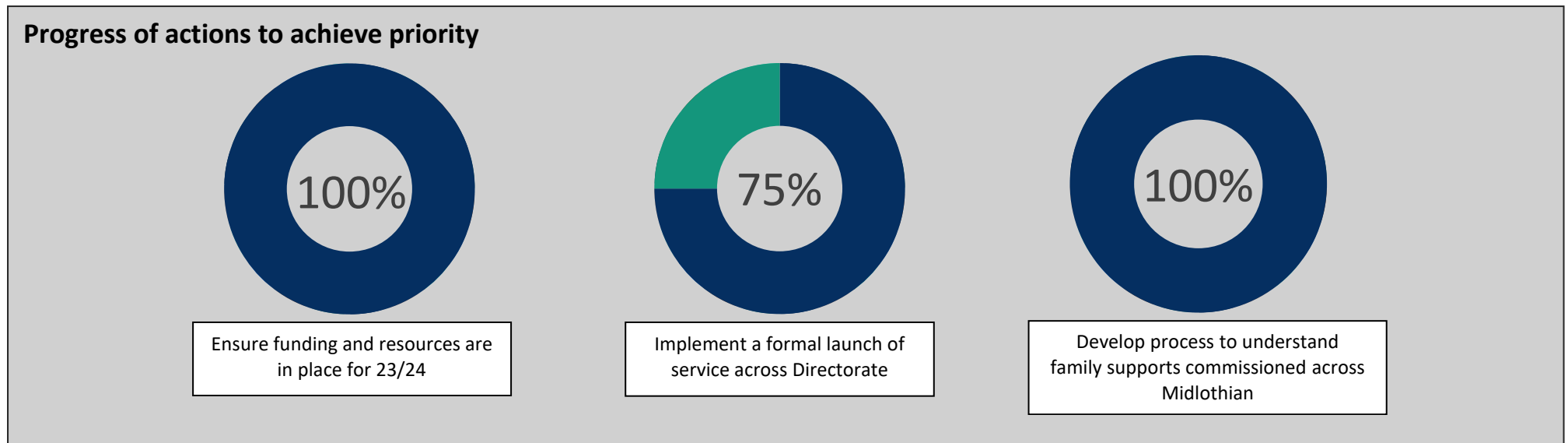
Foster Care

In February 2024 the Council approved a 5.5% fee increase for foster carers in Midlothian. Increased mileage rate and the reinstatement of an additional birthday, holiday and Christmas allowance payment were also approved. We are now ready to embark on a recruitment of foster carers campaign which will commence during Fostering Fortnight 13th-31st may 2024. We have spent a significant amount of time and resource on creating a wide reaching campaign to attract new carers.

Financial Pressures

Finance is an ongoing challenge and we must ensure that we have sufficient capacity within our workforce and resources to meet the increasing demand faced by the fastest growing local authority in Scotland.

Service Priority 1 - Ensure the Midlothian Wellbeing Service is aligned with other family supports across Midlothian

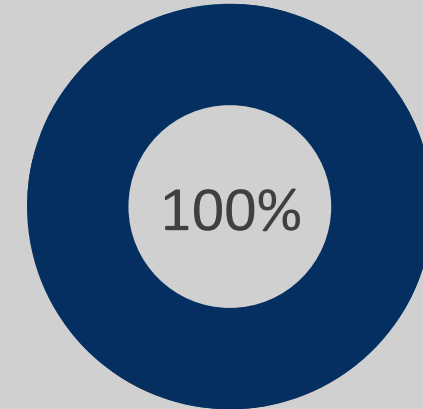
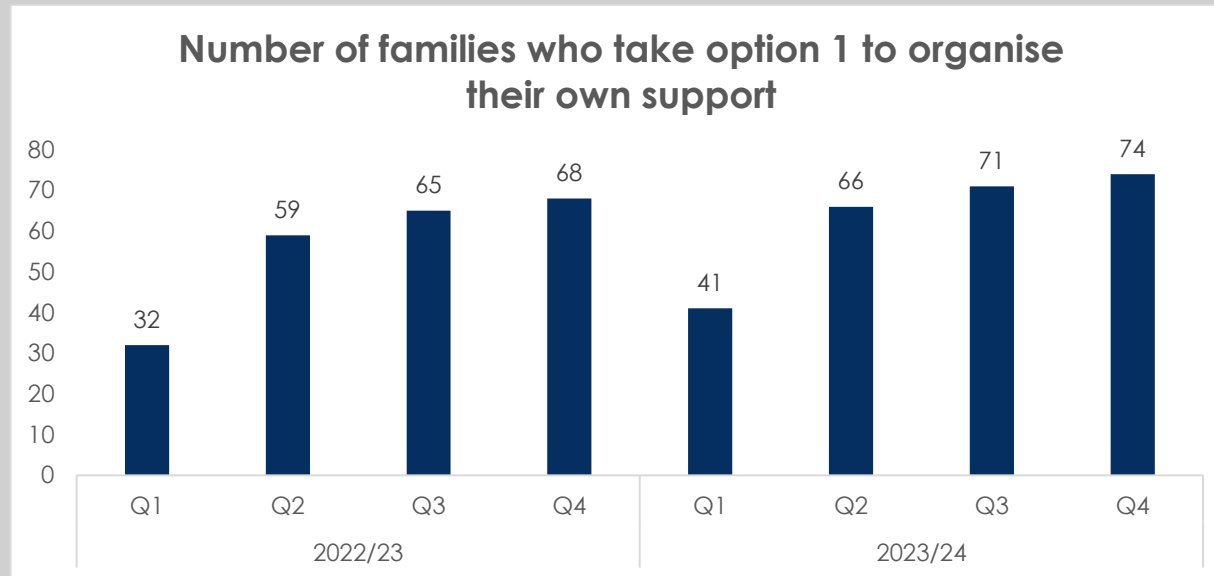


Key achievements this quarter:

- All staff are now in place, 24/25 funding quota announced from Scottish Government. Funding process in place.
- Midlothian Wellbeing Service had a soft launch in 23/24, Formal launch will be rolled out following annual report.
- A formal directory is now in place and used by all staff, monthly updates being entered and monitored.

Service Priority 2 - Promote the use of Self-Directed Support amongst families to empower them to have choice and flexibility

Progress of actions to achieve priority

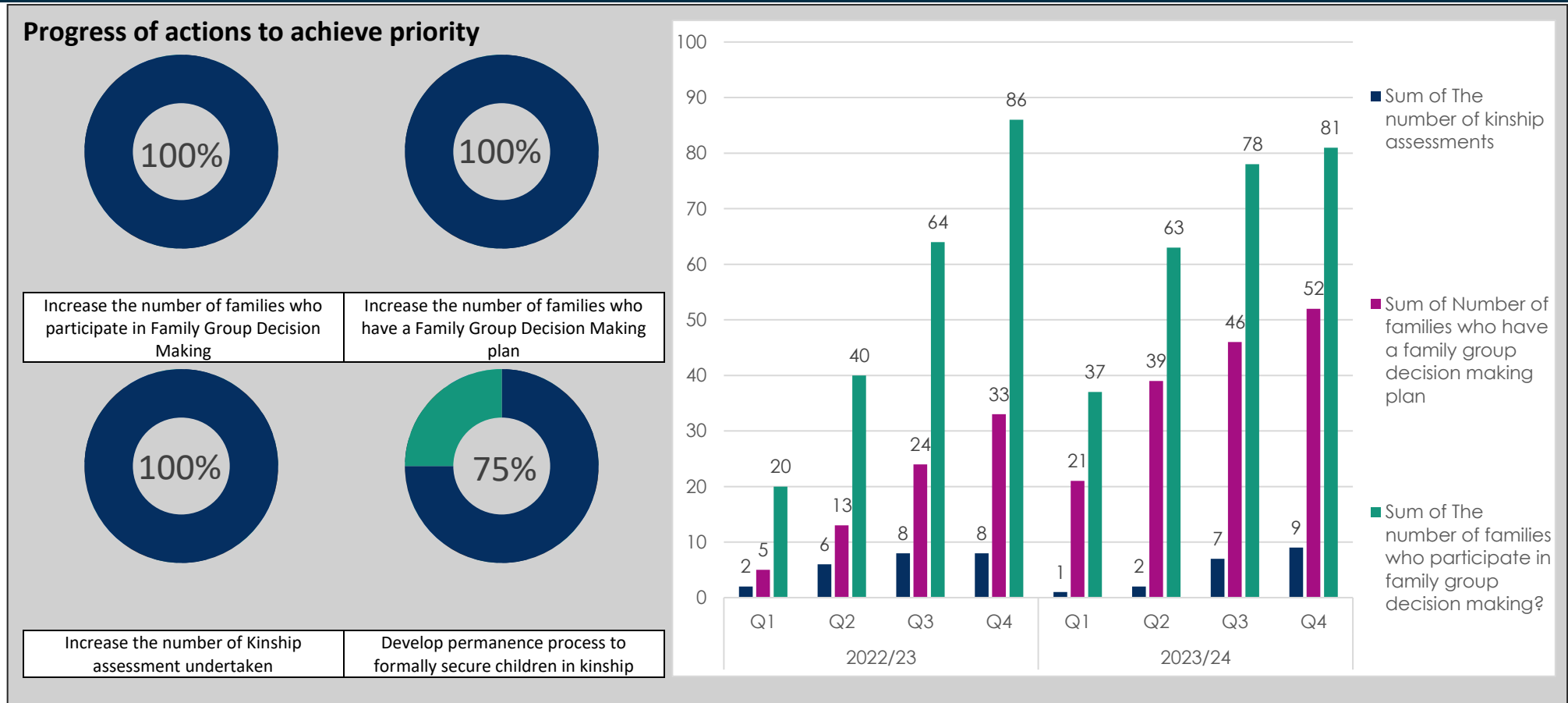


Increase by 10% the number of families who take Option 1 to organise their own support

Key achievements this quarter:

- In total there has been an increase of 33 families using SDS since Q1, which is an 80% increase and is the highest number now than at any point last year.
- This is a great achievement over the quarter and year with numbers continuing to increase. The issue we are facing is the lack of resources within the community to support families who want to access respite or clubs for their children who have additional support needs. Many organisations do not offer a service to children with additional support needs due to the increase costs in staffing but also finding suitably skilled staff is an ongoing issue.
- All posts have now been filled. This information will inform practice planning in 24/25.

Service Priority 3 - Strengthen supports offered to Family Group Decision Making and Kinship supports to maintain children with birth/kin families

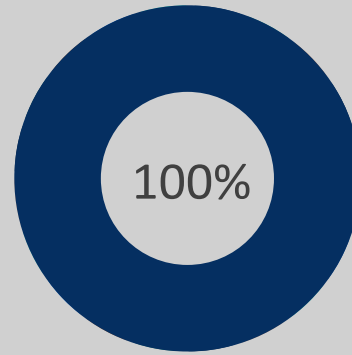


Key achievements this quarter:

- Compared to the same period the previous year there has been a reduction in the number of referrals from 29 to 23 in Q4 2024. This is to be expected as the service has reduced in size and scope due to a reduction staffing.
- Going forward a further FGDM post has been agreed and this will help increase capacity within the service in 24/25.

Service Priority 4 – Implement the National Child Protection Guidance locally

Progress of actions to achieve priority



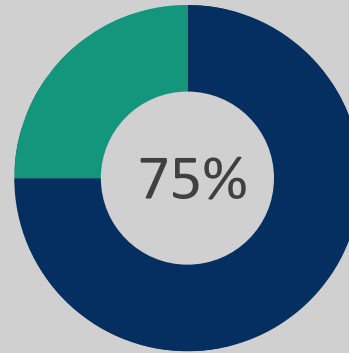
Contribute towards the development of Lothian wide Child Protection Procedures

Key achievements this quarter:

- The new national guidance and local procedure are now in place
- Briefing sessions have been offered across the partnership
- Mosaic processes have been updated to reflect the changes in process and timescales

Service Priority 5 - Develop a pathway for children and families to navigate mental health services in a timely manner

Progress of actions to achieve priority

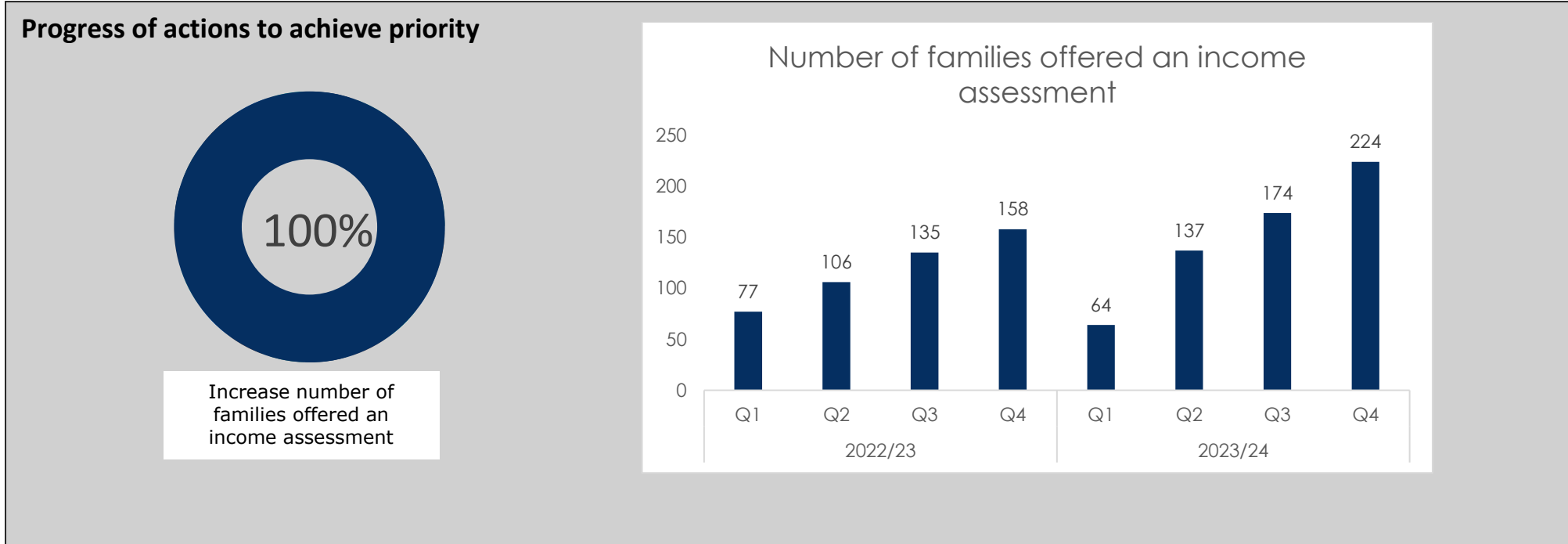


Develop a Single Point of Access across the directorate

Key achievements this quarter:

- Work is progressing on this matter. Funding has been agreed with CAMHS to fund a part time worker to take this work forward. We are awaiting post evaluation before sending for recruitment. Funding secured for all posts going forward. This indicator is being progressed via the Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Sub Group.

Service Priority 6 - Strengthen mechanisms to support families maximise their income



Key achievements this quarter:

- The number of families offered an income assessment in 2023/24 is 41% higher than last year.
- In total 224 families offered assessment in 2023/24. Indicator will change in 2024/25 to look at relative income gained.
- Q4 reporting demonstrates the positive impact of both workers and the financial gain made for families
- Review meeting has agreed to broaden the remit of one worker for families who are engaging in Child protection processes to allow support while this process is in progress

Service Priority 7 - Children, young people and their families experience high quality services

Progress of actions to achieve priority



100%

Ensure local Adoption Service will provide high quality care and support



100%

Ensure local Continuing Care/Adult services will provide high quality care



100%

Ensure Hawthorn Family Learning Centre will provide high quality care and support



100%

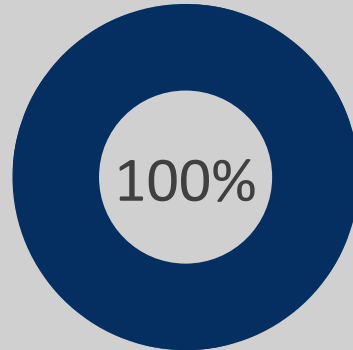
Ensure 2 x Young People's Care Homes will provide high quality care

Key achievements this quarter:

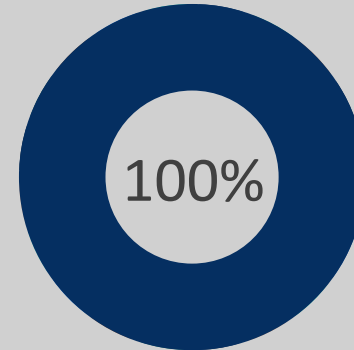
- An inspection took place in September 2023 for Fostering/ Adoption and Continuing Care – an improvement plan has been developed on the back of this and is closely scrutinized and monitored by Social Work Assurance Group (SWAG) to ensure the recommendations are being actioned and improvements being made.
- An annual report and improvement plan are in place at Hawthorn Family Learning Centre, no recent inspection.
- Our Young People's care homes last inspection was rated "Very good". Awaiting this year's inspection. Improvement plan in place.

Service Priority 8 – Strengthen the number of staff who understand the importance of trauma informed practice

Progress of actions to achieve priority



Develop a timetable of events that offer training opportunities and development for all CS staff



Increase the number of staff trained in using a trauma informed approach

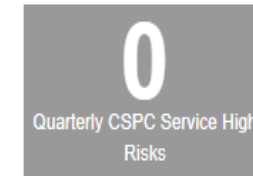
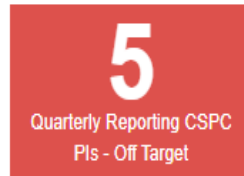
Key achievements this quarter:

- In total 64 CSCYP staff attended training in Trauma informed practice in 23/24, 31 at Level 1 and 33 at Level 2. In-house training is being rolled out throughout the service.
- In-house training is being rolled out to support corporate delivery. Staff development days ongoing with teams.

Pentana Performance Dashboard

A full review of quarterly performance data is available via Pentana (Browser login link - <https://midlothian.pentanarpm.uk/login>)

Quarter 4 - Children's Services Partnership and Communities-



Quarterly Reporting PIs - Off Target

Code & Title	Gauge	Value	Target	Next Update Due	Last Update	History
BS.CSPC.LPI.05 Child Protection: % of Core Group meetings held within 15 days fo...		86%	100%	01 Jul 2024	Q4 2023/24	
CSPC.MPI.07 % of internal/external audit actions progressing on target or complete t...		78%	95%	01 Apr 2024	Q4 2023/24	
CS.SPSO.04.1 Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage 1		6	5	01 Jul 2024	Q4 2023/24	
CS.SPSO.04.2 Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage 2		25	20	01 Jul 2024	Q4 2023/24	
CS.SPSO.05.1 Percentage of complaints at stage 1 complete within 5 working days		0%	95%	01 Jul 2024	Q4 2023/24	

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