

## Children's Services, Partnership and Communities Performance Report Q3 23/24

***“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

Midlothian continues to progress towards the key foundations of The Promise Scotland Plan 2024-2030. Committed to listening and acting on the feedback from the voices of our care experienced children and families, we secured a 3 year contact with Who Cares? Scotland to support delivery of a participation strategy and to re-fresh our current 'champion's boards'. This work is currently being shared across the entirety of Midlothian and wider partnerships to raise awareness of The Promise and Corporate Parenting duties.

## Who Cares? Scotland Awards

In August Who Cares? Scotland held the first ever Corporate Parenting awards ceremony. The aim of the awards was to recognise and celebrate transformative and innovative practice from the past ten years and most importantly highlight how this has benefitted Care Experienced people. Young people in Midlothian had nominated the council for the Stable Foundations, and Outstanding Corporate Parent categories. We were thrilled to be awarded first place in both categories.

## Referrals:

For the second quarter we are seeing a sustained reduction in referrals. This is a result of work over the past year to ensure that referrals coming into social work were appropriate and referrals for early support were redirected to TATC and the Wellbeing Service. It is important to note that Q2 also includes the summer holidays and we typically see less referrals when schools are on holiday. This said the majority of referrals are now child protection referrals and numbers remain high for a small team. Child protection is both complex and challenging and requires workers with experience to undertake assessments and manage and understand the risks. Given the ongoing workforce issues around being unable to recruit experienced workers, we continue to find it challenging with regard to the allocation of this work. The lack of experience across children and families social work practice is becoming more challenging. Newly qualified workers are unable to take child protection work although they can be a good support in helping out in very complex cases with an experienced worker taking the lead. We shall continue to review this position as a senior officer group to ensure workers are supported and to offer reassurance that we are managing risk.

## Number of referrals by Quarter

22/23				23/24				24/25	
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
2,155	2,212	2,023	2,626	2,353	2,067	1,436	1,324	1,170	932

## Family Wellbeing Service

The Family Wellbeing Service is now well established and working hard to engage with schools and early learning centres to identify families who may require additional support. The team moved to Easthouses Primary School with the start of the new school year. The new facilities will benefit both the staff and more importantly the parents as they shall have rooms where they can do some 1:1 work and have meetings.

**Team Around the Child (High School)** has been tested and introduced to support more consistent and robust planning for high school aged children. This replicates the model that has been long established and successful for early years and primary schools. Team Around the Child (TATC) allows multi agency discussion about a child and their family's needs, to create a plan about which service within the council or third sector are best placed to provide support in a timely manner. It avoids families or professionals having to send multiple referrals and provides access to the Family Wellbeing Service and other supports funded by the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.

## Foster Carers Day out

In July Family Centred Care supported 19 children and 21 Foster Carers to attend a Family fun day at Blair Drummond Safari Park. The trip was a great chance for our care experienced children and carers to come together. The feedback was very positive and carers told us they felt valued. We are now planning for a Christmas event.

### Summer Funding/Supports

Over the Summer holidays, as part of reducing inequality and poverty Children's Services gave a total of 272 families vouchers to enjoy activities which included soft play, trampolining, zoo trips, swimming, cinema, camera obscura, restaurants/clothes shopping, mini golf and laser tag. Over 45 of these activity vouchers were shared with families affected by disability who are awaiting assessment for self-directed support.

### Income Maximisation

As part of our effort to reduce Child Poverty Children's Services fund three income maximisation projects. These projects support families subject to Child Protection processes or those engaged with Hawthorn Family Learning centre and the Family Wellbeing Service. The three projects continue to support families to access their entitled benefits, grants and reduce debts. Over Q2 the projects collectively generated **£186,175 income for 39 families.**

### Child Protection and 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. Further capacity for early support also contributes to keeping children out of care.

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 a significant increase in the numbers. The main reason for registering a child's name on the register is the risk posed by parental mental health, this is a change from previous years where domestic abuse was the most common risk factor. Emotional abuse and domestic abuse remain very prevalent in registrations.

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

22/23				23/24				24/25	
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
6.9	6.9	6.8	6.7	6.5	6.6	7.2	7.4	8.6	6.8

\*Scotland Average for 22/23 is 9.7

### Rate per 1,000 population of Midlothian children on the Child Protection Register

22/23				23/24				24/25	
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
1.1	2.3	2.7	2.4	3.8	2.7	1.9	2.2	3.5	2.6

\*Scotland Average for 22/23 is 2.3

### Disability Service and Self-Directed Support

Our new Service Manager Emma Clater started in September. Emma is a very experienced service manager who shall be looking at creating a seamless transition between children, education and adult services for our service users. Emma has already made connections with key partners and is beginning to review processes and resources that will support the creation of a Children's Services Disability team. This team will hold experience and provide continuity of support for children and families needing to access this service.

This service shall also have overall responsibility for self-directed support work ensuring that assessments and reviews are undertaken in a timely way to minimise gaps in support. Furthermore this will allow a better understanding of gaps in service provision to promote strategic partnerships and commissioning to address gaps in community support and resources.

## Challenges and risks

### **Workforce:**

Midlothian continues to experience the same staffing issues encountered by other Councils. As noted in previous quarterly reports, there is a national shortage of experienced and skilled staff across the sector. This has resulted in us having to increasingly rely on locum workers who are both expensive but also do not offer continuity to service users. As already reported in previous quarters this is both a local and national issue which is trying to be addressed via the National Social Work Agency.

As a service we are seeking ways to make permanent roles more attractive and considering ways to ensure we support and retain our existing workforce.

### **Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children**

We continue to work with our Home Office colleagues to discuss 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. Over the past quarter we have supported two young people into our care. They are well supported by our local team of workers and offered the same opportunities as our local Care Experienced young people.

### **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. This work is one of the key priorities for the GIRFEC Board Mental Health subgroup. Partners are seeking solutions to support children, families and schools with the delay in assessment and support from CAMHS. We need to consider the how we deliver sustainable options locally for children and young people with ASN and Complex and Enduring Needs.

### **Financial Pressures**

Finance is an ongoing challenge across the council. Budget consultation and proposals have a significant impact on how we support Children and their families. We must ensure that we have sufficient capacity within our workforce and resources to meet the increasing demand faced by the service as the population continues to grow.

Within Children services we continue to review how we meet our statutory requirements and provide early and enhanced support which reduces the burden on statutory services. This will remain an ongoing challenge as we plan for the new financial year.

## **Priority 1: Ensure the Midlothian Wellbeing Service is aligned with other family supports across Midlothian**

### **Key achievements this quarter:**

- The same TATC process is now in place across all ages. This ensures that FWS is considered in line with all other supports available. This is a change in process for high schools but is getting positive feedback.
- Funding for specialist supports now in place, remaining funding to be used for targeted commissioning – data re gaps in service being collected via TATC.
- Data collection and performance indicators for the team have been defined and are in place. Data to now be drawn and reviewed for performance reporting and service developments. Work ongoing to create data dashboards and management information.
- Family Learning review underway. This will collate information about all the available learning in place for families, the data about staff skills and examine the gaps in skills and service provision.

## **Priority 2: Develop a transitions strategy and pathway across Children's Services, Education and Adult Health & Social Care**

#### Key achievements this quarter:

- The Service Manager (Disability) has now commenced in role and is making key connections across the partnership
- Proposal for Disability team has been agreed and planning began to realign resources and review processes.
- Transitions policy is currently in review - New Service Manager has taken over as lead.

#### Priority 3: Maintain supports offered by Family Group Decision Making and Kinship staff to ensure children remain with birth/ kin families.

#### Key achievements this quarter:

- 24 family referrals during this quarter.
- 15 family meetings held in Q2. The slight reduction in meetings aligned with staff leave and absence.
- Increased service capacity with the recruitment of a new part time worker.
- We remain on target to increase the numbers of kinship assessments completed year on year.
- Additional capacity created to complete Kinship Assessments with new worker aligned to this work. 2 workers will increase capacity but also support to ensure assessments are robust.
- The Kinship workers are now aligned with Family Based Care which will in time increase the support offered to Kinship Carers to be more in line with the offer for Foster Carers.
- Kinship policy is now out for consultation with stakeholders, colleagues and management.

#### Priority 4: Strengthen the number of staff who understand the importance of trauma informed practice

#### Key achievements this quarter:

- Of the 21 staff trained in Trauma informed practice in Q2, 8 were from Children's services
- Further training sessions in Trauma informed practice and Level 2 sessions are being rolled out throughout 24/25. Agreed 17 people to do University level qualifications.
- Psychological consultations commenced as part of staff support and wellbeing. This will be trialled until November and then decisions made about continuing or amending this service.

## Pentana Performance Dashboard

### Quarter 2 – Children’s Services, Partnerships and Communities



Title			
⊕ ▲ All Risks - CSPC		14	14
⊕ ● Childrens Services, Partnerships and Communities	5	3	7 28
⊕ ● Corporate Performance Indicators (latest)	5		6 9
⊕ ● Corporate PIs Off Target	1		4
? CSPC Service plan actions			
⊕ ✓ Ongoing Audits			1
⊕ ▲ Service High Risks (latest)		2	