

## Children's Services, Partnership and Communities Performance Report Q3 24/25

***“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 2045.

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

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. We are committed to listening and acting on the feedback from the voices of our care experienced children and families. In Q2 we secured a three year contact with Who Cares? Scotland and are working together to develop our participation strategy and refreshing our Champion's Boards to ensure wider engagement with our care experienced children and young people. This work continues to be shared with wider partners to raise awareness of The Promise and Corporate Parenting duties.

### Referrals:

#### Number of referrals by Quarter

22/23				23/24				24/25		
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
2,155	2,212	2,023	2,626	2,353	2,067	1,436	1,324	1,170	932	970

In Q3, we have seen a slight increase in referrals compared to Q2, this slight increase is considered nominal and still indicative of a sustained reduction in referrals. This is a result of continuing efforts to ensure that referrals coming into social work are appropriate and referrals for early support are redirected to TATC and the Family Wellbeing Service. Referrals coming into the service typically remain complex, child protection and require workers with experience to undertake assessments and manage risk. Recruitment and retention of experienced staff remains an issue across the service. This impacts on the movement of case work through the service due to a lack of experienced workers who are unable to lead on child protection work. To manage this, Team Leaders are providing additional support to newly qualified staff to support and develop their skills and our recruitment efforts are focused on attracting experienced workers.

### Family Wellbeing Service

The Family Wellbeing Service is now well established and continues to work alongside families, schools, health and third sector partners to support children and their families to improve low school attendance, and other wellbeing concerns. A new Team Leader took over managing the Family Wellbeing Service at the end of November 2024. Positively the team have not experienced any gap in Team Leader cover during this transition period.

The team recruited to the post of Family Learning Coordinator in August 2024 and work is underway to 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.

The following excerpts are from feedback the Family Wellbeing Service has received from children, families and other professionals:

*"...Thanks for everything you've brought me to do and where you've brought me now."*

**14 year old girl who had been unable to attend school and who has been supported to reengage in relationships and learning.**

*"We've only known you (Family Wellbeing Worker) a short while but in this time, you've done so much and made such a positive impact. I'm so glad I answered your text that time."*

**Mum of 3 Primary-school-aged children where the family required support with school attendance, finances and behaviour management for a child with additional support needs.**

*"[Family Wellbeing Practitioner] has been tremendous in supporting [8-year-old boy]. The worker was able to engage him in a way that no other professional at the time could. The worker's consistent, kind and*

*dependable approach allowed the child to develop trust and gently re-engage with his education and improve his engagement with therapy. The child has come on so far and is on track to reach a positive destination. I do not think we would have achieved this had it not been for the Family Wellbeing Practitioner! Thank you for your service. For cases like this one it demonstrates that your service is invaluable in supporting vulnerable young people in Midlothian.”*

**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.

Feedback from Education service colleagues about the TATC High School process has been positive, with people sharing that the structure and process of TATC HS is clear and supportive. Suggestions of improvement such as developing a digital consent option are now in development.

### **Foster Carers Christmas Celebrations**

In December the Family Centred Care team arranged a Christmas celebration for children, young people and their carer at ‘Jump In’. A fun time was had by all. Foster carers were also offered tickets to take children and young people to the Pantomime.

We are now planning a carers appreciation brunch in February 2025 to say thank you to all our carers for their ongoing commitment. We celebrate a range of carers who have provided care and support for over 5, 10 and 15 years and reflect on the number of children who have been supported to return home to families or move on to permanent homes.

### **Income Maximisation**

As part of our effort to reduce child poverty Children’s Services fund three income maximisation projects. These projects support families engaged with our services including Hawthorn Family Learning centre, the Family Wellbeing Service and those involved in child protection processes. The three projects continue to support families to access their entitled benefits, grants and reduce debts. Over Q3 the projects collectively **generated £132,570 income for 49 families**. This is an increase in families reached by the projects and financial gains for individual families continue to be significant. Going forward we have agreed to further improve ease and speed of access to the projects by having 1 referral route instead of 3.

### **Child Protection and Looked After away from home population**

The data evidences that our looked after population is fairly static. 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. For children who have needed permanent care it is really positive that there has been significant progress with permanence planning for a number of children within this period.

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.

In Q4 we are seeking to strengthen our data to explore the connection between poverty and those on the children on the child protection register or who are looked after.

**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	Q3
6.9	6.9	6.8	6.7	6.5	6.6	7.2	7.4	8.6	6.8	8.6

\*Scotland Average for 22/23 is 9.7

**Disability Service and Self-Directed Support**

A discrete disability team is now in place for children’s services. Work continues to recruit experienced and skilled staff to the new team. Our focus upon improving practice and consistency continues, to ensure families are receiving a fair and equitable response to assessed needs. In addition, we are working to identify gaps in service provision – engaging with families to ensure their views shape any new contracts or commissioned services.

The development of this team supports the Business Transformation Project focused on improving transitions across Education, Children’s Services and Adult Services. The introduction of the team will support better tracking of our young people who will need support as they move into adulthood.

**Midlothian House Project**

The fifth cohort of young people to be supported by the project started in Q3. There are currently forty-six young people involved with the project. Only two young people have disengaged from this support since the team began and we continue to have no tenancy breakdowns or evictions for young people supported by the team. This work has been well supported by positive working relationships with partners, most notably colleagues within housing.

**Care leavers National Movement Conference**

In November the Care leavers National Movement Conference was held. Young people and colleagues from the Midlothian House Project participated in the organisation of the conference, holding a stall showcasing the Midlothian House Project. One of our young people spoke at the conference, sharing his experience of leaving care and being supported by the team – this was a huge achievement for him and the team.

**Challenges and risks**

**Workforce:**

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 rely on locum workers who are both expensive but also do not offer continuity to service users. We are testing ways to make permanent roles more attractive to experienced staff and have had successful recruitment in Q2. In addition, we are 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 with no more foster or residential capacity to accommodate these young people. We are trying to develop more creative solutions and further capacity to meet this ongoing demand, which can only be expected to further increase in coming months as the weather starts to improve. In Q3 we have supported two young people into our care, one of whom was a spontaneous arrival. We are also waiting a further 2 referrals. 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 remains a significant delay in families waiting for an appointment with CAMHS regarding neurodevelopmental (ND) concerns. NHS is in the process of developing a new pathway to support ND assessment and support. This work is in its early stages but seeks to ensure families have reduced waiting times for assessment and those that do not need clinical input are supported via other means. Midlothian is an active part of the consultation and planning and the Framework has been shared with the GIRFEC board for feedback and sign off.

Partners are seeking solutions to support children, families and schools with the delay in assessment and support from NHS. We are currently working with the Innovation Unit to develop a bid for Lottery funding to support coproduced community initiatives to improve support and inclusion for those families impacted by neurodivergence.

### **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 TATC process is now consistent across all ages. This ensures that FWS is considered in line with all other supports available.
- Feedback from Education service colleagues about the TATC High School process has been positive, with people sharing that the structure and process of TATC High School is clear and supportive. Suggestions of improvement such as developing a digital consent option have been taken on board and are in development.
- Feedback from children, families and professionals about the Family Wellbeing Service remains highly positive, with a recurring theme of strength in building relationships with hard to reach children and families identified.
- Remaining WFWF funding has been used for targeted commissioning informed by data regarding gaps in service being collected via TATC.
- Data collection and performance indicators for the team have been defined and are in place. Data is now being drawn and reviewed for performance reporting and service developments. Work ongoing to create data dashboards and management information.
- The Family Learning review underway. This will collate information about all the available learning opportunities in place for families, the data about staff skills and examine the gaps in skills and service provision to support future planning.

### **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. Both this manager and a Service Manager for Adult Services are leading the

GIRFEC work plan for Transitions. This includes policies and procedures that direct transitions from Education and Children's Services to Adult Services – including those impacted by complex needs, learning and physical disability, mental health and other acute vulnerabilities.

- The Children's Services Disability team is now in place with social workers and practitioners. Recruitment for a permanent team leader is in process.
- Data collection and tracking is being established to allow long term planning for those with complex needs and consideration of support packages as they move through the system.

**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:**

- 31 family referrals were made to FGDM during this quarter.
- 17 family meetings held in Q3.
- We have increased the service capacity with the recruitment of a new part time worker.
- Additional capacity has been created to complete Kinship Assessments with a new worker aligned to this work. 2 workers will increase capacity but also support to ensure assessments are robust.
- We remain on target to increase the numbers of kinship assessments completed year on year.
- The Kinship workers are now aligned with Family Centred 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**

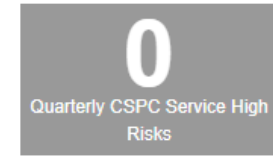
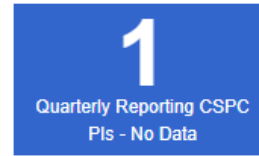
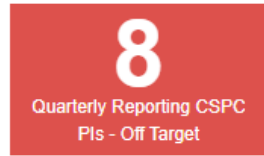
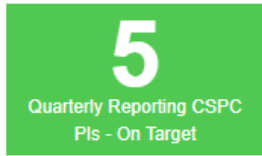
**Key achievements this quarter:**

- 42 CSYP staff were trained in Trauma informed practice in Q3, 36 at Level 1 and 6 at Level 2 bringing the total for the 24/25 year to 97.
- Further training sessions in Level 1 and 2 Trauma informed practice are being rolled out throughout 24/25.
- Children's Services and Learning and Development have agreed 17 Children's Services staff will be supported to complete University level qualifications – all of these course support rights based and trauma informed practice.
- Psychological consultations have been introduced of staff support and wellbeing. Much of this is focused on ensuring staff are supported with the challenging nature of the work and they have opportunities to reflect on the impact of our work. This was a pilot until December 24 and will be reviewed as part of the Children's Services staff survey.

# Pentana Performance Dashboard – Q3 24/25

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

## Quarter 3 - 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.04 Child Protection: % of Core Group meetings held within a 8 week p...		85%	100%	01 Apr 2025	Q3 2024/25	
BS.CSPC.LPI.05 Child Protection: % of Core Group meetings held within 15 days fo...		87%	100%	01 Apr 2025	Q3 2024/25	
CSPC.MPI.02 Average number of working days lost due to sickness absence (cumul...		9.52	9.00	01 Apr 2025	Q3 2024/25	
CSPC.MPI.04 % of invoices paid within 30 days of invoice receipt (cumulative)		94%	95%	01 Apr 2025	Q3 2024/25	
CSPC.MPI.07 % of internal/external audit actions progressing on target or complete t...		85.71%	95%	01 Apr 2025	Q3 2024/25	
CS.SPSO.04.1 Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage 1		8	5	01 Apr 2025	Q3 2024/25	
CS.SPSO.05.1 Percentage of complaints at stage 1 complete within 5 working days		0%	100%	01 Apr 2025	Q3 2024/25	
CS.SPSO.05.2 Percentage of complaints at stage 2 complete within 20 working days		0%	100%	01 Apr 2025	Q3 2024/25	

← 1 of 1 →