

Children's Services, Partnership and Communities Quarter Three Performance Report 2021/22

Midlothian 

Cabinet
Tuesday 08 March 2022
Item 5.3

01. Progress in delivery of strategic outcomes

Our Vision: 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.

Within children's services Q3 has continued to be impacted by Covid and some restrictions, including the increase in number of staff who have had to self-isolate. Staff continue to work on a rota basis within Eskdail Court until such times that Scottish Government guidance allows for a return of all staff.

There has been a large increase in the number of referrals in Q3 in comparison to Q2 (3794 to 5791). Re-referrals made up 72% of these. Police referrals into the service accounted for 37% of all referrals which is a 6% reduction from last year at this time. 21% of the referrals were for financial assistance a 12% increase from last year. Further work on this area is being undertaken.

UNCRC

The Supreme Court on Wednesday 6th October 2021 [handed down judgment](#) that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill was unlawfully made. The Supreme Court rules that the Scottish Parliament did not have the power to pass such legislation. The UNCRC Bill will now return to the Scottish Parliament so the Supreme Court's concerns can receive further consideration. Hopefully, we will see the revised bill make its way through the Scottish Parliament again soon so children's rights across Scotland can be upheld through the UNCRC

National Child Protection Guidance

The new National Child Protection Guidance has been published. There is a national implementation group which Midlothian are part of and we have between 18-24 months to fully implement all the actions. Across the Lothian's and with Scottish Borders we are commissioning a person to write local procedures.

Equity and Inclusion

The Equity and Inclusion GIRFEC subgroup is well established and a plan has been approved with key areas of work identified: ASN review, attendance and engagement in education; nurture; poverty and attainment and family learning.

Reducing Poverty

The income maximisation project has demonstrated that this was a successful pilot which shall continue to be a part of children's services work going forward. This early intervention approach of supporting families to ensure they access the benefits they are entitled to, is a key support in helping families get out of the poverty trap. Covid-19 has impacted hugely on families financial position and therefore the need to ensure that we continue to offer this service is required to try and reduce the impact of poverty. The child poverty working group led by CLLE is revising their action plan.

CLLE

As part of the Community Learning and Development Partnership Strategy increasing our engagement with local people to pre pandemic levels was a key priority. Our target for 2021/22 was 4000 engagements, by the end of Q3 we have exceeded this by 612. 1,817 of the 4,612 engagement were with people and families living in the 40% areas of deprivation. It is important to keep this momentum and building local people's confidence to engage with us both online, in person and blended going forward over the next two years our target is 7,000 plus engagements. We as a service have also exceeded our target of providing one to one employability or positive destination support to 685 individuals exceeding our target by 185. The communities team have supported 66 groups mainly with operational support and also an asset transfer request progress to panel decision.

Supporting Midlothian's Communities to improve outcomes through 3 Year Grant Funding (2022-2055)

CLLE staff in partnership with elected members have successfully assessed 61 applications (worth £4,455,709) and provided support to 28 organisations to reduce carbon emissions, increase learning and health outcomes, whilst improving economic circumstances and thereby reducing poverty. A transition fund was also created to support 4 specific groups. Robust support and monitoring arrangements are in place to be able to assess the impact the funding has to improve outcomes with communities.

Supporting local people to secure employment or learning opportunities – Improving skills, for learning, life and work.

Our employability programmes for all ages have experienced an increase in numbers of local people accessing them. There is also a slow but steady increase in the number of employers accessing the employment recruitment incentive which we operate as part of our youth guarantee support. Third sector employers have embraced the opportunity to support young people through the Kickstart Gateway programme which CLLE manages and operates for them. In addition the service has offered Kickstart employment to 3 young people. The completion rate for modern apprenticeships operated through CLLE and the uptake of foundation apprenticeship is a positive picture especially with the challenges faced by young people and employers. We have also supported four third sector organisations including RUTS for example to expand their employability offer through youth guarantee funding. We have also supported 863 adults or families to engage with one or more of our 115 learning opportunities offered across our first steps to certificated programmes. In partnership with city deal we operate a dedicated parental employability support programme the numbers for this programme have doubled over the last two quarters. We are currently planning a consultation with local people to give them a voice to influence the new offers for adult learning and employability going forward.

Supporting Young People through youth work and wider learning opportunities

We have supported the youth platform to engage with over 1,700 young people through their recent young people's consultation and ran the youth elections for the Scottish Youth Parliament. Our Youth work and Duke of Edinburgh groups have increased their offer, and street work is now on a rotation therefore reaching increased number of geographical communities. The youth work service has provided opportunities for 2641 young people. Our young people's positive destination project at Croft Street Hub has successfully recruited for the Dec 2022 intake.

Instrumental Music Service

Staff have returned to face to face delivery and substantially increased number of pupils being taught. Organising staff into clusters has reduced travelling time and made the service more efficient and provided better continuity to pupils who have the same instructor at both primary and secondary school.

02. Challenges and Risks

Q3 21/22:

National Care Service Consultation. This is taking up a significant amount of time to ensure that everyone has the information they require to make an informed decision.

Impact of Covid-19

Additional kinship placement and without additional support a risk some placements may break down. The need to prioritise earlier intervention by including families at the earliest point of contact. Family Group Decision Making service requires additional workers to make a difference and improve outcomes that are aligned to the Promise, by ensure all children and young people remain Midlothian with their family and local community. We are currently pursuing external funding to support this.

Additional issues around children and young people having access to early mental health support is an area of work being prioritised.

Over the course of quarter 3 referrals into Children's Services have risen from 1107 to 1578. The largest increase in referral reason was financial requests rising from 177 to 517 over the three month period. Again, we are reviewing this area to establish what actions are required to divert and/or sign post to other services

Whilst we continue to analyse this data in further detail via audit activity and strengthen current working processes we are acutely aware of the increasing demand that the rise in referrals has on workers and resources. We recently applied for external funding to employ an income maximisation worker however this was unsuccessful. With a predicted continued rise in families who are subject to low incomes and resulting poverty we now need to be able to secure funding to support the development of targeted resources in this area.

Staffing

As with other parts of the Council the impact of the pandemic has had a significant impact on our staffing rations. Thanks to the flexibility and commitment of our staff we have been able to manage this. This should ease as the national Covid position changes.

Residential Care Homes

Currently, there is a national shortage within the residential children's workforce children's services. This is particularly so for children who have complex care needs such as autism and ASN. Recently we have had to place 2 children within our own care homes because of lack of provision across Scotland, both from external placement breakdowns. Building local capacity was not without issue and required a great deal of staff commitment, intensive autism training and support for staff. Although these placement are at an early stage both children are settled and doing extremely well. Given the circumstances the Care Inspectorate were very supportive and viewed the care planning as creative, inclusive and a good example of overcoming bureaucratic barriers to put the needs of the children first.

However, this is a growing areas of need and we need to consider the longer term impact on our resources. We still need to ensure children are placed within their communities wherever possible. At the same time we need to ensure we meet our Continuing Care obligations by making sur young people remain within their care placements for longer.

There is an increasing need to deliver a more sustainable option locally for children and young people with ASN and complex care needs. An areas we are exploring.

Foster Care

As with the residential sector there is a national and UK shortage of foster carers. There are similar issues in relation to young people remaining in their care for longer, something we aspire to, whilst trying to find capacity to place newly accommodated children or children who are at risk. Midlothian is similar to other local authorities' in that its existing foster carers are becoming an aging population who are seeking to end their fostering carer. There are many challenges with attracting a young foster care cohort some of which we have identified. Midlothian Council's recruitment statistics compared with other local authorities remains encouraging. Nonetheless, we recently recruited an experienced foster carer to support us connect with Midlothian's growing population. Interestingly, our numbers of potential adopters has more than doubled though the numbers of children awaiting adoption in Scotland has significantly reduced. These potential adopters may be an another areas to explore.

Kinship Care

Another growing area as discussed at the beginning of the report. In essence, our resources and kinship services are inextricably linked and rely on each other to rise to the pressure and demands of keeping our children and young in the local community.

Instrumental Music Service

Securing suitable rooms for music within schools remains an issue, particularly with Covid restrictions in place but staff have secured alternative venues to deliver e.g. Kings Park Church

A service review will begin in January 2022 to re design a service that meets the needs of the increasing number of children who wish to access this service and look at the wider creative arts delivery across schools

Childrens Services, Partnerships and Communities



Successes and Challenges

Corporate Performance Indicators (latest)

Pls ● 1 ✔ 11 ? 0 📄 8

Service Plan Pls (latest)

Pls ● 4 ✔ 14 ? 0 📄 15

Corporate Pls Off Target

Pls ● 1

% of Service Pls that are on target/ have reached their target. (does not include Corporate Pls)

Service Plan Pls Off Target

Pls ● 4

Participant satisfaction with CLL services

Number of families who attend supper club

Foundation Apprenticeships completed through CLL

Number of CHs deferred

Service High Risks (latest)

▲ 1

Workforce capacity

All Risks - CSPC

Risks ▲ 13 ✔ 14

Key Pls

- Off Target
- ✔ On Target
- 📄 Data Only
- ? Data Not Yet Available

Key Pls

- Off Target
- ✔ On Target
- 📄 Data Only
- ? Data Not Yet Available

Key Risks

- ▲ High Risk/Medium Risk
- ✔ Low Risk