

Fife Children's Services Plan 2026-2029

Children's Services Plan 2026-2029

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Introduction

Children in Fife is a partnership of public and third sector organisations that work together to safeguard, support and promote the wellbeing of all children in Fife.

We believe that our children and young people are our future. By investing in them, we aim to ensure that they have the best start in life, with the chance to develop, to fulfil their potential and to thrive in all aspects of their lives. It will enable them to contribute to making lives better for everyone.

The Fife Children's Services Plan sets out how we will continue to work together to achieve this aim, building on the progress that we have made over recent years. We will do this by:

- Working more closely with children, young people and families – as we continue to redesign and review how we deliver our services;
- Building on the progress that we have already made towards improving outcomes and ensuring fairer life chances for all of our children and young people;
- And setting the highest ambitions to ensure that our children, young people and families can access the support they need where they need it, when they need it and for as long as they need it.

We are ambitious to achieve this as a partnership, ensuring that our children, young people and families get the support that they need and deserve, and to help 'Make Fife a place where every child and young person matters'.



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Chair, Children in Fife

Head of Service, Children and Families and Justice Social Work Services

Fife Council



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Vice-Chair, Children in Fife

Head of Primary & Preventative Care Services, Fife Health and Social Care Partnership

1. Children in Fife

The Role of Children in Fife

Children in Fife is the Children's Services Planning Partnership for Fife. It includes a range of public and third sector agencies that work together to safeguard, support and promote the wellbeing of children and young people across Fife.

At the end of this section of the Plan, you will find an overview of the partners involved in the Plan and the range of ways in which they support children, young people and families.

Children in Fife oversees the development and delivery of the Children's Services Plan, which is a statutory requirement for Children's Services Planning Partnerships (CSPPs) in Scotland, under the terms of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

Our partnership plays a significant role in supporting delivery of national policies for children and young people, as well as supporting joint inspection arrangements for children's services.

Members of Children in Fife work with the Scottish Government, other national partners, and colleagues from partnerships across Scotland to share practice and learning – through their involvement in a range of national working groups and improvement programmes.

In section 4, you will find an outline of some of this work.



Our Vision and Values

Our Vision

Children in Fife is committed to promoting, supporting and safeguarding the wellbeing of all children and young people in Fife.

We recognise that the children, young people and families of Fife have experiences, needs and aspirations that are many and varied.

Ours is a challenging goal to achieve. There are many ways in which we already do this well, but there are also significant areas where we can improve. This Plan sets out the work that we need to do to address the most significant of these areas for further improvement.

At the heart of this work is our Vision, our shared ambition as a Children's Services Partnership:

'Making Fife a place where every child and young person matters'

Our Values

Working together to achieve our vision of 'Making Fife a place where every child and young person matters' is important to everyone. By ensuring we have a shared set of values, irrespective of which service or organisation we work for, we are confident that our priorities and plans will allow us to work together to achieve our ambitions.

A shared understanding of our values is key to evaluating not only what we do, but how we do it. Our values:

- Ensure that our work has a clear sense of purpose, underpinned by strong guiding principles.
- Support our focus on collective leadership and empowerment, which are strong features of the work we carry out as a Partnership.
- Underpin self-assessment of our collaborative working. This is an integral part of the How Good is Our Family Support Work Framework and pivotal to identifying common priorities and shared goals.
- Influence the way we behave and work together.

Our shared values demonstrate our shared commitment to improving outcomes for our children, young people and families through:

Compassion, Ambition, Respect, Collaboration, and Integrity.

Our Services for Children and Young People

This section provides an overview of some of the key services contributing to Children in Fife. It includes information on:

The contribution of **children's services** in Fife – those partners whose core purpose is to work directly with children and young people.

The contribution of a range of **related services** – which work with households and communities, including families with children, and whose support is vital to achieving the aims of this plan.

The section does not provide a comprehensive overview of the wide scope of partnership working overseen by Children in Fife, but aims to provide some insight into:

- The scale and nature of support for the wellbeing of children and young people in Fife supported through core funding of children's services.
- How the partnership uses the opportunity provided by additional funding to improve partnership working, across children's and related services.

Section 4 of this Plan provides an overview of how we measure the impact of our partnership working. Further information regarding measures of impact for our work to improve these services can be found in the Fife Children's Services Annual Report 2025-26.



How our core service provision supports children & young people in Fife (universal, additional, intensive)	Our core investment in children and young people	How we use additional investment and innovation to support partnership aims	Our investment in wider partnership aims
Fife Council Education Directorate is responsible for pre-school early learning and childcare, and school education in Fife. It provides universal support for children and young people from pre-school to school leaving age, through Early Learning and Childcare Settings, Primary and Secondary Schools. It provides a continuum of support for learners with additional needs – via mainstream and enhanced provision within settings and through special schools, for those who require intensive support with complex needs. This provision is supported by a range of specialist central teams. It has a strong focus on reducing inequality, closing the poverty-related attainment gap and improving outcomes for vulnerable groups (e.g. those living in poverty, the care-experienced).	Budget for core service provision of Education Directorate in Fife: £542.411m <i>2026-27 Revenue Budget</i>	A team of experienced Principal Teachers (PTs) Pedagogy work alongside cluster school leadership teams to support closing the attainment gap for disadvantaged learners. A Family Engagement Team provides individual family and pupil support for learners who are struggling to remain engaged with learning. The work of the Family Engagement Team provides additional capacity to support families across Fife, and supplements school-based support that is funded through the Pupil Equity Fund. Additional funding from the Scottish Government provides access to counselling services in secondary schools, and community-based mental health supports for children, young people and their families. These are focused on prevention and early intervention and are part of a whole-system approach to supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.	Strategic Equity Fund £3.345m including 0.963m Pedagogy PTs; £0.881m Family Engagement Team Pupil Equity Fund £10.456m School Counselling £1.099m Community Mental Health £1.057m <i>2026/27 Budgets</i>

Children, Families and Justice Social Work, Fife Council

How our core service provision supports children & young people in Fife (universal, additional, intensive)	Our Core Investment in Children and Young People	How we use additional investment and innovation to support partnership aims	Our investment in wider partnership aims
The Children, Families and Justice social work service is part of the Communities Directorate and is responsible for providing a range of services and supports (statutory and voluntary) with a focus on family resilience to improve outcomes for children, their families and adults across Fife. The focus of the service is to provide a relationship and strengths-based approach where staff are trauma-informed and offer support tailored to individual needs, with a focus on the wellbeing of vulnerable or disadvantaged individuals who experience complex needs and challenges as well as those who require support at an early stage and ongoing advice and guidance. A new service structure was established in April 2025 including the Early help and Support Teams, Enhanced Children and Family Teams and specialist teams including Children Affected by Disability, Youth Intervention Service and Multi Systemic Therapy – Child Abuse and Neglect Model. These services will strengthen the	Budget for core service provision: £75.003m <i>2026-27 Revenue Budget</i>	Funding from the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund enabled a review of area-based support across Fife. The investment for this preventative approach sits at £8 million. The review led to service transformation by merging separate Family Support and Social Work teams into area-based multi-disciplinary Early Help & Support Teams across Fife's 7 localities; these provide a more flexible and preventative model of support for families. They are supported by locality-based Enhanced Children and Family Teams, which meet all of the Child Protection and statutory requirements. The Early Help and Support Teams provide an essential interface for children's services with the No Wrong Door approach. The ability to be able to ensure strong partnership links at the universal and additional level is crucial to embedding the NWD approach and in	Funding for the Early Help and Support model has been mainstreamed into the Children and Families Service budget, with a commitment to the redesign of the current workforce. This is continuing to establish, develop and embed in Fife.

community support offer and reduce the number of children becoming looked after away from home.		supporting families to get what they need from relevant services at the right time and for as long as they need to build strength and self-sufficiency.	
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Early Help and Support Teams

As part of the WFW funding and whole system change, the Senior Practitioners (SPs) in Schools test of change was established. 5 Senior Practitioners were recruited from the C&F service who undertook an active leadership role in 5 High Schools across Fife to drive forward confidence and improvements in practice and partnership working.

The role was able to provide additional evidence alongside the Homemakers Test of Change to underpin the vision of a wider early intervention plan from Children and Families (C&F) Social Work. The project evidenced greater collective awareness of targeted support, having a more aligned joint approach across the partnership and clarified next steps in the transformational change needed in the delivery of C&F social work. These Tests of Change complemented the redesign which was also part of a planned focus on providing a more streamlined and accessible service for families.

The Early Help and Support Teams, (along with a range of learning from both within the service and from other Local Authorities) were formed using some of the learning from the Senior Practitioners in Schools project and the Homemakers Test of Change which evidenced that consistent and more effective partnership provided a better outcome for children, young people and families. Staff (SW and Education) also reported a more effective and positive working relationship which built confidence in process, practice and managing risk

The Early Help & Support Teams focus on delivering a range of effective interventions which are community based, building resilience and capacity through a whole family model which promotes effective partnership working, minimises duplication and promotes a collaborative model with children, young people and their families at the centre. These teams comprise of Family Support Workers, 1 Senior Family Support Worker, Social Workers, 3 Senior Practitioners and a Team Manager. A higher level of staff resource is allocated to each team to ensure that families receive the right support at the right time.

Further information on the service re-design process and development of the Early Help and Support Teams, including specific evidence of impact, can be found in the Fife Children's Services Annual Report 2025-26.

Fife Health and Social Care Partnership’s Community Children’s Services deliver a coordinated range of universal, targeted and specialist nursing and allied health professional services (e.g. Speech and Language Therapy) to support children, young people and families, reduce inequalities and improve health and wellbeing outcomes across Fife.

Early Years and Family Support

Health Visiting Services deliver the *Universal Health Visiting Pathway (UHVP)* from pre-birth to school entry, providing prevention, early intervention, safeguarding and proportionate enhanced support for families with additional needs.

The Family Nurse Partnership offers an intensive, evidence-based, targeted programme for young first-time mothers facing increased vulnerability.

Targeted Breastfeeding Support provides additional help to families requiring support to initiate and sustain breastfeeding, working closely with maternity and early years services.

School-Aged Children and Education Settings

Fife School Nursing Service provides a universal and targeted offer to school-aged children and young people, including self-referral, health assessment, safeguarding, emotional wellbeing support and early intervention, delivered in partnership with education and other agencies. The Special School Nursing Teams provide targeted nursing support to children with complex health needs in specialist education settings, working collaboratively with education staff, families and wider multi-agency partners to enable safe, inclusive access to learning.

Community and Specialist Children’s Services

Children and Young People’s Community Nursing Services deliver targeted nursing care in community settings for children and young people with complex, long-term or acute health needs, supporting children to remain in their own home. The Children and Young People’s Occupational Therapy (CYPOT) Service works alongside community nursing teams to deliver holistic assessment and intervention, supporting children with complex needs to participate in daily life, education and community activities.

Child Development Centres across Fife provide targeted, parental education, multidisciplinary assessment and support for children with developmental delay and additional support needs, enabling early identification and coordinated care planning.

Targeted and Specialist Pathways

The Community Immunisation Service provides a targeted delivery model to improve equitable access to vaccinations, focusing on outreach, catch-up programmes and underserved populations.

Sexual Health Services offer universal and targeted provision, including self-referral access, to support sexual wellbeing, prevent ill-health and reduce inequalities across the population.

Fife Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is a service for children and young people up to 18 years of age who are experiencing persistent, complex or severe mental health difficulties.

CAMHS is a multidisciplinary service that includes Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Mental Health Nursing, Clinical Psychology, Child Psychotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Dietetics, Systemic Psychotherapy, Art Therapy and Social Work.

The service provides specialist assessment and a range of evidence-based therapeutic interventions for individuals, groups, families/carers and wider support networks through a range of different teams including early intervention, locality-based core teams, intensive home treatment, urgent assessment and teams focusing on trauma and vulnerable groups. It also offers consultation and supervision to professionals supporting children and young people with mental health difficulties.

Police Scotland



Police Scotland contribute to a variety of partnership groups and programmes, including Children in Fife Governance Group, the Corporate Parenting Board – as well as being a key partner for Child Protection.

Fife Division serves the Fife Council Local Authority and is structured into three local commands of West, Central and East Fife.

Seven territorial command areas make up the three local command areas, which share their boundaries with the Fife Council localities. The Fife Division community policing teams that work with community partners to prevent crime, address local concerns and plan policing.

Fifes policing priorities link directly with the priorities in the Plan for Fife and include Protecting the Vulnerable.

Case Study: Fife Bairns' Hoose Pathfinder

The Fife Bairns' Hoose Pathfinder brings together police, health, social work, justice and third sector partners under one roof to reduce re-traumatisation and improve outcomes.

Bairns' Hoose is Scotland's adaptation of the Icelandic 'Barnahus' (meaning 'children's house') model. The model aims to reduce the trauma often caused by multiple interviews by bringing together child protection, health, justice, and recovery services in one setting. This integrated approach focuses on trauma-informed practices to support recovery in a safe, respectful, and welcoming environment.



Fife is one of six pathfinder projects across Scotland which will test the Bairns' Hoose Standards, inform the development of a Bairns' Hoose blueprint, and identify learning around methods, practices and resources required for implementation.

The Third Sector in Fife

The third sector in Fife plays a significant and often essential role in supporting children, young people and families. Its contribution complements statutory provision and is particularly important for prevention, early intervention and community-based support.

There is a wide range of third sector organisations delivering services across Fife. Some examples of key organisations and partnership initiatives are included below.

Fife Voluntary Action (FVA)

[Fife Voluntary Action](#) plays a key strategic and enabling role in strengthening the third sector's contribution to children's services. As the local Third Sector Interface (TSI), FVA acts as a bridge between the third sector and statutory partners.



FVA's role centres on:

- Representation and influence: Ensuring the voice of the voluntary sector is represented within multi-agency planning structures.
- Partnership building: Facilitating collaboration between third sector organisations and statutory services.
- Capacity building: Supporting organisations through training, advice, funding guidance and organisational development.
- Information and co-ordination: Sharing knowledge, promoting best practice and coordinating networks.

Early Years Collective

The Early Years Collective is a partnership initiative led by [Fife Gingerbread](#), [The Cottage Family Centre](#), and [Home-Starts in Fife](#). It provides holistic, early intervention support for vulnerable families with children aged 0-8 years old across Fife, aiming to support parents to ensure that they can provide a safe and nurturing environment and provide the best start in life for their children.



Key Impacts of the Early Years Collective:

- Targeted Early Intervention: The service supports families facing challenges such as poverty, isolation, and poor mental health, aiming to prevent the need for statutory measures.
- Improved Family Wellbeing: The partnership approach has improved the wellbeing and routine of both children and parents, as well as improving parental engagement in their children's play-based learning.

• Advocacy for early intervention: Promoting preventative, community-based approaches. This work contributes to: • Stronger third sector involvement in service design and delivery • Improved collaboration and integration across agencies • Enhanced capacity and sustainability of voluntary organisation	• Empowering Parents: It provides approachable and non-judgmental support, which increases the resilience and capacity of parents and lone parents to navigate complex barriers. • Improved Outcomes for Children: By engaging with families with identified wellbeing concerns, the collective aims to ensure children remain safe and healthy within their own homes.
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<u>Barnardo's</u> – delivers targeted support for children, young people and families across the Fife through community-based services and tailored interventions. Key services include: • The <u>Fife Stronger Families Service</u> works with families with children aged 0-12, providing intensive support to reduce the risk of family breakdown. • The <u>Children's Rights and Advocacy Service</u> ensures that the voices of children and young people, including those in care, on protection plans, or with disabilities are heard in decisions. • <u>Barnardo's Empowering Change (BEC)</u> supports families impacted by substance use or alcohol, focusing on improving family relationships and reducing risks within the home. • <u>Fife Substance Use Education Service</u>: facilitates interactive, educational sessions with all primary (P7) and secondary schools (S3) in Fife on substance use; supports S2 teachers to deliver alcohol education; and provides online and in person support for parents and carers.	 <u>Clued Up</u> – provides a comprehensive “youth friendly” substance use support and information service for young people under-26. The project provides education, prevention, early intervention and diversion for young people affected by their own or someone else’s drug, alcohol, or substance use. Key areas include: • One-to-One Support: Assigning key workers for personal development, including individualised work plans, mentoring, and support with mental health and wellbeing. • Street Work & Outreach: Engaging with young people in their own environments, including "street work" on Friday nights which aims to reduce the negative impact of underage drinking or drug use on under 16’s and the wider community. • Employability Services: Offering a specialised service for 16–26-year-olds affected by substance use. • Young Person Initiatives: Running youth forums, peer mentoring, and a dedicated P7 transition program to support the move to high school.	
<u>DAPL</u> (Drugs, Alcohol and Psychotherapy Limited) – provide counselling and support services to children and young people who are experiencing emotional distress. Key areas include:	 <u>Includem</u> – provides a range of services in Fife including intensive, relationship-based support to vulnerable children, young people and their families. Key projects and services include:	

• School Counselling Service: DAPL delivers counselling in most of Fife's secondary schools as part of the Our Minds Matter framework. DAPL provides 1:1 psychotherapeutic counselling for secondary-aged pupils. • Primary Art Therapy: DAPL provides support to children, offering Art Therapy in Primary 5 through to Primary 7.	• Keeping Connected: is a short-term, community-based mentoring project focusing on mental health and wellbeing for young people in S1 to S6 (up to 26 if care experienced) across Fife. • Includem also provides targeted support for teenagers and young people aged 13-21 and their families, often working alongside social work and education to provide tailored interventions.
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The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) play a key role in protecting children at risk. SCRA operate within the Children's Hearing System and work closely with partner agencies to support children and families referred to and participating within children's hearings.

SCRA is represented on various partnership groups, including Bairns' Hoose Project Board, Fife CYPIC and the Corporate Parenting Board. They are also represented on the Communities of Practice Model pilot.

SCRA support a range of programmes for children and young people with care experience and/or experience of the Children's Hearing System, such as the Modern Apprentice programme.

Other Services

Fife Housing Services Fife Housing Services support young people and families to access a range of housing options across Fife. The service is represented on the Corporate Parenting Board and plays an important role in preparing young people, particularly those with care experience, for independent living by prioritising their preferences and needs in housing decisions. Housing Services provide a range of support to help young people build independence and achieve long-term stability. This includes Housing Options Interviews with trained professionals, relationship-based support delivered in partnership with the National Housing Project, income maximisation and benefits advice, and other tailored support.	Fife Community Learning and Development Fife's Youth Work Partnership is a subgroup of the Community Learning and Development Partnership —consisting of Third Sector Youth Organisations, Fife Council and community groups— working together to strengthen youth work services. The Youth Work Partnership supports and tracks the delivery of the Youth Work Partnership Strategy (2025-28). The overarching purpose of the strategy is 'to encourage and support young people aged 10-25 years to achieve their potential, ensuring they are valued, encouraged, and supported, with their achievements recognised and celebrated.' Further information about the work of the Youth Work Partnership can be found within the full strategy document.
Fife College Fife College supports children, young people and families to pursue educational opportunities, leading to improved outcomes. Fife College contributes to several partnership groups and collaborates with key services, such as Education, to provide a range of opportunities and pathways for learners across Fife.	University of St Andrews The University of St Andrews is represented on Fife's Corporate Parenting Board and offers a range of support for incoming students from diverse backgrounds. The University's Student Services Team has a dedicated Access and Inclusion Adviser who provides bespoke support for various groups of young people including care-experienced, carers, refugees, etc. There is also a Disability Team

	that provides a range of support including one-to-one support sessions, individual support plans, tailored resources and more.
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Our Engagement with Children & Young People

Children in Fife continues to develop its approach to meaningful engagement with children and young people. Children and young people's right to participate in decisions that affect them is enshrined in the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024.

Over the course of the last Children's Services Plan (2023-26), children and young people's participation and engagement was a key priority, with improvement work led by a multi-agency Children's Rights Oversight Group (CROG) and an Engagement and Participation Subgroup.

Several partnership tools and resources were developed to support Children in Fife's approach to engagement. This included:

- Delivery of a refreshed [Participation and Engagement \(P&E\) Framework](#)— a co-produced tool to support agencies to better engage children and young people in decision-making processes.
- Creation of a **Children's Rights Charter**— a co-produced resource, developed with Children's Rights Ambassadors and a Youth Empowerment Panel, outlining fundamental children's rights in an accessible format.
- Creation and embedding of **good practice guidance for child-friendly complaints**— a consistent set of principles, with an approach that now contributes to accountability under the UNCRC.



Our partners have also worked to improve participation and engagement within their individual services. For example, a [Stigma Toolkit](#)— developed by Fife Gingerbread in partnership with families, project staff and practitioners in Fife— provides a practical response to addressing stigma with research, tools and training to improve practice. Other areas of improvement include Fife CAMHS child friendly "Tell Us What You Think" feedback webpage and Education's universal data gathering through Health & Wellbeing and Pupilwise surveys.

Children in Fife is committed to engaging with care-experienced children and young people. We recognise that engagement must be 'ongoing, accessible and grounded in trust', as detailed in [Plan 24-30](#). In Fife, collaboration with the Carolina House Trust and the House Project Trust (Fife) enables young people to take part in group discussions, peer-led activity and co-design, which directly shape services and support.

Moving forward, the CROG will continue embedding resources like the P&E Framework and the Children's Rights Charter and assessing impact across services. Furthermore, a new accreditation framework will be developed to measure maturity of participation and engagement across single-agencies.

There will also be an increased focus on using Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments (CRWIAs) to ensure rights and equality considerations are embedded into all decision-making and service redesign processes. Several improvement actions in the plan for 2026-29 will undergo CRWIAs, including our priority to strengthen Children in Fife's use of data to support children's early development.

Further information on improving engagement with children and young people can be found in Fife Children's Services Annual Report 2025-26.

2. The context for our Children's Services Plan

How our approach to children's services has developed over time

Background

Planned work within the Fife Children's Services Plan 2026-29 builds on a number of approaches that have been developing over the last fifteen years or so. The figure on the next page provides an overview of some of the key events over this period.

During the 2010's Children in Fife established a **nurture-based approach** to partnership working and improvement. This reflected developments in the wider policy landscape, with a strong focus on early intervention and prevention following the publication of the Christie report. Through this work, the Partnership developed a range of **evidence-based approaches** for family support and child development that have continued to be used – or that have informed subsequent developments in – partnership approaches.

A key element in the development of these evidence-based approaches has been a long-established focus on the use of **Quality Improvement Methodology** to support improvement. This has been supported by the work of the Fife **Children's and Young People's Improvement Collaborative (CYPIC)**. The Fife work of CYPIC members has often been pioneering, with Fife work being recognised through national awards and scaled at a national programme level. A clear example is the National Improving Writing Programme, which originated in Fife and has since been scaled up to primary 4 learners across 20 local authority areas.

The Covid pandemic interrupted the development of these approaches and prevented many programmes being delivered face-to-face. It also interrupted arrangements for self-evaluation and quality assurance. The emergency resilience response required a shift towards closer working with the wider Fife Partnership, through **place-based approaches**.

Through the current Fife Children's Services Plan 2023-26, Children in Fife has been successful in:

- Improving the use of the partnership's collective resources to support system-level improvement. Use of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund has supported a range of measures to strengthen partnership working and evidence-based improvement.
- Re-establishing – and further developing – key elements of an evidence-based nurture approach for early intervention.
- Beginning to re-establish a more rigorous approach to self-evaluation and quality assurance.
- Beginning to support a more strategic use of Quality Improvement Methodology, as a basis for ongoing continuous improvement.
- Continuing to develop place-based approaches, and to support the ongoing development of the No Wrong Door model.

Figure: the evolution of our partnership approach to improving Fife Children's Services

	Establishing a nurture approach to early intervention (pre-2020)	Responding to the Covid pandemic (2020-2023)	Supporting recovery & ongoing reform of services (2023-present)
Children's Services	• Early Years Strategy and Strategy Group (2009) • Family Nurture Approach and Family Nurture Steering Group (2013-17) • Children's Services Plans: 2011-14; 2014-17; 2017-20 • 'Cluny Clays' Development Sessions introduced	• Children's Services Plans: Agile Action Plan 2020-21; 2021-23 • WFWF programmes introduced: ◦ Family and Parenting Support- Evidence-based group work ◦ STEPP Outreach Service ◦ Emergency Support Team ◦ Community Social Work • Initial support from the WFW fund in 2022-23 was used: ◦ To establish a workforce development lead, supporting practice development across children's services ◦ Developing the How Good Is Our Family Support self-evaluation framework	• Children's Services Plan 2023-26 • WFWF review of funded work (2024) • Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2025) • Supporting Families Toolkit (HGIOFS) used as framework for Children's Services Development Sessions • Continued funding from the WFW Fund used to support a range of initiatives including: ◦ Establishing Early Help and Support teams across Fife's 7 localities ◦ Senior Practitioners in Schools pilot ◦ Workforce Development ◦ Support to strengthen system-level capacity
QI Work/ Fife CYPIC	• Fife Early Years Collaborative established (Oct 2013) • Fife Children and Young People's Improvement Collaborative established (2016) • QI Award (2017): Inspiring Leader • QI Award (2018): Excellence for QI in Primary Years • QI Awards (2019): ◦ Excellence in Using QI to Support The Best Start in Life (0-8 years) Look Who's Talking Project ◦ Achieving Results at Scale: Spreading Learning for Writing Using QI ◦ QI Leader of the Year	• QI Awards (2021): ◦ Compassionate Collaboration: Making it Work for Families in Fife ◦ Supporting Better Outcomes (8 years+): Inverkeithing High School Using QI to ensure equity in accessing the curriculum ◦ Spreading Improvement: Learning During Lockdown ◦ Improver of the Year	• Move to ensure a greater strategic impact from Fife CYPIC expertise • QI Methodology used to develop improvement actions in 2026-29 Plan • WFWF QI projects scaled up: ◦ Let's Connect ◦ Communication High 5
National Policy	• Early Years Framework (2008) • Christie Commission & Scottish Government response (2011-12) • 3-Step Improvement Framework (2012) • Early Years Collaborative (2012) • Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 • Raising Attainment for All programme (2014) • Maternity and Children Quality Improvement Collaborative	• Whole Family Wellbeing Funding announced (2021) • Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Modification) Order 2021 (1140 hours) • Supporting Families: A National Self-Assessment Toolkit for Change developed (2022)	• UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 • Early Years Speech, Language and Communication Action Plan (2025)

Next steps

The Fife Children's Services Plan 2026-29 aims to continue the development of children's services partnership working in Fife, by firmly embedding:

- the collective use of **resources** to support work on the improvement priorities identified in the Plan;
- more effective **early intervention** to support child development;
- a more strategic use of Quality Improvement Methodology, as a basis for **ongoing continuous improvement**;
- a stronger **alignment to the updated Plan for Fife** (which is due to be finalised in 2027) – supporting the continuing improvement of a place-based approach to supporting families.

The Plan aims to support a narrow improvement focus on three specific and significant challenges:

1. Mental health and emotional wellbeing
2. Family resilience and skills
3. Early speech, language and communication.

The evidence on these clearly suggests that these play a significant role in equity gaps seen across a range of outcomes for children and young people – both in Fife and across the rest of Scotland. The work planned to address these areas will be supported by Quality Improvement (QI) methodology – which will seek to achieve scale and spread of impact from evidence-based approaches that have been developed in Fife.

Although the improvement work in this Plan will be narrow in scope – to help better focus the partnership's resources, capacity and impact – it will be supported by a rigorous approach to continuous improvement across all key aspects of wider partnership working. Use of the How Good Is Our Family Support framework will be further developed, to help ensure that the partnership is effectively: implementing GIRFEC, keeping the Promise in Fife, supporting and promoting children's rights, improving participation and engagement, and tackling child poverty.

Outcomes and experiences for children, young people and families

How we developed our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

Over the course of 2025, Fife's Children's Services conducted a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to better understand the current outcomes and experiences of children, young people and families in Fife. The JSNA is informed by our evidence base and structured around Scotland's key child wellbeing indicators: Safe, Healthy, Active, Nurtured, Achieving, Respected, Responsible and Included (SHANARRI). It draws on data, wider literature, lived experience and strategic reflections to identify current outcomes, inequalities and systemic challenges.

A link to our full JSNA can be found at [Children in Fife web-site](#).

Our partners



Our approach

Workshops 1-3:

- Collected existing data, service information and feedback from children, young people and families across services
- Partners analysed and distilled key themes and messages

Children's Services Development Sessions:

- Presented and sought feedback on collated evidence and emerging themes with workforce

Drafting and finalising:

- JSNA document was drafted and shared with governance and partnership groups for final sign-off

Improvement priorities for 2026-29 Plan identified:

- Strengthening mental health and emotional wellbeing support for children, young people and families
- Building family resilience through early help and holistic, whole-family centred services
- Improving early speech, language and communication to close gaps and support lifelong learning

Our evidence

National and local statistics:

- National Records of Scotland (NRS) and Public Health Scotland (PHS)
- Fife Council Education Service Data, NHS Fife, Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT)

Lived experience:

- Fife Children & Young People Health & Wellbeing Survey, Fife Centre for Equalities 'Let's Chat', Care Opinion Feedback

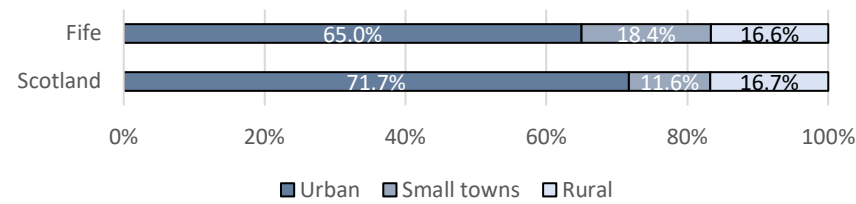
National and local policy frameworks:

- UNCRC, GIRFEC, National Performance Framework
- Fife's Education Directorate Improvement Plan, Fife's Local Housing Strategy, Fife Prevention & Early Intervention Strategy

Our context

The geography of Fife

Fife has a mix of urban areas, small towns, and rural areas – the overall balance of each classification broadly resembles the geography of Scotland.



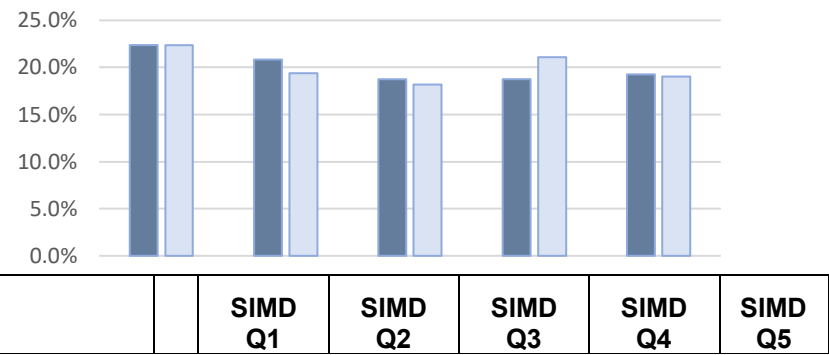
However, Fife’s main urban areas (Kirkcaldy, Dunfermline, Glenrothes and the Levenmouth area) are smaller in scale and are more dispersed than Scotland’s largest four cities, which are classified as large urban areas.

Area	Large urban	Other urban	Accessible small towns	Remote small towns	Accessible rural	Remote rural
Fife	0.0%	65.0%	18.4%	0.0%	16.6%	0.0%
Scotland	40.8%	30.9%	9.7%	1.9%	12.1%	4.6%

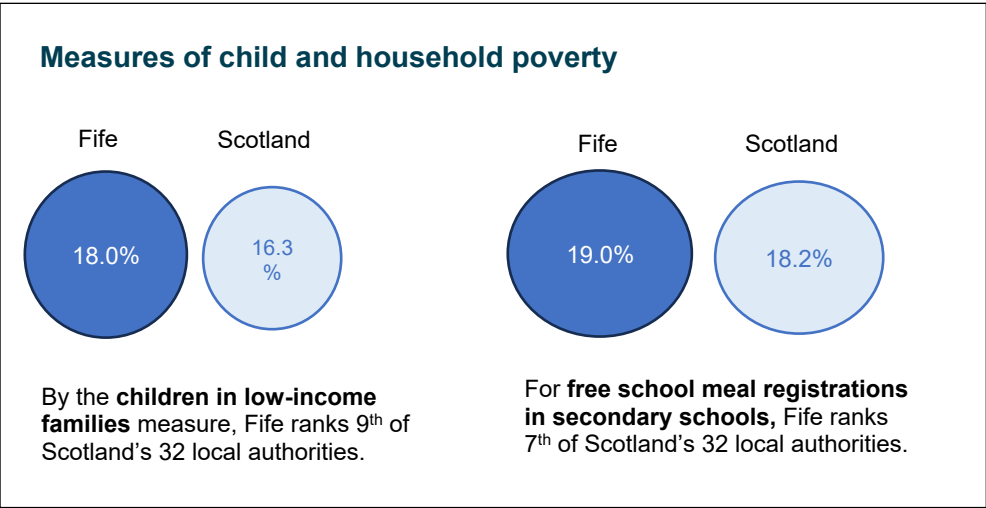
Area deprivation in Fife (SIMD)

The table below shows the geographical distribution of school pupils in Fife and Scotland, based on the SIMD Quintile where they live.

SIMD Quintile 1 areas (SIMD Q1) are the most deprived in Scotland. SIMD Quintile 5 areas (SIMD Q5) are the least deprived. The profiles of Fife and Scotland are very similar.



There are 69,513 children and young people aged 0-17 years in Fife; of these, 47,997 attend a Fife school. The table below shows some of the support needs and characteristics of these pupils.



Group	Number	%
With an additional support need	20,053	41.8
Living in SIMD Quintile 1	10,608	22.1
Speaking English as an Additional Language (not fluent)	2,852	5.9
Minority Ethnic	3,884	8.1
Assessed as having a disability	1,358	2.8
All school pupils	47,997	100.0

Key findings

The JSNA provided robust insight into persistent issues in Fife. These are some of the key findings which Fife's Children's Services 2026-29 priorities seek to address.

Mental health need is high and unevenly distributed.

57.7% of S2-S6 have raised SDQ scores, with girls, pupils with ASN and those in SIMD Q1 most affected.

(Fife Children and Young People Health & Wellbeing Survey 2022/23)

Families experience delayed and fragmented access to support.

Feedback indicates long wait times, having to repeat stories and support arriving at crisis points.

(Fife Centre for Equalities, 2025)

Child developmental concerns rose, and remain high, following the Covid-19 pandemic.

New speech concerns are 14.2% in SIMD Q1 vs 4.2% in SIMD Q5.

(Public Health Scotland, 2025)

Child poverty and inequality are persistently high and dispersed despite intervention.

18% of children live in low-income families. This can range between 9.4% to 31.2% depending on the area.

(Fife Council, 2025)

Struggling with mental health, and experiencing anxiety and depression are key drivers for **substance use**. Despite progress in Fife to address the impact of substance use by young people – and recent reductions in Drug Related Deaths – this remains a significant challenge across Scotland.

Challenges with scale of additional support needs and inclusion.

37.8% of pupils have an additional support need.

Pupils with mental health related additional support needs have the lowest secondary attendance.

Minority ethnic learners and disabled households face higher bullying/exclusion and household stress.

(Education Service Data, 2024/25)

Child protection concerns reflect parental issues.

Child Protection initial case conferences: 60% parental mental ill-health, 51% domestic abuse, 48% parental substance use.

(Scottish Government, 2025)

Our engagement with children, young people and families

Key findings resonate with the views shared by children, young people and families across Fife.

"It is very difficult to find the right services – you can get moved from group to group as nobody can really help as they all have strict guidelines."

Quote 1- Fife Voluntary Action, 2024

"It's hard to tell your story over and over again. It's so hard to do this when workers change, or you have to see a different person each time."

Quote 2- Fife Voluntary Action, 2024

"Why should I have to wait until something is bad before support is put in place?"

Quote 3- Fife Voluntary Action, 2024

Pupilwise & Parentwise surveys: Designed as a way of encouraging pupil and parental participation to inform service evaluation and improvement planning.

The most recent Pupilwise and Parentwise surveys were completed between January and March 2024.

Fife Centre for Equalities' (FCE) **"Let's Chat"** survey: Gathers insights from families with protected characteristics across Fife, focusing on equality and fairness.

Pupilwise:

27,418 responses from children and young people across nursery, primary and secondary schools.

What pupils feel is going well:

- Feeling Safe & Supported:
 - 73% feel safe at school
- Health & Wellbeing:
 - 82% feel encouraged to be healthy & active
- Learning & Engagement:
 - 87% feel happy

Areas for improvement:

- 51% feel their school listens to concerns about bullying
- 45% feel respected by other pupils
- 53% say school knows what they are good at
- 47% feel school has helped prepare them for the world of work

Parentwise:

12,463 responses from parents/carers to understand their perspectives on their child's wellbeing, school engagement and the support provided by educational settings.

What parents/carers feel is going well:

- Safety & Wellbeing:
 - 78% say their child feels safe at school/nursery
- Communication & Engagement:
 - 78% feel well informed about their child's progress

Areas for improvement:

- Relationships, sexual health and parenthood education (45% positive)
- Substance misuse education (46% positive)
- 50% say the school listens to bullying concerns & 44% feel they take appropriate action

Children and young people:

- Indicated facing racism and bullying in schools, with many incidents going unreported. This has a significant impact on their wellbeing as well as their sense of safety and inclusion.

Families:

- Reported feeling unable to access support due to language barriers and digital exclusion. Information about local services is often available online, however this is inaccessible to families who lack digital skills and resources, or whose first language is not English.

Our priorities for improvement for 2026-29

Our three priorities were identified through a review of data and evidence, alongside a wide range of stakeholder engagement across services working both directly with children and families and at a strategic level. Partners reached a shared consensus on where collective effort could have the greatest impact. While Children in Fife acknowledges that other challenges exist, these priorities reflect where the partnership believes it can make the most difference. Our priorities include:

- Strengthening mental health and emotional wellbeing support for children, young people and families.
- Building family resilience through early help and holistic, whole-family centred services.
- Improving early speech, language and communication to close gaps and support lifelong learning.

The table below outlines the strategic priorities and associated evidence. Further detail for each of the priorities can be found in the full JSNA document.

Improvement Priority	Summary of Evidence	JSNA Section
Mental health and emotional wellbeing	• Mental health indicators among children and young people are poorer in Fife than Scotland. • Girls, pupils with Additional Support Needs, and those living in our most deprived areas are more likely to experience poorer overall wellbeing, social and behavioural concerns, poor sleep, weaker peer relationships and lower self-esteem. • In Fife, heavy social media use is higher among girls, particularly in early secondary stages. This mirrors wider evidence on gender differences in social media use from UK cohort studies. • 11.6% of women reported smoking during pregnancy – worse than the national average of 9.6%. Smoking during pregnancy is associated with poorer mental health in children.	Section 5.2.1g (Healthy & Active)
	• Pupils with an additional support need relating to family, emotional and mental health issues have the lowest attendance in secondary schools.	Section 5.4.1a (Achieving)
	• Parental mental ill health is the most commonly recorded concern at Child Protection Initial Case Conferences.	Section 5.1.1a (Safe)
	• Despite progress in Fife to address the impact of substance use by young people, with reducing rates of Drug Related Deaths last year, this remains a significant challenge across Scotland.	Section 5 (Safe)
Family resilience and skills	• The rate of new emotional and behavioural concerns recorded at developmental reviews at 13-15 months and 27-30 months has risen significantly since COVID. Despite recent easing, rates	Section 5.3.1d (Nurtured)

	remain above pre-pandemic levels and those living in our most deprived areas are disproportionately affected.	
	Fife has higher breastfeeding drop-off rates across most age groups compared to Scotland. Mothers aged 20-24 have significantly higher drop-off rates in Fife compared to Scotland. Fife has made progress in reducing the breastfeeding drop-off rate: In 2023/24, the drop off rate was 33.2%, with a target to reduce drop off to 30% by 2025. Fife's drop off rate in 2024/25 was 30.7%.	Section 5.3.1e (Nurtured)
	Priority families at highest risk of child poverty locally include lone parents, households with a disability, minority ethnic families, families with a child aged under one, mothers aged under 25, and families with three or more children. Food insecurity persists and is higher in our most deprived areas, putting pressure on family resilience.	Section 4.5.1 (Priority Groups for Child Poverty Action)
	- Child homelessness has fallen but care-experienced young people and disabled households face increased risks. - Disabled households experience housing challenges including lower satisfaction with their homes, and homes not meeting their needs.	Section 5.5.1a (Respected, Responsible and Included)
	Further consideration is needed around approaches to engaging with parents and opportunities for family learning.	Section 5.4.2 (Achieving)
Early speech, language and communication	- There has been a significant increase in the proportion of new speech, language and communication concerns identified at the 27-30 month developmental review. The gap between Fife and the Scotland average has widened since the pandemic, and levels in Fife remain higher than pre-pandemic levels. - Service reflections highlight increased incidents of distressed behaviours linked to speech, language and early communication. - In Fife, the proportion of children with new speech related concerns at 27-30 months is currently 14.2% in SIMD Q1 (most deprived), and 4.2% in SIMD Q5 (least deprived). - Evidence from cohort studies (e.g. Growing Up in Scotland) consistently shows that measured equity gaps in outcomes for children of school age is already well established by the time that children start school. - Evidence shows that the development of speech, language and communication underpins every aspect of a child's development—their relationships, mental health and wellbeing, learning and future life opportunities.	Section 5.3.1c (Nurtured)

Note: Our improvement priorities were developed using evidence and data gathered until the end of 2025. They reflect a consensus view across partners about the underlying, long-term challenges that present the most significant barrier to life outcomes for children in Fife. While more recent data may show improvement and benchmarking may suggest that Fife outcomes are relatively strong in comparison with national outcomes, Children in Fife recognises that significant improvement in outcomes, experiences and equity gaps – particularly for children living in poverty – depends upon these challenges being addressed.

3. Our Plan for 2026-29

How we will deliver improvement

Governance of Children's Services in Fife

Children in Fife is the Children's Services Planning Partnership for Fife. It oversees statutory planning for children's services – as required under the terms of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

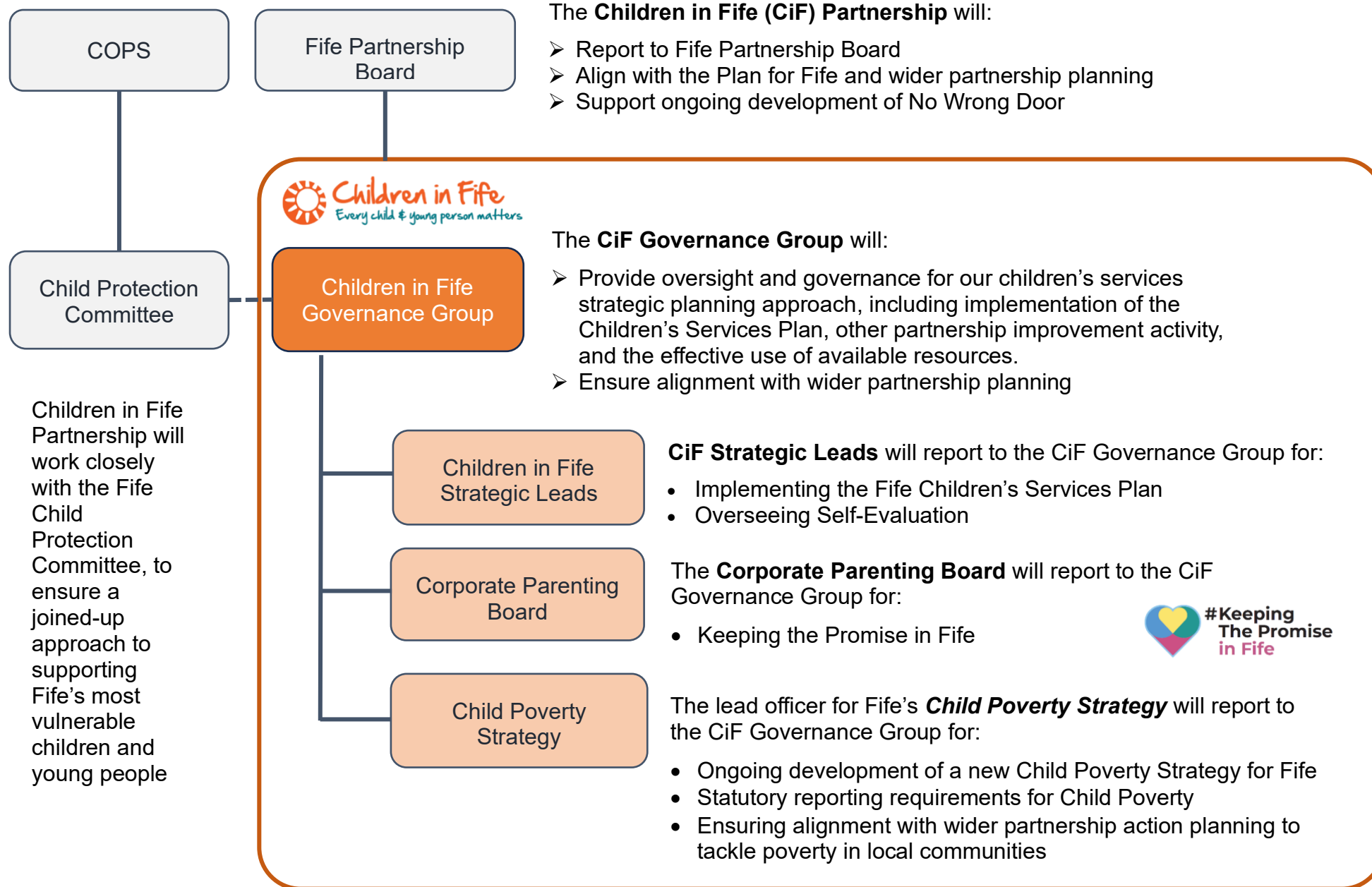
The work of the Partnership is overseen by three key strategic groups, which are:

- **The Children in Fife Governance Group.** This group provides oversight of children's services planning in Fife by:
 - Working collectively to improve the use of partnership resources to support children, young people and families, to help achieve Best Value. This includes a commitment to mainstream core support for partnership improvement, and to prioritise the use of available additional funding to support work on the improvement priorities identified in the Children's Services Plan 2026-29.
 - Providing strategic, values-based leadership for the ongoing development of a whole system approach to Whole Family Wellbeing and action to address child poverty.
 - Ensuring alignment with the work of the Child Protection Committee and with wider partnership planning, including the development of a No Wrong Door approach to service delivery at a local, area level.
- **The Children in Fife Strategic Leads Group.** This group oversees partnership improvement, by:
 - Developing and implementing the Fife Children's Services Plan.
 - Overseeing arrangements to improve wider partnership working, including self-evaluation of partnership core approaches, workforce development to support partnership priorities, and the use of Quality Improvement approaches and data to support continuous improvement.

The group reports to the Children in Fife Governance Group.

- **The Corporate Parenting Board.** This group oversees Keeping the Promise in Fife, ensuring that the Promise is embedded in partnership planning and working. It ensures fulfilment of the statutory duty for corporate parenting. The group reports to the Children in Fife Governance Group.

The Children in Fife Governance Group will also oversee ongoing development of Fife's approach to tackling **Child Poverty**, which will support implementation of the national *Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2026-2031*. The lead officer for Fife's Child Poverty approach will: continue to coordinate work to address child poverty, support the development of a Child Poverty Strategy (working with Public Health Scotland), and report on progress to the Children in Fife Governance Group.



How our approach to improvement will help to tackle child poverty in Fife

It has long been recognised that poverty is a key factor in poor outcomes and experiences for children and young people and families. As a Children's Services Partnership, we see tackling child poverty as an essential and integral part of our partnership working. This section:

- Reviews how our approach to tackling child poverty has developed over recent years.
- Summarises the scope of our partnership working to tackle child poverty.
- Outlines how our children's services plan – and wider partnership working – will help to address this challenge.

Context: the ongoing development of our approach

Tackling poverty and preventing crisis has been a focus of the Fife Local Outcomes Improvement Plan since the end of the Covid pandemic and the work of the children's services partnership has been a significant element supporting recovery, reducing inequality and driving service reform.

The recent development of Early Help and Support Teams within Fife's seven local areas has ensured a transformational change in the delivery of services for children and families at a local level (further details can be found in the Case Study in section 1 of this Plan). This change is supporting the ongoing development of a **No Wrong Door** model as a key approach to supporting families and communities experiencing poverty and related challenges. The No Wrong Door model promotes early intervention, community-based support and more effective joint working across partnership services. Central to this approach is a locality-based triage system, enabling services to work together to build a holistic understanding of family circumstances and ensure that children and families receive timely, coordinated and appropriate support.

Tackling child poverty: the scope of our partnership working

Children's services partners play an integral role in tackling child poverty in Fife, with work across communities demonstrating a strong commitment to early intervention and prevention through locality based, cross-directorate working. This includes:

- **Maximising family incomes** by helping to embed income maximisation across a wide range of community and statutory services, contributing to the development of the Fife Advice Framework.



- Supporting families with the **cost of living** through various support measures to address crisis and material deprivation, illustrated through Cash First pilots and the strategic support given to the Big Hoose project.
- Recognising that **employability and employment** are key levers to sustainably lifting children out of poverty through fair work. The Local Employability Partnership has invested in targeted parental employment support including Making it Work for lone parents (Fife Gingerbread and CARF partnership project).
- Amidst the local and national **Housing Emergency**, Fife has worked to reduce child homelessness and sought opportunities to improve the experience of families navigating temporary accommodation. Building Hope, a national systems change project led by Shelter, will be delivered locally by Fife Gingerbread and Fife Council colleagues.

Further information about the work summarised above – including evidence on the impact of these approaches – can be found in the [Fife Local Child Poverty Action Report 2024-25](#).

Our partnership working: the role of our Plan and wider approach to improvement

Our approach to partnership improvement will help us to continue tackling child poverty over the course of the Fife Children's Services Plan 2026-29. In particular:

- The improvement priorities for this **Children's Services Plan** address key barriers to outcomes for children and families living in poverty: mental health and wellbeing (priority 1), family resilience (priority 2), and early child development (priority 3). The evidence-based approach that we are taking to address these priorities – supported by our use of QI methodology – will help us to strengthen our understanding and measure the impact of our partnership working to address these barriers.
Further details about our planned improvement actions can be found in the remainder of this section.
- The ongoing work to strengthen our approach to self-evaluation– supported by the use of the How Good Is Our Family Support Framework – will help to ensure ongoing continuous improvement of our **core partnership approaches**. This will help the partnership to strengthen and improve the service design and operational processes supporting children and families with needs.
- The piloting and further development of **Communities of Practice** at a local area level will help to establish a structured, locality-based approach that promotes collaboration, shared learning and continuous improvement across all aspects of joint working within children's services (see Section 4). This will help to ensure improved local support for children and families living in poverty and provide more effective support for the continued development of the **No Wrong Door** model at a locality level.
- Ongoing refinement and further development of the partnership's **data and evidence** will help to ensure that we can better monitor, publicly report on, the outcomes and experiences of children who live in poverty – as well as other groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable children.

Our planned improvement actions

Priority 1: Strengthening mental health and emotional wellbeing support for children, young people and families

Context

The **Our Minds Matter Steering Group** (OMM) is a well-established, multi-agency group developed in 2017 to support the mental and physical health and wellbeing of children, young people and families across Fife.



Since its establishment, OMM has provided strategic oversight of key activities and has developed helpful tools to support Fife's collective understanding of mental health and wellbeing. This includes examples such as the OMM Framework and the '5 Ways to Wellbeing' which offer insight into the spectrum of mental health support needs and outline various strategies to maintain positive mental health and wellbeing, particularly for children and young people.

Our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) highlighted ongoing concerns around children, young people and parental mental ill health, particularly amongst vulnerable groups, such as pupils with Additional Support Needs and those living in our most deprived areas. Mental health indicators amongst children and young people continue to be poorer in Fife than the rest of Scotland.

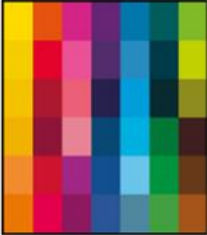
The OMM Steering Group has been identified as the appropriate group to take forward improvement work around strengthening mental health and emotional wellbeing support for children and young people. Work to address this priority will include:

- Developing a competent and confident workforce with foundational understanding and skills to provide mental health support to children and young people.
- Implementing a person-centred approach when addressing the mental and emotional health needs of our most vulnerable children and young people.

Strategic Oversight

Over the course of the Children’s Services Plan 2026-29, the OMM Steering Group will:

- Own the action plan for the improvement priority of Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing
- Be responsible to Children in Fife Governance Group
- Be represented on the Children in Fife Strategic Leads Group

Related National Performance Indicators Within the current National Performance Framework, the work on this priority will help contribute to progress against the following indicators: • Child wellbeing and happiness • Children have positive relationships • Mental wellbeing  Related Children’s Rights Alongside the improvement actions, OMM Steering Group is best placed to ensure partnership alignment with various children’s rights enshrined in the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, and with outcomes in the National Performance Framework. These include, but are not limited to: • Article 24: Every child has the right to the best possible health. • Article 31: Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities 
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Improvement Action: Develop a competent and confident workforce with foundational understanding and skills to provide mental health support to children and young people

Aim: Strengthen the workforce's approach, collective understanding and skills to support effective early intervention for the mental health and emotional wellbeing of young people.

Link to national policy: The Scottish Government's [Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Delivery Plan 2023](#) identified the need to increase access to person-centred mental health and wellbeing training for all.

Rationale: Evidence shared at Children's Services Development Sessions and from the JSNA suggested that gaps remain in the workforce's collective understanding of how to support children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing. Questions remain around the comprehensiveness and level of uptake of training and resources across the workforce. Work in year one will focus on ensuring that universal supports are well understood and embedded in practice. This will form the basis for ongoing self-evaluation and reflection on the effectiveness and impact of our current approaches.

Next steps / Improvement Action	Partnership Support	Measures of impact
Year 1 - Ensure existing MH training is mapped out including what we have, for whom and how it's delivered to allow for the gaps to be considered. - Develop a bespoke Foundational Workforce Development Session for the Children's Services Partnership. - Make the Foundational Workforce Development Session mandatory for all staff working within Fife Children's Services, to establish a shared baseline of knowledge, understanding and shared language across the multiagency workforce. - Design an in person training session with time for discussion and reflection, to support workforce development within the <i>Communities of Practice</i> pilot. Focus the content on: ➤ Promoting positive mental health ➤ Recognising and supporting poor mental health ➤ Local signposting	- Agree the core content and learning outcomes with Children's Services Partners. - Develop and test the session, using feedback from practitioners to improve it. - Roll out the mandatory session across the Children's Services workforce. Ensuring all staff have access to the training, understand expectations for attendance and can complete the session within an agreed timeframe. - Embed follow-on learning routes, with clear signposting to specialist training.	Short-term: % of children services staff who complete the foundational session. - No. of training sessions delivered. - Attendance from organisations across the partnership. % of staff reporting increased confidence in: - Promoting positive mental health. - Recognising and responding to poor mental health. - Suicide awareness and prevention. - Understanding of local support and referral routes. Medium-term:

• Signpost staff to existing specialist training e.g. Trauma Informed Practice, Mentally Healthy Workplace for Managers) as optional follow-on learning. Year 2 • Embed the session into induction processes for all new children's services staff. • Monitor consistency of practice across services using staff feedback, quality assurance activity and workforce confidence measures. • Ensure, across the Children's Services Partnership, services embed their training into practice Year 3 • Sustain and refresh mandatory session to reflect emerging evidence and local learning. • Strengthen impact monitoring linking workforce learning to improved outcomes for children and young people. • Ensure the approach is fully embedded as business as usual across the multiagency workforce.		• Staff demonstrate a shared baseline understanding and common language around mental health and wellbeing. • Services across the Children's Services Partnership are able to demonstrate practice impact • Increase in uptake of specialist training e.g. (Trauma Informed Practice, Mentally Healthy Workplace for Managers). Long-term: • Increased use of the right support and referral pathways at the right time. • Improved wellbeing outcomes for children and young people.
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Improvement Action: Implementing a person-centred approach when addressing the mental and emotional health needs of our most vulnerable children and young people

Aim: Ensure that the mental health and emotional wellbeing of vulnerable young people is well supported.

Link to national policy: One of the four key priorities of the [Joint Strategic Board for Children and Family Mental Health](#), is to 'ensure mental health and wellbeing support is available, appropriate and accessible for children, young people and families in vulnerable situations... this includes children and young people with care experience, and children and young people on the edges of care'.

Rationale: Our JSNA highlighted that girls, those living in the most deprived areas, children with ASN and Care Experienced young people are particularly affected by poor mental health. Improvement work is needed to map and provide tailored support based on the needs of these specific groups of children and young people.

Next steps / Improvement Action	Partnership Support	Measures of impact
Year 1 - Map existing mental health support across single-agency and partnership for families, parents/carers, children and young people, including children under the age of 3, and targeted groups. - Define the priority target groups for Children's Services Improvement work. - Identify gaps, duplication and inequity in current provision and agree a multiagency response if a tailored approach is required. - Scope potential improvement activity, building on effective existing approaches and developing new approaches where needed. - Develop clear partnership guidance on providing effective mental health support for agreed priority groups. - Establish or use existing group (Parents/Carers and Children and Young People's Reference Groups) to inform strategic planning	- Shared values-based leadership to agree priority groups, scope the work and maintain momentum, - Support to map current provision and identify gaps, duplication and inequity. - Support to identify, test and scale effective practice. - Capacity to develop and use partnership guidance consistently. - Active partnership involvement to engage with The Promise Toolkit. - Review funding models, with willingness to develop better approaches together. - Commitment and capacity across services to scale up effective approaches.	Short-term: - A map of mental health support across single-agency and partnerships for universal and targeted provision. - Priority target groups agreed. - Gaps, duplication and inequity identified with agreed multi-agency response. - Partnership guidance developed and agreed and commitment from partners to put it into practice. Medium-term: - Better alignment between funding and agreed priorities. - Increased staff confidence to support mental health needs at a universal and targeted level.

Year 2 • Review current funding models to understand their impact on consistency and sustainability of provision. • Used shared planning cycles to improve and align funding with agreed strategic priorities. Year 3 • Scale up approaches that have shown positive impact. • Strengthen preventative and early help so fewer young people need specialist services. • Agree and implement sustainable funding arrangements to support long term delivery. • Use impact evidence, including The Promise Toolkit, to improve support for Care Experienced Young People.		• Increased service confidence that support is timely and focused on early intervention. Long-term: • Improved mental health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people. • Improved outcomes for Care Experienced Young People. • Effective approaches have been spread and have a scale plan. • Funding arrangements in place to support long term delivery. • Reduced escalation to specialised services due to earlier effective support.
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Priority 2: Building family resilience through early help and holistic, whole-family centred services

Context

A range of evidence-based Parenting and Family Support programmes have been developed and delivered in Fife, since the piloting of Fife's original Family Nurture Approach in 2013. The ongoing development of these has been supported by the use of Quality Improvement methodology in Fife, supported originally by the Fife Early Years Collaborative and more recently by the Fife Children and Young People's Improvement Collaborative (CYPIC).

Delivery of these programmes was adversely affected by the Covid pandemic. Work was undertaken to review these programmes using support from the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (WFW) in the last Children's Services Plan (2023-26), with a view to developing a sustainable framework of accessible, family support services.

As part of Fife Partnership's wider response to ongoing reform and recovery following the Covid pandemic, a place-based "No Wrong Door" model is being developed, to strengthen support for households and communities in each local area. This is currently being piloted in the Cowdenbeath area. Learning from the pilot will inform a model to be implemented across Fife. This will be presented to Fife Council in June 2026

Family Resilience remains a key priority for Children's Services in Fife.

The partnership recognises that although outcomes become measurably poorer as children develop (emerging at a significant scale through data gathered at the 27-30 month review and, later, at the 4-5 year review) developmental differences arise from factors apparent at much younger ages. Work to address this priority will therefore focus on the challenge of better identifying the early warning signs of potential developmental concerns, with a view to better supporting child development through more effective partnership delivery from birth onwards. It will combine:

- Support for scale and spread of **Let's Connect** over the period 2026-29. Let's Connect is a proven, evidence-based programme – developed in Fife – to strengthen the parent-child interactions that underpin healthy child development. Work during 2026-29 will seek to achieve scale and spread of this approach across Fife.
- **Improving support for pre-birth and early child development through nurturing care.** The development of this approach will be informed by work supported by NESTA and CELCIS during 2026-27, to map support services from pregnancy through to early childhood and using the Nurturing Care Framework. It will also be informed by ongoing development of the wider Partnership's place-based No Wrong Door model.

Strategic Oversight

A Family Resilience Working Group has been established, for the duration of the 2026-29 Plan, to oversee this priority. The working group will:

- Own the action plan for the improvement priority of Family Resilience
- Be responsible to the Children in Fife Governance Group
- Be represented on the Children in Fife Strategic Leads Group
- Play a lead role in coordinating the contribution of Fife Children's Services to the ongoing development of the No Wrong Door.

Related National Performance Indicators

Within the current National Performance Framework, the work on this priority will help contribute to progress against the following indicators:

- Child social and physical development
- Mental wellbeing (adults)



Related Children's Rights

Alongside the improvement actions, the Family Resilience Working Group is best placed to ensure partnership alignment with various children's rights enshrined in the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, and with outcomes in the National Performance Framework.



These include, but are not limited to:

- **Article 5:** 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.
- **Article 9:** Children should not be separated from their parents unless they are not being properly looked after.
- **Article 18:** Parents are the main people responsible for bringing up a child.
- **Article 26:** Governments should provide money or other support to help children from poor families.
- **Article 33:** Governments should protect children from use and exposure to harmful drugs.

Improvement Action: Let's Connect

Aim: Strengthen family resilience and build parenting skills by supporting the scale and spread of **Let's Connect** across Fife.

Rationale: Let's Connect is a proven, evidence-based programme – developed in Fife – to strengthen the parent-child interactions that underpin healthy child development. This project will look to achieve scale and spread of improvement across Fife – through this approach.

Progress to date: The Let's Connect Team has engaged 35 of 44 two-year old nursery setting. Ten have embedded Let's Connect. A further 25 are actively building capacity and progressing early implementation.

Next steps / Improvement Action	Partnership Support	Measures of impact
Year 1 - Complete embedding across all two-year old settings - Expand implementation into Health Visiting - Begin structured roll-out to selected third sector partners - Scope implementation with other partners (midwifery, etc) - Begin to develop Let's Connect Champions role to support systems and ensure Quality Assurance (QA) Year 2 - Continue implementation into Health Visiting and Third Sector partners - Training Let's Connect Champions Year 3 - Consolidate sustainable model to support ongoing coaching, QA and fidelity systems - Review and publish recommendations for next steps	Children in Fife is committing to support a programme of scale and spread for the duration of the Fife Children's Services Plan 2026-29. This includes an investment of £123,043 p.a. to support a core team providing support for: occupational therapist (0.6 FTE), speech and language therapy (0.6 FTE), early years practice (0.5 FTE). Funding for 2026-27 is being supported through use of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.	Short-term: use established QA and impact measures to support ongoing implementation of Let's Connect. Medium-term: further develop QA, to ensure that a robust, system-level framework is in place to assess the impact of scale and spread. Long-term aim: to increase confidence that Fife has effective support in place for family resilience and parenting skills before 27 months and to reduce developmental concerns recorded at 27-30 month checks (Social – Emotional, Problem-Solving & Communication)

Let's Connect: established Quality Assurance (QA) and impact measures

Outcome	Measures
Parental use of Let's Connect strategies	% of parents using strategies daily; frequency of coached play interactions; quality of attuned responses
Improved parental confidence	Self-reported confidence scales (baseline to follow-up)
Quality of parent-child relationship	Observational measures of warmth, responsiveness, turn-taking

Further information: on **Let's Connect** can be found in the case study in the Fife Children's Services Annual Report 2025-26.

Improvement Action: Improving support for pre-birth and early child development through nurturing care

Aim: Review and strengthen support services from pregnancy through to early childhood and using the Nurturing Care Framework, by further developing partnership support for the Best Start Pathway and Health Visiting Pathway in Fife.

Link to wider strategic plans: It will also be informed by ongoing development of the wider Partnership's place-based No Wrong Door model.

Link to national policy: The development of this approach will be informed by work supported by NESTA and CELCIS during 2026-27, to map support services from pregnancy through to early childhood and using the Nurturing Care Framework.

Rationale: Evidence from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment shows that family resilience is a significant challenge for Fife families. Wider research also shows the importance of family resilience and parenting skills in supporting early child development.

Improvement Action	Partnership Support	Measure of impact
During 2026-27, we will: • Work with NESTA and CELCIS to further map support services from pregnancy through to early childhood using the Nurturing Care Framework. • Develop proposals for service improvement, or the development of new service provision, to improve service support for family resilience and parenting skills. • Publish a costed plan to use a rigorous QI-based approach to test proposals for improved service provision over the period 2027-29.	Children in Fife will prioritise use of available funding over this period, to support testing and development of pilot models with the potential to support significant improvement across Fife. Work to test proposals for improved service provision over the period 2027-29 will be supported by Fife CYPIC.	Short-term (by end 2026-27): we will have developed a clear mapping of current provision and developed proposals to improve service support for early child development. Medium-term: a rigorous QI-based approach will be used to test proposals for improved service provision over the period 2027-29. Long-term aim: to increase confidence that Fife has effective support in place for family resilience and parenting skills before 27 months and to reduce developmental concerns recorded at 27-30 month checks (Social – Emotional, Problem-Solving & Communication)

Priority 3: Improving early speech, language and communication to close gaps and support lifelong learning

Context

In 2016, Fife's Early Years Collaborative (EYC) and the Raising Attainment for All (RAFA) programme merged, creating **Fife's Children & Young People's Improvement Collaborative (CYPIC)**. This combined model was later replicated nationally. CYPIC brings together practitioners from across Children in Fife, working collectively to improve outcomes for children and young people across Fife.

CYPIC uses the Quality Improvement Journey to ensure activities are grounded in a robust, evidence-informed methodology. This helps build a strong understanding of *what works* to deliver meaningful and measurable improvements for children and young people.

CYPIC is focused on strengthening Quality Improvement capability across the partnership. By drawing on shared expertise and resources, we equip practitioners with the knowledge, skills and confidence to lead improvement, and to support the implementation, spread and long-term sustainability of successful practice.



The **Children in Fife Data and Evidence Group** includes strategic leaders and specialists in research and analysis from across the Partnership.

The group supports the development of a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment every three years, which forms the basis for identifying improvement priorities in the Fife Children's Services Plan (for further information, see Section 2).

It also supports the ongoing review and development of the Fife Wellbeing Indicator Set – which provides a framework to help understand long-term outcomes for children and young people in Fife: across all aspects of wellbeing (as measured via SHANARRI); across different ages and stages of child development. Data for the measures can also be segmented to help understand outcomes for different groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable children, and children living in different areas of Fife.

The group includes colleagues from the wider Fife Partnership, to ensure a shared understanding of quantitative data and qualitative evidence. This helps to strengthen the evidence in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Children's Services and to ensure the alignment of the Children's Services Plan with other key strategic plans, including the Plan for Fife and key strategies of NHS Fife and Fife HSCP.

Strategic Oversight:

Over the course of the Children’s Services Plan 2026-29, Fife CYPIC will:

- Own the action plan for the improvement priority of Early Speech, Language and Communication
- Be responsible to Children in Fife Governance Group
- Be represented on the Children in Fife Strategic Leads Group
- Coordinate with Leads of the Communication High 5 programme and CS Data and Evidence Group

Related National Performance Indicators

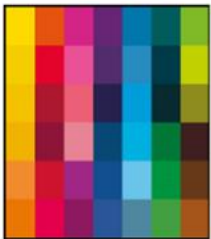
Within the current National Performance Framework, the work on this priority will help contribute to progress against the following indicators:

- Child Social and Physical Wellbeing
- Child Social and Physical Development
- Quality of Children’s Services
- Young People’s Participation
- Educational Attainment



Related Children’s Rights

Alongside the improvement actions, Fife CYPIC is best placed to ensure partnership alignment with various children’s rights enshrined in the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, and with outcomes in the National Performance Framework.



These include, but are not limited to:

- **Article 2:** All children have all these rights, no matter who they are.
- **Article 12:** All children have the right to say what they think and have their opinions be taken into account.
- **Article 23:** Every child with a disability should enjoy the best possible life in society.
- **Article 28:** Every child has the right to an education.
- **Article 29:** Children’s education should develop each child’s personality, talents and abilities to the fullest.

Improvement Action: Communication High 5

Aim: Improve early Speech, Language and Communication outcomes for children not meeting their expected milestones by scaling and spreading **Communication High 5**.

Link to national policy: In 2025, the Scottish Government published the [Early Years Speech, Language and Communication Action Plan](#) commits to reduce the number of developmental concerns at the 27–30 month review by a quarter by 2030 – the most common developmental concern being Speech, Language and Communication (SLC).

Rationale: Communication High 5 is a well-established, evidence-based programme delivered in Early Learning Centres (ELCs). Robust Quality Improvement (QI) evidence shows that consistent, whole system use of the High 5 strategies leads to improved language and communication outcomes for children.¹

Progress to date: We are currently supporting 10 Early Learning Centres who completed the Fife QI Early Language and Communication Programme to fully embed Communication High 5 strategies into daily practice, strengthening high-quality conversations with all children. The model will be replicated and spread across the wider system over the course of the Plan.

Next steps / Improvement Action	Partnership Support	Measures of impact
Year 1 Embed Implementation - Continue to support 10 Early Learning Centres to fully embed Communication High 5 strategies into daily practice. - Strengthen high-quality conversations with all children. - Use real time data to drive improvement for children with lower language and communication outcomes. Spread to New Settings - Extend programme to 8-10 additional settings with high predicted speech and language and communication needs.	Children in Fife is committing to support the spread and scale of the programme for the duration of the Fife Children's Services Plan 2026-29. This includes an investment of £116,776 p.a. to fund a core team providing support for: Speech and language therapy (0.8 FTE), Early Years (0.6 FTE) and Quality Improvement (0.2 FTE). Funding for 2026-27 is being supported through use of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.	Short-term: - Number of settings that have fully embedded Communication High 5 into daily practice. - Quality Assurance evidence showing adult-child high quality interactions across settings. - Percentage of observations demonstrating Communication High 5 strategies. 8-10 new settings engaged in the Fife QI Programme.

¹ Note: 'Children' refer to those not at risk of requiring clinical intervention or children without an identified clinical need.

- Replicate the delivery model and impact demonstrated in cohorts 1 & 2. Year 2 Build Quality Improvement (QI) Capability - Strengthen QI capability across the Early Years workforce. - Support local ownership so improvement can be sustained and scaled across settings. Year 3 Enable System-Wide Adoption - Adapt systems and processes to support Communication High 5 across the wider system. - Embed the approach as standard practice to support long-term improvement in early language and communication.	Early Years will prioritise this QI Programme existing strategic plans to support focus and reduce system overload. Early years will release staff time to support practitioners to attend training, coaching and lead improvement activity. Partners will adapt systems and processes including guidance, Quality Assurance to support scale. Partners will release subject matter expertise and Quality Improvement capacity within the system to support system wide spread.	- Staff confidence in using Communication High 5 strategies. - Number of settings using data over time to track children's outcomes and improvement journeys. Medium-term: - Number of Early Year staff and Link Speech and Language Therapists (SaLT) who have participated in QI training. - Quality Assurance evidence showing Communication High 5 are used across more settings. - Improved language and communication outcomes, shown by the percentage of children assessed as 'green' in the eLIPS <i>saying</i> category. Long-term: - Sustained improvement in early language and communication outcomes shown through eLIPS. - Communication High 5 is embedded within Quality Assurance processes. - Communication High 5 established as standard practice across engaged settings.
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Further information: on **Communication High 5** can be found in the case study in the Fife Children's Services Annual Report 2025-26.

Improvement Action: Better understand partnership data on Early Years Speech, Language and Communication

Aim: Use partnership data to better understand and support the development of Speech, Language and Communication in the Early Years.

Link to national policy: In 2025, the Scottish Government published the [Early Years Speech, Language and Communication Action Plan](#) committing to reduce the number of developmental concerns at the 27–30 month review by a quarter by 2030 – the most common developmental concern being Speech, Language and Communication (SLC).

Background: While current, population-level insights highlight the scale of the issue, they do not allow us to understand how concerns identified at different points in early childhood relate to each other over time. At present, relevant SLC information is held separately across Health and Education systems, limiting our ability to understand shared patterns, gaps and trajectories.

Rationale: Fife has a rich resource of data relating to Speech, Language and Communication in the Early Years. This includes data on: national reviews of child development undertaken by Health Visitors (at 13-15 months, 27-30 months and 4-5 years), and local data from the eLIPS (Early Language in Play Settings) observational tool, used by local authority Early Years Settings in Fife. eLIPS was first developed in 2014 by researchers at the University of Dundee, in partnership with Fife Council. Together, these datasets provide an extensive historical resource to help better understand the development of SLC in the early years.

Next steps / Improvement Action	Partnership Support	Measures of impact
Year 1 Begin an agreed programme of research to better understand the relationships between the different measures, and the development of, Speech, Language and Communication. Finalise a retrospective Data Linkage proposal to support the first stage of the research linking and analysing available data. Ensure all required Information Governance is in place including conducting Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) and Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) on data linkage project to ensure alignment with data protection requirements and children's rights.	The development of a proposal to research Speech, Language and Communication in the Early Years was identified as a next step by the group, following their work to develop the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Fife (see section 2). This project will be a core element in the workplan for the Data and Evidence Group for 2026-27. This research will take a collaborative approach, involving researchers from across the Partnership with oversight from the Data and Evidence Group.	Year 1 Completion of a research report that: • Summarises key lessons from the retrospective Data Linkage project. • Sets out options for further work to strengthen the Partnership's Use of data to support the development of SLC in the early years. Workshop – involving relevant service leaders from across the partnership – to review options and agree an action plan to support further research and service improvement.

Year 2 &3 Review the findings from Year 1 research, to identify: • Whether there are any immediate, specific and clear actions that can be taken to improve service design, or the effective use of partnership data. • What further research may be useful to strengthen evidence and understanding. Agree a partnership action plan, with a view to: improving service design, and ensuring a more effective use of partnership data	The work will be supported by the Children's Services Data Analyst, supported by other members of the Data and Evidence Group.	Year 2 &3 SMART measures of impact for any tests of change arising from the action plan for years 2-3.
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4. How we will continue to improve our wider partnership working

The Context for Our Children's Services Plan 2026-29

Improvement work planned by the Children in Fife over the next three years involves three main strands:

- Piloting and supporting the further development of a **Communities of Practice model**, to better support multi-agency working at a local level. This builds on a recommendation from an independent review (by Animate) of support for Workforce Development in the current Children's Services Plan.
- Ongoing work to strengthen the **Partnership's Core Approaches** through self-evaluation, quality assurance and continuous improvement.
- Focussed improvement actions to address three, specific improvement priorities through the **Fife Children's Services Plan 2026-29** (as described in the previous section).

This section outlines the approach



Strengthening our system-level capacity for:

- Self-Evaluation
- Quality Improvement

Strengthening operational practice through:

- A more effective use of data
- Workforce development

Nurturing the development of Communities of Practice to improve multi-agency support in local areas

Strengthening Core Partnership Approaches that underpin effective partnership working

Improving three priority areas through the Fife's Children's Services Plan 2026-29

Ensuring:

- Alignment with the updated Plan for Fife
- Ongoing support for development of No Wrong Door
- Whole Family Wellbeing is embedded in Fife's children's services planning to help better tackle child poverty

Communities of Practice Model

Children in Fife will be piloting a Communities of Practice model to create a structured, locality-based approach that fosters collaboration, practical learning, and continuous improvement across all services.

The CoP model will aim to:

- Build relationships and trust across agencies.
- Reinforce early intervention and prevention in Fife localities.
- Support operational teams in each locality to identify and address areas for improvement.
- Facilitate collaborative problem-solving to help address local improvement priorities.

Development of the model will be overseen by a Working Group composed of senior leaders from all key services: Health, Education, Early Years, Third Sector, Community Learning, and Social Work. The Group will provide strategic oversight for the development of the Communities of Practice model.

The Cowdenbeath Pilot

To build momentum and ensure a solid foundation, an initial pilot CoP will be launched in the Cowdenbeath area. This pilot will serve as a learning opportunity to test approaches, gather feedback, and refine the model before wider implementation. By starting in one locality, we can identify best practices, address challenges early, and demonstrate tangible benefits such as improved collaboration, shared learning, and enhanced workforce development. The insights gained from this pilot will be critical in shaping a robust framework for rolling out CoPs across all seven areas, ensuring consistency and sustainability.

The two-tier model:

1. **Locality Community of Practice** (working Group) – This group will bring together local leaders to identify priorities within their communities. They will collaborate to plan and deliver learning and networking opportunities tailored to the workforce's needs in their locality.
2. **Workforce Community of Practice** – This tier will consist of staff who attend the learning/Development sessions. It provides a space for them to come together, build relationships, share knowledge, network, and work collaboratively to solve problems.

The Partnership's Approach to continuous improvement

Context

Over the past three years the Children in Fife partnership has strengthened its capacity for self-evaluation, quality assurance and continuous improvement. This section summarises some of the key elements that have supported this approach – and the improvements that have been achieved in partnership working through these changes.

A more systematic review of improvement actions

A strengthened model of strategic self-evaluation was introduced, supported by the establishment of a post for a Policy Officer for Children's Services. This has enabled a more systematic approach to evaluating progress with the improvement priorities in the Children's Services Plan, via an annual cycle of self-evaluation meetings. The reviews have been supported by members of Fife CYPIC, to help strengthen support and challenge. This is helping to provide greater clarity regarding the theories of change underpinning improvement work and to strengthen the evidence of impact.



A more holistic approach to self-evaluation

The *How Good is Our Family Support (HGIOFS)* self-evaluation framework has been used as a basis for partnership self-evaluation, over the past three years. The HGIOFS framework was closely modelled on the Supporting Families Toolkit, developed to support the delivery of Whole Family Wellbeing. The framework has been used to structure Children's Services Development sessions over the past three years, enabling a rounded view of partnership working, which can be reviewed on an ongoing basis.



A more strategic use of Quality Improvement methodology and QI expertise

Quality Improvement (QI) expertise within the Fife Children and Young People's Improvement Collaborative (CYPIC) has been used to help develop the strategic priorities for the new Children's Services Plan. This has included workshops to help develop a theory of change for each improvement priority, which will provide the basis for ongoing evaluation of progress with improvement. It has also enabled work to synthesise the knowledge gained from a wide range of previous QI work undertaken by partners through use of QI methodology, providing a clearer focus for future potential improvement.



Improved data and evidence on outcomes and experiences

A post of Children's Services Data Analyst was established, to support the development of a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and to strengthen partnership's core data processes. This has helped to improve the level of analysis undertaken in developing the JSNA, as well as enabling the development of new performance reports and a more regular cycle of updating core outcomes data.



Partnership investment in continued improvement

Recognising the positive impact achieved by the actions taken in the Children's Services Plan 2023-26, partners have acted to establish a core support team to support ongoing self-evaluation, quality assurance and continuous improvement. This will use resourcing from within core service budgets or other partnership funding streams for:

- Part-time support from a *Partnership Coordinator*. This will support strategic planning and reporting for the partnership.
- Part-time support from an *Improvement Coordinator*. This will enable continued development of a more strategic use of Quality Improvement methodology and expertise.
- Part-time support from a *Policy Officer*. This will enable ongoing support for a more systematic approach to self-evaluation.
- Full-time support from a *Workforce Development Lead Officer*. This will enable the development of a coordinated programme of workforce development: to support delivery of the Plan, to enable a Communities of Practice model to be piloted, and to strengthen ongoing partnership working.
- Full-time support from a *Children's Services Data Analyst*. This will enable continued support to improve the partnership's core data processes and performance reporting, as well as ongoing development of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

Embedding an improved model of self-evaluation

Over the next three years, Children in Fife aims to further develop its use of its *How Good Is Our Family Support (HGIOFS)* framework. This will involve establishing self-evaluation and quality assurance for a range of core partnership approaches, as well as for the improvement priorities within the Children's Services Plan.

The partnership's core approaches have been identified following a review of partnership working and groups, undertaken in preparation for the new Children's Services Plan. The table below summarises the partnership's core approaches and identifies the partnership core groups which oversee the related areas of working.

Many of the partnership core groups have direct links to related national working groups and improvement programmes (e.g. the National GIRFEC Group, the Regional Promise Networks). This helps to ensure that the ongoing development of Fife approaches reflects current national policy developments. It also enables the Partnership to influence ongoing development of policy at a national level.

Additionally, Fife Voluntary Action will work collaboratively with partners to use the self-evaluation toolkit '[How good is our third sector participation in Children's Services Planning?](#)' as a structured framework to reflect on and strengthen the quality, consistency and impact of third sector involvement in children's services planning processes.

By engaging statutory partners and third sector providers in honest assessment against the toolkit's quality indicators, we will identify strengths, gaps and opportunities for improvement, inform shared action planning, and support more meaningful, inclusive and effective

participation. This process will help ensure that the voice of the third sector is well represented, influences decision making, and ultimately contributes to improved outcomes for children, young people and families across Fife.

Partnership Core Groups

The partnership's core groups oversee ongoing development and improvement of essential aspects of partnership working. More information can be found at: the [Children in Fife](#) website.

The table below shows the partnership core groups, their remits, and how their work supports the delivery of national policies and approaches.

Group	Role of group	How the Group helps to delivery and national approaches
Child Wellbeing Pathway Oversight Group	Oversight of the Getting It Right in Fife (GIRIF) Framework and related partnership approaches.	Supports implementation of GIRFEC the national approach to supporting every child and young person to reach their full potential).
Participation & Engagement Group (incorporating the Children's Rights Oversight Group)	Oversight of Fife's approach to implementing the UNCRC. Oversight of Fife's approach to Participation & Engagement with children & young people across the CSPP.	Supports implementation of UNCRC and delivery of Children's Rights, including engagement and ownership, and the voice of children and young people.
Supporting Families Oversight Group	Oversight of Children in Fife's evidence-based approaches to parenting and family support.	Supports delivery of early intervention and prevention by children's services and family support.
Our Minds Matter Steering Group	Oversight of Fife's partnership approaches to supporting the Emotional wellbeing of children and young people	Supports ongoing development of support for the Mental Health and Wellbeing of children and young people.

Partnership Support Groups

The partnership's support groups provide support for the ongoing development and improvement of essential aspects of partnership working.

The table below shows the partnership support groups, their remits, and how their work supports ongoing partnership improvement.

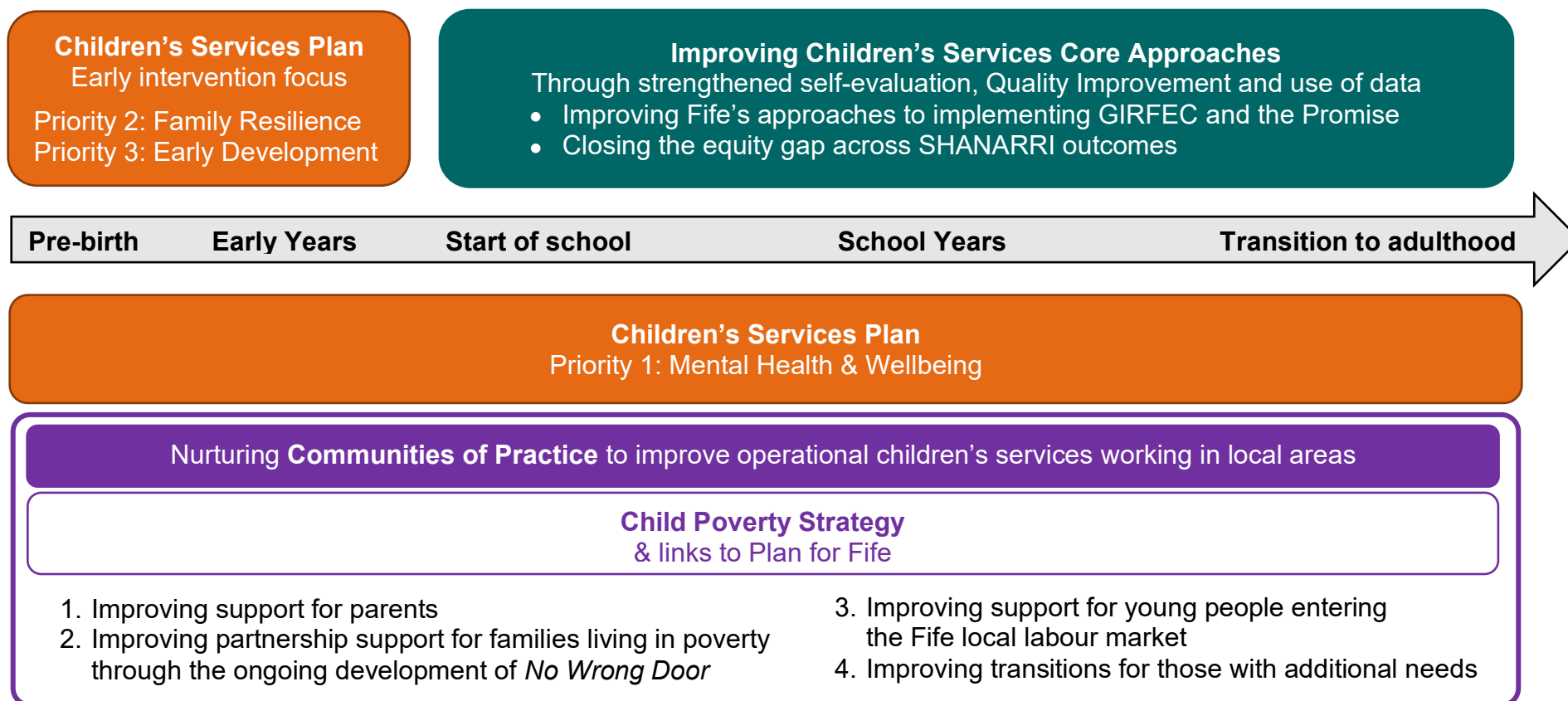
Group	Role of group	How the Group helps to support the improvement of partnership approaches
Workforce Development Group	Development and delivery of the partnership's workforce development model (including practice development and Communities of Practice) – a key enabler of all aspects of CSPP working	Supports ongoing improvement of Our Leadership, Workforce and Culture – a theme within the How Good Is Our Family Support Framework
Data and Evidence Group	Development of Fife's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and improvement of the Children in Fife's core data and wider evidence base	Provides support for: the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) process; the analysis and effective use of data. This is a key enabler for system improvement.
Fife CYPIC	Strengthening the use of rigorous approaches to Quality Improvement across Children in Fife. Participates in – and provides support for – National CYPIC programmes.	Supports the ongoing improvement in SMART approaches to planning, underpinned by well-founded theories of change. Strengthens the effective measurement of system improvement – by identifying appropriate monitoring indicators for short-medium term impact.

Children in Fife has entered into a collective, partnership commitment to support permanent posts to support these activities on an ongoing basis. This has taken effect from the start of the current Children's Services Plan.

Our use of data and evidence

Our framework for improvement: the system-level impact we aim to achieve

The **Fife Children's Services Plan 2026-29** has a particular focus on early intervention. It recognises that equity gaps in outcomes at later ages develop during the early years. There is a strong focus on improving early child development from birth to start of school, by strengthening partnership support for family resilience and parenting skills, and by better recognising and addressing developmental concerns in the early years.



Outcomes throughout the school years will be improved through a focus on **strengthening partnership core approaches** to meet **individual needs**, particularly for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people (including the care experienced and those living in household poverty). Available and additional funding will be used by the partnership to support this approach. This approach will aim to improve the targeting and impact of resources, to better tackle the equity gaps that are evidence across all SHANARRI outcomes.

Support for **Mental Health and Wellbeing** of children and young people of all ages will be strengthened, following a review of the *Our Minds Matter Framework*. This improvement work will focus on strengthening universal support for wellbeing, through workforce development, and reviewing the effectiveness of available support in meeting the needs of Fife's most vulnerable young people.

We will aim to nurture the development of **Communities of Practice**, across Fife's local areas. The model for supporting these Communities will recognise the widely varying local context of each local area, and the differing challenges faced by children's services in each locality. The model will aim to support operational children's services teams in local areas to develop improved working relationships, a capacity for continuous improvement, and more effective use of available data and evidence.

Local area teams will play a key role in supporting the ongoing development of the No Wrong Door model of service delivery across the wider Fife Partnership, and in supporting actions to tackle **child poverty**.

The framework for improvement aims to ensure that:

- the **individual needs** of children and young people are met by improving the effectiveness of working across **children's services** in Fife;
- the underlying challenge of **child poverty** is tackled through improved working – with wider partners who deliver **related services** – through alignment with the updated Plan for Fife, and ongoing integration with the developing No Wrong Door model for service delivery at a local area level.

How we will measure the impact of our approach

Aspect of partnership working	Measures of impact
Communities of Practice	Feedback from operational teams in Fife's 7 localities. Measures from Quality Improvement work undertaken to address local area priorities.
QA Framework for the Partnership's Core Approaches	Workforce understanding and confidence in using core partnership approaches. Process measures to enable understanding of the impact of core partnership approaches.
Fife Children's Services Plan 2026-29	Specific measures are set out in the improvement actions in section 3 of this Plan.

Fife Wellbeing Indicator Set	Long-term outcomes measures, to help track longer-term improvement in the outcomes of children and young people, across all aspects of SHANARRI, ages/stages, etc
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The Fife Wellbeing Indicator Set

The Fife Wellbeing Indicator Set was developed to provide an outcomes framework for children and young people in Fife, providing a rounded view of outcomes:

- for the partnership's contribution to national policy goals and National Performance Framework outcomes.
- across all aspects of wellbeing (as measured via SHANARRI).
- across different ages and stages of child development.
- that could be segmented to provide data for a range of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

The Fife Wellbeing Indicator Set (including available data for a range of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups) was used to inform Fife's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. The current measures are listed below. These will be reviewed once development of a new National Performance Framework is complete, to ensure the Indicator Set continues to support a focus on national priorities.

Outcome	Indicator	Measure
Context	FWI1	% of Children (aged under 16) in Low Income Families (relative poverty)
	FWI2	% of P5-S6 children who agree that their local area is a good place to live
Safe	FWI3a	Number of children on the Child Protection Register per 10,000 aged 0-16
	FWI3b	Number of children on the Child Protection Register
	FWI4a	Number of Looked After Children (LAC) per 1,000 CYP aged 0-16
	FWI4b	Number of Looked After Children
Healthy	FWI6	% of pregnancies where women reported being current smokers at ante-natal booking appointment
	FWI7	Average Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing (WEMWBS) Score for S2-S6 children
	FWI8	Number of CAMHS referrals per 1,000 aged 0-17
	FWI9	% babies being exclusively breastfed at 6-8 weeks
	FWI10	% P1 year children with healthy weight

	FWI11	% P1 year children free from obvious dental decay
	FWI12a	% of S4 pupils who have ever taken illegal drugs, drugs formerly known as legal highs, solvents or prescription drugs that were not prescribed to them
	FWI12b	% of S2 pupils who drink alcohol about once-a-week
	FWI13a	% of school counselling referrals with the primary reason of anxiety
	FWI13b	% of school counselling referrals with the primary reason of school stress
	FWI13c	% of school counselling referrals with the primary reason of home stress
Active	FWI14	% of primary & secondary pupils engaging in physical extra-curricular activity
	FWI15	% of P1-S6 children participating in community activities (participation in at least one from list)
Achieving	FWI16	% of P1, P4 and P7 children achieving expected CfE levels in literacy
	FWI17	% of P1, P4 and P7 children achieving expected CfE levels in numeracy
	FWI18	% of all school leavers in positive destination on leaving school
Nurtured	FWI19	% Early Learning and Childcare settings achieving Care Inspectorate grades of good or better
	FWI20	% of take up by eligible 2 year olds of places in Early Learning and Childcare settings
Respected and responsible	FWI21	% of P5 to S1 pupils who feel confident often or all of the time
Included	FWI23	% of P5-S6 pupils who spend 3 or more hours of their free time on weekdays using electronic devices such as computers, tablets (like iPad) or smart phones
	FWI24a	Number of children in temporary accommodation at 31 March
	FWI24b	Number of children (per 10,000 aged 0-17) in temporary accommodation at 31 March
	FWI25a	Number of children involved in homeless applications

	FWI25b	Number of children (per 10,000 aged 0-17) involved in homeless applications
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An overview of current outcomes for the Fife Wellbeing Indicator Set can be found in the Fife Children’s Services Annual Report 2025-26.

Appendices

How the partnership's approach supports Children's Rights

Fife recognises that, although certain partnership groups are best positioned to support strategic alignment with fundamental rights, the responsibility to uphold children's rights rests with every partner. The table below outlines some of the key children's rights that will be monitored across the partnership:

UNCRC Article	Responsible Partnership Group(s)
Article 3: When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.	Children in Fife, Participation and Engagement Group
Article 4: Governments must do all they can to make sure that every child in their country can enjoy all rights.	Children in Fife, Participation & Engagement Group
Article 19: Governments must protect children from violence, abuse and being neglected.	Children in Fife
Article 22: Children who move from their home country to another country as refugees should get help and protection.	Children in Fife
Article 34: Governments should protect children from sexual exploitation.	Children in Fife
Article 36: Children have the right to be protected from all other kinds of exploitation.	Children in Fife
Article 42: Governments should ensure that everyone knows about children's rights.	Children in Fife, Participation and Engagement Group

National Policy Context

The table below provides an overview of the key national policies, guidance and frameworks that influence the work of Children in Fife and our partners. The final section in the table lists several forthcoming policies and reviews which Children in Fife will be closely monitoring.

National Policy/ Guidance		Description	Link to Children in Fife work
Policy	Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014	Places duties on local authorities and health boards to promote, support and safeguard the wellbeing of children, young people and their families through children's services plans and annual report. This includes duties like Corporate Parenting, Named Persons, and Child's Plans.	Children in Fife Governance Group, Corporate Parenting Board
	UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024	Underpins a rights-based approach, ensuring all children's rights are upheld, especially those at risk. GIRFEC promotes coordinated, wellbeing-focused support across services.	Child Wellbeing Pathway Oversight Group, Participation and Engagement Group
	Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024	Reforms how children are defined, cared for and treated in Scotland's civil and criminal justice systems, emphasising rights-based support and ending the use of Young Offenders Institutions for children.	Children in Fife Governance Group, Participation and Engagement Group, Corporate Parenting Board
	Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017	Requires local authorities and health boards to publish Local Child Poverty Action Reports, targeting efforts to reduce poverty, especially among six priority groups.	Children in Fife Governance Group, Child Poverty Strategy
Guidance/ Frameworks/ Strategy	Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)	National approach to implementing the UNCRC. It provides a shared language and framework for assessing and responding to need using SHANARRI wellbeing indicators. It requires coordinated planning across services, early identification and proportionate response to needs throughout universal, additional and intensive interventions.	Child Wellbeing Pathway Oversight Group
	The Promise	National commitment to care-experienced children. It requires trauma-informed, relationship-based approaches to ensure they are loved, safe and supported.	Corporate Parenting Board

	Getting it Right for Everyone (GIRFE)	Framework designed to improve the delivery of health and social care services by placing individuals at the centre of all decisions about their care and wellbeing	Children in Fife Governance Group, Plan for Fife
	Whole Family Wellbeing Funding	Promotes wraparound, family-centred approaches towards better long-term outcomes for children, young people and families. It requires services to work together to provide holistic support, with consideration to how family circumstances influence child wellbeing.	Children in Fife Governance Group
	Best Start, Bright Futures	National Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan requiring public bodies to collaborate across universal services to deliver holistic, person-centred support to families – particularly those in the six priority groups most at risk of poverty (lone parents, mothers aged under 25, families with a child aged under 1, families affected by disability, minority ethnic backgrounds, and families with more than 3 children).	Children in Fife Governance Group, Child Poverty Strategy
	Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Delivery Plan	Sets out a vision that everyone in Scotland should have the right to achieve the best possible mental health and wellbeing, free from stigma and inequality. A Joint Strategic Board (JSB) for Child and Family Mental Health was established to take forward the actions in the Strategy relating to infants, children and families.	Our Minds Matter Steering Group
	National Guidance for Child Protection	Outlines roles and procedures for protecting children at risk of harm. It emphasises collaboration, timely risk assessments and appropriate action.	Child Wellbeing Pathway Oversight Group, Child Protection Committee
	Early Years Speech, Language and Communication Action Plan	Sets out a vision of ensuring that all children have the strongest start to speech, language and communication at the earliest stage. The Action Plan is structured around three pillars: Leadership and Accountability, Families and Communities and Skilled and Supported Workforce.	Fife CYPIC
	Children and Young People's Improvement Collaborative (CYPIC)	National Hub consists of a team of improvement advisors working in Scottish Government to support national priority areas to apply the quality improvement journey both strategically and at targeted local level.	Fife CYPIC

Ongoing Developments	Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill	Seeks to reform children's care services, strengthens rights for care-experienced individuals, and updates planning and advocacy frameworks in line with the Independent Care Review's recommendations.	Corporate Parenting Board
	National Review of Group Based Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation	Review exploring whether instances of group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation are being identified and acted on appropriately by those services responsible for public protection.	Children in Fife Governance Group, Child Protection Committee
	National Performance Framework	Sets national outcomes focused on reducing inequality and improving wellbeing. It requires Children's Services partners to align their priorities with the outcomes and demonstrate progress through measurable indicators. *CiF acknowledges that the NPF is currently archived and will look to align with the refreshed NPF when published.	Children in Fife Governance Group

Further Information

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation is the Scottish Government's standard approach to measuring relative levels of disadvantage across Scotland. It provides information about a range of resources and opportunities available to communities at a local level. These relate to income, employment, education, health, access to services, crime and housing.



SIMD is calculated for defined local, geographical areas called data zones. There are 6,976 data zones across Scotland.

Each of these data zones fall within five families, called quintiles, according to the overall level of multiple deprivation recorded by SIMD for that area. SIMD Quintile 1 (often abbreviated to **SIMD Q1**) refers to the most deprived areas, as measured by SIMD.

Further information can be found at: <https://www.gov.scot/collections/scottish-index-of-multiple-deprivation-2020/>

Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA)

The Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) is the approach that officials use to provide evidence that proper consideration has been given to the impact that any policy or strategy will have on children and young people up to the age of 18.

Further information can be found at: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2024/08/child-rights-wellbeing-impact-assessment-external-guidance-templates/documents/child-rights-wellbeing-impact-assessment-external-guidance-templates/child-rights-wellbeing-impact-assessment-external-guidance-templates/govscot%3Adocument/child-rights-wellbeing-impact-assessment-external-guidance-templates.pdf>

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