

# Children's Services Plan: 2021 – 2023

**getting  
it right**  
*for every child*  
in South Lanarkshire

Working together: making a difference  
A foundation for recovery



South Lanarkshire  
**Partnership**  
Stronger together

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# Section one:

## Foreword

Welcome to “Getting it Right for South Lanarkshire’s Children, Young People and Families 2021-2023”, our children’s services plan.

This plan builds on our achievements from previous children’s services plans to ensure that our commitment to providing the best outcomes possible remains central to all we do. We continue with the statutory responsibilities of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

Our commitment is to three high level themes and their linked outcomes which act as the organisers for our plan, with a slight refocusing of our third theme around the landscape of child protection and corporate parenting:

- **Prevention and early support:**  
Children have the best start in life and are supported to realise their potential.
- **Health and wellbeing:**  
The health and wellbeing of children, young people and families is improved.
- **Children and young people in need of care and protection:**  
The life chances of children and young people in need of care and protection are improved.

In working towards our outcomes, our strong partnership arrangements provide a robust network of partners to achieve what we need to over the next two years and beyond. Our children’s services partners are committed to working together to get it right for every child, young person and family in South Lanarkshire and the wellbeing indicators are key drivers for our planning processes.

We also consider other recent drivers that inform and shape our plan and help us to improve outcomes for children and families.

- The independent care review and the resulting Promise to keep children with their families where it is safe to do so and value the importance of relationships with families

- The clear direction provided by the joint inspection for children and young people in need of care and protection, carried out in partnership with the Care Inspectorate
- The key guidance provided by the National Performance Framework
- The refocused governance structure of South Lanarkshire’s Community Planning Partnership

To support our vision the plan will focus exclusively on activity carried out by partners working together to use our resources more efficiently and provide a more focussed approach to meeting families needs.

We will work together to strengthen our planning and investment in services where possible to ensure effective targeting for those children and families who need extra support at any time.

We acknowledge the impact COVID-19 has had on our work as a partnership in 2020, affecting our planning and delivery of services and interrupting the desire to make this iteration of our plan a continuation of the momentum we have built up. We also recognise the innovative and creative responses put in place to continue to support children and families throughout the pandemic and mitigate the negative impact the virus has caused. As a result, the new two-year plan will provide synergy with the national planning cycle and create a framework around which to organise our work, to aid the recovery process for children, young people and families. In taking this approach we have been appreciative of the flexibility provided by part 3, paragraph 8 of Schedule 6 of the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 (“the 2020 Act”). This has enabled us to take advantage of the flexibility provided by that Act to postpone compliance with the children’s services plan duties to produce a final report in April 2020 and a new three year plan covering the period April 2020 - March 2023.



**Cleland Sneddon**  
South Lanarkshire Council  
Chief Executive



**Heather Knox**  
NHS Lanarkshire  
Chief Executive

## Section two:

# Our Partnership

In South Lanarkshire we have a shared vision that:

South Lanarkshire's children, young people and families will be safeguarded and supported to reach their full potential and thrive within their communities.

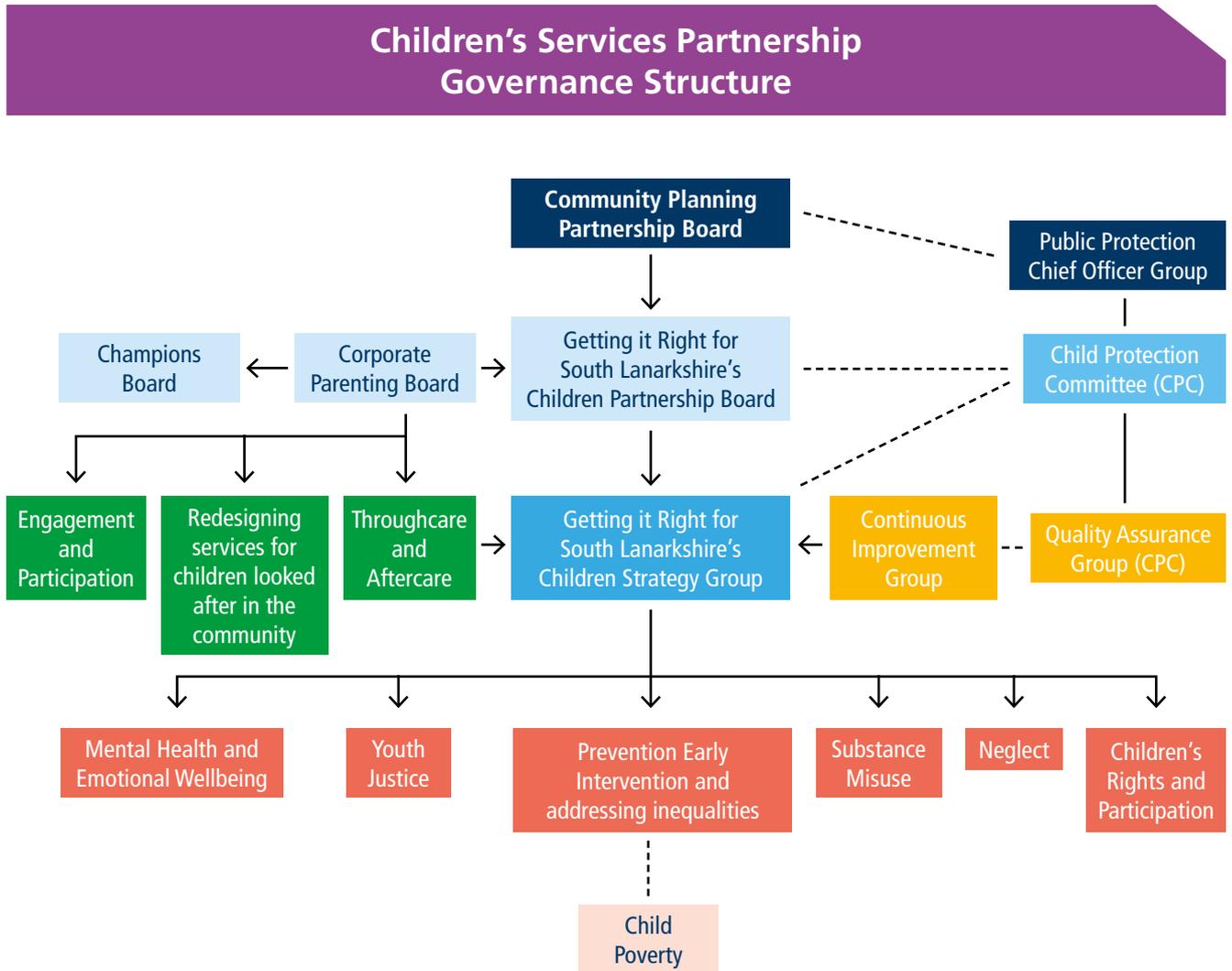


This vision is underpinned by a continued commitment to:

- Tackling inequality, discrimination, and poverty
- Promoting prevention and early support
- Targeting resources on those areas where working together will make the biggest impact on children, young people and families
- Ensuring a multi-agency approach to continuous improvement and
- Implementing a workforce development strategy that builds the competence and confidence of our staff

Our children's services partners in South Lanarkshire are: most importantly our children, young people and families, South Lanarkshire Council, South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership, NHS Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire Child Protection Committee, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA), Police Scotland, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture and Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire (VASLAN) on behalf of the vibrant and valuable third sector organisations working with children and families.

The diagram below shows the governance structure that oversees the work of the children's services partnership and the delivery of our children's services plan.



The structure supports and oversees the progress reporting through our annual report, engagement with national networks, consultations and related structures and planning processes.

By working together in partnership and sharing information appropriately, we can better support children and families. We recognise that every child is entitled to be supported throughout their childhood into adulthood, getting the help they need when they need it.

*Health workers, schools, social work, housing, police and community organisations are alongside each other to give the best help for children, young people and families*

**Achieving**



In developing this plan, we have paid close attention to Scotland's **National Performance Framework**.



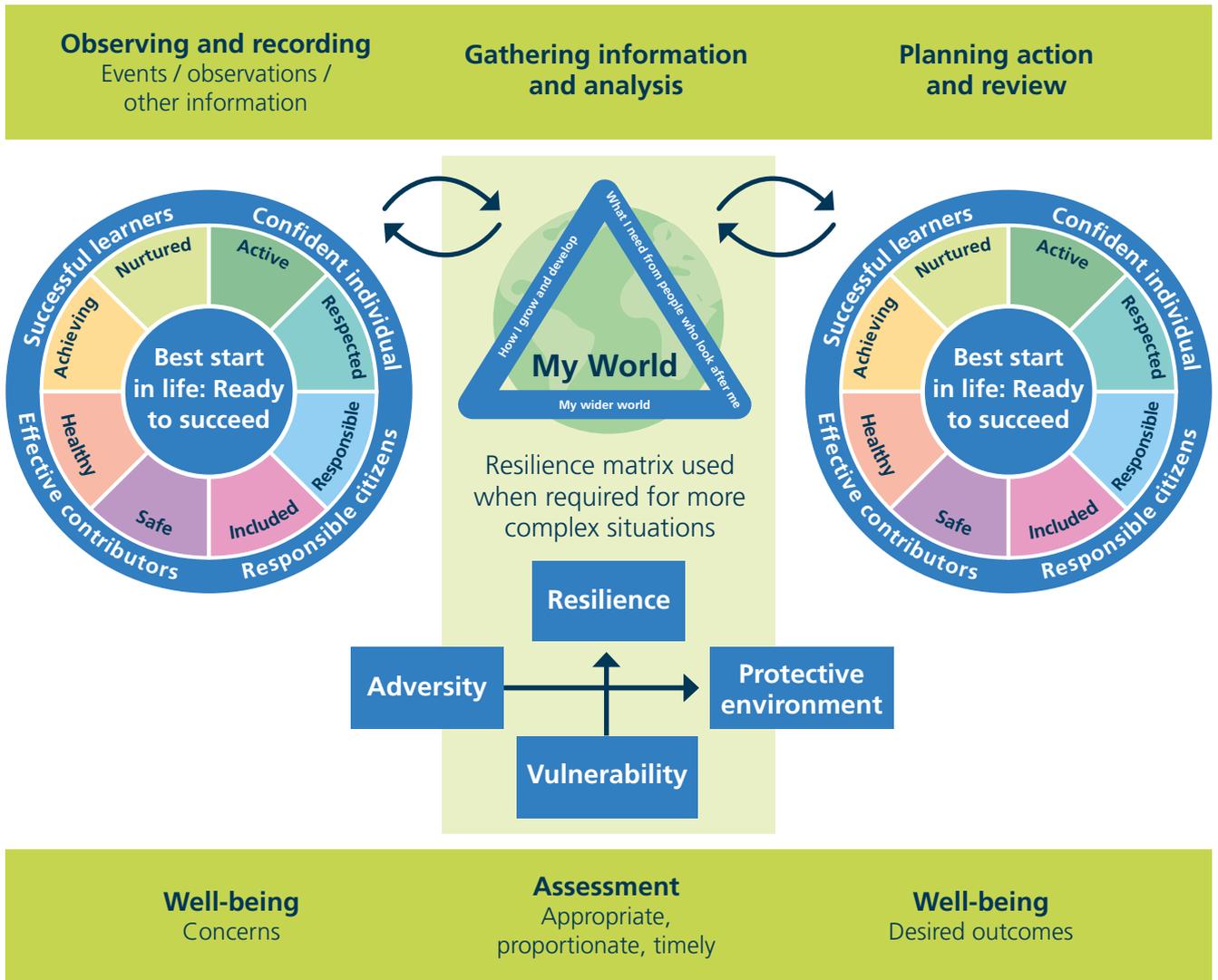
The key to successful outcomes is the provision of good quality services which are well organised and equipped to deliver, joined-up, responsive support to children and their families.

This plan is for all children and young people in South Lanarkshire and helps inform the ability to provide services against a backdrop of tightening budgets. There is a requirement to target our services to where there is greatest need. For approximately 80% of our children universal services offer the support necessary to

ensure positive outcomes are achieved. However, some children and young people need extra help. Inequalities in health and attainment exist between children and young people from our more deprived communities when compared to those from our more affluent ones.

The GIRFEC National Practice Model provides the necessary tools to ensure proportionate and timely intervention, making sure we keep the child at the centre.

# National practice model



The Getting it right for every child approach is based on shared values and principles. It recognises the fundamental right of children and families to be involved in decisions which affect them and for everyone to be accountable for their actions. We want South Lanarkshire to be a place where children can access all the opportunities and support that they need, when they need it. We believe every child has the right to be active, achieving, nurtured, respected, responsible, included, healthy – and above all, safe. At the heart of our approach is a commitment to engage children, young people and their families in having a say about the services and support that are made available.

Our children’s services partnership is committed to ensuring that the various plans and strategies are joined up to maximise benefits and to implement a common goal to tackle disadvantage and inequality. We aim to do this in way that informs the use of our available resources in a shared manner.

*Attachment*



The following legislation provides important direction and guidance for our planning:

- The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
- The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 (includes rights for young carers)

A more comprehensive list of legislation is detailed in the Important links section.

In addition, the following documents have helped to create provide a strong context for the priorities identified.

- South Lanarkshire's Community Plan
- South Lanarkshire Council's Plan – 'Connect'
- Local Child Poverty Action Report
- Integrated Health and Social Care Strategic Commissioning Plan
- Child Protection Business Plan
- Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan
- Youth Justice Strategy and Action Plan
- Lanarkshire's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Strategy
- NHS Lanarkshire Child Health Plan
- Education Resources Plan
- Social Work Resources Plan
- Chief Social Work Officer Report
- Alcohol and Drugs Partnership Strategy
- Community Learning and Development Strategy
- Youth Strategy

Between 2015 and 2017 South Lanarkshire Community Planning Partnership worked with the Scottish Government as part of phase one of the national Realigning Children's Services programme. As we move into a new plan we continue to embrace the ethos of the RCS programme and ensure that our gathering of data and use of other evidence directs how we can use our available resources to achieve best possible outcomes.

As a partnership we have spent some time understanding and analysing our data trends and carrying out conversations with our children, young people and families and listening to our workforce. The result is a comprehensive Joint Strategic Needs Assessment that has informed our plan and reflects the voices of children, young people and families and the views of our wider workforce. This assessment will also help guide our partnership in a range of other planning and decision-making processes as we move forward.

Healthy

Wellbeing

Responsible

Safe

## Section three:

# What we know about children, young people and families in South Lanarkshire

In 2019, South Lanarkshire was home to 320,530 people, of which 17.3% were 15 and under. The area covers 180,000 hectares of land stretching from a few miles from the city centre of Glasgow to close to the Scottish Border (with a 80% Urban and 20% rural split) and is one of the

largest and most diverse areas of Scotland. There are four localities that are aligned to support planning across Education, Health and Social Work and 17 learning communities with 20 secondary establishments, 124 primary schools and 72 early years establishments.

The key characteristics of our children and young people can be seen in the profiles below.

The following section was informed by our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

### Population statistics

Age	Number and % of population	The percentage projected changes in the Under 25 populations to 2036 period.
Aged Under 5	16,803 – 5.3%.	-6%
5-14	35,281 – 11.1%	-4.5% (5-9), + 4.1% (10 -14)
15-19	16,828 – 5.3%	-4.4%
20-24	17,757 – 5.6%	-8.6%



Parents, carers and families are supported from the earliest stages to give children a healthy start and ensure they grow up loved and nurtured

### Smoking rates in pregnancy

Around 1 in 7 women report smoking during pregnancy



this varies from 1 in 4 in the most deprived areas to 1 in 29 in the least deprived

### Breastfeeding rates

33.8% of babies are still breastfed at six to eight weeks.



rates are higher in least deprived areas compared with the most deprived

### Emotional wellbeing in pregnancy

In 19/20 35.7% of antenatal women reported they had an emotional wellbeing issue at booking.



Families have adequate incomes and affordable, warm homes to ensure children have the best start in life

Children and young people are safe, protected from abuse, neglect and harm in their communities and homes

## Data zones

In 2020 South Lanarkshire had **431 data zones.**



**20.4%** of South Lanarkshire's data zones were amongst the **20% most deprived.**

## Child Poverty

**24%** of children are living in relative poverty.



above the Scottish average and a **1%** increase from the previous year

## Free School Meals

**68.8%** of those registered for free school meals actually take them.



below the Scottish figure of **73.5 %.**

## Homelessness

In 2019/20 there were **965 homeless households**



of which **32** were households with children, a total of **41%.**

## Child Protection

In July 2019, **116 children** were on the child protection register



below the national average and a decrease of **2.1 per 1000** from the previous year. The highest category being neglect.

## Care Experienced children and young people

**725** children and young people were looked after – **10.6** per 1,000 population and lower than the national figure of **14.3%**. Of these, during the reporting period:



- **27%** of children and young people were Looked After at Home with parents.  
**1%** above the Scotland total of **26%**
- **29%** with Kinship Carers Friends/Relatives.  
**1%** above the Scotland total of **28%**
- **33%** with Foster Carers.  
**8%** above the Scotland total of **24%**
- **1%** with Foster Carers purchased by Local Authority.  
**9%** below the Scotland total of **10%**
- **1%** in other community settings (includes prospective adopters)  
the same as the national figure

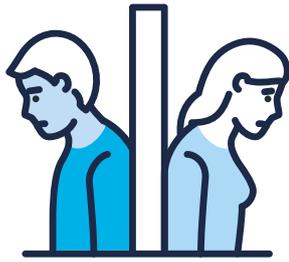
Children and young people are **respected and responsible**, including being involved in decisions that affect them

## Offending

**12.5 per 1,000**

children and young people are referred to the Children's Reporter for offending –

higher than comparator authorities, but lower than the Scotland average.



Rates are 17 times higher in areas of high poverty compared to low poverty areas.

## Activities for children and young people

**4366** children and young people engaged

in Youth, Family and Community Learning sessions on antisocial behaviour, bonfire/fire safety, mentoring and South Lanarkshire's Leisure and Culture Coaching Academy.



Children and young people have good emotional and physical health and live in communities which support health, including play, being active and eating well

## Healthy Weight

**1 in 10 children** in primary school are at risk of obesity.



Children in high poverty areas are at twice the risk of obesity as those in low poverty areas.

## Active Schools Programme

Last year

**20,421 (47%)**

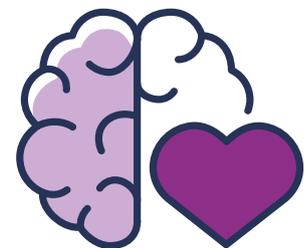
of pupils participated in the Active Schools programme.



An increase of 2% from the previous year.

## Emotional Wellbeing

SALSUS data shows an increasing trend in reported mental health issues.



There has been a 7% increase in 13-year-olds reporting a mental health concern and a 12% increase in 15 year olds reporting a mental health concern.

Children and young people are **included** by addressing inequalities and are supported to learn and to develop and achieve

## Attainment

3 of every 5 young people leave school with at least one level 6 qualification.



In areas of high poverty this falls to 2 out of every 5

## Child Development

In 2019, **17% of children** at their 27mth health review had a concern in at least one area of their development.



This is higher than the Scottish figure of 13.5%.

Speech, language and communication and emotional and behavioural concerns were the areas where most concerns were raised. Children living in high poverty areas had 5% higher levels of concerns in comparison to low poverty areas.

## Attainment

**30% less pupils** from high poverty areas achieved their Curriculum for Excellence levels in S3 compared to low poverty areas.



## School leaver Destinations

In 2018/19, **93.5%** of pupils in high poverty areas achieved a positive school leaver's destination.



above the Scottish average of 93.4% - South Lanarkshire has been above the national average every year since 2012/13

Children, young people and adults affected by childhood adversity and trauma have the right support in place, where needed, to improve health and life outcome

## Childhood Adversity

Traumatic events can have a lasting effect on health and wellbeing.



Data from 2020

highlights concerns raised during the child protection process show the following rates:

### Abuse -

emotional

35.3%

physical

12.1%

sexual

4.9%

### Neglect -

includes emotional and physical

60.3%



### Household challenges -

domestic violence

26.7%

substance use

43.1%

parental mental health

20.7%

## Section four:

# Our investment in children, young people and families

### Resources

South Lanarkshire Community Planning Partnership has overall governance of the provision of Children's Services. Structures are in place to facilitate effective partnership working that aims to align services priorities and establish a set of jointly agreed outcomes. This also sees the alignment of partnership resources both financial and staffing to achieve the outcomes agreed.

Our strong focus on prevention and early intervention across all partners which at a time of public spending reductions makes the best use of our limited resources.

The Community Planning Partnership has regular budget reporting and agreement around budget planning across the partnerships to ensure best outcomes as well as ensuring that any savings do not impact on the joint priorities agreed.

Over the last two years the Community Planning Partnership has led the way in the design and delivery of public services which are responsive to local need and also the establishment of neighbourhood planning areas for targeted interventions. These are a key element of the Children's Service Planning agenda.

In 2019/20, over £396m was provided for the provision of universal and targeted services for children and families. A large proportion of the children's services budget was provided to primary and secondary school-aged children (32% and 37% respectively) and fifteen percent of the budget was spent on the early years and 4% on preschool-aged children. Post school-aged young people received around 2% of the total budget.

In addition, there are an increasing number of funding streams being made available to the partnership to support areas of national policy at a local level. These funding streams include the Care Experienced Children and Young People Attainment Fund, Infant Mental Health funding, Counselling Through Schools and Community Access Mental Health Services resources. The partnership also contributes to the commissioning of the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership services for children with substance misuse issues and the shared resourcing of the Parenting Support Pathway activity. South Lanarkshire's third sector provides valuable capacity to deliver crucial support services to children, young people and families of approximately £11m in value.

We aim to use our combined resource effectively to ensure we deliver services which promote wellbeing, prevent adversity and provide the right help at the right time to those who need it.

### Finance

In 2019/20 over £396 million was spent on services for children and their families across Education and Health and Social Care

### Commissioned services

- South Lanarkshire Young Carers Service (Action 4 Children)
- VASLAN contribution to children's services partnership
- Silverton Short Breaks Service (Action for Children)
- Counselling through Schools providers

### Prioritised partnership spending with aligned funding

- Parenting Support Pathway
- Infant Mental Health Fund
- Mental Health Community Access Fund
- Pupil Equity Fund
- Scottish Attainment Challenge Fund
- Youth Guarantee Fund
- Prevention As Inclusion youth justice initiative

## Section five:

# Children's Rights and #TheRightToBeMyself



Our children's services partnership is committed to the process of incorporating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots law and the additional commitments that come with it, which we hope will help children to access their rights more readily.

Our expectation is that the incorporation will improve outcomes, although we are aware that there is still a lot to be done in terms of raising awareness of the importance of children's rights with children and families. Key adults supporting children require to understand the UNCRC and the bill ensuring that those working in education, child protection and with care experienced children and young people are competent and confident in their use.

We encourage and welcome a proactive culture in making children's rights central to our work. Recognising, respecting and promoting the rights of all children and young people is crucial to improving outcomes and increasing life chances. We are confident that a strong rights-based approach can make a significant difference to children and young people's lives and improve the quality and impact of services.

Building from a strong baseline we have set out to understand the wide range of practice that reflects the 42 articles in the United Nations Convention Rights of the Child. We recognise that children and young people want the right to be themselves **#TheRightToBeMyself** and this is a feature of our approach to children's rights.

In late 2019, a series of locality events helped reflect on rights-based practice and set the agenda for further improvement on the importance of working towards best practice in children's rights. We are listening more to young people than ever before through a wide range of participation and engagement practice, much of which is articulated within this section.

In building this plan, the voices of children, young people and parents have been central to agreeing what our priorities will be for the next two years and how they are articulated in this document.

To support our approach in developing children's rights we have developed a handbook for staff that helps provide support and guidance in recognising the importance of children's rights and inspiring staff to best practice.

Respected

*Life chances*

What we will do to continue our commitment to children's rights in South Lanarkshire over the next two years:

In progressing the children's rights agenda, the Partnership will seek to deliver on the following commitments as part of our plan of action to make children's rights-based practice in South Lanarkshire the best it can be.

- Continue to use the Children's Rights Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) model in developing South Lanarkshire's Children's Services Plan 2020-23, the refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan and other areas of policy and strategy affecting children and young people
- Further develop awareness of Children's Rights into workforce development opportunities provided to the children's services workforce
- Enhance the voices of our care experienced children and young people through the Champion's Board
- Further develop our **Right to be Myself** approach e.g., consider the impact of gender issues and how we are open and responsible in supporting children and young people through their experiences
- Be imaginative in engaging with children and young people who are less likely to engage in traditional consultation process. For example, make use of social media to provide platforms for children and young people to share their views and experiences in a safe environment
- Provide opportunities for children and young people to participate in locality-based events and explore how we can develop more creative opportunities for participation
- Work with parents and carers to raise their awareness of children's rights and ensure children having a better understanding of responsibilities along with rights
- Enhance the rights of young carers through the commissioned Young Carers Service
- Extend and enhance advocacy support to children and young people in need of care and protection

## Learning journey

*The UNCRC will soon be law in Scotland and we want all children, young people and adults to understand why that is important and what they have to do to respect our rights!*

## Milestones

Healthy

Achieving

## Section six:

# Engagement and Participation

## Engagement with children, young people and families

As a partnership we are keen to hear the lived experiences of those children and young people we work with. We do this in a variety of ways and our approach to engagement and participation is guided by both Article 12 of the UNCRC, which states that children and young people should have their say when adults are making decisions that affect them and their opinions are taken seriously and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The act seeks to ensure that children's rights are realised and influence the design and delivery of policies and services.

Creating ways to engage with our children and young people in conversations designed to maximise their voices has been central to this planning process and continues to be a key influence on all our joint planning. Some recent examples include:

- Establishing a Champions Board for our care experienced children and young people
- Carrying out an online survey with children, young people families and communities to inform this plan
- Supporting a comprehensive questionnaire/survey as part of the 2019 inspection for services to support children and young people in need of care and protection

- Implementing the 'Mind of My Own' app for care experienced young people
- Carrying out an extensive biennial Youth Services survey
- Listening to children and young people's experiences and concerns of the impact of COVID-19
- Conversing with service users through focus groups and questionnaires in the Autumn of 2020 to ensure that we were considering the latest experiences and voices of children and families as our plan came together and as the COVID-19 pandemic evolved

In addition, as we move through the process of delivering this plan we will look to improve how we embed our work around the 'voice of the child' into our core business, through areas like care planning and universal services, gathering key messages from children, young people and families and using this to inform planning and decision making. One specific way of doing this will be through six specific tests of change, designed as part of the Inclusion As Prevention Initiative in partnership with Dartington Design Lab, the Centre for Criminal Justice and Action For Children. This activity will be a particular feature throughout the two years of this plan and will be important in our co-design activity.

Our approach is informed by the national standards for community engagement and the recently produced 'National Standards for Community Engagement - Recovery and Renewal' guidance, which supports engagement following the COVID-19 pandemic.

[www.voicescotland.org.uk/support-materials/](http://www.voicescotland.org.uk/support-materials/)



## Through our engagement activity, our children and young people tell us that:

- They want us to be more creative in tackling child poverty and inequalities and helping families and they worry about their family's own money issues
- Parental health and wellbeing, particularly mental health can have a major impact on the health and wellbeing of children and young people
- The unfairness of coronavirus worries them, including missed school/learning, the impact on their future choices and the difficulties maintaining contact with friends
- They worry about homelessness and how that affects other families and young people
- The lack of the right transport can mean they miss out on crucial services and supports
- Families should find it easier to get all the help they need, e.g., through an integrated model of support (get help at one place, not many places)
- Often the culture, stigma and embarrassment at needing help for some things puts people off asking for support
- They are often unaware of what support is available e.g. hearing about entitlements from friends, rather than at the earliest point automatically

## Engagement with staff

Engagement with staff is a highly valued aspect of our work. Regular multi-agency events enable staff from all partners to contribute to our planning and evaluation and reflect on progress against key targets. Last year around 600 staff from across all the partners attended at least one of these events and 1162 members of staff responded to a survey carried out as part of the recent inspection. Over 100 staff participated in an online seminar in January 2021.

This provided a strong perspective of what is working well for our children and families and what needs to be better going forward. This perspective is included as an integral part of our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and has helped to inform our agreed priorities.

## Key issues arising from our engagement activity with staff include the following themes:

Provide early support based on better identification and understanding of need

The importance of emotional wellbeing based on access to the right services and well trained and supported staff

Improve the number of children with a healthy weight, including providing easier ways to be active and develop healthier eating habits

Improve parental engagement in services and facilitate increased opportunities to share views and experiences

Address poverty through affordable childcare, access to benefits, increased employability options and digital inclusion

Supporting care experienced children through transitions better and offer improved supports to kinship carers

Addressing the lack of preventative support for substance use issues of young people and address problems caused by parental substance use at the earliest point

Provide better joined up working, including integrated approaches focused on the whole family and shared training opportunities such as locality events and practice sharing sessions

Support staff's understanding and confidence in relation to trauma-based practice through high quality training and awareness raising



What we will do to continue our commitment to engagement with our stakeholders in South Lanarkshire over the next two years:

*Thriving*

Nurtured

Active

Children, young people and families are at the heart of children's services planning in South Lanarkshire.

## Year One Actions



**1.** Develop a bespoke Engagement and Participation Plan for the Children's Services Partnership

**2.** Engage in conversations with children, young people and parents as part of our core activity and develop ways to share this feedback across the partnership

**3.** Contribute towards other engagement activity taking place including around the development of a new Council Plan and Community Plan for 2022 onwards

**4.** Collate 'Mind of My Own' outcome data to ensure any developing themes identified

**5.** Produce a child friendly version of our plan

**6.** Engage fully with our third sector partners

## Section seven:

# The Promise (Independent Care Review)



The Care Review is “an independent, root and branch review of Scotland’s care system”, including the underpinning legislation, practices, culture and ethos. The Care Review has been built on five foundations of voice, family, care, people and scaffolding and these must be at the heart of how Scotland thinks, plans and priorities for its children and families.

We recognise that the only way significant improvements can be made is by understanding the full extent of what it means to experience care. The lived experience and wisdom of people has been at the very heart of the Independent Care Review and will be at the very heart of the responses to share care review planning in South Lanarkshire. South Lanarkshire Council Children and Justice Services has already been involved in work of the Independent Care Review, specifically the stop: go and edges of care work.

We refer to ‘The Promise’ as opposed to recommendations, recognising that there must be unwavering commitment to radical change that transforms the culture of care.

At its core, is the commitment to keep children with their families where it is safe to do so and above all else, value the importance of relationships with families.

While work is beginning to cascade responses across Scotland, in South Lanarkshire we are working to shape local practice and involve service providers, professionals and volunteers involved in the lives of children to implement change.

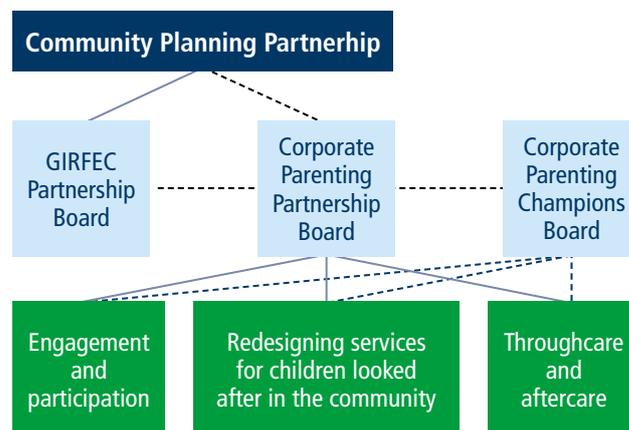
Our progress will be reported to our Champions’ Board, which was launched in December 2019 and now incorporated into our Children’s Services governance structure. As part of our review, we have created a Corporate Parenting Partnership Board, the board will provide challenge and support to progress our commitment to change as it aligns with the vision of the Promise. The work is supported through three priority multi-agency thematic groups:

- Redesigning services for children within the community
- Throughcare and aftercare and continuing Care
- Engagement and participation of care experienced children and young people

The new Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan will include the commitment to building capacity to support children and young people to remain within their families where it is safe. We will do this by developing an enhanced and more coordinated family support model. We have undertaken an improvement programme to enhance the support offered to our Kinship Carers. We have ambitious plans to strengthen our support to care experienced young people post 16 years, in line with the vision of the Promise, co-designing with our care experienced young people a model of support and accommodation that meets young people’s needs.

Our new plan will give centrality to the importance of relationships across our workforce, promoting a culture that values relationships between the workforce and children, young people and their families.

Proposal of renewed Corporate Parenting governance and structure (diagram below)



## Section eight:

# Child Protection

The South Lanarkshire Child Protection Committee (SLCPC) is the local strategic planning partnership responsible for developing and implementing child protection policy and strategy across and between agencies as described in the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland.

The SLCPC performs a number of functions in South Lanarkshire including the development of policies, procedures and protocols in ensuring the effectiveness and quality of local child protection services. It provides high quality learning and development opportunities for a range of professionals, practitioners and managers.

The core business function of South Lanarkshire Child Protection Committee is linked to continuous improvement in the context of a set of quality indicators, based on the Five Key Questions set by the Care Inspectorate that provide a framework for evaluation across the partnership.

South Lanarkshire Committee (SLCPC) members meet quarterly at core meetings and within associated subgroups to consider local and national child protection matters and make collective decisions on how to keep children and young people at the centre of our work. The SLCPC routinely reports to the Chief Officers Group (Public Protection) and offers regular updates to the Integrated Joint Board (IJB), the Children's Planning Partnership (CPP) the Community Justice Partnership (CJP) and the GIRFEC Partnership Board. It works to ensure outcomes are being achieved and that we uphold Article 12 (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989) by working;

- Collaboratively to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in South Lanarkshire
- SMART[i] in developing and implementing plans focussed on improving outcomes for children, young people and families
- Together in reviewing, evaluating, monitoring and publishing multi-agency protocols, procedures and guidance relating to child protection and public protection
- In partnership to ensure oversight of data (qualitative and quantitative) about child protection to inform improvements

- To promote key messages about protecting children, young people and families in our communities; and
- Together to develop and deliver high quality training, learning and development opportunities for the multi-agency child protection workforce

The SLCPC has a number of sub groups who take forward the agenda as set by the Child Protection Improvement Programme in 2017 and National Guidance. It has in place, a number of processes to identify good practice and disseminate lessons learned from past and current practice, including learning from significant case reviews, inspection reports, case file audits, consultation events and other self-evaluation activity and inquiry reports both at local and national level. The SLCPC celebrates success and uses these to strengthen partnership working at every opportunity.

The SLCPC listen to children, young people, families, communities and our workforce to produce public information about protecting children and young people. By working in partnership, we can continue to deliver key messages about keeping safe from, harm, abuse or neglect in South Lanarkshire.

We are prioritising our integrated approach to Child Protection in the context of Public Protection and work closely with partners across key thematic areas including Gender-Based Violence, Adult Protection, the Community Justice Partnership, MAPP (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) and the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership. This strengthens our joint approach in working together to support children, young people and families to achieve the best possible outcomes.

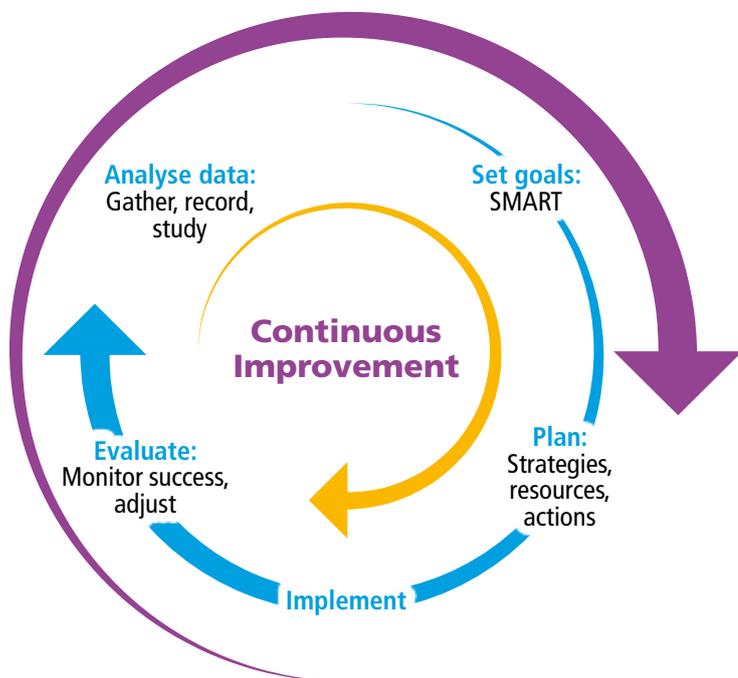
More information is available at [www.childprotectionsouthlanarkshire.org.uk](http://www.childprotectionsouthlanarkshire.org.uk)



## Section nine:

# Continuous Improvement

Continuous improvement is an integral part of our partnership governance structure and our approach has been informed by the national policy and local scrutiny of practice, both internal and external. Our Continuous Improvement Group maintain a shared improvement plan based on quality assurance activity, which is reviewed on a quarterly basis.



Most recently the 2019 joint inspection for children and young people in need of care and protection, carried out in partnership with the Care Inspectorate provided a valuable opportunity to evaluate our progress in the delivery of key services. The resultant published report in June 2020 provided a clear direction for activity that is articulated in the children and young people in need of care and protection theme of this children's services plan.

Our commitment to continuous improvement also includes carrying out a range of activity designed to improve standards, e.g.:

- Using the key self-evaluation documents 'How well do we protect children and meet their needs?' (HMle, 2009), 'How well are

we improving the lives of children and young people?' (Care Inspectorate 2014) and 'A quality framework for children and young people in need of care and protection' (Care Inspectorate 2018) to support of understanding

- Carrying out multi-agency self-evaluation
- Auditing agreed joint processes and using information to promote best practice within and across agencies
- Engaging children, young people and families to hear their views and experiences of accessing services, life circumstances, hopes and aspirations

The Continuous Improvement Group has devised an Improvement Framework to inform the above work and to encourage quality assurance activity on a multi-agency basis, which includes the Scottish Government's Three Step Improvement Framework.

The model is made up of three questions to guide our activity, and a tool to test out our ideas to see whether the change we think will work, acts in the way we think it should.

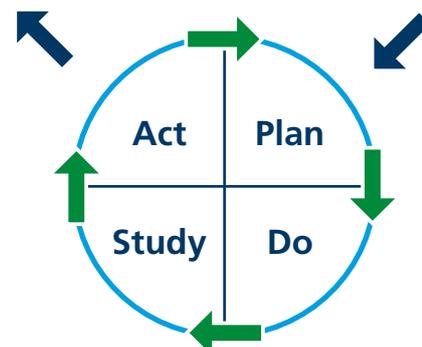
It provides a cyclical approach to improvement which can be used to turn ideas into action, and links action to learning so that the rights changes can be developed and spread to maximise improvement.

### Model for Improvement

What are we trying to accomplish?

How will we know that a change is an improvement?

What change can we make that will result in improvement?





Workforce development is an integral part of our improvement agenda and increasing demands to support new priorities and evidenced need mean that as a partnership, we continually build the capacity of our staff through good quality training opportunities and increased skills, knowledge and confidence to deliver the rights support at the right time. Throughout the duration of this plan we aim to provide training opportunities to support staff in a number of important areas, including:

- Mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people
- Trauma based practice
- Children's Rights and in particular the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots' law
- Attachment
- Parenting support programmes
- Provide important opportunities for networking and the sharing of effective practice



In 2019 we introduced a Staff Handbook, which helps staff understand fully how the work that they do contributes towards our goal of improving outcomes for our children, young people and families.

### What we will do to support workforce development during this plan:

1. Provide awareness raising training around children's rights
2. Continue with our multi-agency events
3. Deliver additional training to support the contribution to the Parenting Support Pathway
4. Provide important opportunities for networking and the sharing of effective practice
5. Continue to support our workforce develop a greater understanding and confidence in approaching trauma-based practice

Included

Opportunities

Active

## Section ten:

# Developing our priorities

We have produced a comprehensive Joint Strategic Needs Assessment which is built on three essential sections, the collection, analysis and understanding of available data, the voices and experience of children and families and the perception of the wider children's services workforce. Our Data and Planning Group recorded data showing trends over time, the scale of inequality and areas where early intervention could reduce the likelihood of further problems in the future. A prioritisation tool was used to support this process and data gaps were identified and areas for improvement were agreed.

The work to engage children, families and the wider workforce is explained in more detail in Section Six, Engagement and Participation and provides crucial evidence to add to the understanding of data and create a more holistic understanding of need.

As a result of this activity, we have agreed three high level priorities, each with a high-level outcome. These are:

- **Prevention and Early Support:**  
Children have the best start in life and are supported to realise their potential.
- **Health and Wellbeing:**  
The health and wellbeing of children, young people and families is improved.
- **Children and young people in need of care and protection:**  
The life chances of children and young people in need of care and protection are improved.

The table below shows the outcome of this process.

Children have the best start in life and are supported to realise their potential	The health and wellbeing of children, young people and families is improved	The life chances of children and young people in need of care and protection are improved
Reducing perinatal substance use	Improving the mental health and emotional wellbeing of infants, children, young people and parents  (Infant mental health, counselling through schools, community mental health, reducing suicide, COVID-19 impact)	Supporting sustained positive destinations for care experienced young people
Improving parental mental health in pregnancy	More children and young people are at a healthy weight	Supporting care leavers transitions
Improving language development in early years (SIMD1)	Increasing breastfeeding	Improving outcomes for care experienced children and young people
Developing inclusion as prevention to offending	Reducing dental decay	Improving care planning and reviews
Supporting Young Carers	Reducing substance use by young people	Supporting Kinship Carers
Preventing domestic abuse	Reducing parental substance use	Addressing neglect
Improving Additional Support for Learning		Extending advocacy services



The Community Planning Partnership works to ensure that any duplication in planning and reporting is kept to a minimum. Tackling child poverty remains an overarching priority for our partnership and to help mitigate child poverty, in addition to the above priorities articulated in the children’s services plan, a range of actions have been incorporated into the Local Child Poverty Action Report, which can be found here: [www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/13027/child\\_poverty\\_action\\_plan\\_summary\\_2020-21.pdf](http://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/13027/child_poverty_action_plan_summary_2020-21.pdf)

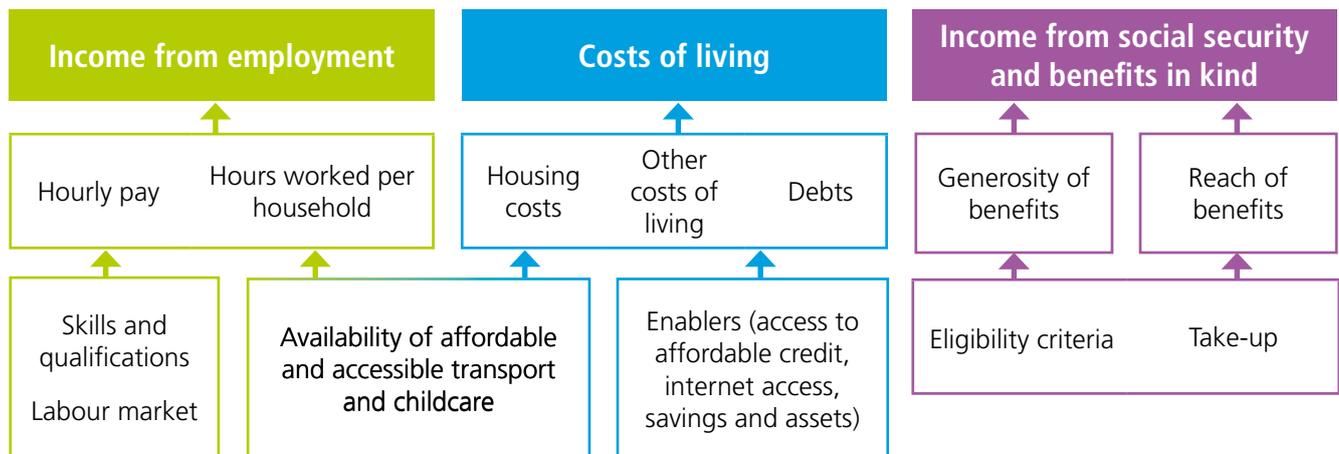
Respected

These include:

- Affordable childcare
- Food poverty
- Homelessness
- Access to benefits and entitlement
- Digital inclusion
- Parental employability

Potential

### Drivers of child poverty



Responsible

Learning journey

## Section eleven:

# Our priority outcomes

Our plan has three priority themes:

- **Prevention and early support:**  
Children have the best start in life and are supported to realise their potential.
- **Health and wellbeing:**  
The health and wellbeing of children, young people and families is improved.
- **Children in need of care and protection:**  
The life chances of children and young people in need of care and protection are improved.

## 1. Prevention and Early Support

### Why is it important?

All children deserve the best possible start in life and to grow up loved, safe and respected so that they achieve their full potential. Several key documents outlined in Section 12 have identified the need for change from a reactive to a preventative approach to stop problems occurring or getting worse with early identification of need and support through both universal and targeted approaches. These are delivered by a range of services, through education, health, social work and the third sector.

If a child with a concern does not benefit from early intervention, there are multiple risks for example – negative impact on their wellbeing, emotional and behavioural problems, Language and literacy difficulties, lower educational attainment, worklessness, challenges to mental health and, in some cases, a progression into offending and substance misuse later in life. It is estimated that 40% of current spending is on interventions that could have been avoided by prioritising a preventative approach.

A shift towards using strengths-based approaches with families/parents and communities alongside preventive spend offers the best opportunity

for tackling inequalities on an individual, family, community and societal level. Reducing future demand in services, more effective use of resources and resulting in better outcomes for children, young people and families.



### Achievements from our previous Children's Services Plan

Over 950 pregnant mums and young families supported by Money Matters Telephone Advice Line with substantial financial gains

Decrease in inequalities of speech, language and communication needs

Improving trend in attendance in SIMD 1

Closing the gap in literacy levels in P4, P7 and S3

An increasing number of young people achieving and sustaining positive post school destinations

Exposure to second-hand smoke at 27 months of age has decreased

### Where are we now?

Over the last three years we have seen substantial investment and commitment both nationally and locally around improving preventative services and early intervention, including: the implementation of our parenting support pathway for 0-8 year olds, the roll out of the national universal health visiting pathway, targeted school nursing approaches, extending our early learning and childcare provision and development of early intervention services within Social Work, for example the Fas Early Intervention Service.



Within our schools, the Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), helps to provide additional opportunities for targeted and innovative solutions to address the poverty related attainment gap.

We use a quality improvement model to accelerate the achievement of the national Children and Young People's Improvement Collaborative and improve outcomes for children and young people. This activity has focused on key developmental, literacy and numeracy and health and wellbeing milestones, as well as sustained positive post school destinations for children within each SIMD data zone.

Our parenting support pathway provides evidence-based programmes for parents on a universal and targeted basis and supports parenting skills and attachment to build strong family relationships. The pathway focuses on parents and carers of infants and children 0-8 years and is currently being reviewed. The pathway will be extended to the 9 -16 age range during the lifespan of this plan. In addition, we recently launched our attachment strategy, which provides an informed approach at an early stage for all professionals working with children. Attachment theory forms a core underpinning framework for all work with children in universal services as well as specialist provision.

There is increasing incidence of maternal mental ill health during pregnancy with 2019/20 figures showing 35.7% of antenatal women reporting a range of emotional wellbeing issues. Supporting evidence suggests poor parental mental health can have a detrimental effect on the health and development of children, leading to an increased risk of mental health problems for the children themselves.

Achieving developmental milestones at 27 months of age has seen the gap close by 4.7% in the last year for children living in the most deprived areas, who were more likely than those living in the least deprived areas to have a development concern. Most concerns remain related to speech, language and communication, with inequalities which can impact on literacy skills in school years.

Our Inclusion As Prevention work in the Rutherglen locality is a £800,000 funded investment over five years from 2019 to redesign early support services with children and young

people to demonstrate better outcomes through a co-design and improvement model aimed at reducing the number of young people going into the criminal justice system. Through developing exemplar project modelling and recognising rights of all children to have their voice heard, children and young people are involved in decisions that affect them. It will be built around an initial six mini projects, or tests of change that support improvement across youth justice and other thematic areas.

Children and young people affected by substance use in pregnancy remains an area of need. In June 2020 data showed that the proportion of women stating they were drinking 1+ units at their antenatal booking visit was 50.2%, significantly higher than the Scottish average of 26.4%. The impact of parental substance use is well researched and shows children are more likely to be at risk of abuse and neglect and at increased risk of developing substance use, behavioural and/or mental health issues themselves.

Domestic abuse has a devastating impact on children and young people that can last into adulthood and is defined as an adverse childhood experience (ACE). Children can experience both short and long term effects as a result of witnessing domestic abuse. However, we are aware that each child will respond differently to trauma and some may be resilient and not exhibit any negative effects.

Over the last few years domestic abuse incidents have increased as a whole. However, South Lanarkshire still remains below the Scottish figure of 108.1 per 100,000. Within the last year the incidences of domestic abuse where children were present has increased slightly to 1369 (2019) from 1237 the previous year. During COVID 19 the children's weekly data report collated by the Scottish Government is already evidencing an increase of 13.6% between 2019 and 2020 data.

We are seeing an increasing number of young carers being identified and our understanding of their needs is improving. Providing the right support at the right time is essential to achieving best possible outcomes for this group. One response has been to commission a new Young Carers Service for South Lanarkshire that has now recently been established and already provides

support to over 100 young carers. We estimate there may be around 660 young carers under 16 in South Lanarkshire.

Children and young people who face additional barriers to learning account for around 25% of all pupils in South Lanarkshire. It is important that they are included fully and have a say

in their learning journey, in their schools and communities. Those working with them need to be aware of and be sensitive to individual needs. As a result of the recent Additional Support for Learning Review, we will ensure that the recommendations are embedded into our planning processes going forward.

**Our key priorities for theme one are listed below.** These will be further developed into aims that follow the "SMART" model to ensure that they are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based. These aims, together with plans as to how they will be achieved, including measurement plans, will be detailed in the Performance Framework.

**Theme 1: Prevention and early support**

Areas for action	Priorities
1. Substance use in pregnancy	Delivery of support services which focus on prevention and early intervention for parents using substances in pregnancy
2. Parental mental health in pregnancy	Maternal health and wellbeing is improved before, during and within the first year of birth
3. Speech and language in early years	Developmental outcomes for infants and children in their early years are improved, so that the difference in outcomes between socioeconomic groups is reduced
4. Youth Justice	Preventative supports to children and young people to reduce offending behaviour
5. Supporting young carers	Better identification of and support to young carers
6. Domestic abuse	Successfully tackle domestic abuse and its impact on children
7. Additional support for learning	Improved support for pupils with additional support needs leads to improved achievement and positive post school destinations

## 2. Health and Wellbeing

### Why is it important?

The health and wellbeing of children, young people and families is vital for populations to live longer, healthier lives and make the most of life's opportunities. Health and wellbeing is affected by a range of wider factors such as deprivation, where we live and the services we have access to.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places a definition of wellbeing in statute. Wellbeing is defined by a set of eight indicators to provide a common language for children, families and practitioners to ensure a holistic

view of wellbeing is considered i.e. that children and young people are Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included. It is recognised that these indicators are all connected and overlapping with emotional wellbeing being a key building block to each.

Curriculum for excellence has health and wellbeing as a key component from early years through to secondary education and beyond. It supports every child and young person to feel cared for and valued as an individual regardless of their background or financial circumstances. Learning about health and wellbeing helps them cope with uncertainties in life, have confidence to try new and different things and make the most of opportunities that come along.



Positive Infant mental health is created and supported primarily through the development of early relationships between a baby and caregivers from conception onwards. However key factors can influence this in a negative way through parental abuse, neglect and household challenges for example parental mental ill health.

Children's and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health is nurtured primarily through parents and carers, but early intervention and specialist services can and do make a difference. Universal services supporting parents and carers are a key way of promoting children's emotional wellbeing during the perinatal stage and in the early years. A secure parent/child relationship is vital for the development of positive attachment and helps to build emotional resilience in children.

For older children and young people, support for parents and carers remains important. There is also evidence that schools and other agencies can enhance children and young people's emotional wellbeing for example by reducing risk taking behaviour, building self-esteem and resilience and supporting the development of social and emotional skills.

The recently launched Lanarkshire Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Strategy sets out four key strands, that provide a framework for planning services to improve the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people. A focus on increasing access to services and supporting earlier intervention is central to the strategy. We have received funding from the Scottish Government to support counselling through schools and community based mental health services. In September 2019 there were 2,091 open cases in CAMHS.

Equally important is children maintaining a healthy weight by participation in regular physical activity and a nutritional balanced diet. Ensuring our children have the best possible start in life is essential to reducing childhood obesity and enjoying the highest standard of health possible. We will pay particular attention to our most deprived communities, so people are enabled to make healthier choices to significantly reduce health inequalities. Achieving change also requires a joined-up approach to food and we will ensure there is a strong link to South Lanarkshire's Food Strategy, which will inform our approach.

Substance use can have negative effects on children at different stages in their lives. During pregnancy, drinking and drug use can put babies at risk of birth defects, premature birth, being born underweight and withdrawal symptoms and is addressed in theme one of this plan. In later years, substance use can put children at risk of physical and emotional abuse or neglect, behavioural or emotional problems, having to care for their parents or siblings, poor attendance at school, experiencing poverty or being exposed to criminal activity. In South Lanarkshire the children's services partnership and ADP are working closely to develop strategies and supports to reduce the number of children, young people and families being affected by substance use.

## Achievements from our previous Children's Services Plan



Increased participation with active schools including children in most deprived data zones

A reduction in the rate of teenage pregnancies for under 16's

The launch of our Attachment Strategy with a supporting workforce development plan

133 families were supported through Incredible Years. 41% of children moved out of the clinical range to borderline and 28% to normal

## Where are we now?

COVID-19 has brought huge challenges and changes to all our lives. In the context of school and education, all children and young people have experienced unexpected challenges such as school closure and extended time at home. Health and wellbeing is central in the mitigation of any negative impact relating to these changes, and how they potentially affect the ability of children and young people to learn.

A gap was identified this year around Infant mental health and to compliment services for maternal mental health we have begun to plan and develop an Infant Mental Health (IMH) service (pre-conception to third birthday) to meet the wider needs of families experiencing significant adversity, including infant developmental difficulties, parental substance misuse, domestic abuse and trauma.

The SALSUS survey in 2018 outlined the level of mental health and emotional wellbeing of young people showing 36% of 13 year olds had a raised score SDQ, an increase of 16% from 2013 and 41% of 15 year olds, an 12% increase from 2013.

Other data evidences an increasing trend in suicides in young people aged 11-25 (deaths caused by self-harm or of indeterminate intent), in 2018 the latest figure was 7.56 per 100,000. Overall Scottish data mirrors the local picture showing there has been a slight increase in females under 14. However, male rates remain higher and twice as high in the 15-24 age range.

Within South Lanarkshire we have improved access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and most recent figures show that 82.6% of children and young people are seen within 18 weeks (Scottish average is 72.9%).

Overweight and obesity levels in P1 children are continuing to increase, impacting on health and wellbeing now and in future years by increasing risk of chronic conditions such as Type 2 diabetes and problems such as low self-esteem. In 2018/19 the proportion of children with a healthy weight was 76.4%.

While we continue to meet Physical Education in schools' targets, we have identified a decline in physical activity levels from S3 particularly in girls. In response we are developing wider integrated

approaches. 'Active Schools' aim to provide more opportunities to take part in sport and physical activity before school, lunchtime and after school. The programme contributes towards the health and wellbeing curriculum in schools and sends out a strong message on the importance of physical activity within school and the wider community. Last year 20,421(47%) of pupils participated in the Active Schools programme, an increase of 2% from the previous year.

Latest figures show in 2018/19 that 73.1% of primary one pupils had no obvious signs of tooth decay, an improving trend and consistently higher than the Scottish average. However, primary seven pupils recorded 73.4% with no obvious signs of dental decay, the highest figure recorded but below the Scottish average of 77.1%.

Over the last year, the six to eight week breastfeeding data shows an improving trend and the gap closing by 3.6% between most affluent and most deprived communities. However, a 15.2% gap remains and our rates continue to be below the national average.

Data from the national SALSUS survey shows an increasing trend in young people reporting smoking, drinking alcohol and using illegal drugs. Smoking results are closely mapped to Scottish trends and there is a dramatic change in young people reporting that they get someone to get them for them, as a result cigarettes appear to be easier to get hold of. In addition, the use of E-cigarettes appears to be on the rise. The Lanarkshire Tobacco Control Strategy gives prioritisation to prevention and protection actions e.g., reducing exposure to secondhand smoke. Parents and families are supported from the earliest stages to give children the best start in life, to be born free from tobacco and to live in a smoke-free community.

Alcohol use in 13 years olds has gone up as it has for 15 year olds, with 13 year olds more likely than average to not think it's okay to drink alcohol. 13 and 15 year olds that have got drunk more than 10 times, appears to be significantly worse in South Lanarkshire than comparator authorities. Drug use is higher than the Scottish average and appears to be increasing, with some evidence of more pro-drugs attitudes in young people than the Scottish average.



Our key priorities for theme two are listed below. These will be further developed into aims that follow the “SMART” model to ensure that they are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based. These aims, together with plans as to how they will be achieved, including measurement plans, will be detailed in the Performance Framework.

## Theme 2: Health and wellbeing

Areas for action	Priorities
1. Mental health and emotional wellbeing	Providing effective support for infants, children young people and parents that will lead to improved mental health and emotional wellbeing.
2. Healthy weight	Promotion of Increased participation in physical activity and improvement in diet which will increase the number of children and young people being recorded as having a healthy weight
3. Breastfeeding	Create a culture that promotes, supports, values and enables breastfeeding as a first choice.
4. Dental decay	Early intervention support for families reduces the number of children experiencing dental decay
5. Substance use by young people	Targeted interventions reduce the number of 13 – 15 year olds using substances
6. Parental substance use	Targeted interventions reduce the number of parents using substances

### 3. Children and young people in need of care and protection

#### Why is it important?

There are some children in South Lanarkshire that need extra support, protection and sometimes care from children’s services partners. Those children and young people deemed to be most at risk will be subject to child protection procedures to help safeguard their wellbeing. Our partnership works together to make sure that those children and young people who need the extra help to be safe and protected, get that help.

The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2014; provides a national framework for agencies and practitioners to understand and agree processes for working together to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children. This guidance is currently being revised and strengthened, taking account of practitioner and stakeholder experience, inspections, research and learning from Significant Care Reviews. In

addition the revised child protection guidance is based upon the protection of children’s rights in accordance to the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Whilst we promote the upbringing of children by their families, in so far as it is consistent with safeguarding the promoting their welfare, there are occasions where this is not possible and children require to be ‘looked after’, either on a voluntary basis if families work with Social Work, or through the Court or Children’s Hearing system where legal measures are required to ensure safeguarding. This can be ‘at home’, with foster carers, in residential homes or external residential establishments like schools or secure units. For those children unable to return home, permanent alternative care arrangements are considered to promote wellbeing.

Due to the difficult childhood experiences that many children have been exposed to, they will present with different issues around being safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included for which they will need targeted support to address.

The Getting it Right for Looked After Children and Young People strategy launched in 2015 by the Scottish Government, recognises care experienced children often have poorer outcomes in respect to health (including mental health) and education. Due to the poor attachments and parenting experienced by these children, they are more likely to have greater social and behavioural difficulties. As a partnership we recognise the importance of working together to address the multi-faceted issues these children can experience.

For those children in our communities who find themselves in vulnerable situations, the South Lanarkshire Child Protection Committee maintains an oversight of how well partners are working together to address issues of safeguarding. The Child Protection Committee is a multi-agency strategic partnership responsible for the design, development, publication, distribution, dissemination, implementation and evaluation of child protection policy and practice across the public, private and wider third sectors. The South Lanarkshire Child Protection Committee promotes partners working together to address all wellbeing concerns and increase life chances of children and families.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places duties and responsibilities on Corporate Parents for all care experienced children from birth and potentially up to their 26th birthday. In South Lanarkshire there is commitment to improve outcomes for care experienced children and care leavers. Over the last three years South Lanarkshire has had an average of 660 children and young people who are in this category at any one time. Our second Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan 2018 – 2020 strengthens and streamlines our core commitments providing a framework showing our aspiration to improve lifelong outcomes.

Taking steps into adulthood and independent living is a crucial transition for young people. Supporting best possible outcomes for care leavers and those in continuing care is essential to them developing well as adults. Continuing care and throughcare and aftercare provision should support the shared understanding that leaving care is a life event for young people and corporate parents require effective systems which reflect that milestone in their life and provide ongoing support for care leavers for as long as they need it.

## Achievements from our previous Children's Services Plan

A decrease in children on the child protection register, in particular pre – birth

An increasing number of looked after children achieving and sustaining positive school destinations

Decreasing trend with children referred to the reporter on offence grounds

Reduction in missing young people in residential care

## Where are we now?



We aspire to have a transformative impact on all aspects of the lives of children in need of care and protection. We have worked hard, both individually and collectively, to bring about the positive change required to ensure that children and families have improved life chances.

The Care Inspectorate recently undertook an inspection of services for children in need of care and protection in South Lanarkshire. The report was published in 2020.

The Care Inspectorate in its conclusion reported that: The Care Inspectorate and its scrutiny partners are confident that South Lanarkshire Community Planning Partnership has the capacity to continue to improve and to address the points for action highlighted in this report. This is based on:

- a strong commitment to collaborative working and improvement
- improvements already demonstrated in the wellbeing of many children, young people and their families supported by a wide range of effective services



- the potential for continuing improvements through developments which had already begun
- the support and confidence demonstrated in senior leaders by staff across all sectors
- the partnership's own joint self-evaluation which identified many of the strengths and areas for development highlighted in this report
- positive discussions in partnership meetings held during the course of this inspection which demonstrated a clear commitment to improvement and learning

Moving forward, we have developed an action plan based on the findings on the Inspection to strengthen our approach to children in need of care and protection.

Our corporate parenting partners have the highest ambitions and aspirations for our care experienced children and young people's futures and are committed to providing the right support so that children and young people are resilient and well equipped with skills for life and work. To this end, we have re-established a Throughcare and Aftercare Service to deliver on our statutory responsibilities by ensuring care leavers are well supported through purposeful, positive relationships with staff and carers to achieve their potential, we are in the process of delivering a range of well-planned effective services to support the successful transition into adulthood.

We are committed to reviewing and improving our Corporate Parenting governance structures to ensure that we have clear checks and balances in place, over areas identified as priorities both by the Inspection and young people in receipt of services. In addition, we will pay particular attention to ensuring successful transitions into adulthood for our care leavers. We have identified four key areas which focus on assessment / planning and review, health and wellbeing, housing and accommodation pathways and finally education employment and training.

For all children in need of care and protection we want to ensure that care plans consistently address how the specific needs of children and young people are met and are tailored to the needs of the individual child or young person. The involvement of children, young people and parents will be a focus of this work in the establishment of care plans and their review.

As a partnership we have taken significant steps towards shifting the balance of care and maximised community-based supports to ensure children benefit from family life and remain connected to their home communities. For those children who require alternative care and where family and friends are not a suitable option, we aim to ensure they are placed in foster placements ensuring that they experience consistent relationships with the adults who care for them. The number of foster carers we have recruited has risen steadily over the last three years with seven applications approved in 2017/2018, nine in 2018/2019 and fourteen in 2019/20.

Our efforts have resulted in 88.5% of our children and young people being looked after in community-based settings, with a notable increase in children and young people living in kinship placements. We will focus on improving how we support kinship carers in this plan, ensuring that kinship carers are well supported to respond appropriately to children's needs. We have furthered our commitment with the appointment of a Kinship Carer Support Worker and a development of a support network. We have also increased direct support via Covey Befriending / mentoring to young people in Kinship care. Our Family Placement Team offer training to kinship carers and the Short Breaks Service has improved our ability to support families through offering respite for families.

We can evidence that care experienced young people have improved life chances as a result of effectively targeted employability support in school and are encouraged to access the opportunities to move to positive and sustained destinations when leaving school. As a result the school leaver initial destination figures have increased year on year and are now the best they have ever been at 90% sitting a full 10% above the national average.

On average in South Lanarkshire there are around 660 children and young people looked after at any point in time. A newly established redesigning services group will focus on key areas of support, including attainment, attendance, and exclusions for this cohort.

Over the past three years there was on average 262 children registered on the child protection register each year. The main indicators of concern relate to neglect, emotional abuse (this includes exposure to domestic abuse in the household), physical abuse and parental substance use. The partnership will work together to identify and provide appropriate supports to these children, young people and families to help reduce any impact on their life chances. In particular, addressing the impact of neglect on our children and where child protection intervention is necessary, the Neglect subgroup will seek to mitigate the harm by working together to provide a joint response to minimise this.

Children experiencing challenging circumstances in our communities can often be left without a voice, over the past two years we have introduced the Mind of My Own app, that allows

care experienced children and young people to share their views and worries at any time with their social worker. The app allows us to see any common themes that are emerging direct our resources to those areas children and young people highlight. We launched a Champions Board in December 2019 that will enable care experienced young people to be connected at the highest level with their corporate parents having a say in how services are designed and run. We are currently planning to extend the advocacy support on offer to include children and young people subject to a child protection order to ensure that their views are heard as effectively as possible. Our approach to engaging with children and young people continues to evolve; the lockdown periods during Covid-19 have provided a catalyst to using different platforms, increasing accessibility for support.

**Our key priorities for theme three are listed below. These will be further developed into aims that follow the “SMART” model to ensure that they are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based. These aims, together with plans as to how they will be achieved, including measurement plans, will be detailed in the Performance Framework.**

**Theme 3: Children and young people in need of care and protection**

Areas for action	Priorities
1. Positive destinations for care experienced young people	Care experienced young people achieve sustained positive destinations and the gap in destinations for those looked after at home is reduced compared to those looked after away from home
2. Care leaver transitions	Care leavers transition successful into adulthood and achieve the best possible outcomes
3. Care experienced outcomes	A redesign of corporate parenting support to improve outcomes for all looked after young people living at home or away from home
4. Care planning	Children, young people and families are satisfied by the level of participation in the care planning and review process
5. Kinship care	Kinship Carers report satisfaction with the support they receive from service providers
6. Neglect	Our assessments of children and young people affected by physical and emotional neglect are enhanced through increased opportunity to improve confidence and competence for both the workforce and families involved in tackling neglect
7. Advocacy	Children and young people receiving advocacy record satisfaction with having their voice heard

## Section twelve



# Important links and key documents

- Continuous Improvement Framework document
- Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan
- Community Learning Development Strategy and Action Plan
- Child Health Plan NHS Lanarkshire
- Children's Rights Handbook
- Engagement and participation strategy
- GIRFEC practice guidance
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act
- Universal Health Visiting Pathway
- Early years Framework
- Education (Scotland) Act 2016
- Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011
- Self-Directed Support (Scotland) Act 2013
- Carers (Scotland) Act 2016
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- European Convention on Human Rights
- Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009
- Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007
- Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2011
- Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- Scotland's National Performance Framework
- South Lanarkshire Council's Plan – 'Connect'
- Integrated Health and Social Care Strategic Plan
- Child Protection Plan
- Early learning and Childcare Plan
- NHS Lanarkshire Healthcare Strategy
- Lanarkshire's Tobacco Control Strategy *Smoke-free Lanarkshire – For you, for Children, forever: Lanarkshire Tobacco Control Strategy 2018-2023*
- Education Resources Plan
- Social Work Resources Plan
- Three Step Improvement Framework [www.gov.scot/publications/three-step-improvement-framework-scotlands-public-services/](http://www.gov.scot/publications/three-step-improvement-framework-scotlands-public-services/)
- Local Child Poverty Action Report
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

*Life chances*

*Attachment*

Included

If you need this information in another language or format,  
please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs.

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