

**EAST AYRSHIRE COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP BOARD:
SEPTEMBER 2024**

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES PLAN ANNUAL REPORT
2023/24**

**Report by Head of Children's Health, Care & Justice Services, Chair of East
Ayrshire Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership**

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To present Community Planning Partners the Children and Young People's Services Plan 2023-26 Annual Report 2023/24 for endorsement.

BACKGROUND

2. Children's Services Plans meet the terms outlined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and follow updated statutory guidance on children's services planning, effective from 1 April 2020. Accordingly, Children's Services Plans seek to improve outcomes for all children and young people by ensuring that local planning and delivery of services is integrated, focussed on securing quality and value through preventative approaches and dedicated to safeguarding, supporting and promoting child wellbeing.
3. The East Ayrshire Children and Young People's Services Plan 2023- 26 ('the Plan') sets the local long term strategic intent for improvement in outcomes for all children and young people and is underpinned by a detailed Action Plan for the three-year period. The Action Plan reflects the priorities we have identified and outlines the actions and activities we will undertake to ensure we achieve the best outcomes for children and young people across East Ayrshire.
4. The Plan has been developed through engagement with local children, young people, families and partners to understand what matters most to them and the five key priority areas identified are; 1. Respecting and promoting children's rights, 2. Improving children's mental health and wellbeing, 3. Tackling child poverty, 4. Achieving and 5. Keeping our children safe and addressing neglect.
5. In East Ayrshire, oversight of Children's Services Plans rests with the Community Planning Partnership Board, with responsibility for strategic planning and continuous improvement activity delegated to the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership ('CYPSP) and managed on a shared basis with the Child Protection Committee ('CPC').
6. The Plan was approved by the Child Protection Committee and the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership in September 2023 and likewise also approved by the Community Planning Partnership Board in 2023 and considered by the NHS Ayrshire and Arran Board also in 2023. In line with statutory requirements, the Plan was shared with Scottish Government colleagues in September 2023.

ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

- 7.** The Annual Report 2023/24 ('the Report') is presented to meet the terms of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The legislation requires each local authority and the relevant health board to publish a report on the extent to which children and young people's services have been provided in line with the Plan and the extent to which delivery is integrated, focussed on securing quality and value through preventative approaches and dedicated to safeguarding, supporting and promoting child wellbeing.
- 8.** The Report is also presented to continue to celebrate the strengths and talents of local children, young people and families that are fundamental to the vibrancy of our local communities and throughout the Report, children and young people's views, experiences and achievements are also showcased.
- 9.** The Report sets out the outcomes that partners aspire to and how progress towards these is measured over the lifetime of the Plan. Measurement of improvement in outcomes for children and young people is aligned to the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan to ensure consistency of reporting and using a partnership approach to data.
- 10.** The Report details key service developments from the reporting period including the Strategic Review of Children and Young People's Services and the work undertaken in Respecting and Promoting Children and Young People's Rights.
- 11.** Key performance indicators are also included in the Report which highlight positive progress across a range of areas including dental health, participation in education, training and employment and young people eligible for aftercare receiving support. However, we know that the number of children and young people living in poverty has increased and this is a key area of focus for the Plan.
- 12.** The Report also sets out our progress under each of the priority areas through delivery examples and the presentation of a case study aligned to each priority area. The report also includes an overview of the Performance Framework and associated measures we are utilising to assess our progress in achieving our stated outcomes for each of the priority themes.
- 13.** Subsequently, it is key to note the unprecedented number and breadth of delivery examples that were shared and considered in the course of developing the annual report. We have committed to producing reports that are as accessible, succinct and visually appealing as possible and therefore not all of these could be included in the document.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 14.** Members of the Community Planning Partnership Board are requested to:
- i) celebrate the achievements of local children, young people, families and carers in 2023/24 and their contributions to East Ayrshire in the period;
 - ii) note the scale and breadth of the vital support that has been delivered in partnership and progress made in relation to strategic priority areas over the 2023-24 period;
 - iii) note that the Annual Report has been approved by the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and Child Protection Committee and will be reported onwards for consideration by NHS Ayrshire and Arran Board;
 - iv) endorse the Annual Report 2023/24; and
 - v) otherwise note the contents of the report.

Marion MacAulay
Head of Children's Health, Care and Justice Services,
East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership
Chair, East Ayrshire Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership
11 September 2024



Community Planning in
EAST AYRSHIRE

DRAFT Children's Services Plan Annual Report 2023-2024

DRAFT

Contents

1. The First Word.....	3
2. Introduction.....	4
3. How Did We Measure Up?	5
4. Key Service Developments.....	7
5. 2023-2027 Children and Young People Service Priorities.....	11
Priority 1.....	11
Priority 2.....	16
Priority 3.....	24
Priority 4.....	27
Priority 5.....	32
6. The Last Word.....	36

1. The First Word

In East Ayrshire we recognise that investment in our children and young people is one of the most valuable long-term investments that we can make and also that by focussing on investing our resources in the delivery, development and improvement of services we can ensure that the needs of our children and young people are met at the earliest opportunity and that they are supported to achieve their full potential.

East Ayrshire is very proud of its Children's Services and the many positive outcomes that they have directly contributed to for children, young people and their families across our communities. These success have been made possible through ensuring that services are joined up, communicating effectively and keeping the needs of children and their families at the heart of everything we do.

This Annual Report for 2023-2024 reflects the work and progress of the priorities and actions outlined in our Children and Young People Services Plan 2023-2026, which we believe will ultimately help all partners to work better together to achieve our stated vision of making ***“East Ayrshire a place where all children and young people can grow up loved, safe and respected so that they can realise their full potential”***

The content of this Report is focused on providing an overview of all the excellent work undertaken by partners in the period 2023-2024 and also on providing a detailed summary of the key initiatives, activities and outcomes that we as a Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) have been focusing on in order that we deliver improved outcomes for our children and young people.

The report is intentionally framed by a focus on the progress made by all partners against the 5 key priorities outlined in the East Ayrshire Children and Young People Services Plan 2023-2026, priorities which were directly shaped by children, young people and families through a series of engagement activities including questionnaires, online surveys and a programme of focus groups.

We now look forward to continuing our collective efforts to improve the support we provide to children, young people and families and to flexibly respond to the needs and pressures for families over the next few years. Above all, we recognise that the achievements outlined in this Annual Report could not have been delivered without the dedicated work of all the staff who work across the CYPSP and who have made a meaningful and positive difference to improving the lives and wellbeing of children, young people and their families in East Ayrshire. I am incredibly grateful to all our staff members for making this success possible.

Marion MacAulay

Chair of Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership

2. Introduction

The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (C&YPSP) includes representation from the local authority (early years; education; housing and communities); the East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership (social work, health visiting; school nursing and adult services); NHS Ayrshire and Arran (midwifery, specialist services); North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)); Police Scotland; Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA); the Third Sector; the Fire and Rescue Service and Kilmarnock College. This partnership has responsibility for development of strategic planning, governance and reporting of children's services in East Ayrshire, including the development of our most recent Children and Young People's Services Plan 2023-2026.

This Service Plan articulates the outcomes partners want to realise for all our children, young people and families over the three-year period 2023 – 2026 and highlights the commitment of partners to deliver these improved outcomes for children and young people through active participation in joint planning and delivery structures.

The stated vision of our Plan is to make East Ayrshire a place where all children and young people can grow up loved, safe and respected so that they can realise their full potential. In order to ensure that the work we undertake, and the supports we provide, help every child to experience the best start in life and build the foundation for living well in the future the priorities partners will pursue will be as follows:

1. Respecting and Promoting Children and Young People's Rights
2. Achieving
3. Improving Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing
4. Tackling Child Poverty
5. Keeping our Children Safe and Addressing Neglect










This Children & Young People's Annual Report 2023-24 is the initial annual report, which details the improvements and progress which partners have made in the first year of the new Plan to advance our strategic priorities. In doing so, the report also highlights and celebrates many of our young people's achievements, talents and contributions and provides examples of our partnership working successes and examples of the positive outcomes achieved for our children and young people.

3. How Did We Measure Up?

Over the course of 2023-2024 we have been able to show a significant level of improvement across a range of key measures associated with the health, wellbeing and educational outcomes of our children and young people. These improvements are an indication of the effective collaboration of all partners in East Ayrshire who work with our children, young people and families. Highlighted below are the results from a selection of our key measures and a full outline of all the measures we have employed to help us evaluate our progress against our priority areas are highlighted in appendix 1.

In respect of those measures where we have not made similar levels of progress or where we have failed to build on previous positive results, this information is used as part of a wider evidence base, which helps us to clearly identify the areas where improvement is required.

This is evidenced in the Children and Young People Service Plan 2023-26 where our framework of measures includes a range of performance indicators that are aligned to key actions and areas of focus and which will help us to evidence our improvement in delivering positive outcomes in these areas.

-  The percentage of children aged 0-15 living in poverty (after housing costs) increased from a figure of 27.2% in 2022 to 27.9% in 2023
-  The percentage of babies born at a healthy weight in East Ayrshire increased slightly from a figure of 83.8% in 2022 to 84% in 2023
-  The percentage of children with no obvious tooth decay in Primary 1 increased from a figure of 66.5% in 2022 to 69.6% in 2023
-  The percentage of children with no obvious tooth decay in Primary 7 increased from a figure of 62.2% in 2022 to 67.4% in 2023.
-  The percentage of young adults (16-19 year olds) participating in education, training, or employment increased from a figure of 91.9% in 2022 to 94% in 2023.
-  The claimant count as % of 16-24 population reduced slightly from a figures of 5.2% 2023 to 5.1% in 2024
-  The rate (per 1,000) of children on the Child Protection Register increased slightly from a figure of 3.6% in 2023 to a figure of 3.7% in 2024
-  The percentage of child protection re-registrations within 18 months reduced from a figure of 8.5% in 2022 to 4.5% in 2023.
-  The percentage of young people eligible for aftercare services who received services increased significantly from a figure of 26% in 2022 to 43% in 2023.

- ✓ The number of Children referred to the Children's Reporter reduced from a figure of 384 in 2023 to a figure of 373 in 2024.
- ✓ The number of children with a Compulsory Supervision Order (CSO) in force remained stable between 2023 and 2024 with a figure of 227 for each of these periods.
- ✓ The percentage of children P1–P7 achieving the appropriate level of attainment across East Ayrshire in Combined Literacy has increased from a figure of 68.2% in 2023 to 71% in 2024
- ✓ The percentage of children P1–P7 achieving the appropriate level of attainment across East Ayrshire in Numeracy has increased slightly from a figure of 77.5% in 2023 to 78.5% in 2024
- ✓ The percentage of children achieving the appropriate level of attainment across East Ayrshire in Writing at Primary 4 has increased from a figure of 66.8% in 2023 to 70.4% in 2024
- ✓ The poverty related attainment gap in Combined Literacy across P1–P7 has reduced from a figure of 19.9% in 2023 to 15.8% in 2024
- ✓ The poverty related attainment gap in Numeracy across P1–P7 has reduced from a figure of 18.7% in 2023 to 14.7% in 2024
- ✓ The poverty related attainment gap in Writing at Primary 4 has reduced from a figure of 21.5% in 2023 to 14.6% in 2024

4. Key Service Developments

We want all children and young people to live in a community that enables them to flourish and to be treated with dignity and respect and to have their rights upheld at all times and whilst we know that many children and young people in East Ayrshire thrive, we also know that for others they and their family face deep-seated challenges. For many these challenges can have a direct impact on their wellbeing and can affect outcomes in adulthood and across 2023-2024 the Partnership initiated a range of new strategies, campaigns and events that focused on addressing these challenges and supporting the delivery of improvements in outcomes for children, young people and families in East Ayrshire.

An overview of the different approaches and initiatives that were introduced are provide below:

Children's Services Wellbeing Model

The model incorporates a transformational approach to improving how children and families are supported in East Ayrshire with the aim that that our children and families can access support at an early stage in their community, in a way that challenges discrimination and stigma. The model incorporates multi-disciplinary team working and the GIRFEC principles at its core, and was given the name 'HEART' (Help Everyone at the Right Time). A range of local services, including: Education, Early Years, School Nursing, Health Visiting, CAMHS, Vibrant Communities, Social Work, Housing and Allied Health Professionals, formally started to come together on a monthly basis from April 2022 in locality based HEART meetings.

Work continued throughout 2023/24 to progress the development of this model in East Ayrshire. The programme team carried out an evaluation of the HEART Locality Groups and have held two development days to support culture mapping, programme planning and further implementation of HEART. Existing data has also been reviewed and support has been given to identify where the areas of greatest need exist and to develop a shared language and approach to establishing an evidence based practice model. Four phases have been identified for the implementation of HEART:

- Creating the conditions for change;
- Developing the practice model at a locality level which is outcomes and evidence driven;
- Testing the robustness of the model; and
- Scaling and sustaining the model.

The HEART programme is currently focused on four core projects: Request for assistance; Restorative approach/family group decision making; Community participation to Power; and ALISS - Digital mapping. These four projects are designed to understand what an effective early help model or 'blue print' for practice could look like. By understanding the social, environmental and cultural factors influencing each locality, the intention is to ensure that supports are meaningful and targeted. Local community participation will improve our understanding of the root causes of

inequalities and discrimination which impacts on the life chances and wellbeing of community members. This will inform the power and participation approach, alongside consistent modelling of restorative practices by Practitioners. The 3 to 5 year impact evaluation will consider how a framework can be developed which rebalances service responses from crisis intervention to building community resilience.

Strategic Review of Children and Young People's Services

A strategic review of Children and Young People's Services was undertaken in 2023-2024 as part of five cross-cutting strategic reviews agreed by the Council. This review explored drivers and barriers to successful multi-agency partnership working for children's services, with a focus on facilitating change and delivering optimal outcomes for children. The findings from the review resulted in a series of recommendations being developed working alongside officers across the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and colleagues in other local authorities, together with a wider stakeholder survey. Through this process the review identified several critical areas for improving collaborative leadership across children's services within the Council, highlighting themes around structures and governance, communication and data sharing, planning, budgets and decision making, engagement and participation, relationships and behaviours. It is anticipated that these recommendations will improve joint working and collaborative leadership, deliver better integration of services, and ensure resources are effectively used and that decision making processes are child centred. Children and young people and their families will see an inclusive, joined-up approach, which is informed by a clear and honest understanding of their experiences and with a robust focus on improvement, leading to the achievement of enhanced outcomes.

Cherishing Our Families Strategy 2023 - 2026

The Strategy was developed by a host of partners who together reflect the range of services and expertise that make up our Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership in East Ayrshire. The direct purpose of the strategy is to prevent and reduce neglect within East Ayrshire and we know that when children are neglected, not only does this impact on their development through childhood and into adulthood, but will often have enduring consequences throughout their lives and we believe strongly that the strategy has the potential to improve the lives of children in East Ayrshire for years to come. Our efforts to prevent and reduce neglect in East Ayrshire will not only protect individual children, but also have the potential to anticipate and avoid a wide range of potential problems cascading down through future generations. The strategy was informed through engagement with a wide range of children, young people, parents, carers and professionals in children's services to establish what was important to them in relation to preventing and reducing child neglect in East Ayrshire.

The Strategy is underpinned by Children's Rights and focuses on tackling neglect and neglectful behaviours through listening to children; supporting families in the right way at the right time; working collaboratively across agencies; and, addressing poverty to ensure families are supported through times of hardship. The strategy sets out what

the services in East Ayrshire will do to listen to children and young people and help them and their family when support is required and also provides information on what services do to protect them from neglect and how they will support them directly if they are/have experienced neglect.

The strategy also includes an action plan which outlines all of the actions and activities partners will undertake in East Ayrshire over 2023-2026 to make sure that we understand what's important for children and young people and to make sure others know too and also to make sure they are getting the right support at the right time.

Respecting and Promoting Children and Young People's Rights

Since 2021 and up to and including the period 2023-24, a collective goal of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership ('CYPSP'), the Child Protection Committee ('CPC') and our partners has been to improve children and young people's participation in decision-making which directly affects them, their families, and their future. In doing so we have recognised our children and young people as experts and amongst our strongest assets and we have placed an emphasis on listening to them to ensure they experience better outcomes.

All our schools and some of our Early Childhood Centres (ECC) are now registered for the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA), which ensures they are adhering to UNCRC and promoting children's rights. Each school and ECC has a dedicated RRSA lead and we currently have 26 schools achieving Bronze, 13 achieving Silver and 6 achieving Gold. Our plan is for all schools to achieve and maintain Gold over the next 3 years.

The East Ayrshire Young Peoples Equalities Forum has allowed our young people with a specific interest in the equalities agenda to come together to learn from each other and to discuss and increase their knowledge around equalities, diversity and equity. This forum has proved to be a positive platform for young people to consult with others and to facilitate community engagement and cohesion to raise awareness of what constitutes fairness and to encourage young people to be more aware of issues such as poverty.

Local Child Poverty Action Plan Report (LCPAR)

Following revised guidance from Scottish Government on Local Child Poverty Action Plan reporting, partners in East Ayrshire took the opportunity in 2023 to incorporate child poverty action planning and reporting within the framework of the Children and Young People's Services Plan 2023-26. This is now reflected under Priority 2: We are working collaboratively, reducing the impact of social and economic poverty on our Children and Young people; and this annual report therefore also serves as the East Ayrshire Child Poverty Action Report 2023/24.

It is also recognised that wider partnership activity, particularly in relation to inclusive economic growth, plays a significant role in addressing the root causes of child poverty. This wider work is reported through our Local Outcomes Improvement Plan Annual Report 2023/24. In addition, community planning partners have agreed, as part

of the recent Community Plan Review, to develop a new Anti-Poverty and Inequalities Strategy. This development recognises the intransigent nature of the challenges that our communities face in relation to poverty and the need for a focused whole systems multidisciplinary team approach to address this. Further work to develop the strategy will be undertaken in 2024/25 which will complement the existing activity set out in the LCPAR.

DRAFT

5. 2023-2027 Children and Young People Service Priorities

Priority 1: Our children and young people feel respected, listened to and influence change.

We have previously submitted two separate reports covering the periods 2017-20 and 2020-23, which outlined the progress made by the East Ayrshire Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) in meeting the statutory duties in accordance with the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2020. These reports highlighted a wide range of activities that were taking place across East Ayrshire which contributed towards the Rights of Children and provided updates in terms of good practice throughout East Ayrshire in contributing towards the Rights of Children.

Embedding Children's Rights is a key part of East Ayrshire's approach to the delivery of services outlined within our new Children and Young People Services Plan 2023-2026. Children's Rights are driving forward the way in which we plan to work better together as community planning partners. Across all partner services and agencies, Children's Rights underpin how children and young people are supported by services and we have introduced a range of mechanisms to empower children and young people to be at the heart of decision-making within their own lives and to support service delivery and improvement.

We said we would

- Develop and implement a broad range of programmes and structures that will encourage participation and co-production by our children and young people in our work
- Develop a strategic framework to involve our children and young people across our partnership in line with the ambitions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Develop a training programme to support our workforce in enhancing and developing their ability and skills to involve and empower our children and young people.
- Put in place a clear system to ensure feedback on our approaches to involvement is heard, considered and acted upon

We Did - Key Delivery Examples

East Ayrshire Children and Young People's (CYP) Cabinet - The CYP consists of young people aged between 11 and 25 and their role is to act as a democratic voice on behalf of all young people living, working or in education in East Ayrshire. Across 2023-24 they continued to meet with the Council Cabinet and Community Planning Partnership throughout the year and worked with the Chief Financial Officer and Head of Finance and ICT to ensure young people are included in the budget making decision processes.

As Cabinet members our young people developed important skills for learning, life and work through their involvement in a range of events, campaigns and representation on

committee groups. They demonstrated dedication and passion to ensuring that youth voice in East Ayrshire was strong and thriving and through a strengthened partnership with East Ayrshire Council, young people not only have a voice but are continually influencing and affecting change.

This period seen Cabinet members actively participate and contribute their views and experiences to inform improvement throughout this period and they achieved awards and recognition for their role in community planning.

The key areas of focus for the CYP in 2023-2024 were linked to mental health support in schools and future plans to build on these supports, safety in the community and the concerns young people had over the bus station and the safety in their communities, utilisation of green spaces and encouraging members of the public to utilise green spaces and also LGBT+ and the need for greater levels of support for LGBT+ Young people in the community, particularly with a focus on the negative press around trans rights.

Active Schools Leadership Training. Vibrant Communities delivered a wide range of Leadership Training for children and young people and signposted them to opportunities within the service to help them get involved in leading change. This included an Active Schools initiative that offered residential trips for East Ayrshire Young Ambassadors that included team building and training along with dedicated time to reflect on how they could implement change going forward within their school and community via school sports councils. Active Schools also delivered a Primary Leadership programme for P6 classes in all Primary Schools, empowering pupils to lead and design lunch clubs and playground games. Nurturing these young people, the leadership programme has fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility within their schools, allowing pupils to contribute meaningfully to shaping their school environment. Pupils have also been given the opportunity to deliver sessions to nursery children attending a transition day before becoming p1 pupils.

Participation Officers Network. Over the course of 2023-2024 we developed a practitioner's network of Participation Officers to enable those working with young people to share experiences and knowledge and maximize partnership working. This resulted in a number of partnership initiatives being established including one with Cumnock Juniors Community Enterprise (CJCE) partnership which provides young people with opportunities to attend football, netball and basketball training at CJCE football and a range of other extra-curricular sports activities. Community Sport Hubs also developed a range of steering groups and forums which allowed for open discussions around promoting a range of developmental sport, health, and physical activity, capacity building, training opportunities including one focussed on supporting young people with leadership opportunities. In addition, Youth Work Network are holding a partnership event in June 2024 to celebrate the successes of Volunteers, leaders and youth workers whilst also providing networking opportunities.

East Ayrshire Young Carers Respite Groups – At four separate locations across East Ayrshire, 300+ young carers attended weekly respite groups in 2023-24. During these weekly groups sporting activities, arts and crafts, games, relaxation activities,

themed nights, and social events were provided for young carers. This was in addition to providing training sessions around more serious issues including bullying, alcohol and drug misuse, healthy eating, debt and budgeting (many of our young carers take over the finances in their households), internet safety and personal care. Through listening to our young people and their needs around their mental health issues, we introduced additional support groups around football, art and music, which has helped ensure our young people are more resilient, confident and feel valued and supported to achieve in life recognising their strengths and values to contribute to society. Our Young Carers music group was hugely successful and well attended and over the course of the year, they worked together to write and produce their very own musical that detailed the Journey of a Young Carers life. They chose songs that resonated with how they felt about their caring roles as well as the barriers they faced and they also wrote their own dialogue to read out in between musical numbers in the form of diary entries. In February 2024 they were able to perform the musical on stage and in front of a live audience. For the Young Carers to have the confidence to perform their own musical was a really positive indication of how far their confidence levels have developed since the group's formation.

Diabetes Education Student Network. In partnership with Lochlan's Legacy Diabetes Charity and Ayrshire College Community Sports Hub, a student network was established which focusses on diabetes education. This network has helped to empower students who have received training and participated in activities related to diabetes to act as peer educators, sharing their knowledge and experiences with Primary School pupil. This network has helped to foster a supportive environment where students have been able to learn from each other, maximize their understanding of diabetes, and build confidence in educating others.

Pupil Equity Funding. Across 2023-2024 we witnessed a growing number of schools using Participatory Budgeting to engage with learners and their families in the decision-making process with regards to a proportion of their Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). All schools consult PEF spend with children and young people through their School Improvement Plan and feedback has suggested that this is having a positive impact on making parents and learners feel more empowered.

The Promise Participation Team. The Team has worked with our care experienced young people over 2023-24 to refresh the Corporate Parenting Board, which was previously known as 'Pizza and Coke', resulting in the Care Experienced Cabinet being formed. Meetings of the cabinet have taken place throughout the year, focusing on different themes including: 'feeling safe and being safe' and 'standing on my own two feet'. The meetings have been attended by care experienced young people, senior council officers, kinship carers and elected member, with the number of young people of varying backgrounds in attendance steadily growing.

The team also continued to work hard to promote The Promise and build strong relationships with other partners including, SL33, Vibrant Communities, East Ayrshire Leisure, Ayrshire College, East Ayrshire CVO, Action for Children, Active Schools and

Columba 1400. Participation leads carried out a total of 201 Promise participation activities during the reporting period which are detailed below

‘ArtClub?’ Across 2023-2024 the East Ayrshire Promise Participation team provided support to the ‘ArtClub?’, a co-curated group led by care-experienced young people with an interest in contemporary visual art and activism. The focus of the ArtClub? is on enabling young people from a range of care backgrounds to creatively engage with the issues and interests that affect them and they held their first exhibition entitled ‘Agora’ in 2023. The Agora Exhibition held in the Young People’s Gallery in the Dick Institute was a revelation for our young people. And they took over the space and filled it with their own expression, via visual art, drawing, poetry, photography, digital, sculpture and collage. This work was recognised by many seniors in Health and also in the artistic community. We were nominated as a great collaborative partner to and by East Ayrshire Leisure Trust at the East Ayrshire Council Employee Awards. The ‘Artclub?’ also held reading and wellbeing sessions for care experienced young people at a local book shop and these sessions gave young people access to books and reading opportunities alongside the opportunity to take part in creative writing and mindfulness.

Kinship Service. In 2023-24 there was significant developments across Children’s Services in regard to improving how we identify and support looked after children and young people in kinship care across east Ayrshire. We rebuilt internal processes for assessing, supporting and reviewing looked after children in kinship care and their carers. We also developed and provided additional training opportunities for kinship carers, which focused on the provision of peer support and encouraging learning from others who were also experiencing similar experiences through Kinship Care. In January 2024 we hosted a community event for kinship carers to share with us their experiences and their needs and the findings from this engagement exercise is helping us to consider how we shape future supports for Kinship Carers and will be an ongoing endeavour as we plan to continue evaluating Kinship Carer experiences at regular intervals going forward. Kinship Care Week took place 11th – 15th March 2024 and we liaised with our partners across the third sector, education, child health to profile the events running for children and carers throughout the week locally and nationally. We used this week as an opportunity to invite the Social Care workforce to attend 2 sessions advising of the process changes from the SLWG which will see our practices develop and change in a direction of providing ‘good’ experiences to children, young people, their kinship carers and the people important to them. We also invited South and North Ayrshire Council Kinship Teams to join us with an intention of building our peer supports and networking for those we serve across our communities. In addition, during kinship care week the kinship panel came together for reflection and panel development / training. Panel members considered the significance of their role on the panel and what they need in the future to fulfil this role to the best of their skill.

CASE STUDY

In 2023 we hosted the “Hope-Hack” (Hackathon), a full-day, large-scale event for young people held at Ayrshire College in Kilmarnock. Designed by the Hope Collective with the support of East Ayrshire Council and What Matters to You, this was part of a UK-wide series of events to bring together young people from the most vulnerable communities with cross-sector leaders and decision-makers to explore and develop solutions to current challenges faced by young people in areas including education, employability & skills, community safety and mental wellness. The event was attended by over 100 young people aged 14-24 from across East Ayrshire, recruited through social media and other channels and resulted in a diverse range of young people attending. The feedback from this event is being used to develop next steps, with young people themselves deciding priorities and how they wish to share their insights and ideas.

QUOTES

Paige Holland, MSYP. Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley Constituency. *“I have continued being a member of the EACYP Cabinet, as an MSYP for Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley. This allows for me to represent my local area, and work alongside other MSYPs in Scotland on issues impacting young people's lives. This opportunity has allowed me to grow my confidence and self-esteem*

Priority 2: We are working collaboratively, reducing the impact of social and economic poverty on our children and young people.

Our priorities in relation to child poverty are closely integrated with our Children and Young People's Services Planning framework. These priorities are set out in the Children and Young People's Services Plan 2023-26 and this annual report forms the basis of reporting on the work and progress achieved locally to address child poverty.

Child poverty levels remain stubbornly high, in East Ayrshire and as people across our communities have struggled with rising costs of living, our children have also been impacted, particularly in families who were perhaps 'just managing' before the turmoil of the last few years.

East Ayrshire had an estimated level of relative child poverty of 27.3% per cent during 2023-2024, which was 1.3 percentage points higher than the national rate of 26%. These figures equated to around 7,000 children and young people aged 0-19 living in poverty, a figure which represented one in every four children living in poverty within our communities and which positioned East Ayrshire as the fifth worst in the national rankings of Scottish Local Authorities in respect of level of child poverty. These figures underline the significant challenge this presents the Local Authority and its partners.

We know there are no 'quick fixes' for child poverty, nor is it something that can be tackled by any one individual agency alone. This challenge needs the totality of our partnership effort, commitment and resource. We are therefore working collectively with national and local partners to tackle poverty in the round – providing the immediate support and care that people need to allow them to live well, and also putting in place long term strategic plans to grow our economy in an inclusive way that supports the wellbeing of people across our communities.

Nationally, child poverty levels are projected to continue to rise in future years. Research commissioned by the Scottish Government in 2018 on forecasting child poverty suggests that relative child poverty (after housing costs), will increase to between 35-38% by 2030 depending on the extent of policy implementation. Applying this estimate locally suggests that nearly 9,000 children and young people could be living in relative poverty by 2030 unless effective action is taken to mitigate against it. This situation is likely to be further exacerbated by the current cost of living crisis.

We said we would:

- Work collaboratively to support our children and young people and families maximise their income and mitigate against the cost of living crisis
- Develop and implement new and innovative work based learning programmes that improve employability prospects for our young people.
- Ensure that collaborative, creative and innovative programmes are developed that encourage equitable access to participation in play, sport and active recreation opportunities.
- Ensure all children, no matter what their financial challenges have access to opportunities to thrive, develop and gain life experiences in their communities.

We Did– Key Delivery Examples

Educational Attainment Stretch Aims - Key measures of attainment at P1, P4 and P7 continued to be used to quantify closing of the attainment gap as set out within the National Improvement Framework (NIF) and Recovery and Accelerating Progress paper (May 2023). Progress across our set of ambitious stretch (attainment) aims was collated at June 2024 and the data highlighted progress towards improvement across all measures for almost all children. SIMDQ1 (most deprived) children’s attainment showed a positive shift with the attainment gap continuing to close. It should be noted that EAC has a SIMD Q1 cohort at approximately 34% of the school population, whilst approximately 9% sit within SIMD Q5. Presenting a ratio of approximately 4-1 Q1 v Q5. This leads to percentage changes at SIMD Q5 reliant on very small fluctuations when compared to that of SIMD Q1. The overall gains and those at SIMD Q1 indicate significant progress across EAC.

Table 1. EAC Stretch Aims 2023-24 (Literacy, Numeracy & P4 Writing)

Core Stretch Aim: 1	SA1: ACEL P1, 4, 7 Literacy Combined (%)			
	Overall	SIMD Q1	SIMD Q5	Gap (Q1 – Q5)
Level: 2022-23	68.2	60.5	80.4	19.9
Stretch aim to be achieved 2023/24	68.8 – 74.2	61.5 - 67.1	76.0 - 81.1	13.9 - 14.6
Level: 2023-24	71.0	63.1	78.9	15.8
Core Stretch Aim: 2	SA2: ACEL P1, 4, 7 Numeracy Combined (%)			
	Overall	SIMD Q1	SIMD Q5	Gap (Q1 – Q5)
Level: 2022-23	77.5	70.1	88.8	18.7
Stretch aim to be achieved 2023/24	78.2 - 82.5	71.1 - 76.6	84.5 - 88.3	11.7 - 13.4
Level: 2023-24	78.5	72.3	87.2	14.9
Core Plus Stretch Aim: 10	SA10: P4 Writing (%)			
	Overall	SIMD Q1	SIMD Q5	Gap (Q1 – Q5)
Level: 2022-23	66.8	57.7	79.2	21.5
Stretch aim to be achieved 2023/24	67.5 - 71.5	58.3 - 62.9	79.6 - 80.4	16.7 - 22.1
Level: 2023-24	70.4	62.6	77.2	14.6

School Meals Initiative - In August 2023 we introduced the ‘lunchtime meal crunch deal’ for all children and young people from P6 until they leave secondary school., which allocated £500,000 to be split across the academic year (£0.365m 2023/24 and £0.135m 2024/25). This initiative ensures that every child can have a hot meal for £1.08 in addition to those already entitled to free school meals.

As a direct result of this initiative, at the end of January 2024, school meal uptake across East Ayrshire had increased by 8% in our primary schools and 14% in our secondary schools compared with same month last year, Following this increased

uptake in school meals we are now projected to see an overall increase of around 275,000 meals in 2024/25 which equates to an additional 2000 young people per day.

Lifescills and Inclusion Multiply Team. We continued to work with families in 2023-2024 to reduce the impact of poverty through supporting families to access community based supports. As part of this work the Multiply Team worked with adults and families 19+ to provide numeracy supports through numeracy 1st steps tasters and sessions, adult numeracy 1:1 supports and through formal qualifications. The Multiply team was funded through the UK Government Shared Prosperity Team with the aim of increasing adult numeracy supports by supporting learners to improve their understanding and use of maths in their daily lives at home and at work and to increase no. of adults achieving maths qualification up to and including level 5. The Multiply sessions and workshops were delivered within schools during school holidays and from April 2023 to 31st March 2024 they worked with 205 Adults, 94 children and 23 groups. Feedback from the sessions were very positive and highlighted that these supports were helping to improve their understanding and use of maths in their daily lives at home and at work.

Jumpstart Programme. In 2023-2024 the Child Healthy Weight team continued to work with families of children aged five to 17 years old to support them to achieve a healthy weight via the Jumpstart programme. A range of programmes were provided through Jumpstart that were targeted at specific age groups, these were Jumpstart Junior (ages 5 to 9), Jumpstart Senior (ages 10 to 13), JumpStart Teens (ages 14 to 17) and JumpStart Plus, which supported children with additional support needs. During 2023/24 a total of 92 Group based physical activity and health education sessions were held and a total of 41 children and their families were supported across the 4 programmes and of the 41 participating children and young people the largest majority of referrals are from SIMD 1 and 2 (74%) with (26%) from SIMD 3,4 AND 5. Positive indicators of those participating on the programme showed an increase in physical activity levels, healthier eating habits including an increase in consumption of fruit and veg and less reported foods high in fats, salts and sugars, increase in scoring by parents on child's health related quality of life resulting in stabilisation or reduction in Body Mass Index Standard Deviation Scores.

Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). Across 2023-24 we were able to progress our aim of encouraging our schools to meaningfully engage with children and young people in decision making related to school expenditure and priority setting. Over this period an increasing number of our schools adopted a participatory budgeting approach to engage with learners and their families in the decision-making process with regards to decisions on identifying priority areas for spending a proportion of their PEF through their School Improvement Plan. An indication of how meaningful this engagement with pupils and families was can be highlighted in a small number of schools carried out PEF Participatory Budget projects chosen through other engagements with children and young people such as pupil councils; ensuring there is a shared responsibility for decision making where appropriate.

Play & Early Intervention and Home Link Team. Across 2023-2024 the Team continued to provide opportunities for children, young people and families to access

free learning, leisure and play opportunities. This included, from January 2023 to February 2024, 2,819 children and 92 adults accessing free swimming through the SHOUT card initiative. In addition a significant number of young people and families also participated in free seasonal programmes, which included 436 children and 277 adults who participated in the Grounds 4 Play events, 425 children and 231 adults who participated at the PlayTimes events and approximately 6,000 children, young people and families who attended East Ayrshire Playday.

Home Link Team – The Team have provided tailored early intervention support where it is most needed to 275 children, young people and their families, of those, 166 children and young people no longer require Home Link support, achieving positive outcomes. The team worked collaboratively with external partners and community groups to run several innovative, impactful and sustainable programmes to support closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

Programmes across EAC have helped to promote high aspirations and provide a sustained emphasis on children and young people's readiness to learn through focusing on engagement, confidence and wellbeing; whilst recognising broader achievement for all our children, young people and their families. The team are developing approaches to ensure programmes gain appropriate accreditation. As such, we secured 76 awards for families, with further 149 awards underway with additional families.

lunch Family Learning sessions - The families that were/are targeted to take part in the iLunch initiative include those where there is a risk of a gap in learning during holiday periods, families where there is a lack of additional support, resources and activities during holiday periods, families where there are difficulties connecting with other agencies or services, families where there is a risk of isolation, loneliness and building trusting relationships and families where holiday hunger may become an issue.

There are 6 key aims of the iLunch initiative, these are to; improve levels of literacy and numeracy, improve parental interaction, increase capacity of parents to support their children with their learning, increase the number of families cooking affordable healthy nutritious meals at home, increase the number of families becoming involved in community events and finally to increase the amount of referrals to partnership agencies for additional support and advice.

iLunch referrals come directly from Head of Establishments within the named school and open conversations between the Homelink Team and Educational staff throughout the academic year ensure a smooth referral process is in place, targeting families at the right time in their journey. Meetings take place with all families well before the programme begins in order to begin the process of building strong relationships and hear all parents' voices on how they would like the programme to look. These meetings take place in an establishment that is known to the parent and where they feel at ease and comfortable.

Across the Easter school holiday period 2023, 109 families attended iLunch sessions in East Ayrshire, this included 176 parents/carers and 364 children and young people participating in 86 hours of family learning sessions. Following this success in the Easter period, a summer iLunch Programme was launched over the 6 week period of the school summer break in which 304 families attended across 254 hours of family learning, which included 320 parents/carers and 647 children and young people attending. Across our secondary schools the team facilitated 6 Wider Achievement sessions for secondary school pupils, this offer included visits to Arran, Newmilns Snow and Sports Complex, Barassie Beach and Millport. Finally In October 2023, 96 families attended 57.5 hours of ilunch family learning session with 76 parents/carers participating and 156 children and young people also attending.

Transition Programmes - Specifically designed by our children and young people the team provided enhanced transition programmes with 260 pupils attending from across all 7 Education Groups. 159 sessions took place accumulating in 220.5 hours of input from the Home Link Team and Care Experienced Home Link Workers. 17 Enhanced Transition sessions were delivered across the summer, taking place within schools as well as the local community, including Dean Castle Country Park, The Garage and Ayr Beach.

Child Poverty and Financial Inclusion Referral Pathway Training. This training was created with the aim of supporting the objectives set out in the NHS Ayrshire and Arran Child Poverty Strategy. In 2023-24 this training was delivered to a total of 36 staff across the organisation. The training has helped to raise awareness of child poverty and the impact it has on children and young people and has helped healthcare professionals to refer children, young people and families to appropriate supports in East Ayrshire. Evaluation has highlighted a positive experience overall for those who attended the Child Poverty and Financial Inclusion training.

Cost of the School Day Programme. In the school year 2023-24 we supported and challenged schools to embed a range of Cost of the School Day (COSD) and Poverty Proofing approaches to support equity and reduce poverty related barriers to learning. Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) has supported COSD approaches and teaching staff have been actively encouraged to complete the COSD online learning module or in-person training which was made available to all staff. PEF impact visits led by the Equity Education Support Officer were carried out in 80% of our schools to ensure all PEF monies are utilised effectively and that COSD approaches were being embedded. We have also seen a strong commitment in all schools to adopt COSD actions and to reduce poverty-related barriers to education with our schools regularly providing breakfast and snacks for pupils. In addition, our schools continued to help source more affordable uniforms for pupils and have provided subsidised trips and outings for children and young people and by doing so ensured barriers to participation have been reduced. In most establishments.

Financial Inclusion Team Pathfinder Projects. The Financial Inclusion Team (FIT) introduced the Early Years Pathfinder Project to support health colleagues working with families with young children ensure families benefit income was fully maximised.

This initiative has allowed health visitors who work with families with children from pre-birth to pre-school to refer these families to FIT who are then able to work with the families to help ensure benefit maximisation. An associated Schools Pathfinder Project has also been established with the similar aim of supporting children and young people attending school and their families/carers, to maximise their benefits income. Substantial progress has been made during the reporting period to implement this model in both our health service and schools in East Ayrshire and evaluation has shown significant financial gains. In 2023/24, the Pathfinder Project had supported 281 families and secured a total of £1,280, 655 in additional benefits for families.

Sports Mentor Programme. Across 2023-2024 Vibrant Communities have ran a Sports Mentor Programme, which has been developed to use sport as a tool to engage disadvantaged and vulnerable young people across East Ayrshire. The programme delivers sessions to vulnerable individuals on a 1-to-1 basis but also to small groups. The young people who attend the Sports mentor programme are given the opportunity to learn new skills from an experienced Boxing coach and also to improve various different areas of their lives such as their physical health, wellbeing, gym knowledge, respect for others, emotional resilience and their relationships with adult and authority figures.

Schools will support children from low income families to overcome the barriers they face in terms of the costs associated with their participation and engagement at school. All schools have a number of Cost of School Day (COSD) projects and use their PEF funding to support pupils where poverty is a barrier to their learning e.g. breakfast clubs, payment for trips. E.g. one secondary school has developed and delivered staff, learner and parent/carer awareness sessions centred on the COSD. In addition, they have an active poverty proofing steering group. This includes staff and learners who work closely to mitigate against poverty-related barriers to learning.

Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG). In 2023 CPAG Scotland worked with the Financial Inclusion Team to deliver child poverty and rights sessions to 70 learners across 5 secondary schools in East Ayrshire. The sessions raised awareness of the impact and causes of poverty in Scotland, explored cost barriers to learning at school and looked at how article 26 of the UNCRC - the right to benefit from social security - was being upheld in their schools through the work of financial inclusion officers. The sessions were also designed to raise further awareness of the financial inclusions workers' roles and encourage young people to champion a welfare rights approach. Young people who took part in the sessions said they had a greater understanding of the prevalence of poverty in Scotland, the impact poverty can have on children's rights, the cost barriers families and pupil face at school but also of the wider help and financial support available to families.

EA CVO Kids' Corner. East Ayrshire CVO created a new retail opportunity titled 'Kids' Corner' in 2023, where unpaid work participants have been able to develop retail and customer service skills. Kids' Corner is a social enterprise, which sells lightly loved children's clothes, toys, books and games and we have recognised the impact that the cost of living crisis has had, and is still having on young families, and ensured all items

in the shop are priced very reasonably, with all profits supporting local foodbanks. So far, 7 young people have had the opportunity to do unpaid work in the shop and it has been very rewarding to see how they have gained experience in the world of work and grown in confidence. In addition to developing confidence and skills in unpaid work participants and helping families with the rising costs of children's clothes and toys, Kids' Corner has also helped to raise awareness of the sustainability agenda and the benefits of recycling.

Post-School Skills and Learning. Our Post-School offer links those young people not in education, employment or training to opportunities, utilising employability workshops and activities that improve skillsets and knowledge around the world of work. Young people also have the opportunity to achieve SQA accredited qualifications and certificated, vocational training within various sectors. Skills and Learning staff are able to deliver various courses, including but not limited to Employability Award, Wellbeing Award and Barista Skills. We are also working towards the delivery of a Skills and Learning customised award which will broaden course choice across the current employability landscape.

Groups engaging with Post-School at Skills and Learning can benefit from bespoke packages of support, including workplace shadowing at highly sought-after industries; as well as intensive support to obtain Modern Apprenticeships through Pre-Apprenticeship programmes. We are also keyed into the issues affecting young people who are not in education, employment or training, and cater for their wellbeing needs through in-house delivery of Drugs, Alcohol and Gambling Awareness and Impacts of Social Media, as well as signposting to support agencies.

Collaborative working is key to delivery for Post-School as it provides links to opportunities within professional settings that instil workplace values, for example, through continuing partnership with Scottish Fire & Rescue. An existing strong partnership with Skills Development Scotland ensured all young people supported through our post-school employability teams have access to, and awareness of, current and future opportunities in East Ayrshire.

CASE STUDY

Carer X is a Young Adult Carer, caring for mother who has cerebral palsy and bipolar. Carer X does everything for mum from house work, medication, shopping to a massive amount of emotional support. Carer X still gets some time to themselves but with work and carers groups this can be difficult to do the hobbies she enjoys. Carer X applied to 'Time to Live' for funding to help towards dance theatre classes. This has helped improve her physical health and mental health. Theatre is something she really enjoys and is passionate about, this has also helped with her social life as she has managed to interact and become friends with others from her class who have similar interests to her. This also improved her relationship with her mother as she is feeling happier at home. They share the interest in theatre so, they have more to talk about and it makes mum feel better as she feels responsible for Carer X missing out on opportunities for fun and friendship that other young people take for granted.

QUOTES

Depute Head Teacher – *“During the individual sessions, Kieran (Sports Mentor) was able to discuss everything from how XX’s schoolwork and friendships were going, to his weekends and family life. This gave XX the support he needed to discuss concerns, worries or events making him feel upset or angry. Kieran worked on strategies for XX to use in difficult situations and due to his huge respect for Kieran, XX would listen to his helpful advice but also his firm handling if he strayed from the plan. Kieran has provided KW with stability and is a positive male role model in XX’s life”.*

Young Person - *“Poverty is much more present in Ayrshire than I thought... I have learned that people can get a wide variety of help with money, and this can happen through school”*

Family supported by FIT – *Our family’s world was rocked significantly following a traumatic event and trying to navigate a system relatively alien to us was challenging whilst adapting to a new way of life. The support we received from the Financial Inclusion Team (FIT) made such a huge difference and contributed at a time where we have felt extremely vulnerable and genuinely worried about coping financially. We truly appreciate the involvement and assistance provided by FIT’*

Priority 3. Our children and young people feel safe

The new National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland was published in 2021. It aims to ensure that children's rights and voices are central to child protection and underline the critical need to engage with families to offer support and reduce risk of harm. Significant activity has been undertaken to support its implementation and we are in full compliance with all aspects of the national guidance.

A child's experience of abuse or neglect can have a lifelong and even intergenerational impact. Over the past three years we have focused on both ensuring that children and young people in East Ayrshire are kept safe from abuse, harm and neglect and strengthening the support in place to children who are on the child protection register and their families.

We said we would:

- Work in partnership with our families to improve children's safety at home, school and community.
- Provide our workforce with the tools and training to identify, support and challenge neglect and harm against children and young people
- Develop innovative support models which will strengthen the safety of children, young people and families

We Did- Key Delivery Examples

East Ayrshire Children Protection Committee. The Committee undertook a range of initiatives across 2023-2024 that were focussed on the safety of children and young people in East Ayrshire. This work included the implementation of the Pan Ayrshire Child Protection Guidance and also work with partners to help build multi-agency workforce confidence, awareness and partnerships working in relation to child exploitation. This has enabled a wide range of professionals who work with children to identify indicators of child exploitation and respond accordingly as a multi-agency team around the child/ family and when managing risk within child protection parameters. The CPC also continued to working in partnership with the Alcohol and drug Partnership to develop the Whole Family Approach to Getting Our Priorities Right and has continued to support the implementation of Safe & Together to the multi-agency workforce with a commitment to this assessment model being the approach within East Ayrshire to working with families who are experiencing domestic abuse and violence.

Trauma Informed Contact and Care (TICC) - The TICC initiative is a unique Police and Education early intervention safeguarding partnership which ensures a child's school is notified prior to the start of a school day if there has been an incident of domestic abuse to which the child or young person has been exposed. This was rolled out to all schools across Ayrshire from 1st April 2022 and to all ECC's from 8th January 2024. This allows staff to be prepared to support the child or young person in a trauma informed manner.

Cherishing Our Families Strategy. The Child Protection Committee (CPC) made significant progress in 2023 – 2024 in supporting the implementation of the 'Cherishing Our Families Strategy' which is underpinned by Children's Rights and focuses on tackling neglect and neglectful behaviours through listening to children; supporting families in the right way at the right time; working collaboratively across agencies; and, addressing poverty to ensure families are supported through times of hardship.

Pitchin 'In' Programme. East Ayrshire Campus Police Officers ran the Pitchin 'In' Programme in partnership with The Killie Community, a Kilmarnock Football Club charity. The Programme was designed to help build decision-making and resilience in young people through a participant centred course of discussion, which encourages participants to think for themselves, be more assertive and develop skills in anticipating the consequences of poor decisions. Outcomes for those young people who participated in the Programme were reported as positive with a majority of the young people highlighting improvements in respect of attendance, referrals, crime involvement and concern forms.

Danger Detectives. The Play and Early Intervention Team delivered a multi-agency 'Danger Detectives' eight day event in May 2023 for Primary six school children in East Ayrshire, with contributions from Police Scotland, Scottish Fire & Rescue, Ayrshire Roads Alliance and EAC Health and Safety. This was an experiential learning event aimed at helping to reduce accidents amongst young people and building community resilience. Over 1,200 pupils from across 35 primary and special schools attended the event at which a safe environment was created for young people where they were able to become more aware of personal safety both in-doors and outside, learn how to react to dangerous situations and to make a contribution towards reducing both crime and accidents.

Respectful Relationships - Within East Ayrshire we have a well-established Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) curriculum as well as our anti-bullying policy and school counselling service in place. In 2023-2024 we continued to support our children and young people to build respectful relationships with each other and to tackle bullying wherever it takes place within an educational context. The actions that we carried out in 2023-24 included our refreshed Bullying Guidance being embedded in practice and the SEEMIS Bullying Recording & Monitoring Module being used by the vast majority of our schools, All schools have also now been signed up for the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award and Educational Psychology also undertook to update our Respectful Relationships Policy.

You Me Together Training. Ayrshire was the pilot division for the education package 'You Me Together' in 2023-2024, prior to it being rolled out across the whole of Scotland and Police Scotland delivered this training package across all East Ayrshire schools in 2023-24. The training package focused on Domestic Abuse, Teenage Relationships and Coercive and Controlling behaviour and the learning intentions for the training were to be able to explain the different elements of coercive controlling behaviour, to identify when a relationship is becoming abusive as a result of coercive control and to have an awareness of 'Police powers' and legislation around coercive

controlling behaviour. The training was initially aimed at S3 pupils and many hundreds of pupils were reached across the local authority with positive feedback being received from the overwhelming majority of pupils who attended the sessions.

Fostering Service Inspection 2023. In October 2023 the fostering service underwent an inspection carried out by the Care Inspectorate and performed strongly on across all indicators. Inspector feedback commented that “children experienced high standards of care” and that caregivers were providing nurturing, trauma informed, care. There was recognition that staff were skilled, knowledgeable and responsible, and that the service overall has been creative and proactive in their efforts to reduce delays for children requiring permanent care. Areas for improvement from the previous inspection around carer approval and annual carer reviews were determined to have been met, with the service now exceeding its target of 80% of carers being reviewed on an annual basis.

New improvement recommendations asked that the service closely monitor and review foster carers at panel within necessary timescales, ensuring that all statutory regulations are met and external management have a greater role in quality assurance of this. Ensuring that our foster carers are looked after is a key priority for the service and in the 2023-24 period we established a new working group of current carers to help us support the wellbeing of foster carers as we move forward. We also held our annual Foster Carer Recognition Event in 2023. This event celebrates the contribution our foster carers make to the lives of the children they care for and gives us the opportunity to thank them for all they do

CASE STUDY

The Child Protection Committee (CPC) partnered with other protection committees within East Ayrshire to deliver a Public Protection Multi Agency Learning Event on 6th September 2023 entitled No Closed Door – Connecting & Protecting People. Spotlight sessions and workshops were provided to the multi-agency workforce from the adult protection committee, child protection committee, violence against women and girls partnership and alcohol and drug partnership. The event demonstrated how public protection practice is growing and developing across East Ayrshire as well as identifying key learning opportunities. This full day event evaluated as a great success with appetite to develop an annual event moving forward. This was the first public protection learning event since 2019.

QUOTE

Care experienced young person - *“When I first came in I was very nervous and I didn't speak. But it got better and I started talking and it's good now”*

Priority 4: Our Children and young people have the best start in life and achieve their potential.

We know that a child's early and developing years are a critical opportunity for building healthy, resilient children and young people to reach their full educational potential. The importance of getting it right for all our children and young people cannot be overemphasised and the challenges are also well understood, for example, reducing health inequalities and tackling issues such as emotional and mental distress.

We also know that improved outcomes requires the support of professionals as well as political leaders both local and national, working together in partnership with families, young people and communities. Another key requirement is strong universal services to support all families and to identify and provide extra and early help when families need it.

We said we would:

- Build upon our community assets and the skills and talents of our children, young people and families to provide the best start in life
- Implement a series of innovative programmes which will support our children and young people to develop and achieve their potential.
- We will support all of our children and young people, particularly those most at risk to make best use of our support pathways for learning, work and wellbeing

We Did– Key Delivery Examples

Intergenerational Network. The Play and Intervention Team supported children and young people to attend intergenerational events in 2023-2024, which has helped to build confidence, tackle stigma and prejudices and also in reducing loneliness and social isolation in both groups. A key outcome from establishing this intergenerational network has been the opening of a Befriending Intergenerational Garden, which has helped to create a safe outdoor space that can be used by both groups and the opening day was a great success with 30 young people, a wide range of local residents as well as residents from local care homes all in attendance. The outcomes for those children and young people who participated in these events was extremely positive with 79% of children and young people reporting increased activity and community involvement, 93% of children and young people reporting reduced isolation and 93% of children and young people also reporting increased confidence.

Language and Communication Workshops. Over the course of 2023-2024 we increased the knowledge, skills and understanding of the Early Years workforce, including Education, Health and partner agencies, on how they can support early language development. Early Language and communication collaborative workshops were held in June and November 2023 facilitated by Scottish Government CYPIC colleagues, which has enabled key professionals across Education, Health and partner agencies to work together and plan how to support early speech, language and communication.

Communication Champions. At the end of 2023-2024, 93% of our Early Childhood Centres had at least one active communication champion whose role is to drive forward initiatives to promote the development of language and communication skills. In order to further improve and align this work, a pilot programme of network meetings was introduced for three locality areas within EAC providing professionals across health and education with the opportunity to connect and collaborate every eight weeks, to share data, projects and learn from each other.

Babychat. The Babychat sessions support new parents and carers to reduce loneliness and isolation as well as improve maternal and infant mental health and in 2023-2024 the number of Babychat Groups increased to 7 groups in total operating across all of East Ayrshire to support children and families with the greatest needs. Suitability for accessing the Programme for Parents and carers is identified by NHS Health Visiting staff who then refer parents and carers into the programme which runs up to 6 weeks. Local venues are utilised to provide ease of access for parents and carers within their own communities and the sessions are delivered by Health Visitor Support Workers who are provided with age-appropriate resources to ensure the sessions are fun and engaging. The sessions are also supported by partners in Speech and language therapy and dietetics. Other areas covered in the Programme include healthy eating, infant massage, bonding and attachment and infant feeding and other topics that parents have requested are also covered.

Kinship Care Week 2024. During Kinship Care Week we liaised with our partners across the Third Sector, Education Services and Child Health to profile the events running for children and carers throughout the week both locally and nationally. We used this week as an opportunity to invite the Social Care workforce to attend 2 sessions advising of the process changes from the SLWG which will see our practices develop and change in a direction of providing 'good' experiences to children, young people, their kinship carers and the people important to them.

We also invited South and North Ayrshire Council Kinship Teams to join us with an intention of building our peer supports and networking for those we serve across our communities. Also during kinship care week the kinship panel came together for reflection and panel development / training. Panel members considered the significance of their role on the panel and what they need in the future to fulfil this role to the best of their skill.

The Kinship Team have adopted a trauma informed focus throughout 2023-2024 in considering the theme of supports and training made available to carers. Further, focus has been on supporting their own wellbeing with support from the wellbeing and learning and development teams in regard to vicarious trauma the team experience.

Family Involvement Programme (FIP) – As part of our focus on Parental Empowerment and Engagement in 2023-2024, the Play and Early Intervention Team delivered the Family Involvement Programme in Doon and Grange Academy with parents and carers shaping the programme. Key partnerships ensured the programme content reflected the parents feedback, this included Doon Academy staff, Campus Police Officer, Family Inclusion Assistant, Children and Families Team. Themed

sessions included Makaton, family cookery on a budget, substance awareness, health & wellbeing, managing teenage behaviour, social media, family budgeting and benefit advice.

Feedback from Families who attended the Doon FIP programme:

- 100% of families who attended FIP said they would now feel more comfortable in approaching Doon Academy if they had an issue with their child's learning or development after completing the programme.
- 100% of families said they would like to be considered to be part of further work between Doon Academy and SAC
- 100% of families confirmed that they would recommend the FIP Programme to other families.
- Programme received a 4.8/5 star rating for overall family enjoyment.
- Active Sessions received a 5/5 star rating from young people who took part
- 83% of parents said they would like to be part of a Parental Empowerment Group

Active Schools (Disability Community Provision). Across 2023-2024 the Young People Sport and Diversion Team (YPSD) delivered a range of opportunities for children and young people with a physical, sensory or learning disability to participate in physical activity within the community across East Ayrshire. These included CHAMPS Club, which is an inclusive community club for all children and young people with additional support needs. The club offered opportunities for all to participate in a varied range of sports, activities and games in a relaxed and supportive environment. Over 2023-24 there were a total of 39 sessions delivered with a total participation of 667 averaging 17 participants on a weekly basis. YPSD also supported the delivery of the SOFA club, which is an inclusive community club for all children and young people with additional support needs. The club offered more of a sports based session where specific sports were adapted to suit the needs and requirements of the participants. Over 2023-24 they delivered 43 sessions with a total participation of 637 averaging 15 participants weekly. Through the delivery of these sessions the aim of YPSD Team was to provide the participants with a feeling of being valued and to provide opportunities for children and young people with a variety of needs the opportunity to be physically active, to build friendships, to learn how to interact with others out with the school environment and to build self-confidence and develop a wide variety of skills. By speaking with the parents and children who attend the sessions 100% stated that the clubs had supported them to build confidence, create friendships and confidence to interact within others.

Employability and Training Activities. We have continued to increase participation of our young people in training opportunities that meet the needs of both our young people and also employers. Our Post-School offer linked those young people not in education, employment or training to opportunities, utilising employability workshops and activities that helped them improve their individual skillsets and knowledge around the world of work. In addition, those engaging with Post-School at Skills and Learning were able to benefit from bespoke packages of support, including workplace shadowing at highly sought-after industries; as well as intensive support to obtain

Modern Apprenticeships through Pre-Apprenticeship programmes. Our young people have been provided with the opportunity to achieve SQA accredited qualifications and certificated, vocational training within various sectors. Skills and Learning staff are able to deliver various courses, including but not limited to Employability Award, Wellbeing Award and Barista Skills.

CASE STUDY

Baby Chat was introduced in 2018 initially with the aim of address low breastfeeding rates in East Ayrshire and a further aim of the Group was to ensure that new parents who were identified by Health Visitors/FNP/SW, were able to benefit from additional support with babies aged between 6 weeks to 6 months. This support now takes the form of help to reduce loneliness and isolation for parents, support for maternal and infant mental health, encouraging parental bonding and attachment with their children and building resilience in parents to allow them to be the best parents they could be. Participation in the Group allows parents to develop an awareness of key messages around early language and communication and should issues arise that require additional supports, parents have an awareness of what is available across services.

Sessions are delivered over a 6 - week block in local venues and there are 7 groups now running across East Ayrshire every week. Membership of the Steering Group has representation from Senior Managers in Health, Family Nurse Partnership, Early Years Practitioners, Speech and Language, Dietician, Infant Feeding, 3rd sector services and our Health Visitor Support Workers who are at the heart of service delivery. Steering Group meetings take place every 6-8 weeks to reflect on and plan the forthcoming sessions. Despite challenges across all areas of the Health and Social Care Partnership, all have remained committed to supporting Baby Chat.

Feedback from parents over the period since the Group was established strongly indicates that being provided with access to a range of health and care professionals and the range of information provided through the Group is seen as vitally important to many parents and that the provision of peer support and being provided with a supportive environment in which to spend time with their babies is hugely appreciated by all parents.

QUOTES

Parent. *"Baby Chat has been a lifeline for me and has built confidence in me as a parent"*

Parent. *"The FIP sessions were always really welcoming and relaxed, we could all talk openly and have a laugh, without feeling judged"*

Parent – *"My child has attend Champs club for several years, due to attending this club he is more able to interact with others, the staff are amazing and make him feel right at home. Champs is the only activity my son has been able to attend and stay at due to the requirements of his needs".*

DRAFT

Priority 5: Our children and young people's mental health and wellbeing is improving

Mental health problems in children and young people are increasing at a rapid rate. Research shows that around 1 in 6 to 1 in 4 children and young people struggle with mental health problems at any given time. At the same time, 50% of adult mental health problems start during adolescence and the impact of poor mental health in childhood impacts on learning, life outcomes and physical health.

Knowing that a large number of children and young people will experience behavioural or emotional problems at some stage has resulted in schools and settings that work with children and young people being encouraged and supported to increase their capacity to prevent mental health problems from developing in the first place.

We said we would:

- Support the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people of all abilities across East Ayrshire using engaging and creative approaches.
- Ensure all staff working with children and families are provided with access to appropriate training opportunities in mental health interventions.
- Support children, young people and their families to develop essential skills, habits and attitudes for building resilience

We Did – Key Delivery Examples

Schools Counselling Service - Children and young people across East Ayrshire have been benefitting from the East Ayrshire School Counselling Service, a service that is provided by The Exchange. The Exchange works collaboratively with Schools across East Ayrshire Council to deliver a seamless service to all accessing support and have been commissioned to provide 28 days of counselling support to secondary schools and 13 days to primary schools across East Ayrshire.

The Exchange specialises in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and their families. They currently deliver a range of services across schools in East Ayrshire providing evidence-based support and accredited training as part of a whole-system resilience focused approach to improving mental wellbeing.

In partnership with East Ayrshire Council, The Exchange deliver support to children, young people, parents and carers in the form of:

- 1-2-1 Counselling Support
- Group Support
- Online Chat Support
- Workshops

The mental health and well-being of every child and young person is priority throughout our principles of building resilience and a considerable number of our children and young people, over the age of 5 years, have accessed the service to date,

and have been given a private space to talk about issues that are troubling them. These issues include bereavement, transitions and change, managing stress, understanding feelings and behaviours, self-worth, positive self-image, body image, relationships and friendships.

Young Carers Service. Through listening to our young people and their needs around their mental health issues, the Young Carers Service has introduced additional support groups around football, art and music. This has helped to ensure our young people are more resilient, confident and feel valued and supported to achieve in life recognising their strengths and values to contribute to society. The Young Carers Service ran a year-long pilot to support, improve and sustain good mental health in young carers, which supported wellbeing through music, art and sport, with the music and art aspects culminating in a small exhibition and a musical performance of work devised and created by young carers. Over the year, key young carers were involved in getting the views, opinions and concerns of young carers and seeking their messages to include in the art or performance. This meant that their views were incorporated into the final performance so their voices could be heard even although they might not have wanted to perform publicly.

Emotional Health and Wellbeing. Throughout 2023-2024 we supported the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people of all abilities across East Ayrshire using engaging and creative approaches. This has included assessing the social and emotional needs of all pre 5 children at developmental visits, our school nurses supporting all school age children referred with tools that provide support for them at home, in school and in the community. In addition, our School Counselling Services have continued to used widely throughout East Ayrshire for children aged 10 and above and the Kooth digital platform has provided support for children aged 12 struggling with anxiety, self-harm and mental health needs.

Mental Health Improvement Approach. In 2023-2024 we provided access to 'Mental Health Improvement Approach' training to our young people and those who work with them and we have promoted this training widely to a wide range of Council and Health staff. 'Mental Health Improvement - a practical approach' training has been promoted widely through distribution of the Public Health MHWB Training Brochure and the Health Improvement training brochure to the same partners noted above. EA HI team staff promote to partners routinely. It is also included in the Education Wellbeing Team Training Calendar and the CYP & Families supports and services document that the School Counselling Service coordinator pulled together. Alongside the OT for Mental Health it was also promoted and delivered to several of the Children's Houses in EA.

Shortlees Family Involvement Programme (FIP). Working in partnership with a wide range of partners our Home Link Workers helped to organise the FIP programme. These partners included Shortlees Primary School, Active School Coordinators, Shortlees Community Association, Facilities and Property Management (catering), Grange Academy, SL33, Oral Health Team, Financial Inclusion, Modern Apprentice and parent volunteers. The aim of the programme was to reduce isolation, increase parental engagement and involvement by creating positive relationships and new

friendships with other families. With a particular focus on spending quality time spent as a family and continuing to build strong links between home and school.

Across 8 weeks, parents and carers engaged in an activity, chosen by them, for an hour whilst their children were supported by Active Schools, Modern Apprentice and Parent volunteer. Sessions included, money management, oral health, British Sign Language, Parental Employability and emotional wellbeing. Once the hour was over, families came together to enjoy a hot meal prepared by the school catering team, this was followed by some family activities. The families also received additional food to take home each week.

Talking Mats. Over 2023-2024 we delivered a series of Talking Mats programmes to practitioners to support engagement with our children and young people with additional support needs. This has been delivered to a range of practitioners including Speech and Language Therapists, Locality Support Assistants from the Scottish Children's Reporter's Administration, Anti-Social Behaviour Manager for East Ayrshire and social workers from the Intensive Support Team.

CASE STUDY

K was referred to the Home Link Service because of concerns regarding a disrupted education since he arrived in secondary education in August 2022 and as a result a Home Link Worker commenced work with the family in March 2023 in order to support mum and help to maximise K's attendance in school.

Poor attendance was seriously hindering his levels of school attainment and K was also being affected by low self-esteem and had endured challenging mental health episodes due to a continuing skin condition that was affecting self-confidence and impacting on time spent out with the family home. K had also made some poor choices with regards friendships in the community with others who were also school non-attenders and they were getting into trouble regularly with the police.

K has engaged well with HLW and formed a strong working relationship through weekly 1:1 sessions and his relationship with his mum has improved immeasurably. K is back in school fulltime and attendance has been excellent currently sitting at 91% since HLW intervention an improvement of 60%. He is engaging in classes and is displaying huge development in his self-confidence and self-awareness surrounding his skin condition. There have also been zero Police Scotland call-outs or reports linked to K since May 15th 2023 when previously this had been a weekly/ twice weekly occurrence. Mum has also stated that she feels stronger now and is grateful for support HLW provided in supporting parenting and relationship with child.

QUOTES

S1 Pupil - *She (school counsellor) helped me a lot. She helped me to get new friends which is what I was really struggling with. She got to know me at the beginning and I really liked that."*

Parent of P4 Pupil - *“He is finding the counselling sessions really productive, there has been real progress in his confidence and self-belief.”*

DRAFT

6. The Last Word

In my time as Chair of the Children and Young People's Cabinet I have had the honour and pleasure of meeting many young people across East Ayrshire, many of whom are testament to the work of the organisations, services and partner agencies that deliver child and young person focussed services in East Ayrshire. In addition, I have also been genuinely encouraged and inspired by the ways in which our services continue to support young people across East Ayrshire to overcome the obstacles that prevent their participation and inclusion in decision-making that directly impact on them and their lives.

In every corner of the authority, young people battle mental health worries, exam stress, COVID recovery and poverty and this report has highlighted the many ways in which the authority and its partners have continued to champion young people's wellbeing as well as all of the innovative work that has been carried out to address these challenges. In my experience, East Ayrshire successfully advocates for its young people; *it sounds like small voices encouraged to ask big questions, the tremor in asking for help, a sigh of joy in finding a solution.*

Whilst this report may be viewed as a reflection on last year's progress and achievements across our services for children and young people, I feel it is also important that we look forward to the future and I know from my own experience as a member of the East Ayrshire Children and Young People's Cabinet that the authority and its partners will continue to build on these achievements and ensure that we realise the stated vision of the Children and Young People's Service Plan for 2023 – 2026, which is to make East Ayrshire a place where all children and young people can grow up loved, safe and respected so that they can realise their full potential.

When asked to write this final word, I was unsure how to encapsulate the breadth and width of my experiences as a young person in East Ayrshire. However, I feel that there are two thoughts that I must share publicly, firstly a big thank you, to everyone who was worked with our young people, to create positive change, and secondly a massive thank you also to our young people who continue to be a real positive force of nature.

I look forward to hearing in the future how we can continue to work together to support our young people.

Sarah McCready

Former Chair of the East Ayrshire Children and Young People's Cabinet

Appendix 1 – Children’s Services Plan 2023-2026 – Performance Framework

Priority 1: Our Children and Young People feel respected, listened to and influence change	Result
% of projects with a children and young people focus that applied for Participatory Budgeting funding	11.5%
No. of youth led change projects established in East Ayrshire communities	4
Priority 2: We are working collaboratively, reducing the impact of social and economic poverty on our Children and Young People	Result
% of schools with active Cost of the School Day / Poverty Proofing action plans	80%
% reduction in the authority’s poverty related attainment gap – P1 to P7: Literacy	4.1%
% reduction in the authority’s poverty related attainment gap - P1 to P7: Numeracy	4%
% of children in living in relative poverty (after housing costs)	27.9%
% of school age children registered for free school meals: Primary School	76.8%
% of school age children registered for free school meals: Secondary School	18.6%
% families receiving school clothing and footwear grants: Primary School	31%
% families receiving school clothing and footwear grants: Secondary School	24.7%
% of households with dependent children which are workless.	19.4%
Level of income generated for families as a result of Financial Inclusion Team support within schools and pre-5 services	£2,766,405
% of children in low income families	21%
Priority 3: Our Children and Young People feel safe	Result
No. of referrals to the Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration on ‘Lack of parental care’ grounds	28
% of children re-registered on child protection register within 12 months	7.1%
No. of children appropriately placed on Child Protection register where ‘Domestic Abuse’ is noted as an area of concern.	32
No. of Trauma Informed Contact and Care (TICC) concerns received from the Police	N/A

% of P6 children reporting increased safety awareness through our annual Danger Detectives Partnership Programme	85%
No. of HSCP staff who completed child sexual exploitation training	20
% of EEI (Early and Effective Interventions) referrals and Children's Hearing's being convened for 'offence grounds	24%
Priority 4: Our Children and young people have the best start in life and achieve their potential	Result
% of babies born a healthy weight	83.75%
% of P1, P4 and P7 children achieving expected CfE levels in literacy	71%
% of P1, P4 and P7 children achieving expected CfE levels in numeracy	78.5%
% of School Leavers Attaining 1 or more qualification at SCQF level 4 on leaving school	97.3%
% of School Leavers Attaining 1 or more qualification at SCQF level 5 on leaving school	85.6%
% of School Leavers Attaining 1 or more qualification at SCQF level 6 on leaving school	60%
% of annual participation (in education, training or employment) – 16-19 years	94%
% of school leavers in positive destinations	93.4%
% of Looked After Children in Positive Destinations	87.5%
% of children and young people residing within our Children's Houses who have participated in community activities supported by Vibrant Communities	75%
Priority 5: Our Children and Young People's Mental Health & Wellbeing is improving	Result
% of Primary School pupils achieving the age and stage appropriate CfE HWB level	93.2%
% of Primary School pupils undertaking biannual Wellbeing profiles	37.4%
% of CAMHS referrals that were appropriate	94%
% of young people actively using Kooth online mental health supports	2.3%