



South Lanarkshire  
**Partnership**  
Stronger together



# Children's Services Plan 2023–2026



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



**Working together:  
making a difference**



# Contents

Section one:	Foreword	4
Section two:	Wider Partnerships	6
Section three:	What we know about children, young people and families in South Lanarkshire	8
Section four:	Children's Rights, Engagement and Participation	13
Section five:	Whole Family Wellbeing Approach	16
Section six:	South Lanarkshire's Promise	18
Section seven:	Health and Wellbeing	20
Section eight:	Public Protection	22
Section nine:	Our approach to Improvement	24
Section ten:	Appendices	25
	• Policy Context	25
	• Useful Links	29
	• Children's Rights Wellbeing Impact Assessment	29

# Section one:

## Foreword

It is so important that all our children and young people have the best possible start in life.

That is the unwavering ambition that sits at the heart of our children's services plan for 2023-26, *Getting it Right for South Lanarkshire's Children, Young People and Families: Working Together: Making a Difference.*

It is an aim that guides the decisions we make at an organisational level and as individual practitioners.

As the name of the plan suggests, no one person, service or organisation can do this alone. To make a real and meaningful difference to the lives of children, young people and families we all need to work together.

Families need the right support from our services and in turn those services need to sit within a supportive environment that nurtures best practice and continual improvement.

This plan is built on three key pillars that stand as the foundation for achieving the best possible outcomes:

- ▶ **Whole Family Wellbeing** – every family should get the right support at the right time for as long as they need
- ▶ **Health and Wellbeing** – every child and young person should be able to access local community services which support and improve their mental health and wellbeing
- ▶ **Keeping the Promise** – children and young people should grow up loved, safe, respected and listened to

We start from a strong position in South Lanarkshire and look to build on the achievements of previous children's service plans.

Excellent partnership arrangements are already in place that will enable us to work together successfully over the next years to get it right for every child, young person and family in South Lanarkshire. We also sit within a wider national planning cycle. Our plan aligns with this and ensures we make the most of synergies between national and local improvement work.

As set out in this plan, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose challenges. Supporting the recovery process for children, young people and families is an important part of this plan. A number of other factors have influenced and informed the development of this plan:

- ▶ The independent care review and the resulting Promise to keep children with their families where it is safe to do so and value the importance of relationships with families. Keep The Promise is at the heart of all we do
- ▶ Transformational change aspirations to support Whole Family Wellbeing
- ▶ UNCRC incorporation and a child friendly approach to respecting rights
- ▶ Community access to mental health services and support

- ▶ Ensuring a best start; bright future approach to challenging child poverty
- ▶ Making the Getting it right for every child ethos central to everything we do as a partnership
- ▶ The key guidance provided by the National Performance Framework and related outcomes
- ▶ The refocused governance structure of South Lanarkshire's Community Planning Partnership, which reflects recent national policy developments and the available funding streams

A huge amount of the work we do in South Lanarkshire makes a contribution to supporting children, young people and families. While the plan acknowledges this positive impact, its main focus is the more targeted areas of support where we have identified an unmet need. We can best do this by working together to make the best and most efficient use of our joint resources. By doing so we can deliver an integrated approach that makes the biggest difference to meeting families' needs and ensure we provide effective support for our most vulnerable children and families.

The benefits to our children, young people and families of getting this right are incalculable. We ask you to join us on this next stage of our journey to improve lives across South Lanarkshire and look forward to working with you to make our plan a reality.



**Cleland Sneddon**  
Chief Executive,  
South Lanarkshire  
Council



**Professor Jann Gardner**  
Chief Executive,  
NHS Lanarkshire



## Section two: Wider Partnerships

In South Lanarkshire we have a shared vision that:

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

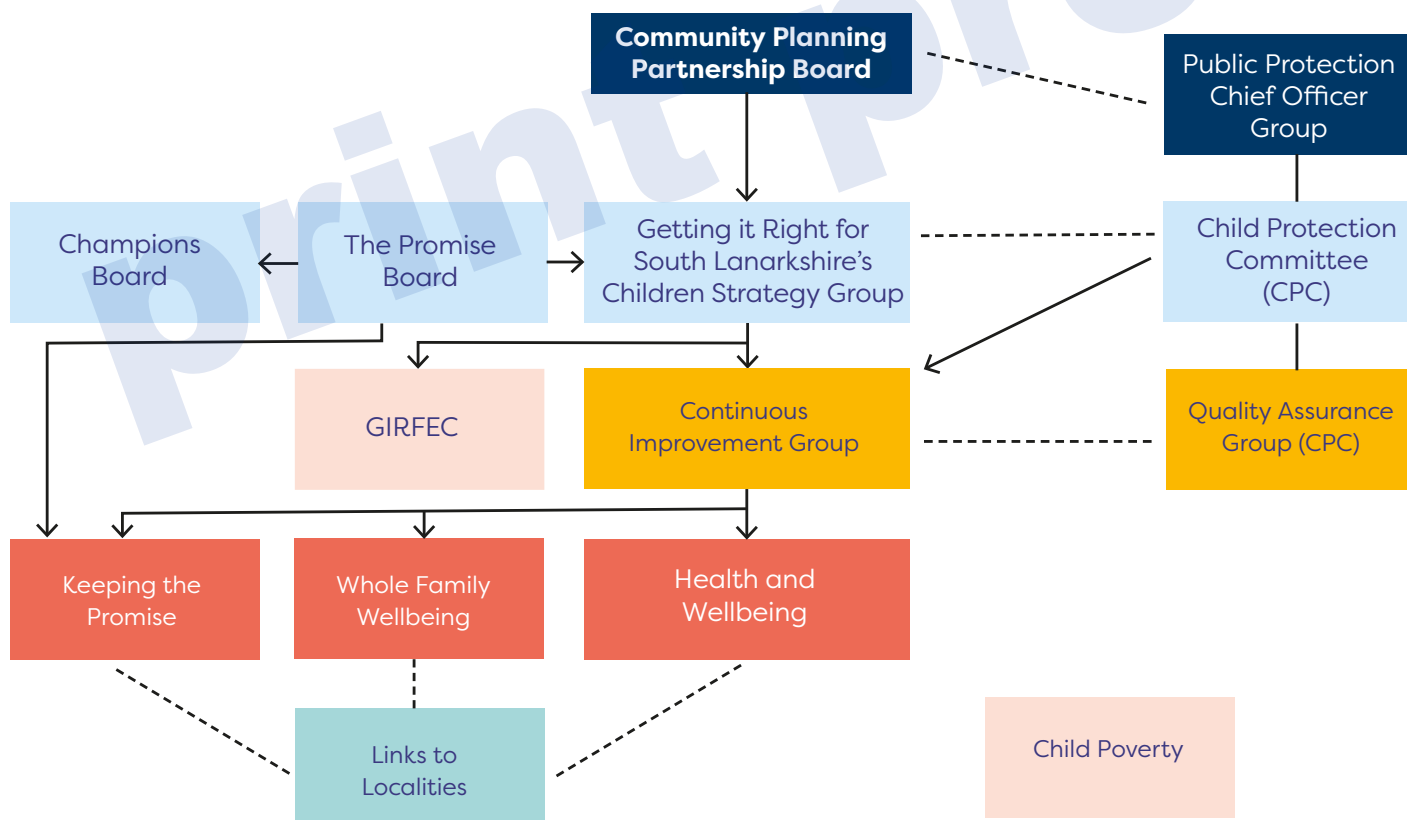
This vision is underpinned by a continued commitment to:

- ▶ Tackling inequality, discrimination, and poverty
- ▶ Promoting early support and prevention
- ▶ Focussing on those areas where working together will have the biggest impact
- ▶ Ensuring a shared approach to continuous improvement, and
- ▶ Implementing a workforce development strategy that builds the competence and confidence of our staff

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

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

### Children's Services Partnership Governance Structure



The structure supports reporting through our annual report, engagement with service users, our contribution to national networks and working groups and connectivity with other local planning structures such as the Community Planning Partnership, the Community Learning and Development Partnership and our planning around child poverty related activity. By working together in partnership, we can better support our children and families.

We recognise that every child is entitled to be supported throughout their childhood into adulthood, getting the help they need, when they need it. Our children's services partners offer a wide range of services to support children and families in this journey. In 2022/23, over £396m was provided to services for children and families e.g. Education Services (£287m), Health Services (£63m) and Social Work Services (£35.6m). South Lanarkshire's third sector also provide valuable capacity to deliver crucial support services to children, young people and families of approximately £11m in value. This reflects our investment in supporting all children, young people and families dedicated to those who need them most.

In addition, there are an increasing number of funding streams being made available to the partnership to support areas of national policy at a local level. These funding streams include:

- ▶ Care Experienced Children and Young People Attainment Fund
- ▶ Counselling Through Schools and Children and Young People's Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Supports and Services Fund
- ▶ Whole Family Wellbeing Fund



**The partnership also contributes towards the commissioning of the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership services for children, young people, and families with substance use issues.**

**We are committed to using our combined resources effectively to deliver services promoting wellbeing, preventing adversity and offering the right help at the right time to those who need it.**

## Section three:

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

In 2021 South Lanarkshire was home to 320,530 people, of which 17.3% were 15 and under.

The area covers 180,000 hectares of land stretching from a few miles from the city centre of Glasgow to close to the Scottish Border with an 80% urban and 20% rural split and is one of the largest and most diverse areas of Scotland.

There are four localities that are aligned to support planning across Education, Health, Social Work, the

Third Sector and 17 learning communities with 20 secondary establishments, 124 primary schools and 72 early years establishments.

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

## Population by Age (2021)

### Age and percentage of population

Aged Under 5

**16,218 (5.0%)**

Aged 5-11

**25,023 (7.8%)**

Aged 12-15

**14,459 (4.5%)**

Aged 16-19

**13,126 (4.1%)**

Aged 20-24

**17,323 (5.4%)**

Children and young people are kept **safe** from abuse and neglect with families supported to build on strengths and recover from experiences of domestic abuse and other harms at home or in the community

## Child protection

In July 2021 **116 children and young people** were on the child protection register

- This is below the national average. The highest number of concerns were for neglect.

## Care experienced children and young people

In July 2021 **752 children and young people** were in the care of their local authority, which is **below the national average**

- 85% being cared for in the community rather than in residential accommodation



Children and young people grow and develop and are encouraged to live **healthy** lifestyles with families able to access appropriate healthcare which supports them to physically and mentally flourish

## Health and wellbeing

The latest SALSUS (2018) data showed **18% of 13 and 15-year-olds tried e-cigarettes**, an increase from previous years

## Emotional wellbeing

SALSUS data shows an increasing trend in reported mental health issues

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

- There are a number of at-risk groups, such as care experienced children and young people



## Section three:

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

Children and young people are encouraged to be **achieving** and receive support through education, family learning and parental involvement which nurtures individual interests, promotes development of skills, and builds self-esteem



## Attainment

In 2021 **91.2% of young people** achieved **SCQF level 5** or above

**43.3% of care experienced young people** achieved **level 5**

## Healthy development

In 2020/21 **93% of children** had their reviews at 27 months, **17.7%** had at least **one developmental concern**

**Speech, language and communication** and emotional and behavioural concerns were the areas where **most concerns were raised**

Children living in high poverty areas had **5% higher levels of concern** in comparison to **low poverty areas**

Families are empowered to provide children with the best start in life, so they grow up loved, **nurtured** and happy, with support available to overcome experiences of adversity and trauma where needed

## Breastfeeding rates

**54.8% of babies** are ever **breastfed** at six to eight weeks

- ▶ Breastfeeding is more common in more affluent areas

## Leavers positive destinations

In 20/21 **96.2% young people** achieved a **positive destination** on leaving school

**90% of care experienced pupils** achieved a **positive destination**

## Family support

The newly established **Family Support Hubs** received **937 referrals** in the first quarter since Sep 2022

- ▶ A recurring theme is families experiencing domestic abuse
- ▶ Online uptake in the last year saw **1415 parents** taking part in attachment-based programmes

Children, young people, and families enjoy meaningful opportunities to be **active**, through both choices in and chances for play, hobbies, sports, and exercise

## Healthy weight

In 2021/22 **74.4% of Primary 1 children** were a **healthy weight**, a **decrease** from previous years

**11.9% of children** were at risk of being **overweight** and **12.4%** at risk of being **obese**

## Active Schools Programme

In 2021/22 **974 pupils** participated in the **Active Schools Programme**, an **increase** from the previous year

- ▶ **8627 pupils** across Primary, Secondary and Additional Support Needs establishments were from **high poverty areas**



Children and young people are **respected**. Their views are taken into account in all decision making and opportunities are available to exercise leadership. Children's rights are upheld and promoted

## Children and young people's views

**Over 16,000 children and young people** were supported to give their views and opinions on services to support their needs and aspirations through a wide range of **engagement and participation processes**



## Section three:

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

Children and young people have meaningful opportunities to participate in decision-making at home, school, local communities, and society, so they grow up **responsible** individuals and citizens; with non-judgemental support available to nurture positive decision-making skills

### Youth Justice

In 2021 /22 **158 children and young people** were referred to the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration on **offence grounds** a stable trend for the last three years

- **109 referrals** were received as part of the Early and Effective Intervention support

Children and young people feel **included** with a sense of belonging at home, school and their local community. Families have adequate income, affordable homes and support

### Asylum seekers and refugees

In 2022/23 there were **27 Asylum Seeker and 119 Refugee pupils** across Primary, Secondary and and Additional Support Needs establishments

### Child Poverty

Almost a fifth of **children and young people (19%)** live in **relative poverty** once housing costs are taken into account

### Fuel and Food Poverty

Latest data shows more households are struggling with **fuel poverty (22%)** and an **increased reliance on foodbank support**

### Homelessness

In 2021/22 there were **327 applications** from **households presenting as homeless** with children (28.4% of all applications received).

- **9.2%** were from a dual parent household and **90.8%** from a single parent household



## Section four: Children's rights, engagement and participation

### Children's rights and #TheRightToBeMyself

Our children's services partnership is committed to the process of incorporating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the additional duties that come with it, which we know will help us to help children to access their rights more effectively.



While incorporation and the focus that comes with it will improve awareness of children's rights across public services, there is still a lot to be done in raising awareness of the importance of children's rights, especially amongst vulnerable groups.

We will support all public sector organisations and especially those services directly supporting children and young people to understand the UNCRC and be competent and confident in their understanding and support of children's rights.

In South Lanarkshire, making children's rights central to our work, recognising, respecting and promoting the rights of all children and young people is crucial to improving outcomes and increasing life chances.

We are confident that we have in place a strong rights-based approach that is making a significant difference to children and young people's lives.

We have a strong understanding of the wide range of practice that supports the 42 articles in the UNCRC. Throughout this practice, we recognise that children and young people want the right to be themselves # the right to be myself is a feature of our approach to children's rights.

We are listening more to children and young people than ever before through a wide range of participation and engagement, much of which is articulated in this section. The voices of children, young people and parents have been central to agreeing what our priorities will be for the next three years.

## Section four: Children's rights, engagement and participation

In early 2023 we have delivered the following events involving around 400 children and young people to ensure their voices are heard by partners and decision makers:

- ▶ Let's Connect Conference focused on mental health and emotional wellbeing
- ▶ Care Day seminar for children and young people, and
- ▶ Launch event for South Lanarkshire's Youth Strategy

This adds to consultations and engagement over the lifespan of the previous plan which also support the voice of children, young people and families and to ensure that planning and decision-making takes into consideration the experiences of service users. The engagement activity reflected here is drawn from a range of activity including bespoke consultations and questionnaires and through the strong working relationships established as part of the provision of support to children and families.

In all around 16,000 people were supported to give their views and opinions on services, needs and aspirations. The activity includes the following:

- ▶ A Facebook 'Closed User Group' consultation as part of the Scottish and World Breastfeeding Weeks events

- ▶ A consultation in the Cambuslang and Rutherglen areas focusing on communities and families COVID-19 experience
- ▶ An online questionnaire via Survey Monkey with children, young people and parents as part of Lanarkshire's Weight Management Programme
- ▶ An extensive consultation via questionnaire as part of our understanding of the issues in accessing mental health support by children, young people and families to inform the use of the Children and Young People's Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Supports and Services funding
- ▶ Ongoing work with care experienced children and young people as part of our Champions Board activity
- ▶ A survey to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on school pupils and parents
- ▶ Mind of My Own app to help care experienced children and young people share their views and experiences with staff
- ▶ Feedback and evaluation from various services and projects across South Lanarkshire



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

- ▶ They want us to be more creative in tackling child poverty and inequalities and helping families and they worry about their family's own money issues
- ▶ Parental health and wellbeing, particularly mental health can have a major impact on the health and wellbeing of children and young people
- ▶ Families should find it easier to get all the help they need, e.g., through an integrated model of support (get help at one place, not many places) including support at an earlier stage - before problems start
- ▶ Stigma and embarrassment get in the way of asking for help for some things e.g., mental health, money worries, housing issues etc
- ▶ They often are not aware of what help is available and being able to access supports easily and knowing where to go for what support is important
- ▶ They would like more emotional wellbeing support in school - having mental health taught and focused on in school more
- ▶ They would like more peer support in schools, or support from someone who has experienced mental health difficulties
- ▶ The right finance support for care experienced young people will help the throughcare transition such as provision of a formal guarantor and emergency contact arrangement and practical financial advice/education
- ▶ Housing support that includes a dedicated team and 'bedding in' process re accessing and transitioning into new housing situations is important for care experienced young people
- ▶ For care experienced children and young people stickability and the option to identify 'their person' to provide support as long as they need it will make a difference

## Our commitment to children's rights in South Lanarkshire over the next three years:

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

- ▶ Continue to use the Children's Rights Wellbeing Impact Assessment model as part of our planning for all new plans and strategies including developing South Lanarkshire's Children's Services Plan 2023-26, the refreshed Keeping the Promise Strategy and Action Plan, our forthcoming Child Poverty Strategy and other areas of policy and strategy affecting children and young people
- ▶ Further develop awareness of Children's Rights into workforce development opportunities provided to the children's services workforce and across all our Community Planning Partnership members to build on recent work to raise awareness of UNCRC incorporation
- ▶ Support the voices of our care experienced children and young people through the Champion's Board
- ▶ Further develop our #RighttoBeMyself approach for all children and young people
- ▶ Be creative in engaging with children and young people who do not tend to engage in traditional consultation processes and explore with them how we can develop more creative opportunities for participation
- ▶ Provide opportunities for children and young people to participate in events like seminars, conferences, fun days etc.
- ▶ Support parents and carers to be aware of children's rights and ensure children have a strong understanding
- ▶ Extend and enhance advocacy support to children and young people
- ▶ Ensure we work with children, young people and their families to help co-design new plans, strategies and areas of work across our local partnerships

# Section five:

## Whole family wellbeing approach

### Why is it important?

Central to our Whole Family Approach, we want all our families to flourish and get the right support at the right time to support a child's right to be raised safely in their own families, for as long as they need it.

We are committed to reducing the need for a crisis response to help families to a much more preventive, early intervention offer. By working with the whole family to identify needs and solutions we will reduce the likelihood of difficulties occurring in the first place.

Supported will be coordinated by a range of partners across education, health, social work and the third sector and built on strong relationships. This will meet the needs for the whole family, help to ensure best possible outcomes and reduce the need for future intervention.

Our aim is to invest our time, energy, and resources in a preventative way, with early help building on family strengths and available community supports to provide practical solutions and reduce any barriers faced by families. Our holistic family and trauma informed support will champion a 'no wrong door' principle to ensure joined up support is wrapped around individual families.

**Wellbeing is influenced by a number of factors including where we live, the education we have had, our access to greenspace, the support we receive from family and friends and access to health services. Therefore, it is important for the partnership to look upon children, young people and families using a wider lens that considers these multiple influential factors.**

The past few years have been some of the most challenging for our children, young people and families due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst services for these groups recover and communities try to return to normal activities, the inequalities that existed between and within communities have been compounded leading to the cost-of-living crisis impacting our children, young people and their families.

### Where are we now?

Over the last three years we have seen increased investment and commitment both nationally and locally around improving preventative services and early support to families. In South Lanarkshire this includes the implementation of our Parenting Support Pathway, the roll out of the national Universal Health Visiting Pathway, school nursing provision for care experienced young people, additional early learning and childcare provision, the development of early support through Family Support Hubs and an innovative schools-based family initiative called Pathfinders.

In addition, there has been continued support from Midwifery services for our children and families to thrive and achieve key milestones around child development and services are working with health visiting colleagues and Education to provide a joined up offer of help for families where a need has been identified.

As part of our approach to whole family wellbeing we know that challenges around healthy weight, encouraging breastfeeding, neglect and gender-based violence can impact on families' outcomes.

Improving the wellbeing of children and young people affected by disability is a priority for the partnership. This includes learning, health and social supports and opportunities as well as planning for transitions and supports required beyond childhood. We will build on consultation with children and their families to better understand their experiences of current services and support. We will work with children and their families to develop areas for improvement through the life of this plan.

The Scottish Government have committed to early help through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund, which will support the change and improvement needed to shift investment towards prevention and reduce the need for crisis intervention. The following areas are part of our integrated approach to supporting families.

We are developing four Family Support Hubs across South Lanarkshire to support easier access to help for families.

We are providing dedicated help to families to help them find their own solutions through a Family Group Decision Making project.

We have recruited peer support workers with lived experience who can help reduce the stigma of needing support.

We have refreshed our Parenting Support Pathway that delivers dedicated programmes to help achieve better outcomes for parents and families.

We have put in place a team of early years workers based in NHS Lanarkshire who will provide support to families with children under five.

We are extending a schools-based family project called Pathfinders that will reduce the need for more complex intervention at a later stage.

We are supporting the extension of attachment informed practice across the children's services partners and we are ensuring we have a trauma informed workforce to help better understand the needs of families.

## What will we do next

We have agreed a number of areas for change which will be a key feature of how we will take a whole family approach, Keep the Promise and tackle Child Poverty.

These areas of change will be supported by a shared commitment to a clear leadership and workforce strategy, a support system that is accountable to families, improved and increased availability of services and access to support and most importantly, making sure that our families are at the centre of the design of new and changing services. By the end of this plan we aim to achieve the following outcomes:

### **Every family that needs support gets the right family support at the right time for as long as it is needed**

- ▶ Reduce the number of children and young people living away from their families
- ▶ Reduce the number of families requiring crisis intervention
- ▶ Reduce the inequality gap in child development
- ▶ Reduce the inequality gap in wellbeing outcomes for families' children and young people
- ▶ Increase the number of families taking up wider supports

## Section six: South Lanarkshire's Promise

### Why is it important?

The Promise Plan 2021-24 is the next step towards keeping the promise made to children and families across Scotland. It sets out the changes that need to happen over the next three years and is the first of three plans running to 2030.

It sets a series of outcomes that must be achieved by 2024 and seeks to ensure significant and sustained action in the following areas:

- ▶ a good childhood
- ▶ whole family support
- ▶ supporting the workforce
- ▶ planning
- ▶ building capacity

**We are committed to the overall vision of The Promise and pledge to work on the above outcomes through the following commitments.**

**We will work to provide better access to health support, providing an education that fully meets needs of learners, promoting the importance of strong and consistent relationships (particularly brothers and sisters), improving access to advocacy support, the decriminalisation of care experienced young people, supporting young people with moving on from care and ensuring the right support is available for all families at the right time.**

### Where are we now?

We have aligned our Corporate Parenting Strategy with the 2021-24 Promise Plan and our local improvement and change ideas. As a result, the Promise Plan has greater visibility and alignment with our Children's Services Plan.

We have established a Promise Board at chief officer level, which ensures a shared level of accountability to drive change. We set up a Champions Board to enable our care experienced children and young people to articulate their views and experiences, which has already had a key role in helping us shape and adapt practice.

In 2021 we strengthened our capacity to drive the Promise agenda by recruiting a dedicated Promise Participation Team in partnership with Who Cares? Scotland. The team's aim is to elevate voice through creating opportunities for the participation of care experienced children and young people on the issues that matter to them.

We have endeavoured to support the voice and improve the support for our kinship care families through a network of support groups, which are improving how we listen, support, and promote the value of kinship care.

There is a programme of improvement activity to support care experienced young people when they wish to move on based on what our young people told us needed to change. This includes more accessible mental health support, substance support and treatment and help with employability options.

This includes:

- ▶ Access to health care with dedicated nurses to support better health outcomes for young people 16 - 26
- ▶ Strengthened independent advocacy through an advocacy pathway
- ▶ Young people over 16 benefiting from improved and more consistent pathway planning
- ▶ Targeted employability support through our youth employability service Aspire, which supports positive destinations for all young people including our care experienced young people

Our lottery funded; whole system approach project in Cambuslang/Rutherglen 'Inclusion as Prevention' works with young people to redesign early support services to demonstrate ways to reduce the number of young people going into the criminal justice system.

The Pathfinders initiative (in Cambuslang/Rutherglen) explores different ways to work with families to improve outcomes for vulnerable young people experiencing barriers to learning. The initiative addresses issues such as low-income families, alcohol and/or drug difficulties, employability, disabilities and improve overall health and wellbeing. The initiative is now being extended across South Lanarkshire.

As part of the Promise, we have a commitment to pathway planning for all care experienced young people through transition to ensure that it is the right help at the right time and in the right place. This will support young people to stay put where appropriate within the legislation and also as part of pathway planning Social Work, Housing and Health will work together to ensure accommodation options are provided to the highest standard and timeously to meet children's needs both physically and emotionally and their voice is heard.

## What we will do next

We have worked with our Champions Board and our wider care experienced population to agree the priorities for our work over the next three years.

By the end of this plan, we aim to achieve the following outcomes:

### Children and young people grow up loved, safe, respected and listened to

- ▶ Put voice at the heart of all decision-making processes at all levels
- ▶ Increase the number of care experienced people accessing further and/or higher education opportunities and successful employment
- ▶ Reduce poverty amongst care experienced people
- ▶ Improve lifelong support for care experienced people
- ▶ Improve support into long term housing for care experienced people
- ▶ Improve the mental health and emotional wellbeing of care experienced people

## Section seven: Health and wellbeing

### Why is it important?

We know mental health is important for supporting positive outcomes for children, young people and families. The World Health Organisation highlights that:

*“Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community.”*

There is evidence to show that the mental health of children and young people in Scotland isn't improving e.g., the most recent Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey shows this, and COVID-19 has exacerbated inequalities for the most vulnerable in terms of mental health.

**Protecting mental health at an early age and providing early support is vitally important to ensure future mental wellbeing and resilience, and wider life outcomes.**

Our children's service partnership is committed to improving the health and wellbeing for all children, young people and families in South Lanarkshire. This reflects local and national priorities including,

- ▶ Scottish Government Mental Health Strategy (2017-2027)
- ▶ Recommendations from the Children and Young People's Mental Health Taskforce (2019)
- ▶ Creating Hope Together, Scotland's Suicide Prevention Strategy, 2022-2032
- ▶ Lanarkshire's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2024

South Lanarkshire has taken a whole systems approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing, using available data and engaging with partners, children, young people and families. This approach emphasises support that is:

- ▶ Easily accessible
- ▶ Accessible to all
- ▶ Built around prevention and early support
- ▶ Strengths based
- ▶ Built on strong and consistent relationships
- ▶ Empowering
- ▶ Offering the right support at the right time
- ▶ Focused on ensuring a 'no wrong door' approach, so that children and young people tell their story only once

### Where are we now?

We have established or extended a number of community-based initiatives for our children and young people. This includes: the delivery of Kooth, an online wellbeing and counselling support for children and young people; delivery of The Blues programme by Action for Children and the procurement SAMH to support delivery of peer support programmes in schools and mental health and wellbeing workshops for families and staff. In addition, there has been an increase in capacity to deliver focused supports to the most vulnerable children and young people through the Trauma Recovery Service and additional practitioners to support those who are care experienced.

The supports offered have been informed by the voices of children and young people and we are working with children and young people to design further new services.

Our counselling through schools approach supports access to counselling for every primary and secondary school across South Lanarkshire for children and young people over 10. Numbers of self-referrals have risen, and a significant majority of children and young people who complete counselling report wellbeing benefits in terms of their wellbeing.

We have continued to focus on providing staff with the relevant skills to help them respond to children and young people who may be at risk of self-harm and suicide. An increased number of training sessions in Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) has enhanced the knowledge and skills of staff across South Lanarkshire. In addition, training in the use of 'Lifelines Lanarkshire' multi-agency guidance has been delivered to key children's services staff within all mainstream secondary schools, Youth Family and Community Learning and Social Work Resources.

We have contributed to the development of the Scottish Government's Mental Health and Wellbeing Whole School Framework document and have shared this work across our partners.

## What will we do next?

We have agreed a small number of areas for change as part of this plan.

By the end of this plan, we aim to achieve the following outcomes:

### **Every child and young person will be able to access support which helps improve their mental health and emotional wellbeing**

- ▶ Improve maternal and infant mental health
- ▶ Improve support offered to children and young people who may be at risk of self-harm and suicide
- ▶ Improve whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing
- ▶ Improve visibility and accessibility of community mental health supports and services
- ▶ Develop staff professional learning and development to ensure their own and others' wellbeing is established

## Section eight: Public protection

The South Lanarkshire Child Protection Committee is the local planning partnership responsible for developing and implementing child protection support across agencies as described in the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland.

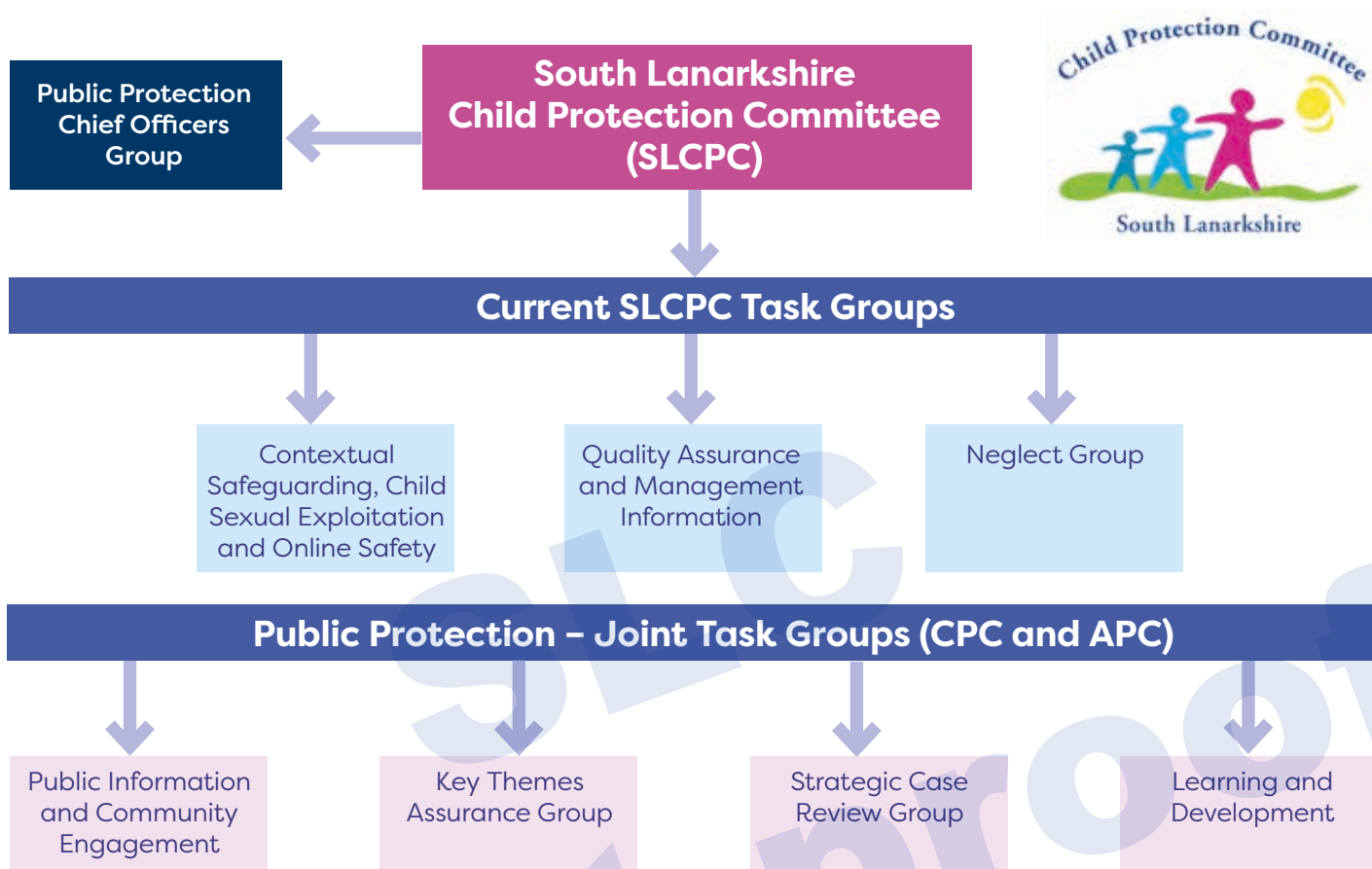
The committee work to ensure the effectiveness and quality of local child protection services to keep our children and young people safe providing high quality learning and development opportunities for a range of professionals and managers.

The committee members meet quarterly to consider local and national child protection matters and make decisions on how to keep children and young people at the centre of our work.

We work to ensure outcomes are being achieved and that we uphold Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, making sure children and young people's voices are central to decisions made in their best interests. We listen to children, young people, families, communities and our wider workforce to produce public information about protecting children and young people. By working in partnership, we continue to deliver key messages about keeping safe from, harm, abuse or neglect across South Lanarkshire.



The following diagram shows how our child protection services are structured.



A number of child protection working groups support important activity that contribute to making sure that our child protection services are as good and robust as they can be. This includes identifying good practice and where think we can do better e.g., through learning reviews, inspection reports, case file audits and consultation events. It's important to us that we are able to share and celebrate success and use this knowledge to strengthen our partnership working at every opportunity.

Child protection is only part of our wider offer of support to children and families and is supported by the GIRFEC approach to working with families. Our approach is informed by the outcomes of the Independent Care Review and the priority areas set out in The Promise.

The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021) provides updated guidance to ensure consistency between GIRFEC and child protection as well as supporting our children's services plan and the child protection system throughout the next three years.

We are prioritising our integrated approach to child protection in the context of public protection and work closely with partners across key thematic areas including gender-based violence, adult protection, the Community Justice Partnership, MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) and the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership. This strengthens how we work together to support children, young people and families and to achieve the best possible outcomes.

## Section nine: Our approach to improvement

As a partnership, we take improvement seriously and continuously look to where we think we can deliver better support and services to our children, young people and families. As part of this work, we maintain a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, which is built around available data, the voices of children, young people and families and the views of our wider workforce. This assessment has not only helped decide the priorities in this plan but informs a range of other planning and decision-making processes.

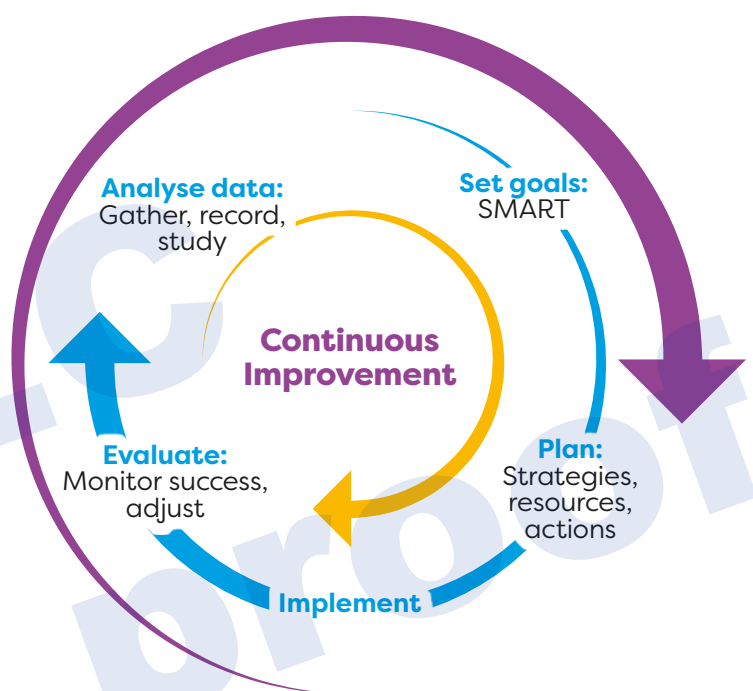
Our approach to continuous improvement has been informed by national policy and local scrutiny of practice, both internal and external and is an integral part of our partnership governance structure.

We have a Continuous Improvement Group, that maintains an overview of quality assurance activity and works with all our partners to agree where we can be better. This is informed by our own self-evaluation activity and outside scrutiny e.g., Joint Children's Services Inspections carried out by the Care Inspectorate.

Our commitment to continuous improvement is built around activity designed to improve standards and services e.g.

- ▶ Using the key self-evaluation documents 'How well do we protect children and meet their needs?' (HMIe, 2009), 'How well are we improving the lives of children and young people?' (Care Inspectorate 2014) and 'A quality framework for children and young people in need of care and protection' (Care Inspectorate 2019) to support our understanding
- ▶ Carrying out multi-agency self-evaluation
- ▶ Auditing our work and using information to promote best practice within and across agencies
- ▶ Engaging children, young people and families to hear their views and experiences of accessing services, life circumstances, hopes and aspirations

Our locally developed Improvement Framework helps to guide our work and encourage best quality assurance and improvement practice.



**By applying this method to what we do, we can map our progress and refine our approach to ensure we are doing the right things in the right way. Most importantly it helps us understand where we are making a positive difference for children, young people and families.**

## Section ten: Appendices and useful links

### Policy Context

In developing this plan, we have paid close attention to Scotland's National Performance Framework which formed the basis of our Joint Strategic Needs Analysis.



## Section ten: Appendices and useful links

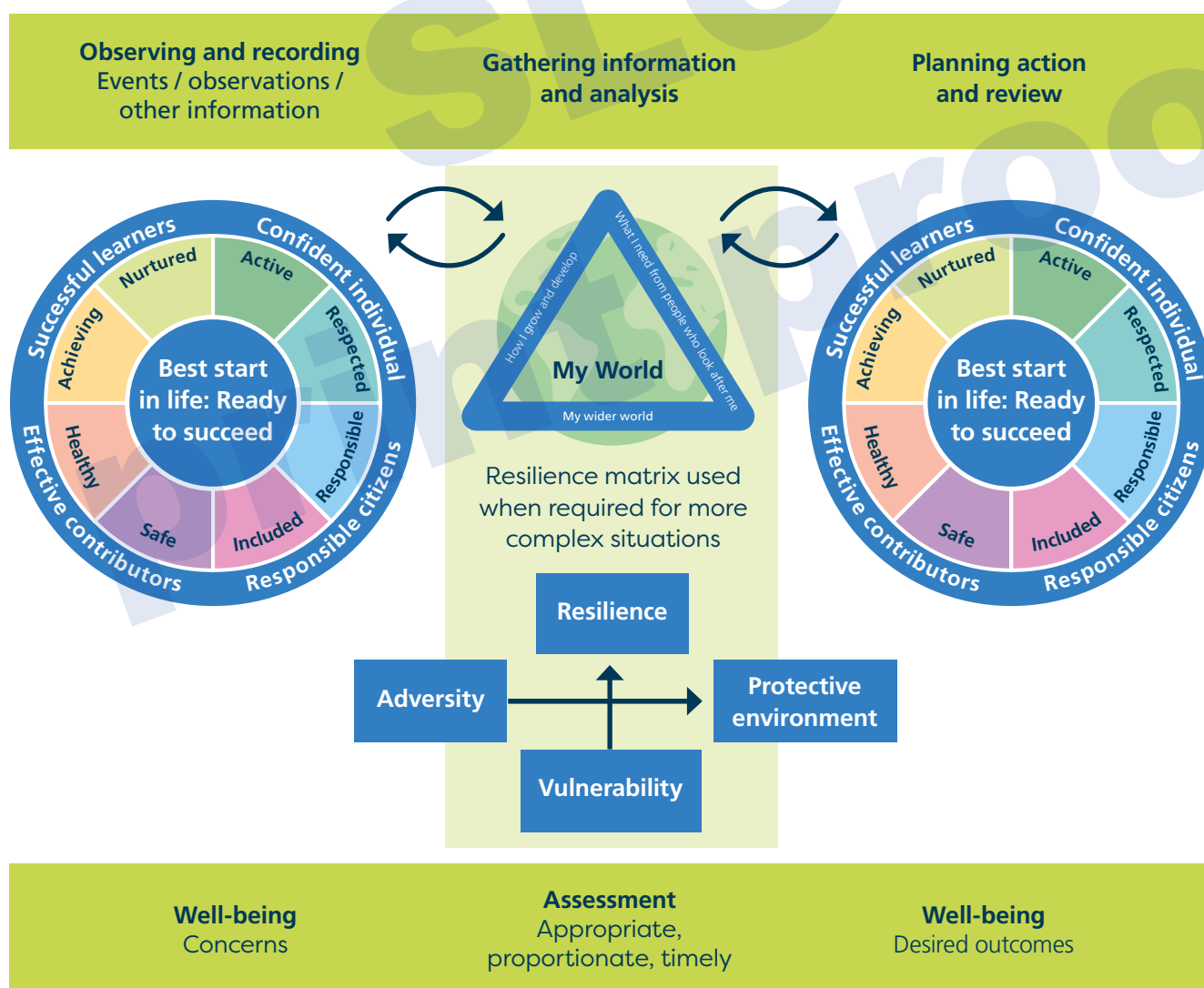
A preventative approach and the offer of early support are key to successful outcomes. By providing services which are well organised and equipped to deliver high-quality, joined-up, responsive support to children and their families at the earliest stage we will realise our ambition for transformational change in providing whole family support.

Whilst this Plan is for all children and young people, providing services against a backdrop of tightening budgets there is a need to target our services to where there is greatest need.

For around 80% of our children, young people and families, universal services offer the right support necessary to ensure positive outcomes. However, we know some children and young people need extra help at times. Inequalities in health and attainment exist between children and young people from our

more deprived communities when compared to those from our more affluent ones, as well as specific vulnerable groups e.g., children who are looked after, or young carers, or from armed forces backgrounds.

GIRFEC and the supporting National Practice Model provides the necessary guidance to ensure we work together to provide proportionate and timely support, with the voice of children, young people and families at the heart of our work.



Getting it right for every child is based on shared values and principles. It recognises the fundamental right of children and families to be involved in decisions which affect them and for everyone to be accountable for their actions. We want South Lanarkshire to be a place where children can access all the opportunities and support that they need, when they need it. We believe every child has the right to be active, achieving, nurtured, respected, responsible, included, healthy – and above all, safe.

Our plan recognises the varied and sometimes unique needs of children who live in our communities. Boys and girls have rights to be supported to grow up and live life to the fullest – but we know this can be different for girls. International and national research (as highlighted in the creation of the National Advisory Circle for Girls) tells us that girls experiences growing up are likely to be unequal, from early in their lives and so have a potentially lifelong impact. This can include gendered expectations of boys and girls about sport, careers, having children, caring for others, sexual harassment, and potential for unwanted pregnancy, as well as greater likelihood of childhood sexual abuse, female genital mutilation and other forms of violence and abuse.

Evidence gathered locally tells us that a significant percentage (74%) of high-risk cases referred to and discussed at MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) in South Lanarkshire involve children living with domestic abuse within their home. We know that growing up in a household where domestic abuse is present can have a profound and lasting impact on children and young people and recognise the need to ensure we take a proactive, early intervention approach to ensuring that families get the support they need at the time they need it and that perpetrators of such abuse are held to account for their behaviours. For these reasons, the actions underpinning this plan will take a gendered approach where required, to ensure the best fit and best outcomes for both boys and girls in South Lanarkshire.

At the heart of our approach is a commitment to engage children, young people and their families in having a say about the services and support that are made available. This is reflected in our commitment to children's rights and in implementing the duties of UNCRC Incorporation Bill and the views and experiences of children, young people and families have been central to writing this plan.

Our children's services partnership is committed to ensuring that the various plans and strategies are joined up to maximise benefits and to implement a common goal to tackle disadvantage and inequality.

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

- ▶ The Children and Young People's (Scotland) Act 2014
- ▶ The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
- ▶ The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 (includes rights for young carers)
- ▶ The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017

We know that families in South Lanarkshire are facing new challenges in 2023 and although COVID begins to recede, the rising cost of living, and particularly of fuel and food, means that money is stretched even further than it was before. The inflation rate, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, energy and fuel prices reaching new highs, and expected funding gap across public services create a complex set of circumstances in mitigating poverty for those families most at risk of struggling.

We know certain groups are affected more than others by this, including the priority groups identified in Best Start Bright Futures, the National Child Poverty Delivery Plan:

- ▶ one-parent families
- ▶ a household where someone is disabled
- ▶ families with three or more children
- ▶ minority ethnic families
- ▶ families with a child under one year old
- ▶ families where the mother is under 25 years of age

In addition to these nationally recognised groups, we understand that children and young people who are care experienced, or who find themselves in circumstances of child abuse or neglect are also impacted in a disproportionate way.

## Section ten: Appendices and useful links

Our work on child poverty is driven by a dedicated working group who have produced our Child Poverty Strategy and have worked to ensure this does not happen in isolation and the approach sits well alongside other key national policy agendas such as the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund and a commitment to transformational change in integrated support to families. Our commitment to ensuring lived experience and the voice of children, young people and families aligns well with our preparation for UNCRC incorporation across public services and our refreshed vision for GIRFEC, firmly puts families at the centre of everything we do.

There is a strong link between families' economic circumstances and the likelihood of experiencing neglect or becoming care experienced. Our commitment to The Promise and making sure that children and young people grow up loved, safe and respected is central to our approach. The foundations of Family, Voice, Care, People and Scaffolding will provide a strong framework for our offer of support, which will have close links to our commitment to Keeping The Promise to South Lanarkshire's care experienced families.

New legislation came into force on 22 November 2022 in relation to the UK Armed Forces Covenant, which legally obliges councils (through Education and Housing services) and health boards to do everything they can to negate the effects of military life on forces children and to ensure that they receive the same standard of education as every other child in their care. We will promote a strong partnership message around the Armed Forces Covenant, linking engagement and collaboration across Education, Health, and Housing sectors to ensure staff are aware of the barriers and concerns faced by armed forces families and to support a 'warm welcome' at all times.

Our plan contributes towards South Lanarkshire's sustainability and climate change commitments, and we know that children, young people and adults require the knowledge and skills to thrive in the green economy and help restore nature, particularly in a world more influenced by the effects of climate change. Over 40 South Lanarkshire schools currently hold an Eco-Schools green flag award and many more contribute towards the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals and UNESCO's 'Education for Sustainable Development for 2030' which set out the key role of schools in the successful achievement of the goals. In addition, there are

Climate Change and Sustainability Forums in all secondary schools and sustainability is one of five priorities in our Youth Strategy to ensure young people's voices are represented and can positively influence change and progress on sustainability.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are incorporated into the National Performance Framework and supported by our Community Plan. Our work on neighbourhood planning supports communities to articulate where they are facing the greatest inequalities and work with them to devise local solutions.

**Much of this work involves children, young people and families in very practical ways, helping communities support each other and making sure that the resources are used to the best effect.**

Our Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy 2022-2027 and action plan includes the following:

- ▶ Pupil voice to influence and change attitudes and personal behaviours across school and local communities
- ▶ Tracking, monitoring and improving carbon emissions within school communities
- ▶ Embedding sustainability in the curriculum
- ▶ Managing and monitoring food waste in schools
- ▶ Developing a strategic approach to increase the number of young people obtaining the skills to access green economy jobs

The following documents have helped to create and provide a strong context for the priorities identified.

- ▶ South Lanarkshire's Community Plan
- ▶ South Lanarkshire Council's Plan – 'Connect'
- ▶ Local Child Poverty Action Report

- ▶ Integrated Health and Social Care Strategic Commissioning Plan
- ▶ Child Protection Business Plan
- ▶ Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan
- ▶ Youth Justice Strategy and Action Plan
- ▶ Lanarkshire's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Strategy
- ▶ NHS Lanarkshire Children and Young People's Health Plan
- ▶ Education Resources Plan
- ▶ Social Work Resources Plan
- ▶ Chief Social Work Officer Report
- ▶ Alcohol and Drugs Partnership Strategy
- ▶ Community Learning and Development Strategy
- ▶ Youth Strategy
- ▶ Children's Services Improvement Framework

## Useful links

- ▶ **South Lanarkshire Child protection homepage**  
[www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/Childprotection](http://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/Childprotection)
- ▶ **Children and Young People's Improvement Collaborative**  
<https://cypic.co.uk>
- ▶ **South Lanarkshire Council homepage**  
[www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk](http://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk)
- ▶ **South Lanarkshire's Community Plan and other linked plans and strategies**  
**Community Planning**  
[bit.ly/CommunityNeighbourhoodPlan](http://bit.ly/CommunityNeighbourhoodPlan)
- ▶ **The Promise**  
<https://thepromise.scot>
- ▶ **The Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland**  
[www.cypcs.org.uk](http://www.cypcs.org.uk)
- ▶ **NHS Lanarkshire**  
[www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk)

## Children's Rights Wellbeing Impact Assessment

A combined Equalities Impact and Children's Rights Wellbeing Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the planning process for this document and a copy is available on request from the following:

**Education Resources, South Lanarkshire Council**  
Floor 6, Almada Street, Hamilton, ML3 0AE

**Email:** [education.inclusion@southlanarkshire.gov.uk](mailto:education.inclusion@southlanarkshire.gov.uk)  
[strategic\\_services@southlanarkshire.gov.uk](mailto:strategic_services@southlanarkshire.gov.uk)



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