

# Report

Report to:	<b>Social Work Resources Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>15 February 2023</b>
Report by:	<b>Director, Health and Social Care Executive Director (Education Resources)</b>

Subject:	<b>Update on the Work of the Getting It Right for South Lanarkshire's Children's Services Partnership</b>
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## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to: -

- ♦ update the Social Work Resources Committee on the progress of the activity of the Getting It Right for South Lanarkshire's Children's Services Partnership and in particular our Children's Services Plan, 'Working together: making a difference. A foundation for recovery'.

## 2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s): -

(1) that the content of the report is noted.

## 3. Background

3.1. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 introduced a requirement for each council and Health Board to prepare and publish the following:

- a) a Children's Services Plan covering the period April 2017 – March 2020 and subsequent plans on a rolling three-year cycle; and
- b) a Children's Rights Report by March 2020 and subsequent reports to coincide with the Children's Services Plan cycle.

3.2. The production of a Children's Services Plan is a statutory requirement under the Act, whilst the duty to produce Children's Rights Reports is currently a non-statutory requirement.

3.3. Our current Children's Services Plan covers the period April 2021 to March 2023, taking into account the COVID-19 impact allowing a 'roll over' year for the previous plan. A refreshed plan is due by 1 April 2023 and is in production.

3.4. Since putting the current iteration of the Children's Services Plan in place, a number of key national policy areas have evolved. These include "The Promise", community access to Mental Health Services, whole family wellbeing and the introduction of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (WFWF), the UNCRC Incorporation Bill, the refresh of Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) guidance and the proposal to introduce a new National Care Service to include Children and Families.

#### **4. Children's Services Progress Update**

- 4.1. The annual report is a mechanism for reporting progress to stakeholders, including service users. The report reflects on performance in addressing our agreed 20 priorities. A copy of the 2021/22 annual report is attached as Appendix 1.
- 4.2. The annual report contains our now annual report in relation to Children's Rights Activity in South Lanarkshire, which more than meets the requirements outlined in 3.1. and supports our preparations for the expected duties related to the forthcoming incorporation of UNCRC into domestic law.
- 4.3. The Plan and our annual report emphasise the importance placed on continuous improvement activity by partners. Almost all the activity explicit in the Plan is additionality, driven by an understanding of where we want to improve our support to children, young people and families. This is an approach also being adopted by partners in the work to improve our Local Child Poverty Action Report (LCPAR) activity. In developing this more corporate approach to improvement we have worked with the Improvement Service (the national lead on LCPARs) and CELSIS (Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection) a leading improvement and innovation centre in Scotland to support this shared change process.
- 4.4. The Promise
  - 4.4.1. The National Independent Care Review challenged public services to overhaul the way they support care experienced children, young people and families through The Promise. The commitment to keep The Promise is already well embedded in our work in South Lanarkshire with a Champions Board for children and young people in place to ensure their voice is heard by decision makers. Additionally, a Promise Board chaired by the Council Chief Executive, brings together the highest level of corporate parents to ensure The Promise commitments are central to all we do and to engage with Champions Board members.
- 4.5. Three task groups have been in place to drive improvement around the priority themes of Throughcare and Aftercare, Children and Young People Looked After by Family Friends and Relatives and Engagement and Participation. As part of ensuring we all understand our corporate parenting responsibilities, a multi-agency event was held in October to raise awareness of national policy developments, our local response and to identify how we can continue how we improve support to our care experienced population.
- 4.6. Whole Family Wellbeing
  - 4.6.1. The Scottish Government has committed to invest £500m in Whole Family Wellbeing (WFW) funding over the lifetime of this Parliament to support whole system transformational change required to reduce the need for crisis intervention, and to shift investment towards prevention and early intervention. Year one funding is intended to be flexible to support Children's Services Partnerships assess local gaps and opportunities and plan activity accordingly, with a view to laying the groundwork for scaling up transformational activity in subsequent years.
  - 4.6.2. The funding is intended for new work and additionality of resource to support transformation in-line with the National Principles of Holistic Family Support and our ambition to 'Keep the Promise'. South Lanarkshire have been awarded £1.827million in year one, and a report has been presented to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) to consider the WFW developments and how funding in the first year should be aligned.

- 4.6.3. Proposals include extending the Pathfinder initiative in schools, contribution to the Family Support Hub model across the four localities in South Lanarkshire from the centralised Hub model, investment in the parenting support groupwork pathway and extending Family Group Decision Making (Children 1<sup>st</sup>) as part of the WFW approach. Updates will be provided to future Children's Services Strategy Group meetings.
- 4.6.4. A Whole Family Wellbeing Fund Partnership Steering Group has been established to review the design and delivery of Children's Services in South Lanarkshire, promoting best use of WFW funding.
- 4.7. UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) Incorporation
- 4.7.1. The UNCRC Incorporation Bill sets out the intention to bring the UNCRC into domestic law and will introduce additional statutory duties on councils, health boards and other public services. The intention is to recognise, respect and promote Children's Rights as far as possible. This includes the right to be treated fairly, to be heard and to be as healthy as possible.
- 4.7.2. The Bill underlines the role that parents and families, communities, local and national governments, and organisations that work with children and families play in helping children understand and experience their rights.
- 4.7.3. A Task and Finish Group of public sector partners has been meeting to assess preparedness for the incorporation duties and to develop resources to support staff in respecting Children's Rights. An extensive staff engagement programme has been completed and work is ongoing to talk to children, young people, and families in relation to their understanding of the UNCRC and Children's Rights. A staff handbook has been produced with a bespoke Children's Rights section and a training video has been produced and tested with staff in Community and Enterprise Resources.
- 4.7.4. The main duties of incorporation include:
- ♦ implementing the UNCRC and incorporating it into Scots law to make it unlawful for public authorities, including the Scottish Government, to act incompatibly with the UNCRC requirements
  - ♦ an action plan to help children and young people experience their rights
  - ♦ using the Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) to ensure that our policies and legislation protect and promote the rights and wellbeing of children and young people
  - ♦ reporting on our progress to the Scottish Government on an annual basis
- 4.8. Community access to Mental Health supports
- 4.8.1. In 2021, the Scottish Government established a Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund and South Lanarkshire benefited from around £800K as part of this new funding stream. The fund is intended to improve accessibility to support, and services provided to children and young people to promote, manage, and improve their mental health and wellbeing and to help them develop coping strategies and resilience. It underlines the principle that every child and young person in Scotland should be able to access local Community Services which support and improve their mental health and emotional wellbeing.

- 4.8.2. South Lanarkshire's approach is to try to ensure that every child, young person and their family gets the help they need, when they need it, from people with the right knowledge, skills and experience to support them.
- 4.8.3. An oversight group has been set up to provide a monitoring role and quality assurance to the use of the fund in developing the additionality required by the funding criteria.
- 4.8.4. Over the last 18 months, provision established has included:
- ◆ support to the Fas initiative
  - ◆ helping to establish a test of change around the Earlier Help Hub
  - ◆ investment in the Blues Programme across South Lanarkshire schools
  - ◆ Family Group Decision Making
  - ◆ increased capacity for Short Breaks
  - ◆ online supports (Togetherall and KOOTH), designed to provide an additional route for young people to access support
  - ◆ investment in refreshing our Parenting Pathways model, and
  - ◆ building additionality in the Trauma Recovery Service
- 4.8.5. A report is submitted to the Scottish Government as part of a strong governance of this work underlying the use of the investment, what this additionality looks like in terms of services and engagement and in terms of the impact on children, young people and families.
- 4.9. Refresh of Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) resources
- 4.9.1. The Scottish Government has led on a refresh programme to update the policy resources around GIRFEC. The new resources and guidance were published in early October, and we are currently working on the best way to cascade the information to staff to clarify what is expected of them in using the materials.
- 4.9.2. Key aspects of the revised guidance include:
- ◆ a focus on Children's Rights and the UNCRC
  - ◆ a strong read across to aligned policy areas including Child Poverty, the Promise, national Child Protection Guidance and Whole Family Wellbeing
  - ◆ simpler language to support engagement with children, young people and families
  - ◆ policy rather than legislative driven functions for Named Person and Lead Professional, and
  - ◆ emphasis on building trusting relationships
- 4.9.3. A short life working group has been established to develop a workforce development strategy to support single and multiagency implementation.

4.9.4. The Children's Services Partnership completed a 'governance review' in December 2022 to ensure that its structure, processes and resourcing of support to families are fit for purpose. This will enable the Partnership to meet any upcoming challenges and help partners contribute effectively to the agreed national policy areas at a local level. This has resulted in a smaller number of thematic groups being agreed to support the evolution of the Children's Services Plan and implementation of the demands of the relevant policy areas. These groups will take responsibility for driving forward practice under the following themes:

- ◆ physical and mental health
- ◆ Whole Family Wellbeing
- ◆ The Promise

## **5. Next Steps**

- 5.1. Multi-agency activity is currently underway across the Partnership to prepare a new Children's Services Plan for the period 2023 – 26, in-line with statutory requirements. A robust process of engagement with children and families and the wider workforce is in place to inform a Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) and the plan itself. The JSNA is also a useful tool that will inform developments around our LCPAR, the work around The Promise, Whole Family Wellbeing, and other shared policy areas. A copy of the JSNA is available on request.
- 5.2. Many of the current 20 priorities of the Plan will be carried forward, with the JSNA informing the pace of change, investment in improvement areas and identifying any current gaps in our Partnership agenda.
- 5.3. Staff feedback from two multi-agency seminars for Senior Managers and locality-based staff held in November 2022 will help inform the new Children's Services Plan and future direction of priority areas of work.
- 5.4. The Whole Family Wellbeing Steering Group will support the investment of the WFWF monies to ensure quality and accountability of the support developed as a result of this funding stream.
- 5.5. An awareness raising, and training strategy will be developed and implemented to ensure consistent understanding and use of the refreshed GIRFEC materials and guidance.
- 5.6. Following on from the successful 'Keeping the Promise' event in October, there will be a session with our care experienced family in February to celebrate Care Day. This event will also ensure we are reporting our Promise progress and reaffirm our commitment to our care experienced children, young people, and families.
- 5.7. Work will take place with stakeholders to transition to the agreed revised governance structure by April 2023 in-line with the new planning cycle duties.

## **6. Employee Implications**

- 6.1. There are no employee implications associated with this report.

## **7. Financial Implications**

- 7.1. There are no financial implications associated with this report.

## **8. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications**

- 8.1. There are no implications for Climate Change, sustainability or the environment in terms of the information contained in this report.

## **9. Other Implications**

- 9.1. There are no other implications associated with this report.

## **10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**

- 10.1. A combined Equality Impact Assessment and Children's Rights Wellbeing Impact Assessment will be completed as part of the process in producing the new Children's Services Plan.
- 10.2. A Children's Rights Wellbeing Impact Assessment will be completed as part of the work to build the Children's Services Plan 2023-26.
- 10.2 The work to engage children, young people, and families in developing the CSP 2023-26 supports our commitment to the UNCRC and in particular the following Articles:
- ◆ **Article 12 (respect for the views of the child)** Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life; and
  - ◆ **Article 13 (freedom of expression)** Every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.

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**Director, Health and Social Care**

**Tony McDaid**  
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30 January 2023

### **Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes**

- ◆ focused on people and their needs
- ◆ we will work to put people first and reduce inequality
- ◆ our children and young people thrive

### **Previous References**

- ◆ none

### **List of Background Papers**

- ◆ Children's Services Plan Annual Report 2021-22

### **Contact for Further Information**

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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