

Family Support Hub Annual Report

(Sept 22 – Sept 23)

Background:

Social work in South Lanarkshire formally launched locality-based Family Support Hubs on 27th September 2022 following a year of testing the model on a smaller scale. The service priorities and improvement measures are aligned to the Children's Services Planning Partnership's implementation of the whole family wellbeing strategy.

The aim of the whole family wellbeing strategy is that holistic whole family support will be more readily available to families at the time of need rather than crisis. The ambition is that this will create a transformational system change within children's services that will reduce the need for child protection or looked after procedures and allow a shift in investment towards prevention and early intervention.

The whole family wellbeing strategy is a partnership approach between health, education, social work and the third sector. Most families will receive the help and support they require from universal services and third sector but for some children and young people there will be a need for social work to respond in accordance with the local authority's duty under section 22 of the (Children (Scotland) Act 1995), to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The Family Support Hubs have been established in South Lanarkshire to provide the social work response to babies, children and young people in need because local office teams are unable to provide this service due to other competing statutory demands. Instead, the Family Support Hubs respond to the referrals to social work for families in need and try to prevent an escalation to statutory teams by providing intensive whole family support.

The Family Support Hubs are community facing and accessible provisions based in Hamilton, East Kilbride, Lanark and Cambuslang localities. Each locality area has 3 social workers, 7 family support workers, 2 parenting support workers, 1 peer worker and 1 Children 1st staff who offer families a wide range of different types of support with a shared remit of providing whole family support that prevents crisis, reduces inequalities and improves child development, family functioning and wellbeing.



(East Kilbride Family Support Hub)

Service Priorities in Year 1:

- 1. Reduce the number of families requiring a service from Local Office Child and Family teams.**

Referral data:

Figure 1.1

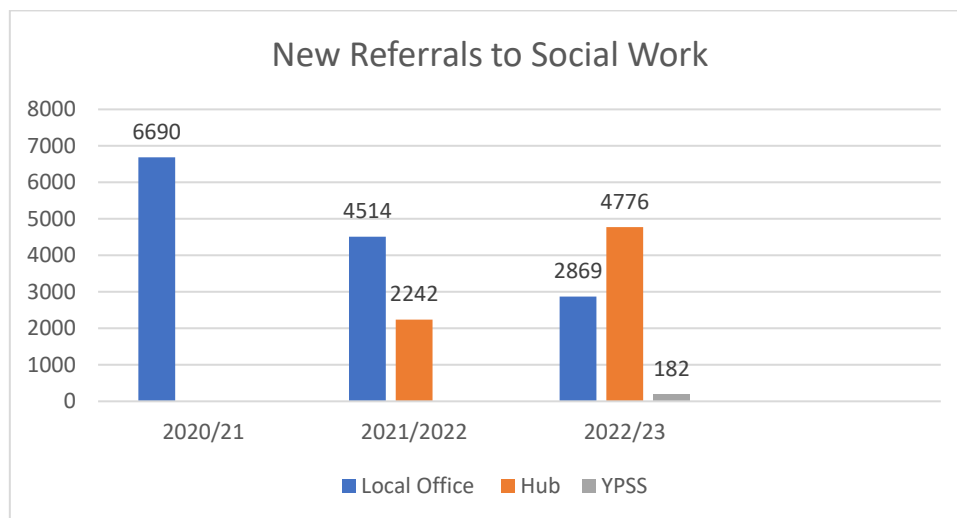


Figure 1.1 details the referral rates to Social Work for babies, children and young people over the past 3 years and demonstrates that the Family Support Hubs have successfully reduced the number of new referrals to Local Office Teams.

Since the whole family strategy was introduced, there has been an increase in the number of referrals to social work, which is likely due to social work assessment and intervention now being more readily available to families.

In the past year, the Family Support Hubs have responded to 61% of the total referrals. This significantly decreases the volume of initial assessments being undertaken by Local Office Teams and will create more capacity within this part of the system to respond to child protection referrals.

Re-referrals:

There have been 1281 re-referrals to the Family Support Hubs in the past year. The main reason for re-engagement with the service was under the category of childcare concern at 45%. The second largest re-engagement reason was due to domestic abuse at 6% of the total. However, this is viewed positively as the model promotes the principle that families can re-engage at points of need and for as long as is needed to ensure that they can get the right help, at the right time to avoid a situation escalating and there is an expectation that there will continue to be families that re-engage at different points of need.

Furthermore, given that over 60% off all referrals were consistently diverted from Local Offices at each quarterly review this indicates that re-engagement was not due to escalation in concern that resulted in an increase in child protection referrals to our local office teams in the next period.

Figure 1.2

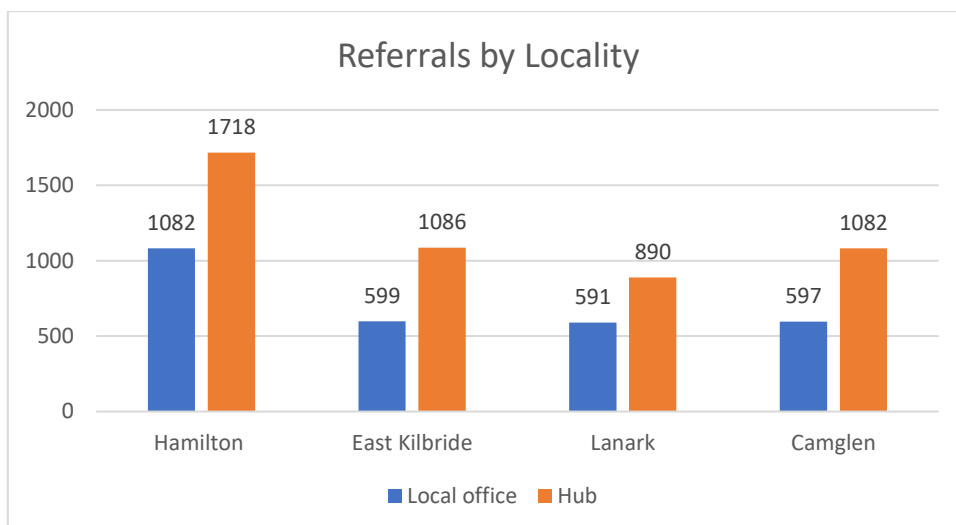


Figure 1.2 provides referral data for each locality. Please note that the Hamilton teams cover two locality areas and have higher staffing ratios.

In all localities the number of new referrals dealt with by the Family Support Hubs was at least 60% but in East Kilbride and Cambuslang the largest impact was seen with them both responding to 64.5% of new referrals.

Allocation data:

Figure 1.3

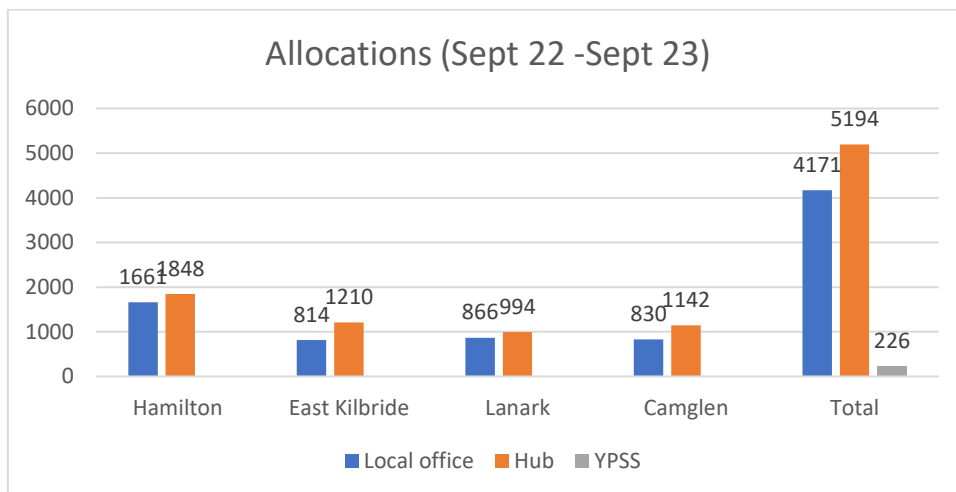


Figure 1.3 illustrates the number of children and young people allocated to the various social work teams for assessment and/or intervention and support. Allocation numbers are higher than referral figures as these include allocations to second workers and cases that have been transferred between the teams when there has been an escalation or a reduction in concern. The current system does not monitor the exact number of cases that have moved between the teams, but manual data collection has commenced to inform future service planning.

The data in Figure 1.3 demonstrates that the Family Support Hubs have allocated a higher number of cases in the last year than other teams, which has led to a significant reduction in the number of allocations to locality statutory teams compared to previous years. See below Figure 1.4.

Figure 1.4

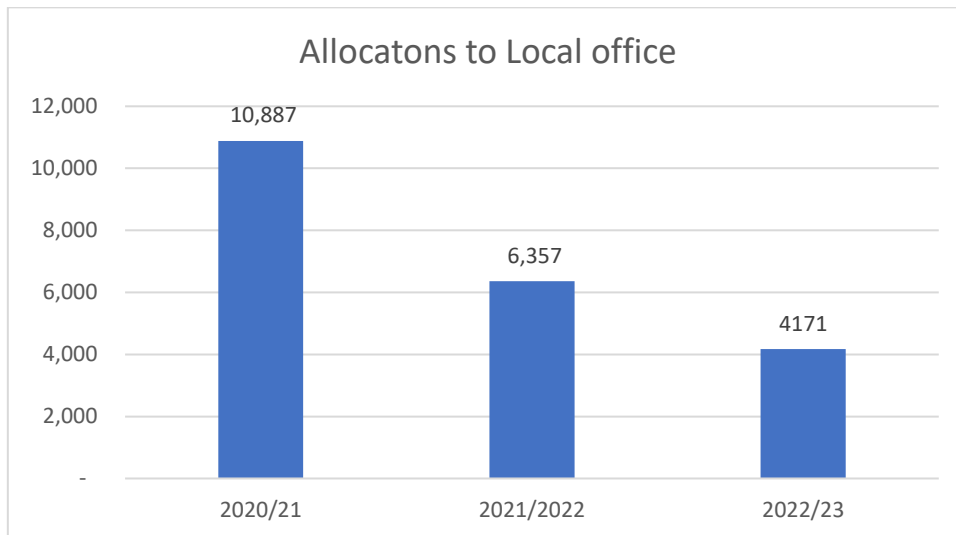


Figure 1.5

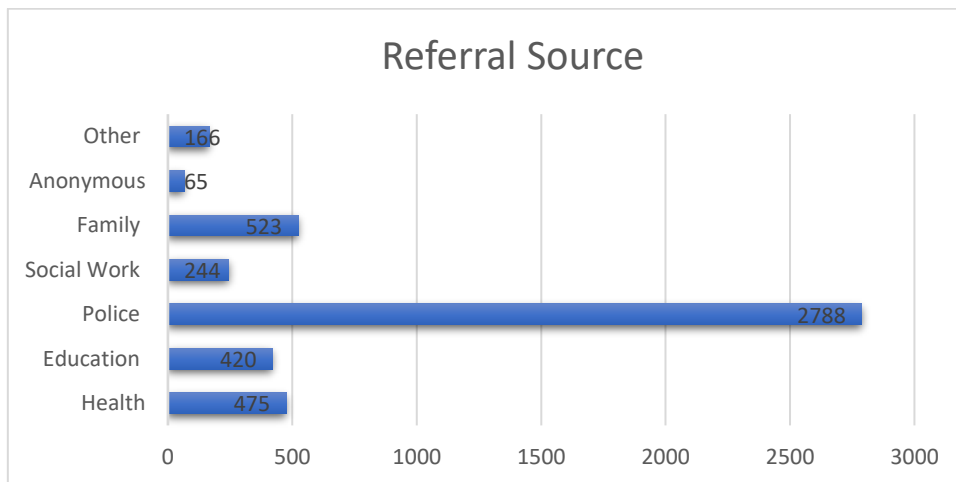


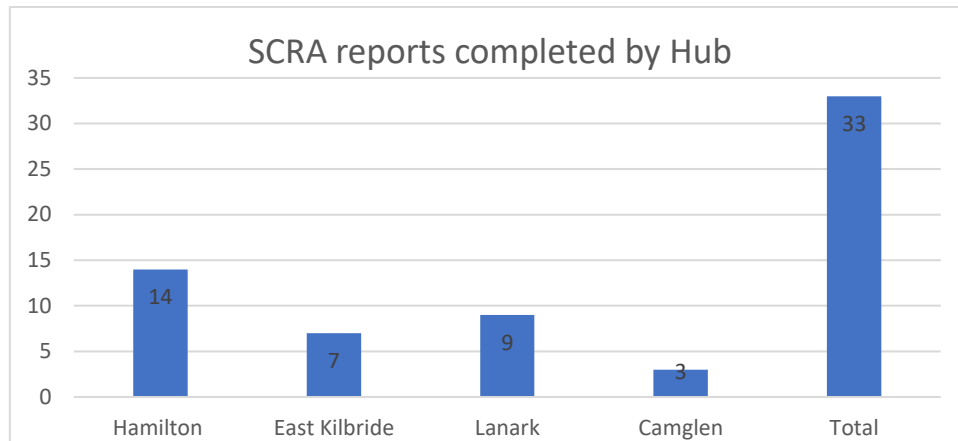
Figure 1.5 reflects the source of referrals to the Family Support Hubs. It is very encouraging that 523 families have referred themselves and are the second largest referrer to the Family Support Hubs following the Police.

The total number of Police referrals made to children’s services was 3928. 71% of these were responded to by the Family Support Hubs, 26% by Local Offices and 3% by the Young Person’s Support Service.

68% of referrals made by the Police to the Family Support Hubs were under the category of childcare concern. 23% of referrals were due to domestic abuse.

This data indicates that most vulnerable families identified by the Police are being responded to by the Family Support Hubs, which evidences some initial success in diverting police concern reports away from crisis intervention to family support.

Figure 1.6



The Family Support Hubs work with families to try to prevent the need for compulsory measures. The data above details the reports submitted to the Children’s Reporter to inform decision making for children and young people open to the Family Support Hubs. These have been both Initial Assessment Reports and Social Background Reports.

An area of development being tested in one Family Support Hub currently is new SCRA report requests being diverted to the Family Support Hubs. The aim is that this will ensure that early help and family support has been offered to a family before compulsory measures are put in place.

The Family Support Hub team leaders attend all Joint Assessment Team meetings (JATs) convened by education. The aim of this representation is to ensure that social work services are offered to families before a referral is made to SCRA for non-attendance or disengagement from school.

2. Improve the pathway for vulnerable unborn babies.

A multi-agency audit of vulnerable pregnancy cases and process mapping of the current system was completed in year 1.

A partnership steering group has been established to oversee the implementation and review of the pregnancy related improvement work.

In January 2023 it was decided that all pregnancy referrals will be held by the Family Support Hubs unless older siblings are open allocations to Local Offices. The aim is that by positioning the pregnancy related work within the Family Support Hubs there will be less babies accommodated either at birth or in early infancy as more timely assessment and holistic whole family intensive support can be offered that will reduce risk and strengthen protective factors for the families.

The Mellow Bumps groupwork programme is offered by hubs to pregnant mothers, which aims to promote the wellbeing of the mother during pregnancy. There are also a number of post

birth group work options available to both mothers and fathers that promote family wellbeing and parents understanding of child development.

Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) is offered to all pregnancy cases that are allocated for assessment and intervention.

Additional support from newly appointed peer support workers is also now available. This support can be offered to pregnant mothers and their partners when there are drug and/or alcohol issues present.

All Family Support Hub resources can be utilised by the Local Office teams during pre-birth work to ensure there is a consistent offer of whole family support to all vulnerable pregnancies.

Figure 2.1

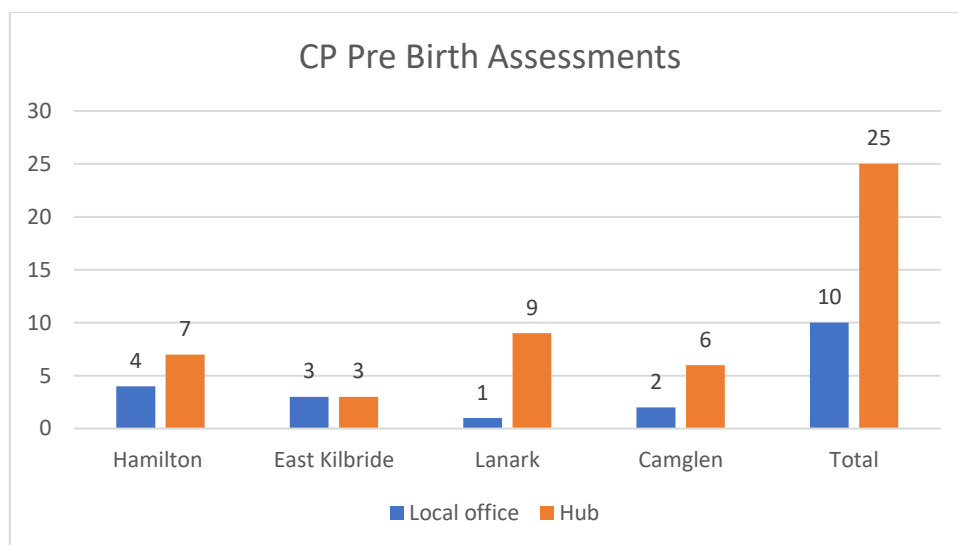


Figure 2.1 demonstrates the proportion of pre birth work undertaken by the Family Support Hubs in the first year of operation.

From the 25 pre-birth child protection assessments undertaken by the Family Support Hubs in the first year, 3 have progressed to alternative care arrangements.

From the 10 pre-birth child protection assessments undertaken by the Local Office teams 7 have progressed to alternative care arrangements.

The care arrangement data for babies is being tracked until babies turn 1 to help us understand the longer-term outcomes of the child protection pre-birth work being undertaken within the Family Support Hubs and Local Offices.

Parents Plan

In an effort to reduce the use of child protection procedures the Hamilton Family Support Hub have introduced a parent plan approach for vulnerable pregnancies. This approach still ensures there is early identification and response to risk and safeguarding concerns through a robust assessment and review process using a GIRFEC approach.

This approach has been successful in reducing the need for child protection procedures in the Hamilton Locality. The team undertook 15 parent plans in the past year that would normally have met the threshold for child protection procedures. Only 4 escalated to child protection procedures and the remaining 11 continued to be supported using the parents plan approach pre and post birth.

In year 2 the parents plan approach will be implemented in all Family Support Hubs and will be regularly reviewed by the oversight group to ensure it is achieving the desired outcomes for children and their families.

3. Introduce Family Group Decision Making (FGDM).

Family Group Decision Making has been aligned to the vulnerable pregnancy work within the Family Support Hubs. This was following a period of testing to determine where this approach would have most impact.

Family Group Decision Making is offered to families that are at risk of their situation escalating to child protection or looked after procedures, at the earliest stage possible. This approach is expected to empower families to make their own plan to safeguard their child.

Children 1st provide this commissioned service utilising whole family wellbeing funding. The 1st year reporting on South Lanarkshire Family Group Decision Making Service for 2022-2023 is available and referenced in the background papers of the report.

4. Develop a parenting group work pathway across the localities.

The parenting groupwork pathway has been developed as a direct response to need identified in the parent survey. The pathway will provide consistency and accessibility in all four localities and will be delivered by a range of partners.

Eight Parenting Support Workers were recruited using WFWF to deliver parenting support groupwork programs in collaboration with partner agencies, including Education, Health, third sector partners and Social Work. Their role will provide holistic support to parents through the completion of parenting support needs assessments and ensuring parents have access to appropriate support, including engagement in groupwork programs and provision of ongoing support to parents during and following their involvement in groupwork programs.

Regular Parenting Support Pathway Planning meetings have been implemented with key partners to ensure a coordinated approach to supporting parents via groupwork programs, and robust evaluation of impact. Parents will be invited to contribute to this process to ensure 'lived experience' is included in the ongoing evaluation of the Parenting Support Pathway. The Parenting Support Pathway is supported by the NES Psychology of Parenting Project through regular PoPP Coordinator meetings and accessing staff training in accredited evidence-based programs including Incredible Years Pre-School, Incredible Years School Age and Group Teen Triple P.

The revised Parenting Support Pathway has been expanded to include support for parents with children aged 0-18 years. These programs include evidence based and accredited programs and for those parents not requiring additional or intensive groupwork programs, the pathway has been expanded to include Family Support Hub specific groupwork programs to

provide general parenting and wellbeing support, a positive social experience and an opportunity for parents to engage with their local Family Support Hub.

5. Embed peer support within the model.

During consultation families said that staff with relevant lived experience should be embedded within the Family Support Hubs. An application was submitted to the Corra Foundation's Child and Family Fund and £487,340 was awarded to recruit 3.5 full time equivalent peer workers for a minimum of 5 years with the overall aim of reducing the impact of parental drug or alcohol use.

In 2023 3.5 peer support staff were recruited and are based across the 4 Family Support Hubs. Their remit within the team is to try to reduce the impact of parental substance use by providing support to parents to address any barriers to their recovery. The initial ambition was that the peer workers would support 50 parents within the first year but have already exceeded this number within 6 months due to it being received positively both by parents and social work colleagues.

The first year is currently being evaluated and the report will be available before the end of the financial year in April 2024.

6. Family support buildings to be accessible within each locality.

Adapting four sites has brought significant challenges in the first year of operation but in each of the localities a Family Support Hub is now open and accessible to families and partner agencies.

Each site is well used by families, social work staff and partner agencies and feedback is that they provide a welcoming, psychologically informed environment that is accessible to the local community.

7. Support the workforce during a period of transformational change.

The creation of the Family Support Hubs has necessitated large scale systemic change in how children's Social Work services are organised and delivered in South Lanarkshire. The vision promoted by the whole family wellbeing strategy and adopted by the Hubs is one of transformational early action system change to create better outcomes for children and their families.

During the first-year communication with our workforce has been a key priority. The transformation process and rationale for change ideas has been communicated to the workforce and reassurance given that they will be supported to build confidence in new tasks and delivery methods. Regular updates have been shared with staff teams, senior managers and partners to ensure change has been transparent and inclusive. It has been important to ensure regular opportunities for staff to share the challenges they've faced at the frontline and their ideas for improvement. Staff have been included in planning and have made valuable contributions to the development of the service.

Staff report being invested in the vision of providing responsive and holistic family support that prevents escalation in risk and concern and report that they can see the positive impact being made for families already.

A challenge for staff has been managing transitions smoothly for families when support provision is moving between the Family Support Hubs and the Local Office. This has particularly been when there has been an escalation in risk and concern or looked after procedures are required. Therefore, a significant amount of work has taken place in year 1 to ensure that the interface between the teams is positive and transitions are managed in the best interests of children and their families. The team leaders in the localities meet regularly to discuss case transfers and an interface meeting also takes place regularly to consider ideas for further improvement.

Reflective and Trauma Informed Practice

To continue to support the workforce and ensure trauma informed practice is embedded funding has been used from the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund to recruit a Reflective Practice Co-ordinator. The Reflective Practice Initial Evaluation report below outlines the progress of this provision for staff, which commenced in June 2023.

Recruitment of a Trauma recovery Counsellor is currently being progressed using community mental health funding to work directly with children and families who have experienced trauma. This provision will contribute to the realisation of delivery of preventative whole family support. Families will have access to this specialist intervention before the situation has escalated. The counsellor will work directly with families, as an early intervention approach in line with local and National priority.

An evaluation report is available – Reflective Practice Initial Evaluation Report and is referenced in the background papers of the report.

Feedback from families in Year 1:

My hub worker helped me and my daughter get through a traumatic experience of domestic abuse by spending time with us, being available when we needed her and having a caring and supportive approach.

I have found the approach to be more supportive than my previous experience of social work and I'm planning to also take up the option of attending the parenting groups offered.

"You were there at the right time when I needed someone to talk to and you have helped me get the right support for him"

"I would not have managed over the past few months without having the emotional support. It has got me through a very difficult period, and even if I didn't call one week, just knowing someone was there for me if I needed it was great"

“The support helped me to improve mine and my children’s situation, not only their environment but wellbeing too. My perception of Social Work has changed as a result.”

“The support from the hub has helped me overcome all obstacles in my way and helped get my confidence back as their kind words has reminded me of the person who I truly am throughout my healing process.”

“I have noticed a massive improvement in my daughter’s attendance in school and her emotional and mental health. Before she was very withdrawn and hardly spoke to myself. Since working with the hub worker she has become more open to express how she feels and seems happier. I also received a lot of help regarding my issues within my home.”

Plan for Year 2:

- An evaluation framework to be developed that ensures that evidence of impact is consistently gathered and there is a sound evidence-base for improvement actions for all aspects of the Family Support Hub provision.
- Quality assurance to be embedded within the model to ensure service standards are consistently high.
- Improvement actions identified for the vulnerable pregnancy pathway to be implemented and reviewed.
- Increase Hub capacity to respond to SCRA referrals with the aim of diverting more families from Children’s Hearings and reducing the application of statutory orders.
- A trauma counsellor to be recruited and begin to offer therapeutic interventions to children and families.
- Further develop partnerships with other agencies that promote access to earlier help and support for families in their local communities.

Contact details:

Danielle Sarr, Field Work Manager Danielle.sarr@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

Sharon Grant, Service Manager sharon.grant@southlanarkshire.gov.uk