

Children, Families and Justice Services Self-Assessment Summary

Purpose

This summary presents the key findings from the Public Sector Improvement Framework (PSIF) self-assessment for Children, Families and Justice Services, carried out in September 2025. The assessment supports Best Value and meets the requirements of the SPI Direction to publish self-evaluation outcomes.

Methodology

The PSIF model covers six key areas:

- Service Planning
- Staff
- Partnerships and Resources
- Processes and Services
- Leadership
- Results

42 out of 258 Staff completed a structured questionnaire, with a **16% response rate**. Responses were analysed to identify strengths, challenges, and cross-cutting themes.

Staff Engagement and Consensus Building

As part of the self-assessment process, staff from the Children, Families and Justice service were brought together in a dedicated focus group to review the findings and analysis. This session ensured that staff recognised the results, validated the themes, and began shaping the improvement actions collaboratively. This consensus-based approach is a key feature of the Council's improvement methodology, helping to build ownership, foster engagement, and support the service on its improvement journey from the outset.

Key Strengths

- Strategic planning communicated through service plans, animations, and regular briefings.
- Staff involvement in improvement projects, including recruitment and initiatives such as the Immediacy Project.
- Justice Services restructuring with consultation involving people with lived experience.
- Reintroduction of geographically based team structures with the aim of reducing travel, improving wellbeing, and enhancing service delivery.
- Strong multi-agency collaboration and learning through GIRFEC meetings and audit activity.

Improvement Opportunities

- Move from reactive responses to a more forward-looking approach, with greater emphasis on early intervention and long-term planning—particularly for accommodation and support for vulnerable children.
- Develop more meaningful engagement processes where staff and stakeholders see their feedback influencing decisions, building trust and transparency.
- Introduce strategies to improve recruitment, retention, and resilience, ensuring the service can meet demand sustainably.
- Improve the link between budget decisions and the impact on service delivery, making resource allocation more transparent and outcome-focused.
- Provide clear, timely updates on decisions and the reasons behind them, to strengthen staff engagement and awareness of the service direction.

Cross-Cutting Themes

- **Communication and Visibility:** Staff want clearer, more regular communication on decisions, priorities, and performance data, with greater service leadership visibility.
- **Use of Data and Evidence:** Performance reporting needs to be simplified and linked to improvement, using both positive and negative feedback to drive learning.
- **Workforce Support and Culture:** Staff value flexible working and training but highlight workload pressures, inconsistent induction, and concerns about fairness and team culture.
- **Service Leadership and Direction:** Service leadership could be more visible, inclusive, and emotionally intelligent, with clearer messaging on priorities such as financial sustainability, climate action, and The Promise.
- **Partnership Working and Resource Use:** Partnerships are strong but staff report unequal influence, underused resources, and gaps in communication around multi-agency activity.

Next Steps

An **Improvement Action Plan** has been developed, detailing actions, risks, resources, and outcomes. This will guide service enhancements and ensure alignment with Council priorities and Best Value principles.

This summary reflects Dumfries and Galloway Council's commitment to **transparency, continuous improvement, and effective governance**.