



Dumfries and Galloway

# Children's Services Plan

April 2026 to March 2029

Dumfries &

Galloway

Together is  
Better



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## Introduction

**Scottish Government legislation requires all local authorities in Scotland to develop a Children's Services Plan.**

This is a document that sets out the desired outcomes for children and young people in the authority area, and how services will work together to achieve these outcomes. A Children's Services Plan is the legal responsibility of the local NHS Board and the Local Authority, but involves all services used by children and young people and also related services across the Community Planning Partnership. Related services are those such as Housing for example, which are used by adults but directly affect children.

In Dumfries and Galloway our Community Planning Partnership has a joint vision for our children and young people.



**Jim Brown**

Assistant Director Education

Chair of Dumfries and Galloway Children's Services  
Strategic and Planning Partnership



### **Our vision,**

To build a Dumfries and Galloway where every child and young person is treated with kindness and love, and their voice respected and valued to enable them to reach their full potential.

**To achieve our vision, we have identified four priorities,** each with outcomes that we need to achieve, and actions that we need to deliver.

The plan provides details of how we agreed our priorities and how we will deliver our planned outcomes between 2026 and 2029.

## Engagement with children, young people and families in Dumfries and Galloway is embedded in the way that we work.

In developing this plan we have drawn on a range of ongoing engagement activities to ensure that views of children, young people and families have shaped this plan.

Further evidence has come from our Strategic Needs Assessment carried out in 2025. We have followed a rigorous, evidence-based development process, and we are confident that through this, we have identified the right priorities and workstreams in this plan that will allow us to deliver on our vision for children and young people.

This plan follows on from our 2023-2026 Children's Services Plan which had six priorities. During the course of the previous plan we delivered some notable successes, however **where some pieces of work need to continue to be addressed, we have included these under relevant priorities in our 2026-2029 plan.**



A key development during our previous planning cycle was the introduction of Whole Family Wellbeing (WFW) Funding from the Scottish Government.

In Dumfries and Galloway we used this funding for **whole family support** and **initiatives** that reflected **preventative** and **early intervention** approaches towards **children** and **families**. One of our initial priority actions in our 2026-2029 plan is to evaluate our use of the WFW funding, and to agree our final model of whole family support.

**This reflects our commitment to providing whole family support in a holistic way.** Over the previous planning period, our children's services planning partnership had to balance our need to move from crisis intervention to prevention, with the immediate challenges of dealing with an increased demand for services resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. **We are still dealing with increased demand for services, but as a partnership we are committed to embedding preventative approaches, and our plan sets out how we will achieve this.**

## Involvement of our Youth Council

Dumfries and Galloway Youth Council Members were consulted on the development of the new children's services plan as part of the consultation and engagement process and agreed the final version of the new plan at a joint meeting of Dumfries and Galloway Council and Youth Council in February 2026. Going forward, our Youth Council will also be involved and engaged in oversight of this plan.



# Profile of Dumfries and Galloway

## Rurality

**6,427**  
sq. km

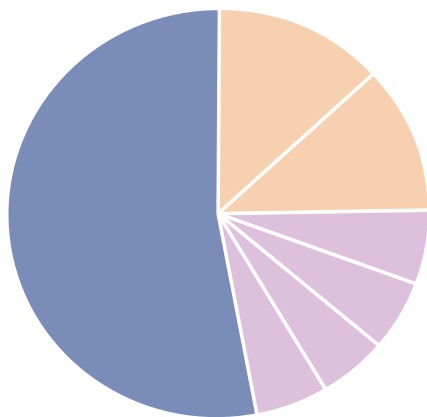
**145,000**  
people

Dumfries and Galloway is a mostly rural area in southwest Scotland.

It covers 6,427 square kilometres and is home to just over 145,000 people according to the National Records of Scotland (NRS) estimates (2023).

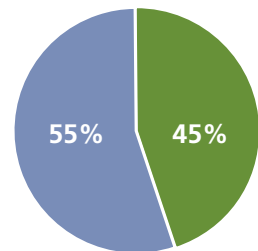
The 2025 General Medical Services Review describes Dumfries and Galloway as one of the most rural areas of Scotland where issues such as **transport**, **access to services** and **rural deprivation** can have a big impact.

The 2022 Census reports there are just under 71,000 households across the area.



### The main towns (by population):

- Dumfries and Locharbriggs (including Heathhall) (39,700 people)
- Stranraer (9,800 people)
- Annan (8,700 people)
- Lockerbie (4,400 people)
- Dalbeattie (4,100 people)
- Castle Douglas (4,000 people)
- Newton Stewart (4,000 people)



**Nearly half of all people in Dumfries and Galloway (45%) live in areas classified as rural**

by National Records Scotland which is defined as living in settlements with fewer than 3,000 people.

**This is more than double the average for Scotland (17%).**

**33%** = **3rd highest in** live remotely = **mainland Scotland**

**66% say** good place to live

**The town of Dumfries is the only urban area.** The population of Stranraer was estimated to be below 10,000 at the 2022 Census. This means that it is classified as a remote small town.

In terms of accessibility, a third (33%) of the population live in areas classified as remote, which is defined as living further than 30 minutes' drive away from a large town. Compared to the rest of mainland Scotland, this is the third highest proportion of people living in remote rural locations after Argyll and Bute and the Highlands.

The Scottish Household Survey in 2019 showed that a higher proportion of people living in Dumfries and Galloway rated their neighbourhood as a "very good" place to live (66%) compared to the average across Scotland (57%).

**Benefits can include: easy access to open spaces, less pollution and a strong sense of community.**

## Fuel poverty

### Living in a rural area can also bring challenges

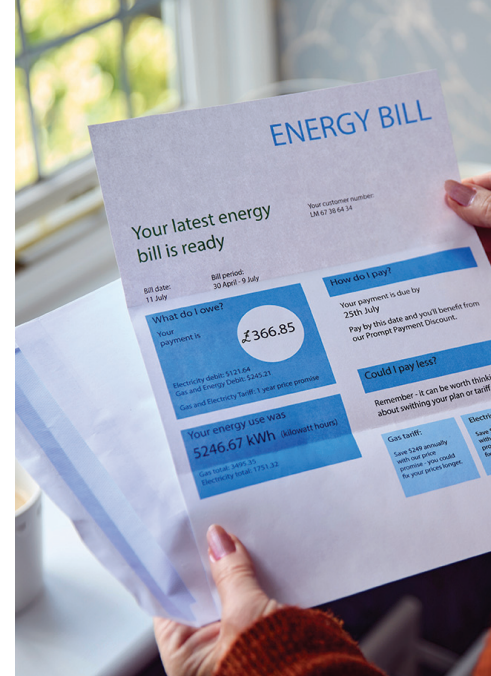
The Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act 2019 describes a household to be in fuel poverty if more than 10% of the household income (after housing costs) is needed to heat the home and pay for fuel.

The Scottish House Condition Survey (2017 - 2019) showed that across Dumfries and Galloway the proportion of households experiencing fuel poverty was 29%. This is higher than the average for Scotland at 24%. A recent survey in 2023 showed that across Scotland fuel poverty in remote rural areas remained at 43%, **indicating that many people are at an increased risk of fuel poverty.**

**Just under 30,000 households in Dumfries and Galloway are using energy off the gas grid.**

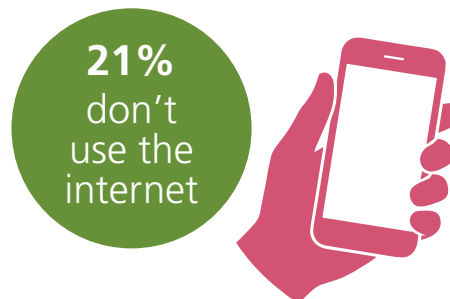
Typically, Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) is more expensive than the natural gas received by homes that are on the grid.

The areas of Dumfries and Galloway that are estimated to have the highest levels of fuel poverty are Wigtown West, Mid Galloway and, Mid and Upper Nithsdale. This is due to being large rural areas with a high proportion of households that have poor energy efficiency that use expensive fuel types.



**Households in rural areas are also more likely to spend a greater proportion of their income on petrol and transport costs.**

A Scottish Government report in 2021 found that travel was the greatest source of additional costs for people living in remote and rural areas. These additional costs were estimated to add over £200 in a month to living costs in rural areas. In addition, for families without access to private transport this can lead to an increased level of challenge in accessing services.



**Using technology** is one way people can overcome the challenges of living in a rural area. In 2020, 79% of people living in Dumfries and Galloway were internet users. However, this means that 21% of people were non-internet users, the second highest proportion in the UK.



## Demographics

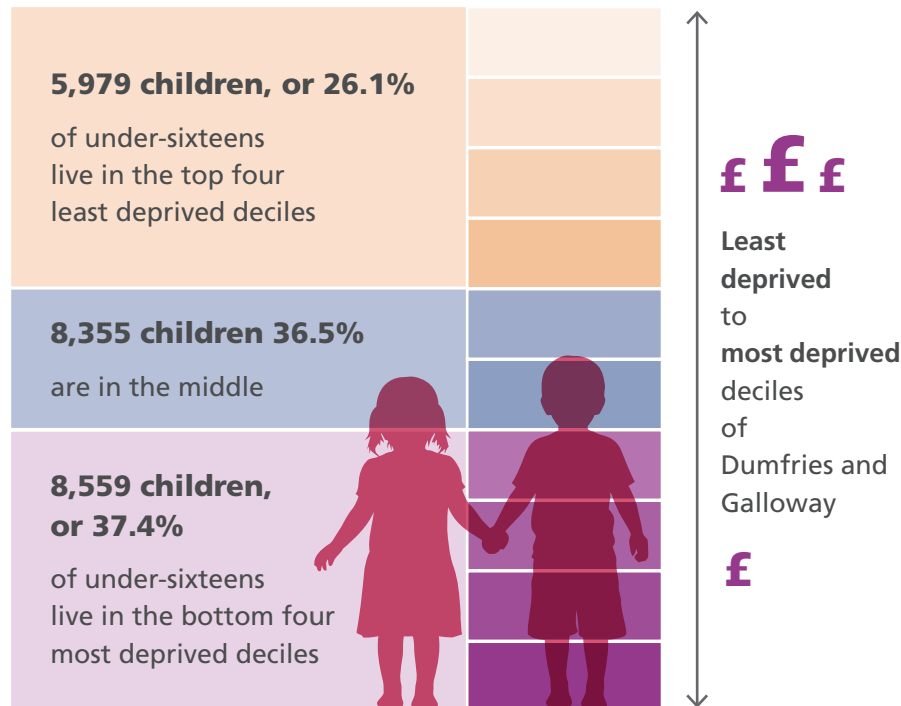
There are **25,142 children and young people aged under 18 in Dumfries and Galloway, 17.3% of the population.**

In 2023 there were 1,123 births in Dumfries and Galloway.

Overall, the number of births in Dumfries and Galloway is decreasing.



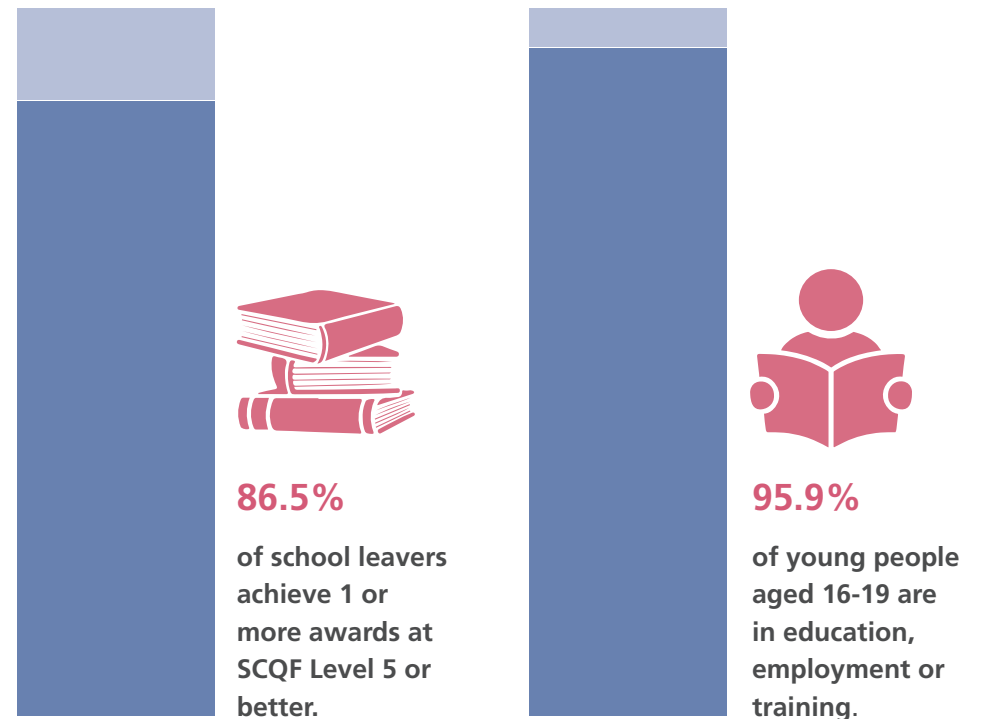
## Deprivation in Dumfries and Galloway



In 2024, **19.2% of children** in Dumfries and Galloway were in **relative low-income families** compared with 16.3% of children in Scotland; and **15.5% of children** in Dumfries and Galloway were in **absolute low-income families** compared with 13.2% in Scotland.

## Education

Dumfries and Galloway has **higher rates of early learning and childcare registration in 2024 and 2025** than Scotland, for both eligible 2 year-olds and 3 and 4 year-olds.





**49.3%**

of all pupils have an additional support need.

The rate for Scotland is 43.1%

### Children with Additional Support Needs (ASN)

In 2025/26, there were 8,653 pupils (49.3 per cent of all pupils) with an additional support need (ASN) recorded;

- 4,262 primary pupils (45.7% percent)
- 4,359 secondary pupils (53.1% per cent)

The percentage of pupils recorded with an additional support need in Dumfries and Galloway has increased since 2020 when it was 32.4%.

The largest rates in Dumfries and Galloway are for pupils recorded in the **Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulty (SEBD)** category.

### Attendance rate for children with ASN

#### Primary schools 2024/25

**91.5%** children with ASN

**95.3%** children without ASN

#### Secondary school 2024/25

**83.5%** children with ASN

**92.1%** children without ASN

**Overall exclusion rates for primary and secondary school pupils fell in 2025, but children with additional support needs continued to have higher exclusion rates than those without.**

## Neurodiversity

There is a growing awareness of **neurodiversity**, and this has led to an increase in the identification of **neurodivergent** patterns of development, and also of diagnostic trends in children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway. This pattern is consistent across Scotland.

**1 in 7 people**  
are neurodivergent  
(15%)

Prevalence figures taking into account all Neurodevelopmental conditions indicates around **1 in 7 people** (15%) are neurodivergent and these young people will be represented in figures for ASN reported above.

Although the Additional Support for Learning (ASL) Act states that **support must focus on needs** and is **not dependent on a label or diagnosis**, there is a significant demand in Dumfries and Galloway for diagnostic assessment.

**There are currently over 2000 children, waiting over 3 years on the Neurodevelopmental Assessment Service (NDAS) waiting list for diagnostic assessment**

Families report significant challenges accessing services, impacting on their own mental health and wellbeing and concerns for their children's health, wellbeing, inclusion and attainment.



## Smoking/Vaping

Smoking/vaping is one of the top 5 issues reported by young people as affecting them.

Anecdotally, we have heard from young people that smoking and vaping are elements of a broader issue of nicotine addiction, and that there is an increasing use among young people of other nicotine products, for example nicotine pouches. Information presented by **Ash Scotland** indicates that product awareness of nicotine pouches is increasing in young people in the UK aged 11 to 17, with an increase in those who have ever used these products.

**1 of the top 5 issues**



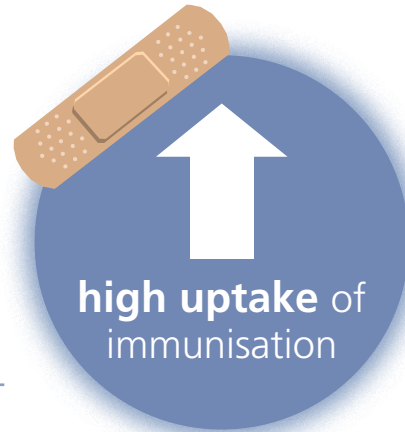
## Exposure to second hand smoke

Maternal smoking rates are falling, but in Dumfries and Galloway, **17.6% of women are known to smoke** at the 6 to 8-week post-partum visit.

The rate for Scotland is 14.3%.

## Immunisation Rates

Dumfries and Galloway has high uptakes of immunisation with 97% and 95.4% of children immunised at 24 months for 6-in-1 and MMR respectively.

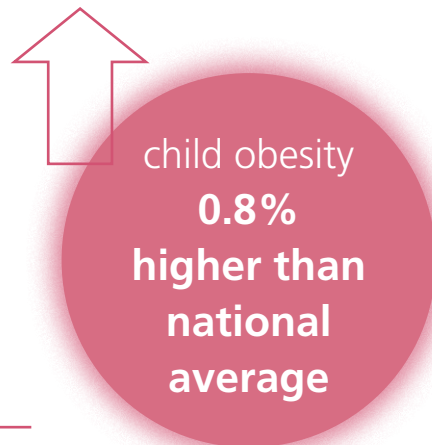


## Dental Health

At 82%, Dumfries and Galloway has a high percentage of children in P1 with no obvious decay. The national average is 73%.

## Child Healthy Weight

Dumfries and Galloway has a slightly higher percentage of Primary 1 children at risk of overweight and obesity compared to the national average (23% and 22.2% retrospectively).



## Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing

20% most deprived areas = highest referral rates for mental health services

Referral rates to Child and Adolescent Mental Services (CAMHS) are noted to be highest in the 20% most deprived areas in Dumfries and Galloway, however numbers are going up across all areas. Youth Work, School Nursing and Educational Psychology also report sustained demand for services.



In the quarter ending December 2024 the referral rate from the most deprived areas was, 32.1 people, per 1,000

Almost 3 times as many referrals from the least deprived areas.

## Children in the care of the local authority

On 31 July 2025 there were 328 children in the care of the local authority in Dumfries and Galloway.

This means that children might be living with parents/carers under a Supervision Order; with relatives or friends; with foster carers or prospective adopters. We call these 'community settings'. Children and young people might live in other settings like a residential children's home, or in secure care.

90.5% of the children and young people in the care of the local authority were living in community settings in July 2025.



## Attendance rates for children in 2024/25

Primary school attendance rate for children in the care of the local authority in primary schools was

**88.1%** compared with **93.7%** for other children.

Secondary schools attendance rate was

**76.4%** for children in the care of the local authority, compared with **88.2%** for those who were not.



## Exclusion rate for children in 2024/25

Primary school exclusion rate for children in the care of the local authority was

**25.2% children per 1,000** compared to **9.8% children per 1,000** for others.

Secondary school exclusion rate for children in the care of the local authority was,

**47.9% children per 1,000** compared to **20.1% children per 1,000** for others.



## School leavers for children in 2024/25

**37.9%** of school leavers, in the care of Dumfries and Galloway local authority **gained 1 or more qualifications at SCQF Level 5**, compared to

**87%** of all other school leavers in Dumfries and Galloway.

Nationally, **39.9%** of children in the care of Scottish local authorities gained 1 or more qualifications at SCQF Level 5.



## Child Protection

On 31 July 2025, there were **55 children on the Child Protection Register in Dumfries and Galloway**. This was a rate of 2.2 children per 1000 - a slight increase from 2.0 per 1000 in 2024.

This was also slightly above the national rate of 2.0 children per 1000.

## Unintentional Injuries in children under five.

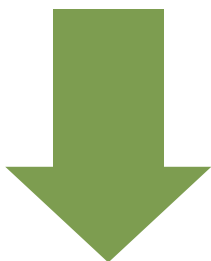


Unintentional injuries are the result of events that, usually, can be prevented.

They can occur in the home, at school, on the road and during play. Children under five years of age are at most risk from injuries in the home.

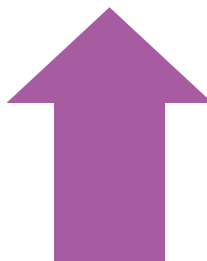
In the period 2021/22 to 2023/4, the average rate of hospital admissions for unintentional injuries in children under five in Dumfries and Galloway was **1239.6 per 100,000**, while the rate for Scotland in the same period was 915.6 per 100,000.

## Referrals to Scottish Children Reporter Administration (SCRA)



In 2024/25, **340 children** were referred to SCRA on all grounds – a fall in overall referrals from the previous year.

A total of **120** of these referrals were on offence grounds, a **50% increase** on the previous year (80).





## Smoking during Pregnancy

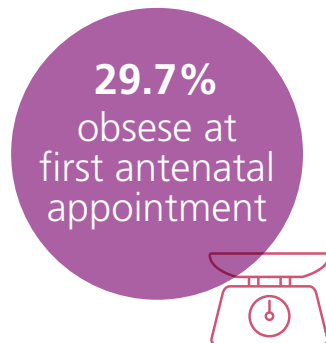
**10.1%** of pregnant women in Dumfries and Galloway in 2024 were recorded as 'current smokers' at their first antenatal booking.

The rate in Dumfries and Galloway fell in 2024, but remains higher than that for Scotland (8.2%).



## Maternal obesity

As a 3-year average to 2024, **29.7%** of pregnant women in Dumfries and Galloway were considered to be obese at their first antenatal booking.



## Healthy Birthweight

As a 3-year average to 2024, **79.9%** of babies in Dumfries and Galloway were an appropriate birthweight.

In 2023/24, **4.1%** of babies in Dumfries and Galloway had a small birthweight.



## Breastfeeding

As a 3-year average to 2024, **27.8%** of babies in Dumfries and Galloway were exclusively breastfed at 6-8 weeks.

Most of the data in this profile is taken from a strategic needs assessment that we carried out in 2025. Further information and sources are available in the main document on this [page](#).



## Our position in April 2026

In our 2023-2026 Children's Services Plan which ended on 31 March 2026 there were **six main** areas of work that we prioritised.

### 1. Family Support:

This was about supporting families who were facing a range of difficulties, and there was an increased likelihood that Social Work could become involved and that their children might need compulsory measures of carer.

This area of work involved providing preventative support and intervening early with families with difficulties so they could avoid getting into crisis.

Our position at the end of our 2023-26 Children's Services Plan was that we were delivering family support and parenting groups.



#### Improved access

In this workstream, we identified all the supports available to families, so we could make these more accessible. The **development of our Children's Services Website** provided families with information about local services and how to access them.



#### Increased support

We **increased our number of Family Support Workers** who worked with families **in their homes**, helping them to make and maintain changes, and linking them in with other services that could provide help.



#### Evidence based parenting support

We used **Whole Family Wellbeing Funding** from the Scottish Government to recruit a **Parenting Co-ordinator**. Parents had told us that they could need support at two stages – when their children were in early childhood, and then when they were teenagers – so we delivered evidence-based parenting programmes.

### What do we mean when we talk about Prevention, Early intervention and Crisis?

**Prevention** is where families have access to all the help/support they need to avoid problems arising.

**Early Intervention** is where problems emerge and the **child** or their **family get the right support from the right place as quickly as possible** so that the problems can be helped and do not get worse.

**Crisis** is an **urgent, very serious situation** where a **person** or **family** faces an **immediate threat** to their **health, safety, or housing**. In this situation, the person or family needs help very quickly to prevent more harm.

Crisis happens at a point when usual ways of coping are not working anymore. Often, this point is triggered by events like poverty, eviction, domestic abuse, or mental health emergencies.

When a family is in crisis, children might need to live away from their parents/carers or be supervised by a Social Worker.

## 2. Disabled children with complex care needs

This was about making sure that children who had healthcare needs can have these needs met while they are in school, without their parents/carers having to come into school to do this.

It was also about providing better **support** for **children** and **young people** with **neurodevelopmental needs**; and ensuring that disabled children had smoother transitions between different stages of their lives.

**Our position at the end of our 2023-26 Children's Services Plan was that the Healthcare in Schools Guidance had been developed and launched.**

### Community-led support for families with neurodivergent children

We had a group working on support for children and young people with **neurodevelopmental disorders**.

The group engaged with families locally who said they needed **community-based support in which they could get practical advice from people who understood about neurodevelopmental (ND) needs.**



In partnership with Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway, this led to the development of a Dumfries and Galloway community-led approach.



This approach is about using existing third sector resources in communities, and building a network of people within communities who are ND-skilled.



It means that children, young people and families will be able to access support on the things that matter to them, from people in their communities, without having to wait or navigate referral processes.



### Development of neurodivergent strategy

Our 2023-26 plan saw us move forward from the direction of our previous Autism Strategy to a direction that better accounts for the needs of neurodivergent children, young people and their families.

In focusing on getting it right for neurodivergent children, young people and their families, we have consulted with those with lived experience and co-designed improvements with them.

At the end of the 2023-26 plan, we had come a long way in our thinking but looking ahead, we need to deliver and evidence meaningful change.

### Transition improvements from Primary to Secondary

We had looked at the arrangements that were already in place to support disabled children when they moved to early years provision, then to primary school, to secondary school and then to higher education or training/employment.



We then **updated** our **guidance** on these arrangements for **disabled children and young people**. We also decided that we needed to look at transition arrangements for all young people when moving from primary to secondary school.



As a result of this work, we now have **improved processes** to **support good transition for all pupils**, with an inclusive approach, and information being held in a single site.



We **updated** our **Child's Plan template** to include a prompt for people to think about **transition arrangements** when meeting with children, young people and their parents/carers to plan the actions needed to support the child or young person.

### 3. Mental health and wellbeing

This was about developing a range of low-level mental health supports for children and young people: counselling for young people in schools, web-based resources for children and young people, and developing peri-natal and infant mental health services.

Our position at the end of our 2023-26 Children's Services Plan was that we had established a counselling in schools service through Youth Information Workers, we had received very positive feedback about this initiative. This work is now embedded in core service delivery. More information can be found on our [Youth Enquiry Service webpage](#).



Young people had developed our new [CAMHS website](#), supported by our CAMHS Youth Engagement Worker.



We had developed a range of **peri-natal and infant mental health services**. A group of volunteers with lived experience was recruited, and they continue to help shape these services.



We had developed a **Mental Health Pathway**. This pathway set out all the different types of mental health supports for children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway. These range from low-level supports like Youth Information Workers, and School Nurses in Schools, up to specialist services like CAMHS that provide clinical treatment for more serious mental health issues. The aim of the pathway was that children, young people, parents/carers and practitioners could see how and where to access the right level of mental health support as quickly as possible.

### 4. Care experience:

This was about how we support children and young people who are, or have been, in the care of the Local Authority – '**looked-after**'. We have a Corporate Parenting Plan that sets out all the work that is happening to improve the lives of care-experienced children and young people.

Our position at the end of our 2023-26 Children's Services Plan was that we had five workstreams, and this work is continuing:



**Being Involved and Included** – making sure that children and young people's voices are heard and their rights respected.



**A Safe and Stable Home** – making sure that care-experienced children and young people have the right place to live with the right support when they need it.



**Access to Education** – increasing the opportunities for our care experienced children and young people to access education in a way which best suits their needs.



**Being Healthy** – ensuring that our care experienced children and young people are able to have their health needs met by attending their health appointments and that health services sufficiently reflect and accommodate the unique circumstances that our care experienced children and young people experience.



**Moving On/Transitions** – ensuring that those moving on from care have an experience that is safe, loving and respectful.

## 5. Child Poverty:

This was about how, as a multi-agency partnership, we work together to tackle child poverty in Dumfries and Galloway. It involved actions aimed at tackling some of the reasons behind poverty (like training and education for adults so they could get better-paid work) and actions aimed at reducing the impact of poverty (like improving the take-up of benefits and free school meals).

Our position at the end of our 2023-26 Children's Services Plan was that we had a [Child Poverty action plan](#) and we were delivering actions aimed at increasing income from employment and benefits, and reducing the cost of living. Child Poverty continues to be an area of concern in Dumfries and Galloway.



This work will continue to be addressed by our Poverty Partnership.



## 6. Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) Implementation:

This was about making sure we had the right systems and guidance in place to support services to get it right for every child.

Our position at the end of our 2023-26 Children's Services Plan was that we had reviewed and updated our local GIRFEC guidance. We had also reviewed and updated documents that are used when children require additional help or a child's plan, for example our Request for Assistance Form.



The next work in this area will focus on staff training.

### What is 'Getting it right for every child'?

Getting it right for every child is sometimes called 'GIRFEC'.

In Scotland, the GIRFEC approach helps people who work with children in Scotland to get things right for them – so that children have good wellbeing.

Wellbeing means feeling comfortable, healthy and happy. To have good wellbeing, a child needs to be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included.

The GIRFEC approach means that we work together with the child and their family to give them the right help at the right time to meet their needs.

It is about early intervention and prevention.

Find out more about GIRFEC on the [Scottish Government site](#), or on our [Children's Services Website](#).



Getting it Right for Every Child  
in Dumfries and Galloway

## Our Priorities for 2026 to 2029

### How we identified our priorities

#### Engagement with children, young people and families

In Dumfries and Galloway, we actively see to listen to children, young people and families, across all our services, and involve them in the delivery of services. This is a key principle of how we work.

We routinely seek the views of those who use our services, and those who are less likely to engage with services.



Some examples of engagement over the last three years include:

- Supporting the development of the [Youth Matters report of 2023](#).  
This was planned, led and co-delivered by a Steering Group of disabled young people.
- The [10,000 Voices region-wide consultation](#) with young people aged 10 to 25 first took place in 2018, and then again in 2025.
- Our [Champions Board and Listen2Us project](#). Our Champions Board involves care experienced young people aged 12-25 from across the region.  
The board meets formally three times a year with senior managers and elected members of the local authority to give care-experienced young people the opportunity to influence service planning.  
The Listen2Us group is for young people who want to have their say and change the system for other young people, and the group can raise their views through the Champions Board.
- In 2025 children from P4 to S6 took part in a wide-scale review of bullying in schools in Dumfries and Galloway. The [findings](#) from this led to a review of our anti-bullying policies and the strengthening of bullying prevention measure in schools.
- Engagement with the families of children and young people with neurodevelopmental needs led to the development of a community-led support model in Dumfries and Galloway.



To further support the development of this plan, we carried out a range of **targeted engagement** activities. These included:

- A **public consultation** through the local authority's 'Have Your Say' webpage, and our Children's Services website.
- **Engagement with Parent Council Forum representatives.**
- **Face-to-face engagement with children, young people and parents/carers** at 'Here for You' after-school events in schools across Dumfries and Galloway.



Some of the things that **children, young people** and their **families told us** were:

- Parents of children with neurodevelopmental needs were concerned about waiting lists for diagnosis and they wanted people to talk to who knew about neurodivergent development and could offer practical help and advice.
- When asked if they think their school deals well with cases of bullying, only 44 percent of pupils responded 'yes' (22 percent said no and 34 percent were unsure).
- Parents attending face-to-face evening events in schools said that they had not known about all the information on supports available to them.
- There was praise from parents for people who work in services for children, young people and families across Dumfries and Galloway. However, some parents told us that while we had excellent, high-quality staff, as parents they had approached several different services looking for support before finding the 'right one'.





## Our Strategic Needs Assessment

**In 2025 we carried out a strategic needs assessment (SNA).**

**In this document, we collected a range of data about Dumfries and Galloway, and the children, young people and families who live here.**

**We also looked at what children, young people and families had told us about their experiences and how they wanted services to help them improve their lives.**

**We shared the SNA with parent representatives and people who work with children, young people and families across our region, and asked them what they thought the findings told us, and what services need to do differently in Dumfries and Galloway to help improve the lives of families.**

**This led us to identify the following four priorities for 2026 to 2029**



## Priority 1

### Children and young people are kept safe

#### Our SNA told us;

- The number of children on the Child Protection Register in Dumfries and Galloway had increased. Neglect is one of the most frequent reasons for this.
- Our rate of emergency hospital admissions for unintentional injury in children under 5 had increased and was higher than that for Scotland.
- The number of children and young people referred to the Children's Reporter on offending grounds had increased.
- We had higher rates than Scotland of drug or alcohol-related hospital admissions for young people.
- In 2025 we reviewed our approach to bullying in Dumfries and Galloway, and pupils told us that we needed to do better if they were to feel confident that bullying was being dealt with.
- We have an increasing number of children and young people whose families choose not to make use of universal services like schools and health visiting, and if we do not see these children, we do not know if they are safe and well cared-for at home.



We decided that our first priority needed to be that **children and young people are kept safe.**

We have a strong focus on child protection through our Public Protection Committee, but we need to look more broadly at children and young people's lives, and the risks that they can face outside their homes and families – this is called contextual safeguarding.

**Contextual Safeguarding** is an approach to understanding, and responding to, all the different ways that children and young people can experience significant harm outside their families.

When services set up ways of protecting children, they tend to think about the risk of harm to children within their homes, or their families.

However, children and young people can face many different types of harm outwith their homes. They might face harm on the school bus, in a local park, within their peer group, in the street or online.

**Contextual Safeguarding is about how services work together to understand all the different ways that children can experience harm, and then use this understanding to better protect children.**



We need to look at how we can make sure that children who are not seen by teachers or health professionals are safe and are being cared for.



We need to make sure that we are addressing the causes of bullying, and supporting children and young people who are affected by this.



We need to make sure that we have a joined-up approach across our service to tackling neglect, including [digital neglect](#).

#### This priority helps us to achieve these UNCRC articles:

- **Article 19**, children have the right to be protected from being hurt or badly treated
- **Articles 34, 35 and 36**, children have the right not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable, unsafe or sad. Children have the right not to be kidnapped, sold or trafficked. Children have the right not to be used by adults in ways that harm them.
- **Article 16**, children have the right to keep some things private.
- **Article 17**, children have the right to get information in lots of ways, as long as it is safe.

#### Actions that we will deliver under this priority include:

- Developing a Digital/AI Safety Strategy
- Improving the ways that we work together to prevent and address bullying. We will deliver a promotional campaign for children and young people, parents and carers, and staff highlighting a zero-tolerance to bullying and how to respond to bullying. We will adopt [Respect for All \(2024\)](#) and we will make sure that incidents of bullying are recorded and report regularly on how they are resolved.
- Reviewing our current multi-agency approach to children that we do not see and making sure we have a clear pathway and processes in place for when a child remains physically unseen. We will make sure that each child who is not attending education has a **Child's Plan** with a specified time scale for when they must be physically seen.
- Embedding Contextual Safeguarding in Child's Plans, including school/community safety mapping and peer group assessment. We will train people who work with children, young people and families in **Contextual Safeguarding Awareness**. We will use [Early and Effective Intervention](#) to minimise risk to children in conflict with the law.
- Focusing on neglect, with further training and awareness sessions for people who work with children and families on recognising neglect.

## Priority 2

### Ensuring that families receive the support they need, when they need it.

#### Our SNA told us

- that in Dumfries and Galloway there were many issues affecting families that could lead them to need earlier support to help them avoid crisis. Some examples are that we have high levels of poverty and low income.
- We have a high proportion of children with additional support needs. We have families spread out over rural areas where it is difficult for them to access services.
- Families, and also people who work with them, told us that families could find themselves going from service to service trying to get help and had to keep telling their story to different professionals.

It is very important that we support families as early as possible so that we can keep **The Promise** in Dumfries and Galloway.



We decided therefore, that our second priority needed to be **ensuring that families receive the support they need, when they need it.**



This means that services need to provide holistic whole family support.

**Holistic whole family support** is a Scottish Government initiative that is about changing the way that support is provided to families. Instead of just helping a child or an adult in isolation, it is about **supporting the whole family** to prevent problems from reaching a crisis point.

**The goal is to provide help so that children can stay safe and loved within their own families.**

### The Promise

This is the **promise** that **Scotland's children and young people grow up loved, safe and respected** so that they realise their **full potential**.

#### The Promise involves:

- providing better support for children, young people and adults who are care-experienced
- providing better support for families where there is a risk that children, young people and families could be taken into care.
- providing better support for all families as early as possible so that fewer children and young people need to go into care.
- To achieve the Promise, where children are safe and feel loved they must stay with their families; and families must be given support to nurture that love and overcome the difficulties which get in the way.

### For parents, it means:

- People who work with children and families will **look at the needs of everyone in the household**, not just one person.
- **Early Help:** The focus is on early support, preventing the need for crisis intervention.
- **Tailored to You:** Support is based on the family's specific strengths and needs, not on rigid, one-size-fits-all rules.
- **No stigma or judgement:** Services should be easy to access, similar to how you would access a GP or local school. You should not experience any 'wrong door' if you are looking to services for support.



### It covers a wide range of practical and emotional support,

including:

- **Parenting support**, financial help,
- **Support for mental health, substance use, or managing neurodevelopmental issues** (like autism spectrum disorders or ADHD).
- **Practical Assistance** like help with housing, school attendance, and connecting to community groups who can provide support in your community. **Third Sector organisations** have a very important role in this.

The Scottish Government sets out [here](#) what needs to change so that every family that needs support gets the right family support at the right time to fulfil children's right to be raised safely in their own families, for as long as it is needed.

### This priority helps us to deliver the following UNCRC Articles:

- **Article 3**, when adults make decisions, they should think how they affect children and do what is best for them.
- **Article 12**, children and young people have the right to be listened to and taken seriously.
- **Articles 5 and 18**, a child's family should help them know and use their rights; and children have the right to support from both parents if possible.
- **Article 26**, governments should help children's families if they cannot afford all the things they need to meet their physical and mental needs.
- **Article 27**, children have the right to a proper home, food and clothing.

## Actions that we will deliver under this priority include:

### Whole Family Wellbeing Fund

The Scottish Government provided funding through the **Whole Family Wellbeing Fund** (WFWF) to help services transform the way they support families.

This funding will continue to the end of March 2027.

In Dumfries and Galloway, we are using this funding for a range of initiatives. These include

- a primary school inclusion project
- and increasing the number and geographic spread of our family support workers across the region.

One of the first actions we will take in 2026 is to evaluate the initiatives that have received WFWF funding, and **decide how we will continue** to provide holistic whole family support when the funding comes to an end. As a partnership, we will develop a model of whole family support for Dumfries and Galloway that provides stigma-free early help, multiple points of access, rights-led participation, and shared accountability across partners.

### Fairer Futures Partnership

Our Fairer Futures Partnership in Dumfries and Galloway is delivering a project called '**100 Voices**'. This is a project that has funding for one year.

The project will work with 100 parents in areas of poverty in Dumfries and Galloway. Funding will be used for keyworkers who will help parents to access support, and find out from them what works well and what does not. We will use the findings from the 100 Voices project to help us make changes to services and provide whole family support.

Some of the other actions we will deliver under this priority include:

- Involving children, young people and families in the design, review and development of services.
- Changing how we work, from being a 'team around the child' to 'the team with the family'.
- Testing new approaches to working with families across our children's services partnership.

### What are Fairer Futures Partnerships (FFPs)?

These partnerships are a Scottish Government initiative that are about testing new ways of helping families who are in poverty, or at risk of poverty.

- FFPs are part of the **whole family support** approach. If families are to move out of poverty, they need local services including housing, education, employability and health to work together more closely to support them.
- FFP's **receive funding** to carry out projects in local areas or regions. These projects are about working closely with families to test different ways that services can support them to move out of poverty.

The idea is that **successful projects will be used to make changes** to the way that services work with families. These projects will also be shared across Scotland so other areas can learn from these and do things differently.

## Priority 3

### Children and young people are supported to be healthy

#### Our SNA told us

- That we had a long waiting list of children waiting for assessment by our Neurodevelopmental Disorders Assessment Service (NDAS).
- We also have high rates of referrals to our Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Parents and carers of children with complex needs told us that services needed to work better together to support their children. A child is described as having complex needs if they have been diagnosed with an illness, disability or sensory impairment and they need a lot of additional support on a daily basis.

We had actions about these in our 2023-26 plan, and we decided that these needed to continue.

We decided that our third priority should be that **Children and young people are supported to be healthy** with a **focus on neurodevelopmental disorders mental health**, and **children with complex needs**.

#### This priority helps us to deliver these UNCRC articles:

- **Article 23**, if a child is disabled, they have the right to special care and education.
- **Article 24**, children have the right to be as healthy as possible.



### What are Neurodevelopmental Disorders?

Neurodevelopmental difficulties can affect children and young people's development. Children and young people may experience difficulties across different areas, including:

- Independence Skills
- Motor skills
- Social Communication Skills
- Play/Flexibility
- Sensory/Regulation
- Academic and Learning
- Attention, Memory, Organisation and Planning Skills
- Emotional Wellbeing / Mental Health
- Attachment and Relationships

Sometimes children developing differently may need a bit of extra support from the people around them, or some changes to their environment to help them to achieve their potential. Simple adaptations can make things easier. For some people, however, they may continue to need a lot of support, even with adaptations.

### Actions that we will deliver under this priority include:

#### Review mental health pathway

In our 2023-26 Plan, we developed a Mental Health Pathway.

- In our 2026-29 plan, we want to review this pathway and make it more accessible to children and young people.



### Other actions under this priority include:

- Ensuring that we have a range of interventions to address early presentation of mental health and wellbeing needs.
- Implementing Scotland's [National Neurodevelopmental Specification](#) and ensuring timely support for neurodivergent children that is not dependent on diagnosis.
- Implementing and monitoring our updated Healthcare in Schools Policy to make sure that children and young people are having their healthcare needs met while in school.
- Implementing and auditing appropriate transition tools. This means that we will work with children, young people and families to bring in new ways of supporting children through transitions. We will ask children, young people and their families if these worked well, and if they had a good experience.

## Priority 4

### Children and young people are able to access learning opportunities which meet their aspirations

#### Our SNA told us

- That we have some children and young people who are not attending school, or not attending full-time for a range of reasons including emotional non-attendance.
- We have a high proportion of children and young people with Additional Support Needs (ASN). Of these children and young people, many require support for needs in the Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulty (SEBD) category. Pupils with ASN typically have lower attendance and higher exclusion rates than those without ASN.

When children and young people are not engaged with learning, they need services to work together to help them re-engage.



We decided that our fourth priority should be that **children and young people** are able to **access learning opportunities which meet their aspirations**.

When we talk about children and young people's aspirations, we are listening to what they tell us about their lives and what they want for their future, and the challenges they face.

- Some children and young people have told us that they face challenges in their lives that mean that going out to school is not one of their immediate priorities.
- Some have told us that when they feel that they are under pressure to spend more time in school than they can cope with, they can stop engaging completely.

#### What are Additional Support Needs?

A child or young person is said to have additional support needs (ASN) if they need more - or different support - to what is generally provided in educational establishments to children or young people of the same age.

- A child can have short or long-term needs. These could be because:
- their learning environment is not suitable for them
- they are disabled or have a health condition
- family circumstances are affecting their ability to learn
- they are experiencing social or emotional problems.

### Actions that we will deliver under this priority include:

Under this priority, the actions are about,

- working together with children, young people and their families to test out different approaches to helping children and young people re-engage with learning.

This priority links with our other three.

Children and young people are less likely to disengage from learning if we can support the whole family when problems arise, or if we can get the right support at the right time to children with neurodevelopmental or mental health needs. If children are attending school regularly, they are seen by staff who can raise concerns should these arise.



Some of the actions under this priority include:

- Using improvement methodology to improve the number of children and young people accessing learning.
- Developing a multi-agency approach to support children with significant barriers to attendance.
- Working towards our aim of ensuring that all care-experienced children have full time educational provision through our [Corporate Parenting](#) Education workstream.
- Recognising that for some young people, success might look different to full-time attendance at school, and developing alternatives to school that would meet the needs of these young people.

This priority helps us to deliver articles:

- **28 and 29** of the UNCRC. These articles guarantee the right to a free, quality education (ages 5–16) that develops personalities, talents, and abilities, regardless of background.

## Underpinning our plan

There are important enabling themes that will be considered in how we act across all our priorities:

- Having a supported, well-trained, well-informed and empowered workforce across all sectors
- Valuing the voices and experiences of children, young people and their families
- Learning from approaches elsewhere and any developing evidence
- Fulfilling our commitments to **The Promise** and **embedding the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**
- Making sure our language is easy to understand for all and our plans are published in accessible formats too
- Switching our focus from child to whole family and community.

### What do we mean by embedding UNCRC?

The UN Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC) is an important, legally binding agreement which outlines the human rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities. These include the right to an education, the right to the best possible health, to nutritious food, to a safe, warm house, to social security, and the right to protection from abuse and neglect.

In 2024, the UNCRC was written into Scots Law through the (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act (2024). This Act requires public authorities to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights.

## Links with other plans

**Our Children's Services Plan aligns closely with other multi-agency plans. These include:** our [Public Protection Partnership Strategic Plan](#); our [Corporate Parenting Plan](#); our [Child Poverty Action Plan](#); and our local [Employability and Skills Partnership Delivery Plan](#).

Actions in the Public Protection Strategic Plan will help us achieve **Priority 2 – keeping children safe**.

Actions in the Education workstream of our Corporate Parenting Plan will contribute towards achieving **Priority 4 - children and young people are able to access learning opportunities which meet their aspirations**.

Actions in the Child Poverty and Employability and Skills plans will contribute towards achieving **Priority 1 – ensuring families get the right support when they need it**.

Similarly, actions in this children's services plan will complement and add value to these plans while avoiding duplication.

## Links with National Performance Framework

The National Performance Framework was introduced by the Scottish Government. It is for all of Scotland and it sets out a vision of collective wellbeing. There are currently 11 National Outcomes that give a picture of what 'good' looks like for Scotland. These are being reviewed and might change, but they are currently still in use.

Our children's services plan contributes directly towards these National Outcomes:

**We grow up loved, safe and respected** so that we realise our full potential.

**We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society.**

Through our commitment to **embedding the Rights of the Child**, and to **working with communities** to developing **whole family support**, we are also contributing to these National Outcomes:

**We respect, protect and fulfil human rights** and live **free from discrimination.**

**We live in communities** that are **inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.**

Our third priority of **supporting children and young people to be healthy** contributes to this National Outcome:

**We are healthy and active.**

## National Outcomes



## Our Partnership Arrangements

In Dumfries and Galloway, we have a Children's Services Strategic and Planning Partnership (CSSaPP). This partnership has an Executive Group with members who are senior leaders from Education, Social Work, Health, Police, Children's Reporter Administration and Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway.

The Executive Group lead our multi-agency planning of services for children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway and they have oversight of our children's services plan. Priority actions in the plan are delivered by various multi-agency groups. All these groups are required to report to CSSaPP Executive Group on delivery of their actions. CSSaPP Executive are responsible for scrutiny and challenge, and as senior managers, will take action where necessary to resolve any issues or barriers that could be getting in the way of delivery of the plan.

We report quarterly to the Board of our Community Planning Partnership on delivery of our children's services plan, and also on the operation of our children's services planning partnership itself, and the effectiveness of CSSaPP as a partnership. We have links with other strategic multi-agency partnerships including: our Public Protection Partnership; our Alcohol and Drugs Partnership; our Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership, our Corporate Parenting Group and our Employability and Skills Partnership.

In 2025, we carried out an exercise on 'how good is our Third Sector involvement' and this led to the development of an action plan to better involve our Third Sector in children's services planning. Third Sector organisations have a key role in the development of holistic whole family support and as a partnership, we are committed to better involving the third sector in children's services planning, and to delivering the action plan for this.

## Performance Reporting

Each of our four priorities has a set of outcomes, actions and measures. These are high-level, and each priority will have further delivery plans sitting beneath it that set out more detailed actions. As these delivery plans are developed, further measures may be identified.

An identified lead for each priority will be responsible for reporting to CSSaPP on delivery of the priority outcomes, actions and measures at dedicated scrutiny meetings.

We have a suite of high-level indicators of wellbeing with data going back over 10 years for many of these. These are shown in [Appendix 3](#). Taken together, these indicators give us a picture of the wellbeing of our population of children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway. These indicators allow us to see long-term trends, and also to compare ourselves against Scotland and other similar local authorities. We will continue to collect and report on these indicators over the course of this planning period. We will also identify further high-level wellbeing indicators that will reflect views and experiences of children, young people and families.

The Council and NHS have a duty to develop and publish a joint report annually on our children's services plan and send this to the Scottish Government. We will involve children, young people and families in the development of this report and publish it on the Council website.

# Delivering our Priorities: outcomes, actions and measures

## PRIORITY 1

### Children and young people are kept safe

We will adopt Respect for All (2024) and embed Contextual Safeguarding in Child's Plans, including school/community safety mapping and peer group assessment. We will monitor and report on how quickly we resolve bullying issues.

This priority reflects UNCRC Articles: 19 (protection from violence), 34–36 (exploitation), 16 (privacy), 17 (access to information).

The outcomes we aspire to achieve	Key actions and areas of focus	Measures we will use to evidence our progress
Our children and young people are supported to be safe in the digital world.	Develop a Digital/AI Safety Strategy	Percentage of children and young people who report feeling safe at home – with information captured from Casefile Audits, and Youth Work.
Our staff understand contextual safeguarding and respond appropriately where there is risk to a child or young person.	Build online safety capacity through Education Scotland's digital citizenship programme and link family messaging to Police Scotland's "Keep secure online" guidance.	Indicator to be developed about the percentage of children and young people who report feeling safe at school.
Our children and young people benefit from a zero-tolerance approach to bullying in any form.	Multi-agency promotional campaign for children and young people, parents and carers, and staff highlighting zero-tolerance to bullying and how to respond.	Percentage of children and young people who report feeling safe in their community – indicator to be developed.
Services are responsive to the needs of children and young people whose families may choose not to take up universally available provision.	We will monitor and report on resolution of bullying incidents.	Indicator to be developed that will tell us about whether our children and young people feel safe in the digital world.

Our children and young people are not exposed to neglect	We will review our multi-agency approach to unseen children.	Percentage of staff who have completed Contextual Safeguarding awareness training.
Our staff recognise neglect and use professional curiosity to identify it.	We will ensure that each child not attending education has a Child's Plan.	Indicator to be developed regarding Child Plans for children not in education.
	We will adopt Respect for All (2024) and embed Contextual Safeguarding in Child's Plans, including school/community safety mapping and peer group assessment.	Percentage of Primary 1 children with no obvious tooth decay.
	We will deliver Contextual Safeguarding awareness training	Percentage reduction in the number of concerns raised with Neglect as a factor (with data from Social Work IT system)
	We will use Early & Effective Intervention (EEI) principles to minimise risk to children in conflict with the law.	Number of children that attend inputs and/or number of inputs given and feedback from the children.
	We will deliver multi-agency training and awareness sessions on neglect and professional curiosity to staff across our partnership, with opportunities for a 'critical friend' for support from other agencies as well as single agency peer support.	Number of staff trained in neglect.
	We will carry out Reflective Learning on selected cases involving neglect.	Number of times that peer support/ critical friend used to identify neglect – with case studies or practice examples.
	Police Youth Engagement Officers will deliver inputs to Schools and College, or any evening inputs which would engage with 16–17-year-olds not in education (for example Operation Safety and other aspects relating to digital safety).	

## PRIORITY 2

### Ensure families receive the support they need when they need it

We will implement Scotland's Route-map and National Principles of Holistic Whole Family Support, ensuring stigma free early help, multiple points of access, rights led participation, and shared accountability across partners, supporting the enhancement of community capacity for local family support at the right time.

This priority reflects UNCRC Articles: 3 (best interests), 12 (views), 5 & 18 (family guidance and responsibilities), 26 (benefits), 27 (adequate standard of living).

The outcomes we aspire to achieve	Key actions and areas of focus, we will;	Measures we will use to evidence our progress
Our families understand how to access help to support their children and young people.	Pivot our support model from the 'team around the child' to 'the team with the family', including the introduction of refreshed practitioner guidance and plans.	% of parents (ELC, primary and secondary) who report through the Biannual Stakeholder Survey that they know how to access support through their school.
Our children, young people and families are supported through a holistic system of whole family support that meets the needs of the whole family unit.	Involve children, young people and families in the design, review and development of services.	Data from the Social Work Family Support File Audit to be carried out in March/April 2026.
Our children, young people and families experience 'no wrong door' when needing support and do not have to repeatedly share their story.	Evaluate individual family support services and approaches through analysis of qualitative and quantitative data and using methods including cost benefit analysis.	Number of children, young people and families participating in the design, development and review of services evidenced by information from Youth Work Services and Social Work Audit.
Our children, young people and families are at the heart of whole family support service design, development and review	Evaluate the effectiveness of the overall whole family support system within Dumfries and Galloway, using Care Inspectorate Quality Framework, including the implementation of 'Getting it right for every child' locally.	The percentage of plans (examined in the Social Work Family Support Audit) that demonstrate consideration of whole family support needs.
Our children, young people and families can access universal support without the need for a referral from a professional.	Test new approaches within the whole family support landscape which seek to deliver on our identified outcomes, and through Fairer Futures activity.	Referral rates to SCRA on care and welfare grounds

<p>Our children and young people are supported to have the best start in life.</p>	<p>As a community planning partnership, we will develop and implement a local model of Whole Family Support that provides stigma-free early help, multiple points of access, rights-led participation, and shared accountability across partners.</p>	<p>Emergency hospital admissions [Unintentional Injuries] for children under 5.</p>
<p>All children will be supported to reach their developmental potential.</p>	<p>Share the findings of our Fairer Futures 100 Voices project, and use these to develop more integrated ways of supporting families in/at risk of poverty.</p>	<p>Poverty/low income indicators from our Annual Child Poverty Action Plan Report.</p>
		<p>Housing/homelessness indicators including the number of families with children in temporary accommodation.</p>
		<p>Number of Child's Plans 0-3, Reduction in Speech &amp; Language need, Early Health data.</p>
		<p>The number of families accessing adult learning opportunities/parenting courses.</p>
		<p>Reduction in number of (looked-after) children in the care of the local authority.</p>
		<p>Reduction in number of Requests for Assistance to Social Work.</p>
		<p>Reduction in number of children being looked after in care outwith Dumfries and Galloway.</p>
		<p>Publication of annual participation evidence through the partnership showing how children, young people and families have influenced decisions.</p>

## PRIORITY 3

### Children and young people are supported to be healthy

We will ensure timely support for neurodivergent children that is not dependent on diagnosis, implementing Scotland's National Neurodevelopmental Specification standards.

This priority reflects UNCRC Articles: 24 (health), 23 (disability).

The outcomes we aspire to achieve	Key actions and areas of focus	Measures we will use to evidence our progress
Our children, young people and families receive the right mental health support at the right time.	Implementation and monitoring of revised mental health pathway.	Number of children and young people accessing low level mental health and wellbeing support (with data provided by Youth Services on Youth Information Workers in schools)
Our children, young people and families affected by neurodevelopmental conditions can access timely support that is not dependent on diagnosis.	Ensure we have a range of interventions to address early presentation of mental health and wellbeing needs.	Information from the NHS Care Experience Team and the Transitions Mental Health Nurse.
Our children and young people with complex needs receive the care they need in learning and social settings.	We will continue to deliver our improvement programme relating to neurodevelopmental conditions through our partnership approach and involving stakeholders.	Number of children and young people accessing school nursing mental health and wellbeing support.
Young people receive a smooth transition from Child to Adult services.	We will ensure timely support for neurodivergent children that is not dependent on diagnosis, implementing Scotland's National Neurodevelopmental Specification.	Number of children and young people accessing CAMHS and the percentage of CAMHS referrals that are appropriate.
	We will implement and monitor the updated Healthcare in Schools Policy.	% of children and young people seen by CAMHS within target timescales,

	We will ensure that Child's Plans reflect the wishes of the child and the support that they require across all environments.	We will develop separate mental-health access indicators (school-level, community mental health, CAMHS)
	We will implement and audit appropriate transitions tools.	Indicators to be agreed from the revised Mental Health Pathway
	In partnership with Police Scotland, we will deliver inputs about the dangers of substance misuse to young people in secondary schools.	Information from an audit of the implementation of the Healthcare in Schools Guidance.
		Indicators to be identified during the Community-Based Neurodevelopmental Support Project (to include qualitative information from families regarding their stories and their experiences).
		Develop a measure that evidences the effectiveness of transition arrangements from child to adult services 12 months after transition (to include data, and also feedback from children, young people and families).
		Number of inputs given to young people and/or number of young people at the inputs by Police Scotland.

## PRIORITY 4

### Children and young people are able to access learning opportunities which meet their aspirations

This priority reflects UNCRC Articles: 28–29 (education & aims), 13 (expression), 17 (information).

The outcomes we aspire to achieve	Key actions and areas of focus	Measures we will use to evidence our progress
Our children and young people on reduced timetables are given support that enables them to access learning opportunities.'	Use improvement methodology to improve number of children and young people accessing learning.	% of children and young people on reduced timetables
Our children and young people with low attendance are supported to overcome barriers to attendance.	Develop a multi-agency approach to support children with significant barriers to attendance.	% of children and young people not attending school
	Through our Corporate Parenting Education workstream we will work towards our aim of ensuring that all care-experienced children have full time educational provision.	Attendance rates at school
	We will develop alternatives to school for young people that support them to succeed in their aspirations.	Number of children accessing digital learning.
		Exclusion data – Reduction in number and length
		Number of excluded children and young people returning to education
		Range of data measures from our Additional Support Needs Annual Report.

		Staying on at school rates.
		Positive destination rates.
		Proportion of children whose first choice across all elements of timetable was met.
		Proportion of vocational courses within the SQA diet.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – What are Children’s Services and Related Services?

A ‘children’s service’ is a service which is provided wholly or mainly to, or for the benefit of children generally, or children with needs of a particular type (such as care experienced children or children with a disability or a need for additional support). Examples of children’s services are Early Learning and Childcare and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

A ‘related service’ is a service which is not provided wholly or mainly to, or for the benefit of children, but is capable of having a significant effect on the wellbeing of children. Examples of related services are Housing Services and Adult Mental Health Services.

Both children’s services and related services should be party to children’s services planning. Children’s services and related services may be delivered by the public, private or third sector and a list of services in Dumfries and Galloway is detailed below.

Children’s Services *
Early Learning and Childcare
Primary Schools
Secondary Schools
Additional Support Needs School (Langlands)
Educational Psychology
Educational Visitors
Education Autism Outreach Team
Education Care Experience Team
Education Attendance Team
Children and Families Social Work East and West Teams
Family Support Teams (Children and Families Social Work)
Children with Disabilities Team (Children and Families Social Work)
Transitions Team (Children and Families Social Work)
Youth Justice Team (Children and Families Social Work)
Reviewing Team (Children and Families Social Work)
Fostering and Adoption (Children and Families Social Work)
Residential Care (Children and Families Social Work)

Kinship Team (Children and Families Social Work)
Paediatrics
Health Visitors / Family Nurses
Children and Young People Speech and Language
Children and Young People Physiotherapy
Children and Young People Occupational Therapy
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
School Nursing
Care Experience Team
Community Children’s Nurses
Acorn House
Aberlour
Action for Children
Barnardo’s
Young Carers’ Project
Better Lives Partnership
Befriending Project
Private residential care providers (for children)

\* PLEASE NOTE this list is not exhaustive

## Related Services\*

Adult Social Work Services (DGC)  
Criminal Justice Social Work (DGC)  
Lifelong Learning (DGC)  
Employability and Skills (DGC)  
Youth Work (DGC)  
Housing (DGC)  
Homelessness (DGC)  
Benefits (DGC)  
Resettlement (DGC)  
Care Call (DGC)  
Adult Psychology (NHS)  
Alcohol and Drug Service (NHS)  
Acute Services (NHS)  
Other Adult Services (NHS)  
Sexual Health (NHS)  
Midwifery (NHS)  
Social Landlords  
Skills Development Scotland  
Dumfries and Galloway College  
Social Security Scotland  
Carer's Centre  
Women's Aid  
Quarriers  
Homestart

\*PLEASE NOTE – this list is not exhaustive

## Appendix 2 – Policy Links

New or Updated Policy Links	
Additional Support for Learning (ASL)	<a href="#">Additional support for learning - Schools</a>
Bairns Hoose	<a href="#">Bairns' Hoose - Scottish Barnabus: vision, values and approach</a> <a href="#">Bairns' Hoose - project plan: progress report and pathfinder delivery plan 2023 to 2025</a>
Child Protection guidance	<a href="#">Child protection</a>
Continuing Care	<a href="#">Continuing Care Guidance Update - June 2024</a>
Early Child Development Programme	<a href="#">Early child development transformational change programme</a>
Early Learning and Childcare	<a href="#">Best Start - strategic early learning and school age childcare plan 2022 to 2026</a> <a href="#">National Standard for early learning and childcare - Early education and care</a>
Early Years Speech Language and Communication Action Plan	<a href="#">Speech, Language and Communication Action Plan</a>
Equally Safe 2023	<a href="#">Equally Safe strategy - Violence against women and girls (VAWG)</a>
GIRFE	<a href="#">Getting it right for everyone (GIRFE)</a>
Health Visiting	<a href="#">Health visiting: action plan 2025 to 2035</a>
Kinship care guidance	<a href="#">Kinship care - Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 - part 13: updated guidance 2024</a>
Kinship care assessment framework	<a href="#">Kinship care: assessment framework 2024</a>
Play	<a href="#">Play: vision statement and action plan 2025 to 2030</a>
Scottish Recommended Allowance (SRA) for foster and kinship carers	<a href="#">Scottish Recommended Allowance: information for carers and professionals</a>

Self-Directed Support	<a href="#">Self-directed support: improvement plan 2023 to 2027</a> <a href="#">Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013: statutory guidance</a> <a href="#">Supporting documents - Social care - self-directed support: framework of standards - May 2024</a>
The Promise	<a href="#">The Promise</a> <a href="#">The Promise Progress Framework</a>
Whole Family Wellbeing	<a href="#">Whole Family Wellbeing Funding (WFWF) Programme - year 2:</a>
Corporate Parenting Report 2018-21	<a href="#">Caring for our Children and Young People: An update on Scotland's Corporate Parenting 2018 - 2021</a>
Corporate Parenting Report 2021-2024	<a href="#">A decade of care: A corporate parenting update from Scottish Ministers 2021 - 2024</a>
Scotland's Breastfeeding and Infant Feeding Strategic Framework (2025-2030)	<a href="#">Breastfeeding and Infant Feeding Strategic Framework and Delivery Plan</a>
Adoption	<a href="#">Adoption - Supporting adoption: vision and priorities - statement (published November 2024)</a>
Public Health	<a href="#">Scotland's Population Health Framework</a> <a href="#">Health and Social Care Service Renewal Framework</a>
Public Service Reform	<a href="#">Scotland's Public Service Reform Strategy: Delivering for Scotland</a>
Review of Scotland's Children's Services Plans	<a href="#">Improving outcomes for children, young people and families: Review of Scotland's Children's Services Plans (2023-2026) and strategic engagement National Report</a>

Current Policy
<a href="#"><u>Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC)</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>National Transitions to Adulthood Strategy for Young Disabled People</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Transition Care Planning action 21: principles of transition (Transitions from CAMHS to Adult Mental Health Services)</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Early child development transformational change programme</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Early education and care</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>School age childcare delivery framework</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Poverty and social justice (Child Poverty)</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Looked After Children (includes corporate parenting, adoption, fostering etc)</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Hearings for Children report: response (Children's Hearings)</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>National Drugs Mission Plan: 2022-2026 and Drugs and alcohol workforce action plan 2023 to 2026 (Alcohol and Drugs)</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>The role / the function of the child health commissioner (Child Health Commissioner)</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Universal Health Visiting Pathway in Scotland: pre-birth to pre-school</u></a>

<a href="#"><u>Scotland's Baby Boxes</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>CAMHS: National Service Specification</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>National Neurodevelopmental Specification for Children and Young People: principles and standards of care</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>National Neurodevelopmental Specification for Children and Young People: implementation review report</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People Update 2024</u></a>

## Appendix 3 – Wellbeing Indicators

This is a **high-level suite of indicators**, that taken together provide a global picture of the wellbeing of our children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway.

Further data on our children and young people is in our 2025 Strategic Needs Assessment which is intended to be a 'live' document that will be regularly updated with the most recent data, and new datasets added.

### SAFE

- Number of children on the Child Protection Register as rate per 1000 population aged 0-15 years (Priority 2)
- Emergency hospital admissions for Unintentional Injuries for children aged under 15 in Dumfries and Galloway (Priority 1)

### HEALTHY

- Primary immunisation rate by 12 months of age – 5-in-1/6-in-1 (Priority 3)
- Primary immunisation rate by 12 months of age - PVC (Priority 3)
- Primary immunisation rate by 12 months of age – Rotavirus (Priority 3)
- Primary immunisation rate by 12 months of age - MenB (Priority 3)
- The percentage of 27-30 months reviews completed (Priority 3)
- The percentage of children in Primary 1 at risk of being overweight and/or obese (Priority 3)

### ACHIEVING

- Percentage of LAC School Leavers who enter a positive Destination (Priority 4)
- The percentage of children meeting developmental milestones at the 27-30 month review. (% with no concerns across all domains, and % with no concerns recorded but some domains incomplete/missing) (Priority 4)
- Percentage of young adults (16-19 year olds) participating in education, training or employment. (Priority 4)
- Proportion of Primary pupils achieving expected levels in all three Literacy organisers (Priority 4)

- Proportion of Primary pupils achieving expected levels in Numeracy (Priority 4)
- Proportion of Primary pupils (looked-after children) achieving expected levels in all three Literacy organisers (Priority 4)
- Proportion of Primary pupils (looked-after children) achieving expected levels in Numeracy (Priority 4)

### NURTURED

- Number and percentage of children being referred to the Children's Reporter on care & protection grounds. (Priorities 1 and 2)
- Balance of care for Looked After Children: % of children being looked after in the community (Priority 1)

### RESPONSIBLE

- Number and percentage of children being referred to the Children's Reporter on offence grounds, Section 67 j grounds. (Priority 1)

### INCLUDED

- Attendance Rate, Primary School, Dumfries and Galloway for Looked after Children. (Priority 4)
- Attendance Rate, Secondary School, Dumfries and Galloway for Looked after Children. (Priorities 1, 2, 3 and 4)
- Number of homelessness applications from applicants who were looked after as a child by the local authority within the last 5 years. (Priority 1)

## Appendix 4 – Explanation of some terms in this plan

We have tried to avoid using complex professional language in this plan, but here are some terms that might need some explanation.

Care Experienced	<p>Care Experienced is a term that can mean children or young people who are:</p> <p>Looked after* at home through a Compulsory Supervision Order (CSO) *see below for 'looked-after'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looked after away from home in a residential children's house, in a foster placement or in a kinship placement (Looked After or Non-Looked After).</li> <li>• A Non-Looked-After child or young person might stay with friends/ family in a kinship placement where this is something the family arrange themselves without any legal order in place)</li> <li>• Previously looked after, where at some point in their lives they have had any of the above experiences. The child/young person may never have been formally looked after.</li> </ul>
Corporate Parenting	<p>A corporate parent is the name given to an organisation or person who has special responsibilities to care experienced children and young people. This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• those in residential care,</li> <li>• those in foster care,</li> <li>• those in kinship care, who live with a family member other than a parent, and</li> <li>• those who are looked after at home.</li> </ul> <p>In simple terms, a corporate parent is intended to carry out many of the roles a loving parent should. While they may not be able to provide everything a parent can, but they should still be able to provide the children and young people they're responsible for with the best possible support and care.</p> <p>Corporate parent responsibilities are intended to encourage people and organisations to do as much as they can towards improving the lives of care experienced and looked after children, so that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feel in control of their lives, and</li> <li>• are able to overcome the barriers they face</li> </ul> <p>See <a href="#">What is a corporate parent? - The Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland</a></p>

Complex needs	<p>A child is described as having complex needs if they have been diagnosed with an illness, disability or sensory impairment and need a lot of additional support on a daily basis. A child might have complex needs from birth, or after an illness or injury.</p> <p>See <a href="#">How to care for children with complex needs - Social care and support guide - NHS</a></p>
Crisis	<p>A crisis refers to an urgent, very serious situation where a person or family faces an immediate threat to their health, safety, or housing. In this situation, the person or family needs help very quickly to prevent more harm. Crisis happens at a point when usual ways of coping are not working any more. Often, this point is triggered by events like poverty, eviction, domestic abuse, or mental health emergencies.</p>
Digital Neglect	<p>Digital neglect does not yet have an agreed definition, but it is generally understood to involve some or all of the following:</p> <p>Failure of Parental Supervision. This is where children are able to access social media, internet or gaming without any restriction or supervision. This can lead to potential exposure to harm.</p> <p>Lack of Interaction: This is where parents/carers spend so much time on their own devices that they pay little attention to children. This results in the child being emotionally neglected. Parents/carers can also leave children to spend too much time on devices.</p> <p>Inappropriate Access: this is the failure to ensure that technology (games, apps, content) is suitable for the child's age or developmental stage (for example ignoring Pan European Gaming Information [PEGI] ratings).</p> <p>Neglecting Online Safety: this is the failure to protect children from online risks such as cyberbullying, sexual exploitation, or grooming.</p>
Early and Effective Intervention (EEI)	<p>EEI aims to respond to children who come to the attention of the Police for offending, concerning or harmful behaviour. The overall aim is to improve the outcomes for children by ensuring proportionate responses that are right for the child, at the right time. See <a href="#">Youth justice - early and effective intervention: core elements - framework - gov.scot</a></p>
Early Intervention	<p>Early intervention means identifying and supporting children, families, or individuals as soon as challenges arise. The aim is to prevent problems from escalating or to stop them from happening altogether. Early intervention focuses on the strengths of the person or family so that they are better able to cope with challenges. It is about providing help before the person or family reaches a crisis situation.</p>

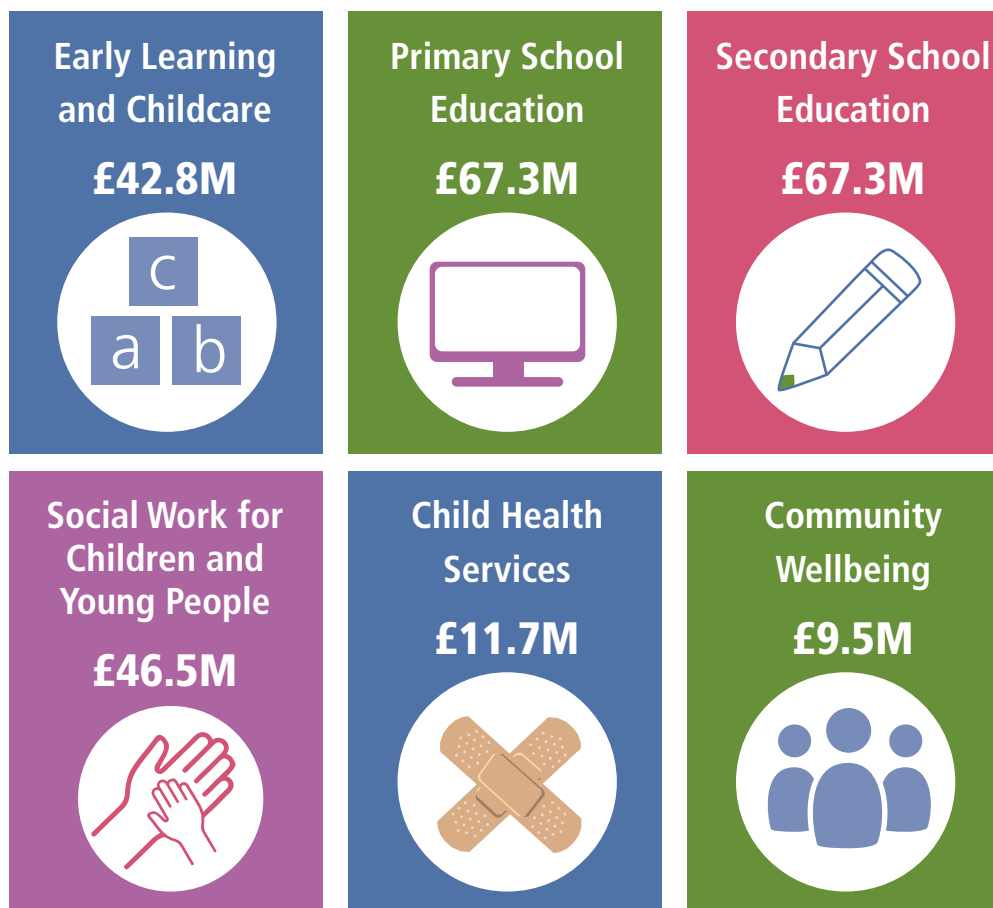
<p>Looked after (Children and young people in the care of the local authority)</p>	<p>Looked after means ‘in the care of the local authority’. In Dumfries and Galloway, we avoid using the term ‘looked after’ where possible, because children and young people have told us that they do not like being described with this language.</p> <p>However, the term ‘looked after’ may appear in official documents and in reports to the Scottish Government. This is because it is an official term used by Scottish Government that means that there are legal requirements about a child or young person’s safeguarding. They might be living at home, or away from home, but there will be a legal order in place for them.</p> <p>Looked after children/young people include those:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looked after at home through a Compulsory Supervision Order (CSO) OR</li> <li>• Looked after away from home in a residential children’s house, in a foster placement or in a looked after kinship placement.</li> </ul>
<p>Neurodevelopment</p>	<p>Neurodevelopment is about how the brain develops. Our brains start to develop before we are born. The brain continues to develop through childhood and into early adulthood. Human brains typically develop following a basically predictable pattern, but each individual’s brain will develop in a slightly different way that makes them unique.</p>
<p>Neurodiversity and Neurodivergent</p>	<p>Neurodiversity is the concept that brain differences are natural variations and no two brains are the same. This means that everyone will think and process the world around them slightly differently.</p> <p>Sometimes, these natural differences in the way that people process the world can be quite noticeable, and they might be described as neurodivergent. Their brain differences could lead to them being given a diagnosis of autism and/or ADHD for example.</p>
<p>Neurodevelopmental Disorders</p>	<p>Neurodevelopmental Disorders are when a person’s neurodivergence affects their day-to-day life in a way that gives them significant difficulties.</p> <p><a href="#">Children in Fife</a> have accessible information for children on Neurodiversity.</p>
<p>Prevention</p>	<p>In the context of getting it right for every child, prevention is about identifying and meeting wellbeing needs before problems can arise.</p>
<p>Third sector organisations</p>	<p>The third sector includes charities, social enterprises and community groups which deliver services and help to improve people's wellbeing.</p> <p>Locally, we have an organisation called <a href="#">Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway</a>. This is a charitable organisation that exists to promote, support, and develop a strong third sector, social enterprise, volunteering, and connect into community planning. Many of our third sector organisations are members of Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway (TSDG) and the sector is represented on the Executive Group of our children’s services planning partnership by the Chief Executive Officer of TSDG.</p>

## Appendix 5 - Resources

Delivery of a children's services plan relies on existing resources.

By working together, we can make best use of our shared resource for the benefit of local children, young people and families.

Our resources within children's services in Dumfries and Galloway include:



*\*Public Health Nursing; Allied Health Professionals; Care Experienced Team; Community Children's Nursing; Community Paediatrics; CAHMS.*

**We have 1,668 Teachers:** (This includes HQ staff that are teachers). These equate to 1,359.76 Full Time Equivalent teachers.

**We have 644 Learning Assistants** which equate to 407.42 Full Time Equivalent posts.

**We have 74 Social Work posts** and **120 Social Work Assistants/Family Support Staff.**

The **Whole Time Equivalent Workforce (WTE) in Child Health services\* is 184**

*\*(where Child Health services are: Public Health Nursing; Allied Health Professionals; Care Experienced Team; Community Children's Nursing; Community Paediatrics; CAHMS)*

Information on our Children's Services Plan is available on the Dumfries and Galloway Council website, please search for 'Children's Services Plan'

<https://www.dumfriesandgalloway.gov.uk/>

Further information on children's services planning, and Getting it right for every child in Dumfries and Galloway is available on our GIRFEC

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/dg/girfecdg/>