

West Lothian Children's Services Annual Report 2020-2021



Getting it Right for
West Lothian's
Children & Families 

West Lothian
Health & Social Care Partnership
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West Lothian
Council

Children's Services Annual Report 2020-2021

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In West Lothian we recognise that investment in our children and young people is one of the most valuable long-term investments that we can make. By investing our shared resources in the delivery and development of services that focus on prevention and early intervention we can ensure that children's needs are met at the earliest opportunity and are supported to achieve their full potential.

This Annual Report for 2020-2021 reflects the work and progress of the Children's Services priorities and actions



Annual Reporting

In 2020-2021 partners have worked together to deliver high quality services that are child centred and developed with families and partner agencies and that tackle inequalities and focus on improved outcomes for children in West Lothian. This report outlines the key areas of work that have been undertaken by the Children and Families Strategic Planning Group, the key factors that have impacted on this work and the progress made in taking forward the priorities of the West Lothian Children's Services Plan 2020-2023.

Planning Services for Children, Young People and Families

The Children (Scotland) Act 2020 received Royal Assent on 1st October 2020 and puts children and children's views at the heart of the decision-making process, and ensure the fair treatment of children and families by Scotland's civil courts. Work is currently underway in West Lothian to ensure that practice, processes and procedures are reviewed and updated to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Act.

Our aim is to tackle health and social inequalities and give children and young people in West Lothian the best possible start in life, we want all children to be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. Children and young people are the future of West Lothian. We listen to the voices of children, ensure their views are valued and respected and include them in the planning process.

The West Lothian Children's Services Plan 2020-2023 outlines the work of the West Lothian Children and Families Strategic Planning Group and follows an outcome-based approach to planning as led by the West Lothian Community Planning Partnership (CPP).

We recognise that new challenges have emerged as a result of COVID-19, some of the families who were vulnerable prior to the pandemic are presenting with greater vulnerabilities now and families who would not have presented as vulnerable previously, now are. These changes will need to be considered in planning of services going forward.

The experience of Covid-19 has highlighted the flexible and innovative ways of working that staff, volunteers, carers and services have undertaken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children and families has been maintained.

These new flexible working methods including increased use of technology will support the swifter adaption to potential new working ways.

James Cameron

Chair of the Children & Families Strategic Planning Group

Introduction

Our Vision

In West Lothian we believe that every child should have the best start in life to enable them to: have high aspirations, build the foundations for living well in the future and realise their potential.

This underpins the national programmes of Curriculum for Excellence and Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) with desired outcomes that all children become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens through being safe, nurtured, healthy, active, included, achieving, respected and responsible.

We are committed to providing services that are holistic and developed with families themselves and partner agencies; that tackle inequalities and focus on improved outcomes for children. To ensure that children and young people in need have a head start in life, we are focused on the importance of preventative work with families to help them cope with the pressures of parenting, as well as providing statutory early intervention and child protection services.

Our Principles

The underpinning principles of how we plan and deliver services for children revolve around how we target support to children and their families at an early enough point whilst recognising that there will always be a need to provide services for the ongoing problems that families may experience.

The West Lothian Children's Services Plan has been developed to encompass the following principles:

- Getting the right balance between universal and targeted services
- Re-distributing resources towards targeted activities with individuals, groups and communities
- Improved integrated working
- Improving outcomes for the individual child and their family Focusing on early intervention by shifting resources from managing crisis to prevention and building resilience.

The West Lothian Children's Services Plan:

- Highlights partners' commitment to delivering outcomes for children and young people in West Lothian through active participation in joint planning and delivery structures.
- Defines the approaches and mechanisms which partners use in West Lothian to plan and deliver those joint services, initiatives and activities geared towards the delivery of outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- Defines the key outcomes which have been agreed by partners as priorities for multi-agency action.
- Explains the way in which activity relating to each of these themes will be linked to key outcomes, will be monitored through the use of meaningful performance indicators and will be driven by challenging targets

Partnership Working

The Children's Services Plan confirms the commitment of partners to:

- Actively participate in well-established joint service planning in West Lothian, through the Children and Families Strategic Planning Group, Corporate Parenting Strategic Planning Group, Safer Communities Strategic Planning Group, Integration Joint Board Strategic Planning Group, the Child Protection Committee and the Anti-Poverty Task Force and the Third Sector Strategy Group.
- Investigate best practice in early intervention and preventative approaches, and implement such approaches across West Lothian.
- Build on previous successes and further demonstrate the added value from cooperative approaches to planning and delivering services and activity.

Our Plan at a Glance

United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC)

National Performance Framework Outcomes

West Lothian Local Outcome Improvement Plan

Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed

We are better educated and have access to increased and better-quality learning and employment opportunities

People most at risk are protected and supported to achieve improved life chances

We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities

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West Lothian Children's Services Priorities

Corporate Parenting

Child Protection

Raising achievement and attainment

Promote Health and Wellbeing

Reduce offending behaviour in Children and Young People

Reduce Substance Misuse

Promote Children's Rights

Wellbeing Indicators

West Lothian's Children – Profile

In planning for the development and delivery of services for children, young people and their families, the profile of West Lothian's children and families has been considered. West Lothian has a population of about 183,100 (mid-2019) and is one of the fastest growing and youngest in the country. Between 1998 and 2019, the population of West Lothian has increased by 19.5%. This is the 2nd highest percentage change out of the 32 council areas in Scotland. Over the same period, Scotland's population rose by 7.6%.

Between 2018 and 2028, the population of West Lothian is projected to increase to 192,812. This is an increase of 5.9%, which compares to a projected increase of 1.8% for Scotland as a whole.

Based on 2019 mid-year population estimates of West Lothian's population of children and young people aged 0-15 years 35,494 which is 19.3% of the total population. This is a 5.2% increase since 1998 compared with an 8% decrease of the 0-15 year old population across Scotland for the same time period.

The impact of the demographic increase is significant as it will bring an increase in demand for services which is likely to exceed available resources if services are not fundamentally redesigned.



15,000 people in West Lothian (8% of the county's population) live within the 15% most deprived areas in Scotland.

Youth unemployment in West Lothian stands at 10.9%, which is greater than the Scotland rate of 9.8% and the Great Britain rate of 9.4%.



The most recent child poverty statistics (2019) show that 24.6% of West Lothian children are living in poverty. This is a decrease of 1.4% from 2018 (26.0%)



The percentage of mothers who stop breastfeeding by 6-8 weeks is higher in West Lothian at 29.9% compared to 25.9% across Lothian



In West Lothian 91.3% of eligible children receive a 13-15 month review compared with 88.9% across Lothian and 93% of 27-30 month children receiving a developmental and wellbeing review compare with 88.9% across Lothian

1.1% of the total 0-17 years population in West Lothian were Looked After. The Scottish average for the same period was 1.5%.

The demographic profile of West Lothian coupled with life-stage specific challenges indicates that there will be an increase in the demand for services for children and families with additional needs. This means that we need to ensure that services are appropriately targeted, delivered and planned in partnership and focused on improved outcomes for children and their families.

Strategic & Legislative Developments

There have been significant strategic and legislative developments during 2020/21 likely to impact on Community Planning Partners service delivery in the future.

The Promise Scotland launched Plan 21-24, on 31st March 2021 which sets out the Five Priority Areas and Five Fundamentals which will be essential to achieving the transformation change required to improve outcomes for care experienced children and young people. A dedicated role has been developed in West Lothian to support the system, practice and cultural changes that will be required to take forward this key priority area of improvement work.

Partners are focused on improving outcome for **care experienced people**. We are committed to ensuring that families are supported at the earliest point possible and that intensive support is provided to ensure that children at risk of being accommodated remain within their own families, family networks and communities where it is safe to do so.

Improvements focussed on the procedural safeguards for children being placed within **secure accommodation** have been embedded in practice as a result of the findings of the investigation undertaken by the office of the Children and Young People's Commissioner; Statutory Duties in Secure Accommodation; Unlocking Children's Rights.

The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill sets out the specific rights that all children have to help fulfil their potential, including rights relating to health and education, leisure and play, fair and equal treatment, protection from exploitation and the right to be heard. The bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament on 1st September 2020 and was passed unanimously on 16th March 2021, but in October 2021 the Supreme Court ruled that some provisions of the UNCRC Bill would be outside the legislative competence of the Scottish Government and as such the Bill cannot be introduced into Scottish Law until this has been resolved. The Scottish Government remains committed to the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law to the maximum extent possible.

The Children (Scotland) Act

2020 received Royal Assent on 1st October 2020 and puts children and children's views at the heart of the decision-making process, and ensure the fair treatment of children and families by Scotland's civil courts. Work is currently underway in West Lothian to ensure that practice, processes and procedures are reviewed and updated to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Act. Promoting Children's Rights is a priority in the West Lothian Children's Services Plan 2020-2023 and the associated action plan prioritises embedding the articles of the UNCRC into practice.

In October 2018, the Deputy First Minister made a commitment to introduce a statutory financial redress scheme, as part of a package of wider reparations for **survivors of historical child abuse in care**. The Bill was introduced on 13 August 2020 and sets up a scheme to make financial payments ('redress payments') to survivors of historical child abuse in care in Scotland prior to 1 December 2004. The Bill also provides survivors of abuse with other practical and emotional support. The Bill became law on 23 April 2021 and introduced the Redress for Survivors (Historical Child Abuse in Care) (Scotland) Act 2021. Scotland's Redress Scheme opened for applications in December 2021.

The findings from the **Independent Review of Adult Social Care (IRASC)** were published on 3rd February 2021. The report's recommendations propose significant reform and transformation of adult social care in Scotland. The final extent and reach of reform following the report will become known when decisions are made on key recommendations.

The Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019 raises the age of criminal responsibility from 8 to 12 years and provides new specific investigative powers for police investigating the most serious cases of harmful behaviour and new duties for Local Authorities. The Act is underpinned by the key principles that a child cannot be held criminally responsible for harmful behaviour that amounts to a crime or offence which occurred when the child was aged under 12. Planning commenced for introduction of the changes, due to take effect from 17th December 2021. This included giving consideration to appropriate Places of Safety.

Early Intervention and Prevention

Early intervention and prevention was identified as a strategic theme that runs through all the priorities in the Children's Services Plan and is supported through robust multi-agency partnership working. The benefits of preventing crisis for children and young people is recognised as the best outcome for the individual, the wider family and the community.

In West Lothian, we have embedded models of support which engage with families with very complex needs and with the most entrenched social issues using asset based, co-production ways of working. This has the benefit of working with families on their own terms, addressing issues that are live and important for the family by building strong and persistent relationships between professionals and families, supporting them to navigate and negotiate services and release the strengths already present within the family to best avoid periods of crisis.

Partners in West Lothian work together in a range of ways to focus on prevention and early intervention to ensure that children's needs are met at the earliest opportunity and are supported to achieve their full potential.

Planning and development work has concluded for the new Inclusion and Support Service, which brings together existing teams from education and social policy to support children, young people and families with additional support needs to form one service. The service includes the Inclusion and Wellbeing Service, who provide educational support from their Early Intervention and Secondary Teams for children and young people aged 0-18. The Inclusion and Support Service also includes social policy teams from the Children and Young People's Team, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Positive Parenting and AIMS. The service commenced in April 2021, with services co-ordinated and young people and their families at the centre to ensure appropriate preventative and early intervention interventions are in place to address identified need.

West Lothian's Mental Health and Mental Wellbeing Screening Group (MHMW) provides a collective forum for professionals to meet, discuss and resource mental health and wellbeing referrals. A wide range of agencies are represented and the group operates a needs-led approach which ensures young people have access to the correct supports and resources without delay. A streamlined referral process is in place and all referrals are screened within a two-week period.

Referrals for care experienced children and young people, many of who have trauma-based issues are prioritised however, the majority of referrals come from universal services. The MHMW group has changed to become the "Wellbeing Recovery Group". It is further bolstered by representation from the Practice Teams, Education (ASN), DASAT and Voluntary Sector. This provides one single referral pathway to replace various access routes into individual services. Whilst many referrals will have a mental wellbeing basis, this group also considers referrals relating to physical care, deprivation, and financial hardship. Referrals to the Inclusion and Support Service will also be made via this route.

The Family Assessment and Support Service (FASS) is an amalgamation of Family Centre, Early Years and Parenting Groupwork services. The aim of this service is to capture and prioritise the needs of vulnerable children pre-birth up and to provide a singular referral route for professionals and family. The focus is on the family and providing community-based resources where possible. Whilst primarily an early intervention service, the service also undertake parenting and contact assessments in child protection, permanency and statutory cases.



The year 2020/21 has presented the most challenging circumstances ever faced by all services and organisations delivering services to children and families as a result of the Covid-19 global pandemic.

It has been documented that the impact of COVID 19 is having a detrimental effect on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. This has been evidenced in West Lothian in the increasing numbers of referrals for mental health support. In order to address this increasing need, additional resource was awarded by the Scottish Government, which was directed to the agencies represented at the Wellbeing Recovery Group as an immediate COVID response. In addition, Social Policy commissioned a strategic needs analysis of West Lothian's mental health provision for children and young people. This analysis will inform the work of the new Lead Officer for Mental Health Development, whose role will be to work across West Lothian's services to ensure that gaps in provision are addressed and children and young people have easy access to the appropriate services as early as possible.

The West Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership have worked closely with all of our key stakeholders and in particular with our partners in the Third and Independent Sectors, with families, carers and service users to ensure that essential services continued to be delivered during these unparalleled times. Key services were able to be delivered against agreed commitments alongside other services adapting to meet the challenges and rapidly changing circumstances presented by Covid-19.



The West Lothian Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) centre was set up using an emergency team of Social Policy and NHS staff who were redeployed from their substantive roles. The building was supplied by West Lothian Council with no charge. WLC Criminal Justice staff unable to carry out their usual duties due to the suspension of unpaid work volunteered as delivery drivers for the centre as did volunteers from Carers of West Lothian to deliver PPE to unpaid carers.

In responding to the pandemic, we have developed different ways of working and we will work together to capitalise on these, to build on what works well and how these lessons can be used to improve how we support children young people and their families in West Lothian in the future. Families caring for their children affected by significant and complex disabilities have experienced significant pressures as many of the usual routes for providing breaks from caring and support for them were reduced as a result of COVID-19.

West Lothian Anti-Poverty Strategy

The Community Planning Partnership (CPP) refreshed the West Lothian Anti-Poverty Strategy in 2018 to take into account the changing nature of poverty, notably the effects of social security changes and government austerity measures. One of the eight outcomes detailed within the strategy is to reduce the number of children living in relative poverty. This is of relevance to the aims of the Children's Services Plan.

OUTCOME: Reduce the number of children living in relative poverty

- AIM:**
1. Families with low income are aware of and are supported to access financial support
 2. Families have access to tools and resources to improve their financial wellbeing

Progress of the Identified Actions

1. Increase uptake of school clothing grant by extending eligibility criteria to include Council Tax Reduction Scheme

For new Clothing Grant applications, the qualifying criteria was amended to include Council Tax Reduction entitlement resulting in an additional 247 awards made on this criteria only.

2. Improve accessibility of Education Maintenance Allowance through the development of an online claim form

Online applications for Education Maintenance Allowance have been available since June 2020. This option has been widely promoted alongside digital access to make applications for Free School Meals and Clothing Grants. Social media promotion has been delivered at key points in the year, in July, September and January to encourage maximum uptake and posts have been shared over 350 times.

3. Activity to promote the NEC card/ Young Scot card

The WLC website has been updated with details of how to apply for the Young Scot card under 22 free bus travel along with a link to a new Transport Scotland webpage with full details about the scheme and frequently asked questions.

4. Parents with children eligible for 2 year old early learning and childcare are offered a referral for financial advice

The option to request a financial health check has now been embedded as part of the application process for Early Learning and Childcare and self-referrals for income maximisation advice and support are now received directly from applicants to the Advice Shop.

5. Work with Family Assessment and Support Services screening group to provide income maximisation for at-risk families

Referral mechanism implemented in June 2020 for at-risk families through the Family Assessment and Support Service resulting in 43 referrals for income maximisation advice and support between June 2020 and March 2021 and 105 referrals so far in the 2021-22 period

6. Looked after young people are offered one-to-one support to develop budgeting skills and become financially included

Recruitment has now concluded and a dedicated officer is now in post to support young people most at risk of homelessness, including looked after young people. As part of this project, the Anti-Poverty Service has supported the development of new Tenancy and Citizenship SQA modules focused on teaching young people key post-school skills including successful tenancy management, personal finance skills and cookery skills, techniques and processes. This has been piloted through Burnhouse School and will be expanded to include learners on the Level Up (Looked After Children) project.

7. Work with West Calder High School and local partners to develop a family financial capability support hub

Work has been ongoing with West Calder High School to promote financial capability for families and young people. During 2020, a series of workshops were delivered to pupils by Money Advice Scotland focused on budgeting and money skills for school leavers.

With support from the Anti-Poverty Service, West Calder High School has developed the role of pupil 'Challenge Poverty Ambassadors' who aim to support the school community to promote inclusion and equality and address barriers and stigma associated with poverty. During Challenge Poverty Week 2021 'Challenge Poverty Ambassadors' delivered poverty awareness training around the cost of the school day to their teachers in the school and created a display board to raise awareness of poverty related issues.

8. Targeted campaign to focus on lone parent families and those with a disability to provide long term support

Following this successful partnership, joint work with schools has been taken forward in the 2021-22 period with the recruitment of 3 new Campaign Development Officers who will work directly with 6 high schools to embed advice and support services for families and young people directly through the school setting.

Child Poverty has not been reflected as a stand-alone priority in this plan as this work is being undertaken as part of the Anti-Poverty Strategy.

Additional work with Young People includes the implementation of Anti-Poverty Youth Champions in youth clubs.

Following the Community Learning and Development Youth Services consultation with young people during the pandemic about the impact of lockdown, worry about money was identified as a key concern. In response, young people have volunteered as Anti-Poverty champions to volunteer in youth club settings to engage with and support other young people experiencing poverty or money worries. The Anti-Poverty Service has provided support to deliver poverty awareness training and 3 young champions are now in place, ready to start in youth clubs in Armadale, Winchburgh and Livingston.

The West Lothian Carers Strategy 2020-2023 - Young Carers

The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 came into effect on 1 April 2018. The purpose of the Act is to help carers continue in their caring role whilst being supported to look after their own health and wellbeing, this includes young carers. One of the strategic outcomes of the Act is that young carers are supported; and protected from inappropriate caring and negative impacts on their education, social lives and future development.

The West Lothian Carers Strategy 2020-2023 was approved in September 2020 and priority areas for young carers were identified.

OUTCOME: Young carers are supported and protected from inappropriate caring and from negative impacts on their education, social lives and future development

AIM: Young carers are supported to look after their own health and wellbeing whilst continuing their caring role

Progress of the Identified Actions

1. Involve young carers in individual decisions which affect them and encourage them to engage in strategic decisions, supporting young carers to engage and have their voices heard, including the Scottish Young Carers Festival and the Social Security Young Carer Experience Panel

Despite Covid Young Carers (YC) have been invited along to YC Festival activities online and been involved in online consultations about the Young Carer Grant and the impact Covid has had on their lives as a Young Carer.

They have had the opportunity through Scottish Government and Carers Trust to also complete some questionnaires to help have their views listened to and to help get their feelings across.

2. Schools actively play a key role to identify and support young carers and signpost / refer to the necessary support organisations

Awareness raising input to both Primary Headteachers and Secondary School Depute Headteachers about the newly established referral pathway for Young Carers to be assessed for a Young Carer Statement will take place in February 2022. These sessions will also promote secondary school aged pupils taking part in the carer survey in Feb/March 2022, with a separate survey developed for primary aged pupils (to be completed by Primary School HTs). Schools will also be prompted to support parents/carers/families to complete the adult version of the audit survey. Schools continue to refer YC's to CoWL for support.

3. Schools raise awareness of young carers role to peers and how this role can impact them and how to support a friend who is a carer

Each secondary school have an online pack they have access to which helps them to plan and deliver PSE classes to raise awareness of Young Carers and their needs. Also, during the restrictions, a video was produced for schools to deliver at Assemblies. Staff also have access to an E Learning Module for them to complete as part of their own personal development.

4. Ensure the necessary support for young carers when transitioning from school to their next positive destination; further and higher education or into employment

All young people in schools including YC's have access to Skills Development Scotland and More Choices, More

Chances workers within school, starting at age 15, who work with them as individuals to look at post-school options (whether that be work, apprenticeships, college or higher education).

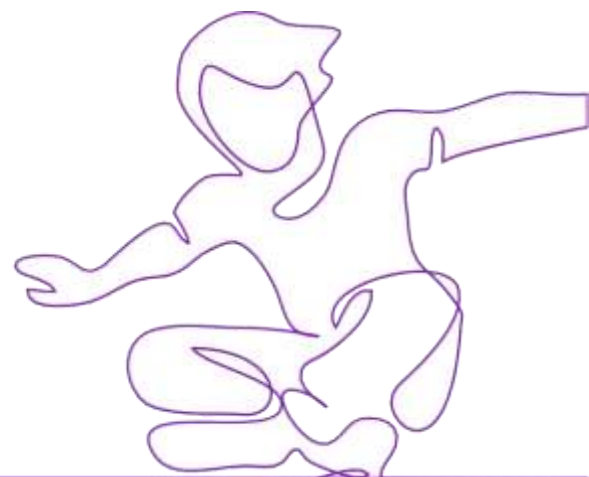
5. Promote the financial support available for young carers including; Young Carer grant, Young Scot Package, free bus travel

Young Carers are referred onto the Advice shop to help them access appropriate grants and benefit checks. Social media, e-bulletins and group emails are used to promote the Young Carer Grant and Young Scot Packages on a regular basis and more recently their entitlement for free transport. Several Young Carers have been successful in receiving this financial support.

6. Young Carers are made aware of their Children's Rights in line with the GIRFEC principles which reflect the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

CoWL use Social Media channels, groups and bulletins to update and inform the young carers of their rights and also with regards to recent changes and updates. Children's Rights are routinely discussed in schools, but the above plans and activities will support the role of Young Carers to be aware of their specific rights under this legislation.

Support for Young Carers has not been reflected as a stand-alone priority in this plan as this work is being undertaken as part of the West Lothian Carers Strategy. This Children's Services plan will align to the young carers priority areas to support young carers wellbeing to help them to continue in their caring roles and to be children first and receive the same opportunities as their peers to succeed in life.



In order to ensure that every child in West Lothian has the best start in life to enable them to have high aspirations, build the foundation for living well in the future and realise their potential the following priorities have been identified as key areas of work for the partnership.

The seven high level priorities are:

Child Protection	Corporate Parenting
Promote Health and Wellbeing	Promoting Children's Rights
Raising Achievement and Attainment	Reduce Substance Misuse
Reduce Offending Behaviour in Children and Young People	

The priorities were established following consultation and engagement with children and young people and their families, stakeholders, staff and other organisations involved in delivering Children's Services and in line with the National Performance Framework. All of these priorities contribute directly to the Wellbeing Indicators (SHANARRI) and correlate with links to the UNCRC priorities of safeguarding children and young people as detailed in Appendix 1.

Our priorities were reviewed to take account of the lessons learned during our collective response to COVID-19 in 2020. We are clear that robust partnership working is essential in order to deliver positive outcomes for children young people and their families going forward. We are aware that the pandemic has had disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable families and that there is an increase in the number of families who, prior to the pandemic, would not have presented as vulnerable.



Child Protection

To ensure that every child in West Lothian has the best start in life they must be safe. Child protection is the responsibility of all who work with children, families and adults, regardless of whether that work brings them into direct contact with children. Partnership working is at the heart of everything we do and plays a vital role in ensuring the protection of West Lothian's children and young people.

Progress of the Identified Actions

1. **Reviewing the quality of information provided to Case Conferences with emphasis on the active engagement of children and their families**

A pilot to produce a multi-agency chronology and core group report for 6-month child protection review case conferences (CPCC) was positively evaluated by the Quality Assurance Self Evaluation (QASE) subcommittee, partners and parents and is now embedded in practice.

Parental attendance is encouraged at CPCCs and barriers to non-attendance explored after each CPCC. Participation of children and young people is being considered to ensure there is meaningful engagement.

2. **Implementation of new missing person protocol to ensure ongoing safety of children and young people**

A new protocol is being rolled out across a range of professionals including Residential Houses, Social Care Emergency Team (SCET), children's services teams and Police colleagues. A multi-agency Panel meets on a monthly basis to discuss cases where there are repeated incidents of someone going missing with a view to addressing the causes.

3. **Ensuring that there is a confident and competent workforce that understands its role and responsibility in the area of child protection for all children, regardless of need and ability**

In 2020, West Lothian moved from having a single Public Protection Committee (PPC) to having four dedicated committees providing leadership in the areas of: Child Protection; Adult Support and Protection; Violence Against Women & Girls and Offender Management (MAPPA). The committees make sure that staff have up to date policies, procedures, guidance and training so that they are equipped to work in partnership to protect those at risk of abuse and harm. They are also responsible for quality assurance and making sure that members of the public have access to relevant information and know who to contact if they have any concerns that a child or adult may be at risk of harm.

4. **Improving responses to neglect**

A Significant Case Review on the theme of neglect was undertaken during 2019 and presented to the Child Protection Committee in 2020. Lessons learned will inform future plans to improve and develop practice.

A Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) working Group has been established to refresh local guidance and templates to ensure a consistent approach. The group contributed feedback to the Scottish Government's consultation on refreshed guidance.

5. **Working together to prevent and address Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

The Human Trafficking and Exploitation Procedure was updated and agreed by the Child and Adult Protection Committees. This was shared with staff. Where CSE concerns are identified an Inter-agency Referral Discussion (IRD) is initiated to address the concerns and a CSE Strategy meeting is convened if risks are identified to agree actions and review.

6. Ensuring that Visually Recorded Interviews (VRI) are of a high and consistent standard

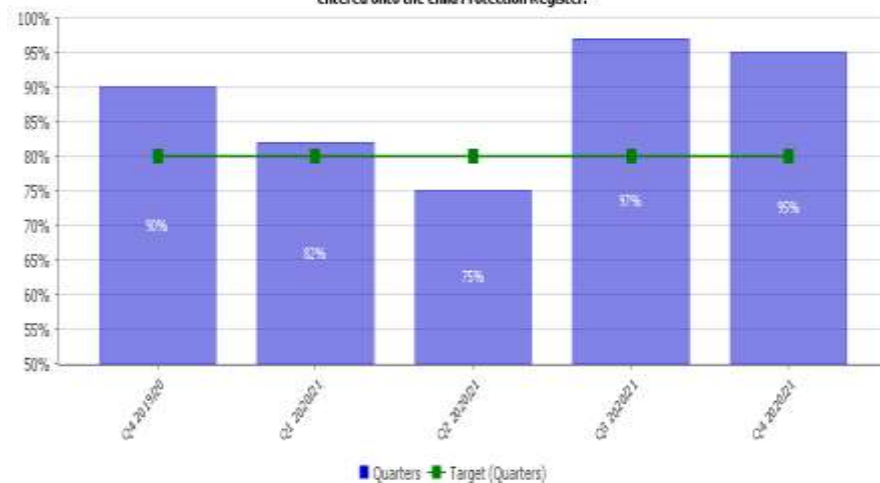
A new national Joint Investigative Interview project will be implemented to improve quality of experience of child victims and witnesses, minimise re-traumatisation & improve quality of evidence. This will be a phased process overseen by a local implementation group, with the current interview model continuing while staff are trained in the new Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM).

7. Considering practice in light of lessons learned from Initial Case Reviews and Significant Case Reviews

A Significant Case Review (SCR) on the theme of neglect was undertaken during 2019 and presented to the Child Protection Committee in 2020, with an action plan agreed to address findings. An SCR in relation to Child B was completed in 2021.

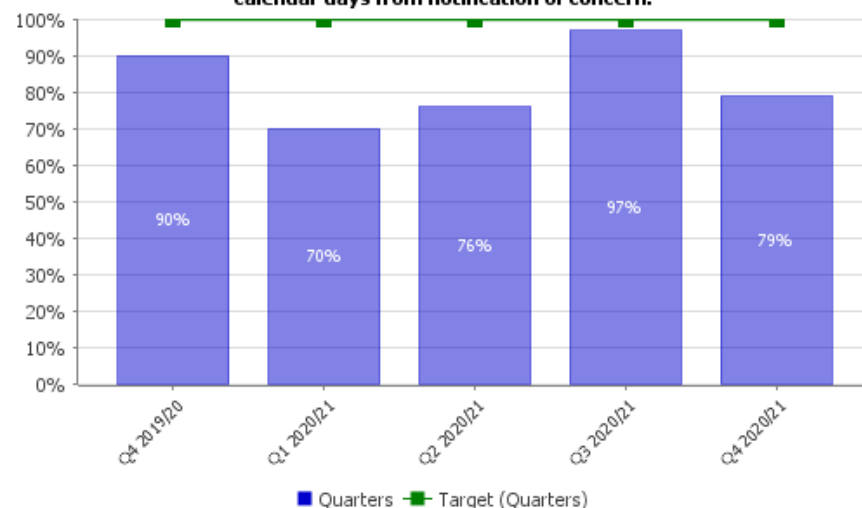
There is a suite of Performance Indicators to monitor the performance of service delivery: 2 examples:

SPPPC_102 Conversion rate as a percentage of children subject to pre birth or initial Child Protection Case Conferences who are subsequently entered onto the Child Protection Register.



This indicator is the percentage of case conferences that result in registration. The decision to place a child's name on the register is a multi-agency one.

SPPC200_9a Percentage of initial child protection case conferences held no later than 21 calendar days from notification of concern.



This indicator reflects the new "Minimum Dataset for Child Protection" that has been agreed and this indicator will now be measured in Academic quarters (e.g. August - October) to align with complementary Education indicators. The minimum data set runs a month in arrears of normal financial quarters.

The performance has been variable for this indicator, however the result is can be strongly influenced by the number of child protection cases in any quarter and the circumstances of the case.

Promote Health and Wellbeing

Good health and wellbeing is key to ensuring children and young people in West Lothian have the best start in life. Children's health and wellbeing starts with their family and includes good physical and mental health, feelings of happiness, satisfaction and successful social functioning. It influences the way children and young people interact in their environment. A strong sense of wellbeing provides children with confidence and optimism which maximise their learning potential.

Progress of the Identified Actions

1. Streamline access to supports across services

Planning has concluded for the implementation of the new Inclusion and Support Service (ISS) which enables a holistic approach to early intervention and support for young people and their families to prevent escalation. The new service, with a single vision of family need, will strengthen professional links and a co-ordinated response to identified need. The new service will be supported through new systems and processes for information sharing, screening, prioritisation and service matching as well as links to wider agencies and services, that will form part of the service delivery model. Through this new model it is anticipated that there will be real impact on the direct work that is done to support children and their families. There will be a single point of access to services to ensure an integrated and co-ordinated response to identified need. One single referral pathway will prevent duplication of resources and offer a simplified customer orientated approach. Working with partner agencies, it will streamline processes, make more efficient use of resources and ensure consistency of approach and equity of opportunity across West Lothian. The service launched on 19th April 2021.

In March 21 to help inform the West Lothian Health and Social Care Children's Service Plan, the future commissioning strategy and to establish the mental health needs of the children and young people in West Lothian. A strategic needs assessment was commissioned. The findings from this needs assessment will be used to inform the planning and re-design of services to ensure that they will meet the needs of children and young people in the area equitably, effectively and timeously.

2. Increase accessibility of healthy food choices

The West Lothian Food Network and its members, have been developing their network of distribution points and support services, to increase the accessibility of healthy food choices

The food consortium supports many food pantries and Community fridge facilities throughout West Lothian, these have increased substantially during the pandemic and the need remains high due to levels of poverty. These facilities give Children, families and young people in supported tenancies, access to fresh produce - fruit, veg, meat and dairy. The Youth Action Project compliment the foodbank services by providing emergency food supplies, particularly outwith normal working hours if referred by WLC or third sector agencies.

3. Increase in the inclusivity of sport and physical activity

An Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (E,D & I) plan is currently being drafted for the Active Schools and Community Sport service, having been awarded time-limited internal funding to support this area of work, and are actively working with schools to develop interventions and plans to improve E, D & I within our programmes and to support the health and wellbeing of pupils.

4. Ensure that all children have appropriate and safe opportunities for play

COVID 19 has had an enormous impact on children and young people's physical and mental wellbeing with access to play being restricted. The results of a consultation organised by Play Scotland in Jan-Feb '21 showed that Children want a return to play, more play and better play. The existing West Lothian Play Strategy will be reviewed, updated and progressed in line with the Scottish national Play Strategy which is under review.

5. Support for parents/ caregivers of pre-school and all school aged children

Introduction of the FEAR-LESS TRIPLE P online. The programme is suited to parents or caregivers interested in coaching children to become more emotionally resilient or have children aged from 6 to 14 years with anxiety that causes significant distress or impact on their everyday life. The online programme may also be used by families waiting for clinic services or as an adjunct to in-person services (e.g. missed clinical sessions or session reviews). Fear-Less Triple P aims to help parents to: set a good example of coping with anxiety; coach their children to become more emotionally resilient; develop a toolbox of strategies for helping children to manage their anxiety; and choose the most effective ways to respond to their children's anxiety.

6. Children's early years services are available to support children to have the best start in life and to meet their potential developmental milestones

The SG Universal Pathway of Health Visiting Services is delivered in all areas of WL. We have recently introduced the antenatal visit in 2 areas and will look to expand this across West Lothian in the next few months. The Health Visiting pathway is about building and maintaining relationships between families and their Health Visitor. The data collected on the Universal Pathway shows that the families living in areas of deprivation are receiving more pathway visits than those in the more affluent areas. Despite this the developmental outcomes for children in the affluent areas are much better. 10% of children in West Lothian at their 13-15 month review have concerns noted with their gross motor skills however this has resolved by the time they reach 27-30 months.

Data from the Health Visitors 27–30-month review for children born in 2019 highlights that there has been a substantial increase in speech and language developmental concerns in West Lothian. While all areas across Lothian have increased slightly (which will be partly due to the pandemic) West Lothian is sitting at 12% which is significantly higher than other areas. Many of the deprived areas have seen rates double, with some areas sitting at 25%. There is work ongoing to:

- Identify the support that parents have in place in local communities and potentially any gaps
- Look at information and quality of the interaction between the health visitor and the families, including identifying resources to support them
- Work with Speech and Language Therapists to test interventions in one area to monitor impact using improvement methodology.

The Health Visitors are looking at doing some quality improvement work with parents around improving developmental outcomes for children. We are also linking with our public health colleagues mapping out services for parents in West Lothian which will improve developmental outcomes for children.

7. Support positive mental and emotional wellbeing of parents, children and young people

A Lead Officer for Mental Development came into post in April 21 and is supporting the implementation of outcomes of the strategic need's assessment for the development of mental health services to children and young people in West Lothian. The Lead Officer is responsible for the redesign of mental health services, applies the values and principles of the Community Young People's Mental Health & Wellbeing Supports and Services Framework. Also ensuring that any national developments, including changes in legislation, policies, regulations and guidance; research evidence and best practice examples, are incorporated accordingly.

West Lothian Health & Social Care Partnership has welcomed Scottish Government Community Young People's Mental Health & Wellbeing Supports and Services Framework (The CYPMHW Framework) grants to assist with the focus on prevention, early intervention and the treatment of distress and the continued work to support young people's and their family's mental health and wellbeing needs.

The initial Scottish Government CYPMHW Framework Grant has enabled us to commission three additional third sector community organisations to provide mental health and wellbeing services to help manage the increased demand of wellbeing support at the Wellbeing Recovery Group. This was appreciated at a time of change and the implementation of the new Inclusion and Support Service.

A new Public Social Partnership is being discussed as an option with the Scottish Government pandemic response grant. The PSP will involve ten local Third Sector partners, who will pilot a new model which will introduce a

streamlined approach to mental health supports for children, young people and their families. This will also allow us to increase our understanding of the expressed mental wellbeing needs of families in West Lothian.

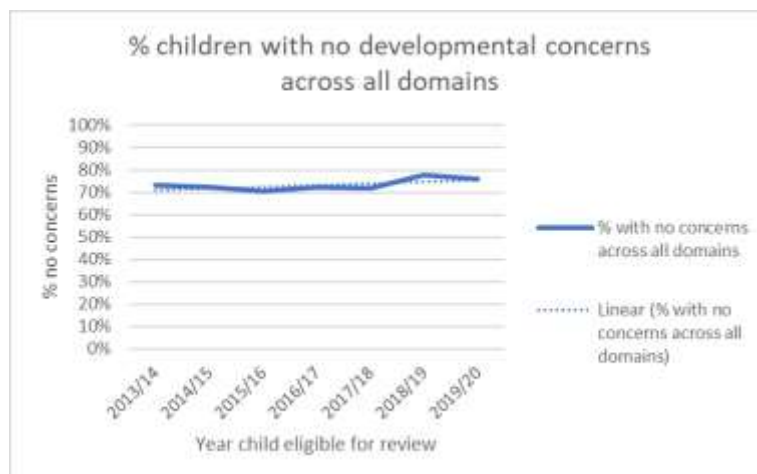
The Wellbeing Recovery Group provides a single referral route to access prevention and early intervention services for wellbeing and from April 2021 will include from the new Inclusion and Support Service.

8. Provide trauma informed and mental health support for staff, parents, children and young people

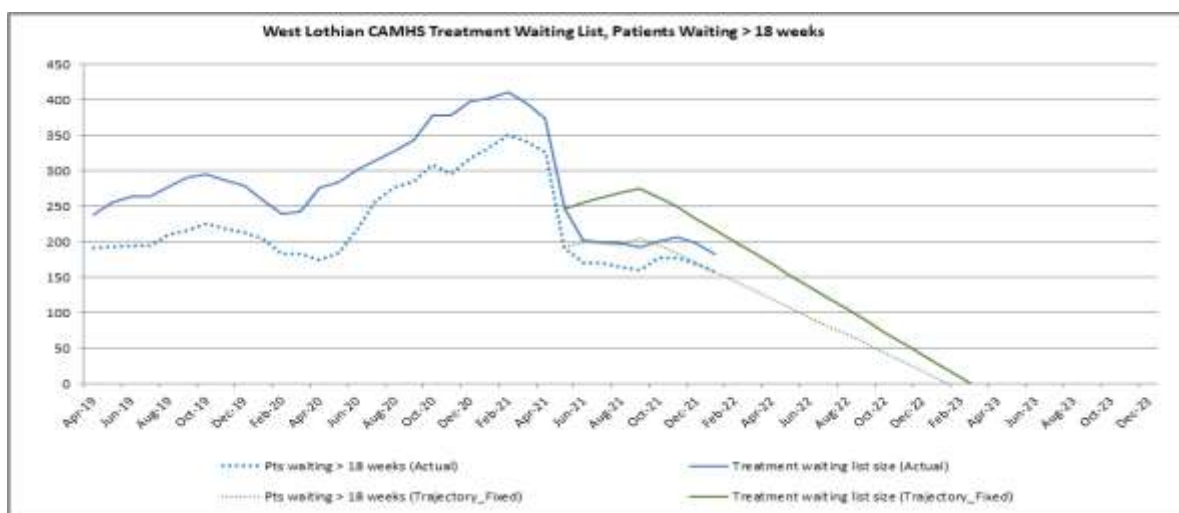
Currently a 3-year action plan is being developed to provide training for frontline staff on trauma informed practice, mental health first aid and Solihull (a parenting course for professionals to support parents).

Partners are currently exploring how best to start a Trauma-informed Hub of resources, networking and events, to replace the previous Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Hub.

The percentage of children with no developmental concerns has remained fairly stable across West Lothian. However, when you break this down into geographical areas, children who live in areas of deprivation have significantly more developmental concerns, particularly in relation to speech and language development and social and emotional concerns.



In 2021, NHS Lothian commenced a long-term improvement programme within CAMHS. The programme comprehensively details the planned improvements required to achieve the CAMHS Local Delivery Plan Access Standard by March 2023 in West Lothian. The aim is that all young people commence treatment for specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health services within 18 weeks of referral. This target reflects the early intervention and prevention initiatives highlighted in this priority's actions.



Raising Achievement and Attainment

West Lothian Council is committed to improving attainment for all children and young people in line with the National Improvement Framework and through the effective delivery of Curriculum for Excellence. Schools in West Lothian have consistently demonstrated their capacity to improve attainment. Within the Children's Services Plan 2020-2023, the overarching themes are to raise the attainment of all in achieving excellence, and to ensure equity through closing the gap in education outcomes between children from the most and least deprived backgrounds.

Progress of the Identified Actions

1. Measuring the achievement and attainment of children and young people with significant Additional Support Needs (ASN)

Work has developed to provide an ASN Planning Tool which is designed to provide school leaders with detailed information about the profile of ASN within their school. This information can then be used to target resources and whole school strategies to meet local need. Detailed analysis of this tool took place last academic session across all Secondary Schools and is now commencing in identified clusters within the primary sector.

West Lothian ASN Schools are undertaking benchmarking work in relation to identifying developmental pathways for learners that can be used to track individual achievements. This work is in line with recommendations from the Additional Support for Learning Act Implementation Review report

2. Raising Attainment for All in the Broad General Education (BGE) Ensuring Excellence

A relentless focus on raising attainment is the focus of a support and challenge model provided by the quality improvement team. The model has a number of core elements and is continually modified to respond to the current context. Focused one to one meetings have taken place with link education officers focusing on analysis of attainment data and setting clear, timeous actions to address identified attainment gaps. Further attainment meetings have been supported by the performance team to support and develop the capacity of school senior leadership teams to understand, analysis and interrogate the data unique to each school setting.

High quality learning and teaching is at the core of raising attainment. Regular head teacher briefings have focused on pedagogical approaches including agile learning, skills development, refreshing the curriculum, moderation and assessment in numeracy and literacy and digital leaning.

3. Closing the Poverty Related Attainment Gap in the BGE – Ensuring Equity

A targeted approach to raising attainment, identified based on a needs analysis, including performance data, has been delivered through the deployment of officers and data coach to support improvements in performance.

A central equity team along with pedagogy officers is supporting schools in identifying targets for improvement, specific interventions and impact measurement.

Schools have signed up to developing and promoting their poverty proofing statements

4. Raising Attainment for All in the Senior Phase – Ensuring Excellence

There are key improvements across many key features of attainment demonstrate progress towards achieving the outcomes and targets in the Senior Phase.

Pupils are being presented for and passing more National 5 qualifications at the S4 stage than they were in 2017 and on average, pupils are being presented for and passing more Highers at the S5 stage than they were in 2017. In S4, West Lothian pupils are achieving above the level of the virtual comparator and the national average at key measures of attainment at SCQF Level 5 and in S5 West Lothian pupils are achieving above the level of the virtual

comparator and the national average in key measures of attainment at SCQF Level 6. In S6 West Lothian pupils are leaving with more qualifications than the virtual comparators and national average at key measures of attainment at SCQF Level 6.

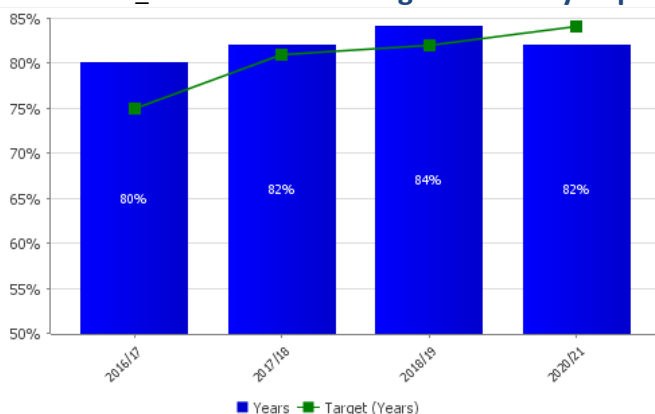
5. Closing the Poverty Related Attainment Gap in the Senior Phase – Ensuring Equity

Raising attainment for all in literacy is a specific focus of the secondary strategy for all schools and data is supporting schools to more effectively identify pupils who have yet to achieve literacy at level 5 and plan interventions as part of their curriculum.

The Winter Leavers Programme for targeted pupils leaving school at Christmas also now includes a literacy focus to ensure that pupils leave school with literacy at the highest possible level.

The Children’s Services Plan refers to the outcomes in the Raising Attainment Strategy and below are two Key Performance Indicators that measure performance in this area:

EDSCH081_9b.1a: **Percentage of Primary Pupils Achieving Expected Level in Numeracy**



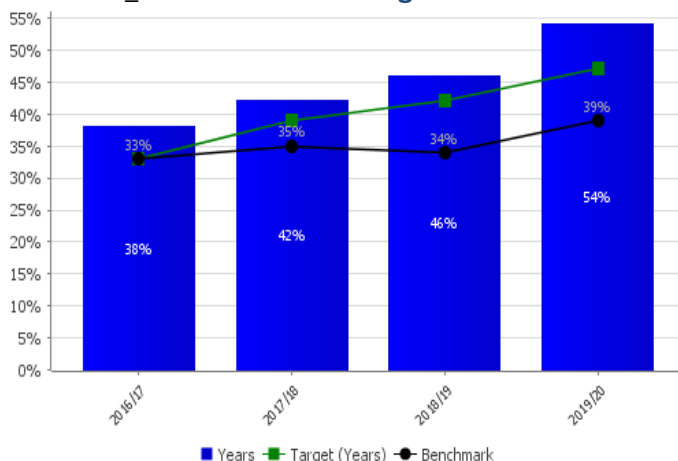
Performance in 2020/21 was 82% which was below 2018/19 performance of 84% and below the target of 84%.

The Scottish Government concluded in June 2020 that there was no strong rationale for gathering the Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Level data under the COVID-19 circumstances and decided to suspend the data collection for academic session 2019/20.

Account has also been given to the extended period of School closures and interrupted learning requiring a review of targets for 2021/22.

The target for 2021/22 has therefore been set at 84%, in order for Schools to assess and address any potential learning loss resulting from School closures.

EDSQA111_9b.1a: **Percentage of School Leavers that Achieved five or more Level 6 Awards or above**



Performance in this indicator in 2019/20 was 54% which was above performance in 2018/19 of 46% and above the target of 47% due to our ongoing review of curricular models and delivery to maximise and raise attainment.

For 2020 the absence of external assessment information, and the Ministerial direction to award estimated grades, have led to a different pattern of attainment than we have seen in previous years.

The target for 2020/21 has been set at 47%, which is a 1% increase on performance in 2018/19, last moderated year pre Covid, due to the different approach to the awarding process that has been utilised in 2019/20.

Performance information for 2020/21 will be available in March 2022.

Corporate Parenting

In West Lothian we believe that every child should have the best start in life to enable them to realise their potential and achieve their aspirations. We have an additional responsibility to children and young people who are looked after and who have left care. We are determined to look after them as we look after our own children.

Looked after Children and Young People represent one of the most vulnerable groups in our society and that we have a responsibility, in conjunction with our partners, to act in the best interests of these children or young person to ensure their wellbeing. The Multi-Agency Corporate Parenting Strategic Group has undertaken a range of activities to inform the development of the West Lothian Corporate Parenting Plan 2020 – 2023 to facilitate positive practice and ensure that looked after children and care leavers are supported to achieve their potential.

Progress of the Identified actions

1. Improving our care and care planning

The new continuing care policy and procedure ensured that decisions with regards to continuing care were centred in the looked after review process. It ensures that young people were made aware of their entitlement to this and therefore promoting and encouraging young people to remain in their existing care placements for longer.

There has been a review of all children and young People who have been subject to a CSO for 2 years or more is concluded and plans are in place to review all children subject to CSO at home in line with the timescales for children away from home.

Family Group Decision Making is routinely being utilised to enable families to come together to make plans to prevent children becoming accommodated and to promote rehabilitation at the earliest opportunity. There is support in place for kinship carers to assist in the caring role and in sustaining placements.

Engagement has been undertaken with staff in relation to new duties in respect of ensuring siblings are supported to stay together where appropriate. Processes are being reviewed to ensure keeping siblings together feature prominently.

The Emergency Placement Breakdown procedure has been rolled out in an attempt to avoid the pattern of crisis placement breakdowns. It includes a disruption process to enable reflection and review of situations where placements break down. This will enable the service to develop systems/practice to avoid repeat incidents wherever possible.

Placement Agreements and 4 Weekly Planning Process was introduced to ensure that planning progresses timeously. This is now well embedded, with the aim of ensuring that planning remains on target and that decisions are made regarding plans for children as effectively as possible.

There has been a focus on education in care planning for all children/young people in our residential houses. This is to ensure that children who live in our residential houses maximise their educational potential, with a specific focus being placed on education support within care plans. This was incorporated into the four weekly planning process and involved the development of a specific education room in our residential House.

2. Improving the health and wellbeing of looked after children

Joint efforts between Social Policy and Looked After Children's Nursing Service improved timely notification of children and young people becoming Looked After.

Within NHS Lothian, Initial Health Assessments were migrated to our electronic recording system and includes all national datasets promoting improved accuracy of collection, analysis and reporting.

All school aged children's health plans are shared with the Lead Professional (social policy) following assessment to be incorporated into their child's plan.

The ongoing implementation of NHS Lothian's Pathway for Looked After Children is progressing with School Nursing supporting elements of care for Care Experienced Children and Young People.

The NHS Lothian Looked After Nursing and Throughcare and Aftercare Nursing service has adapted procedures to offer an increased person-centred approach to supporting health of care experienced children and young people. This includes changes to consent processes, focusing on engaging with families directly; offering continued contact when Children and Young People move placement out of area and routinely offering access to Throughcare Nursing services at point of transition. There is a continued focus and development of data collection, measuring uptake of offer of health assessment, health status at initial health assessment and audit of any change of health outcomes.

3. Raising attainment and promoting positive destinations

Membership of this group changed and now includes representatives from Skills Development Scotland and Social Policy in addition to Education colleagues. Key task has been to review previous performance indicators in this area and to update these to gather more robust data about our children and young people with care experience. This includes more refined data about pupil absence patterns and starting to gather data not only on literacy attainments, but also for maths.

Other project work in this area includes: 1) An audit of school leavers to ensure they've taken up a positive destination and to ensure any young person who hasn't achieved a positive destination is being supported to reach one; 2) To develop a leadership and engagement course for care-experienced pupils aged 15+ to help them build their skills and confidence; and 3) To develop mentoring skills for Corporate Parents to be able to effectively pair with care experienced pupils and help them achieve their goals, and to also provide opportunities for senior pupils and young adults with care experience to develop mentoring skills to be able to pair with younger peers with care experience or who are new into care.

The Looked after Children Attainment Project has provided a holistic approach, offering bespoke packages of education and wellbeing activities to support young people. The team is made up of outreach teachers, an inclusion officer and two family support workers, with access to counselling support two days each week. The interventions have been continually reviewed as COVID-19 restriction have eased. In 2019-20, the project supported 24 young people with 93% of the school leavers by summer 2020 achieving positive destinations. There are 26 young people being supported by the Project in 2020-21. The project has allowed the most vulnerable learners to re-engage with education and achieve National 4 and 5 qualifications and to be supported to move on to positive destinations including college, training, and work programmes.

4. Providing effective through care and aftercare support and services

Quarterly Throughcare and Aftercare information sessions have been developed and are provided to all teams working with Looked After Young People. This supports an early referral to the Throughcare service and discussions regarding care and care planning for young people. Ensuring continuing care is discussed fully and moving on options are explored with young people to achieve best success.

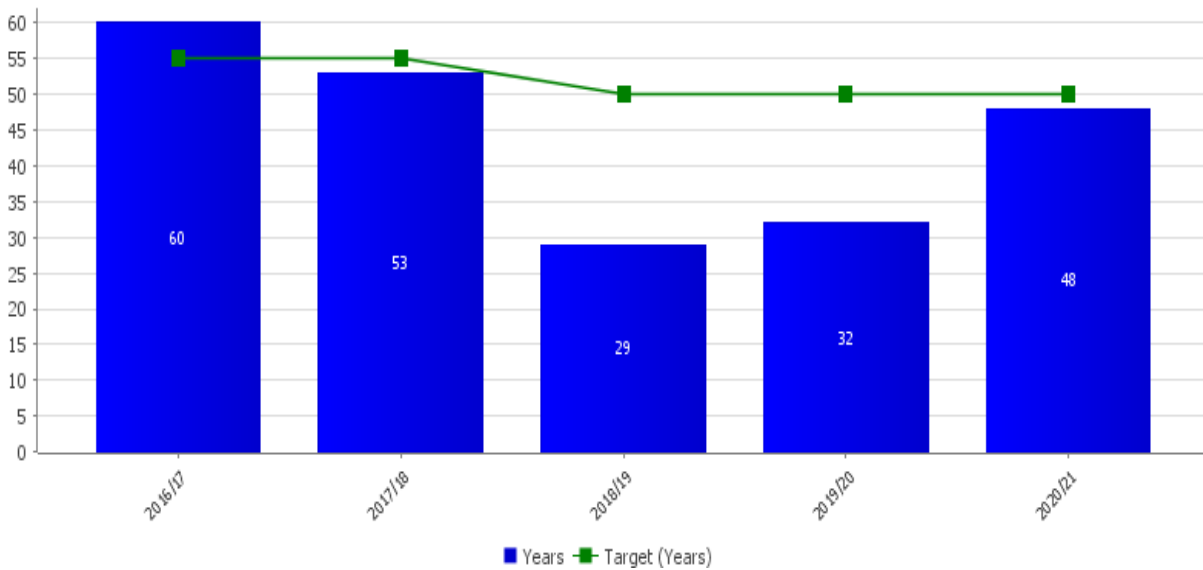
This public social partnership has been established, progressed between Social Policy, Housing and the voluntary sector in order to redesign the accommodation and supports that young people who wished to move on from care had access to. In 2020, the focus was on mapping the current services that young people had access to, identify where the gaps were and what the anticipated need was. In addition, consultation was carried out with young people who were in the process of moving on from care, those who were currently accessing accommodation and support services and those who had previously accessed the accommodation and support services in order to ensure they were fully involved in the redesign of these services.

There is a suite of Key Performance Indicators to monitor the performance of service delivery: 2 examples:

SPCF112_9b:

In 2020-21, for children under 5 the performance on average was 48 weeks, a dip in performance from 2019-20. This is unfortunate given the progress that was being made in making planning for permanence more efficient. The dip in performance was due to disruption caused through suspension of activity in relation to courts and hearings but also because pre permanency reviews were suspended for 22 weeks, not resuming until September 2020. This is an important indicator as to the service's ability to ensure permanence arrangements for children are progressed in as timely and efficient a manner as possible.

Average time taken from point of accommodation for a child under the age of 5 to obtain a permanent placement decision.



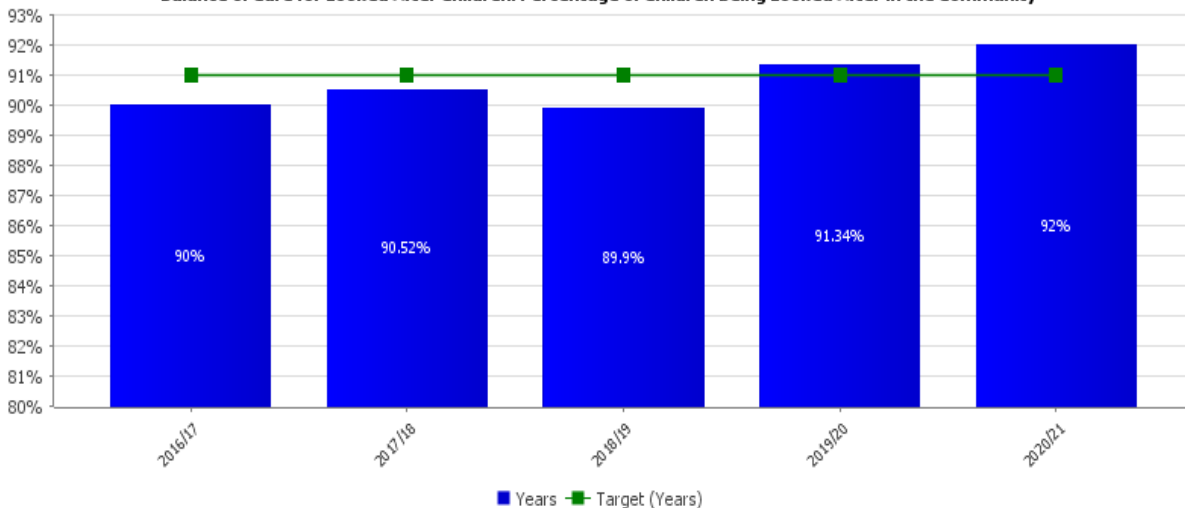
SPCF092_9B:

Performance in 2020-21 was 92%, an improvement from 2019/20 which stood at 91.34%. Whilst improvements are improving by small amounts each year, these changes are significant and a positive indication of a move in the right direction.

West Lothian is making efforts to ensure children are being managed in the community as far as possible through its Transforming Your Council (TYC) Programme and the performance reflects the investment made in services locally.

The target for 2021-22 will increase to 93% to reflect the importance of this indicator

Balance of Care for Looked After Children: Percentage of Children being Looked After in the Community



Promote Children's Rights

The UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament on 1st September 2020 and was passed unanimously on 16th March 2021. The UNCRC sets out the specific rights that all children have to help fulfil their potential, including rights relating to health and education, leisure and play, fair and equal treatment, protection from exploitation and the right to be heard. The main purpose of the Bill is to bring the UNCRC into Scots law and once enacted, the legislation places a duty on public authorities to act in a way compatible with the Convention. In October 2021 the Supreme Court ruled that some provisions of the UNCRC Bill would be outside the legislative competence of the Scottish Government and as such the Bill cannot be introduced into Scottish Law until this has been resolved. The Scottish Government remains committed to the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law to the maximum extent possible.

Guidance will be received from the Scottish Government to inform local implementation in 2022

Progress of the Identified Actions

1. Promote and incorporate the principles of the UNCRC to ensure every child knows their rights and is heard in matters affecting them

Improvements focussed on the procedural safeguards for children being placed within secure accommodation have been embedded in practice as a result of the findings of the investigation undertaken by the office of the Children and Young People's Commissioner; Statutory Duties in Secure Accommodation; Unlocking Children's Rights

West Lothian has a bespoke children's rights service for children with experience of Court Contact orders. The role of Court Contact Rights Officer to ensure that children's voices are heard and that their rights are upheld within an adult judicial system by allowing sheriffs to hear directly from the child so that decision can be made in a child's best interests

Looked after children and carers are actively encouraged to attend all meetings where their needs and outcomes are to be discussed. If they choose not to attend, we ensure their views and voices are heard at their meetings and ensure they receive feedback on what was discussed after their meeting

We have commissioned the independent advocacy service for an additional two years with 2 additional advocates who are also commissioned to advocate for children and young people going through the child protection process

Revision of the looked after process has been done to ensure that all looked after children and young people's plans are being reviewed within timescales whilst promoting and incorporating the principles of the UNCRC

Revision of reviewing process to ensure outcomes focus and more active participation and consideration of children/young people's views

Community Learning and Development (CLD) Youth Services support young people to have their voices heard through various interventions:

- coordinated the young people's elections process in West Lothian and is supporting the four young people who were elected from West Lothian to the Scottish Youth Parliament. Two young people were elected in Linlithgow constituency and two were elected in the Almond Valley constituency. Almond Valley had the largest constituency vote in Scotland with 2,814 young people participating.
- CLD Youth Services and the Anti-Poverty Service have trained five young people to take on the role of Anti-Poverty Champions, to engage with, signpost and encourage other young people to access appropriate support. Anti-Poverty Champions support young people with financial worries, experiencing poverty or financial difficulties within their family.
- CLD Youth Services is re-establishing the young people's Mental Health Working Group that was in place prior

to COVID-19 pandemic.

- CLD Youth Services has recruited young people to become COP26 Champions. West Lothian was awarded £6,321 to be used to promote awareness around climate change and the environment. The COP26 Champions approved a participatory budgeting approach to allocate funds to community based youth groups.
- CLD Youth Services will continue to support these groups and maintain links with other youth forums as part of the developing youth participation model. It is the intention to hold a West Lothian young person-led participation event in the autumn.

2. Reduce barriers and increase engagement with BAME children and families

We use advocacy services and work in collaboration with partner agencies to promote engagement and highlight specific needs and use interpreter services to reduce barriers to engagement

This is a new priority in the Children's Service Plan and work will be undertaken to develop a working group to address this priority and create relevant Key Performance Indicators and measures to monitor progress



Reduce Substance Misuse

In West Lothian we recognise that substance misuse damages lives, families and communities, and can contribute to violence and crime. Most of those affected will have experienced difficult life circumstances, and are among the most vulnerable in society. We recognise that some young people are at high risk of developing addiction issues in adulthood if not supported, these young people are generally already known to services and engaging in other risk-taking behaviours.

Evidence shows that young people at risk of addiction do not engage well with intervention models currently used for adults. They do however engage in services which offer them a persistent key working relationship, meaningful activities and assistance to improve their employability.

Progress on Identified Actions

1. **Ensure that Young People referred to the Wellbeing Recovery Group & Families Together Screening Group who are affected by substance misuse have access to appropriate services**

It is recognised that children, young people and families mental health and wellbeing has suffered as a result of Covid 19 and due to the pandemic new approaches have been implemented to engage with young people.

In 2021, the Wellbeing Recovery Group there were 1,389 referrals received for children, young people and their families who were in need of wellbeing support. It is through this multi-agency screening group that professionals are able to take account of children, young people and their families views and ensure that their needs are matched the most appropriate service. Specialist organisations who support families affected by substance misuse participate fully in this screening-group.

Families Together Screening Group continue to consider the holistic needs of all members of a family who are referred for support. Representatives from the third sector (children 1st and Circle) and Social Policy continue to attend this screening group to consider the most appropriate support package for children, young people and their families in order to ensure that they can be supported to remain within their families and local communities.

WLDAS and Circle are part of the WL Mental Health Collaborative and are reviewing referral pathways to ensure anyone affected by substance misuse has access to the appropriate services.

2. **Continue to raise awareness of the issues associated with substance misuse**

Ten staff members across various services in West Lothian including Circle, WLDAS, Families Together and CAS attended Scottish Drugs Foundation – ‘Children and Families Affected by Parental Substance Use’ Training. There is continued ongoing development across the sector to increase awareness of the issues associated with substance misuse.

The WLADP Young People Sub Group has been renamed ‘Whole Family Approach Sub Group’. The group have continued to meet regularly and has prioritised two funding streams, as follows: Scottish Government National Drugs Mission – Children & Families Fund – a collaborative proposal submitted on 04 Nov 2021 to the CORRA foundation. The bid focuses on intervention (WLDAS additional worker), prevention (Youth Action Project Additional Worker) and extra capacity in the Circle Service. The Whole Family Approach Delivery Framework in West Lothian is being taken forward by this group in a new Public Social Partnership model and has its own funding stream.

Progress on ADP Identified Actions

1. Ensure substance use (including prevention & early intervention) is included in work plans and other agendas in relation to young people such as the WL Children and Family Management Group

Workplans focusing on substance misuse are embedded in appropriate services

2. Continue to support Children Affected by Substance Misuse (CAPSM) service with a Family Support Service

Commissioned services have been extended until 31st March 2025 to allow continuity of services with no disruption to service delivery,

The CAPSM service is a whole family approach to substance misuse recovery. The service works with a minimum of 48 families per year.

3. Review the work of the new Young Person Worker with a view to increasing the resource if required

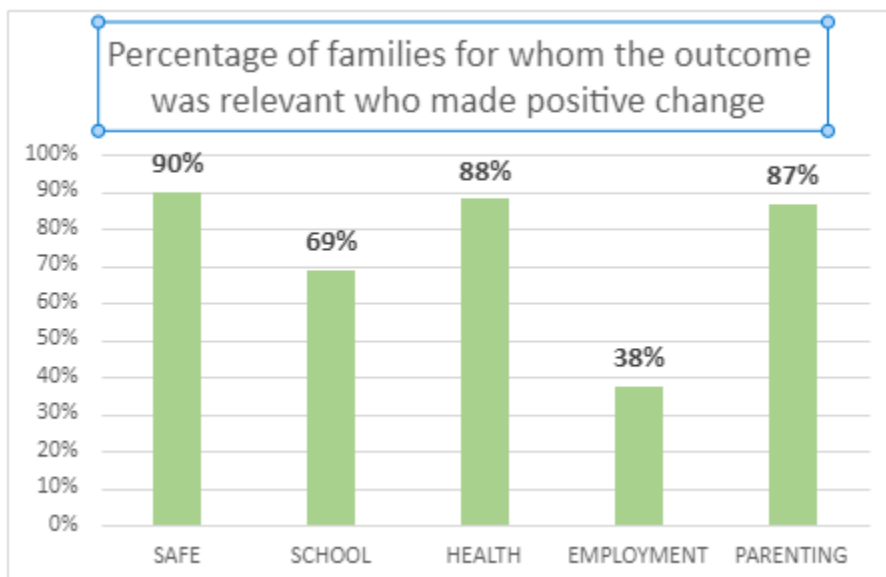
Commissioned services have been extended until 31st March 2023 to allow continuity of services with no disruption to service delivery. This role is now part of the Psychological Services Contract WLDAS have with the WLADP and is now a core element within our Therapeutic Support Service to service delivery.

4. Pilot a Dads project with support from external funding

The service has been Successful in CORRA funding bid and are now trying to source match funding. Match funding will be part of the Whole Family Approach PSP going forward.

The family support service often termed 'Children affected by parental substance use' (CAPSU) service has 6 reporting areas agreed with WLADP and report on a quarterly basis:

- Families supported – 28 families from April to Dec 2021
- Domestic Abuse - 14 of 28 families have been impacted by Domestic Abuse
- Treatment & Recovery - 18 of 28 families have a parent in treatment and recovery services.



Reduce Offending Behaviour in Children and Young People

Preventing offending behaviour is integral to West Lothian's vision to help make Scotland the best place to grow up. No single agency has sole responsibility for supporting young people to make positive lifestyle choices. For young people who become involved in offending behaviour they must be adequately supported through the Whole System Approach (WSA) with all partner agencies working collaboratively with the ultimate aim of reducing the level of offending and anti-social behaviour across West Lothian.

Progress of the Identified Actions

1. Develop the Whole System Approach (WSA)

WSA in West Lothian is well embedded up to age of 22. Youth and Adult Justice Services are integrated which means staff work effectively across both the children's hearing system and adult court system. No further work has been identified as necessary and the action is complete.

Preparation with partners is underway for the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019 coming into effect on 17 December 2021. The Act supports the whole system and early and effective intervention approaches in Youth Justice. The change also supports trauma informed practice and ensuring a holistic approach to understanding and responding to the needs of children.

2. Ensure and enhance streamlined processes for reintegration and transitions for young people

Very mature systems are in place for minimising extent children, particularly looked after children, go on to be involved in the adult system. There exists close working with Polmont YOI to ensure any young people in custody are supported appropriately. Nationally there has been a significant reduction in the numbers of young people in Polmont. The roll out of supervised bail and the recent implementation of the additional electronic monitoring elements of the Management of Offenders Act should have a direct impact on the number of remands. Development of the local EEI process underpinned by the GIRFEC principles, direct measures such as Diversion from Prosecution and in the introduction of Structure Deferred sentences all offer proactive options as alternative to custody, remand or escalation of cases. These Justice services options are provided by a dedicated and highly skilled Youth Justice staff who are experienced in dealing with individuals who straddle the children's services and adult justice. Continuity of service for all those who are in conflict with the law underpins the whole systems approach to our young people services reducing. No further work has been identified as necessary and the action is complete.

3. Recognise and divert young people from serious organised crime (SOC)

Good close working exists between Children's services and Police Scotland to identify and then divert young people vulnerable to SOC. No further work has been identified as necessary and the action is complete.

4. Enhance Practitioners knowledge and skills in working with young people vulnerable to exploitation including sexual and criminal exploitation

Training is available to staff and strong process are in place to increase awareness, knowledge, skills and practice for staff around Child Sexual Exploitation and Criminal Exploitation.

Further training courses are planned over the coming months and will also include training around Human Trafficking, Self Neglect & Hoarding, Risk Assessment and Forced Marriage. Mental Health/Suicidal ideation is also under consideration as a result of the impact that the pandemic has had.

5. Ensure timely, effective responses to the health and well-being needs of children and young people

Good systems are in place for children at risk of being involved in Justice Systems. More broadly work is taking place to better embed GIRFEC across all agencies which will be taken forward through the Child Protection Committee and Children and Families Strategic Planning Group.

6. Address and minimise the risk of substance misuse for children and young people, ensuring education

on the harm and consequences of poly drug use

No specific action on youth Justice front but additional funding is being put in place to support children and young people vulnerable to problematic substance misuse.

7. Promote and enhance victims and community confidence

Staff are aware of needs of victims and victim awareness. Recognition that this has to be promoted nationally

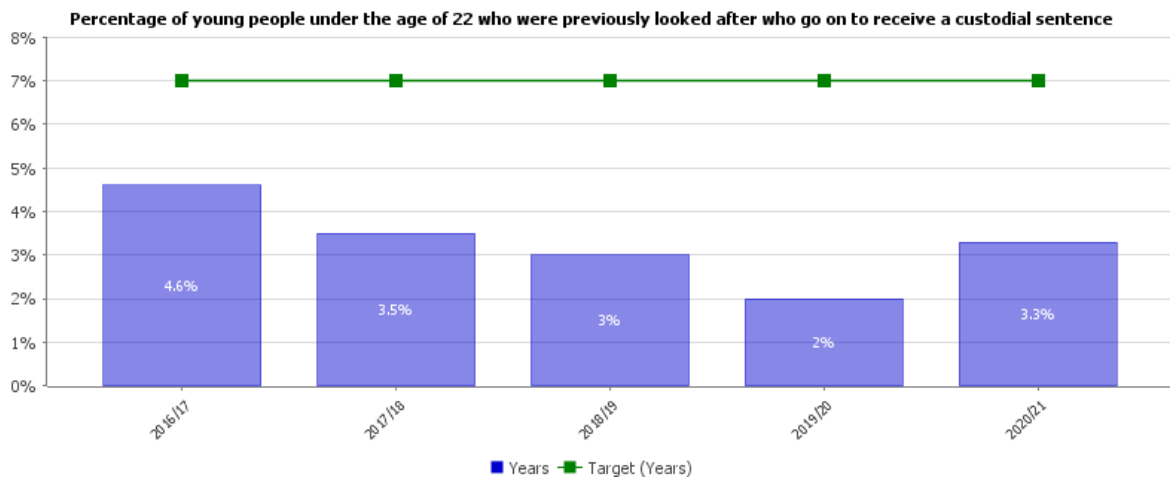
8. Performance and Improvement Framework

Enhanced and developed Youth Justice Team Plan to ensure efficiency and evidence-based outcomes for young people. A plan is in place and Performance Indicator's have been reviewed. A new indicator around reduction in risk is being developed.

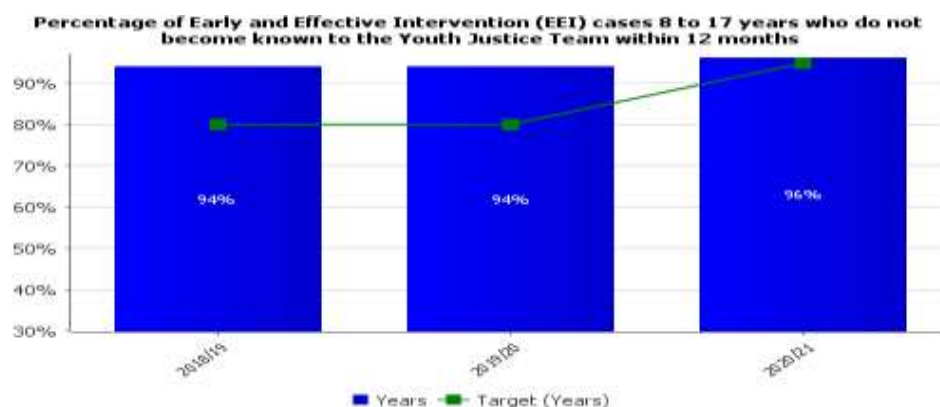
There is a suite of Key Performance Indicators to monitor the performance of service delivery: 2 examples

SOA1305_16: One of the worst outcomes for young people is that they receive a custodial sentence. The likelihood of this is increased if young people were previously Looked After. Through the development of the 'Whole System Approach' and other services for Looked After Children, better transitions and services will hopefully mean young people can be kept out of the justice system through Early and Effective Intervention and other mechanisms. Services for those in the justice system will also be improved so that custody can be avoided.

Very few young people receive a custodial sentence. At 31st March 2021 there were 212 young people who had been looked after with only 7 receiving a custodial sentence by the time they were 22. This means a performance of 3.3% which is a further improvement from 2017-18.



CP:SPCJ103a_9b: This indicator helps the service assess the impact Early and Effective Intervention is making on supporting young people not to reoffend. In 2020-21 69 from 72 referrals made in 2019-20 did not escalate. This resulted in an improvement to 96%. There is a downturn in numbers due in part to COVID - 19 but also because of a tightening on referrals needing to progressed through EEI.



We recognise that the quality and effectiveness of our services rely on the commitment, dedication and ability of staff across West Lothian. On a daily basis they make a difference to the lives of children, young people and their families. As a partnership we are committed to ensuring that our collective workforce has the necessary skills and knowledge to provide high quality services in this challenging environment.

The IJB Workforce Planning Development Group oversees implementation of the West Lothian Integration Joint Board's (IJB's) Workforce Development Strategy. The Group ensures that workforce planning is aligned to the delivery of the strategic priorities set out in the IJB's Strategic Plan. Representatives from across the Health and Social Care partnership (HSCP) bring substantial knowledge, experience and commitment to ensuring delivery of the action plan developed in support of the West Lothian Workforce Development Strategy.

One of the key recurring challenges faced by the HSCP in West Lothian is the recruitment and retention of a suitably qualified workforce. This is particularly focussed on specific social care roles. This is a challenge that we share with our partners and the organisations that we commission to deliver services on our behalf. The Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated the key importance of the social care workforce in protecting the health and wellbeing of some of our most vulnerable citizens and within that context the impact of these recruitment difficulties is complex to manage.



The Covid 19 pandemic has allowed staff to see the potential in using digital technology as a work tool and driven creative practice but it has also highlighted a number of issues we face going forward, such as the need for a workforce that is proficient and confident in digital technology and skills.

We have continued to offer staff opportunities to enhance their professional development by sponsoring candidates to complete Mental Health Officer training and post-graduate courses in Adult Support and Protection, Practice Education and Child Welfare and Protection to increase our recruitment possibilities and the importance of retention of front-line staff. We also offered placements to Social Work students who were displaced from their universities during the lockdown to enable them to sustain practical learning practice.

Mandatory and statutory training remains a priority and further training courses are planned over the coming months and will also include training around Human Trafficking, Risk Assessment and Forced Marriage. Mental Health/Suicidal ideation is also under consideration as a result of the impact that the pandemic has had. The Child Protection Committee is working towards developing a learning culture where formal training is only one aspect of embedding learning into practice.

NHS Lothian's Directorate of Public Health and Health Policy has undergone a process of organisational change to implement local Public Health Partnership and Place teams across Lothian. The West Lothian team is nearly at full capacity (with one post still to recruit to), and consists of the Strategic Programme Manager, 2 WTE Programme managers (filled with 3 part time staff) and the project officer post will be recruited to soon. The team have spent the last few months developing their workplan in line with local needs and priorities.

A range of tools and resources have been developed to protect and support employee mental health and wellbeing and these have also been shared with commissioned services and unpaid carers. We anticipate the increased focus on mental health and wellbeing to remain as a key priority for the short and medium term.

Children & Families Commissioning

The priorities for the Children's Services Plan 2020-2023 have been established following consultation and engagement with children and young people and their families, stakeholders, staff and other organisations involved in delivering Children's Services and in line with the National Performance Framework.

We are committed to providing services that are holistic and developed with families themselves and partner agencies; that tackle inequalities and focus on improved outcomes for children. The development of any new services will be done to ensure the inclusion of West Lothian Community Choices processes. To ensure that children and young people in need have a head start in life, we are focused on finding strengths within families, and in providing help at the earliest opportunity, as well as providing statutory early intervention and child protection services.



A PSP is currently established with the aim of co-designing and delivering housing and support services that will meet the needs of young people. Consultation has taken place with young people, including looked after and care experienced, under the Community Choices Framework.

The Children & Families Commissioning Plan is currently under draft. We are clear that robust partnership working is essential in order to deliver positive outcomes for children, young people and their families going forward. Three overarching areas have been identified as requiring the support of a joint commissioning plan are:

- Support for those families with a Disability
- Early Intervention & Prevention
- Supported Accommodation

It has also been identified that all areas will have Mental Health as a running theme. This will be a partnership approach with the 3rd sector and will be planned for a 3-5yr period.

The priorities which have been identified to reflect the findings of a strategic needs assessments which has been undertaken, within the area of Mental Health Development, will provide the basis for the review and redesign, where appropriate, of services to be carried out. These priorities will remain focused and assist in achieving the partnership's vision that children and young people in West Lothian have the best start in life, to enable them to have high aspirations, build the foundations for living well in the future and realise their potential.

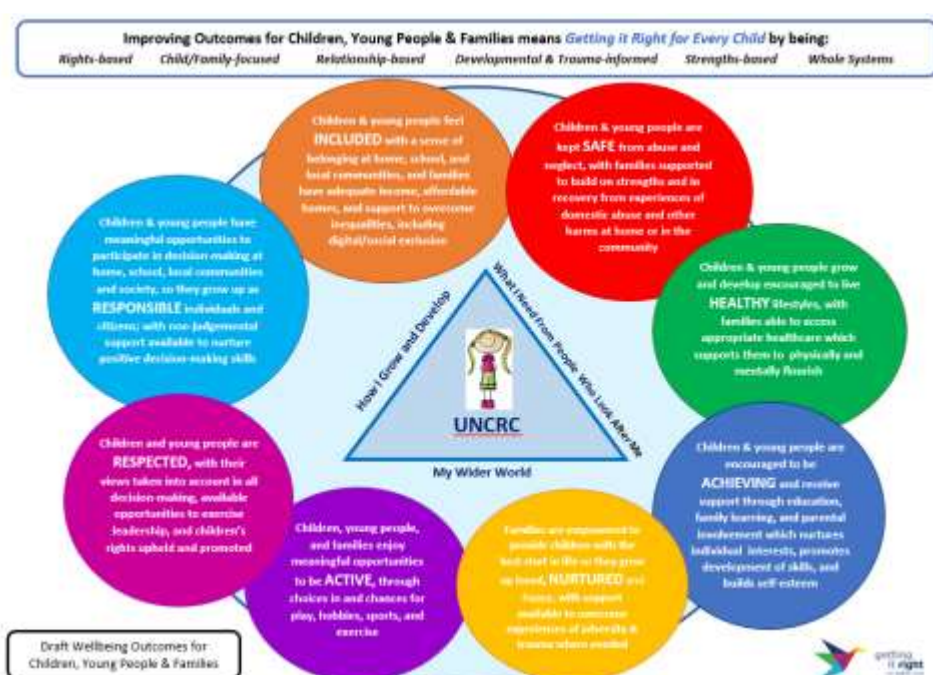
The plan will also ensure we recognise and incorporate the principles of The Promise. Partners in West Lothian are already working to improve outcomes for Looked after Children and Young People and are committed to working towards shifting the balance of care. We are reviewing how we position and provide services to ensure that families are supported at the earliest point and intensive support provided to ensure children at risk of being accommodated remain placed within their own families, family networks and communities.

- Performance management is critical to the effective delivery of streamlined services. Performance data is vital management information that is used in planning and decision-making processes and it also helps to align resources, processes and employees to deliver our strategic priorities
- The Children and Families Strategic Planning Group has identified its specific contribution to the delivery of the outcomes detailed within The National Performance Framework (NPF) and West Lothian's Local Outcome Improvement Plan outcomes
- Our priorities have been agreed and a robust suite of indicators using the SMART framework, aligned to the actions agreed in our action plan have been established or are being developed to ensure we achieve our intended outcomes in meeting Children and Young People's needs to achieve their potential.
- This reporting mechanism is not without its challenges and will require an in-depth review to the collecting, analysing and reporting of data from all partner agencies in the CPP. The CPP is made up of all multiple partner organisations and there is no one system to collect data and information that crosses all partners
- Given the diversity of the various performance management systems across the CPP there is also an issue of sharing and storing information through the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and this presents as a challenge to a streamlined system to ensuring the best service possible to meet children and young people's needs

During 2021 the Scottish Government worked with COSLA and Children's Services Planning Partnerships to develop a nationally agreed, and used, Children, Young People and Families Outcomes Framework and a Core Wellbeing Indicator Set.

The purpose of this work is to establish an Outcomes Framework and Core Wellbeing indicator set which provide a holistic overview of wellbeing at local and national level and ensure they meaningfully reflect what matters to children, young people and families and enables measurement of progress.

The new framework to be introduced in April '22 will give us an opportunity to implement a holistic partnership performance management system which reflects the performance of all services involved in Children's Services.



Performance Management

The Scottish Government National Performance Framework identifies eleven national outcomes. West Lothian Children's Services Planning and priorities directly correlate to SEVEN of these outcomes:

National Outcome:	West Lothian Priorities	GIRFEC Wellbeing Indicator
<p>Children and Young People: We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential</p> <p>Poverty: We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally</p> <p>Education: We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society</p> <p>Health: We are healthy and active</p> <p>Human Rights: We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination</p> <p>Communities: We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe</p> <p>Culture: We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection • Corporate Parenting • Raising achievement and attainment • Reduce Substance Misuse • Reduce offending behaviour in Children and Young People • Promote Health and Wellbeing • Promote Children's Rights <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackle Child Poverty (Anti-Poverty Strategy) • Promote Health and Wellbeing • Promote Children's Rights <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising Achievement and Attainment <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Health and Wellbeing <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Children's Rights <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Children's Rights • Reduce Substance Misuse • Reduce offending behaviour in Children and Young People • Promote Health and Wellbeing • Child Protection • Corporate Parenting <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Children's Rights • Promote Health and Wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe • Nurtured • Achieving <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible • Responsible <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy • Respected • Included <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurtured • Included • Respected • Healthy <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respected <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe • Nurtured • Responsible • Responsible • Healthy • Respected • Included <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respected • Included

The remaining four National outcomes: Environment; Economy; International and Fair Work and Business do not correlate directly to this Children's Services Plan.

All West Lothian’s priorities contribute directly to the Wellbeing Indicators (SHANARRI) and correlate with links to the UNCRC priorities of safeguarding children and young people:

Wellbeing Indicator	Priority	Suggested Links to the UNCRC
Safe Protected from abuse, neglect or harm at home, at school and in the community	Child Protection	(11) abduction and non-return of children, (19) protection from violence, abuse and neglect, (22) refugee children, (32) child labour, (33) drug abuse, (34) sexual exploitation, (35) abduction, sale and trafficking, (36) other forms of exploitation, (37) inhumane treatment and detention, (38) war and armed conflicts
Healthy Having the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health, access to suitable healthcare and support in learning to make healthy, safe choices	Promote Health and Wellbeing	(3) best interests of the child, (6) life, survival and development, (24) health and health services, (39) recovery and rehabilitation of child victims
Achieving Being supported and guided in learning and in the development of skills, confidence and self-esteem, at home, in school and in the community	Raising achievement and attainment	(4) Governments must do all they can to make sure every child can enjoy their rights in systems that promote and protect these rights, (18) parental responsibilities and state assistance, (28) right to education, (29) goals of education
Nurtured Having a nurturing place to live in a family setting, with additional help if needed, or, where possible, in a suitable care setting	Corporate Parenting	(4) Governments must do all they can to make sure every child can enjoy their rights in systems that promote and protect these rights, (5) parental guidance and a child’s evolving capacities, (18) parental responsibilities and state assistance, (20) children deprived of a family, (21) adoption, (25) review of treatment in care, (27) adequate standard of living
Active Having opportunities to take part in activities such as play, recreation and sport, which contribute to healthy growth and development, at home, in school and in the community	Promote Health and Wellbeing	(3) best interests of the child, (23) children with disabilities, (31) leisure, play and culture
Respected Having the opportunity, along with carers, to be heard and involved in decisions that affect them	Children’s Rights Corporate Parenting	(2) non-discrimination, (3) best interests of the child, (4) Governments must do all they can to make sure every child can enjoy their rights in systems that promote and protect those rights. parental guidance and a child’s evolving capacities, (8) protection and preservation of identity, (12) respect for the views of the child, (13) freedom of expression, (14) freedom of thought, belief and religion, (16) right to privacy, (17) access to information; mass media, (18) parental responsibilities and state assistance, (30) the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family
Responsible Having opportunities and encouragement to play active and responsible roles at home, in school and in the community, and where necessary, having appropriate guidance and supervision, and being involved in decisions that affect them	Reduce Substance Misuse Reduce offending behaviour in Children and Young People	(3) best interests of the child, (12) respect for the views of the child, (14) freedom of thought, conscience and religion, (15) freedom of association, (40) juvenile justice
Included Having help to overcome social, educational, physical and economic inequalities, and being accepted as part of the community in which they live and learn	Children’s Rights Corporate Parenting	(3) best interests of the child, (6) life, survival and development, (18) parental responsibilities and state assistance, (23) children with disabilities, (26) social security, (27) adequate standard of living



Getting it Right for West Lothian's Children & Families 

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