

# West Lothian Children's Services Annual Report 2022-2023



Getting it Right for  
West Lothian's  
Children & Families



West Lothian  
**Health & Social Care Partnership**  
westlothianhscp.org.uk



**West Lothian  
Council**

## Children's Services Annual Report 2022-2023

Foreword	2
Introduction	3
Our Plan at a Glance	4
West Lothian Profile	5
Strategic & Legislative developments	6
Early Intervention & Prevention	7
Our Priorities:	8
• Child Protection	9
• Promote Health and Wellbeing	10
• Raising Achievement and Attainment	12
• Corporate Parenting	13
• Promote Children's Rights	15
• Reduce Substance Misuse	17
• Reduce Offending Behaviour in Children & Young People	18
Performance Management	20

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 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 children are supported to achieve their full potential.

## **This Annual Report for 2022-2023 reflects the work and progress of the Children's Services Plan priorities and actions**



## Annual Reporting

During 2022-2023, partners worked together to deliver high quality services that are child centred and developed with families and partner agencies, address inequalities and focus on improved outcomes for children in West Lothian. This report outlines the key areas of work 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 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.

Our aim is to address health and social inequalities and give children and young people in West Lothian the best possible start in life. Children need to be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included and there is recognition that children and young people are the future of West Lothian.

The partnership listens to the voices of children and ensures that their views are valued and respected. Partners have a shared commitment to achieving positive outcomes for children, young people and their families through active participation in joint planning for service delivery. The views of children and their families are at the heart of the decision-making process.

Throughout 2022/23, there continued to be additional challenges for partners as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on individuals, communities and services. Some families who were vulnerable prior to the pandemic have presented with greater and often multiple complex needs and there are families who may not have sought support previously, who are facing adversity. As service provision continues to be reviewed and further understanding is gained from the longer-term impact of the pandemic on families in West Lothian and their needs, this will contribute to future service developments.

The necessary changes to practice in response to the pandemic, such as increased flexibility and use of technology have continued to have benefits in service delivery. Opportunities for further innovation will be considered and a commitment to continuous improvement.

**Siobhan McGarty**  
Chair of the Children & Families  
Strategic Planning Group



## Our Vision

Partners in West Lothian 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 the 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.

Partners are committed to providing services that are holistic and developed with families 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, preventative work with families is valued and promoted, to support with the pressures of parenting and improve overall outcomes. There is a commitment to providing a high standard of statutory and child protection services when needed.

## Our Principles

Central to the underpinning principles of the planning and delivery of services for children is targeted support to children and their families early enough 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:**

- Re-distributing resources towards targeted activities with individuals, groups and communities
- Improved integrated working
- Improved 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 how 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: Children and Families Strategic Planning Group, Corporate Parenting Strategic Planning Group, Safer Communities Strategic Planning Group, Child Protection Committee, 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.

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

### Our Vision

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.

### 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

## Profile of Children, Young People & Families in West Lothian

In planning for the development and delivery of services, the profile of children and families in West Lothian has been considered. West Lothian has a population of approximately 185, 580 (mid 2021) and is one of the fastest growing and youngest local authorities in the country. Between 2001 and 2021, the population of West Lothian has increased by 16.7%. This is the 5th highest percentage increase out of the 32 council areas in Scotland. Over the same period, Scotland's population rose by 8.2%. Between 2018 and 2028, the population of West Lothian is projected to increase to 192,812.

Based on 2021 mid-year population estimates of West Lothian population of children and young people aged 0-15 years was 35,133 which is 18.9% of the total population. This is a 0.5% increase since 2001 compared with an 6.1% decrease of the 0-15-year-old population across Scotland for the same time period. The local profile is of importance in considering all areas of service design and developments.



14,632 people in West Lothian (8.1% of the county's population) live within the 15% most deprived areas in Scotland.

Youth unemployment in West Lothian stands at 4.6%, which is slightly greater than the Scotland rate of 4.5% and lower than the UK rate of 13.23%.



The most recent child poverty statistics (2021) show that 21.09% of West Lothian children are living in poverty. This is a decrease of 3.51% from 2020 (24.6%)



Babies exclusively breastfed at 6-8 weeks – this is 30.1% in WLC and 40.9% for NHS Lothian



In West Lothian 93.9% of eligible children receive a 13-15 month review compared with 93.9% across Lothian and 91.6% of 27-30 month children receiving a developmental and wellbeing review compare with 92.2% across Lothian

0.94% (373) of the total 0-17 years population in West Lothian were Looked After. The Scottish average for the same period was 1.2% (12596)

West Lothian Homeless Applications by 16-25 years olds was 405 which is 32% of all Homeless Applications

Primary aged children registered for free school meals was 11,703 and 2009 within Secondary education

Partners in West Lothian are committed to ensuring that services are appropriately targeted, planned and delivered in partnership and focused on improved outcomes for children, young people and their families.

# Strategic & Legislative Developments

There have been significant strategic and legislative developments during 2022/23 likely to impact on Children and Family Strategic Planning Group 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 transformational change required to improve outcomes for care experienced children and young people. West Lothian work closely with The Promise Scotland Team to drive forward this work and support the practice and cultural changes that will be required to take forward this key area of improvement work.

The **West Lothian Gender-Based Violence Strategy 2021-2024** was approved by the West Lothian Chief Officers Group in the previous reporting period. During this reporting period, a Strategic Needs Assessment is underway to support the development of an ambitious Improvement Action Plan that will be overseen by the gender based violence committee partnership, in order to reduce the incidence of domestic abuse in West Lothian

**UNCRC Article 4 (implementation of the Convention)** - Governments must do all they can to make sure everyone child understands and can access their rights. Appropriate laws, systems and other measures shall ensure the promotion and protection of children's rights.

The Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Supports and Services Implementation in WL has created The Mental Health Oversight Group to consider a whole systems approach is developed in planning and delivering mental wellbeing supports.

A revised approach to interviewing vulnerable child victims and witnesses, the Scottish Child Interview Model is being implemented in Scotland and has now been adopted in West Lothian. The model is trauma informed and provides an interview process that aims to secure the child's best evidence at the earliest opportunity. Dedicated social workers and police officers have been trained for this specialist role. There are close links with the National forums to support ongoing development of this work.

## **Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill:**

The Bill was introduced on 13 December 2022 and makes changes to the law in relation to the care of children and the involvement of children in the criminal justice system. The changes relate to the children's hearings system and several parts of the criminal justice system. This includes courts that hear cases relating to children and the places where children can be detained.

The West Lothian GIRFEC working group is a multi-agency group with a focus on developments locally in relation to GIRFEC. The group reviewed the guidance for Child Planning Meetings, to promote a consistent approach and support practitioners in understanding the role and function of Child Planning Meetings. The group is now reviewing the Child's Plan.

The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry concluded the foster care phase of the Inquiry in 2022. Evidence was provided by local authorities, foster carers, family members and social workers. West Lothian Council participated by gathering information and providing a written submission. The next phase of the inquiry, 'Residential Accommodation for young persons in need of care and protection' will take place throughout 2023.

In West Lothian early intervention and prevention has been 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 and creating conditions to allow children and young people to thrive is recognised as the best outcome for the individual, the wider family and the community.

Partners 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 realise the strengths already present within the family to best improve outcomes.

In West Lothian there is a dedicated Mental Health Lead Officer who is driving forward the transformation of mental health services. This work is supported by the values and principles of the Community Young People's Mental Health & Wellbeing Supports and Services Framework and associated funding. Work is undertaken to ensure a connection to all national developments, including changes in legislation, policies, regulations and guidance; research evidence and best practice examples is maintained.

The priorities for this work were identified through the completion of a strategic needs assessment which provided a clear picture of what the needs of the families were in West Lothian. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation have ensured the services delivered continue to be based on the needs expressed by these families and that we remain focused on embedding a right based approach to service delivery. Families strengths are recognised to ensure they are supported appropriately when they are deciding what is required to improve the mental health and wellbeing of the family. Families are linked with their chosen support, if there is a waiting time, an alternative support can be agreed, this ensures families receive an appropriate support when they need it.

The Inclusion and Support Service is a prevention and early intervention service, providing support to children, young people and their families with additional support needs. The service provides educational support for children and young people and a range of other interventions can be put in place including outreach parenting support and family work, parenting group work and counselling. The service has a holistic approach and has developed interventions informed by assessed need and engagement with families.

West Lothian's Wellbeing Recovery Group provides a collective forum for professionals to meet, discuss and resource mental health and wellbeing referrals received by the Inclusion and support Service. A wide range of agencies are represented including from the voluntary sector, CAMHS, Practice Teams, Education (ASN) and DASAT. The group operates a needs-led approach which ensures young people have access to the correct supports and resources without delay.

All referrals to the Inclusion and Support Service are screened within a two-week period. Referrals for care experienced children and young people, many of who have trauma-related concerns are prioritised, however the majority of referrals are from universal services.





The following seven priorities are identified by the Children and Families Strategic Planning Group as key areas of work:

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 Children and Families Strategic Planning Group members confirmed that the Seven priorities agreed for the Children’s Services Plan 2020-2023 are still relevant and meet the aims of the proposed plan 2023-2026 to tackle inequalities and give children and young people in West Lothian the best possible start in life.



## Child Protection

West Lothian Child Protection Committee (CPC) is the key local body for developing, implementing and improving child protection strategy across and between agencies and the local community. The CPC performs a number of crucial functions in order to jointly identify and manage risk to children and young people, monitor and improve performance and promote the ethos that "It's everyone's job to make sure I'm alright".

The CPC has 3 subcommittees to support its work: Quality Assurance & Self Evaluation (QASE), Practice and Training (P&T) and a Learning Review (LR) subcommittee. The CPC has strong links with the Children and Families Strategic Planning Group with its overall oversight and leadership of Getting It Right for Every Child in West Lothian.

### Main developments in the period 2022/23

- In response to a Learning Review concluded in 2021, the CPC commenced a pilot of Core Group Supervision. The aim of this supervision is to allow all professionals involved in the core group to meet without family, to reflect and receive peer support, discuss practice, consider outcomes and whether, as a group they have become overly pessimistic or optimistic. The session is led by a social work team manager who is independent to the case. This will be reviewed by the QASE, taking account the experiences of staff involved to determine if the approach will be embedded in practice. There is scope for the group supervision to be expanded for benefit through all GIRFEC work.
- The Learning Review subcommittee reviewed two cases in this period where the decision was made to proceed to formal Learning Reviews. The findings of these reviews and subsequent actions will be progressed in the next reporting period.
- The Learning Review subcommittee reviewed one case where it was decided not to proceed to a learning review but actions were identified in relation to strengthening the role of the independent Reviewing Officer and plans made for QASE members to observe Child Protection Case Conferences, to identify good practice and areas for learning.
- In November 2022, an engagement event took place with members of the CPC and staff from all agencies. The purpose was to support understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the CPC and a forum for ongoing engagement. There is a plan for further events to be convened.
- The new model for joint interviewing of children (Scottish Child Interview Model) has been implemented in West Lothian since 2021. There is a commitment to ongoing improvement and practitioners and senior management are involved in National forums reviewing and developing this work, including outcomes data.
- The IRD review group meets fortnightly to review every open IRD. At the end of every meeting the Review Group considers any themes, patterns, emerging trends and examples of effective multi-agency work.
- Engagement with young people and staff in West Lothian's Children's Residential Services has supported the production of the 'Intervening Safely Policy'. A user friendly version of the policy has been produced to ensure children and young people understand the meaning of the policy and they have been encouraged to express their views about it.



## Promote Health and Wellbeing

Good health and wellbeing are key to ensuring that children and young people in West Lothian have the best start in life. Children's health and wellbeing starts prior to conception and is influenced by children's wider social and economic environments. Health and wellbeing 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 and life chances.

Improving health and wellbeing is at the core of what we do and is where we focus the majority of our preventative work intervening and providing support, early enough to prevent deterioration or escalation. We recognise however that for some children and young people specialist help will be required to address more complex needs that impact health and wellbeing. Across the partnership we have a range of services in place to support these young people and ensure that they get the right support at the right time.

### Main developments in the period 2022-2023:

- The Scottish Government's Whole Family Wellbeing Funding (WFWF) is a £500 million investment between 2022 and 2026 to support the whole system transformational change required to reduce the need for crisis intervention and shift investment towards prevention and early intervention. The fund aims to significantly reduce the number of children and young people in care by 2030. During this reporting period, West Lothian have setup a planning group with community planning partners in order to work in partnership in order to maximise the effect, efficiency, reach and sustainability of this funding. WFWF will cease at the end of 2025 to 2026, as it is expected that local investment will have realigned to support the new systems and services enabled by the funding.
- A strategic needs assessment recently undertaken highlighted a gap for additional services and supports for young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families. The Child Disability Service (CDS) are appointing a support worker in a new role to specifically support children who have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The plan is to support to families already involved with CDS on an intensive basis to enable the development of strategies and thus supporting with challenges. This will be available at evenings and weekends when families have informed they will benefit from the support most. An application is being made with partners to the Scottish Government Whole Family Wellbeing Fund that would support further development of services for young people with ASD and their families.
- In June 2022 a newly developed early intervention mental wellbeing self-referral support phone line for young people, parents and carers was launched named Listen & Link. The approach used by Listen & Link staff is based on 4 of the priorities and the 5 fundamentals of The Promise. This service focuses on a no wrong door approach for children and their families, providing the right service at the right time.
- The Voice service, launched alongside Listen & Link in June 2022, is a 24/7 text message service for anyone to text if they are struggling. Working alongside Shout as a key partner has enabled us to undertake evaluation and analysis of feedback and data to inform the times of day people reach out for support, what they are struggling most with and the different communities we are being effective in reaching. This information helps us to plan for current and future service delivery. The service is there 24/7 and the target is for those messaging to get a reply within 5 minutes of their text being received. Responders will work through their worries and signpost them to any resources and potential services which may be able to assist that individual's situation and circumstances, with the ultimate aim being to reduce the level of self-harm and suicide across the UK. Commissioning Shout as a key word partner has provided us very quickly with data around day times people are reach out for support, and the themes that are arising. This information helps us understand the services needed and how to plan appropriately.
- Roots is a public social partnership which is in its second year of service delivery. It includes eight local third sector partners, and alongside west Lothian council representatives we have had the opportunity to pilot a more streamlined and responsive approach to mental health supports for children, young people and their families.
- The Roots model provides services that meet the expressed needs of children, young people and their families. The services are available when/where families need it, and is provided by people with the right knowledge, skills and experience to support them. Roots provide two drop-in sessions for families per week. Through discussions with the families we have ensured the received support is embedded in the community either close to their home, education, or employment.
- A specification for the evaluation of Roots PSP and the Listen & Link Service was being written during this reporting period to commence in July 2023, the purpose of which is:

- Seek to improve performance – as a team we will learn new methods from the evaluation to support continual improvement
  - Organisational learning – by presenting the learning with others outside the Listen & Link and Roots we can foster a culture of continuous learning and organizational growth
  - The evaluation will provide an opportunity for us to understand if we are meeting the performance outcomes for each of the projects and how we progress any challenges
  - Involving stakeholders in the evaluation process can help build relationships and deepen trust in the team’s abilities
  - Understand if the Listen & Link and Roots are best value and inform future planning for service delivery
  - Assist us to understand the sustainability of the projects and how to achieve this
- The scope of the evaluation report will include:
    - Analysis of current West Lothian practice in relation to the values and principles of the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Supports and Services Framework
    - A comprehensive overview of impact, quality and effectiveness of the new approaches used in both projects
    - An assessment of the adequacy and capacity of Roots and Listen & Link service provision
    - Analysis of the degree of service user involvement in Roots and Listen & Link
    - Innovative and evidence-based recommendations for development
    - Identification of potential gaps or duplication
    - An assessment of current referral pathways
    - Exploration with families who were unable to connect with Roots
    - Overview of how both projects are designed and funded and if this meets the needs of young people and families
    - Exploration of sustainability, due to the uncertainty of funding. Any recommendations for new services will require consideration to be made to redirection of funding from existing services
  - The Scottish Government allocated £20M funding to Local Authorities across Scotland to provide support for vulnerable children and their families over the summer months. The West Lothian funding has been accessed widely across Children’s Services with 73 families benefited from this funding. The impact and benefits have been far reaching for vulnerable families with many applications being progressed to support young people to attend various summer camps and events, some examples being summer football clubs, dancing and horse-riding lessons. These have been enjoyed by children individually as well as including whole families. Additionally, this fund has also supported children within the Child Disability Service to access improved activities during the summer. The fund has also been accessed to provide a Summer House within the garden of one of the Residential Houses – this will be a welcoming space for looked after children to enjoy with their peers and their families, which they will be actively involved in designing and deciding its use based on their own interests.
  - Since 2014 all eligible two-year-old children living in low income households, as well as care experienced children, have been entitled to free early learning and childcare places in order to help close the poverty-related attainment gap and enable parents/carers to access employment, training or study which can lead to improved health and wellbeing outcomes and increased family resilience.
  - Uptake for these places was lower than expected and in 2020 a multiagency group was established to understand barriers to customer participation. Issues with application processes were identified and following changes being made, an 84% increase in uptake has been noted compared to pre-pandemic levels. There were 422 qualifying applications in the last academic year compared to 229 in the year prior to the pandemic. This activity contributed to West Lothian Council’s application to the 14th Public Sector Transformation Awards 2023. The council was awarded the Silver Award in the “Working Together” category.

## 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. The Raising Attainment Strategy is the mechanism by which attainment and achievement of all learners will be supported and Schools in West Lothian have consistently demonstrated their capacity to improve attainment. Annual progress towards the Strategy are contained within the National Improvement Framework Report and Plan for Education Services along with progress with the Scottish Attainment Challenge framework.

Main developments in the period 2022-2023

- A partnership approach to Strategic Equity Funding planning has been taken in order to collaborate with a range of services across the local authority including the anti-poverty team, social policy, community learning and development, educational psychologists and others. Collaborative projects were identified which have a specific targeted focus.
- The Education Scotland report to Scottish Government June 2023 stated: “West Lothian has demonstrated considerable progress in its implementation of the SAC refresh, in particular governance around strategic equity fund and pupil equity fund. The Scottish Attainment Challenge team continues to effectively support the work in all schools through the Equity team, partnership projects and funding streams. This has resulted in a more consistent focus on tackling the poverty related gap across the authority. There has been good progress made with universal and targeted work to tackle the poverty-related attainment gap. The new Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) planning tool is sharpening the focus on impact of PEF on learners. The West Lothian approach, based on partnership working through collaborative projects, is beginning to evidence positive impact on achieving the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge.”
- The Equity Team has provided universal and targeted support to schools and Early Learning & Childcare (ELC) settings in tackling the poverty-related attainment gap and making effective use of Pupil Equity Funding. A variety of supports and professional learning opportunities for school leaders, teachers, ELC practitioners, pupil support workers, family link workers, and partners including speech and language therapists has been provided.
- The Level-Up project is an intensive, multi-agency approach to re-engage our care experienced learners in the senior phase of their education. It is targeted at those with minimal engagement in their learning and at risk of care placement break down. Evidence to date shows improved educational attainment outcomes, including SQA qualifications and SCQF wider achievement Awards. Level-Up has also now been extended to involve a collaborative approach to improve outcomes in mainstream secondary schools.
- Two new staff posts were created by Housing creating a youth team within the service, working closely with Education: The Youth Emergency Prevention officer works with 16 to 17 year olds and the Youth Housing Options Officer who works with 16 to 18 year olds. To support the youth team, secondary schools are now identifying young people at risk of homelessness, who are also receiving support. In addition the Citizenship & Tenancy Award SCQF Level 4 has been delivered in most secondary schools within the authority as a targeted intervention. Additional youth-friendly resources have also been developed along with training for school staff.
- The Mentors in Violence Prevention programme is now well supported in schools using a peer education model, within schools and community groups, to discuss important issues faced by young people in Scotland. This approach is working towards challenging gender-based violence.
- In order to support with improved attendance across schools, the interrupted learner service has continued to work with young people to build engagement and confidence, and to encourage working towards qualifications and positive destinations. Through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund, additional posts will be added to this team in order to enable further development of this support for young people next session.

The creation of a new strategic post for supporting Attendance is also set to develop innovative and creative approaches in supporting schools to provide an inclusive and equitable education for all learners with a focus on enhanced engagement and achievement.

As part of the approach to equity as outlined in the Strategic Equity Fund plan, the implementation of a Family Link Worker in most secondary schools, supported by a collaborative partnership programme has also led to improvements in attendance of targeted groups of young people who are struggling with engagement.

## Corporate Parenting

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 defines corporate parenting as "the formal and local partnerships between all services responsible for working together to meet the needs of looked after children, young people and care leavers". This includes infants, children, young people and care leavers who are:

- in residential care, including secure care
- in foster care
- in kinship care, who live with a family member other than a parent
- looked after at home
- disabled and who receive overnight respite
- left care – up to the age of 26 years

In West Lothian, the Corporate Parenting Plan is developed by the multi-agency Corporate Parenting Strategic Group and with engagement with children and young people. West Lothian are proactively working in partnership to embed the Promise Scotland Change programme and ensure that children and young people grow up loved, safe and respected.

### Main developments in the period 2022-2023

- The development of a West Lothian Adoption service
  - The aim of this development is to provide an internal West Lothian Council Adoption service which will recruit and assess prospective adopters. This will enable us to have a better understanding of the strengths of our adopters and enable matches to be more robust and the support for introductions and placement moves to be enhanced due to good working relationships internally.
  - The aim will be to reduce the need to purchase external placements thereby being more cost efficient and improving our performance in sourcing adoptive placements for West Lothian Children. In addition, it will allow us to build on our existing relationships with other local authorities to support us to identify a placement out with authority if this is required or alternatively provide placements to other local authorities at an agreed cost.
- The development of an Intensive Fostering service
  - The aim of this development will be to reduce the need to purchase external placements from independent fostering or residential providers. By increasing our pool of foster carers locally we will enable the young people to remain in their local area, with opportunities to spend time with their birth family and peers and remain connected and able to continue attending their existing school placement and continue with any activities they are involved in. This will assist in supporting them to maintain their most important relationships.
  - Remaining in an area familiar to them will limit the number of changes and losses experienced if young people cannot remain within their family network at that particular time. It also maximises the opportunities to ensure young people return to live within their family networks as quickly as possible provided it is safe for this to happen. This development allows us to work in line with The Promise, the principles of Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) and The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- Staff Training
  - Across the health and social care partnership a co-ordinated approach has been taken to work force development. This will help ensure that all children, young people and families are experiencing a similar approach and hearing the same language when meeting staff from any local mental well-being service
  - We have prioritised Mental Health First Aid, Trauma Informed Practice and Suicide Prevention
  - 22 staff have recently completed the Mental Health First Aid Training for Trainers, with the plan to roll out of Mental Health First Aid training to staff
  - A facilitators pack has been developed for Trauma Informed Practice using the NES Trauma Training Practice, to ensure ease of use for the facilitators. This has been piloted across 20 staff groups with plans for a longitudinal impact evaluation.
- Local Authorities are responsible for providing care and support for Looked After Children whether at home, within their kinship network, residing in foster care, residential houses or school and in secure care accommodation. The number of looked after children in West Lothian has reduced from 384 in 2021-2022 to 360 in 2022-23.
- There has been investment by shifting resource from residential services to earlier intervention and intensive family support services to prevent children becoming looked after. The percentage of children being looked after in the community for 2022-2023 is 91.7% which is a slight increase from 91% in 2021-2022. It continues to be a priority in West Lothian for children and

- young people to be cared for in their family and community with Family Group Decision Making routinely being utilised to enable families to come together to make plans to prevent children becoming accommodated or to promote a return home at the earliest opportunity, alongside kinship care support staff who are providing support for children and carers.
- The Secure Care Pathway and Standards Scotland were launched in 2020 and set out what young people in or on the edges of Secure Care should expect to receive from services. The Care Inspectorate commenced a review of the pathways and standards in September 2022 to report on the experiences and views of young people in relation to Secure Care provision in Scotland. The aim of the review is to understand how services have worked together to provide the right support at the right time for young people and their families. They focus is on the importance of relationships for young people and considering the extent to which their rights have been upheld, the impact and outcomes for young people. West Lothian is involved in the review which will conclude in June 2023.
- The service continues to work closely with Housing and third sector partners to support young people moving towards independence and also to sustain tenancies. Through these partnerships, young people are supported in further education and employment with budgeting, sustaining and re-establishing connections and in relation to wider aspects of health and wellbeing. On 31 March 2023, of the 315 young people eligible for aftercare, 134 were in receipt of a service.
- In November 2021, the National Transfer Scheme became mandatory for all Local Authorities due to the increasing numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) – arriving in the UK. West Lothian Council accepts children through the rota-based system, which has been put in place to allow children to be placed within all local authorities. During 2022-23, 8 young people transitioned to West Lothian, having their accommodation and support needs met by a range of partners.

## 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 GIRFEC approach is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and requires those who work with children and young people to put children at the heart of their day-to-day practice.

Putting children at the centre in particular meets the requirement to consider the best interests of the child (Article 3) and the need for children's views to be considered when decisions are being made about matters which affect them (Article 12).

The UNCRC has 54 articles in all, each outlining in detail the basic rights of every child. These can be summarised into four core principles:

- Non-discrimination
- Devotion to the best interests of the child
- The right to life, survival and development
- Respect for the views of the child

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.

### Main developments in the period 2022-2023

- Listen & Link staff use an approach that gives young people and families choice and control over the service they receive, and a participatory approach informed by Hart's model of participation is prioritised. All young people within West Lothian schools had the opportunity to enter a competition to design a badge and a slogan for the service. We invited a number of young people and their parents/carers who have used Listen & Link services to judge the entries at Howden Park Centre where a winner from a local primary school was chosen. A number of neurodiverse children and young people attended the judging event this meant we had to adapt our approach to ensure meaningful participation for all. The design will be used to share what the Listen & Link service does and help young people recognise the service. This is the beginning of an exciting time for Listen and Listen as the staff work alongside our young people in designing and shaping the service.
- An achievement awards working group was set up to acknowledge and celebrate the achievement of all our children and young people. Over 100 young people received an award in a face to face celebrating achievement ceremony held in the local community in November 2022. There were five categories that children and young people could be nominated for and the event was inclusive of all abilities. The five categories were:-
  - Successful Learners
  - Physical Activities
  - Contributing to the Community
  - Achievements in Arts
  - Caring/Helping Others

Partners are working together to plan the event for 2023.

- Community Learning and Development services arranged A big conversation consultation event which was run by young people for young people with support in Howden Part Centre in 2022. Young people from West Lothian had the opportunity to come together and have a united voice speaking to adult decision makers within West Lothian Council about things that mattered to them to ensure their voices were heard. 75 young people attended this event.
- Children and young people worked together with our well established multi agency Children's Rights Working Group participating in the making of a video so that as a local authority there is a good understanding of their views on how we embed children's rights into culture, policy and practice. They shared what activities they think West Lothian Council should progress in order to contribute to ensuring children's rights within their local communities



are respected, protected and fulfilled.

- Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is the national approach to improving the wellbeing of children and young people to ensure children and families get the right help, at the right time, by the right person or service. West Lothian's GIRFEC multi-agency group meet regularly to collaborate on arising matters and practice developments. The group has produced Child's Planning Meeting guidance to enhance and improve multiagency planning, support and decision making alongside children and their families. The next step is to review and update current Child Plans and consider a single Plan that could follow a Child's journey through different stages of professional support and intervention. The group will continue to consider relevant subjects and opportunities for multiagency training and development.

## Reduce Substance Misuse

The West Lothian Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) brings together multi-agency partners to support children and families impacted by substance misuse. The ADP have developed a Whole Family Approach Public Social Partnership (PSP) to coordinate existing approaches, as well as trial a range of additional interventions. These services adopt preventative and early interventions strategies, as well as providing direct support to both children or their families who are using substances.

Substance use can affect children and families in a variety of ways. Children and young people may experience direct harm from their own drug or alcohol use, or through their parent's use. Those who experience harm from substance use may have experienced difficult life circumstances and be among the most vulnerable in society.

Parents who use substances may have challenges in caring for their children or providing them with the necessary emotional and physical support to help them develop and grow. Improving outcomes for children affected by parental substance use (CAPSU), is a priority in West Lothian.

It is recognised that some young people are at high risk of developing addiction issues in adulthood if not supported. Often, these young people are already known to services and engage in other risk-taking behaviours.

### Main achievements in the period 2022-2023

- The family support service often termed 'Children affected by parental substance use' (CAPSU) service has five reporting areas agreed with WLADP and report on a quarterly basis:
  - Families supported – 44 families were supported by Circle from April 22 to March 2023
  - Domestic Abuse - Levels of domestic abuse are high Impacting over half of the families – 27 of 44 (61%)
  - Treatment & Recovery - 44 families that engaged with Circle support 34 (77%) were also engaged with treatment and recovery services
- The Corra Foundation Children and Family Fund has awarded West Lothian Alcohol and Drug Partnership (WL ADP) partners a grant of £496, 508 over the next five years. A collaborative bid was submitted to the fund which was led by West Lothian Drug and Alcohol Service (WLDAS) and included the Youth Action Project (YAP) and Circle Scotland. This 5-year project will focus on early intervention, prevention and family support for people with drug and alcohol problems. The funding will enable the recruitment of one new staff member in both WLDAS and YAP and 0.4 FTE in CIRCLE. The project will be led by a project team and will report into the ADP structures in West Lothian. The funding is part of the Scottish Government's commitment to developing supports to reduce drug related deaths.

## Reduce Offending Behaviour in Children and Young People

Reducing harmful behaviour, preventing young people coming into conflict with the law and promoting a whole system approach are all priorities for West Lothian. No single agency has sole responsibility for supporting young people to make positive lifestyle choices and within West Lothian we are committed to working in Partnership to tackle the causes and impact of harmful behaviour. Partners are working together to ensure support is provided at the earliest opportunity with a focus on a rights respecting approach where children, young people and families are supported to share their views and understand their rights.

The provision of early intervention and prevention services is a key focus to ensure that where possible children and young people are diverted from formal measures and are instead supported appropriately, constructively and effectively being actively encouraged to participate in decisions about them. Preventative approaches improve life chances for children and young people at risk of offending and promotes community safety.

### Main developments in the period 2022-2023

- There has been an Increased use of Prosecution Diversion for Under 21 years in line with Advancing the Whole System Approach
- The service has strengthened their partnership approach to early identification and prevention of CCE (Child Criminal Exploitation) and diversion from Court processes for Young People at risk/charged with alleged offences
- There has been an Increase in use of Structured Deferred Sentence for Young People under 21 years to prevent escalation through the Justice System
- Increased use of Supervised Bail for Young People to prevent the use of Remand in line with the Whole System Approach
- Increased use of Movement Restriction Conditions (MRC)/Compulsory Supervision Requirements for children to prevent use of secure care
- Improved use of CARM (Care and Risk Management) for children/young people who come into conflict with the law.
- There has been an increased number of referrals noted to our Early and Effective Intervention (EEI) service but performance remained high. The main indicator measures the number of young people aged 12-17 years who do not go on to be referred to Youth Justice Services in the next 12 months. The results for this reporting period were 97%. This consists of data from the previous year and this is because the reporting takes place 12 months in arrears to allow monitoring of the young people over the intervening 12 months. This is improved performance on the preceding 3 years where the results were 94%, 94% and 96% respectively.
- EEI is also working with the Community Safety Partnership to identify and support children 8-11 years who are below the age of criminal responsibility so no longer eligible to work with the EEI service but who nonetheless may benefit from a whole family, early intervention service. We monitor police concern reports and then identify support services that may be appropriate. A new performance indicator has been developed to capture this data.
- New community payback orders between 2021 and 2022 have since increased by 90%. To accommodate the increase in new cases related to domestic abuse, and address the treatment needs of the existing cases, additional group work has now commenced. Justice Services staff are trained to deliver the Up2U programme. Up2U is a programme for people who use domestically abusive and unhealthy behaviours in their relationships and the sessions are delivered in small group settings. It seeks to reduce the incidents of domestic violence and prevent the cycle of abuse. Justice Services work closely with our colleagues in DASAT to ensure victim impact is retained within risk management.
- His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (HMIPS) visited HMP Addiewell between Monday 7th – Friday 18th November to undertake a full prison inspection. The purpose was to establish the treatment of, and the conditions for prisoners and to report publicly on findings. West Lothian Council Justice Service are contracted to provide the statutory Prison Based Social Work Service within HMP Addiewell. This includes assessments for Parole, life licence and in respect of sex offenders returning to the community. The prison based social work team

were involved in this inspection. They providing feedback to the inspectors through focus groups and individual discussions to inform the Inspectorates findings on standard 7 'Transitions from custody to life in the community'. The inspectors reviewed systems by observing integrated case management conferences, statutory risk management multi agency meetings and by reviewing sentence management and progression processes.

- West Lothian Justice Services are delighted to donate new bikes as part of their Community Payback Unpaid Work Bike project. The bikes are donated to young people who are currently being supported by Social Policy, enabling them to travel around the community and connect with family and friends. The bikes are purchased from monies generated through the scrap metal programme. Unwanted bikes that are donated from around West Lothian are picked up and brought back to the work unit and dismantled by clients who have a Community Payback Order and attending Unpaid Work. All materials are recycled and the money that is generated from metals is accumulated throughout the year and then given back to the community.

During 2021 the Scottish Government worked with COSLA and Children's Services Planning Partnerships to develop a nationally agreed, Children, Young People and Families Outcomes Framework (CYPF) and a 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.

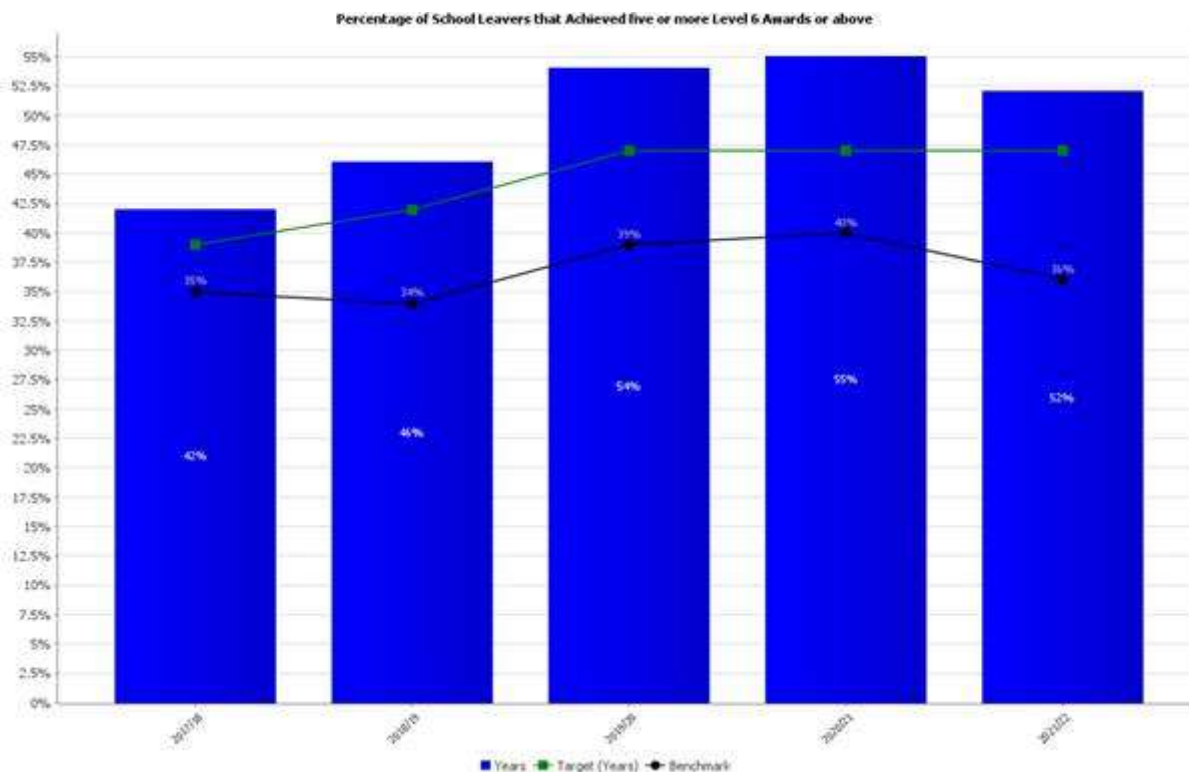
The CYPF Outcomes Framework is being developed to provide an over-arching holistic picture and understanding of children and young people's wellbeing in Scotland. Its approach is grounded within GIRFEC, with children's rights at its core.

To align local indicators to the newly established national indicators, a West Lothian Performance Management Framework has been produced to ensure 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 the CYPF.

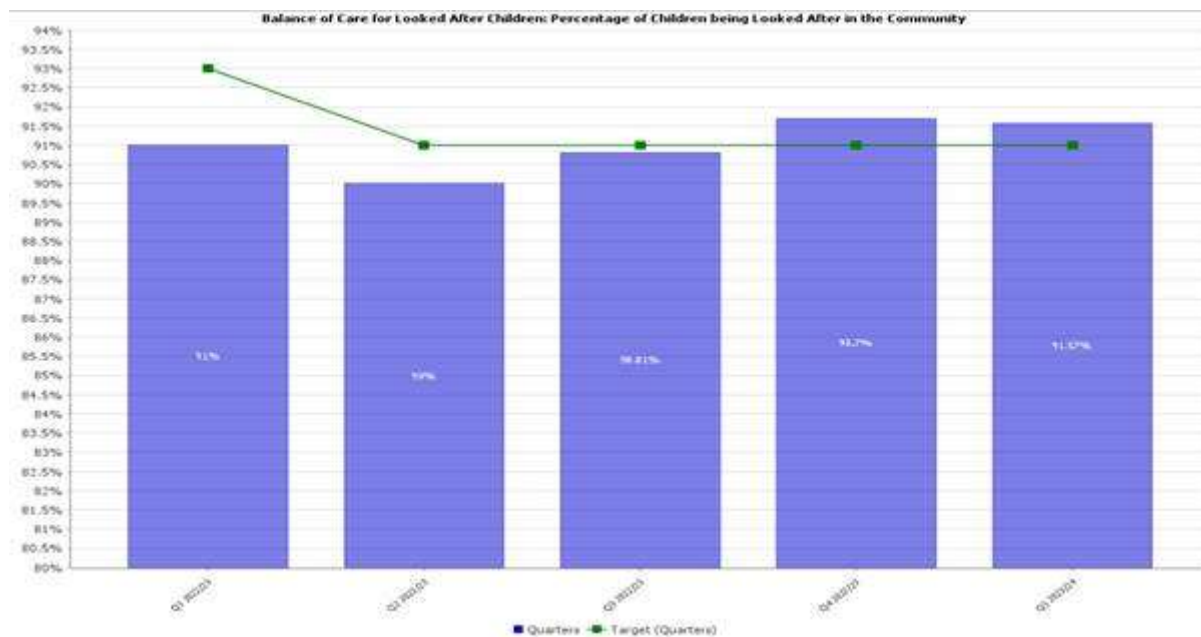
West Lothian priorities have been agreed and a robust suite of indicators using the SMART framework, aligned to the actions agreed in our action plan have been, or are being developed to ensure we achieve our intended outcomes in meeting Children and Young People's needs to achieve their potential. Indicators will be tracked through partner's performance information systems. Performance reports on the progress of the plan and the indicators will be submitted regularly to the Children and Families Strategic Planning Group and Children's Services Annual Reports and the 3-yearly UNCRF progress report will be submitted to the Community Planning Partnership to report progress of our Plan.

The West Lothian Assessment Model (WLAM) is a quality model that is used by West Lothian Council staff to improve the overall quality and performance of our services. The model and the process of self-assessment are part of a continuous improvement approach that helps the council and our stakeholders to monitor what we are delivering for West Lothian, particularly in our corporate priorities. The corporate Priorities are reviewed in consultation with key stakeholders every 5 years, in line with the corporate planning periods.

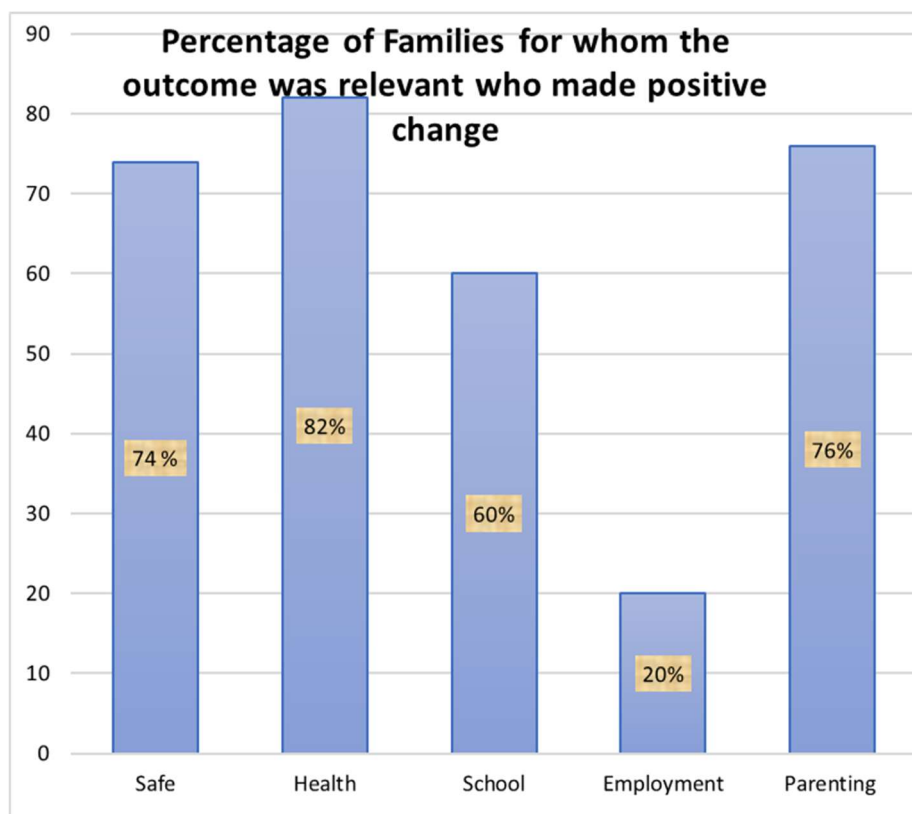
## Raising Attainment



## Corporate Parenting



## Reducing Substance Misuse

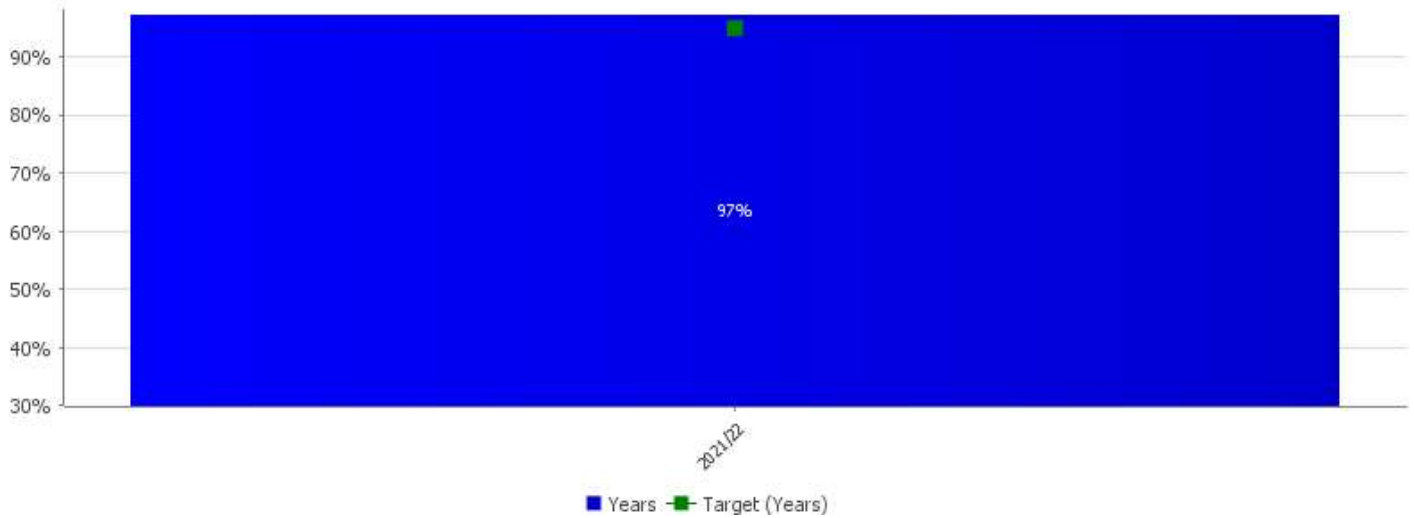


The family support service often termed 'Children affected by parental substance use' (CAPSU) service has 6 reporting areas agreed with WLADP and report on a quarterly basis:

- **Families Supported** – 44 families were supported by Circle from April 22 to March 2023
- **Domestic Abuse** - Levels of domestic abuse are high Impacting over half of our families – 27 of 44 (61%).
- **Treatment & Recovery** - 44 families that engaged with Circle support 34 (77%) were also engaged with treatment and recovery services

## Reducing Offending Behaviour in Children & Young People

**Percentage of Early and Effective Intervention (EEI) cases 12 to 17 years who do not become known to the Youth Justice Team within 12 months**

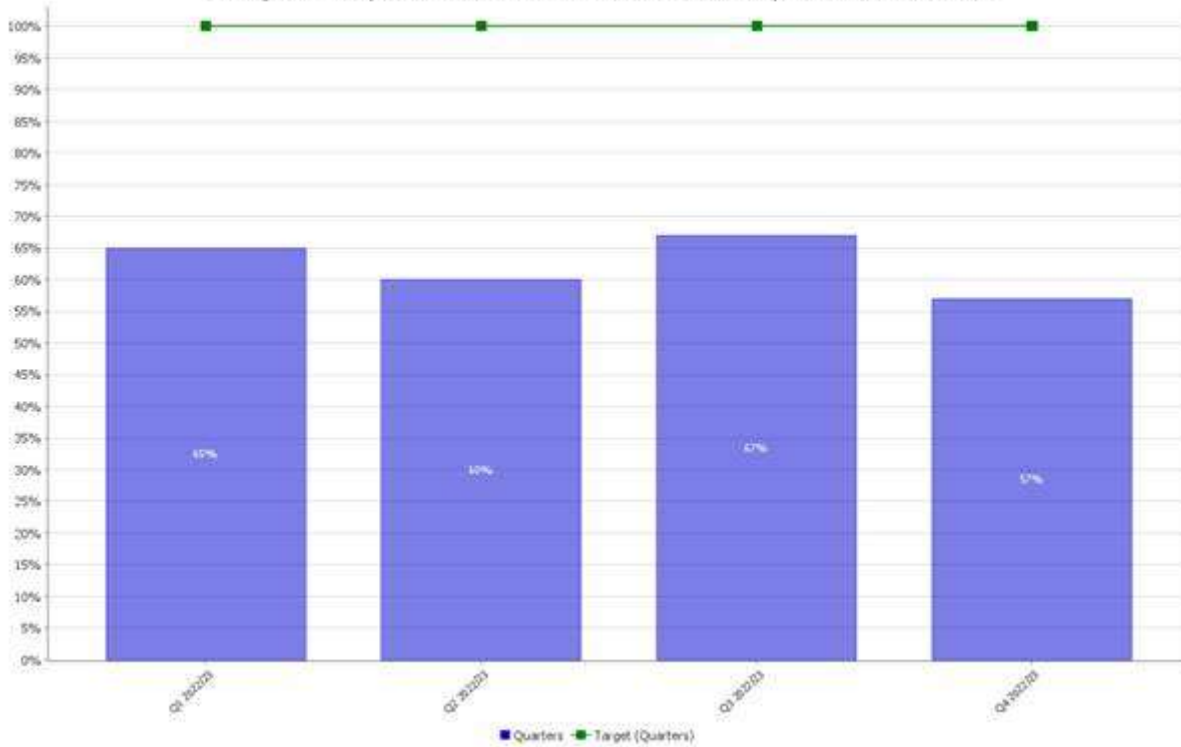


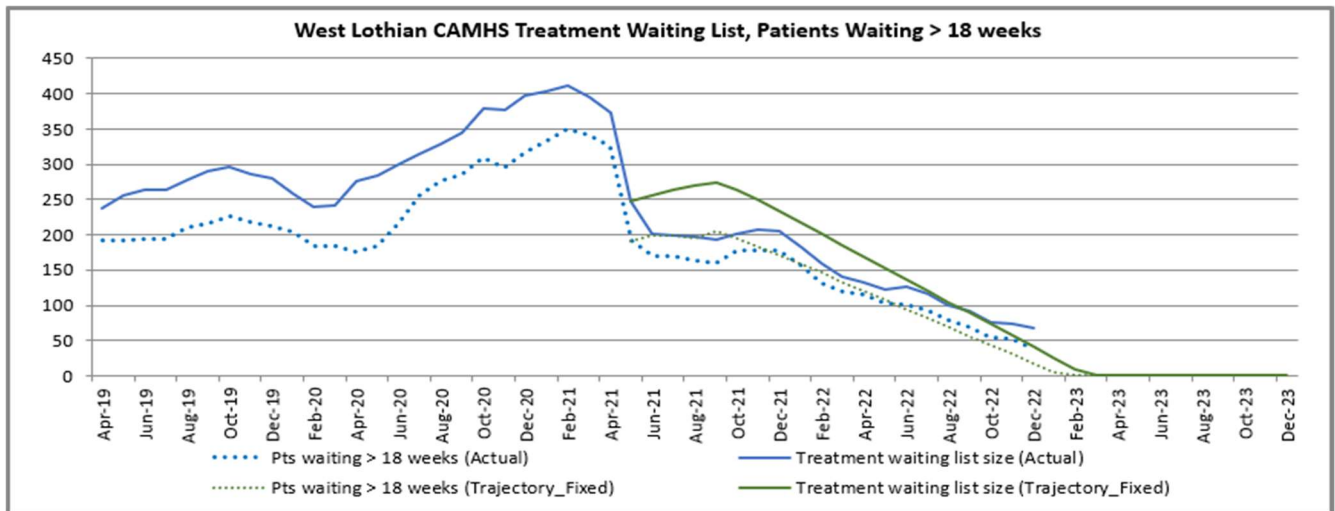
This indicator was introduced in 2022/23 in response to the age of criminal responsibility being increased from 8 to 12 years on 17th December 2021. Previous data and commentary can be seen on the archived indicator: CP:SPCJ103a\_9b.

This indicator has been developed to help the service assess the impact Early and Effective Intervention is making on supporting young people not to reoffend.

## Child Protection

**Percentage of initial child protection case conferences held no later than 21 calendar days from Initial Referral Discussion**







# Performance Management

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
<b>Safe</b>  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
<b>Healthy</b>  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
<b>Achieving</b>  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
<b>Nurtured</b>  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
<b>Active</b>  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
<b>Respected</b>  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
<b>Responsible</b>  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
<b>Included</b>  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 

West Lothian  
**Health & Social Care Partnership**  
westlothianhscp.org.uk



**West Lothian  
Council**