



Dumfries and Galloway

Children's Rights Report

2020-2023

Dumfries &

Galloway

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Contents

| | |
|--|----------|
| Foreword | 4 |
| Introduction..... | 5 |
| Dumfries and Galloway: Our Young People and Our Region | 6 |
| How we have developed the rights report | 7 |
| Progress between 2020 and 2023 | 9 |
| Cluster 1 - General measures of implementation | 9 |
| Cluster 2 - General principles of UNCRC1 | 10 |
| Cluster 3 - Civil rights and freedoms..... | 19 |
| Cluster 4 - Violence against children..... | 21 |
| Cluster 5 - Family environment and alternative..... | 23 |
| Cluster 6 - Basic health and welfare..... | 27 |
| Cluster 7 - Education, leisure & culture | 30 |
| Cluster 8 - Special Protection measures | 32 |
| What children and young people told us..... | 34 |
| Evaluation of progress 2020-2023..... | 42 |
| Recommendations/Next Steps..... | 43 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Action Plans: | |
| Dumfries and Galloway Council and NHS Dumfries and Galloway | 44 |
| Appendix - Case studies and examples..... | 57 |
| Pupil Council Charter | 58 |
| Dumfries and Galloway Youth Council (DGYC)..... | 58 |
| Welcoming Gypsy Traveller families | 59 |
| The Council's Roads Service | 59 |
| Waste Services Pilot..... | 60 |
| Operation Safety..... | 60 |
| Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)..... | 61 |
| Summer of Play | 62 |
| Employability and Skills – Project SEARCH | 63 |
| Community Mental Health Funding | 63 |
| Perinatal and Infant Mental Health services | 64 |
| Lifelong Learning | 64 |
| Tackling Poverty | 65 |

Foreword

This is the second report on Children’s Rights in Dumfries and Galloway. It covers the action taken by Dumfries and Galloway Council and NHS Dumfries and Galloway services to promote and progress Children’s Rights between 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2023. This joint report has been developed by a Member-Officer Children’s Rights Working Group involving Elected Members and representatives from Dumfries and Galloway Youth Council. The report outlines what is going well, what needs to improve, and what the Council and NHS should do next.

In Dumfries and Galloway, we are committed to providing the best start in life for all our children; to listen to them and to support them to achieve their full potential. We want to ensure that they not only achieve but also that they grow, develop and contribute to their local communities. We know that for this to happen, every child and young person in Dumfries and Galloway must know about their rights, understand what these means for them, and be confident in where they can go for help and support. We will continue to work together with our children and young people to make this happen.



Introduction

“As a person, you have rights that apply to everyone in the world.

As a young person you have other rights, too. These are listed in a document called the UN Convention on The Rights of the Child, or UNCRC.”



The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a human rights treaty that sets out the rights of every person under the age of 18. It is the most widely adopted international human rights treaty in history with 196 countries signing up. In the United Kingdom, the UNCRC was endorsed in 1991.

It states that every child has rights “without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child’s or their parent’s or legal guardian’s race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status”.


The UNCRC has 54 articles that cover all aspects of a child’s life and set out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled to. It also explains how adults and governments must work together to make sure all children and young people can realise all their rights.

The UNCRC must be seen as a whole: all the rights are linked, and no right is more important than another.

In Scotland, legislation has been prepared that will incorporate the UNCRC into Scots law. This legislation – the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill – is currently being amended and is expected to be reconsidered by the Scottish Parliament.

Public authorities in Scotland – like Councils and Health Boards – must report every three years on children’s rights. The report must say what progress the Councils and Health Boards have made in making the UNCRC requirements into a reality for children and young people in their area. This report says what the Council and NHS in Dumfries and Galloway have done between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2023.

After we published our first Rights Report in Dumfries and Galloway, we set up a Member-Officer Working Group on Children’s Rights which included Elected Members and Members of Dumfries and Galloway Youth Council. The group has directed engagement activities with children and young people that have informed the development of this report.

The Covid-19 pandemic caused upheaval to the lives of children and young people over the reporting period and the aftermath of the pandemic continues to have an impact on children and young people’s lives and well-being. However, despite the pandemic, during this period, there were important developments in Scotland like the **The Promise**  to Scotland’s care-experienced children and young people. “The ‘promise’ is that Scotland’s children and young people will grow up loved, safe and respected. To keep it, Scotland must bring about the change demanded by its Independent Care Review”.

In Dumfries and Galloway, our Children’s Services Partnership intends to keep the Promise. It underpins our vision for children and young people:

“All children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway will be treated with kindness, love and respect, and given the right support at the right time to enable them to reach their full potential.”

We will continue to work with children and young people, to support all children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway to know about and realise all their rights.

Dumfries and Galloway: Our Young People and Our Region

Dumfries and Galloway is:

The third largest region in Scotland, characterised by small settlements of 4,000 people or less spread across a large area

One of the most rural areas of mainland Scotland, after Argyll and Bute and the Highlands, with 21% of the population living in remote rural locations

21% of the population living in remote rural locations

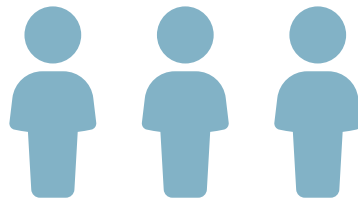


- In Dumfries and Galloway, we have 117 School nurseries and 2000 children in early learning and childcare.
- There are 16 secondary schools and 94 primary schools.
- Seven secondary schools have fewer than 500 pupils; 45% of primary schools have fewer than 50.
- During 2021/22 there were 4,516 referrals to Children and Families Social Work. 87% of these referrals were for children considered to be in need with 13% related to children in need of protection.
- A 2019 report by the End Child Poverty organisation estimated that in 2017/18, 27% of children in Dumfries and Galloway were living in poverty after housing costs. This gives Dumfries and Galloway the fourth highest rate in Scotland, after Glasgow City, Dundee City and Clackmannanshire.
- In 2022, there were 3,326 primary school pupils and 3,292 secondary school pupils with Additional Support Needs. A total of 60 primary and secondary pupils had Coordinated Support Plans.
- In 2022, the school census recorded 301 primary, and 393 secondary pupils as being assessed or declared disabled.
- On 31 March 2022, there were 47 children on the Child Protection Register, with the most prevalent risk factors being domestic and emotional abuse.
- In 2022, we had a rate per 1000 of 11.7 looked-after children and young people. This means there were 11.7 looked-after children and young people for every 1000 children and young people aged under 18 in Dumfries and Galloway.
- In 2022-23, 370 children in Dumfries and Galloway were referred to the Reporter. Of these, 307 were on care and protection grounds and 94 on offence grounds (some are referred on both care and protection and offence grounds).

Our population aged 0-17 in mid-2020 was estimated at 26,328.

Of these:

6,229 were aged 0 to 4
10,406 were aged 5 to 11
6,415 were aged 12 to 15
2,988 were aged 16 to 17



How we have developed the rights report

Our Children's Rights Member-Officer Working Group have led on the development of this report. This group is made up of Elected Members, Members of Dumfries and Galloway Youth Council, and Officers from Dumfries and Galloway Council and NHS Dumfries and Galloway.

The group have:

1. Asked all services to complete a Rights Audit to gather information about the work and activities that each service has undertaken to respect, promote or progress Children's Rights.
2. Made sure that children and young people were able to share their ideas and experiences of Children's Rights in Dumfries and Galloway.
3. Scrutinised and made recommendations to ensure that this report is an accurate reflection of service delivery, and children and young people's experiences of service delivery.

Members of the Working Group from the Youth Council developed an engagement session that allowed professionals to run workshops with children and young people across the region through primary schools, secondary schools and youth groups. The workshops were delivered over 4 weeks with:

- 54% of participants being primary aged children
- 46% of participants being secondary aged young people

771 total children and young people took part in the consultation:

- 17% were from Annandale and Eskdale
- 35% were from Nithsdale
- 22% were from Stewartry
- 25% were from Wigtownshire
- 1% did not disclose their locality

We also looked at what children and young people have told us over the last three years through lots of different engagement activities. These included:

- 10,000 Voices Findings
- Youth Matters Report
- Health and Wellbeing Census Results
- The Bright Spots Pilot Results

Children and young people's feedback has informed this Children's Rights Report and the recommendations for what can be done to promote and progress Children's Rights over the next 3 years.

The Rights Working Group were asked for their thoughts on the report as it was developed. Changes were made in response – like making the report shorter and easier to read.

Developing this report has been challenging due to the volume of work being undertaken by services when it comes to Children's Rights. Both the NHS and Council are large organisations and so there are a number of services being delivered for and with children and young people with a variety of engagement methods used. As a result, this Rights Report is a significant document that provides a lot of information and detail. We have produced a summary document to go alongside this report that is person-friendly and communicates the key messages, views and recommendations.

One of the main themes that was clear when looking at the feedback from groups and individuals was that there is not a consistent approach or experience when it comes to Children's Rights across organisations, between or within services. There are excellent examples of Children's Rights education, activities, initiatives and processes that have been included within service level Rights Audits that have been mirrored within children and young people's responses. However, there are also instances where service efforts are not known or recognised to be rights work by children and young people. The experience of engaging with children and young people has emphasised the need for more consistent, transparent approaches to Children's Rights across our organisations.



Progress between 2020 and 2023

Cluster 1 General measures of implementation

This cluster of rights is about our vision and our values, and how we make sure that we provide good services.

Our overarching Community Planning Vision in Dumfries and Galloway during the 2020-23 reporting period was: *'working together to create an ambitious, prosperous and confident Dumfries and Galloway where people achieve their potential'*.

Children and young people are a very important part of this vision. We want to make sure that they can grow up with the right support at the right time to enable them to reach their full potential.

Community Planning is where lots of different services come together as a partnership. These include the NHS, the Council, the Police, the Children's Reporter, and other services in the area like charities and voluntary services. The Community Planning Partnership is where all these services look at what they can do together to make the area a better place for the people who live there.

Our Council priorities and commitments set out what Dumfries and Galloway Council will do to achieve this vision. One of the Council's priorities in this reporting period was to **Provide the best start in life for all our children**. The Council did the following things to make this happen:

- Ensure early intervention, in particular to keep our region's most vulnerable children safe. This means that if children are facing difficulties, services help them at the earliest possible time. Services act quickly to help children who might not be safe and might need to be protected from harm.
- Invest in creating schools fit for the 21st century which are at the heart of our communities. This means having the best possible schools for our children and young people. We want schools to be welcoming places.
- Raise ambition and attainment, in particular to address inequalities. This means helping all children to reach their full potential. This includes children who might face difficulties like having disabilities, or living in places where there is a lot of deprivation.
- Support children to be healthy and active. This means that we support children with health services like immunisations and dental care and support from school nurses. We want children to have healthy school meals and opportunities to take part in sports and other activities.

In 2023, a new Council Plan was agreed. Children and young people are an important part of the new plan.

NHS Dumfries and Galloway aim to deliver excellent care that is person-centred, safe, effective, efficient and reliable, as well as working with the communities and partner organisations to reduce health inequalities across the region.

The Promise and the Getting it Right for Every Child approach are both centred on children's rights, and both of these drive everything we do as a children's services partnership. Our new Children's Services Plan for 2023-26 sets out all the things we will do to keep the Promise and get it right for every child.

Services within the Council and the NHS have plans that respect and promote children's rights. Staff who work with children and young people follow guidance and policies that respect children's rights.

An example of this is our Education Improvement Plan 2023-2028. This includes a commitment that all schools in Dumfries and Galloway will undertake UNCRC and UNICEF UK Rights Respecting Schools Award. In 2023, Dumfries and Galloway became the first authority in Scotland to have all primary and secondary schools registered with this programme.

In 2023:

- 15 Schools were at registration stage
- 66 Schools had achieved Bronze accreditation
- 23 Schools had achieved Silver accreditation
- 6 Schools had achieved Gold accreditation.

The ambition of the Education Authority is that all schools achieve Silver accreditation by the end of the 2024-25 academic year.


In Dumfries and Galloway we have a Public Protection Committee (PPC). The PPC decides how services should work together to protect people from harm, including children and young people. The PPC makes sure that we have guidance and policies for staff to follow to keep children and young people safe. They make sure that all these policies and guidance are relevant and up-to-date. The PPC provides child protection training for staff from the Council, and NHS, and other services, so that staff know what to do if they are concerned about a child or young person.

We carry out multi-agency case-file audits to check how well we are protecting children and young people and what we could do better.

We carry out other child protection audits to make sure that our local child protection processes and guidance are in line with national laws and guidance.

All NHS staff undertake Child Protection and Equality and Diversity Mandatory Training courses.

In schools, child protection policies and procedures are in place, with professional learning to support them. There is a dedicated Schools Safeguarding Manager who supports staff in schools to take action if they are concerned about a child. There is an annual update to training which all staff in schools must take part in.

In November 2022 Dumfries and Galloway Council produced their second **Youth Participation and Engagement Strategy**  that outlines the Council's clear commitment to young people:

- We will ensure young people have the skills, ability and confidence to speak out
- We will talk with, listen to and value our young people
- We will make sure that young people have opportunities and are given choices to actively and meaningfully get involved in the decisions that affect their lives
- Act on the views of young people by reviewing and changing Council services as required

A multi-agency child protection case-file audit involves staff from different services – these could be Social Workers, Police Officers, Health workers and Teachers. They come together to look at cases where children and young people have been at risk of harm and in need of protection. They check that procedures were followed properly. They look at what worked well for the children and young people, and their families, and what could have been better. Then they make recommendations for how we can improve the ways that we protect children and young people.




Cluster 2

General principles of UNCRC

This section of the report demonstrates how well we meaningfully involve children and young people in service-planning and delivery; how we demonstrate non-discrimination; how we actively involve marginalised groups; how we ensure children's rights to survival and development; and how we respect the views of children.

Ensuring non-discrimination in our services

In Dumfries and Galloway, the Council and NHS are committed to 'mainstreaming' equality. 'Mainstreaming' means that equality is at the heart of everything that both organisations do. Equality means that everyone is treated as an individual with equal dignity and respect. Achieving equality involves getting rid of the discriminatory barriers that limit what people can do and achieve. Mainstreaming also means that all staff take responsibility for equality and diversity – it's not someone else's job.


Our Health and Social Care Partnership, and the Council, both report on what they are doing to mainstream equality and diversity. The Health and Social Care Partnership report can be viewed [here](#) , and the Council report can be viewed [here](#) . Both the Council and NHS have a policy that all new plans and policies should undergo Equality Impact Assessment. When we developed our 2023-26 Children's Services Plan, we tested Scotland's **Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA)** .

Children and young people from marginalised groups

Care-experienced children and young people were a priority in our previous Children's Services Plan, and they continue to be a priority in our 2023-26 Children's Services Plan. When we developed our last plan and our new plan, we looked at evidence, and we listened to what children and young people said was important to them. We used this to help us decide what should be in the plans.

The most important things in our previous plan were:

- Where children and young people live – both while they are in care and when they leave care.
- Interaction with young people – this was about having the same expectations for our looked after children and young people as we would have if they were our own children.
- Raising attainment – this was about removing the barriers to learning that looked after children face, and supporting young people into positive destinations when they leave school.
- Improving access to Health – this was about supporting looked after children to attend health assessments and have their individual health needs met.

The report on our 2020-23 Children's Services Plan is [here](#) . This contains information about what we did to support care-experienced children and young people.

Our Youth Justice Team is now represented on all national Youth Justice Groups and is recognised nationally. We were asked to present to the National Youth Justice Conference in June 2021 and 2022, and a Scottish Government Conference in January 2023 to talk about our work around, and approach to the implementation of the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act. This is the law that made the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland 12 years old. This means a child under the age of 12 cannot be arrested, charged or prosecuted for a crime.

Young Carers in Dumfries and Galloway are supported by Dumfries and Galloway Carers Centre. Young Carers are supported to get a Young Carers Statement. This is a plan to help Young Carers work out how caring responsibilities affect their life. It looks at different areas of the Young Carers life and helps them express their feelings and needs as a Young Carer and a young person.

Our schools provide additional support to welcome Gypsy Traveller families. You can read about this in the examples in the Appendix.

Children and young people's rights to develop to their full potential.

Early learning and childcare settings offer education and childcare to children up to school age, they can be operated by the council, private businesses, voluntary organisations, or childminders. In Dumfries and Galloway children can access up to 1140 hours per year.

Dumfries and Galloway Council provides support to the:

- Private, Voluntary or Independent sector, and
- local authority Early Learning and Childcare settings.

This enables children and young people to benefit from early learning and development opportunities. Care experienced support workers are employed to support the wellbeing of children and young people with care experience.

The Care Experienced Education Team works with individual care-experienced children and young people on a regular basis. The team is led by a Principal Teacher and comprises of Care-Experienced Teachers and Care-Experienced Officers. The service responds to Requests for Assistance and works with multi-agency partners to a child's plan to ensure open communication and consistency for learners. The service develops that crucial relationship with our pupils and helps them understand their educational rights within their plan. Flexible options are explored with staff in schools to tailor children and young people's education package to enable access that works for them. This is critical when their personal or family circumstances are impacting the child or young person's learning. Children and young people are encouraged to express their feelings, thoughts and wishes. The service also strives to ensure pupils get early access to Skills Development Scotland to ensure they are aware of their rights as they go into adulthood.

Following the second period of school closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our Education Department looked at how to introduce the Framework for Inclusion into schools in Dumfries and Galloway. Four full-time equivalent Inclusive Practice Principal Teachers worked on this. They helped schools to get ready for Framework for Inclusion. In March 2023 the Framework for Inclusion was launched in Dumfries and Galloway.

The Framework for Inclusion is guidance for teachers in Scotland. It helps teachers to think about children's rights, and how to be inclusive in the classroom.

Encouraging participation in service planning and delivery

Below are some examples of how Council and NHS services have involved children and young people in service planning and delivery.

Dumfries and Galloway Council has a clear commitment to talking with, listening to, and acting on the views of young people as outlined within the Youth Participation and Engagement Strategy 2022 – 2027. This includes the development of youth participation structures including:

Dumfries and Galloway Youth Council

- Established in April 2019, Dumfries and Galloway Youth Council is an organisation made up of 35 elected youth representatives who volunteer to represent the voices and experiences of young people in their community at a local, regional and national level. There are 3 types of role on the Youth Council:
- Ward Youth Councillors: 2 young people are elected per Ward area to represent their local community. This includes working with young people through secondary schools, youth groups and community organisations.
- Nominated Youth Councillors: 1 young person is elected per nominated group to represent a community of interest (marginalised group). There are 7 nominated representatives in total covering; care experienced young people, young carers, young people with additional support

needs and disabilities, young parents, gypsy / traveller young people, young people with ethnic minority identities and LGBT youth. Their role includes working with Council and Third Sector services that provide targeted support for marginalised young people.

- Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament: 2 young people are elected per Scottish Parliamentary constituency. Their role is to work alongside young people in their constituency, in partnership with Ward and Nominated Youth Councillors, and represent the views of young people on a national level.

The Youth Council is recognised as the main Youth Democracy structure in Dumfries and Galloway with them having been involved in providing support to organisations and services to engage with young people and delivering peer to peer consultation with young people on issues affecting local communities. Annually, there is a Joint Meeting between Dumfries and Galloway Youth Council and Full Council that determines an action plan based on key issues impacting young people, and a Joint Meeting with the Community Planning Partnership. In 2022, youth representation was introduced to Area Committees and Education, Skills and Learning Committee.

In addition, there are also a number of participation groups, supported by the Council's Youth Work Service and broader Community Planning Partners, for young people with minority identities to have their say including:

- Dumfries and Galloway Young Women's Network, young people who have created a platform aiming to empower, raise aspirations, build confidence and resilience and take steps towards making meaningful change across our communities for young women,
- Chameleon Steering Group, for LGBT+ young people and their allies who organise an annual LGBT gathering for young people and deliver a series of social action activities throughout the year based on young people's experiences.

- Youth Matters, a steering group of young people with additional support needs and disabilities who led on the development of the Youth Matters Conference in 2023.
- Listen2Us, a youth advocacy group for care experienced young people who aspire to make change on behalf of children and young people who are care experienced. Listen2Us have co-designed 3 annual #WeCare gatherings that bring young people and decision makers together to inform planning.

All structures and groups identified within the Youth Participation and Engagement Strategy are youth-led, Council supported groups.

NHS Dumfries and Galloway were the first Health Board in Scotland to appoint a permanent role of Participation Lead for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). CAMHS follow an approach to participation that has four important aspects. These are:

- Space (children must be given the opportunity to express their views)
- Voice (children must be facilitated to express their views)
- Audience (the view must be listened to)
- Influence (the view must be acted upon, as appropriate.)

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) Youth Forum was established online during lockdown, they are a group of 8 young volunteers aged between 12 and 21 years old, from across Dumfries and Galloway who are either currently accessing CAMHS or have accessed the service in the past. The young people are all passionate about sharing their lived experiences with others and discuss issues that are important to them in relation to mental health services. CAMHS participation work helps to create a listening and collaborative environment where young people, parent and carers can work in partnership with mental health professionals to make positive improvements to the service together. Currently young people can get involved within our CAMHS Youth Forum, sharing their lived experiences within improvement projects, raise mental health awareness, developing new resources by and for young people and get involved within new CAMHS staff members recruitment.

The Education Department has quality improvement processes. This means that Education keep looking at what they do, what works well, and what they could do better. As part of this, schools take part in collaborative reviews. A collaborative review is where the Education Officers visit a school and speak to stakeholders and gather an understanding of their experiences in the school. This helps the school to better understand the needs of the pupils and decide what to do next.

At the final interview stage of headteacher recruitment, a representative group of pupils are given the opportunity to listen to a presentation prepared by the candidates and to question the candidates in relation to the role. The pupils then have a vote to identify who is their preferred candidate and for what reasons. This information is shared with the final interview panel and considered as part of the final decision for appointment.


Learners throughout their time in schools have lots of opportunities to plan and co-create their learning alongside their peers and teachers. They also have opportunities to reflect and measure their own progress and set next steps in their learning journey. All pupils have regular opportunities to engage with the SHANARRI Wellbeing Indicators.


In 2022, we carried out a multi-agency Child Protection Audit in Dumfries and Galloway. We did this so we could look at how well our processes worked for protecting children, and see if there were things we could do to make them better. As part of this, we asked children and families about their experiences of child protection processes. We used the findings to help us decide what to do next.

We have a Family Support Service in Dumfries and Galloway. This service helps families that might be facing difficulties and parents might need some support to help them look after their children well. When families are no longer involved with the Family Support Service, there is an evaluation. This is where the families are asked about their experiences, and how well the service worked for them. The evaluation includes ideas for how the service could be improved. Our Social Work department are going to extend this evaluation to all the children and families that they work with.

Young People are now involved in the recruitment of staff across Social Work service areas.

Social Work have used funding to appoint a Participation and Engagement Officer, for a 12-month period. The officer will work with children and young people to develop a Participation and Youth Justice Strategy.

In 2023, the Council's Youth Work service published the findings of the second **10,000 Voices consultation** . The project involved young people in all stages, from its initial planning and development through to the delivery and the subsequent analysis and reporting of the findings. The 2023 research involved 10,828 young people aged between 10 and 25 years old, which was 51.7% of the young people living, working and studying in Dumfries and Galloway.

The Youth Matters Conference was held in November 2022 and was attended by more than 110 disabled young people from across the region. During the Conference young people were able to share their aspirations and ambitions for the future, the challenges they have faced and the potential solutions to remove barriers. The Conference was designed and co-delivered by a youth-led steering group. Expert listeners from a range of services were invited to attend the conference and listen in to discussions on 6 workshops focussed on issues relevant to the lives of disabled young people including: housing; personal health, safety and access; work, education, training and volunteering; friendships, family, sexual health and community; self-respect, self-confidence, self-esteem and mental health; reaching goals and achieving our full potential. Following the conference, the Steering Group produced this **report** .

The findings of both 10,000 Voices and Youth Matters were published after we had produced our 2023-26 Children's Services Plan. When the findings from both were available, the senior managers in our Children's Services Partnership asked all the planning groups involved in our Children's Services Plan to look at the findings and make sure that their action plans took account of these.

Other engagement activities included the #WeCare Gathering for care experienced young people, and the Bright Spot Consultation which gathered information from care-experienced children and young people relevant to their health and well-being to inform service planning. We are using the findings from these, together with those from 10,000 Voices and Youth Matters to inform our new Corporate Parenting Plan for 2023-26.

Seeking children and young people's views on matters that affect them

Our Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Youth Forum have done lots of work aimed at helping children and young people to give their views. Many examples of this are in the Appendix at the end of this report. Every child and young person's voice and view shared with CAMHS is important, whether this has been shared by completing an online short survey, or from participating within art-based activities, group work, using communication aids, or being involved within working groups and taking part in the CAMHS Youth Forum. We know that when care and services are designed and delivered in collaboration with the people who use them, there will be better outcomes for all.

Dumfries and Galloway are working on the second and third phases of Bairns' Hoose. We received funding which allowed us to work with a group of young people to develop Bairns' Hoose Standards. This includes developing child-friendly information.

Children and young people's views are always sought within foster care reviews. We changed the paperwork used so that it includes the child's views, and observations

Bairns' Hoose is a place for children who have experience of abuse or violence. The idea of a Bairns' Hoose in Scotland is that it will be a child-friendly place where children can get help from different services in one place – like child protection, health, justice and trauma-recovery services. Having all these services together in one child-friendly setting means that children who have had bad experiences don't have to keep telling their story over again to different people.

of the child using the SHANARRI indicators. Children are also encouraged to speak to workers on their own, if they choose. The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration send out a document to gather children's views and the foster carers help with this. Social Workers also seek the views of the birth children of Foster Carers.

Young people who are in foster care are part of training for prospective foster carers and adoptive carers at the pre-approval course.

Children and Young People's views are sought following every unplanned ending in foster care and they are asked if they wish to attend the Unplanned Ending meeting to share their views, if not these are shared by their worker.

Within Education there is ongoing consultation with stakeholders about timetable changes and alignment. Young people are asked for their views and opinions, and these are listened to. Children and young people with Child's Plans have opportunities to attend meetings and contribute to plans as and when appropriate.

In 2020, Dumfries and Galloway Youth Council, supported by a wide range of Council and Third Sector partners led the way in gathering the experiences of young people in Dumfries and Galloway through the 'Impact of COVID-19 on Young People in D&G' research. The consultation was live for a 3-week period with just over 530 young people sharing their experiences and concerns in this time. The findings were available within 2 weeks and shared with decision makers at every level to inform their planning and service delivery.

Ensuring that children and young people with communication difficulties are able to give their views.

In NHS Dumfries and Galloway, those working with the youngest children have become familiar with the "Infant Pledge" to hear the voices of babies and infants.

The NHS Board has comprehensive interpretation and translation provisions in place for patients and carers where English is not their first language.

Speech and Language therapists work closely to support children with Augmentative and Alternative Communication requirements to give support when a child has other communication needs besides talking.

Ensuring that children/young people have access to independent advocacy in order to claim their rights.

NHS Dumfries and Galloway promote the Advocacy Service and the Patient Advice and Support Service. This is on the website at <https://www.nhsdg.co.uk/how-did-we-do>. Patient Services can also give information about this.

Within the new CAMHS website, which was co-designed with young people, there is information regarding local advocacy services and what support is available.

Barnado's Hear4U Advocacy Service is commissioned by Dumfries and Galloway Council. The service supports looked-after children, and other vulnerable children such as those with a Child Protection Plan.

All children who are looked-after have access to advocacy.

Clear and transparent complaints processes

Education have provided training and support for our schools regarding the Dumfries and Galloway Complaints Handling Process. As part of this we have engaged at local and national level in to get ready for introduction of the Dumfries and Galloway Child Friendly Complaints (CFC) Procedure which is planned for April 2024. Promotion of the Child Friendly Complaints Procedure will be led by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). Our Education Department have already engaged with Headteachers on what this will look like for schools and young people. Education will work with Pupil Councils and the Youth Council to ensure that clear messages around this procedure are accessible.

Education have been working alongside Social Work Services in looking at Child Friendly Complaints procedures. Social Work have delivered training to all staff up to and including Stage 2 Complaints. The service recognises

the need to further improve Complaints Procedures in relation to being child-friendly - including how the service communicates with children, and provides child-friendly leaflets and other materials. Social Work have started to use briefings to raise the profile of complaints processes with frontline staff.

When the new procedure is released, it will also be followed by NHS Dumfries and Galloway. Although the procedure is not yet released, NHS Dumfries and Galloway has other different ways that people can be supported to make complaints about their experiences (see <https://www.nhsdg.co.uk/how-did-we-do/>.) These are called 'feedback mechanisms'. Services that work directly with children and young people adapt these feedback mechanisms to make them more accessible to children and young people. An example of this is from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS):

Within the CAMHS website a specific feedback page has been developed: <https://dghscp.co.uk/camhs/feedback/>. This is where the service promotes the Care Opinion picture stories where children and young people can share their experiences. There is also have a short CAMHS recent appointment feedback form, that young people can complete, and information about how to make a formal complaint through the Patient Services team.

Routinely seeking views, and providing feedback to children, young people and families

As part of School Improvement Planning Procedures schools are expected to gather view and opinions of pupils along with other stakeholders as part of gathering self-evaluation evidence. These along with other data help to inform school improvement priorities.

Schools often use the How Good Is Our School (HGIOS) resource with pupils to gather qualitative data to inform improvement in schools.

In Dumfries and Galloway, we are looking at how to bring in Participatory Budgeting across our Council. The Education department is looking at how to make Participatory Budgeting work using our existing approaches to Pupil Equity Funding; our Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategy and our plans for a Pupil Council Charter. Some of our schools have already introduced Participatory Budgeting through activity and consultation in relation to Pupil Equity Funding.

Participatory Budgeting is about involving local communities in decision-making and the way that Councils may spend money in their communities. The aim of the Scottish Government is that at least 1% of local government mainstream budgets will be subject to participatory budgeting.

How Good is OUR School is a resource from Education Scotland. It is used in schools to help pupils to give their views on their school. There are 5 themes:

- **Our relationships**
- **Our learning and teaching**
- **Our school and community**
- **Our health and wellbeing**
- **Our successes and achievements.**

Pupils give their views on these themes, and the school can use these to help them plan improvements.

Seeking the best approaches to engagement

Services within our Children's Services Partnership have improvement plans which include actions about engaging with children and young people and improving the way that we do this. Below are some examples of this.

The Youth Work service is confidential for young people to engage with (unless there is risk of harm to themselves or others – child or adult protection concern). The service actively encourages young people to share their views on a wide range of issues through groups, 1-2-1 discussion and as part of structured programmes and activities. Youth Work approaches start from where young people are at, and as a result the initial aspect of any workshop, activity or discussion is providing young people with the opportunity to share their own understanding.

In addition, the Youth Work service supports a number of youth participation and democracy groups – the role of the service is to work with young people to ensure they have the confidence, skills and information they need to be effective in their role (elected or not) and the service supports this by ensuring young people can access relevant training, professional inputs, and team-building activities.

Within Social Work services, the best interests of the child are threaded through everything the service does, promoting the child's voice being heard in decision-making in accordance to age and stage. Social Work uses the Signs of Safety approach with children and families. This is an approach which has engagement and a relational approach with children and families at its heart. Plans and safety goals for children include the child's own voice and language. Words and pictures are used in a way that makes sure that the child can make sense of what is happening. For some children, Social Workers will work together with Speech and Language therapists to help children with disabilities, or who are in conflict with the law understand what is happening. This is important because many children who are in conflict with the law have speech, language and communication difficulties that might not have been diagnosed or recognised.

In Health, QR codes have been introduced to make it easier for people to feedback on their experiences with health services through Care Opinion. CAMHS produced 'Get Involved' resources with QR codes so young people can just scan these to sign up for projects. The service worked closely with Education to reach 'hard to reach' children to encourage them to become involved in the #healthandcare week.

During lockdown, CAMHS participation projects took place online, but CAMHS posted to children and young people all the information and resources that they needed in order to take part.

Cluster 3

Civil rights and freedoms

This cluster focuses on children's civil rights and freedoms including: children's right to move freely in public space and to meet with others; children's right to think and believe what they like, to access information and speak their mind as long it is not harmful to others; children's right to keep personal matters and communications private; and their right to be protected from inhumane or degrading treatment.

Provision of public spaces for children and young people to meet safely.

Dumfries and Galloway is a very rural area, and many people live in small villages with fewer than 500 people. This means that it can be difficult for children and young people to meet up with friends outside school. In the 2023 10,000 Voices consultation, children and young people were asked to rate the statement: 'I can access a range of space with opportunities for play and recreation'. The average score for this, across the whole of Dumfries and Galloway was 4.25, on a scale where 1 was 'awful' and 7 was 'excellent'.


Dumfries and Galloway Council's Youth Work Service provide a range of universal and targeted youth work opportunities across Dumfries and Galloway for young people aged 12-25 to get involved in. The service delivers a range of projects, programmes and services across our region to broaden young people's horizons, and to aid in their personal and social development.

The service delivers a wide range of groups for young people after school, in the evenings and at weekends. This includes groups focussed on different skills (cooking, gaming, volunteering, sports, arts etc.) and targeted groups for young people with additional support needs or disabilities, experience of care, LGBT+ identities and their allies. Youth groups take place in secondary schools (during lunch or afterschool) and in community venues (evenings and weekends) throughout the region. The

service also runs issue-based groups for young people exploring topics such as sexual health, healthy relationships, body image and confidence.

Youth Work also delivers Drop In's which are places for young people to come together with their friends, take part in activities and grab something to eat. Throughout the holidays, the service runs a range of varied and exciting programmes during the school holidays for young people in towns and villages across Dumfries and Galloway.

In 2022, Dumfries and Galloway received funding for activities for children and young people over the summer holidays (Summer of Play). Information about the Summer of Play in Dumfries and Galloway is in the examples in the appendix.

Youth Beatz  is Scotland's largest free youth music festival and has been held annually in Dumfries and Galloway for over 13 years. Youth Beatz festival is a 9-day festival in which events take place across every Ward area of Dumfries and Galloway as part of the Fringe Festival, culminating in the two main days of the music festival in Dumfries. The award-winning event is managed through a partnership led by Dumfries and Galloway Council's Youth Work Service, in conjunction with the Oasis Events Team. Youth Beatz provides young people from across the area with a fantastic festival experience in their local community, as well as valuable experiences through volunteering opportunities such as performing in immersive youth led drama production The Toon and participation in the annual Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award residential.

The Toon is a hard-hitting interactive drama and is one of the festival's biggest features. The immersive drama production is designed and delivered by local young people from across Dumfries and Galloway and provides festival attendees with accurate and relevant information and advice when dealing with issues that commonly affect their lives. The issues displayed in the production are chosen by the young people, and include – knife crime, poverty, bullying, domestic violence and sectarianism to name a few.

Ensuring proportionate and lawful data-sharing while recognising a child's right to privacy

The Council and NHS Dumfries and Galloway comply with the Data Protection Act. Our multi-agency Public Protection Guidance provides staff with guidance on how to share information when they have concerns about the safety of a child or young person. In 2022, the Scottish Government provided revised guidance on getting it right for every child (GIRFEC). This included guidance about information-sharing. Following this, we produced new multi-agency guidance on information-sharing, and this will be released in early 2024.

Providing information in child and young people-friendly formats

Below are some examples of this.

The Health Board has a legal duty to make sure that communication with Patients, Carers and the general public is clear, accessible and understood. All Patients have a legal right to effective communication in a way that enables them to understand and take part in their healthcare and understand information about it.

Within CAMHS children and young people are involved when developing new resources and social media content using a variety of creative methods and approaches to ensure these are child friendly and easy to read.

When developing and designing the new CAMHS website, young people were involved in all aspects – including colours, use of language, deciding on and designing artwork, as how resources visually look are important to children and young people. Flyers were produced which included a QR code to provide feedback on CAMHS appointments.

The NHS Sexual Health Website has a section specifically targeted towards young people.

As described previously, the Signs of Safety approach used by Social Work uses child-friendly words and pictures so that children can understand what is happening.

Our 2023-26 Children's Services Plan is available in an Easy Read version, and we also produced a short video with information about the plan that had British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation.

The Employability and Skills Service (ESS) champions the rights of young minds by imparting knowledge on fair work, amplifying seldom-heard voices and opinions, and promoting healthy work relationships. ESS adopts a person-centred approach through dedicated employability keyworkers, offering holistic pre-employment support. Our commitment extends to ensuring that young individuals not only have access to essential services but also a safe environment to voice their opinions and engage in group learning. This approach emphasises fostering an understanding of healthy personal and professional relationships, with the confidentiality of interactions with keyworkers upheld, unless there is a potential risk of harm.

Cluster 4

Violence against children

This cluster focuses on situations where children experience violence in all its forms including physical and mental violence, abuse and neglect, maltreatment and exploitation including sexual abuse; it highlights the right of children to services which support their physical and psychological recovery; and emphasises that children should not be subjected to torture or to other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment including physical or corporal punishment.

Promoting children and young people's recovery from violence and abuse

We know that for our children and young people, trauma results from an event, or a series of events/circumstances that has been harmful or in some cases, life threatening to them. Whilst the experience of trauma will differ across our children and young people, the effects of trauma can be lasting and limit their ability to achieve mental, physical, social or emotional well-being.

In order for our workforce to be able to support our children and young people who are experiencing trauma in their life, we have to ensure that we provide them with the appropriate skills and knowledge so that they are trauma informed and can adopt and implement trauma informed approaches in the work that they do. In doing so, we are building a well-equipped trauma informed workforce that support our children and young people to feel safe, and to develop trusting relationships.

In early 2023 the Council appointed a Trauma-Informed Practice Lead Officer who works closely with colleagues in Mental Health within the NHS.

To support the Social Work workforce, a virtual reality training programme was purchased. This allows the user to experience life through the eyes of the child. Dumfries and Galloway is one of only two Scottish local authorities that are using this creative and immersive tool as a different approach to the way in which we traditionally work, and how we train and upskill our workforce.

In addition to our workforce, we have delivered this training to our foster carers. It is important that we support them in the understanding of the impact of trauma and neglect has on our children so that when our children are placed with them, they can support them from a perspective of understanding and empathy which in turn supports our placements to be sustained creating a stable environment.

Listening to children and young people in child protection and other processes

As described previously, services seek out innovative approaches such as Signs of Safety which are strengths and relational-based. Multi-agency Case-file Audits look at how well we listen to children and young people and actively seek to include them.

Supporting children and young people to manage their behaviour.

Employability and skills keyworkers play a crucial role in supporting young people to manage their own behaviour and promoting a violence-free work environment. Through individualised guidance, keyworkers empower young people to develop essential skills for self-regulation, conflict resolution, and effective communication. By fostering a supportive and open atmosphere, keyworkers create spaces where young people feel comfortable discussing and addressing any challenges they may encounter. Additionally, employability keyworkers actively contribute to a workplace culture that rejects violence against young people. They engage in advocacy, education, and awareness initiatives, ensuring that all staff members understand the importance of maintaining a safe, respectful, and nurturing environment for children to thrive.

Schools co-create behaviour policies with stakeholders, many of which focus on the promotion of positive behaviour. Schools are guided to support staff to manage instances of bullying. This is supported by respectme training which has been offered to staff and stakeholders. This advocates schools co-creating individual policies for bullying.

Youth Justice, in partnership with key stakeholders, deliver preventative groupwork in schools focusing on consequential thinking and respect for others.

Cluster 5

Family environment and alternative

This cluster focuses on: the primary role of parents and the support parents should have to bring up their children; the right of children to not be separated from parents unless this is in their best interests; the right of children to be well cared for where they live apart from their parents; the right of a child to maintain contact with both parents if that is in their best interests; the right of a child to have a say when decisions are made about where they should live, with placements subject to regular review; and the right of all children to be protected against all forms of violence and abuse.

Accounting for children's evolving capacities, making sure younger children are able to access their rights.

Through signs of safety and relationship-based practice, Social Work have introduced a number of tools to engage with our children and families such as 'Words and Pictures' which help to explain what is happening to children including the role of their Social Worker.

With regard to the child's evolving capacities to make their own choices, recognition of this is threaded through everything that Social Work do - promoting the child's voice being heard and decision-making in accordance with age and stage. The child's voice is promoted at all ages, and the Young People's Transition Team are included in supporting our young people to make positive decisions.

Within the NHS Public Protection Team, an understanding of child development is embedded into practice, alongside tools that support decision-making about risk to children.

Within the national Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) resource, schools are able to access materials which support learning and teaching at all levels taking into account the age and developmental stage of the pupil to ensure appropriate messages are shared and discussed with pupils.

Seeking and taking account of children and young people's views prior to making decisions that affect them

Social Work commission Barnardo's Hear4U service to provide advocacy for children and young people. Children, young people and families are supported and enabled to refer themselves for advocacy. Individuals may also be supported to seek assistance from solicitors; Scottish Guardianship; and interpretation services. Staff ensure that our children have an understanding of their rights.

Children who are at risk of requiring secure care are given an opportunity to discuss their views with the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO). Whilst in secure care, as well as being supported to provide their views to Looked After Child Meetings, they are asked their views specifically about being in secure care on a monthly basis and are made aware they can discuss their views with the CSWO at any time.

Work on Social Work's Brother and Sister activity has progressed, ensuring continued relationships between brothers and sisters and those who have significant relationships, and with children supported to maintain those relationships. Young people in foster care are involved in the training for prospective foster carers.

Through the Whole Family Wellbeing fund, additional family support workers are embedded in Social Work mainstream areas of activity to further support participation and engagement with children.

Ensuring that looked-after children and young people have access to the services they need, and have a say in decisions about where they live

All routes are explored to keep children with their families. This includes: identifying the whole network of support; recognising the importance of all relationships; and planning how children and young people get to spend time with parents irrespective of who they are living with. Family time is included in the training plan for staff. Social Work seek to ensure all kinship options have been explore prior to placing a child in foster care. Carers are encouraged to promote family time and the importance of maintaining sibling connections.

Ensuring that young people who are moving onto independence but continue to require services, have access to the support they need

One of the priorities in our 2020-23 Children's Services Plan was Children with Disabilities. Under this priority, a key action was to improve arrangements for young people with disabilities in their transition to adult services. Some work was carried out on this in advance of Scottish Government legislation (the Transitions to Adulthood (Scotland) Bill), but the partnership decided to act in advance of the legislation and expand the focus of work to include all aspects of transition across all life-stages. We listened to the voices of Disabled young people at the Youth Matters event in 2022 regarding their transition between services, and this has informed the transition action in the 2023-26 plan.

Young people leaving care can get support from our Leaving Care Team.

Providing support and services to parents/carers in order that they can care for their children

Social Work offer Whole Family Support, including parenting programmes to support parents/carers to care for their children.

Whole Family Support is a where a range of services work in an holistic way to help families meet their individual needs. The aim is to improve families' wellbeing by providing advice and support to enable them to avoid crisis. The aim is to support families to stay together in a safe and loving environment and reduce the number of children who are taken into care.

Funding from the Scottish Government's Whole Family Wellbeing Fund has allowed us a more targeted approach on whole family support. This includes upscaling of the role of children and families current Social Work Assistants and Family Support Workers, and expansion of the current service to meet increasing demand for support to families at all times of need. We have appointed a Parenting coordinator to develop parenting programmes in line with a survey to gain the views of parents across Dumfries and Galloway.

Children and families are provided with a choice about support through our family support workers across the region together with signposting to other appropriate services. The Whole Family Support Group is seeking to involve children, young people and families in evaluation of the wider whole family support activity to evidence that provision is responsive to the needs of families.

We have clear evidence that the life chances of those families experiencing challenges are being improved due to the engagement in family learning.

Trauma-informed practices are now embedded across some activity, the Whole Family Support Group now want to take this further in terms of relationship building with our families, and further empower families.

We are listening to children and families and responding to feedback. An example of this is that we received feedback about the availability of PEEP – that PEEP was only available in certain areas and that there were gaps in service delivery. As a result, PEEP is now being delivered in the areas identified: Whithorn and Newton Stewart.

We are on a journey to create a whole family support system that is accountable to service users; and ensures that support can be offered across a wide spectrum of need from the least intensive to the most intensive requirements.

School Nursing and CAMHS teams engage with children without their parents as a personal choice from Primary School age, dependent on assessed need.

Parenting advice and support are provided by Universal Midwifery, Family Nurse Partnership and Health Visiting teams.

Proving support to children and young people who experience complex family circumstances.

Embedding the Safe and Together approach in Dumfries and Galloway has continued to improve the response to domestic abuse, with work to increase understanding of the principles of Safe and Together:

Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) met throughout the reporting period every 4 weeks to action plan for those at highest risk of serious harm and death due to domestic abuse. In 2022/23 there were 113 cases discussed (33 of these were repeat cases) with 156 children living in the households.

The Safe & Together™ Model: aims to keep children who have experienced domestic abuse safe and together with their non-abusive parent, while working with the non-abusive parent to help them protect the child, and ensuring the abuser is held accountable.

We are developing a Domestic Abuse Policy in Dumfries and Galloway that will include the Safe and Together approach. This will support staff to work in a domestic abuse informed way.

As described earlier, all Young Carers have the right to a Young Carers Statement, and it will be completed with a support worker. Young Carers can choose to share their statement with family members, teachers, or other support agencies.

Young Carers Cards are available to all young people who have a caring role. They are issued by Dumfries and Galloway Young Carers Project. The card allows Young Carers to understand the illness of the person they care for, be better involved in any medical procedures and be kept up to date by professionals about the cared for person's treatment.

MARACs are regular, local meetings where information about domestic abuse victims at risk of the most serious levels of harm is shared between representatives from a range of local services. The aim is to agree a coordinated action plan to increase the safety of the victim and their children.

Ensuring that our management team are informed of, and fulfil their responsibilities as corporate parents.

A seminar for elected members was delivered in 2023, which outlined their roles and responsibilities as corporate parents. The Council's senior managers - the Corporate Management Team (CMT) - receive reports about our care-experienced children. They also receive information about how they can meet their responsibilities as good corporate parents.

Reviewing placements for children and young people

Procedures are in place to regular review a child's needs and circumstances. Our looked after children procedures include regularly reviews of a child's plan for those living away from home. Social workers visit premises to assess residential homes and foster homes.

A corporate parent is the name given to an organisation or person who has special responsibilities to care experienced children and young people. This may include:

- **those in residential care,**
- **those in foster care,**
- **those in kinship care, who live with a family member other than a parent, and**
- **those who are looked after at home.**

Councils and Health Boards and other services act as Corporate Parents to children who they look after.

Review of foster carers and kinship carers is undertaken on an annual basis, in between regular visits.

Where a baby/child is placed in hospital, staff will visit the baby/child through to discharge and back into the family home.

Monthly supervision of the foster homes is undertaken, ensuring that the child is seen. Unannounced visits are undertaken, and there is the opportunity for the child to be seen alone. There is an extensive training programme for Foster Carers and additional support is provided if required. Safer Caring plans are reviewed and updated, as are Risk Assessments, and Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) and wider checks take place.

Cluster 6

Basic health and welfare


This cluster focuses on the health and welfare of all children and the consideration of disabled children's rights. All children should have the best possible standard of health, including access to relevant health services. There should be a focus on the determinants of children's health, including mental health. Where families do not have enough to live on, children have a right to support to meet their basic needs.

Early Learning and Childcare, and Lifelong Learning

Our Early Learning and Childcare service in Dumfries and Galloway aims to provide nurturing environments that support children's wellbeing, learning and development. Information about Early Learning and Childcare in Dumfries and Galloway is in the following chapter – Cluster 7.

Access to services for disabled children

Children with disabilities was a priority in our 2017-20 Children's Services Plan. We had four aims in this priority which were all underpinned by the principle of 'enablement'. Enablement is essentially about services 'doing with' rather than 'doing to' children, young people and their families. It means that services recognise, promote, and enhance children and young people's ability to control their own lives.

Information about this is available in the final report on our 2017-20 Children's Services Plan on **this page** .

For children with disabilities, individualised GIRFEC child's plans ensure that they have access to the services they need, and choice and control over these. Youth Work services have provision specifically aimed at engaging with young people with additional support needs and disabilities.

In April 2023, the Council agreed to allocate £1,250,000 from the Scottish Government's Play Park Renewal Fund across Dumfries and Galloway during the next three financial years from 2023/24 to 2025/26. This will mean an additional ten inclusive play parks will be established. The initial five locations have been agreed, and the final five locations will be agreed through engagement with members of the public and community groups.

Access to high quality health care, including preventative health care services.

The Universal Health Visiting Pathway was set out by the Scottish Government in 2015. The Pathway presents a core home visiting programme to be offered to all families by Health Visitors as a minimum standard. NHS Dumfries and Galloway adopted an incremental approach to delivery of the pathway. All 11 pathway contacts (home visits) are now being implemented. with the introduction of the 4-5-year review in May 2020.

All children with a Child's Plan have the support of a Health Visitor as Named Person. Where GIRFEC national practice model assessment identifies support needs for early intervention, the Health Visitor provides that support, or planned care is delegated to Health Visitor Assistant Practitioner. Requests for assistance are made to partner agencies where necessary. There is a Link Health Visitor for Gypsy Traveller families.

The refocused role for School Nursing, which was tested in NHS Dumfries and Galloway during 2016-2017, is now being rolled out across Scotland. It is a model with a focus on prevention, early intervention and support for the most vulnerable children over five years. In addition, School Nursing concentrates primarily on ten priority pathway areas under the overall headings of vulnerable children and families, mental health and wellbeing and risk-taking behaviour:

- Emotional/mental health and Wellbeing
- Substance misuse: drugs, alcohol and tobacco
- Child protection
- Domestic abuse
- Sexual health and wellbeing/Pregnancy and parenthood
- Youth justice
- Young Carers
- Transitions

Within Dumfries and Galloway, the new model for School Nursing is now fully embedded in practice. Referrals from other professionals or agencies are made via a Single Point of Contact email address, while a self-referral contact number has been established for parents/carers and young people.

The Child Smile programme is a preventative approach that delivers fluoride varnishing for children aged 3 and until Primary 4 in 11 priority nurseries and schools across Dumfries and Galloway. The programme also supports nurseries and primary schools to offer free, daily, supervised toothbrushing (whether it is a local authority, voluntary or private nursery). The National Dental Inspection Programme report published in 2023 reported that Dumfries and Galloway demonstrate that 84.6% of Primary 7 children had no obvious dental decay experience in their permanent teeth.

Staff in schools have been trained in Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood education. All schools in Dumfries and Galloway are now accessing the new national suite of resources for delivering Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood learning and teaching to children and young people aged 3-18.

The Employability and Skills Service runs Project SEARCH. This project supports young people in the region with additional support needs and disabilities, and helps them on their journey to secure and maintain employment. Information about Project SEARCH can be found under examples in the Appendix.

Support for children and young people to meet their mental health needs

During the period 2020-2023, Mental Health was a priority in our Children's Services Plan. During this period, we delivered the following as a multi-agency partnership:

- We developed a Single Point of Access for CAMHS and Psychology.
- We introduced 'Referral Huddles' with CAMHS/Psychology and School Nursing teams, to enable the referral to be directed to the most appropriate service. This means that children don't need to repeat their story to lots of people.
- Our Low-Level Mental Health Support Project in Dumfries and Galloway has supported children and young people by developing skills for wellbeing, increased confidence and self-esteem - and building improved attitudes about and attendance at school. The project was positively evaluated in a research project. Information about the project, and the evaluation report can be found [here](#).
- We developed a Mental Health Pathway for children and young people. The pathway provides clarity to support mental health and wellbeing of young people. The goal is to ensure that Children and Young People have appropriate support from the right person/service at the right time. The pathway is designed to build upon the things already happening in school for young people – for example the Health and Wellbeing Curriculum, a focus on positive relationships, pupil support, and peer support. Initial feedback from schools on the non-specialist end of the pathway is that it is working well.

Training has been developed for school staff, with three-tier training that has evaluated positively. This builds the capacity of staff within schools to deliver low-level, early intervention supports, and to make appropriate referrals.

As described previously, our Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service has a dedicated Participation Officer who has led on a range of engagement activities, including development of a new CAMHS website as a co-production activity with children and young people. A core group of young people are involved, with a wider group contributing, and feedback on services is being collated.

Support for children and families with the cost of living

Tackling poverty was a priority in our 2020-23 Children's Services Plan and continues as a priority in our 2023-26 Plan. A lot of work was done to reduce the cost of the school day for families and to increase take-up of free school meals and other supports.

Cluster 7 Education, leisure and culture

This cluster focuses on the right of all children to an education that will help them achieve their potential without discrimination. Education should be child-centred and empowering and strengthen their capacity to experience the full range of children's human rights including their right to express their views and participate in all aspects of their education. Article 29 entitles children to a broad curriculum. Article 31 states that children have a right to play, recreational activities, rest and leisure and to take part in cultural life.

The child at the centre sits at the heart of all planning and decision making for our young people at school and authority level. Pupils are treated as individuals and settings strive to meet their individual needs to ensure an equitable education experience for all pupils in Dumfries and Galloway.

Our school leaver positive destinations have steadily increased to 95.92% which is above the national average. There are no leavers with a destination unknown in Dumfries and Galloway.

Early Learning and Childcare is underpinned by the principles of Getting It Right for Every Child. Accessible, affordable and flexible Early Learning and Childcare will ensure that our youngest children will benefit from high quality care and learning experiences to improve outcomes.

Early Learning and Childcare in Dumfries and Galloway has an approach that stresses the importance of play. In high quality enabling learning environments that fully support all children to play, learn and develop skills and knowledge, building on previous experiences through a supportive, inclusive, nurturing ethos.

Early Learning and Childcare is provided for approximately 2,900 children of which 63% access their funded entitlement in 45 school nurseries and 37% in 36 funded providers and 32 childminders. In Dumfries and

Galloway all Local Authority provision is within primary schools. Most Local Authority nurseries operate between 8:30 and 15:30 each day with 7 larger nurseries open between 8:00 and 18:00. Funded providers offer a range of models over term time or all year round.

Expressive arts are a component of Curriculum for Excellence and within this are experience and outcomes for pupils to experience live and real-life cultural events, including musicals, galleries, visiting theatre groups, musical performances.

Adaptations are made to make sure that young people with disabilities are provided with as many opportunities to participate as possible.

The Youth Work Service includes a range of community and school-based youth work opportunities that enable young people to socialise and participate in informal learning opportunities.

Between April 1 2022 and March 31 2023, some key figures include:

- Youth Work programmes have been attended by 4,803 individuals with a further 28,793 attending events.
- 524 young and adult volunteers have supported the delivery of events, groups and expeditions through Youth Work and Lifelong Learning activities.
- 489 young people completed an accredited Youth Award including Dynamic Youth Awards, Heritage Hero Awards, John Muir Awards, Saltire Awards and Hi5 Awards.
- Report Communities Committee 6 June 2023
- 89 young people Achieved their Duke of Edinburgh's Award with a further 415 Awards at Bronze, Silver and Gold enrolled during this time.

The 2022 Summer programme included a 'Camp Experience' which involved 1 day of activities in young people's local community followed by 2 days and an overnight stay at the Scout Camp near St Anne's with groups from across the region. Over 60 young people achieved their Dynamic Youth Award (credit rated and levelled by the Scottish Qualifications Authority on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework at level 3).

Dumfries and Galloway Council became the first whole Council in Scotland to be awarded the Investing in Volunteers (IIV) Quality Standard of Excellence by Volunteer Scotland. Investing in Volunteers is the UK quality hallmark of good practice in volunteering. It ensures that, consistently across the Council, we are valuing our volunteers and supporting them to grow, achieve and thrive through their volunteer experience. It helps our organisation get the best from our volunteers.

There has been a focus on recruiting and developing opportunities for young people aged 14-18 to get involved in volunteering across the region through the Young Leader programme. The opportunity was promoted through social media, youth organisations and schools with a number of new volunteers recruited. In May and October 2022, young people took part in full-day training sessions that included a wide range of information relevant to their role. All achieved their Level 1 in Volunteering with work started by young people to complete their Level 2. Young people were also able to attend the Young Leaders Residential as part of the Summer Programme where they were able to come together with other volunteers from across the region.

The Employability and Skills Service collaborates with schools and partners, with Employability Keyworkers actively participating in employability co-ordination groups (ECGs). These groups respond to requests for assistance from schools, supporting young people aged 16-18 in finding suitable education or employment paths. The service assists in identifying necessary qualifications or skills, offering upskilling when needed. Assisting young people in completing application forms for college or university and prepares individuals for interviews. The service facilitates smooth transitions into further and higher education, along with supporting employment through employer recruitment incentives and paid placements. Additionally, the service administers the Dumfries and Galloway Workplace Skills Award, an SQA-accredited qualification developed in collaboration with local businesses to provide individuals with transferable skills for the workplace at SCQF levels 3 and 4.

Cluster 8

Special Protection measures

This cluster focuses on groups of vulnerable and marginalised children who require special protection. These are often the children who are most at risk of having their rights ignored or infringed. They include asylum-seeking and refugee children, child victims of trafficking or exploitation, and children in conflict with the law.

Support for children, young people who are seeking asylum and are migrants

Our Social work Ukrainian Support Team are committed to promoting the empowerment, integration and independence of all children and young people. Unaccompanied minors who enter the country and are supported by either a family member or friend will be supported throughout their stay in Scotland by an allocated social worker.

Families are supported to integrate within the community, and specific pieces of work are undertaken by Social Work to support the families to face the future if they have been subjected to war crime. The signs of safety model is used to identify the children and young people's needs and thus ensure that their families' and educational needs are met.

The Employability and Skills Service has a dedicated resettlement team focused on assisting individuals who identify themselves as asylum seekers or refugees, including those aged 16-18. The team provides support in obtaining documentation, offers English as a second language assistance, arranges for translators, and directs individuals to appropriate services for additional support, all while offering comprehensive employability support.

When children are at risk of or in need of secure care, the national Secure Care Standards are followed which ensure that children and young people's views are taken into account at each stage of the process and that they are told about their rights and how these can be fulfilled.

Supporting children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation or drug use.

Our Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) has provided "Everyone Has a Story" training to staff in Education. Everyone Has a Story was an action research project that was born from conversations with projects that identified a need to understand how parental recovery from problematic alcohol and drugs affected children and young people. The findings illustrated the importance of positive relationships and actively listening to the experiences of young people. Recommendations were made to practitioners, policy makers and academics, and these continue to be taken forward.

Training on Sex, Drugs and Vulnerable Young Children was provided to teaching and non-teaching staff; Youth Services staff; and Third Sector staff. The Scottish Drugs Forum provided resources for staff to use in lesson-planning.

Our Alcohol and Drug Partnership supported Aberlour Children's Charity in a bid for funding which was successful. Aberlour is now delivering targeted services to children and families affected by problematic substance use across the region.

In November 2022, we changed our child protection arrangements to ensure that 16 and 17 year-olds who may be at risk of harm would be considered through our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub as children rather than through adult systems.

Supporting children and young people to avoid involvement in the criminal justice system.

Work was carried out between the Police and the Children's Reporter from April 2022 to reduce the number of non-offence ground referrals that may be deemed as inappropriate. Guidance was issued to Police staff and overseen by Police Public Protection Unit Sergeants. This led to a reduction in non-offence ground referrals received by the Children's reporter with referral figures more stable. Ongoing monthly quality assurance between the Police and SCRA is undertaken to ensure referral rates are monitored and any issues highlighted at the earliest opportunity.

The Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019 came into effect on 17 December 2021 that saw the increase in the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland to 12 years. In Dumfries and Galloway, we set up a group with the responsibility of ensuring that all necessary plans were in place to respond to any situations as defined by the Act from 17 December 2021. The Implementation Group agreed and developed a communication strategy to accompany the launch date of 17 December 2021 for all staff across the partnership and information to the public was released over social media, with the emphasis on the cultural changes and focus on Children's Rights that the Act signifies.

Children and Families Social Work continue to host a Youth Justice Team – something that is becoming less common across Scotland. The team has staff who can support children who are at risk of or in conflict with the law. This includes providing interventions at an early intervention and prevention level by working closely with schools where behaviours are identified which could indicate a risk of these children coming into more formal systems as they get older.

A number of different interventions are available in such circumstances including groupwork programmes delivered in schools, and jointly with Education and Police Scotland to focus on choices and consequential thinking.

Dumfries and Galloway operate an Early and Effective Intervention (EEI) process where low level offences (or behaviours for those under 12 years) are referred to Youth Justice who will link in with the child's Named Person on behalf of the partnership to consider what type of responses might be most appropriate for the child. This involves close collaboration between Youth Justice and Police Scotland and schools to ensure the right level of support is offered to the right children by the right people and at the right time.

The criteria for Youth Justice involvement has changed so that a child does not need to be charged with an offence or referred to the Reporter for Youth Justice to be able to offer support to children and their families. This allows interventions at a much earlier stage and should prevent children entering formal and criminal justice processes.

What children and young people told us

In developing this report, we engaged with children and young people, and asked them how they understood and experienced their rights. Youth Council Members who were part of the Working Group developed workshop plan that professionals could use to facilitate focus groups with children and young people in schools, youth work groups, and other settings. Forty-one primary and 13 secondary schools took part, with a total of 771 children and young people participating.

Focus groups began with a quick fire round asking young people the following 5 questions:

1. On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the most, how aware are you of your rights?
2. On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the most, how confident are you about what your rights mean?
3. Do you know where to find out information about what your rights are?
4. Generally, do you feel your rights are respected, promoted and protected by the adults in your life?
5. Do you know what to do/where to go if your rights aren't being met?

Following this, the facilitator introduced each cluster of rights followed by a discussion. This section provides a summary of the key findings.

Question: On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the most, how aware are you of your rights?

| Rating: 1-10 | Percentage of children and young people |
|--------------|---|
| 1 | 1% |
| 2 | 1% |
| 3 | 4% |
| 4 | 6% |
| 5 | 12% |
| 6 | 11% |
| 7 | 25% |
| 8 | 17% |
| 9 | 12% |
| 10 | 10% |
| Unsure | 1% |

Seventy-five percent of children and young people gave a positive score of 6 or above for awareness of rights.

Question: On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the most, how confident are you about what your rights mean?

| Rating: 1-10 | Percentage of children and young people |
|--------------|---|
| 1 | 1% |
| 2 | 3% |
| 3 | 5% |
| 4 | 7% |
| 5 | 11% |
| 6 | 13% |
| 7 | 18% |
| 8 | 13% |
| 9 | 14% |
| 10 | 12% |
| Unsure | 3% |

Seventy percent of children and young people gave a positive score of 6 or above for confidence about knowing what their rights mean. Responses were based on the engagement presentation.

Question: Do you know where to find out information about what your rights are?

- Approximately 70% of participants responded that they knew where to find information about their rights, although some who said they were not sure said that this would depend on what they wanted to know more about, as some rights were easier to find information on than others. For participants who took part in the engagement activity through school, the main sources of information would be: teachers/ school, followed by searching on the Internet. Other young people who took part in the engagement activity through Health, or Youth Work groups, mentioned Youth Workers, Barnado's Advocacy and the CAMHS website.
- Where schools were further along in their Rights Respecting journey, pupils highlighted that resources and information on rights were very prominent within their schools "there are posters everywhere".

Question: Generally, do you feel your rights are respected, promoted and protected by the adults in your life?

- While the majority of pupils said yes, and most group submissions from were positive, there were instances where children were unsure, or said no. Generally, primary aged participants felt their rights were more respected than those who were in the secondary age group.
- Some responses made the distinction between different adults in the children's lives – it depended on whether the children/young people were at home or school/in other services.
- "Most adults do, but some don't". "Some adults think that you are a child so don't need respected." "Sometimes people at home don't understand what my rights are."

Question: Do you know what to do/where to go if your rights aren't being met?

- There was a more varied set of responses to this. Those who gave details of what they would do, were likely to tell a trusted adult such as a teacher or a family member, or call Childline.
- More detailed responses were provided by participants who had also sought help in accessing their rights who stated it depended on the situation and the particular rights that weren't being met. Young people who had experienced more individual interventions were more likely to expect "lots of waiting about" or "investigations" as things that could cause delay.

Participants were then asked for their views on their experiences of clusters of rights. For each cluster, the participants were asked 3 questions:

1. What do services already do with children and young people about these rights? Do you know about them, if yes – can you remember how you found out?
2. In your opinion, is there anything that's working well or anything that isn't when thinking about young people knowing and understanding these rights?
3. What's something you think would be good to happen to make sure more people know and understand what these rights mean for them?

The first cluster covered articles 1, 2, 3, 6 and 12: knowledge of rights; right to life, right to be involved in decision-making; and support from adults to experience their rights.

In responses where children and young people knew what services were doing, the majority said they were informed about rights at school. Other responses were aware of how other services, including Health services and Youth Work, promoted rights.

In terms of what was working well, or less well, promotion of rights in schools was generally felt to work well, with rights-focused assemblies. Some children and young people learned about rights in clubs/other activities such as Brownies. Children and young people were aware of an inconsistency of approach across the region, with some schools doing a lot, and others less.

Some young people spoke about responsibilities as well as rights, and the need for consequences - sometimes it doesn't feel like there's really any 'punishment' for people who affect others' rights:

"Everyone's got rights, but you don't have the right to do what you want if it hurts someone else."

In terms of what could happen to raise awareness and understanding, children and young people thought that there should be more awareness with adults – especially with parents and within communities. This could involve things like posters and leaflets in waiting rooms in places where people access services. Some young people felt that rights needed to be introduced early on, in primary school, or with parents-to-be.

"If someone is going to have a baby, I think they should know about children's rights, to help them understand and support their child in their understanding of what rights they have".

The second cluster of rights included the rights to name and nationality; identity; freedom of expression and religious belief; freedom to meet in public spaces, protection from cruel treatment; the right to privacy and to access information.

Generally, there was a reasonable level of awareness about services were doing to uphold at least some of these rights. Schools and other services help keep children safe. Children and young people were aware of schools keeping their data safely, and had lessons on online safety. Some schools used lessons and assemblies to put these rights into real scenarios to show what they mean in practice around the school and the wider community. Some children and young people said that they took these rights for granted in the UK and Scotland, but they were aware that children and young people in other countries did not have the same experience of rights.

When asked what was working well/less well, some children and young people were not sure, while many said that talking about rights was working well. Young people who were care-experienced were more questioning about the reality of their right to privacy “everything is put in a report anyway so what’s the point?” Young people also spoke of the right to meet up in public spaces. When young people are just ‘hanging out in a group on the street’ adults can make assumptions about anti-social behaviour and young people can find themselves being moved on. With regard to access to information, young people spoke of the amount of misinformation and fake news that was online, and the difficulty of knowing what’s right or wrong.

When asked what could be done to raise awareness of these rights, children and young people wanted rights work to continue in schools, and as previously, more awareness-raising in the wider community. Some young people discussed the need for specific issues including:

- Clear information about young people’s rights to private health appointments and examples of what can and can’t be shared with/ without their permission. For example can a young person get ‘the pill’ when they are 14 without their parent knowing?
- Less talking about anti-social behaviour or more defending young people who ‘aren’t being anti-social at all’. One participant said it would be good if adults ‘stopped having a go at them’ for meeting their friends.
- Some kind of fact-checker, if that’s possible, for social media sites – or something that can help young people to find their way through misinformation and fake news.

The third cluster was about nurture, care and protection. These include: the right to be brought up at home with parents, or if that is not possible, the right to be brought up in a nurturing environment with special care and protection; the right not to be taken out of the country illegally; the right to be given help to recover from harm or ill-treatment.

Generally, there was a good understanding of these rights, especially in Rights Respecting schools. Many children were aware that Social Work had a role in protecting children, and looking after those who were living apart from their families, even if they didn't have direct experience of this. Throughout the focus group engagement, children said they were aware of how their experiences of rights in the UK could be different to that of children in other countries. They were aware of world events, especially conflict, and how that affected children elsewhere.

Children were aware of how other services protected their rights: "NHS are there for all of us if we are hurt. Social services are there to help my family when we need help. Childline is there for children suffering hurt and neglect."

"The police came into school to tell us about Right of the Child. We also learned about some of these rights at the live World Children's day assembly that we participated in at school. We do anti-bullying work at school too".

With regard to what children and young people was working well, or less well, some said that they were aware of these rights, but they didn't have direct experience of what they might mean in practice. They felt that children who were in abusive or neglectful situations should probably have more support with knowing their rights. Some felt very strongly that there should be more work around the right to be cared for by a family who is not the child's parents.

"Every kid deserves a parent but not every parent deserves a kid - a friend told me this. It's true because some parents are not good people."

For young people who were care-experienced, much depended on their relationship with their worker. If they have a worker that they feel cares about them, then they were more likely to know about and understand their rights.

Suggestions for how services could increase awareness of rights included:

- A requirement for all organisations to have a minimum requirement to signpost rights.
- People coming into schools to give presentations. "A Social Worker could visit us to talk about their job".
- Information for children about world events, especially Ukraine and the conflict in Gaza. They suggested a project where they could learn about how children in other countries experienced rights.

The fourth cluster was about rights to be nurtured and to develop. This included the right for children with disabilities to be included and supported, the right to healthcare, the right for a child's family to have enough money to bring them up, and the right to proper housing, food and clothes.

Generally, there was more awareness of these rights than of the previous set. Children were aware that disabled children had the right to support. There was awareness of the Cost-of-Living crisis and that families needed Food Banks and benefits.

"I think we have a good health care system, I know it is under-funded, but in general can get seen if I need to be. Dentists becoming a bigger issue and the wait time is bad."

"We had our vaccines today which helps us to be stay healthy and not get the flu. If we ever fall, we get first aid and a form sent home to our families. We have a uniform bank so people that don't have a lot of money can take uniform or to help the environment. We get extra help if we are stuck in school to have a good education."

In terms of what is working well, or less well, those who hadn't been aware of these rights said that more needed to be done to promote them – especially with young people themselves and not just with parents/carers. The amount of support available was seen as a positive, but some young people had not known about the various supports that were available and said that these should be promoted directly to young people.

With regard to how services could improve awareness of these rights, there was a sense that more work could be done on what these rights looked like in practice: "Free travel helps those that are struggling with money, but pupils would not associate that with rights."

Some young people suggested that free school meals could be something that was instead payable to young people aged 16+ like the Education Maintenance Allowance, so they could get lunch outside school.

Young people wanted more information about housing when they were in S3 – the different types of housing and what is available locally, especially affordable/social housing. It was felt that this is not spoken about much and there is a stigma around it.

The fifth cluster was about rights relating to play, relaxation, and education.

Generally, there was a good level of awareness of the right to an education, but there was less of a clear picture with regard to awareness of other rights - especially the right to play and relaxation. Some children and young people spoke of all the extra-curricular activities available to them.

“We have Fun 31 every Friday where everyone can choose to play with others and choose what they want to do. This time is not taken away from us. We learn in lots of different ways - together, inside, outside. Our parents come in to learn with us every week.”

However, some young people said they were only aware of education being a right. They wanted more information about play, recreation and extra-curricular activities and whether there was a minimum level of provision that children and young people could expect with regard to these.

With regard to what is working well, or less well, children and young people felt that the approaches used in Rights-Respecting schools worked well.

“Assemblies work well as it makes sure that everyone in the school knows. Having an article of the month means we learn about new rights we didn’t know about. We learn about respecting others’ rights and what this means.” However, “the young people felt that some schools are doing a lot around children’s rights and others don’t seem to be doing that much. Or if they are they aren’t aware of that.”

In terms of what services could do better, the right to play and recreation was highlighted. “Not all children have safe places they can play. It depends where they live. Children should be told about their right to play and given more chances to play in different places.” “Reduce prices of entry to leisure facilities. Increase opening times and improve transport facilities to them.”

The sixth cluster was about special measures of protection. These included the rights of refugees; the right to fair treatment if accused of a crime; the right to be protected from dangerous drugs, sexual exploitation and trafficking; the right to be protected from dangerous work, and from joining the army as a child.

There were more varied responses to this. Some young people felt this cluster was the most straightforward as a lot of things are already in law in the UK – for example laws against drugs and sexual abuse are all well-known amongst young people as they have always been the same (in their lifetime).

Other children spoke about drug and alcohol education in schools, and the Police coming in to give talks.

As with previous clusters, there was an awareness that while there were laws in the UK and Scotland to protect children, children in other countries did not experience the same protections.

With regard to what is working well/less well, children and young people spoke about their own anxieties. “Vaping is becoming a huge issue that seems to be ignored.”

The issue of consequences for unacceptable behaviour was important for children and young people. “Restorative conversations are not working.” As in previous discussions, children and young people felt that having rights did not allow individuals to abuse the rights of others through bullying for example, or hate-crime. There was a strong sense that a lack of meaningful consequences for abusive behaviour not only failed the victims, but also failed those who were carrying out the abuse as it had a negative impact on their own development - we don’t actually help young people in the longer-term by letting them escape consequences for their actions.

Workplace rights were an issue for young people. Some said that the only place where they heard about employment rights was in school, and employers did not tell them about their rights as young people in paid employment.

With regard to areas for improvement, children and young people wanted more information about world affairs, the rights of children in other countries, and how children experienced conflict. "Find out more about why refugees come to our country and how they get treated when they get here."

Young people wanted to see action taken on workplace rights. "Force rights of employees to be advertised more in workplaces. Raise more awareness of 'Ask For Angela' for young people in workplaces to protect them."

Other suggestions included the need for every child to have a trusted adult who they could speak to, and the need for more signposting to support.

In summary, it was clear that knowledge and understanding of rights was more advanced in schools that were more advanced on the Rights-Respecting journey. Children and young people felt that the approaches used in these schools were effective in helping them understand their rights. These approaches included a regular focus on rights in assemblies, using rights as illustrations in lessons, regularly talking about rights, and the use of posters and other materials on school walls. Responses indicated that it can be easier to do work on Rights in primary schools as more time can be devoted to this than in secondary schools, especially once young people start to take exams.

Children and young people wanted to see more work done to raise awareness of rights with adults in wider communities. There were specific rights where they wanted more information, and help to understand what that right might look like in practice for them. They were aware of world events and wanted to know more about children in other countries and the experiences of refugees. They wanted help to find their way through all the fake news and misinformation that they are bombarded with through social media. They wanted to see action on workplace rights.

Evaluation of progress 2020-2023

Our evaluation shows us that there is a great deal of activity around children's rights across our organisations. Within the NHS and Council, many services are supporting children's rights, and there is a commitment within Education to all schools achieving Rights Respecting status. However, while we can demonstrate evidence of a significant range of rights-promoting activities across services, we are not currently in a position to demonstrate a strategic approach to UNCRC implementation at an organisational or partnership level.

This report demonstrates areas of good practice and areas for improvement across Council and NHS services in Dumfries and Galloway. The feedback received from engagement sessions with children and young people has confirmed the positive impact that Children's Rights focussed education, activities, initiatives and processes made over the 2020 – 2023 reporting period. However, based on this feedback and the differing views shared by children and young people, it is reasonable to caveat this and recognise that further steps need to be taken to ensure that there is consistency in how children and young people are encouraged and supported to engage with, understand and champion Children's Rights.

In some areas there is a disconnect between our strategic objectives, priorities and visions, and the accessibility of this information for children and young people. Documents relating to services for children and young people that are significant in their length, language and high level in their ambitions are often not engaging for members of the public, including children and young people to engage with. We are confident in that there has been strides made in how we promote and reference Children's Rights within our strategic planning and the expectation to involve children and young people more meaningfully in decision making has steadily increased over the reporting period. We have also recognised that the language we are using around Rights is changing and that as we near incorporation of the UNCRC there is a more conscious effort needed by all professionals

to ensure that the Children's Rights become explicit. This is supported by the feedback from facilitators who noted that through taking part in the workshop, participants were able to make better connections between the activities and information available in their schools and communities, and Children's Rights more directly.

We are committed to building on our engagement activities - engagement and participation is a priority in our 2023 – 2026 Children's Services Plan. Where possible, we have used funding to recruit participation officers so that we can develop co-produce approaches with children and young people to service planning and strategy development.

When analysing the feedback, we can see that children and young people who attend primary and secondary schools that have a pro-active approach to achieving their Rights Respecting Award, or those who are further into their Rights journey, overall had more positive responses than those who were at the start of this process. Participants had a better knowledge and awareness of their rights due to having regular discussions, clear communication around resources available and being surrounded by more visual rights displays and posters. We are confident that this knowledge will increase as we move towards all schools achieving Rights Respecting Status.

However, whilst as a partnership we can see clear evidence of all the work being done to promote and embed rights across our children's services partnership and across services, we recognise there is a need for a stronger, more explicit commitment to rights at an organisational and partnership level.

Recommendations/Next Steps

Our Elected Member, Youth Council and Officer Working Group supported and guided the development and refinement of the following proposed actions for Dumfries and Galloway Council and NHS Dumfries and Galloway, taking account of service responses and feedback from children and young people. The actions for the Council and NHS have been structured using the key steps from the Improvement Service's 'Getting Ready for UNCRC Incorporation Framework', to ensure alignment between local action and what will make a difference. The Improvement Service Framework takes forward the Theory of Change for implementing the UNCRC Bill in Scotland which was developed by the Observatory of Children's Human Rights Scotland (in partnership with Public Health Scotland and Matter of Focus), who undertook a collaborative, evidence-based process. By realising the actions detailed within this Rights Report the Council and NHS will advance children's human rights in Dumfries and Galloway, and Dumfries and Galloway Council and Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board have committed to achieving these.

Action Plans

Dumfries and Galloway Council and NHS Dumfries and Galloway



Dumfries and Galloway Council

Leadership Commitment

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|---|--|---------------|--|
| Explicit agreement from Dumfries and Galloway Council to adopt a children's human rights-based approach where the organisation commit to respect, protect, promote and fulfil children's human rights, and secure better or further effect of the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. | Dumfries and Galloway Council (Full Council) | February 2024 | Minuted decision by Dumfries and Galloway Council (Full Council) and/or addendum to the Council Plan. |
| Explicit commitment from new Dumfries and Galloway Council Chief Officers (in post from 1 April 2024) to respect, protect, promote and fulfil children's human rights and secure better or further effect of the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. | Dumfries and Galloway Council Senior Leadership Team and Council Management Team | April 2024 | Minuted decision by Dumfries and Galloway Council Senior Leadership Team and Council Management Team. |
| Embed children's human rights into service level priorities, budgeting and planning at all levels of Dumfries and Galloway Council. | Dumfries and Galloway Council Chief Officers | March 2025 | Children's human rights are reflected within Council service plans, with relevant performance indicators, and are reported through existing reporting arrangements. Children's Rights Impact Assessment is embedded within the Council's Impact Assessment process so that children's human rights are considered when designing policies and strategies, establishing practices, and making major decisions (including financial decisions). |
| Present output from Rights Report to Community Planning Partnership, and any other relevant local strategic partnerships, in order to expand collaborative approach on children's human rights beyond Council and NHS. | Assistant Director Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing | March 2025 | Sessions facilitated with Community Planning Partnership and any other relevant strategic partnership. |
| Agreement to embed a Children's Rights Impact Assessment within the Council's Impact Assessment process, as part of the ongoing Impact Assessment Review, so that children's human rights are considered when designing policies and strategies, establishing practices, and making major decisions (including financial decisions), and task relevant Officers to progress this. | Dumfries and Galloway Council (Full Council) | 2024 | Children's Rights Impact Assessments are carried out as part of the Impact Assessment process when designing policies and strategies, establishing practices, and making major decisions (including financial decisions), which potentially may impact children's rights. |

Participation and Empowerment of children and Young People

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|---|--|------------|---|
| Council services consistently enable children and young people to have a voice and meaningfully participate in decisions that affect their lives (now and in the future), directly and indirectly, including in policy-making, budgetary decision-making, and in reviewing processes and practices, in line with the Council's Youth Participation and Engagement Strategy 2022-2027. | Dumfries and Galloway Council Chief Officers | March 2025 | Council services provide opportunities for children and young people to have a voice and meaningfully participate in decisions that affect their lives, including the design, development and review of services, in line with the Council's Youth Participation and Engagement Strategy 2022-2027. |
| Council Services consistently offer a range of ways for all children and young people to meaningfully participate. | Dumfries and Galloway Council Chief Officers | March 2025 | Council services use a variety of methods to support participation of children and young people, in line with the Council's Youth Participation and Engagement Strategy 2022-2027. |

Empowerment of Children and Young People

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|---|--|------------|---|
| Council Services identify and review barriers to participation and work to remove these. | Dumfries and Galloway Council Chief Officers | March 2025 | Council Services consider potential barriers to participation and seek to address these as far as practicable. |
| All children and young people have access to advice to support them in their understanding of their rights. | Assistant Director Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing, and Service Director Social Work | March 2026 | All local authority staff working with children and young people have the skills and knowledge to support them in their understanding of their rights. |
| All children and young people have access to accessible advice to support them in their understanding of their rights within their communities. | Head of Thriving Communities and Service Director Social Work | March 2025 | Community-based staff working with children and young people promote children's rights and support them in their understanding of their rights. |
| All children and young people have access to independent advocacy to support them in their understanding of their rights. | Service Director Social Work | March 2025 | Independent advocacy is available to children and young people in relation to children's rights. Action is taken to increase awareness of these services. |

Child Friendly Complaints

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|---|--|------------|---|
| Implement a Child Friendly Complaint Process and keep under regular review. | Dumfries and Galloway Council Information Governance Manager | March 2025 | A Child Friendly Complaint Process is in place and has been promoted to children and young people and their families. The process is reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure it is working well for children and families. |
| Regularly review child-related complaints and feedback. | Dumfries and Galloway Council Information Governance Manager | March 2025 | Child-related complaints and feedback are reviewed on a regular basis to inform future improvement in processes, services and participation. Key learning is communicated to the Council Management Team or individual services as appropriate. |

Training and Awareness Raising

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|--|-------------------------------|------------|---|
| Staff and volunteers at all levels of the organisation have a basic understanding of children's human rights and their responsibility to protect and advance them. | Dumfries and Galloway Council | March 2025 | A mandatory E-Learning opportunity on children's human rights is provided for all existing Council staff and added to the induction process for new staff. |
| Staff and volunteers working directly with children and young people adopt and model a children's rights-based approach through their work. | Dumfries and Galloway Council | March 2026 | Council services who work directly with children and young people provide additional learning opportunities for staff on children's human rights so staff have the confidence to promote children's rights and support them in their understanding of their rights. |

Improving Practice

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|--|---|------------|---|
| Resources are shared with services that can support them to advance children's rights and use those tools to review policy and practice. | Children's Services Manager | Ongoing | When resources are made available by Scottish Government and other sources these are circulated to relevant services. |
| Policies and procedures are compliant with the UNCRC. | Dumfries and Galloway Council Chief Officers | March 2026 | Review existing policies and procedures to ensure that they are compliant with the UNCRC, and as part of this activity identify and remove barriers. |
| Legal implications of UNCRC Bill are understood by services and staff. | Assistant Director Governance and Human Resources | March 2024 | Updates to be provided to Council Management Team and individual services as and when there are any local or national developments. Areas of risk are added to Council Risk Register. |

Child Friendly Publications

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|---|--|------------|---|
| Children and young people have access to child friendly/easy-read format documents when the subject matter is relevant to them. | Dumfries and Galloway Council Communications Manager | March 2026 | A criteria is established which provides services with clarity regarding when a child friendly/easy-read format or version may be appropriate. The organisation has capacity to prepare and publish child friendly/easy-read documents in line with European Commission Guidance. |

Monitoring Progress

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------|---|
| Repeat of engagement exercise with children and young people. | Children's Services Manager | November 2025 | Programme of engagement completed. |
| Alongside Progress Reports in 2025 bring forward proposed set of indicators (alongside up-to-date data) which can help monitor how we are protecting and progressing children's rights. | Children's Services Manager | 2025 | Suite of rights-related indicators agreed in relation to children's rights. |

Children's Rights Budgeting

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|--|--|-------|--|
| Children's Rights Impact Assessments are carried out as part of the Impact Assessment process when making decisions about the allocation of Council budgets. | Dumfries and Galloway Council Chief Officers | 2025 | Children's Rights Impact Assessments are published as part of the Impact Assessments carried out when setting budgets. |
| The process of Council budget development includes transparency and the participation of children and young people. | Chief Financial Officer | 2025 | Children and young people have opportunities to participate in the budget setting process. |
| Explicit budget lines can be identified which specifically support children's rights e.g. tackling child poverty or inequality. | Chief Financial Officer | 2026 | Budget lines are easily identifiable by anyone reviewing Council Accounts. |

Accountability and Reporting on Children's Rights

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------|--|
| 2023-26 Rights Report published online and shared with Scottish Government. | Children's Services Manager | February 2024 | Following agreement by Dumfries and Galloway Council, NHS Board and Youth Council 2023-26 Rights Report is shared as required. |
| Elected Members are provided with an update on progress in 2025 as part of the Joint Annual Report on the Children's Services Plan. | Children's Services Manager | 2025 | Report published and scrutinised by Dumfries and Galloway Council (Full Council). |
| Dumfries and Galloway Youth Council are provided with an update on progress in 2025. | Children's Services Manager | 2025 | Report published and scrutinised by Dumfries and Galloway Youth Council. |
| 2023-26 Rights Report developed and published. | Children's Services Manager | 2026 | Report published and scrutinised by Dumfries and Galloway Council, NHS Board and Youth Council. |

Non-Discrimination and Rights at Risk

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|--|--|-------|--|
| Web pages which promote children's employment rights are developed and published on Council Website. | Organisational Development Manager | 2024 | Web pages published. |
| Employment rights of children and young people are promoted through schools. | Assistant Director Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing | 2024 | Children and young people are aware of their employment rights. |
| Awareness raising campaign for employers of children and young people promoting their responsibilities in relation to children's employment rights. | Head of Thriving Communities | 2024 | Employers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to children's employment rights. |
| Where Council services identify situations where children's human rights are at risk and no solution can be implemented then this must be escalated. | Chief Officers | 2024 | Council Management Team are made aware of any situations where children's human rights are at risk and no solution can be implemented. |

Other

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|---|--|-------------|---|
| Ensure all schools registered for the UNICEF UK Rights Respecting Schools Programme | Assistant Director Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing | August 2024 | All schools are registered. |
| Ensure all schools registered for the UNICEF UK Rights Respecting Schools Programme achieve a minimum of Bronze level | Assistant Director Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing | August 2025 | All schools have achieved Bronze level. |
| Explore opportunities to continue delivery of Rights Respecting Schools Programme when current funding ends in 2025. | Assistant Director Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing | August 2025 | A solution is found which enables schools to continue to participate in the Rights Respecting Schools Programme or an equivalent. |
| Develop and deliver a programme of public awareness-raising activities of Children's Rights for parents and carers. | Assistant Director Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing | March 2026 | Parents and carers are aware of children's human rights. |
| Develop and deliver a programme of public awareness-raising activities of Children's Rights in wider communities. | Head of Thriving Communities | March 2026 | Communities are aware of children's human rights. |

NHS Dumfries and Galloway

Leadership Commitment

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|---|---|---------------|--|
| Explicit agreement from Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board to adopt a children's human rights-based approach where the organisation commit to respect, protect, promote and fulfil children's human rights, and secure better or further effect of the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. | Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board | February 2024 | Minuted decision by Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board and/or addendum to a strategy or plan. |
| Explicit commitment from Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board Management Team to respect, protect, promote and fulfil children's human rights and secure better or further effect of the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. | Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board Management Team | February 2024 | Minuted decision by Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board Management Team. |
| Embed children's human rights into service level priorities, budgeting and planning at all levels of NHS Dumfries and Galloway. | Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board Management Team | March 2025 | Children's human rights are reflected within strategic plans, with relevant performance indicators, and are reported through existing reporting arrangements. A Children's Rights Impact Assessment is embedded within the NHS Impact Assessment process so that children's human rights are considered when designing policies and strategies, establishing practices, and making major decisions (including financial decisions). |
| Agreement to embed a Children's Rights Impact Assessment within the NHS Impact Assessment process, as part of the ongoing Impact Assessment Review, so that children's human rights are considered when designing policies and strategies, establishing practices, and making major decisions (including financial decisions), and task relevant Officers to progress this. | Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board | 2024 | Children's Rights Impact Assessments are carried out as part of the Impact Assessment process when designing policies and strategies, establishing practices, and making major decisions (including financial decisions), which potentially may impact children's rights. |

Participation and Empowerment of children and Young People

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|---|---|------------|---|
| NHS services consistently enable children and young people to have a voice and meaningfully participate in decisions that affect their lives (now and in the future), directly and indirectly, including in policy-making, budgetary decision-making, and in reviewing processes and practices. | Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board Management Team | March 2025 | NHS services provide opportunities for children and young people to have a voice and meaningfully participate in decisions that affect their lives, including the design, development and review of services, |
| NHS Services consistently offer a range of ways for all children and young people to meaningfully participate. | Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board Management Team | March 2025 | NHS services use a variety of methods to support participation of children and young people. |
| Learning from CAMHS Participation activity is shared, with successful approaches upscaled across other NHS Services. | Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board Management Team | March 2025 | Increased delivery of participation activities in services outwith CAMHS. |

Empowerment of Children and Young People

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|---|---|------------|---|
| NHS Services identify and review barriers to participation and work to remove these. | Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board Management Team | March 2025 | NHS Services consider potential barriers to participation and seek to address these as far as practicable. |
| All children and young people have access to advice to support them in their understanding of their rights. | General Manager – Women, Children and Sexual Health | March 2025 | All staff working with children and young people in NHS DG will 1 know how they can support children’s understanding of their rights. 2 have the skills and knowledge to support children in their understanding of their rights. |

Child Friendly Complaints

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|---|--|------------|---|
| Implement a Child Friendly Complaint Process and keep under regular review. | NHS Dumfries and Galloway Complaints Manager | March 2025 | A Child Friendly Complaint Process is in place and has been promoted to children and young people and their families. The effectiveness of the process is reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure it is working well for children and families. |
| Regularly review child-related complaints and feedback. | NHS Dumfries and Galloway Complaints Manager | March 2025 | Child-related complaints and feedback are reviewed on a regular basis to inform future improvement in processes, services and participation. Key learning is communicated to the Council Management Team or individual services as appropriate. |

Training and Awareness Raising

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|--|---------------------------|------------|---|
| Staff and volunteers at all levels of the organisation have a basic understanding of children's human rights and their responsibility to protect and advance them. | NHS Dumfries and Galloway | March 2025 | A mandatory E-Learning opportunity on children's human rights is provided for all existing NHS staff and added to the induction process for new staff. |
| Staff and volunteers working directly with children and young people adopt and model a children's rights-based approach through their work. | NHS Dumfries and Galloway | March 2026 | NHS services who work directly with children and young people provide additional learning opportunities for staff on children's human rights so staff have the confidence to promote children's rights and support them in their understanding of their rights. |

Improving Practice

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|--|---|------------|---|
| Resources are shared with services that can support them to advance children's rights and use those tools to review policy and practice. | Child Health Commissioner and Children's Services Manager | Ongoing | When resources are made available by Scottish Government and other sources these are circulated to relevant services. |
| Policies and procedures are compliant with the UNCRC. | Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board Management Team | March 2026 | Review existing policies and procedures to ensure that they are compliant with the UNCRC, and as part of this activity identify and remove barriers. |
| Legal implications of UNCRC Bill are understood by services and staff. | NHS Legal Advisors | March 2024 | Updates to be provided to NHS Board Management Team and individual services as and when there are any local or national developments. Areas of risk are added to NHS Risk Register. |

Child Friendly Publications

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|---|--|------------|---|
| Children and young people have access to child friendly/easy-read format documents when the subject matter is relevant to them. | NHS Communication and Engagement Manager | March 2026 | A criteria is established which provides services with clarity regarding when a child friendly/easy-read format or version may be appropriate. The organisation has capacity to prepare and publish child friendly/easy-read documents in line with European Commission Guidance. |

Monitoring Progress

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------|---|
| Repeat of engagement exercise with children and young people. | Children's Services Manager | November 2025 | Programme of engagement completed. |
| Alongside Progress Reports in 2025 bring forward proposed set of indicators (alongside up-to-date data) which can help monitor how we are protecting and progressing children's rights. | Children's Services Manager | 2025 | Suite of rights-related indicators agreed in relation to children's rights. |

Children's Rights Budgeting

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|--|---|-------|--|
| Children's Rights Impact Assessments are carried out as part of the Impact Assessment process when making decisions about the allocation of Council budgets. | Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board Management Team | 2025 | Children's Rights Impact Assessments are published as part of the Impact Assessments carried out when setting budgets. |
| The process of NHS budget development includes transparency and the participation of children and young people. | Director of Finance | 2025 | Children and young people have opportunities to participate in the budget setting process. |
| Explicit budget lines can be identified which specifically support children's rights e.g. tackling child poverty or inequality. | Director of Finance | 2026 | Budget lines are easily identifiable by anyone reviewing NHS Accounts. |

Accountability and Reporting on Children's Rights

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------|--|
| 2023-26 Rights Report published online and shared with Scottish Government. | Children's Services Manager | February 2024 | Following agreement by Dumfries and Galloway Council, NHS Board and Youth Council 2023-26 Rights Report is shared as required. |
| NHS Board are provided with an update on progress in 2025 as part of the Joint Annual Report on the Children's Services Plan. | Children's Services Manager | 2025 | Report published and scrutinised by Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board. |
| Dumfries and Galloway Youth Council are provided with an update on progress in 2025. | Children's Services Manager | 2025 | Report published and scrutinised by Dumfries and Galloway Youth Council. |
| 2023-26 Rights Report developed and published. | Children's Services Manager | 2026 | Report published and scrutinised by Dumfries and Galloway Council, NHS Board and Youth Council. |

Non-Discrimination and Rights at Risk

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|--|-----------------------|-------|--|
| Where NHS services identify situations where children's human rights are at risk and no solution can be implemented then this must be escalated. | Board Management Team | 2024 | Board Management Team are made aware of any situations where children's human rights are at risk and no solution can be implemented. |

Other

| What needs to happen? | By who? | When? | What will success look like? |
|--|---------------------------|------------|---|
| Child Health Commissioner remit in relation to children's human rights is effectively delivered. | Child Health Commissioner | March 2026 | Child Health Commissioner advocates both locally and nationally that the rights and interests of children and young people, as detailed in the UN Rights of the Child are recognised, promoted and acted on in the development and implementation of policies, strategies and services. |

Appendix

Case studies and examples



Pupil Council Charter

In Dumfries and Galloway we are introducing a Scheme of Establishment for a Pupil Council Charter. A 'Scheme of Establishment' is a framework, or a set of rules for how we set something up. This helps us ensure that when Pupil Councils are set up, they have guidance to make sure they work in a way that is equitable for all young people.

The Charter should be written by the Pupil Council in partnership with the school. This is to ensure that we have consistency in the way that Pupil Councils operate. It also ensures that the work they undertake is reflected in the policies and guidance of the Education department. The Education department is working with stakeholders to develop a Charter statement.

Key Functions of a Pupil Council are:

- To promote contact between Pupils/Pupils and Parents/Communities of Interest
- To make representations to and from pupils to the school on matters that affect them in their learning and education
- To make representation to the school and local authority on policies and objectives that affect them in their learning and education

Key Features are to be:

- Fair and Inclusive - opportunities for all voices to be heard
- Transparency – opportunities to become involved are clear
- Participatory – opportunities for co-creation and co-production

Dumfries and Galloway Youth Council (DGYC)

An organisation of young volunteers, aged 12-25, who live, work and study in the region. There are 35 positions on DGYC. The Youth Council represent the views of young people across the region and during this reporting period began having representation on the Education and Learning Committee and the four Area Committees.

The last elections took place in November 2021 and during this reporting period two

by-elections took place. This is to be expected with any youth council due to young people moving on for work or education. Both by-elections were run successfully.

One of the highlights of the year for the Youth Council was organising hustings events for the Local Government Elections in May 2022. The hustings involved all candidates standing for elections with questions put forward to candidates by young people throughout Dumfries and Galloway. Questions were put to candidates about their priorities and what they planned to do for young people if elected.

Welcoming Gypsy Traveller families

In Dumfries and Galloway we welcome all families equally; however, we are aware certain protocols need to be in place when welcoming Gypsy Traveller families.

When a Gypsy Traveller family comes to school to enrol their children, support will be offered by the Head teacher and clerical staff to complete all relevant admission paperwork.

The Head teacher will discuss with parents the various routines and procedures about the day-to-day life of the school and go through with the parent the welcome pack which they can take away with them.

Contact will be made with any previous schools regarding the child's previous education if appropriate.

The child's learning will be assessed by their teacher using the school's Rapid Assessment. This will be followed by a consultation to determine level of support required.

Schools recognise the needs of Gypsy Travellers:

- To be made welcome and to feel safe and secure
- To be given the opportunity to make friends
- To have access to an appropriate* curriculum
- To be accepted and included in the life of the school community

Schools meet the Additional Needs of Travellers through:

- Providing clear information on routines and expectations e.g. Visual timetables displaying breaks and lunchtimes . Recognising differences in vocabulary and terminology to ensure understanding.
- Talking to children about their previous school experiences, assessing children's formal learning to date using Dumfries and Galloway's Gypsy /Traveller 'Initial assessment'.

- School uniform: Children are encouraged to wear school uniform, however we do not enforce this. New and pre loved uniforms are made available for purchase, through donation or free.
- Accepting children may wish to change separately for PE.
- Accepting that Sexual health education should be discussed with parents prior to any teaching. It should not be assumed that it is 'OK' to teach.
- Celebrating festivals and cultural diversity and weaving these into the curriculum and lessons.

The Council's Roads Service engages with children and young people, visiting schools and talking to children and young people about road safety, and providing child-friendly materials. The Roads Service ran a competition with early learning and childcare settings and primary school learners in Dumfries and Galloway to take part in a competition to name one of our 18 new gritters for the winter of 2023/24.

Duncow Primary School was working towards a Gold Rights Respecting School Award. The school's Junior Road Safety Group invited Roads Service to visit the school so that the pupils could ask questions and raise their road safety concerns. A technician visited the school and gave a presentation to the pupils showing works that the Service had carried out. The Schools Junior Road Safety Group, which was comprised of six pupils from all different ages P1 – P7, then highlighted some road safety issues they felt were of concern to their safety, for example: repair of slow down lights; reduction of speed limit; overgrown hedges; overhanging trees. Actions were agreed on the issues raised and it was agreed that the Road Services representative would inform the group of progress.

Waste Services Pilot

During January and February 2022 Dumfries and Galloway Council ran an innovative pilot with two primary schools in Dumfries. Members of the Global Gang School Group at Georgetown and Calside Primary Schools met with representatives from the council's Waste Services department to explore how they could recycle as much as possible. They began by identifying the most common types of waste that were produced at school - these included:

- Plastic bottles
- Paper and cardboard
- Tins and cans
- Food waste
- Crisp packets

They then provided black boxes in all classrooms to help collect recycling and easily transport it to the bins. This resulted in more recycling and fewer general waste collections. Following the pilot with the two primary schools, the Council decided to roll out school recycling across the region, and this is taking place in stages.

Operation Safety is an early intervention and prevention programme for P7's that is delivered in partnership between the Emergency Services (Scottish Fire & Rescue

Service, Scottish Ambulance Service, Police Scotland) and Youth Work Services. The programme seen a variety of interactive workshops delivered with young people on a wide range of issues including how to be safe online, first aid, fire safety, water safety, electrical safety and resilience. The aim is to equip young people with the information they need to be able to keep themselves and others safe, whilst also providing education about what to do if things go wrong. Operation Safety was delivered over 3 weeks in advance of the 2022 Autumn school break within the Youth Enquiry Service with local primary schools from across Nithsdale, Annandale and Eskdale and Stewartry being invited to participate for a full day experience. 41 primary schools participated in the programme from across all ward areas with over 750 P7 students taking part.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

The Be Kind project, led by nine young people supported through CAMHS service and external funding from See Me, delivered an engaging animation an educational booklet and the young people wanted to highlight the importance of talking about Mental Health and where you can seek support locally. 500 educational booklets were produced and shared locally.

Young people involved with the 'Be Kind' Mental Health project had the opportunity to share their lived experiences with policy makers when they had a meeting with Kevin Stewart MSP Minister of Mental Wellbeing and Social Care alongside See Me and BEAT Young Champions. A young person reflected on this by saying; "It felt really good to be a part of something, to feel like we were making our voices heard in the places that they are needed."

CAMHS Youth Forum members have been involved in developing a guidance document and devising training specifically for young people to equip them with the knowledge and information they need for meaningfully engaging within mental health professionals interviews.

CAMHS Improvement Projects, from focusing on our waiting times and giving young people the opportunity to share their experiences on the first assessment process and listening and learning from these.

Young people, parent and carers and members of the CAMHS staff team, were involved in developing and designing a new CAMHS and ISSU 18 Information Leaflet.

The "changing rooms" project was one of the CAMHS improvement projects. A group of young people were involved in a project to make clinical spaces look and feel more young person-friendly. This group had full ownership over an allocated budget and were involved with regards, planning, designing, involving others and officially launching the new-look spaces.

Young people took a lead role in designing the new NHS Dumfries and Galloway Child Adolescent Mental Health Service website. Young people were involved in the website working group from the start, where they were involved in all aspects: from discussing language; design; colours; developing content; producing art work; poetry; videos; and selecting podcasts to be included within the website.

Summer of Play

In 2021 the Scottish Government provided funding for a Summer Offer for Children and Young People (Summer of Play) which would focus on the wellbeing of children and young people during the 2021 summer holidays and support existing provision of activities for children and young people and their families over the summer, ensuring they were provided with opportunities to socialise, play and reconnect within their local communities and environments. Following positive evaluations, funding was made available for the summer of 2022, and Dumfries and Galloway was allocated £329,037.

In Dumfries and Galloway, Third Sector and Council Services could apply for funding to deliver activities under the 'Summer of Play' banner over the summer holiday period. Council services were allowed to apply for funding to enable them to offer the services for free to children and young people. The Council with Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway to develop the arrangements for the Third Sector fund, to ensure it was co-designed with the sector.

As the offer was aimed specifically at children and young people, it was important that they were involved from the very beginning of the planning process for the funding. As such, 2 co-production groups were created (Primary 1 to Primary 5 & S1 to S6) in early May to ensure their views were heard. The children and young people from the co-design groups identified the following key priorities that planned activities would cover, and applicants were required to demonstrate how their activity met one or more of these priorities within their application:

- Priority 1 – Accessibility
- Priority 2 – Sports
- Priority 3 – Culture, Arts and Performance
- Priority 4 – Recreation, Social and Learning
- Priority 5 – Food
- Priority 6 – Nature and Outdoor

Applications for funding were considered by Assessment Panels which consisted of young people from the co-production groups alongside Council Officers and Third Sector partners. One of the criteria for funding was that all activities had to be co-designed with children and young people.

A range of activities were provided over the summer, and through the Amazing Summer Roadshows, 131 pop-up community events were delivered across 78 remote and rural communities in Dumfries and Galloway. These were accessed by 4,330 children and young people. Over 1,800 children and young people across the region accessed free leisure memberships for the summer holiday period in 2022. Information about the Summer Offer, and the activities provided is available [here](#).

Customer Services have continued to support the national programme to provide all 5–22-year-olds with free bus travel through the National Entitlement Cards which launched in January 2022. During the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 there were 1260 new cards issued through face-to-face appointments at Customer Service Centres; 1159 new cards issued through online applications; and a further 1532 issued to through the P7/S1 transition process in collaboration with Education.

Employability and Skills – Project SEARCH

The Employability and Skills Service, in collaboration with Dumfries and Galloway College, launched Project SEARCH in 2015. The goal was to provide an additional, highly supported program designed to enhance the achievement levels of individuals in the region with additional support needs and disabilities, facilitating their journey to secure and maintain employment. The program accommodates 12 participants annually (from August to June) and aims for a 70% employment success rate each year.

The Employability and Skills Service acknowledges the positive impact of routine, structure, feeling valued, and making a positive contribution on the mental health of young people. Each young person receiving support from the service is assigned a one-to-one key worker who assists them in planning an individual program. This tailored program involves work experience, learning opportunities, training, and qualifications, aiming to provide structure and achieve positive outcomes. For young people with acute or complex mental health challenges, appropriate referrals to specialised services are made.

The Employability and Skills Service offers extensive support to young people to assist them in applying for the Holywood Trust, referring them to food banks, liaising with social services and housing providers, covering expenses for interview or job-related clothing, and facilitating access to welfare funds for clients. Additionally, the service supports clients in obtaining essential documents such as birth certificates, passports, or provisional driving licenses. Access to “moving into work” funds helps to eliminate barriers to employment, including travel, training, and driving lessons.

Community Mental Health Funding

£430,000 of Community Mental Health and Wellbeing funding was granted to our Children and Families commissioned services to provide new and enhanced services for young people. The providers used the funds to develop unique and interesting projects such as an Orchard, Mental Health Advocacy in schools, Young Carers Wellbeing Support Worker, Befrienders, Animal Assisted Therapy and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy to name but a few. In 2022 over 1000 young people accessed the projects with more than half reporting improved outcomes. The main issues affecting young people accessing the services were anxiety, social interaction and isolation.

Perinatal and Infant Mental Health services have been developed, with the development informed by a significant engagement with new parents. Over 60 parents engaged in a survey on Maternal Mental Health and on Infant Mental Health, with 16 of these women meeting individually with PIMH team members to offer feedback. There have been three lived-experience focus groups that have taken place remotely and in Bump, Baby and Beyond. The last Focus Group fed back ideas for service improvement to a Birth Trauma Pathway group within NHS Dumfries and Galloway. Efforts continue to seek representation on the Peri-natal and Infant Mental Health Steering Group from those with lived experience. The existing lived-experience model is under review, and the service is seeking involvement from Quality Improvement Service and from Clinical Governance to develop a sustainable model. This may involve a volunteer model.

The Infant Mental Health service Wee Minds Matter has been developed and is now live for referrals. The lead clinician is trained in Video Interactive Guidance and Circle of Security. The Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Service (PIMHS) are supporting Health Visiting to offer Solihull training and expanding this across mental health services. The PIMH team are developing a training needs survey for staff to identify training priorities across perinatal and Infant Mental Health topics with support from the Psychological Therapies Training Co-ordinator. They also regularly meet with Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Champions within the NHS and have a regular update meeting with the main Third Sector providers in the area.

Lifelong Learning has a key delivery target for Family Learning. This is an approach that supports improved attainment which leads to positive outcomes for both adults and children. Family Learning in Dumfries and Galloway is an early intervention working with families pre-birth to children Primary 3. We provide several evidence-based programmes in the community and within 11 targeted primary schools in the region. Schools are targeted based on areas of deprivation and attainment levels. Delivery is universal within each link school and open to all parents to ensure that parents do not feel targeted and encouraging peer learning between families.

Within early learning and childcare provisions sessions are directed towards parents and carers in relation to sleep, toileting, nutrition, play. There are also a number of opportunities for sessions such as stay and play and family cooking sessions.

During the three-year reporting period the Lifelong Learning Service has engaged with 12,650 adults and children throughout the region. Lifelong Learning has a key delivery target for adults in Dumfries and Galloway to develop their skills and confidence. Community based adult learning provides a range of programmes which include literacy and numeracy support, English language learning and digital learning. Adult Learning is available to anyone 16 plus who are not in full time education.

Tackling Poverty

All schools in Dumfries and Galloway have worked to minimise or remove all costs associated with the school day.

When considered alongside initiatives such as free school uniform events that were hosted across the region in advance of the 22/23 academic year and offered free school uniform for children, parents of school age children have seen some reduced costs which may have gone a small way to help with the increased costs of living. Where feasible we have adopted a cash first approach in order to ensure the dignity of families. This is also exemplified by our period dignity project which makes sanitary products available in ways that are acceptable to those who need them.

Within the local authority, data analysis highlighted lower than expected uptake levels in relation to income related free meals, school clothing grants and holiday food payments. This analysis led to work to match data of families in receipt of free school meals and council tax reduction in order to identify children who were in one data set and not the other (as being in receipt of free school meals on financial grounds). Where children were found to appear in only one data set staff subsequently proactively contacted and engaged with families to invite an application, providing support as required. This approach has increased the uptake of income related free school meals which has a direct financial benefit to local families. It has also increased the uptake of means tested council tax reduction which has had a positive financial impact by reducing the families' liability to pay council tax, water and waste water charges.

Throughout August 2022, the Poverty and Inequalities Team delivered four Free Back to School Uniform Events across the Region supporting 475 family members, with over 5,595 items of new and pre-loved school uniform items redistributed. Free Haircuts from local Hairdressers at each event also helped to save families money before children and young people went back to school.

In addition to the free events, seven permanent School Uniform Banks have been developed in each of the following locations which are open all year round for the donation and collection of school uniforms:

- Stranraer
- Newton Stewart
- Dalbeattie
- Castle Douglas
- Kelloholm
- Dumfries
- Annan

The School Meals Service has various references, policies, guidance that support the delivery of the service, some of which support children and human rights. The service complies with all Scottish Government legislation in relation to food and drink provision in schools. Healthy Eating in Schools is embedded within our school meals lunchtime service and ensures all children and young people have access to nutritional balanced meals when in school. This related to children's rights on having access to proper nutritious food while also having a children and young people centre approach showing our commitment to improve the health and wellbeing of our children and young people.

For further information about Children's Rights in Dumfries and Galloway,
please contact **ChildrensServices@dumgal.gov.uk**