

City Chambers
DUNDEE
DD1 3BY

17th October, 2025

Dear Colleague

You are requested to attend a MEETING of the **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE** to be held in the Council Chamber, City Chambers, City Square, Dundee and also to be held remotely on Monday, 27th October, 2025 following the special meeting of the City Council called for 5.00pm.

The meeting will also be livestreamed to YouTube. Members of the Press or Public wishing to join the meeting as observers should follow this link www.dundee.gov.uk/live or alternatively they may attend in person.

Should you require any further information please contact Committee Services on telephone (01382) 434818 or by email at committee.services@dundee.gov.uk.

Yours faithfully

GREGORY COLGAN

Chief Executive

AGENDA OF BUSINESS

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Members are reminded that, in terms of The Councillors Code, it is their responsibility to make decisions about whether to declare an interest in any item on this agenda and whether to take part in any discussions or voting.

This will include all interests, whether or not entered on your Register of Interests, which would reasonably be regarded as so significant that they are likely to prejudice your discussion or decision-making.

2 ACHIEVEMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS - Page 1

(Report No 314-2025 by the Executive Director of Children and Families Service, copy attached).

At this juncture external members of the Committee will depart.

3 OUR PROMISE 2023-26 ANNUAL UPDATE - Page 21

(Report No 313-2025 by the Executive Director of Children and Families Service, copy attached).

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ITEM No ...2.....

REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE – 27 OCTOBER 2025

REPORT ON: ACHIEVEMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

REPORT NO: 314-2025

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report 'Achievement of children and young people with Additional Support Needs', provides information on the profile of additional support needs (ASN) in Dundee and an overview of some of the achievements of children and young people with complex ASN.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the content of the report.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Dundee City Council has a statutory responsibility to assess and make provision for children's additional support needs (ASN) under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004. In addition, it has duties under the Equalities Act 2010 regarding children and young people with protected characteristics, including disabilities.
- 4.2 A child or young person has additional support needs for the purposes of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 where, for whatever reason, the child or young person is, or is likely to be, unable without the provision of additional support to benefit from school education provided or to be provided for the child or young person. Additional support falls into three overlapping, broad headings: approaches to learning and teaching, support from personnel and provision of resources.
- 4.3 A child or young person has additional support needs if the child or young person is looked after by a local authority (within the meaning of section 17(6) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 (c.36).
- 4.4 Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 requires that the local authority "must make adequate and efficient provision for such additional support as is required by each child or young person with additional support needs, for whose school education the authority is responsible." There is no requirement in the 2004 Act that a diagnosis must be made before support is provided.
- 4.5 The presumption to provide education in a mainstream setting has been in legislation since 2003 reflecting a move towards a children's rights-based approach. Section 15 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 provides that a preschool and school aged child should be educated in a mainstream school unless one of three circumstances set out in section 15 apply. The three exceptions are that it would not be suited to the ability or aptitude of the child; would be incompatible with the provision of efficient education for the children with whom the child would be educated or would result in unreasonable public expenditure being incurred which would not ordinarily be incurred.

- 4.6 In 2010, the way in which ASN information was collected by the Scottish Government changed and for the first-time information on reasons for support and nature of support was collected separately for each type of additional support need. Since 2012, six extra categories of reasons for support (communication support needs, young carer, bereavement, substance misuse, family issues and risk of exclusion) have been introduced.
- 4.7 It is important to recognise that children and young people with additional support needs are not a homogenous group. They may have a range of needs – some educational, some not – some needs may be short term; others may be long lasting. Whilst some children and young people do not require additional support beyond that which a classroom teacher can provide, others need additional services or specialist provision. The Children and Families Service provide a range of additional services and provision to meet the needs of our children and young people, with an overview included in Appendix 1.

5.0 PROFILE OF ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS (ASN) IN DUNDEE

- 5.1 The number of children and young people in Dundee identified with additional support needs (ASN) has steadily increased since 2010 and there continues to be year on year increases, both in terms of the numbers as well as the complexity of needs. This is mirrored nationally.

Early learning and childcare settings

- 5.2 The [Additional early learning and childcare statistics 2024](#)¹ (published December 2024, Scottish Government) contains information about the number of children registered with early learning and childcare (ELC) settings whose home language is not English, are assessed/ declared disabled, and have additional support needs (ASN). The statistics for Dundee, and Scotland, are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1 Percentage of registrations (and number of children) with ASN in ELC in Dundee

	Dundee	Scotland
Percentage of all registrations whose home language is not English, Gaelic, Scots, or Sign Language (note: estimate to nearest ten in publication)	13% (340)	11%
Percentage of all registrations assessed/declared disabled	3% (80)	2%
Percentage of all registrations with additional support needs	20% (520)	19%

- 5.3 According to these statistics, 12% of all children registered in Dundee's ELC settings are recorded as having language, speech, and communication issues, compared to 8% nationally. 4% of children are recorded as having learning difficulties, compared to 2% nationally. 7% of children are also recorded as having social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties, compared to 6% nationally.

Primary and Secondary schools

- 5.4 According to the [pupil census supplementary statistics](#)² (published March 2025, Scottish Government), 33.4% (3,311) of primary school children in Dundee in 2024 were reported to have at least one ASN. This was an increase of 3 percentage points (pp) from 2023, when 30.4% of children were recorded as having ASN. The Scotland average increased from 30.4% in 2023 to 34.6% in 2024. The highest seven reasons for additional support are detailed in Table 2, as well as the number of looked after children.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/summary-statistics-for-schools-in-scotland-2024/documents/>

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/pupil-census-supplementary-statistics/>

- 5.5 48.7% (4,110) of young people in Dundee secondary schools in 2024 were reported to have at least one ASN. This was an increase of 4 pp from 2023, when 44.7% of young people were recorded as having ASN. The Scotland average increased from 42.9% in 2023 to 46.1% in 2024. The highest seven reasons for additional support are detailed in Table 2, as well as the number of looked after young people.

Table 2 Number children and young people with Additional Support Needs 2023 and 2024, by Reason for Support (NB cannot be summed, as a pupil may have more than one reason for support). 12 most common Reasons for Support 2024.

	Primary Schools			Secondary Schools		
		2023	2024		2023	2024
1	Social, emotional and behavioural difficulty	925	966	Social, emotional and behavioural difficulty	1,252	1,359
2	English as an additional language	727	884	Family Issues	686	780
3	Family Issues	384	404	English as an additional language	541	665
4	Communication Support Needs	324	373	Mental health problem	486	606
5	Language or speech disorder	357	359	Other moderate learning difficulty	471	575
6	Other moderate learning difficulty	299	318	Interrupted learning	271	514
7	Autistic spectrum disorder	265	270	Young Carer	339	506
8	Physical health problem	202	198	Autistic spectrum disorder	409	434
9	Young Carer	178	190	Physical health problem	252	357
10	Learning disability	125	138	Dyslexia	242	311
11	Looked after	105	118	Other specific learning difficulty (e.g. numeric)	257	250
12	Interrupted learning	81	111	Looked after	175	219

- 5.6 In total, there are 1,716 children and young people assessed and/ or declared as having a disability in schools in Dundee. 1,388 of these children and young people have been assessed as having a disability.
- 5.7 There are 2,464 children and young people in Dundee schools for whom English, Gaelic, Scots, Doric nor Sign Language is their home language. These children and young people have 75 different home languages between them. Dundee has the fifth highest amount of different home languages of all 32 local authorities.

- 5.8 Children and young people receive support in a range of ways, and from various professionals and partners, to meet their needs. An overview of the nature of this support is detailed in Table 3.

Table 3 Nature of support of children and young people with Additional Support Needs in 2024

Nature of support	Primary	Secondary
Education: Additional Specialist teaching support	732	1,268
Education: Additional Specialist non-teaching support	1,120	1,575
Social Work services	201	283
Health services	724	962
Voluntary	129	254
Classroom Teacher	2,193	2,683
Other	265	546

Note: children and young people with more than one additional need will appear multiple times

Special schools

- 5.9 Dundee has two 'special schools: Kingspark School and Rockwell Learning Centre. In 2024, there were 268 children and young people (89 female; 179 male) in Dundee's specialised schools with ASN. 196 of these children and young people were assessed or declared as having a disability. 166 children and young people receive additional support for learning disabilities and 129 for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Table 4 Nature of support of children and young people with Additional Support Needs in 2024: Special

Nature of support	Special
Education: Additional Specialist teaching support	228
Education: Additional Specialist non-teaching support	249
Social Work services	24
Health services	75
Voluntary	11
Classroom Teacher	7
Other	10

6.0 ACHIEVEMENTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IDENTIFIED AS HAVING ASN

- 6.1 The following measures are based on all pupils in Dundee mainstream schools with at least one additional support need (ASN) recorded on SEEMiS (the management information system).
- 6.2 Table 5 shows that, in 2025, 75.3% of senior phase pupils (S6 based on S4) with ASN attained literacy and numeracy at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 4 or better. This is 1.1 pp better than the previous year.
- 6.3 In 2025, 48.3% of senior phase pupils (S6 based on S4) with ASN attained literacy and numeracy at SCQF Level 5+. This is 1.8 pp higher than the previous year.

Table 5 Percentage of pupils (S6 based on S4) with ASN attaining literacy and numeracy.

Session	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
At SCQF 4+	74.3%	76.3%	75.5%	74.2%	75.3%
At SCQF 5+	50.3%	48.7%	48.6%	46.5%	48.3%

- 6.4 As Table 6 shows, in 2024/25, the lowest attaining 20% and middle attaining 60% of senior phase pupils (S6 based on S4) with ASN improved their average total tariff points compared to 2023/24. The highest attaining 20% of pupils with ASN saw a drop in average total tariff points.

Table 6 Average Total Tariff Points for pupils (S6 based on S4) with ASN

Session	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Lowest 20%	38	41	29	36	39
Middle 60%	484	495	471	468	478
Highest 20%	1,578	1,751	1,632	1,600	1,571

- 6.5 Special sector schools are not included in the Insight benchmarking tool. Their results are available to the Children and Families Service in the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) results available on SEEMiS in August and updated in December.
- 6.6 In 2025 two young people in S6 in Kingspark achieved one National 2 award each, one young person achieved two National 2 awards, and one young person achieved two National 2 and one National 3 awards. These awards were in English and Communication, Performance Arts, Physical Education and Practical Cookery.
- 6.7 37 pupils at Rockwell Learning Centre were entered for SQA awards at National 3+ in 2025, 21 in S4, 13 in S5 and 3 in S6. Table 7 shows the number of pupils gaining one or more awards at Level National 3 or better in 2025. These figures are not cumulative i.e. they do not include awards gained in previous diets.

Table 7 The number of pupils in Rockwell gaining 1 or more awards at Level National 3 or better in 2025 (not cumulative).

		Award Level		
		National 3+	National 4+	National 5+
Number of awards	1+	37	31	14
	2+	32	21	
	3+	15	12	
	4+	10	6	
	5+	7	4	
	6+	5	2	
	7+	3	1	

- 6.8 Not all the achievements of children and young people should, or can, be measured in statistics; the same can be said about the support and experiences provided by our staff and partners to meet the needs of our children and young people. Case studies have been included in Appendices 2 to 6 to give an insight into the additional support available (staff, services and provision) and the impact of this support in meeting the needs of children and young people with a range of additional support needs.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The Children and Families Service continue to strive to improve outcomes for children and young people who have additional support needs.
- 7.2 The number of children and young people in Dundee identified with additional support needs has steadily increased since 2010, as it has done nationally, and there continues to be year on year increases. The complexity and range of additional support needs is also increasing. The Children and Families Service completed an ASN review which has now informed a new, long-term Inclusion Strategy to ensure that the local authority can meet the changing and increasing needs

of Dundee's children and young people. The working vision for this strategy can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Inclusion Strategy (draft) vision statement

Vision

Every Dundee learner is educated within an inclusive, equitable, and nurturing environment where they thrive, learn, and achieve their full potential, regardless of background, identity, or additional support need, within their local catchment school.



7.3 The key aims of our Inclusion Strategy can be summarised as follows:

7.3.1 **Promote Inclusive Practice**

Embed 'The Dundee Standard of Inclusive Practice' across all educational settings, ensuring every learner feels safe, valued, and supported.

7.3.2 **Strengthen Wellbeing and Belonging**

Prioritise the emotional, social, and mental wellbeing of children, young people, and staff through proactive, trauma-informed approaches.

7.3.3 **Ensure Equity of Access and Outcomes**

Address barriers to learning and participation through timely, needs-led support. Use inclusive, responsive pedagogy to meet diverse learner needs and promote positive outcomes for all.

7.3.4 **Build Capacity and Leadership**

Develop confident, skilled practitioners and leaders at all levels, who deliver high quality learning and teaching and who champion inclusion and wellbeing.

7.3.5 **Enhance Data-Informed Decision Making**

Use robust, moderated data to inform planning, interventions, and quality assurance in a timeous manner.

7.3.6 Article IX of The Minute of Meeting of the Children, Families and Communities Committee of April 2024, (Report No 113-2024 refers) 'A Step Change on Positive Destinations for Young Dundonians' sets out an ambitious improvement plan to inspire young people to pursue education, develop their employability skills, and realise their full potential. This improvement plan identifies six key themes to improve the participations rates of all Dundee's young people. Each theme has a "young person's expectation" to focus the direction of the changes needed and subsequent

actions. Whilst the themes are interconnected, there is a specific theme of “Additional Support Needs” with a young person’s expectation and associated improvement actions.

8.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 This report has been subject to the Pre-IIA Screening Tool and does not make any recommendations for change to strategy, policy, procedures, services, or funding and so has not been subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. An appropriate Senior Manager has reviewed and agreed with this assessment.

9.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 The Council Leadership Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are in agreement with its content.

10.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 None.

Audrey May
Executive Director of Children and Families
Service

Paul Fleming
Head of Education, Learning & Inclusion,
and Chief Education Officer

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APPENDIX 1**Range of addition support (services and provisions) available in the Children and Families Service**

Provisions	Type of Support offered
Accessibility and Inclusion Service (AIS)	An outreach team who supports children and young people with a range of ASN including care experienced young people, travelling community, hospital education and home education.
Anxiety in Motion (AIM)	A community-based provision, now situated in Rockwell, that supports education for young people in secondary who have medically registered Anxiety, where they experience school avoidance due to anxiety.
Dudhope Young People's Unit School (YPU)	A hospital-based education provision for CAMHS inpatients aged 12–18, with all referrals received through the NHS. Young people come from any of ten local authorities across the North of Scotland.
English as an Additional Language (EAL)	Team of teachers and bilingual assistants that support children within mainstream education to build strategies to support English language.
Longhaugh Support Group (LSG)	Supports joint placement for primary aged pupils between their placement school and LSG. Supports pupils experience high levels of social, emotional and behavioural needs.
Deaf Education team	The education team supports children and young people across different secondary and primary schools, who have hearing impairments or are registered Deaf.
Visual Impairment (VI) team	The VI education team supports children and young people across different secondary and primary schools, who have sight impairments or are registered blind.
Autism and Social communication team	Outreach team who supports mainstream schools and nurseries with strategies to support young people who have a diagnosis of autism or display behaviours that are neurodivergent in nature.
Rockwell	Specialist off site provision for secondary aged pupils who are experiencing complex social, emotional and behavioural needs.
Kingspark school	Specialist school who supports educational outcomes for children and young people from Primary 1 – to Secondary S6, who have complex medical and other additional support needs.

APPENDIX 2

Dundee CAMHS YPU School - Case Study**Focus: Educational Resilience in a CAMHS Inpatient School**

Pupil A was first admitted to the Dundee CAMHS Young People's Unit (YPU) at the age of 13, during her second year of secondary school (S2). She was diagnosed with anorexia nervosa and was also experiencing high levels of emotional distress, homesickness, social anxiety, and self-harming behaviours. The hospital admission took her far from home, family, and school. Despite these challenges, she demonstrated a deep commitment to her education, continuing to engage with YPU School throughout several lengthy admissions until the age of 18.

She was especially passionate about languages and writing, often expressing herself as comfortably in French as in English. Initially reluctant to engage with NHS staff or therapists, she developed strong, trusting relationships with her teachers, valuing the clear boundary between education and clinical treatment. YPU teachers adopted a personalised and flexible approach to her learning, collaborating with her home school teachers and NHS professionals to create an education plan that allowed her to thrive.

The Covid-19 pandemic presented additional challenges, particularly due to restrictions on movement and the cancellation of exams. However, the education team responded with creativity and determination, keeping the YPU School open and prioritising wellbeing, learning, and teaching throughout the pandemic. Despite many challenges, she achieved top grades in all her National 5, Higher, and Advanced Higher qualifications, a testament to her perseverance, resilience, and the effectiveness of the tailored educational support provided.

Beyond the classroom, she became one of Dundee's Young Ambassadors for Inclusion, advocating for young people with mental health needs and highlighting the importance of education during a CAMHS admission. "Mental illness can be a barrier to success in school, but with the right support, it does not have to be," she said. During lockdown, when unable to leave the hospital for external placements, YPU teachers facilitated a virtual work experience project, enabling her to develop French language resources for younger learners as part of a local 1+2 primary languages initiative.

Now entering her final year of university, studying psychology, she remains determined to use her lived experience to support others facing similar challenges. Her recovery journey illustrates the transformative impact of sensitive, student-centred teaching within a clinical education setting. At the YPU School, staff recognise the importance of maintaining high educational expectations and provision—alongside emotional safety—for young people with complex mental health needs.

APPENDIX 3

Case Study: Overcoming Emotional Based School Avoidance – The Journey of Pupil X – AIM**Background**

Pupil X, a 13-year-old boy, presented with significant challenges related to emotional health and wellbeing, school anxiety, and physical health concerns. These difficulties emerged during the critical transition from primary to secondary school, which was severely disrupted by COVID-19 restrictions. The lack of a structured transition, combined with the breakdown of peer relationships, marked the onset of Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA).

He also suffered from a chronic bowel condition, which heightened his anxiety about being away from home and the need for close proximity to toilet facilities. At home, emotional struggles were compounded by trauma, having witnessed domestic abuse involving his mother. This led to comfort eating, increased isolation, and a deepened attachment to his mother, making separation and school attendance increasingly difficult.

Challenges

- Severe school avoidance and agoraphobia
- Anxiety related to health and toilet access
- Social isolation and physical health decline due to inactivity and emotional eating
- Trauma exposure and attachment concerns linked to domestic violence
- Complete disengagement from education and refusal to leave the house

Initial Interventions

Initial school-based efforts were led by the Health and Wellbeing Worker, but Pupil X was too anxious to engage. As his situation deteriorated, CAMHS became involved to address the agoraphobia. The school arranged online learning to maintain educational access.

Innovative Support – Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

In January 2022, Pupil X was identified as an ideal candidate for the council's pilot Virtual Learning Programme (VLE). He engaged with National 3 Geography through online resources and one live lesson per week.

This marked a turning point:

- He achieved a National 3 qualification in Geography
- He regained a sense of achievement and re-engaged with learning
- Transition to AIM

In May 2022, Pupil X was referred to AIM, a community-based education setting designed for young people experiencing EBSA. He joined the Broad General Education (BGE) class in S3 and began a phased return to in-person education.

Through gradual exposure and individualised support, he:

- Built trust and confidence
- Improved attendance
- Engaged with peers in a small group setting
- Targeted Health and Wellbeing Support

Physical health remained a concern. Pupil X expressed a strong interest in becoming a wrestler, despite limited physical capacity. In response:

- The AIM Educational Resource Worker connected with the Healthy Weight Service for tailored nutrition education
- Contact was made with a local wrestling club, which provided a mentor with lived experience of overcoming social anxiety
- He received a lifetime free membership to the club
- Funding from Cash for Kids enabled the purchase of gym clothes and gear

As a result, he:

- Increased his fitness
- Gained a new social group
- Participated in wrestling events in Dundee

Family Support

The AIM team extended support to the wider family:

- Assisted with reapplying for larger housing, including writing statements of support. The family successfully moved after being previously unsuccessful since 2002
- Encouraged participation in community events, including Family Fun Days and outings, helping reduce isolation and build a social network

Educational Progress and Outcomes

Pupil X remained at AIM for three years:

- S4: Achieved 5 National 4 Awards and 3 Unit Awards
- S5: Began a senior phase college course in Esports (Level 6 Award) while completing:
 - 2 additional National 4 qualifications
 - National 5 English (Grade B)
 - 2 units in National 5 Mathematics

To support independence:

- Successfully applied to the Independent Living Fund to purchase a laptop and driving lessons in preparation for college life

Current Status (2025)

Pupil X has now:

- Transitioned to full-time college, studying Computing
- Is attending regularly and thriving in the new environment
- Remains committed to wrestling, continuing to grow physically and socially

Conclusion

Pupil X's journey is a powerful example of what can be achieved through early identification, multi-agency collaboration, trauma-informed practice, and innovative educational approaches such as the VLE and AIM. His story highlights:

- The importance of relationship-based support
- The role of flexible education models in re-engaging learners
- The long-term impact of whole-family support

This case demonstrates how tailored intervention can not only reintroduce young people to learning but also transform lives.

APPENDIX 4**Autism & Social communication Team – Case Study****Background**

Pupil A is a young autistic child who presents with a demand avoidant profile. His early experience in education began in a mainstream nursery setting; however, this environment did not meet his needs, and he exhibited high levels of distress. His behaviours indicated significant anxiety, and he was unable to access learning in that setting.

Following these difficulties, he was placed in a specialist nursery provision. This setting was more appropriate for his needs and provided a nurturing, structured environment. The change led to noticeable improvements in his wellbeing and engagement. This period was a positive experience for both Pupil A and his family, with his needs being better understood and supported.

Transition and Withdrawal

Pupil A transitioned into his catchment primary school and attended for just over one term. Although he managed to be in school during this time, there were increasing signs of distress at home. His anxiety escalated to the point where he began refusing to attend school altogether. This led to a prolonged period—spanning two terms—during which he was not in education. In addition, he was not engaging in daily living activities, and leaving the house became an overwhelming challenge.

Targeted Support

During this period of heightened anxiety and withdrawal, the AIS Autism team began providing targeted support to the family, in consultation with the educational psychologist. Their input included:

- Supporting the family to establish daily routines (e.g., getting dressed, structured outings, bedtime routines)
- Introducing visual supports to reduce anxiety and increase predictability

Following a family relocation, Pupil A was enrolled in his new catchment school. AIS supported a phased transition into this new school environment, ensuring that the approach was child-led and flexible. Key elements included:

- Careful planning of transactional supports (e.g., identifying key adults, visual timetables, predictable routines)
- Making school predictable and desirable by incorporating his interests and motivators

Current Status

Pupil A has recently started attending school full time. While this is still early in the reintegration process, the signs are promising. His current setting continues to prioritise structure, predictability, and low-demand communication to reduce anxiety. AIS remains involved in providing ongoing support and ensuring the provision remains responsive to his evolving needs.

APPENDIX 5

Case Study: Supporting a Refugee Pupil – English as an Additional Language (EAL)**Background**

Pupil R is currently a Primary 7 pupil attending a school in Dundee. He arrived in Scotland as a refugee with his family, and his first language is Arabic. Prior to arrival, he had received limited formal schooling. Upon starting school, he struggled to follow classroom routines, frequently appeared restless, and occasionally left the classroom or the building without permission. His behaviour was initially interpreted as challenging, and concerns were raised regarding the need for a more structured environment. Following a multi-agency meeting, a decision was made to allocate him an enhanced support place in an area with additional staffing.

Initial Concerns

- Communication barriers: Pupil R had very limited English on arrival, making it difficult for him to understand instructions or express his needs.
- Behavioural presentation: He was observed shouting out, wandering during lessons, attempting to leave the building, and showing signs of frustration.
- Emotional impact: As a refugee, he had experienced upheaval and uncertainty, which may have contributed to his behaviour.

Intervention by EAL Staff

The EAL team became directly involved and identified that Pupil R's difficulties were closely linked to his stage of English language acquisition rather than any inherent behavioural difficulty.

Key strategies included:

- Language support through focused small-group sessions to develop basic social and curriculum English
- Use of visual scaffolds such as picture timetables, flashcards, and dual-language resources to support comprehension
- Implementation of a buddy system to model classroom routines and provide language role models
- Staff training to help teachers and support staff differentiate tasks, reduce language load, and offer alternative ways for Pupil R to demonstrate understanding
- A wellbeing focus through regular check-ins to ensure he felt safe, valued, and included

Progress

Over the course of two terms, Pupil R's confidence grew significantly. He began using simple English to communicate with peers and staff, and his understanding of classroom instructions improved. As his language needs were better met, his frustration decreased, and he was able to engage more consistently in learning activities. Teachers noted that behaviours previously perceived as disruptive were actually attempts to participate without the necessary language.

Outcome

With the support of EAL staff, the classroom teacher, and support assistants, Pupil R made strong progress in acquiring English and adapting to school routines. His enhanced support place was no longer required, and he successfully reintegrated into his mainstream class on a full-time basis. By the end of Primary 6, he was working at expected levels in several curriculum areas and actively participating in group tasks and class discussions.

Key Learning Points

- Behavioural concerns in newly arrived bilingual pupils may often stem from language barriers and unfamiliarity with school expectations rather than underlying difficulties
- Early involvement of EAL specialists can prevent unnecessary referrals for behaviour or learning support
- Visual scaffolds, structured language development, and staff training are highly effective in supporting refugee pupils' inclusion

- A focus on wellbeing and belonging is central to enabling pupils to thrive academically and socially

APPENDIX 6

Case Study: Supporting children's communication and emotional regulation through SCERTS – Woodlea Children's Centre and Dundee Educational Psychology Service (DEPS)

Background

Woodlea Children's Centre is a large, free-standing nursery catering to children aged 2 to 5 years. Situated within the St John's/Harris cluster, the centre has long held a strong reputation in Dundee for supporting children with additional support needs (ASN). At the time of the project, the nursery had a roll of 119 children, with 68% residing within SIMD 1 and 2.

SCERTS is an assessment, planning, and intervention framework that draws on evidence from psychology, child development, speech and language therapy, and neuroscience. It provides a comprehensive structure for developing Social Communication (SC) and Emotional Regulation (ER) through attuned interaction, known as Transactional Supports (TS). The framework also supports the effective integration of other approaches, ensuring they are developmentally appropriate.

This project was led by the Nursery Teacher and the Link Educational Psychologist, with full support from the Head Teacher and the wider management team. Careful consideration was given to sustainability and future roll-out.

Rationale

- Dundee City Council ASN data indicates that the primary barriers to learning in the early years are language and communication, social interaction, and emotional regulation.
- This trend was evident in the target nursery, where profiling and referrals to the Dundee Educational Psychology Service (DEPS) highlighted a growing number of children whose main challenges were social communication and emotional regulation.
- Observations of the targeted children revealed that, although ABLe planning is well embedded within the nursery, there is no consistent approach to setting targets for these children. Furthermore, analysis of the plans and discussions with staff suggested that the emphasis of the plans is more on the support provided than on promoting children's developmental progress.
- Practitioners currently report difficulties in demonstrating measurable progress for these children.
- Visual supports are used to aid understanding; however, staff report that their use is often based on trial and error and lacks consistency. The team aimed to explore how visuals could be used more effectively to support communication.
- Educational Psychology (EP) reports for the Early Years panel that utilised the SCERTS framework were considered helpful.
- There is a strong research base supporting the importance of coaching in embedding new learning.

Description

- The Head Teacher and the link Educational Psychologist completed a three-day NAIT training programme focused on the SCERTS framework.
- The Nursery Teacher participated in training sessions delivered by the link Educational Psychologist to the wider Dundee Educational Psychology Service (DEPS) team.

- All nursery staff received an introduction to SCERTS through two sessions, each delivered twice to ensure full staff attendance. Medbridge videos were used to support discussion and highlight key messages. Staff engaged with the SCERTS initial assessment to identify a child's developmental stage and trialled the SCERTS observation tool. This process revealed a tendency to focus on developmental "gaps" rather than strengths, prompting further reflection on the nursery environment—for example, considering how to make group time more predictable.
- Six information and coaching sessions were delivered to staff supporting five target children. These sessions focused on the SCERTS process, use of assessment tools, and drafting individual SCERTS plans.
- Target staff shared their learning with the wider team during the February In-Service Day.
- Evaluation and planning for the next session were undertaken to inform future practice.

What happened during implementation?

Whole Staff Inputs

Training inputs delivered to all nursery staff were positively received. Key learning points included:

- A deeper understanding of how to support children who experience the world from an "objective-focused perspective." This led to reflection on previous practices, with some staff expressing discomfort upon considering past approaches such as physically moving children between areas of the nursery.
- A shift in thinking around observation practices. Several staff recognised a tendency to focus on developmental gaps rather than identifying and building on children's strengths and current developmental stages.

Targeted Staff Inputs

- While initial plans aimed to explore the three areas of the SCERTS framework—Social Communication (SC), Emotional Regulation (ER), and Transactional Support (TS)—staff found it challenging to separate these domains. Sessions were therefore more effectively structured around the SCERTS assessment and planning process.
- Time allocated for professional dialogue and coaching proved essential. Additional sessions were added to address queries and support the embedding of learning. Flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of the group were key to the success of this approach.
- The sessions highlighted the depth of staff knowledge about the children they support.
- Although some staff initially expressed insecurities about sharing their learning, all were able to do so with growing confidence. Their contributions were well received by the wider team. A preparatory session was added to support staff in presenting their learning.

Planned Outcomes

For All Staff:

All nursery staff are expected to develop a clear understanding of the following:

- The importance of children perceiving interactions with adults as enjoyable.
- Children's motivation to seek interaction both to meet their needs and for pleasure.
- The three stages of social communication—social, language, and conversational—and how to assess each stage.
- The value of a predictable environment and what this looks like in practice.
- How to use verbal supports that meet children at their current developmental level, including objects of reference, photographs, and symbols.
- The importance of extending communication beyond simple naming.

- Their role in supporting the five targeted children to develop social communication and emotional regulation.

For Targeted Key Staff:

For staff working directly with the five targeted children, the use of the SCERTS framework is expected to positively impact:

- Confidence in assessing Social Communication (SC) and Emotional Regulation (ER) for the targeted children.
- Confidence in setting measurable targets for SC and ER.
- Consistent use of attuned transactional supports across the nursery setting.
- Observable progress in SC and ER for the five targeted children.
- Confidence in sharing their learning about the SCERTS model and contributing to planning for the next cycle of implementation.

For Dundee Educational Psychology Service (DEPS):

Evaluation of this test of change will inform future service delivery and development.

Impact

NAIT assessments indicated improved ratings in Social Communication and Emotional Regulation for all five targeted children, with the most significant impact observed in social communication. These findings were triangulated through staff observations and feedback from parents during Team Around the Child (TATC) meetings. The consistent use of transactional supports by staff was also reflected in the assessment ratings.

Impact

NAIT assessments indicated improved ratings in SC and ER for all of the 5 target children with the biggest impact in social communication. This was triangulated through observations and feedback from parents at TATC meetings. The consistent use of transactional supports by staff was also demonstrated in the assessment ratings.

Feedback from the staff through questionnaires and focus group was also positive, with the majority of the wider staff:

- rating their confidence in key messages and use of the “bubble plan” as 4/5 on a 5-point rating scale
- reporting more confidence in the assessment process (a rating of 3 and above)
- indicating an interest in being part of the target group moving forward.

All members of the target group reported that they had enjoyed participating in the project. They expressed increased confidence in using the SCERTS framework and noted that their involvement had positively influenced their practice. Their evaluative comments highlighted several key themes:

- Staff engaged in significant reflection on their individual practice, particularly in relation to specific situations where they supported individual children.
- The project helped staff to focus more clearly on target strategies.
- It provided permission and space to take time for meaningful reflection on these targets.
- Staff were encouraged to question the rationale behind targets and to consider the ways in which they implement them.
- Reflections extended to broader practice, such as differentiating group activities, which led to positive outcomes—for example, children actively seeking interaction. This approach helped to break down barriers by building on children’s strengths and reducing uncertainty, making practice more predictable and positioning the practitioner as a key resource.

- The experience reinforced the importance of knowing the children well.
- Staff reported growing confidence in sharing their learning with the wider team.
- Many felt empowered and reassured in their thinking and practice, and valued the opportunity to seek advice from colleagues.
- Observations showed that children had made progress through focused targets, particularly in social communication—such as indicating needs, showing awareness of keyworkers and peers, and using language to bridge communication levels. Children also demonstrated increased interest and enjoyment in engaging with others.
- Staff recognised the importance of ensuring predictability when physically supporting a child, including explaining what will happen next to promote safety.
- There was thoughtful reflection on the language used by adults when supporting individual learners.

Staff Feedback and Reflections

Feedback gathered from staff through questionnaires and focus groups was overwhelmingly positive. The majority of the wider staff:

- Rated their confidence in understanding key messages and using the “bubble plan” as 4 out of 5 on a five-point scale.
- Reported increased confidence in the assessment process, with most ratings at 3 or above.
- Indicated interest in joining the target group in future cycles of the project.

All members of the target group also reported that they had enjoyed participating in the project. They expressed increased confidence in applying the SCERTS framework and noted that their involvement had positively influenced their professional practice. Their evaluative comments highlighted several key themes:

- Staff engaged in deep reflection on their individual practice, particularly in relation to specific situations involving support for individual children.
- The project helped staff to focus more clearly on implementing targeted strategies.
- It provided time and permission for meaningful reflection on developmental targets.
- Staff were encouraged to question the rationale behind targets and to consider the methods used to implement them.
- Reflections extended to broader aspects of practice, such as differentiating group activities, which led to positive outcomes—for example, children actively seeking interaction. This approach helped to break down barriers by building on children’s strengths and reducing uncertainty, making practice more predictable and positioning the practitioner as a key resource.
- The experience reinforced the importance of knowing each child well.
- Staff reported growing confidence in sharing their learning with the wider team.
- Many felt empowered and reassured in their thinking and practice, and valued the opportunity to seek advice and support from colleagues.
- Observations indicated that children had made progress through focused targets, particularly in social communication—such as indicating needs, showing awareness of keyworkers and peers, and using language to bridge communication levels. Children also demonstrated increased interest and enjoyment in engaging with others.
- Staff recognised the importance of ensuring predictability when physically supporting a child, including explaining what will happen next to promote safety.
- There was thoughtful reflection on the language used by adults when supporting individual learners.

Next Steps**In Woodlea Nursery:**

- **Group 1**, comprising the initial cohort of staff supporting children who remain in nursery, will continue to meet regularly. This group will adopt a coaching approach to support ongoing assessment, planning, and review.
- **Group 2**, made up of key workers for newly identified children and supported by members of the original group, will follow the revised programme of Career-Long Professional Learning (CLPL), as outlined in the “Do” session.
- Alternate whole-staff “Supporting Learners” meetings will include a SCERTS focus to promote shared responsibility in implementing individual plans.

Areas for Consideration:

- Strategies to better facilitate the use of SCERTS plans as dynamic, working documents informed by regular observation and evaluation.
- Opportunities for further involvement of parents in the planning and review process.
- Approaches to effectively support transition planning for children moving on from nursery.

For Dundee Educational Psychology Service (DEPS):

- The SCERTS approach will be rolled out to a target nursery in each cluster, as agreed with Education Officers and Speech and Language Therapy colleagues, as part of the DEPS Service Improvement Plan (SIP).
- Moving forward, SCERTS projects in target nurseries, including Woodlea, will be evaluated and recorded using a shared Assess–Plan–Do–Review (APDR) template. These evaluations will be collated to inform the overall DEPS SIP evaluation.
- Ongoing dialogue with Additional and Inclusive Support (AIS) colleagues will continue to ensure that receiving primary schools are equipped to support children on their SCERTS journey.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIS	Accessibility & Inclusion Service
BSL	British Sign Language
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
DEPS	Dundee Educational Psychology Service
ESOL	English for Speakers of other languages
EAL	English as an additional language
LSG	Longhaugh Support Group
PACE	Pupil Access to College and Employability
RISE	Raising Interpersonal Skills for Employment
SEBN	Social, Emotional and Behavioural needs
SCERTS	Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactional Support

GLOSSARY

Insight	Insight is an online tool for benchmarking the senior phase. It is a professional tool available to secondary schools and local authorities to allow them to look at specific cohorts of learners and identify areas of success and where improvements can be made. Although Insight provides data on the attainment of a wide range of Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) awards from a range of providers, not all SCQF achievement awards are included.
SEEMIS	A management information system, that is used by all authorities within Scotland. It is a secure site that holds all attainment, attendance and personal data of our young people.
Special Schools	These are specialist provisions to support the educational outcomes for pupils and young people.
SQA	Scottish Qualification Authority, an awarding body for National qualifications.
Strategic Equity Fund	Is provided by the Scottish Government to invest in approaches to achieving the mission of the Scottish attainment challenge; to use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, with a focus on tackling the poverty-related attainment gap.
Tarriff Points	The Tariff Scale is a key feature of the Insight online benchmarking tool. It allows a score to be calculated that summarises a wide range of achievement and awards from a range of providers. The tariff score is based on elements from the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), in particular SCQF Credit Points and levels, as well as elements related to a qualification's composition. The tariff scale allows comparisons to be made between cohorts, schools, local authorities, and their virtual comparators. The tariff points accrued by schools, local authorities and cohorts should not be viewed as the only way of measuring performance and should be considered in the context of the other outcome measures included in the tool, for example, breadth and depth, improving post-school participation and raising attainment in literacy and numeracy as well as other data sources.

ITEM No ...3.....

REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE– 27 OCTOBER 2025

REPORT ON: OUR PROMISE 2023-26 ANNUAL UPDATE

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

REPORT NO: 313-2025

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides the Children and Families Committee with the second annual update on the implementation of Our Promise to Care Experienced Children, Young People and Care Leavers 2023-26 (Appendix 1). The report covers the last 12 months and follows Elected Member approval of Our Promise on 23 October 2023 (report number 295-2023) and the first annual update approved on 28 October 2024 (report number 298-2024). The report also includes an update on Whole Family Wellbeing Funding (WFWF) activities (Appendix 2) and Whole Family Support opportunities.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that committee:
- a Note continued progress made in the implementation of Our Promise 2023-26 and improve outcomes for care experienced children, young people and care leavers.
 - b Request the Executive Director to present the next 3-year report covering the period 2026-29 in 6 months.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Children's Social Work Service is currently projecting a £750k overspend in 2025-26 related to staffing costs. Contingency measures include a review of the staffing structure regarding non-essential vacant posts and a review of a Third Sector commissioned service. The service also continues to work with partners to provide support which prevents children and young people from needing alternative care and shifts the balance towards family-based care. Gross expenditure on care provision for children and young people decreased by around £3.5m between 2022-23 and 2023-24, including £2.9m for residential based care.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 requires Local Authorities to develop a 'Corporate Parenting Plan' to outline how it will meet the needs of 'Looked After Children'. The Independent Care Review published in February 2020 was critical of this stigmatising language and promoted a stronger collective ambition to achieve transformational improvements in the way we describe and provide support to vulnerable families. There is an emphasis on ensuring families can remain together and when not possible children live in family-based care settings. The review outlined 5 foundations relating to Family, Care, People, Voice and Scaffolding.

5.0 DEVELOPMENTS

- 5.1 In response to the Independent Care Review, the Council developed Our Promise to mirror the 5 foundations. Out of the total of 29 initiatives outlined in the current plan, work has started on all of them, 19 have been completed and 10 are making good progress. As outlined in Appendix 2, the 16 initiatives allocated WFWF funding have also been active in building the capacity of 6 existing services to help maximise resources or delivering 10 new services to help address Council priorities. Some trends, benchmarking and further learning over the last 3 years now includes:

- **Number in care** - the total number of care experienced children and young people reduced from 374 in March 2023 to 335 in March 2024 and 309 in March 2025.

This 14% reduction compares with an overall national reduction of 6% and Social Work teams continue to support families on a voluntary basis where alternatives are not required.

Over the period, there has also been an increase in Compulsory Supervision Orders (CSO) at home from 52 to 83, when children previously in care continue to receive support.

- **Balance of care** - the balance of family based versus residential care has increased from 85.7% in March 2023 to 91% in June 2025.

This also compares favourably to a national average of 90%, although it remains behind an exemplar Local Authority where the balance is 95%.

As this depends upon other care options being available, the service will continue to prioritise building the capacity of internal Kinship Care, Foster Care and Houses.

- **Missing episodes from Children's Houses** - a marked reduction in 'missing episodes' from Children's Houses from 470 in 2020 to 185 in 2024 and a projected 140 in 2025.

Whilst a 'missing episode' is very broadly defined and includes instances of being late to arrive home in the evening, this is indicative of greater stability in the houses.

All instances of more than 12 hours are escalated and the service is now routinely collating data on episodes to pro-actively address themes as they emerge.

In 2025, 8 (6%) of the 140 episodes were for more than 12 hours and the service adapted support to the young people concerned.

- **School attendance** – the overall attendance rate for care experienced pupils is now 82.8%, higher than the LGBF Family Group average of 80.5%.

The average figure is adversely affected by the significantly lower attendance levels of children and young people subject to a CSO or in Kinship Care, which is a key priority.

- **Attainment** – the percentage of care experienced pupils achieving one or more awards at SCQF Level 4 or better has steadily increased from 73% in 2020-21 to 81% in 2024-25.

For the past four years the average achieving one or more awards at SCQF Level 5 or better has been 53% and they still lag their peers in educational attainment overall.

- 5.2 The key objectives of keeping vulnerable families together, supporting children and young people in family-based settings and improving outcomes are therefore being increasingly realised. However, as reported in last year's Annual Report, children and young people on CSOs at home or in Kinship Care continue to experience poorer outcomes; the recruitment of Foster Carers remains a challenge to sustain the drive towards family-based care; and educational outcomes need to continue to improve. These remain key priorities and further details on more recent and planned activity are outlined in this report.

6.0 PEOPLE

- 6.1 In relation to the workforce, the service is implementing a Social Work/School cluster model to promote consistent support to families. In response to the identified needs of some families during evenings and weekends, the WFWF funded Total Mobile project involves a review of the working hours of Children's Social Work teams. It has included full consultation with the workforce and Unions and will make recommendations in November 2025, with a test for change to focus on one or more of the Social Work/School clusters providing support to vulnerable families at home, in schools and in the community.

- 6.2 The 5 other WFWF projects intended to re-design the delivery of services and maximise support are the Dundee Voluntary Action (DVA) development of a Volunteer Strategy; the Dundee Independent Advocacy (DIAS) development of an Advocacy Strategy; the Advice Infrastructure Fast Online Referral Tracking (FORT) system; the Mental Health Foundation coordination of Together to Thrive; and the Council development of a multi-disciplinary hub for adolescents. Four of these projects will be finalised this year and Together to Thrive will be scaled to further enhance the capacity of teams to respond to neuro-developmental concerns.
- 6.3 To evaluate and help further improve Children's Social Work practice, audits of assessments, plans, chronologies and engagement continue to be carried out 3 times a year. When this programme started in May 2021, 58% were graded as Good or better overall. This rose to 93% in June 2023 and 94% in December 2023. In an audit carried out in May 2024 focused specifically on support to adolescents, 83% were graded as Good or better. In the most recent audit in June 2025 focused on children and young people on CSOs at home, 93% were rated as Good or better and the activity described in paragraph 9.1 will extend support to this group.
- 6.4 The Children's Social Work teams continue to operate with an average caseload of 12 families per Social Worker, which is below the indicative optimum of 15 suggested by the Setting the Bar Report published in May 2022. To reduce the burden of administrative tasks and enable teams to increase direct support to families, the service is extending Magic Notes which utilises AI to transcribe reports. In a pilot carried out in the Community Justice Service, the system reduced the time spent on administrative tasks by an average 7 hours a week per worker. The case file audits include a focus on supervision and indicate teams receive close support.
- 6.5 In both the Children and Families Service and Health and Social Care Partnership, teams also continue to operate a national Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW) scheme, which places restrictions on the number of families they work with during the first 12 months of their career and provides protected learning time to enhance professional development and retention. A new Supervision Framework which promotes a focus on support, development, accountability and mediation has been developed in consultation with teams and will be launched in November 2025.

7.0 FAMILY

- 7.1 The details in Appendix 2 provide an overview of progress with the other WFWF projects. As Scottish Government has extended funding to March 2027, the Council is currently exploring opportunities to coalesce the range of services into a Whole Family Support project and utilise remaining funding to further build capacity. Discussions with key partners are at an early stage but there is a shared commitment to learn from wider initiatives such as the Linlathen Pathfinder and develop a data-driven place-based focus on addressing child poverty, including with families in the 6 Child Poverty Priority Groups and families with children aged 0-5 years.
- 7.2 The Children and Families Service is also about to finalise a review of Third Sector commissioned services, which currently involves £2.3m annual funding to 14 organisations. They deliver a range of services, from supported accommodation to substance use, parenting, mediation, one parent families, advocacy and disability. The review is informed by the 10 principles of flexible family support outlined in the Independent Care Review and is designed to meet varying overlapping needs in more integrated, accessible and responsive ways, with a similar focus on the 6 Child Poverty priority groups and families with children aged 0-5 years.
- 7.3 In relation to Early Years, as infants aged 0-5 years remain disproportionately represented on the Child Protection Register or provided with alternative care and in recognition of the importance of the first 1,000 days of a child's life, the service has continued to provide or coordinate a range of support to vulnerable families. Currently, 26% of care experienced children are aged 0-5 years compared with a national average of 17%. The New Beginnings Team is being supported by NHS Tayside Lead Clinicians for Infant Mental Health to implement the Infant Pledge and help encourage positive attachment between parent and baby.
- 7.4 This continues to strengthen the support provided by the New Beginnings Team and will be scaled to other Social Work teams supporting parents or carers with babies and infants. Over the

last 12 months, 70% of referred babies were able to remain either at home in the care of their parent or with a Kinship Carer. The 2 WFWF initiatives focused on early years, delivered by Alternatives Counselling and Tayside Council on Alcohol, have similarly provided support to other vulnerable women with emotional health concerns and/or who have previously experienced children removed from their care.

8.0 VOICE

- 8.1 For younger children, the New Beginnings Team has also been trained in using a Mental Health Observational Indicator Set to make observations of children with their main care giver and inform support. To help drive measurable improvements, the service has started to gather data on the proportion of 0-5's who either attend or, more frequently, have their views represented at key decision-making meetings in their absence. The first audit completed in June 2025 established a 50% baseline for this age group compared with 65% overall and this informs an action plan, which includes the development of resources to enable their views to be heard.
- 8.2 For older children, Mind of My Own (MOMO) forms one of several ways of obtaining children and young people's views to inform support. It provides an alternative option to 1:1 methods and Champions Boards have commented positively this year on its use. Where they need additional support to be heard, a Who Cares? advocacy service engaged with 83 children and young people. It retains a strong presence in all Children's Houses and advocated for 31 young people in external Foster Care and residential care. The audit of views provided at key meetings showed that 81% of children over 6 years attended or had their views represented.
- 8.3 The WFWF also contributes towards the delivery and evaluation of What Matters to You, which the Council continues to coordinate with the Hunter Foundation, BBC Children in Need and local communities. Increasingly, the approach involves the use of Cafe Conversations to pro-actively listen and respond to the needs of local communities, including how they might lead or contribute towards developments. Communities play a central role in the allocation of a Make it Happen Fund to enhance support. A full report on the initiative and next steps will be provided to the Children and Families Committee on 1 December 2025.

9.0 CARE

- 9.1 A similar range of developments continue to strengthen support to children, young people and care leavers in different care settings. In response to the lower school attendance and attainment levels of children and young people on CSOs at home or in Kinship Care, the range of existing supports are being extended and systems tightened. In addition to welfare rights assessments, a Place2B online parenting programme, school holiday activity camps, targeted leisure and sports activities, engagement with What Matters to You and trauma informed support from 2 Clinical Psychologists:
 - Education and Social Work leads are ensuring that all pupils on CSOs or in Kinship Care have a Coordinated Support Plan, including support from Pupil Support Workers
 - Mentoring providers in MCR Pathways, Volunteering Matters and Tayside Council on Alcohol will work as a collaborative to target available capacity at this cohort
 - The WFWF funded Total Mobile flexible working project will involve targeted out-of-hours and weekend engagement at home and in the community to this cohort as a priority
- 9.2 In relation to Foster Carers, key developments over the last 12 months include a Care Inspectorate inspection of the Fostering, Adoption and Continuing Care Service published in January 2025. In 2 out of 3 inspection categories, the Fostering and Continuing Care Teams improved from Adequate to Very Good and the Adoption Team improved from Adequate to Good. In the other category, they all improved from Weak to Adequate. In respect of the latter, the key cross-cutting area for improvement related to the oversight of panel functioning and membership. This related to a recruitment challenge and was addressed by March 2025.
- 9.3 However, both nationally and locally Children's Social Work services and Third Sector providers continue to experience challenges in the recruitment of new Foster Carers. The response to recruitment campaigns has been limited and the number of internal Foster Carers has gradually

declined from 109 in 2022 to 95 in 2023, 83 in 2024 and 74 in 2025. Similarly, external Foster Carers recruited by Third Sector organisations and commissioned by the service have also declined over the same period from 95 to 75. It reduces opportunities to support children and young people in family-based settings and remains a key priority.

- 9.4 As outlined in the report to the Scrutiny Committee on 25 June 2025 (report number 205-2025), in the last 12 months the Care Inspectorate also carried out annual inspections of 3 Children's Houses. The inspections focused on 2 Quality Indicators of children and young people being safe, feeling loved and getting the most out of life; and leaders and staff having the capacity and resources to meet and champion their needs. In both categories, Forrester House improved from Good to Very Good; Gillburn Cottage maintained a grading of Good; and The Junction declined from Very Good to Adequate. The grade at The Junction mirrored very specific circumstances and all requirements and areas for improvement have been addressed.

10.0 SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

- 10.1 This report describes how Our Promise continues to have a positive impact in supporting vulnerable families. The number of children and young people in care have continued to reduce; the balance of family-based care has increased; foundational Social Work practice is improving; children, young people, parents/carers and communities are increasingly listened to; Care Inspectorate inspections of regulated services are getting better overall; missing episodes from Children's Houses are reducing; costs are reducing; and WFWF initiatives are either contributing towards enhanced support or show promise.
- 10.2 However, there still remains a disproportionate number of babies and infants subject to formal Child Protection processes and ultimately in care; children and young people on CSOs at home and in Kinship Care are less likely to progress well at school; there are significant challenges in the recruitment of Foster Carers; and the care experienced population still lags their peers in educational attainment by some margin. These concerns are informing Council and partnership priorities, including the development of a data-driven place-based Whole Family Support initiative. In relation to the 10 actions not yet completed but making good progress:
- ✓ **Review of Advocacy Services** – WFWF funding has been allocated to a DIAS led collaborative and new Advocacy Strategy and Delivery Plan will be finalised in late 2025
 - ✓ **Scale What Matters to You** – Cafe Conversations and a Make it Happen Fund are operating in 3 localities and will be scaled to the other 5 over the next 12 months
 - ✓ **Edge of care offer** – the review of commissioned services in the context of Whole Family Support priority groups including early years is due to make proposals in November 2025
 - ✓ **Review of working arrangements to provide support in times of need** – WFWF funding was allocated to Total Mobile and proposals will be presented in November 2025
 - ✓ **Contextual Safeguarding** – delayed due to other priorities but will be progressed using co-located multi-disciplinary services at Crichton Street as a platform from March 2026
 - ✓ **Secure Care self-evaluation** – key provisions of the Care and Justice (Scotland) Act 2024 have been implemented, and a multi-agency group will evaluate practice in March 2026
 - ✓ **Implement Getting it Right for Every Child Practice Profile** – guidance has been developed, Team Around the Child data gathered and qualitative evaluation in March 2026
 - ✓ **Revise Children's Social Work procedures to be compatible with Our Promise** – several procedures have been updated and 12-month rolling schedule was finalised in October 2025
 - ✓ **Explore and apply models of best practice in family support** – review of commissioned services informed by principles of Flexible Family Support in the Independent Care Review
 - ✓ **Develop and implement Foster Carer support strategy** – Care Inspectorate inspection showed marked improvements and recruitment/retention remains a key priority

11.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The content of this report was previously considered in report (93-2021) and remains valid. The original report was not subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. An appropriate senior manager has checked and agreed with this assessment. For follow-ups relating to initial reports agreed prior to 22/8/22 a copy of the Integrated Impact Assessment is available (where applicable) on the Council's website at www.dundee.gov.uk/iia

12.0 CONSULTATIONS

12.1 The Council Leadership Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are in agreement with its content.

13.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

13.1 None.

Audrey May
Executive Director

Glyn Lloyd
Head of Children's and Community Justice Services
Chief Social Work Officer

September 2025

APPENDIX 1

Our Promise to Care Experienced Children, Young People and Families 2023-26 Action Plan				
Foundation	Actions	Leads	Measuring Impact	Timescales
Voice	Implement Infant Pledge for babies and toddlers in care - 'Hello in There Wee One' has been developed jointly with NHS Tayside and Dundee University. It is being implemented in the New Beginnings Team to strengthen mother/baby attachments.	Service Manager	Audit of practice in test sites	¼ audits
	Coordinate Champions Boards – now operate in all Secondary Schools and are attended by the Chief Executive, Executive Director and Heads of Service. They have included support to attend and feedback on Columba 1400 and use Mind of My Own.	Education Officer	Survey Champions Boards	¼ meetings
	Review advocacy to improve access and impact – WFWF funding was allocated to a DIAS led collaborative to develop an Advocacy Strategy and Delivery Plan by late 2025. In the interim, the service continues to commission Who Cares? Scotland.	Service Manager	% offered and accessing	March 2024
	Last year, Who Cares? advocated for 83 children and young people, including 31 living outside the city. Typically, this occurs at key decision-making meetings, where audits show that 50% of under 6's and 81% of older 6's had their voices heard.			
	This has informed the development of an action plan to widen the range of resources available to teams to enable them to ensure that children and young people's voices are heard in meetings. The wider review of advocacy is designed to enhance capacity.			
	Implement findings of survey on brother/sister care – a Staying Connected Procedure has been implemented; teams have received training; and data monitoring has been enhanced. Overall, 47.2% of children live with at least one sibling and this varies as follows: - At home with parents – 80% - Kinship Care – 55% - Foster Care – 31.3% - Children's Houses – 11%	Service Manager	Implementation of plan	March 2025

	External residential care – 0% This is a key reason why the service prioritises local family-based care, where children are more likely to live with or near their brothers/sisters. It also reinforces the importance of building local Foster Care capacity so they can be together or remain close. Some children and young people with more complex needs are cared for in care external residential settings, where it is not appropriate and/or possible for their brother or sister to stay. In these circumstances, regular contact is supported It should also be noted that ‘having a sibling’ includes half-siblings living with the other birth parent and adult brothers and sisters, where it is often not appropriate and/or possible for a care experienced child to stay. Implement and scale What Matters to You in locality areas – Cafe Conversations and a Make it Happen Fund are now operating in some locality areas, with plans in place to scale the approach via Local Community Planning Partnerships over the next 12 months. Include a focus on voice in audits of practice – audits provide data on children and young people attending or being represented at decision-making meetings. The initial audit showed that 65.5% overall had their voices heard and has informed an action plan.	Head of Service	Formal evaluation	March 2026
		Service Manager	% where voice informed plans	¼ audits
Family	Coordinate targeted deployment of Whole Family Wellbeing Funding – all WFWF funding was allocated by November 2023 and the Children’s Services Planning Partnership is exploring options for the SG extension and increase of funds to March 2027.	Head of Service	Develop specific measures	Nov 2023
	Develop a clear edge of care offer to all families – this relates to a review of commissioned services and an options appraisal was delayed due to competing priorities but is now to be finalised and make proposals in November 2025.	Senior Manager	Numbers in care	June 2024
	Review working arrangements to provide support at time of need – WFWF funding was allocated to Total Mobile in early 2024 and they will make final proposals for additional evening/weekend working to the Senior Leadership Team in November 2025.	Senior Manager	Family stability/disruption	June 2024

	Conduct Welfare Rights assessments with all families at risk – families with Kinship Care arrangements all receive a Welfare Rights assessment. Others not in formal Kinship Care have also and will continue to receive support to help maximise income.	Practice Manager	Income maximisation	June 2024
	Implement Contextual Safeguarding for adolescents at risk – this has been delayed pending the developments with the co-located multi-disciplinary team at Crichton Street due to be launched in February 2026.	Senior Manager	Audits of Child's Plans	March 2024
	Explore and apply models of best practice in family support – this relates to the review of commissioned services and options appraisal which has been delayed due to other priorities but will be finalised in November 2025.	Senior Manager	Measures to be developed	March 2025
Care	Develop and implement brothers/sisters practice guidance – Staying Together procedures have been developed and implemented across teams, which continue to navigate complexities in sibling relationships and care arrangements.	Senior Manager	Measures inform by survey	June 2025
	Implement therapeutic and other supports to Kinship Carers – Corra funded Clinical Psychologists provide routine trauma informed advice and support to both Kinship Care Team and Kinship Carers. Funding sustained to March 2027	Service Manager	Numbers in Kinship Care	June 2025
	Target school attendance support to pupils in Kinship Care – after additional supports were provided, they are now being further extended and systems tightened to more effectively address the needs of this cohort of young people in secondary schools	Education Officer	Educational outcomes	March 2024
	Develop and implement new Foster Carer support strategy – a strategy has been developed and implemented. A Care Inspectorate inspection showed substantial improvement from Weak/Adequate to mostly Good/Very Good. There are still recruitment challenges	Service Manager	Recruitment and satisfaction	Nov 2023
	Complete secure care self-evaluation and implement improvements – key provisions of Care and Justice (Scotland) Act 2024 implemented and a multi-agency group will evaluate practice before, during and after Secure Care in March 2025-26.	Senior Manager	Compliance with standards	June 2024
		Senior Manager	Compliance with standards	June 2024

	Develop and implement new Continuing Care practice guidance – developed and implemented so the Aftercare Team now receives advance notification and transfer of young people aged 16 years, then continues to offer support up to age 26 years. Review Aftercare support to care leavers aged up to 26 years – reviewed and 98% of care leavers eligible for compulsory support receive support from the Aftercare Team, including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). Enhance supportive post-care housing support - new provision has been developed at Reid Square and Fairbairn Street. A Third Sector commissioned service is being reviewed by November 2025. Policy of no 16–17-year-olds in adult homeless accommodation Implement Youth Participation action plan – being implemented with Youth Participation Group including additional capacity from WFWF, pro-active identification and support to STARS in secondary school and extension of mentoring support	Senior Manager	% supported and outcomes	June 2024
		Senior Manager	Homelessness	June 2024
		Senior Manager	Positive destinations	June 2024
People	Implement risk assessment and defensible decision-making training – training modules developed with Educational Psychology with initial focus on Children's Homes and now delivered to all front-line Social Work teams Implement Welfare Rights training – Welfare Rights senior manager is a member of Our Promise Partnership; routine assessments are carried out for Kinship Carers; and advice/guidance available for other families Implement an annual foster carer training plan – developed and implemented and now also extends to Kinship and Foster Panels to promote consistency of approach. Attendance and satisfaction data for both carers and panels is being gathered by February 2026 Ensure high quality Child's Plans for all care experienced children – audits show marked improvements in the % of Children's Social Work assessments, chronologies and plans graded as Good or better Scale parenting programme training across teams – Place2B is used by the Kinship Team and the review of commissioned services	Service Manager	Audits of practice	¼ audits
		Service Manager	Audits of practice	¼ audits
		Service Manager	Attendance and satisfaction	Annual
		Service Manager	Audits of practice	¼ audits
		Service Manager	Audits of practice	¼ audits

	will include a focus on parenting as part of a general whole family approach			
Scaffolding	Fully implement GIRFEC Practice Profile in all sites – guidance has been developed for all sites and data is gathered on Team Around the Child Meetings. Audit of quality to take place in late 2025-26. Implement new Social Work Practice Standards – implemented across teams and support is being provided to prioritise support in accordance with assessed levels of risk and need, including children on the Child Protection Register Revise all Social Work procedures to be Our Promise compatible – some procedures have been reviewed and an update report outlining next steps was approved by the management team in October 2025	Education Officer	Audits of practice	Bi-annual audits
		Senior Manager	Audits of practice	January 2024
		Service Manager	Audits and staff survey	March 2024

APPENDIX 2

Appendix 2 Whole Family Wellbeing Fund			
Organisation	Funding	Description of service provided	Service Delivery Update
Alternatives	Yr1 - 20,110 Yr2 - £34,159 Yr3 - £34,267 <u>£89k</u>	Early intervention support to expectant or new parents with emotional health and wellbeing concerns, including group therapy. <u>Reflects the Early Years priority</u>	2024 – 2025 - Referral redirected to Adult Psychological Services: 1 - Women engaged in counselling: 13 - Total perinatal sessions delivered: 177 - Sessions for miscarriage/termination support: 52 - Assessment/pregnancy choice sessions: 55
Tayside Council on Alcohol	Yr1 - £148k Yr2 - £249k Yr3 - £263k <u>£662k</u>	For The Birch Programme providing support to women who have had children removed from their care, remain vulnerable and are at risk of further pregnancy. <u>Reflects the Early Years priority</u>	2024-25 - Referrals - 34 - Group Sessions: 66 1:1 Appointments Offered: 908 (attended 651) - Peer Support Appointments: 63 (attended 55)
Mental Health Foundation – Together to Thrive	Yr1 – £0 Yr2 – £157k Yr3 – £157k <u>£314k</u>	For Together to Thrive, a model which enhances the skills of teams providing support to parents of primary aged children with neuro-developmental concerns. <u>Reflects the Mental Health priority</u>	2024-25 - Referrals - 168 - Accepted – 132; not accepted 22; waiting allocation 14 1:1 support: 92 children/families - Group support: 40 children/families - Training cohorts: 6 - Practitioners trained: 88 - Coaching sessions: 100
Read Dundee	Yr1 – £44k Yr2 – £45k Yr3 – £46k <u>£135k</u>	For Talk and Play Together, a service which supports whole families to improve literacy skills whilst enhancing relationships and addressing barriers to learning. <u>Reflects the Inequalities priority</u>	2024-25 - Total Sessions: 30 - Total Families: 63 - Total Children: 71 - Books and Resource Packs Gifted During Delivery: 775
The Yard (1)	Yr1 – £22k Yr2 – £54k Yr3 – £57k <u>£133k</u>	For Family Support and Summer Play activities for families with children and young people with a disability, including play sessions for 5 days a week. <u>Reflects the Child Poverty priority</u>	2024 – 2025 - Number of school holiday sessions run - 20 - Number of weekend play sessions run - 50 - Number of children/young people supported- 213

			Number of families supported - 100
The Yard (2)	Yr1 – £8k Yr2 – £41k Yr3 – £50k <u>£98k</u>	For additional support provided to pupils with ASN transitioning from Primary to Secondary school. <u>Reflects the Inequalities priority</u>	2024 – 2025 - Number of transitions sessions run - 17 - Number of school pupils attending sessions - 63 - Number of schools worked with - 10 - Number of families taking up wider support - 2
Advocacy (DIAS)*	Yr1 – £29k Yr2 – £99k Yr3 – £92k <u>£219,227</u>	For the coordination and maximisation of multiple advocacy services across the city. <u>Reflects the Inequalities priority</u>	Additional partnership working with Reach Advocacy to assist with the completion of the strategy document, with Action Plan now complete and due to be submitted to Strategic Leadership Group for approval in early 2026.
Dundee Bairns	Yr1 – £48k Yr2 – £93k Yr3 – £98k <u>£238,201</u>	For a capacity building approach towards child healthy weight, involving volunteer coaching in budgeting and nutrition and an expansion of tea clubs. <u>Reflects the Child Poverty priority</u>	Tea clubs run in 23 schools and serving approx. 750 meals per week. The Healthy Eating Coordinator worked in 19 schools and engaged with 154 pupils with an average feedback score of 4.38 out of 5 for delivery and quality of food.
DVVA *	Yr1 – £35k Yr2 – £73k Yr3 – £77k <u>£186k</u>	For the coordination and maximisation of multiple volunteer services across the city, with a view to consistent volunteer development, pathways and targeting. <u>Reflects the Inequalities priority</u>	Partnership working and research to gain clearer understanding of volunteering challenges, which has led to the design and introduction of the Volunteer Passport. Launch of the passport scheduled for late 2025.
Advice Infrastructure FORT *	Yr1 – £0 Yr2 – £54k Yr3 – £54k <u>£108,000</u>	Reinstate the Fast Online Referral Tracking (FORT) triage function for a coordinated partnership system and to accelerate access to services. <u>Reflects all priorities</u>	2024 – 2025 123 whole family referrals 191 referrals to wider support services
Dundee REP	Yr1 – £0 Yr2 – £77k Yr3 – £80k <u>£157k</u>	A Creative Family Wellbeing Service that offers 1:1 and group dramatherapy sessions and psychoeducational support. <u>Reflects the Child Poverty priority</u>	September 2024 – March 2025 24 referrals from various sources 8 clinical sessions being held weekly supporting 13 clients - Waiting list of 11 referrals (21 clients)
Total Mobile*	Yr1 – £0 Yr2 – £85k Yr3 – £0 <u>£85k</u>	Commissioned Consultancy Service to explore options to extend Children's Social Work out-of-hours support. <u>Reflects all priorities</u>	Consultation and proposals will be completed in November 2025.
What Matters To You*	Yr1 – £44k Yr2 – £0 Yr3 – £0 <u>£44k</u>	Data collation, analysis and learning in 2 pilot sites, feeding into both LCPPs. <u>Reflects the Child Poverty priority</u>	1 year allocation to support evaluation of WM2U.
DCC Holiday Programme Partnership	Yr1 – £31k Yr2 – £123k Yr3 – £127k <u>£281,661</u>	School holiday, including Summer Play, activity for priority children, young people and families, including low income, disabilities and in kinship care. <u>Reflects the Child Poverty priority</u>	April, Summer & October 2024 holidays 7,720 pupils attended - Schools reporting increase in attendance of children - Reduction in crisis intervention

DCC Discover Work	Yr1 – £0 Yr2 – £101k Yr3 – £105k <u>£205k</u>	Implementation and delivery of the Improvement Framework for Positive Destinations. <u>Reflects the Child Poverty priority</u>	From Aug 2025 all schools will have a Positive Destinations Core Implementation Group operating in accordance with the framework.
DCC Social Work Crichton Street Hub*	Yr1 – £260k Yr2 – £91k Yr3 – £91k <u>£442,000</u>	Renovation costs for the co-location of a multi-disciplinary team at Crichton Street. <u>Reflects all priorities</u>	Building work to renovate the property will begin in October 2025, with scheduled completion and opening in February 2026.