



THE EDINBURGH PARTNERSHIP

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES PLAN

2026-29



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# 1 Introduction

Welcome to the Children’s Services Plan 2026-2029 for the City of Edinburgh. This plan sets out our shared vision, ambitions and commitments to making a meaningful difference in improving the lives of Edinburgh’s children, young people and their families.

This plan takes account of the achievements and progress made over the last 3 years under the [Edinburgh Children’s Services Plan 2023-2026](#), a summary of which is available in the [Edinburgh Children’s Partnership Annual Report 2025-2026](#). It is intended to build on that progress and identify new and emerging priorities through consultation.

The Edinburgh Children’s Partnership (the Partnership/ECP) is the statutory partnership, as outlined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, which sets out how services are provided locally. This requires councils and NHS Health Boards, along with other key partner agencies, to work together to plan, provide and deliver services for children and their families.

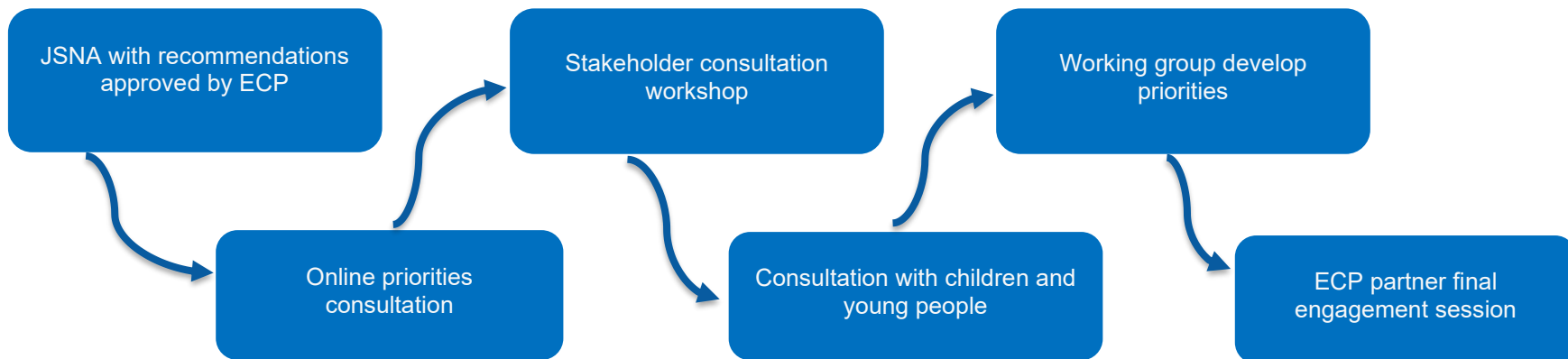


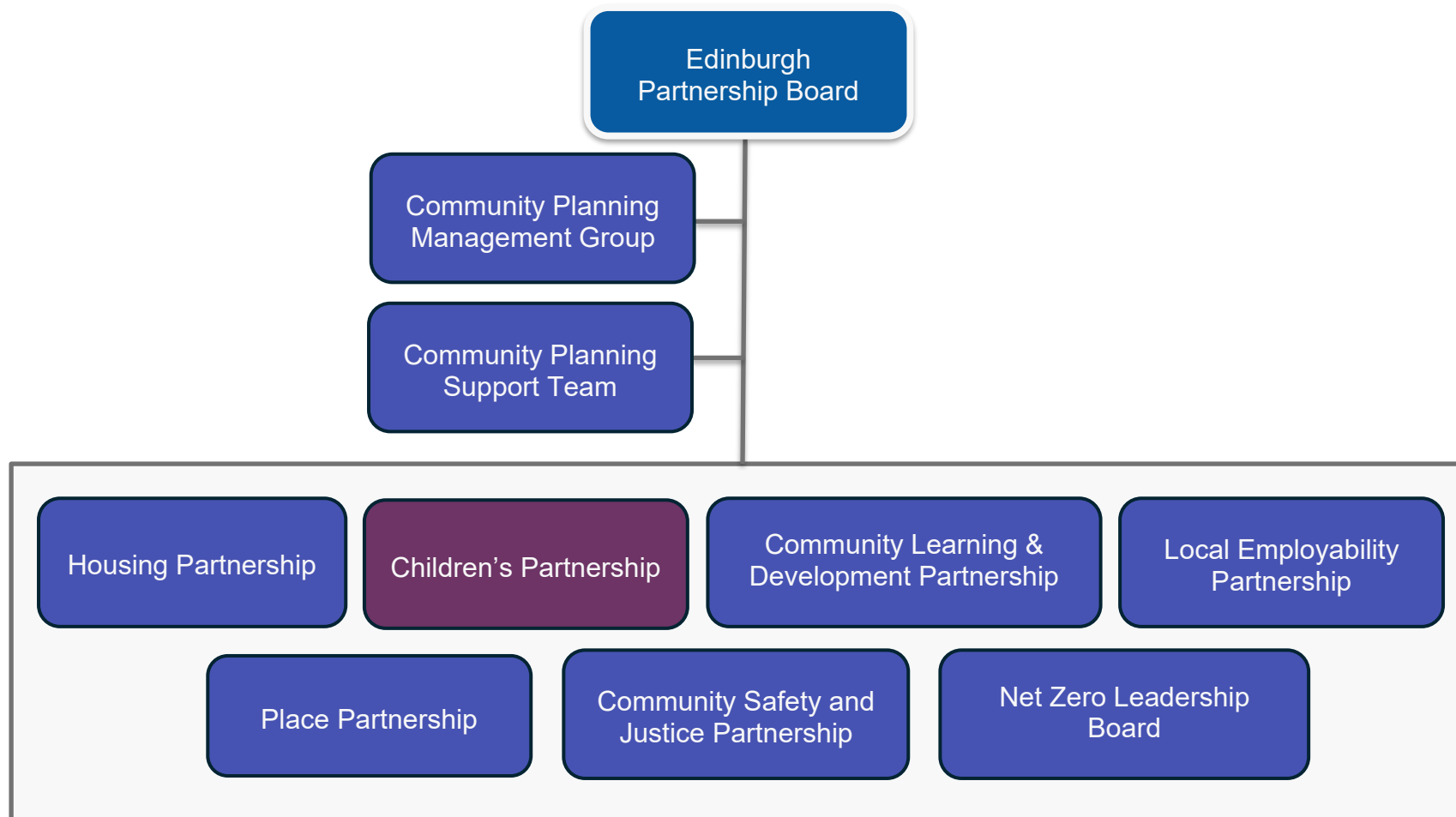
Figure 1 - Plan development process

Our partnership organisations represent local government, health, social care, education, government organisations and third sector community and voluntary organisations. Edinburgh Children's Partnership reports into the Edinburgh Partnership Board and directs the strategic planning, development and delivery of children and young people's services on behalf of the Edinburgh Partnership to ensure all of the different people who work with our babies, children and young people do so in a joined-up way.



This Plan has been developed in collaboration with public sector bodies and third sector organisations and is informed by both the voice and testimony of children, young people and families and the needs of our communities as detailed through our [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Children and Young People in Edinburgh \(2025\)](#). This Plan articulates how partners work together to provide services which are organised, equipped to deliver high-quality, joined-up, trauma-informed, whole family support to children and families.

### Community Planning Structure



## 2 Consultation with Children and Young People

As part of the development of this plan, it was essential to consult with professionals and organisations that work with children, young people and families as well as capture the voice of children and young people (CYP) themselves. One way we did this was through an online consultation with professionals. This was developed from reports which held significant levels of data, research and the voice of children and young people.

We also held specific engagement groups with children and young people across the city. The groups were supported by trusted adults who created safe and enabled spaces for the voices of children and young people to be heard. The consultation themes were adapted into accessible language, delivering these through the most appropriate setting / tool for the collection of the children and young people's expressions.

In total, ten groups of children and young people representing a diverse range of backgrounds, ethnicities, identities and ages from 0-25 years were approached. They were engaged in structured small group discussions, offering the opportunity to reflect on their lived experiences and share their knowledge. To support 'hearing' the voice of infants, skilled practitioners worked alongside parents to capture the needs of our youngest citizens.

Whilst findings from this consultation have strengthened and enhanced the priorities and actions within the plan, it emerged that themes relating to children and young people who identify as LGBT+ did not come through in consultation and may have been missing or 'unheard' from this process. Furthermore, whilst demographic data for Edinburgh is available from Scotland's Census 2022 and this data can be broken down by some equality characteristics such as race, religion, sex and disability, data is not available for sexual orientation or gender reassignment for under 16s.

In order to address this gap, national research such as that published by LGBT Youth Scotland will be used as part of our Equality and Children's Rights Impact Assessment and the voice of children and young people in Edinburgh who identify as LGBT+ will be explored further within the Children's Rights Plan 2026-2029.

Common themes:

- **Safe spaces, in community settings and within schools:** Identifying the need for spaces which felt sensory aware, there was a clear call from the children and young people who took part in the consultation for time and space for peer interaction in safe places.
- **Opportunity for play and experiences across the age ranges:** For babies and infants, this included play, which was low-cost and supported development. For school-aged and older children, this was about clubs, arts, leisure and new experiences as well as access to spaces and physical exercise. They asked for more opportunities to be outdoors, both for enjoyment and to have breathing space.
- **Family support:** Recognising that families (parents/carers) are often juggling demands of

work, money and supporting their child / young person with mental health or social needs.

- **Importance of trusted adults:** Described as adults who 'know you', take issues seriously, who both ask and listen and when needed can bridge communication with parents or other services.
- **Informed and involved:** Children and young people asked that services and support be advertised both as posters around schools and youth clubs, as well as on the online platforms they use. Information and understanding for parents were raised in relation to mental health and wellbeing. Specifically, being informed about how to access services and clear expectations around waiting lists and what can be provided.

Three 'big issues' emerged which had not been identified within the professional stakeholder consultation:

- **Social media and smartphones:** Children and young people repeatedly commented that social media and smart phones are a challenge. Links were made with poor mental health and wellbeing, the feeling that children and young people are not fully equipped to navigate digital life was expressed and that a level of support/control around the digital environment would be welcomed.
- **Misogyny:** Descriptions of misogyny, labelled 'sexism', emerged. There was a sharing of early experiences of feeling uncomfortable with some of the behaviour from peers and a call for more respect and education on this subject.
- **Racism:** Young people discussed the impact of experiencing and witnessing incidents of racist bullying, with a call for clearer guidance on what to do if they experience or see racist bullying, alongside more education for young people about racism to prevent and support in the future.

**These priorities are included within the plan, sitting within the actions for subgroups to explore further and take action.**

The Children's Partnership has also been working on developing approaches to furthering children's rights, including the right to have their voices heard, in all work undertaken.

Learning from the consultation process will be taken forward within the plan. We are committed to continuing to build on children's rights and participation in the new plan.



### 3 What the data tells us about children and young people in Edinburgh

This Children's Services Plan is informed by a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), completed in 2025. The JSNA brings together data and evidence as well as views and perceptions, to build a shared understanding of the needs of children, young people and families across Edinburgh. It provides the evidence base for this plan and helps ensure that priorities are shaped by what the data tells us about children's lives across the city. For access to more information, a link to the full report is provided: [JSNA Edinburgh CYP](#).

Edinburgh is home to a culturally diverse population of 514,543 people, including 57,376 children and young people aged 0–17 and is, on average, a less deprived area than Scotland as a whole.

Almost a third of households (30.9%) live in areas of the city that are considered the least deprived areas in Scotland, while only 4% live in areas of the city that are in the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland. However, these overall figures can hide real differences across the city.

*Around 11% of people across Lothian, just over 100,000 residents, live in neighborhoods that are among the 20% most deprived in Scotland, and most of these communities are in Edinburgh.*

Levels of deprivation vary widely between different parts of the city. Northeast Edinburgh has the highest proportion of people living in the most deprived areas, while more than half of residents in the Northwest and Southeast live in the least deprived areas nationally. Neighbourhoods such as Craigmillar, Niddrie, Liberton, Gilmerton, Westerhailes, Pilton and Granton experience the greatest levels of deprivation. In these communities, families with children make up a much larger share of households (43.8%) than elsewhere, illustrating how children and families are more likely to be affected by poverty.

While Edinburgh does better than the national average on some maternal and infant health measures, inequalities remain.

Around 7% of pregnant women are recorded as smokers at their first appointment, compared to 11% nationally, however rates vary significantly across the

city with rates as high as 36.4% in some areas. Breastfeeding rates are relatively high, with 84.9% of babies ever breastfed, but fewer than four in ten are exclusively breastfed at 6–8 weeks and drop-off rates are higher in more deprived areas. In schools, the proportion of pupils with additional support needs has risen from 25.7% in 2017 to 45.9% in 2023.

*Less than half of pregnant women are a healthy weight at booking and around one in five are classified as obese, which can affect both maternal and child health.*

Poverty continues to have a major impact on children's lives. Around one in five children in Edinburgh are living in poverty, affecting their health, wellbeing, learning and future opportunities. Housing insecurity is a particular concern; in September 2025, nearly 5,000 households in the city were [living](#) in temporary accommodation, including over 3600 children and young people.

During 2024/25, 96 young people aged 16 and 17 [presented](#) as homeless, highlighting the risks faced by young people during key stages of transition.

Overall, the data shows that while many children and young people in Edinburgh are doing well, too many continue to face disadvantages. These findings reinforce the importance of partners working together to focus on prevention and early support, so that inequalities are reduced and all children and young people have the best possible start in life.

*At the 27–30-month child health review, children living in the most deprived communities are around 10% more likely to show developmental concerns than those in the least deprived areas, and this gap has changed little in recent years.*

57, 376 children under 18 years of age live in Edinburgh

4,463 births in 2024

6.3% of children were born at low birth weight in 2024/25

Registration of eligible 3- and 4-year-olds with the free early learning and childcare scheme dropped to 96% Sept 2025

27% (41,890) aged 0-24 have a disability or long-term physical or mental health condition

21% (18,000) of children in poverty

30,058 primary school attendees

23,150 secondary school attendees

686 special school attendees

Young Carers:  
897 aged 3-15  
2,940 aged 16-24

Primary, secondary and special school pupil ethnicity:

32,306 White British

7,060 White other

14,018 Minority ethnic group

Children who speak a language other than English as their main language:

5,621 aged 3-15

11,847 aged 16-24

45.9% of school children with additional support needs\* in 2023

\*see JSNA for definition of additional support needs

The rate of looked after (care-experienced) children in Edinburgh is 10.2 per 1,000 0-17 population and 1.4 per 1,000 children aged 0-15 are on the child protection register

## 4 Performance Indicators

In October 2023, the Edinburgh Children's Partnership agreed on 10 outcome indicators to track our progress over time. These indicators were chosen to represent things the Partnership aimed to achieve as part of its collective vision and because they are both available nationally and regularly updated to ensure we can make comparisons with other local authorities and over time. Some serve as proxy indicators where direct measures are not available or not routinely collected. For example, there is not currently a suitable indicator for mental wellbeing, however evidence suggests children and young people with poorer mental wellbeing are more likely to miss school, therefore the Partnership includes Secondary School Attendance as one method of tracking how well services are meeting the mental wellbeing needs of Edinburgh's children and young people.

All 10 indicators provide valuable insights into the overall, long-term health and wellbeing of the population of children and young people, allowing the Partnership to track the impact of its work and make policy decisions.

However, these 10 indicators tell us about population-level outcomes, rather than the health and wellbeing of specific groups or individuals, nor do they take into account the lived experience of children, young people and families accessing services.

Therefore, the sub-groups of the Partnership will also use other indicators and forms of data to track the impact of specific programmes of work, including process, output and outcome indicators, considering equity of impacts wherever data availability allows.

**Child Poverty**

Percentage of children living in households with below 60% median income in the local area, after housing costs

**P1 Healthy Weight**

% of P1 children whose BMI is between 5-95% of reference range for their age and sex

**Looked After Children**

The rate of children per 1000 who are looked after by the local authority

**P1 Literacy**

% P1 children in each SIMD achieving expected Curriculum of Excellence literacy levels

**Smoking in Pregnancy**

% women in each SIMD who are current smokers at the antenatal booking appointment

**Secondary School Attendance**

% young people in each SIMD attending secondary school

**Breastfeeding**

% of babies in each SIMD reported by parents to be exclusively breastfed at the 6–8-week review

**School Leavers Positive Destinations**

% school leavers, aged 16-19, in positive destinations at 9-month follow-up

**Developmental Concerns**

% children in each SIMD with developmental concerns noted at 27–30-month review (% not meeting level of no concerns across all domains)

**Care-experienced School Leaver Destinations Positive**

% looked after school leavers, aged 16-19, in positive destinations at 9-month follow-up

## 5 Our Plan: Principles and Approaches

This plan is built around a set of core principles and approaches that guide everything we do together. The objectives and implementation plan will be guided by and adhere to these principles and approaches to ensure we, as a partnership, deliver the maximum benefit for our children and young people.

### Principles

1. **Prevention and Early Intervention.** As a partnership, we will prioritise actions which prevent issues or harms from occurring in the first place. When an issue or harm does occur, we will work together with the right services and organisations to develop strategic actions that seek to tackle them at the earliest stage possible.
2. **Ambitious, Creative and Trusting Multi-agency Collaboration.** We will maximise the collective strength and influence of our partnership to address complex social challenges through coordinated, multi-agency action. All objectives and priority programmes will be delivered collaboratively, drawing on the expertise of more than one agency. We will continue to demonstrate ambition for children and young people in Edinburgh, applying creative and innovative approaches to achieve positive outcomes.
3. **Voice of Infants, Children and Young People.** We will develop actions and services that are informed and shaped by people with lived experience and place the voice of infants, children, young people and families at the heart of service improvement. We commit to clear actions that further their voice and the integration of robust reporting mechanisms. Children, young people and their families are best placed to determine what they need to live healthy and happy lives. We will empower

children, young people and their families to contribute to how we support their communities and design solutions to address any issues.

4. **Reducing Inequalities.** Our partnership is committed to reducing inequalities and ensuring that all children, young people and families can access the support they need, when they need it. We will work collaboratively across services to address structural barriers, target disadvantage and promote equitable outcomes for those most at risk of poorer life chances.

## Approaches

- **Equality, diversity and inclusion.** The Children's Partnership will work collaboratively and purposefully to embed equality and diversity within the plan and associated actions. This approach will be seen through workforce development that expands knowledge and understanding of the needs of infants, children, young people and their families and in turn supports further inclusive planning. This will also be a key element in our approach to children's rights and participation, by improving how we meaningfully engage with children and young people to ensure they feel enabled and empowered. The partnership will also explore approaches that are proven to demonstrably increase participation amongst children and young people furthest from their rights.
- **Trauma-informed.** The Edinburgh Children's Partnership shares the Scottish Government and COSLA's ambition to have a trauma-informed workforce and services, capable of recognising where people are affected by trauma and adversity, that are able to respond in ways that prevent further harm and support recovery and can address inequalities and improve life chances. We will continually promote the integration of the five core principles: safety, trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment into all strands of work across policies, practice, systems and organisational culture.

Acknowledging the central importance of relationships to make a positive difference to anyone who has been impacted by psychological trauma and adversity, improving wellbeing, reducing emotional difficulties for children and young people and having a positive impact on families and caregivers.

- **Whole Family Support.** Whole Family Support (WFS) is a holistic, preventative approach designed to strengthen families, improve child wellbeing and reduce poverty by addressing needs collectively rather than focusing on individuals in isolation. WFS has 10 core principles, which came from [The Promise](#), which should be embedded through the work of the Children's Partnership.

### **Strategic approach to allocation and delivery of the Whole Family Wellbeing funding:**

The approach to delivering family support through Whole Family Wellbeing Funding was designed to ensure that investment strengthened whole family working in areas identified as a priority by the Edinburgh Children's Partnership. A cross-sector working group was established to shape the strategic direction of the fund and agree on how funding should be allocated. The group also identified learning to inform future commissioning and strategic oversight, which has been applied in the development of this Children's Services Plan. Funding was designated based on a collaborative model of service delivery, co-designed by at least one statutory and Third Sector partner, with all partners operating on an equal footing. Each collaboration was required to:

- ✓ Align work to at least one priority area within the Children's Services Plan (2023-2025), which was in turn aligned to the National Principles of Holistic Whole Family Support.
- ✓ Clearly explain how their proposed approach was transformational.
- ✓ Demonstrate evidence of need through baseline data.
- ✓ Evidence of experience of working with the priority family groups they intended to support.
- ✓ Deliver city-wide support, ensuring access was not restricted based on postcode.
- ✓ Demonstrate understanding that the fund was intended to drive transformational change rather than create long-term funded services and outline plans for sustainability.

Proposals were assessed against these criteria by a cross-sector panel and six collaborations were funded:

1. **The Family Hub:** Provides appropriate holistic, family-centred support at the universal and enhanced level at the earliest stage possible for families with a child under 5 years.
2. **Umbrella Hubs:** Provides early, community-based support to families with a range of support needs.
3. **Time to Talk:** Supports and improves the mental health of young people, as well as their families. This includes Youth work in a hospital A&E setting.
4. **Edinburgh Parent-led Childcare Collaborative:** Developing a package of support to aid the set-up and sustainability of affordable, parent-led after-school clubs in primary schools.
5. **Parent Infant Partnership:** Create a seamless, multi-disciplinary pathway that provides meaningful and equitable support to the most vulnerable expectant parents and their babies.
6. **EDAN Hub:** Provide collaborative, whole family support to families with a child or young person with a disability, including children who are neurodivergent (Pre-school to adult transition).

In addition to the collaborative funds, a central team within the Edinburgh Council provides core support to strengthen whole family working across the system. This includes:

- Locality co-ordinators who support workforce development around the National Principles, co-delivery programmes such as PEEP and Mellow for Young People, lead test of change activities and contribute to the development of the Single Point of Access.
- Trauma coordinators who deliver cross-sector training and a reflective practice calendar, assess workforce need and develop an enhanced trauma-informed pathway for the Third Sector.
- A systemic family psychotherapist who builds practice across the workforce and provides structured case consultation spaces for practitioners working across families experiencing complex or 'stuck' situations.

## 6 Our Plan: Priorities

### Reducing Child Poverty and Inequality

**Outcome:** Families experience improved financial stability, wellbeing and inclusion, reducing poverty and deprivation-related inequalities and improving long-term outcomes for children and young people.

**Indicators:** Child poverty; Smoking in pregnancy; Looked After Children

In line with the [Edinburgh Partnership Community Plan 2018–2028](#) priority *Enough Money to Live On* and the [Edinburgh Poverty Commission’s call to action to end poverty in Edinburgh by 2030](#), the Edinburgh Children’s Partnership will continue to prioritise actions that contribute to reducing child poverty. Financial stability has a profound impact on the health, wellbeing and life chances of children and young people. When families experience improved financial security, inequalities in health, education and wellbeing are reduced across the life course. For children, whose development is particularly sensitive to early experiences, poverty can have long-lasting impacts on physical health, emotional wellbeing and educational attainment.

Reducing child poverty therefore represents not only a priority in its own right, but also a **foundation for progress across all other priorities within this plan.**

Data from the Edinburgh Poverty Commission 2025 Calls to Action estimates that around 18,000 children in Edinburgh currently live in poverty. The Commission highlights that:

**“To end poverty in the city, the pre-condition and the single biggest transformation Edinburgh could achieve would be to make the experience of seeking help less painful, more humane and more compassionate.”**

While the **Child Poverty and Inequality Sub-Group** will lead actions to reduce levels of child poverty, achieving this transformation requires a whole-system approach. All ECP sub-groups and partners have a role in improving the experience of seeking support for children, young people and families.

The approaches set out in this plan, including commitments to **equality, diversity and inclusion, whole-family support and trauma-informed practice**, aim to ensure that services are accessible, non-stigmatising and responsive to the needs of families.

Of the Partnership's ten long-term outcome indicators, child poverty levels will be tracked directly under this priority. Smoking in pregnancy is also monitored as this indicator is strongly associated with socioeconomic deprivation. Work under this priority may also contribute to reducing the number of children becoming looked after, as recognised in [The Promise](#), which highlights poverty as both a contributing factor to children entering care and a common experience among care-experienced children.

### **Best Start in Life: Pregnancy, Infancy and Early Development**

**Outcome:** Babies and young children are supported from pregnancy onwards to develop strong relationships, healthy development and early learning foundations.

**Indicators:** Breastfeeding; Developmental concerns; P1 healthy weight; P1 literacy

A consistent theme emerging from consultation during the development of this plan was the importance of **prevention and early intervention**. While these principles underpin the work of the Edinburgh Children's

Evidence consistently demonstrates that experiences in the pre-birth to age three period have a profound influence on lifelong health, wellbeing and learning outcomes

Partnership as a whole, the *Best Start in Life* priority represents a particularly important focus for preventative action.

Scotland's [Population Health Framework 2025–2035](#) emphasises this, stating:

**“A focus on early years is crucial to the future health and wellbeing of our population and the evidence suggests more can be done to improve outcomes in the pre-birth to age three period.”**

The indicators tracked under this priority (breastfeeding rates, developmental concerns, P1 healthy weight and P1 literacy) reflect key aspects of early childhood health, development and readiness for learning. For example, breastfeeding is associated with well-established short- and long-term health benefits for both infants and mothers. However, breastfeeding rates are often lower in more deprived communities, reflecting wider inequalities in support and access to services. The Best Start in Life Sub-Group will lead actions to increase breastfeeding rates and support early development across the city. Improvements in all these indicators, particularly within areas of greatest deprivation, will reflect progress in ensuring that services effectively support families and address the theme emerging from consultation with children and young people relating to safe space and access to play opportunities.

### **Wellbeing and Mental Health**

**Outcome:** Children and young people have timely access to preventative and community-based mental health support, enabling them to engage in learning and enjoy a healthy childhood.

**Indicators:** Secondary school attendance; School leavers' positive destinations

Mental health and wellbeing emerged as a clear priority during consultation with partners, children and young people in the development of this plan.

**Stakeholders highlighted a range of challenges**, including long waiting times for specialist services, a need for greater access to community-based support and the importance of trauma-informed and relationship-based approaches. Participants also emphasised the importance of holistic and preventative supports, including safe spaces, youth work, trusted adults and community-based provision that can help children and young people build resilience and maintain good mental wellbeing.

This priority, therefore, focuses on strengthening preventative and community-based supports that enable children and young people to maintain good mental health and remain engaged in education.

At present, there is no single robust population-level indicator of mental wellbeing for children and young people in Edinburgh. As a result, proxy indicators have been identified. Secondary school attendance and school leavers' positive destinations provide an indication of whether children and young people are sufficiently supported in their wellbeing to participate in learning and progress into further education, training or employment.

During consultation, children and young people themselves also highlighted concerns about the impact of social media and smartphone use on their wellbeing. Given the emerging evidence linking excessive digital use with negative mental health outcomes, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Sub-Group will work with partners across the city to align with existing initiatives and develop a coordinated approach to addressing these concerns.

### **Youth Work, Inclusion and Engagement**

**Outcome:** Children and young people experience inclusive, accessible learning and community environments, including youth work, particularly for those facing barriers or disadvantages.

**Indicators:** Child poverty; P1 healthy weight; P1 literacy; Secondary school attendance; School leavers positive destinations; Looked After school leavers positive destinations.

The **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)** explored Edinburgh's *Universal Offer* - the services, opportunities and supports that all children and young people should be able to access across the city. Equitable access to informal learning, play, leisure, culture and youth work opportunities play a key role in preventing inequalities in health, wellbeing and educational outcomes from emerging.

Youth work contributes to physical and mental wellbeing, supports the development of skills and trusted relationships and can strengthen engagement in learning and pathways towards positive destinations.

This priority reflects the Partnership's commitment to prevention and early intervention by focusing on key [building blocks of health](#) and wellbeing identified in the JSNA, including: education and skills, family, friends and community and our surroundings. Strengthening these foundations can improve wellbeing across the whole population of children and young people while also reducing inequalities for those who experience barriers or disadvantages. Because the impacts of work in this area are wide-ranging, a broad set of indicators has been identified to monitor progress across childhood and into early adulthood.

The Youth Work, Inclusion and Engagement sub-group will lead actions to progress the [Edinburgh Youth and Children's Work Strategy 2023-2028](#), and the priorities identified in the [Strategy Reconnector Report](#) and develop a Play Strategy for the city, bringing together partners to deliver a coordinated, multi-agency response to this priority.

## Children, Young People and Families' Meaningful Participation

**Outcome:** Children, young people and families are meaningfully involved in shaping services, with their rights, voices and lived experiences informing decisions and contributing to reduced inequalities and improved outcomes.

**Indicators:** All indicators

The **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment** identified *Children's Voice* as a key cross-cutting theme and concluded that:

**“The collection and consideration of children’s voice is not systematically embedded effectively within all services.”**

This finding was echoed through consultation with stakeholders and partners during the development of this plan. As a result, strengthening meaningful participation has been identified as a priority.

This work builds on the progress made by the Partnership’s **UNCRC Sub-Group**, which has led work over the past three years to embed children’s rights within policy and practice. A new **Children’s Rights and Participation Sub-Group** will now take forward this agenda with a particular focus on **Article 12** of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#), which states that:

**“Children who are capable of forming their own views have the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting them, and those views should be given due weight.”**

The group will bring together partners from the **Edinburgh Children’s Partnership** and the **Edinburgh Community Learning and Development Partnership**, reflecting the shared responsibility across community planning partnerships to uphold children’s and young people’s rights and strengthen participatory practice. By working collaboratively, the group will help ensure a more joined-up approach across partnerships while avoiding duplication. The group will also lead on the publication of the three-yearly Children’s Rights Report in relation to partnership activity.

## A System That Delivers: Workforce, Data and Partnerships

**Outcome:** A confident, skilled workforce and a well-connected system use shared data, learning and partnership working to deliver consistent, effective and measurable improvements in outcomes for children and young people.

**Indicators:** All indicators

The [Edinburgh Partnership Board Work Programme 2025–26](#) includes a workstream to strengthen governance, structures, reporting and communication across community planning partnerships.

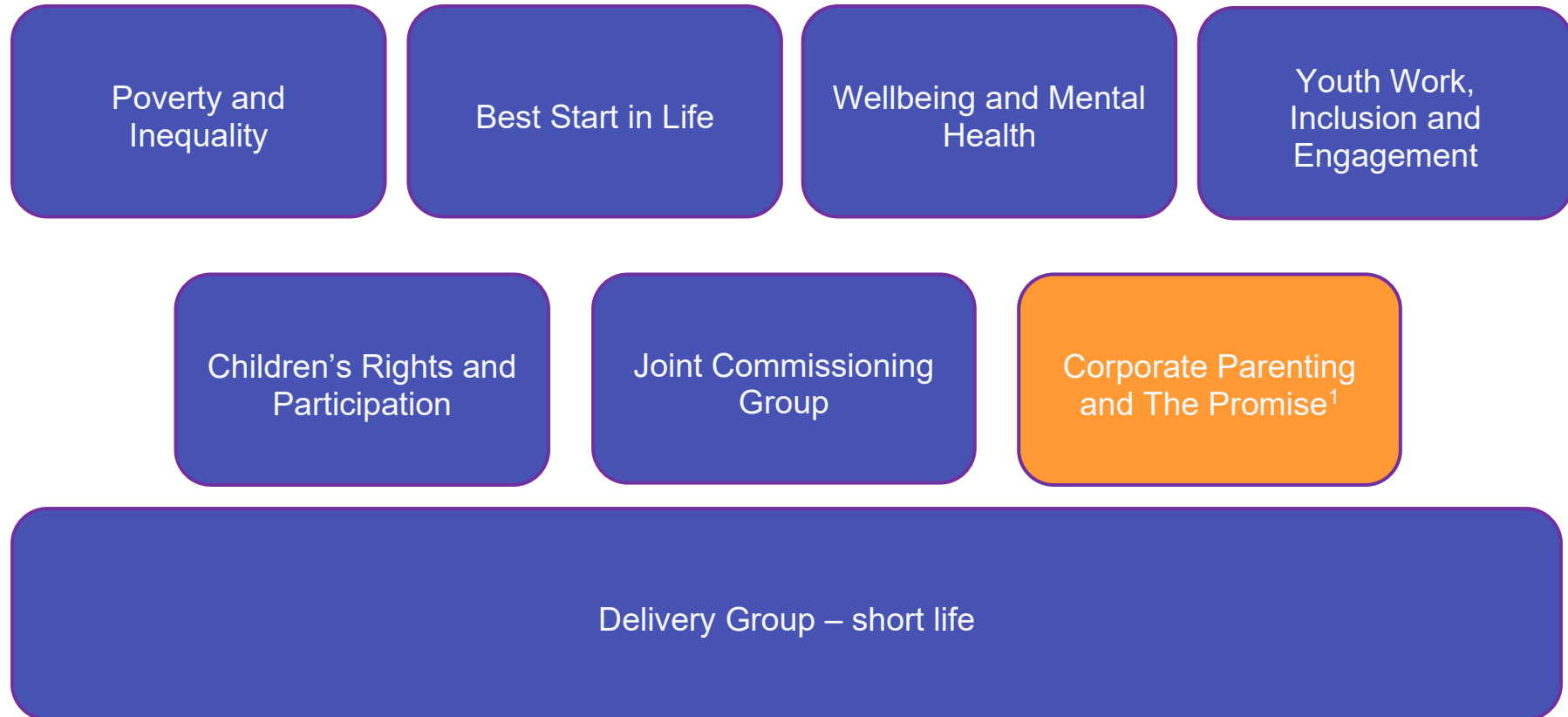
In alignment with this work, the Edinburgh Children’s Partnership will establish a **short-life Delivery Sub-Group** to review the Partnership’s current systems, governance and ways of working. The group will identify opportunities to strengthen collaboration, improve the use of shared data and ensure that partnership activity is effectively aligned with strategic priorities, both within the Children’s Partnership and with the wider Community Planning Partnership and Local Outcome Improvement Plan.

Initial consultation with partners has already identified a number of areas for development. These include strengthening collaboration between sub-groups and improving links with other strategic partnerships across the community planning system.

Strengthening these systems will help ensure that work is not duplicated across partnerships, collective resources are used effectively, and actions across different partnerships contribute to shared outcomes for children and young people.

Ultimately, this work aims to support a more coordinated, efficient and outcome-focused community planning system for children and families in Edinburgh.

## 7 Children's Strategic Planning Partnership Structure



<sup>1</sup> Actions associated with Corporate Parenting and The Promise are detailed within the Corporate Parenting Plan and are governed under the Corporate Parenting Board. Regular updates will be provided to Edinburgh Children's Partnership to ensure work is joined up and collaborative.

## 8 Our Plan: Actions

Priority	How will we make it happen?	When will it happen?	Who will make it happen?
<b>1. Reducing child poverty and inequality</b> Families experience improved financial stability, wellbeing and inclusion, reducing child poverty and deprivation-related inequalities and improving long-term outcomes for children and young people.	Develop, facilitate uptake of and evaluate child poverty learning content to support staff with routine money worries enquiries, with particular focus on child poverty priority family types and the impact of poverty on experiences of the care system	Year 1-3	Child Poverty and inequality sub-group
	Develop data-driven opportunities to proactively identify and support individuals or households who are most likely to be financially insecure, including those at risk of homelessness	Year 1-3	
	Identify the financial costs associated with accessing the health and care system and promote targeted and universal mitigation opportunities with partners	Year 1-2	
	Monitor and evaluate the accessibility, uptake and impact of welfare rights advice and infant food insecurity pathways across early years and wider family services, supporting their ongoing development and improvement in collaboration with the Best Start in Life sub-group.	Year 1-2	

<p><b>2. Best start in life: pregnancy, infancy and early development</b></p> <p>Babies, young children and families are supported from pregnancy onwards to develop strong relationships, healthy development and early learning foundations.</p>	<p>Take a whole family support approach to inclusion by embedding the principles of inclusive fathers from the start within children’s services</p>	<p>Year 1</p>	<p>Best Start in Life sub-group</p>
	<p>Reduce barriers to breastfeeding by promoting support groups and raising the profile of breastfeeding through accreditation with Breastfeeding Friendly Scotland Scheme within Early Years settings, and other Partnership services such as Neighbourhood Prevention Hubs.</p>	<p>Year 1</p>	
	<p>Develop a coordinated pathway for pre-birth access to holistic multi-agency services, maintaining strong links with welfare rights advice pathways and supporting advancement of this work where appropriate</p>	<p>Year 1-3</p>	
	<p>Development of coordinated communications and workforce development plan for responsive caregiving, including the importance of physical play messages which support parent–infant relationships, early brain, speech and language development and infant mental health, including increasing uptake of library registration at birth.</p>	<p>Year 1-3</p>	
	<p>Codesign and pilot a unified framework that supports improved transition process between Health, Education and the Third sector for transitions from Health Visiting and Early Years settings into Primary 1</p>	<p>Year 2-3</p>	

<p><b>3. Wellbeing and mental health</b> Children and young people have timely access to preventative and community-based mental health support, enabling them to engage in learning and enjoy a healthy childhood.</p>	<p>Develop a sustainable Partnership model for the Single Point of Access (SPA), considering integration with other pathways of support e.g. Neighborhood Prevention Partnerships (NPPs) and improving efficiency and reducing bureaucracy.</p>	Year 1-2	Well-being and Mental Health Sub-group
	<p>Improve prevention and early intervention for those with needs below CAMHS thresholds by strengthening the continuum of mental health support with consistent access to targeted support through collaborative locality working with Education Wellbeing Service and NHS partners (e.g. CAMHS, Primary care)</p>	Year 1-3	
	<p>Develop relevant shared outcomes across community wellbeing and mental health providers with robust and proportionate reporting, including use of digital solutions, to improve efficiency and consistency.</p>	Year 1-2	
	<p>Interface between pan-Lothian work around neurodevelopmental pathways and ECP members, promoting the inclusive and neuro-affirmative (with and without diagnoses)</p>	Year 1-2	
	<p><b>CYP Priority</b> – Smartphones and social media Promote positive approaches to the use of digital environments to support mental health across ECP members.</p>	Year 1-2	

<p><b>4. Youth work, inclusion and engagement</b></p> <p>Children and young people experience inclusive, accessible learning and community environments, including youth work, particularly for those facing barriers or disadvantage</p>	<p>Progress the Youth &amp; Children's Work Strategy and associated Calls to Action through a coordinated partnership-led approach, with collective responsibility for addressing key priorities to ensure all children and young people can access safe spaces and build trusted relationships.</p>	Year 1-3	<p>Youth Work and Community Engagement sub-group</p>
	<p>Building on the JSNA Universal Offer recommendation, coordinate the development and delivery of an Edinburgh Play Strategy that increases equitable access to informal learning, play, leisure and culture opportunities for children and young people of all ages.</p>	Year 1-3	
	<p>Examine and address barriers to participation in learning outside of school from EY to secondary school.</p>	Year 1-3	
<p><b>5. Children, young people and families' meaningful participation</b></p> <p>Children, young people and families are meaningfully involved in shaping services, with their rights, voices and lived experiences informing decisions and contributing to reduced inequalities and improved outcomes</p>	<p>Strengthen mechanisms for capturing infant, child, young person and family voices by embedding the Lundy model of participation across planning, delivery and evaluation.</p>	Year 1	<p>Children's Rights and Participation sub-group</p>
	<p>Collect and analyse children and young people's voices to improve understanding of systemic barriers to children's services for vulnerable groups. Sharing with relevant Children's Partnership sub-groups to support changes which address barriers using a proportionate universalism approach to service provision.</p>	Year 2	

	Share data and learning from children and young people's voice work completed in Years 1 and 2, with wider Strategic Partnerships within Edinburgh's Community Planning Partnership to support further changes in service provision, which reduce inequalities in access to services.	Year 3	
	As ambassadors for CYP, work with CLD Partnership to promote the continued commitment to upholding Children's Rights across Community Planning Partnership	Year 1-3	
	<b>CYP Priority</b> – Racism and sexism Work across Community Planning to develop a response to CYP concerns about racist bullying and misogynistic behaviour from peers	Year 1-3	
<b>6. A system that delivers: workforce, data and partnerships</b> A confident, skilled workforce and a well-connected system use shared data, learning and partnership working to deliver consistent, effective and measurable improvement in outcomes for children and young people.	Coordinate workforce development across partners, including wider community planning strategic partnerships, learning from Whole Family Wellbeing funded projects, trauma-informed, Money Counts and neurodiversity training and improving access to training through shared systems.	Year 1-2	Delivery short-life group
	Ensure actions are tracked and monitored using appropriate indicators of progress and feedback loops are in place to evaluate the impact of the Partnership.	Year 1-2	
	Consider priority areas where improved data collection, sharing or analysis would enable us to	Year 1-2	

make more informed policy decisions and service improvements.	
Ensure learning from WWF and other programmes of community-based work are embedded in routine mechanisms for supporting communities to improve access to key services	Year 1-2
Support collaborative working across sub-groups on cross-cutting priorities to facilitate joined-up strategies.	Year 1-2
Formalise alignment with Strategic Partnerships and horizon-scan emerging priorities.	Year 1-2

These actions reflect our current priorities for infants, children and young people in Edinburgh, but do not represent an exhaustive programme of work for the next three years. The Edinburgh Children’s Partnership is committed to a responsive, data-informed approach, enabling us to adapt and develop further actions as new opportunities and emerging needs arise. Forthcoming national and local policies and reports are expected to provide additional evidence and recommendations and we will actively consider how these can inform and strengthen our work. We will continue to identify and use the Partnership’s collective influence to drive change, embedding learning as required throughout the lifetime of the Plan, including the following areas of work:

- Play Sufficiency Assessment
- Scottish Health Equity Research Unit (SHERU) reports
- Commercial determinants of health Youth Commission Project
- Expansion of breakfast clubs
- Childcare Short Life Working Group actions
- GIRFEC refresh implementation action plan

## 9 Joint Commissioning

The Joint Commissioning Group (JCG) was established to oversee/support the allocation and administration of funding in relation to three programmes of work – the Connected Communities Programme, the Community Mental Health Funding Programme and the Whole Family Wellbeing Programme. It has worked during the lifetime of the previous Edinburgh Children’s Services Plan (2023-226) to do this alongside the working/steering groups for each programme.

### Purpose and need for continuity

The JCG has ensured continued partnership working throughout the monitoring of the Connected Communities (2024-27) grant programme, drawing on the learning from the published Lessons Learned Report. The JCG has supported work with partners from the University of Edinburgh, inviting Connected Communities Grant recipients to participate in an optional external evaluation of the impact of their work. The JCG has also supported the allocation of the next phase of Scottish Government Community Mental Health Funding, ensuring specifications to procure further mental health and wellbeing support for children and young people complement and enhance

existing offers in the city, following recommendations from the evaluation of the previous phase of community mental health grants. The JCG has also used transformation funding from the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund to pilot a digital data platform to support more effective delivery, monitoring and evaluation of supports from children, young people and their families in the city. The platform will be made available to the recipients of Connected Communities Grants (phase 1 of the trial) and wider funding where applicable, with the aim of digitally transforming the way we collect monitoring data and informing future commissioning cycles.

## Ongoing work and next steps

Learning from the first year of the Connected Communities Grant Programme has been used to influence discussions within the wider Edinburgh Community Planning Partnership about the value of working differently with the Third Sector, including the importance of Fair Funding Principles, as well as the value of jointly commissioning where possible. Work has begun to consider development opportunities, including partnership involvement, for the programme beyond April 2027 and how the Joint Commissioning Group can support the Connected Communities Steering Group. This will include consideration of how learning from joint commissioning opportunities can inform future funding of Third Sector work, including learning relating to effective and proportionate monitoring and evaluation of impact.



## 10 The Promise

The Promise set out a 10-year children's sector transformational programme, concluding in 2030. Plan 2024-30 covering the latter half of the route map. Aiming to support all children and all families (including those living away from home and being in the care system), focusing on preventative and supportive work to ensure, wherever possible, that Edinburgh's children and young people remain in the care of their families.

In Edinburgh, the Promise and progress to keep the Promise across the city is monitored by the City of Edinburgh Council's Corporate Parenting Board. Keeping the Promise is far bigger than the activities of the Children's sector in Edinburgh. Therefore, the Board has a diverse membership, reflecting the whole system approach to 'keeping the Promise'.

The membership and Board function under their own Terms of Reference and have reporting functions filtered through this model. To ensure the crucial strategic link with community planning and children's partnership planning, The Promise and Corporate Parenting Board will attend, update and work within the structure of the Children's Partnership.



## 11 Membership

Each sub-group consists of key partners who have specialist knowledge to support the development and delivery of the priority areas. All service areas, networks or organisations that are members of the full Children's Partnership will also be active within one or more of the subgroups.

Children's Rights and Participation*	Best Start in Life	Poverty and Inequality	Youth Work and Community Engagement	Mental Health and Wellbeing	Joint Commissioning Group
CEC - Social Work	CEC - Early Years	CEC - Housing	CEC- Education	CEC- Education	CEC - Commissioning
CEC - WFW	CEC - Social Work (PrePare / PIP)	CEC - Wider Achievement (Parent & Carers)	NHS - Public health	(mental health & inclusion)	NHS - Public Health
CEC - Education (Schools)	NHS - Health Visiting	CEC - Social Work (Early Intervention)	Third Sector (LAYC)	CEC - WFW	Third Sector (LAYC)
CEC - Wider Achievement and Life Long Learning	NHS - Midwifery	CEC - Corporate Parenting	Third Sector representative	NHS - CAMHS	Third Sector (EVOC)
NHS - Child Health Commissioner's Office	NHS - Speech and Language	NHS - Public health	Third Sector (EVOC)	NHS - School Nursing	Police
NHS - Public health	NHS - PAIRS	NHS - Health Visiting	Police	NHS - Public Health	
Third Sector (EVOC)	NHS - Public health partnership	NHS - Family Nurse Partnership	Edinburgh Leisure Skills Development Scotland	NHS - OT	
Third Sector (LAYC)	NHS - Family Nurse partnership	NHS - Midwifery		Third Sector (LAYC)	
Police	Thid Sector (EVOC)	Third Sector (EVOC)		Third Sector (EVOC)	
SCRA	NHS - Strategic Planning	Third Sector (LAYC)		Police	
		Third Sector (Advice Network)			

\*To forward Children's Rights within Edinburgh, the Children's Rights and Participation sub-group will have a shared membership and terms of reference with the Community and Learning Developing Partnership. The statutory reporting function will be routed through the Children's Partnership.

## 12 Acknowledgement and Thanks

The Junction – staff and youth advisors

Drummond Community High School – staff and pupils who took part in the consultation

Wester Hailes High School - staff and pupils who took part in the consultation

EDAN – The Yard staff and children & families who attended the consultation

Home Link Family Support – Staff, children and families who attended the consultation

WFW Team and NHSL Public Health

The short life working group

