



Edinburgh Children's Services Plan 2023/26

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Foreword

We are delighted to share with you our ambition as a partnership and collectively introduce the new Edinburgh Integrated Children's Services Plan covering the years 2023-2026. This plan is the culmination of extensive collaboration and dedication from a range of professionals and community members who are committed to improving outcomes for children and families in Edinburgh.

The aim of this plan is to provide a framework for delivering high-quality, integrated services that are tailored to meet the needs of children and families across the city. We recognise that children and young people are at the heart of our communities and that we must work together to create an environment in which their voices can be heard and they can thrive.

At the core of this plan is the belief that every child in Edinburgh deserves the best possible start in life, and that early intervention is essential to addressing issues before they become more significant. We aim to promote an integrated approach to children's services, breaking down barriers between different agencies and working collaboratively to deliver effective support.

An effective whole family support model is one of collaboration and brings together families, communities, professionals and systems to work together in a joined up co-ordinated approach, to develop a shared understanding and prevent further problems arising in the future.

We know that every child is unique, and their needs will differ depending on their circumstances. Therefore, our plan aims to provide a range of services in a child's local community that are flexible and responsive to individual needs, whether that be in education, health, social care, or other areas.

We are confident that this plan will make a significant difference to the lives of children and families in Edinburgh. By working together, we can create a city where **all of Edinburgh's children and young people enjoy their childhood and achieve their potential.**

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this plan, and I look forward to seeing the positive impact it will have on our community



Our Vision

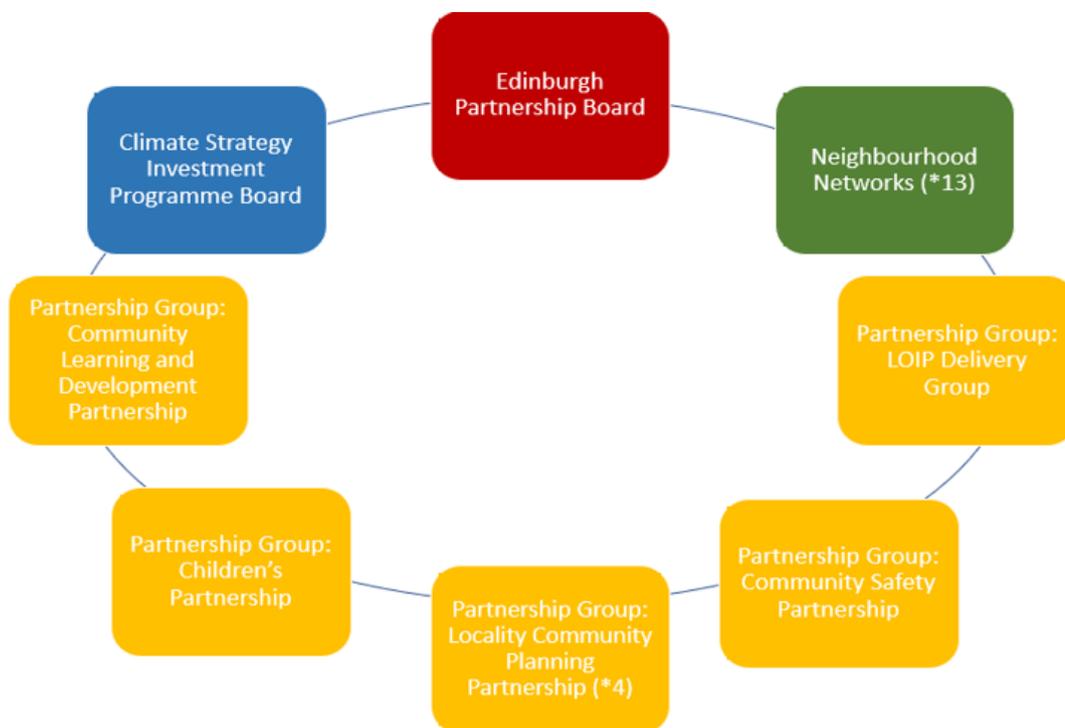
Edinburgh's children and young people enjoy their childhood and achieve their potential.



Our Partnership

The Edinburgh Children's Partnership (the Partnership) is the statutory partnership as outlined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 which 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. The partnership directs the strategic planning, development and delivery of children and young people's services on behalf of the Edinburgh Partnership. Our partnership organisations represent local government, health, social care, education, government organisations and third sector voluntary organisations.

Edinburgh Children's Partnership reports into the Edinburgh Partnership Board and supports the Edinburgh Partnership Board to deliver against the wider [Edinburgh Partnership Community Plan 2018-2028](#). Which aims to ensure that those living in Edinburgh have enough money to live on; access to work, learning and training opportunities; and a good place to live.



Our Principles

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

Our five core principles are:

Multi-agency Collaboration

All our objectives will be multi-agency and we will make best use of the partnerships' collaborative gain and the influence that combined service provision can have to address complex social issues. All priority programmes within the implementation plan will have more than one agency involved in the delivery.

Prevention and early intervention

We will prioritise objectives that help protect our children and young people from poor outcomes. Through a range of universal and specialist interventions and services, we will ensure that every child and young person has better opportunities to fulfil their potential. Our aim is to provide an environment that supports good health and wellbeing, as well as ensuring any issues are addressed before they become crises, thereby allowing our resources to be used more effectively. When need is identified, we will react quickly and provide the right services at the right time, with the knowledge that early intervention and support provides better outcomes. Our services and partners will put measures in place to ensure we understand our ability to prevent poor outcomes and intervene early when required.

Voice of the child and young people

We will ensure children and young people are at the heart of developing the future of Edinburgh. 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.

Reducing Inequalities

Increasing the life chances of all children and young people and reducing inequalities in outcomes that currently exist. It is therefore essential that the Edinburgh Children's Partnership Board seeks to address the fundamental causes of inequality, including tackling poverty.

Equality, diversity, and anti-racism

Embed equality, diversity, and antiracist practice in all strands of its work. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought several challenges, and has also, sadly, magnified the existing disadvantages that some groups face for reasons including their age, gender, race, disability or experience of poverty. The partnership will aim to engage with marginalised voices, encourage people with lived experience to play an active role in decision-making spaces. To enable the core aims of the partnership to be achieved for all children we will strengthen the systematic evaluation of our plans from the viewpoint of preventing discrimination as described in article 2 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child.

Assumptions

The current plan was developed on the assumption that services are provided in the way which:

1. best safeguards, supports and promotes the wellbeing of children in the area concerned,
2. ensures that any action to meet needs is taken at the earliest appropriate time and that, where appropriate, action is taken to prevent needs arising,
3. is most integrated from the point of view of recipients,
4. constitutes the best use of available resources, and
5. related services in the area are provided in the way which, so far as consistent with the objects and proper delivery of the service concerned, safeguards, supports and promotes the wellbeing of children in the area concerned.

Previous Plan

In the 2020/23 Edinburgh Children's Services Plan, our priorities were the 3Bs:

- Best Start - Every child should have love, care and support
- Bridging the Gap - Every family should have enough money to live on
- Being Everything, You Can Be – All children and young people should have access to a safe place and someone they can talk to

Best Start

This working group successfully progressed tests of change across areas of Edinburgh which focused on the sharing of information (at both individual and strategic level) from Health Visitors with Early Years centres, thus improving the uptake of Early Years placements as well as the supports offered to children.

Bridging the Gap

Although this working group started before the completion of 2020-2023 Plan this area of work was subsumed into the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP), given the Priority area of Enough Money to Live On within the LOIP, to avoid duplication of work with Community Planning.

Being Everything, You Can Be

This working group progressed two main areas of work relating to mental health and wellbeing and school attendance.

Mental health and wellbeing

In the last three years a Community Mental Health Framework was embedded which allowed for the development of a Single Point of Access for mental health and wellbeing supports within Edinburgh. The implementation of the Single Point of access is a key priority within the 2023-2026 Plan.

School attendance

Gracemount High School was identified as a priority school through a local Collaborative Enquiry to bring education and community partners together and work with young people experiencing issues with school attendance to identify key barriers. We will continue to build upon this work within 2023-2026 Plan.

Integrated Planning

Building strong relationships is important in Edinburgh's children's services. Creating and keeping these relationships helps when working with children and young people, families, and different agencies. The Edinburgh Children's Partnership wants to make things easier by reducing issues and delays in the city's children's sector.

To do this, the partnership is finding new ways to use available resources, staff, and funding. This will help lower the needs and inequalities that affect children and their families.

By working together, people in the children's sector can support each other and follow the values of both the trauma-informed approach and Edinburgh's Promise Fundamentals.

National Policy Drivers

The Partnership acknowledges there is a range of national strategies and plans that pertain to improving the lives of children, young people and their families in Edinburgh. Many of these plans have interconnections and common goals/ aims to improve the health, wellbeing and development of children and young people.

- [Getting it Right for Every Child \(GIRFEC\)](#)
- [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#)
- [The Promise](#)
- [The Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan](#)
- [The Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan](#)
- [The Scottish Attainment Challenge](#)
- [The Youth Employment Strategy](#)
- [The Children and Young People's Rights and Participation Strategy](#)

The Promise

The Promise sets out a 10-year children's sector transformational programme, concluding in 2030. Edinburgh's Promise will support all children and all families (including from living away from home and being the care system) and will focus on preventative and supportive work to ensure wherever possible that Edinburgh's children and young people remain in the care of their families.

Keeping the Promise is far bigger than the activities of the Children's sector in Edinburgh. Significant work underway is aimed at areas as diverse and as key as:

- **To realise a child's rights, we must support their family— whether it's one they're born into or not. And all families need support at different times.**
- **All children within Scotland's "care system" will have a good, loving childhood. They will feel loved. They will have their needs met. And they will have their rights upheld.**
- **Ensuring that where children and young people cannot remain with their families, that the significant relationships that they have with family, friends and others are supported, promoted and maintained.**
- **Ensuring children and young people have access to activities outside of school to support their development and interests, and that children and young people's health needs will be responded to as a priority.**
- **Supporting young people who are unable to live with their family, go onto have the life chances expected of their peers and to break the stigma of care experience.**

Tackling Child Poverty

Edinburgh aims to eliminate child poverty by 2030. Although previous Children's Services Plans have made progress, the current cost-of-living crisis shows more work is needed to protect children and young people from poverty. Child poverty was increasing before the pandemic, which only further exposed families to social and economic inequality. There is a clear link between child poverty, adverse childhood experiences, and later health outcomes, as highlighted in the [NHS Lothian Director of Public Health Annual Report](#).

To address this, the Partnership is continuing to make child poverty prevention a core focus of its plan. Edinburgh's child poverty landscape is vast and complex, involving many partners. A review will be conducted to ensure clear responsibilities and well-coordinated activities across the city, including in relation to [Edinburgh's Annual Child Poverty Report](#), which measures success and identifies challenges.

Key areas of work during this plan's implementation will include strengthening financial well-being support in relevant service areas to help those most in need. The ongoing review of welfare services across the city will also be supported as it enters its next phase of delivery. Staff in key services will receive training to enhance their skills in addressing welfare and debt issues, enabling them to confidently refer and signpost people in need.

The upcoming incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scottish law offers a rights-based perspective on addressing child poverty. This approach can reduce stigma by helping children, young people, and their families understand their right to social and economic assistance

The National Performance Framework

This framework aims to improve outcomes for the people of Scotland by increasing opportunities, increasing wealth, creating sustainable and inclusive growth and reducing inequalities. The framework sets out eleven national outcomes against which progress will be measured. These include people growing up loved, safe and respected, able to realise their full potential; people live in inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe communities; people are well educated and skilled; people are healthy and active, and that poverty is tackled by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally



United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The Partnership's commitment to Children's Rights continues into this plan. With the expected inclusion of the UNCRC into Scottish law, there is a need to begin to see, hear, and observe children's rights as being at the fore of decision making at operational and strategic levels.

Over the next 3 years we need to work to ensure that our community understands the rights of the child. Adults need to know their actions in and around children and young people (and their family's lives) first and foremost of as participation, protection and provision in those rights.

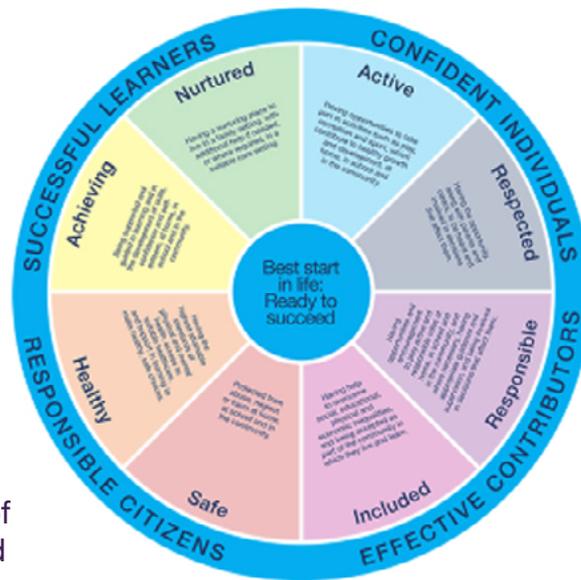
Workforce development will be undertaken to ensure the normalisation of discussions around children and young people as being not only rights supporting but also ensuring that children's rights - including their rights for their views to be respected; their rights to access information; education and health; their rights to have their basic needs met in terms of food, clothing and a safe home; and their rights to rest; play and access cultural and arts opportunities in safe and healthy environments - are a constant focus across all decision making, planning, monitoring and evaluating of services.



Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)

GIRFEC provides the framework for understanding a child’s life against eight wellbeing indicators. Safety, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, and Included are all key indicators of the success and development of a young person along their life course as shown by the SHANARRI wheel (see right). It also aids consistent assessment of where gaps exist in someone’s development and where support can be offered to remedy that gap.

GIRFEC will be used as a consistent approach to support children and their families’ circumstances, supporting decision making on when and where offers of support and assistance are required to ensure that we get it right for every child.



We want all children to get the best start in life. Our universal approaches start by supporting all families from before the birth of the child. As a basic principle, the first person to offer support to a child or young person and their family should be the person to complete a GIRFEC whole family assessment using the partnership agreed assessment tool and provide either a single agency response or co-ordinate a plan and a team around the child and family.

A Whole Family Approach

We want to provide support that responds to the needs of the whole family. Support will recognise the strengths of families and work alongside them to build resilience. Children and families will be engaged at every stage and their experiences will help shape and improve services. Measuring the difference, we make we want children and families to receive support that meets their needs at the right time and makes a difference to their health, happiness and safety and to achieve their potential. We will measure the impact of our joined up approach across the partnership to check that what we do is effective and a good use of resources.

Whole family support and getting it right for every child is everyone’s responsibility. Every one working with or engaging with children and families, regardless of organisation has a responsibility to deliver whole family support and support the family to access appropriate services.

GIRFEC puts the responsibility on all professionals from across the partnership to identify emerging concerns and potential unmet needs for individual children and families, irrespective of whether they are providing services to children or adults. Professionals working in universal services are best placed to identify children or their families, who are at risk of poor outcomes. These will be in health services, such as midwives, health visitors, GPs and school nurses, or in nursery and education provision at any age from early years onwards.

Healthy Places

Children's health and wellbeing is shaped by the places in which they live, including their homes, schools, neighbourhoods, parks and leisure facilities and the infrastructure and transport options that allow them to access the places they need. The UNCRC sets out the specific rights that all children have, with their rights to health, education, rest, play and to grow up in healthy environments being essential to allow them to realise their full potential.

Edinburgh Children's Partnership will support children's rights to grow up in healthy places, as well as supporting children to know about, feel welcome in and access these places. This will include accessing places within their local community but also enabling and encouraging them to access the wide range of health-promoting places, including green and blue spaces, libraries, museums and other cultural opportunities that exist across the city.

The children's partnership will take forward a number of areas of collaborative work to ensure children's voices are included in place-making decisions, particularly in relation to 20-minute neighbourhoods, as well as to ensure children are supported to access the places they need in their communities and beyond. This aligns with the Edinburgh Poverty Commission's calls to action that Edinburgh's citizens should have 'opportunities that drive justice and prospects' as well as 'connections in a city that belongs to us'.



Enablers

Commissioning

The Partnership are in the process of developing a framework for commissioning that will benefit children and their families by maximising the money that comes to Partnership members, to be used to support and develop services for children, young people and their families.

Work continues to develop a joint commissioning framework, which will support the Partnership in agreeing upon, planning for, developing, and commissioning new services. The framework will begin to allocate the Scottish Government funding for Edinburgh's Whole Family Support transformation, so that family support is in place in a consistent manner across the city, being offered at the right time, for the time it is needed for, and at times which fit with the family and not with traditional opening hours.

Enhanced Data Sharing

Over the last 18 months a significant piece of work has been undertaken to review the existing (2015) Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) between the NHS Lothian/City of Edinburgh Council and voluntary sector organisations working with children. The new DSA has been developed in line with the Edinburgh's Promise and the principles and data protection provisions of the GIRFEC refresh, recently published by the Scottish Government.

Through this DSA, which sets out how the proportionate and timely sharing of relevant information will be managed. Access to services for children and young people should no longer be dependent on families negotiating barriers and the experience for all will be more positive, inclusive, and effective. All organisations wishing to sign up to this Data Sharing Agreement will receive training on it and the standards they will be expected to meet, as well as being provided with operational guidance on what this may mean in practice for your organisation.

The needs of our children and young people

Edinburgh is home to 87,551 children and young people under the age of 18, equating to roughly 20% of Edinburgh's overall population (Edinburgh Council, 2021).

Whilst educational outcomes across primary and secondary schools in Edinburgh have shown, in general, steady improvement over the years the poverty related attainment gap persists. For example, the percentage of primary pupils achieving their expected Curriculum for Excellence level in Literacy in 2021/22 was at its highest at 77% though this was 87% for those least deprived compared to 62% for those most deprived pupils, a 25 percentage point gap. For secondary schools the percentage of leavers with 1 or more awards at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 6 or higher for 2021/22 was 68% though this was 86% for those least deprived compared to 45% for those most deprived pupils, a 41 percentage point gap.

The gap is also evident in the levels of school attendance, for 2022/23, with 95% attendance in Primary schools for those least deprived compared to 89% for those most deprived and in Secondary schools 93% for those least deprived compared to 86% for those most deprived. This highlights the need for targeted interventions to promote equal opportunities for all.

In general, the city is doing well against a range of key health outcomes. With regard to pregnancy, indicators show that the percentage of women classed as 'obese' in Edinburgh is lower than that seen in Scotland, 17% compared to 26%. There are risks associated with being overweight in pregnancy such as developing conditions like pre-eclampsia and gestational diabetes. It is worth noting there are significant discrepancies between population groups, with poorer outcomes seen for those living in areas of higher socio-economic deprivation. This is demonstrated by the fact that over 20% of pregnant women living in the most deprived areas are classified as obese, compared with less than 10% of those living in the least deprived areas. The same trends are seen for other indicators, with nearly 20% of women in the most deprived areas smoking in pregnancy, compared with less than 1% in the least deprived areas.

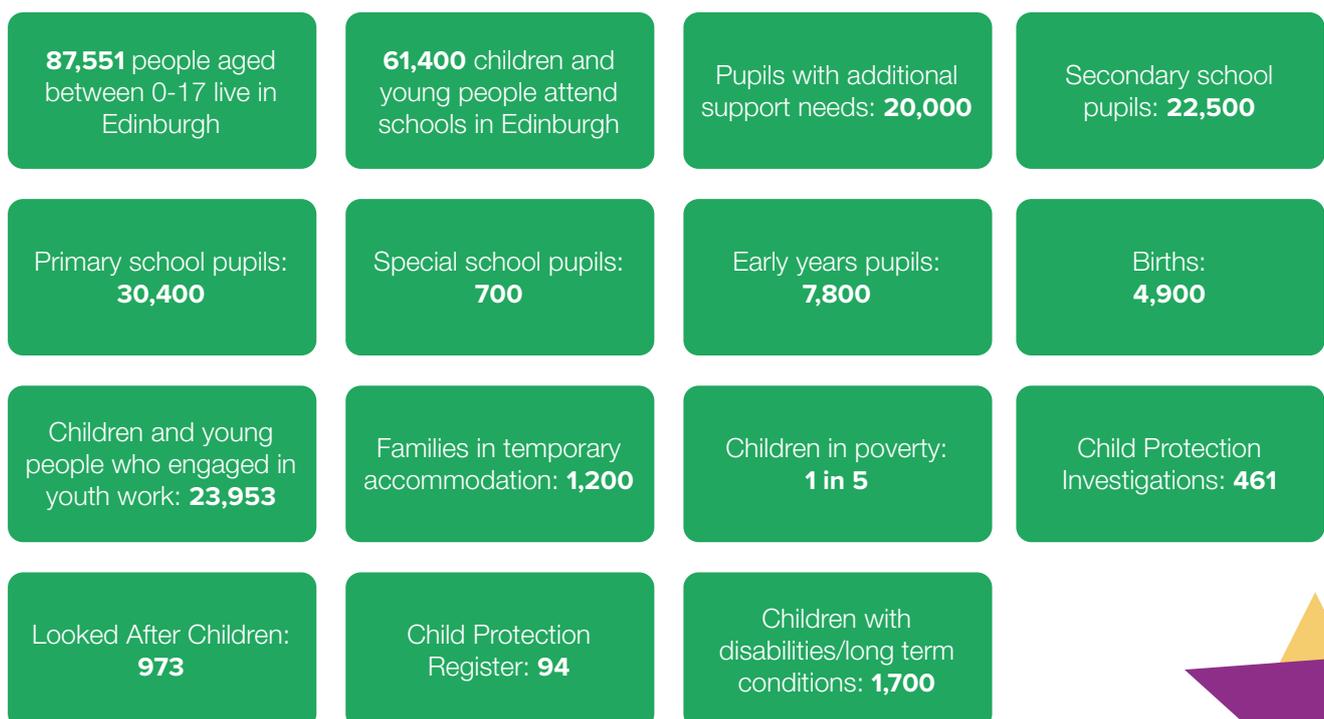
The proportion of babies reported to be exclusively breastfed at their 6-8 week check-up is 49%, this is higher than the Scottish proportion of 32%. This has been steadily increasing across the city since around 2012/13, in line with Scotland, although at a faster rate. Regarding developmental concerns recorded for children at their 27-30-month review, the percentage of children with one or more concerns recorded was 10% compared to the Scottish percentage of 15%.

In Edinburgh, 73% of children in primary 1 have a healthy weight, compared to 70% of children across Scotland, this has declined, however since 2018/19. Regarding oral health, 78% of P1 children were shown to have good dental health, this increases to 79% for children in P7. In both cases, this is higher than the percentage seen across Scotland.

Local data from the 2021/2022 Health and Wellbeing Census Scotland survey, conducted with Primary 5 to Secondary 6 pupils, demonstrated the following in relation to education, mental health, neighbourhood, life at home and physical health for this age range living in Edinburgh:

- **81% strongly agreed or agreed they enjoyed learning new things**
- **65% agreed that adults are good at listening to what they say**
- **67% said the area in which they live is a good place to live**
- **65% said they always have an adult in their life who they can trust and talk to about personal problems**
- **63% of P7-S6 pupils said they never went to bed hungry**

While Edinburgh has made progress in many areas related to the well-being of children and young people, there is still room for improvement. Addressing the attainment gap between the most and least deprived pupils, tackling mental health issues, and reducing obesity rates are key priorities for the city. Continued investment in targeted programs, collaboration among local stakeholders, and the evaluation of existing initiatives are crucial for ensuring that Edinburgh remains a supportive and inclusive environment for all its children and young people.



Engagement with children, young people and families

Over the last three years children and young people were regularly consulted through Youthlink Scotland, Scottish Youth Parliament, Young Scot and Children's Parliament, with Lockdown Lowdown and How Are You Doing surveys.

Data from these consultations have been drawn upon locally to influence strategic planning.

In December 2020, an Edinburgh Family Support Mapping consultation was undertaken, with a recommendation that information gathered from this consultation should influence resource allocation decisions taken by Community Planning Partnerships.

Participation in Implementation

During the COVID-19 lockdown, a Family Support Mapping Exercise, Parental Consultation and Schools Consultation with over 2600 parents and carers, schools and organisations was carried out on behalf of the Edinburgh Children's Partnership (ECP).

As a result of this process, the following 7 key priority areas for improving Family Support were identified building on existing good practice across the board.

1. Accessible Outreach Support For Families
2. Support for Parents of Children with Additional Support Needs (ASN)
3. Supporting Parents with their own and their children's Mental Health
4. Improving Confidence in Parental Engagement/ Family and Home Learning
5. Increasing Access to Low Cost Family Activities
6. Antenatal and Perinatal Support
7. Better Signposting and Information on Available Family Support

Edinburgh Youth Action

In November 2022 there was approval at Full Council Committee to progress what was then referred to as “Young People’s Assembly” but this is likely to be known as Edinburgh Youth Action following consultation with a group of young people in January 2023.

Local youth forums will be started alongside a citywide forum, the aim of which will be to enable the voices of young people to be heard.

Edinburgh Children’s Services Partnership will look to engage with Edinburgh Youth Action as part of the ongoing delivery and implementation of 2023-2026 Children’s Services Plan.

Champions Board

Edinburgh Champions Board is a platform for young people with care experience to influence the policy and practice of corporate parents through a range of participant and engagement activities.

For this reason, Edinburgh Children’s Services Partnership should also engage with this group in addition to the Edinburgh Youth Action.



Our Priorities

AIM	PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION
We will ensure Edinburgh's Children and Young People have timely access to appropriate emotional, mental health, and wellbeing support	Developing a single point of access to efficiently allocate mental health & wellbeing supports in line with Scotland's new Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy
We will ensure Edinburgh's Children and Young People receive the appropriate needs-based support whilst they are assessed for neurodevelopmental concerns	Utilising the single point of access to implement a neurodevelopmental pathway in line with the SG service specification
We will work to increase community-based opportunities for Edinburgh's Children and Young People in safe spaces with trusted adults	Working with our third sector partners to sustainably embed youth work into service models.
We will provide families with holistic support to help to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people and families	Implementing our whole family support strategy and effectively utilise the whole family wellbeing fund.
We will reduce the number of families and children living in relative poverty	Implementing and delivering on the actions set out in the Local Poverty Action Plan
Partner agencies will work together to commission the services that are needed to fulfil the priorities identified in the Children's Services Plan	Develop robust joint commissioning processes and oversight
All professionals are appropriately trained and equipped to deliver services in a trauma-informed way	Implementing Trauma Informed Practice throughout the partnership workforce
We will ensure the rights of every Children and Young People in Edinburgh are upheld by embedding UNCRC into daily practice and processes	Developing a plan to ensure UNCRC is implemented across all partnership services
We will work to ensure families are supported to stay together at home	Delivery of The Promise and the new Corporate Parenting plans within Edinburgh
Families are supported in a way that demonstrably improves outcomes for mothers and babies	Developing a partnership approach to testing bespoke supports offered throughout pregnancy and early years for families experiencing complex social factors
We will strengthen GIRFEC practice and ensure information is shared proactively to aid prevention and early intervention	Developing a plan to ensure GIRFEC practice is strengthened across all partnership services, and information is shared between partners effectively.
We will ensure Children and Young People have access to healthy environments, in line with UNCRC, to support their health and wellbeing and enable them to fulfil their potential.	Develop a partnership approach to place and planning , ensuring that children's voices are included in decisions about their environment and that they are supported to make use of facilities and activities across the city.

How will we measure our success?

The Partnership have identified a number of key objectives in order to measure the effectiveness of this plan. These are outlined below:

- An increase in the number of families supported through a whole family GIRFEC early help plan.
- An increase in the number of children, young people and families making progress against the goals in their GIRFEC plan.
- An increase in the number of children, young people and families who are satisfied with the support they receive.
- A reduction in children living in poverty.
- A reduction in contacts requesting a statutory social work service – meaning that families are supported within local communities by those who already know them and can provide early intervention at a very early level.
- A reduction in the number of children and young people with a child protection plan.
- A reduction in the number of children and young people looked after outside of their family.
- A reduction in crisis mental health intervention being required.
- An increased amount of professionals within the partnership receiving multi-agency trauma informed practice awareness training.

How will the Plan be monitored?

The partnership will develop an implementation and action plan in response to the priorities and objectives.

The partnership will rigorously monitor and evaluate the plan, to establish how effective the plan is, through various methods such as developing an improved partnership data set and feedback from children young people and families. The partnership will also provide feedback on outcomes and the difference it makes to children, young people, and families, to ensure that all partners continue to deliver effective services for children young people and families.



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