TO:    Councillors A. Anderson (Chair), K. Pragnell (Vice Chair), T. Buchanan, K. Campbell, D. Devlin, C. Merrick, O. O'Donnell and G. Wallace; and Ms F. Gilchrist; Ms D. Graham; Mr D. Morris; and Ms E Yedd.


**EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

A meeting of the Education Committee will be held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Eastwood Park, Giffnock, on **Thursday, 12 June 2025 at 10.00 am.**

The agenda of business is as listed below.

Yours faithfully


*Louise Pringle*

**LOUISE PRINGLE**
**DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS**


# AGENDA


**1.    APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**


**2.    DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members are requested to give notice of any declarations of interest in respect of items of business on the Agenda.


**3.    EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT ON WILLIAMWOOD HIGH SCHOOL**

Report by Director of Education (copy attached, pages 3 – 32)


**4.    SPOTLIGHT ON EARLY YEARS TRACKING TOOL**

Presentation by Head of Education Services (Performance and Quality Improvement)

**5.    EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE ANNUAL REPORT**

Report by Director of Education (copy attached, pages 33 – 48)

**6.    EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT ON EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL'S EDUCATION DEPARTMENT'S APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

Report by Director of Education (copy attached, pages 49 – 64)

**7.    WEST PARTNERSHIP REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE: LESSONS FROM 2017-2025**

Report by Director of Education (copy attached, pages 65 - 108)

**8.    REPORT ON UPDATED APPROACH TO GETTING IT RIGHT FOR EVERY CHILD IN EAST RENFREWSHIRE**

Report by Director of Education (copy attached, pages 109 - 182)

**9.    CLOSURE OF GLEN FAMILY CENTRE AND FUTURE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AGED 0-3 YEARS RESIDING IN THE EAST OF THE AUTHORITY FOR SCHOOL SESSION 2026/27 AND BEYOND**

Report by Director of Education (copy attached, pages 183 - 208)

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 12 JUNE 2025

Report by Director of Education

EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT ON WILLIAMWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.    To inform Education Committee of the report by Education Scotland on Williamwood High School.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.  Education Committee is asked to:

a)    recognise and comment on the outstanding Education Scotland report on Williamwood High School;

b)    commend the school's achievements by awarding it accreditation from February 2025 until February 2028; and

c)    approve the action plan to address the agreed areas for improvement in the Communication Support Service.

**BACKGROUND**

3.    Williamwood High School was inspected by a team from Education Scotland in February 2025.  The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school and the Communication Support Service (CSS) identifying particular strengths and areas for improvement using the Education Scotland six-point scale and the self-evaluation framework *How Good is our School?*

4.    Since August 2016, Education Scotland use 2 models of school inspection.  The full and the short model.

5.    The full model evaluates 4 quality indicators, with the short model focusing on 2.  Both models include an evaluation of Learning, Teaching and Assessment and Raising Attainment and Achievement.

6.    The school and CSS were inspected using the short model, with an evaluation for 2 quality indicators and a short report which details the strengths and areas for improvement. The report was published in April 2025 and is attached as Appendix 1. It has been issued to staff, parents, local elected members, the Convener for Education, Equalities, Culture and Leisure and made available to the local community.

**REPORT**

7.      In assessing the indicators of quality in the school and CSS, Education Scotland found one  area to be **very good**: learning, teaching and assessment, and the other, raising attainment and achievement to be **excellent**.

8.      This is an excellent report on an East Renfrewshire establishment, with the evaluations and report matching the school's and department's evaluations.

9.      The report highlights sector leading practice across Scotland and noted the following as an area worth sharing more widely nationally:

- Use of data to improve learning experiences, attainment, participation in achievement and attendance.

10.     The particular strengths highlighted by the inspection team included:

- Highly motivated and articulate young people who are determined to achieve well. Very positive relationships across the school support a constructive and purposeful culture of learning which promotes very effective engagement in learning by young people.

- The headteacher, senior leaders and staff have worked very successfully with young people to develop a high quality and well-structured framework of key principles in learning, teaching and assessment. As a result, young people take responsibility for their learning and benefit from motivating and enjoyable learning experiences.

- Young people benefit from a very extensive range of activities and programmes which support and develop their wider achievement. Young people's achievements are encouraged, recorded and celebrated by school staff highly effectively as a central part of the school's culture.

- Young people attain exceptionally well throughout their time at school. Staff use high quality approaches to monitor learners' progress and attainment and create skilled interventions to support them as required. This supports well a culture where all young people are encouraged to succeed and flourish.

11.     The commitment of staff at all levels to ensure young people achieve and make progress across the school and CSS was identified by the inspection team:

- Staff at all levels recognise their responsibility to improve outcomes for every young person. They provide highly equitable access for all young people to all aspects of school life. As a result, young people, including those who may face barriers to their learning, are attaining and achieving very successfully and making strong and sustained progress throughout their time in school.

- In both 2022/23 and 2023/24 all young people who left the CSS entered positive destinations on leaving school. The majority of young people move to supported college places. A few young people move to mainstream college courses.

12.   The inspection team identified 1 area for improvement:

- Continue to build on the highly effective planning in learning, teaching and assessment. This should include further development of approaches to learning, teaching and assessment and improving attainment and achievements in the Communication and Support Service.

13.   Given that the school has been judged to be very good and excellent in the indicators assessed by Education Scotland, there is no need for an additional action plan to address the areas for improvement as noted above in the mainstream classes.

14.   The school will continue to use the results of its own self evaluation to identify priorities for improvement which will be published in its annual standards and quality report and school plan.

15.   The letter to parents/carers and more detailed summarised inspection findings is available on the Education Scotland website.

16.   Considering the Summarised Inspection Findings comments regarding the CSS, the department has asked the Head Teacher to prepare an action plan (Appendix 2) which details the planned steps for improvement within the provision.

17.    The department will continue to work in partnership with the Head Teacher and staff to share the sector leading practices with other schools within East Renfrewshire and across Scotland.

18.   Education Scotland will make no further reports in connection with the inspection of Williamwood High School and the Education Department recommends that the school be accredited for its achievements. This will mean that the authority will not carry out any formal quality assurance activities in Williamwood High School mainstream classes for a period of 3 years from the date of the inspection, i.e. until February 2028.

19.   Within 2 years of the date of publication, the Quality Improvement Service will revisit the CSS to review the impact of the improvement (action) plan and to provide a progress report to parents.

**FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY**

20.   There are no financial or efficiency implications related to this report.


**RECOMMENDATIONS**

21. Education Committee is asked to:

a) recognise and comment on the outstanding Education Scotland report on Williamwood High School;

b) commend the school's achievements by awarding it accreditation from February 2025 until February 2028; and

c) approve the action plan to address the agreed areas for improvement in the Communication Support Service.

Mark Ratter
Director of Education
12 June 2025

**6**

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Appendices
1.    Education Scotland report on Williamwood High School.
2.    CSS Action Plan

# Summarised inspection findings

## Williamwood High School

East Renfrewshire Council

29 April 2025

# Key contextual information

School Name: Williamwood High School
Council: East Renfrewshire
SEED number: 8602034
Roll (Sep 2023: 1668)

Williamwood High School is a non-denominational school serving the areas of Clarkston, Busby and Netherlee. There are three associated primary schools: Carolside Primary School, Netherlee Primary School and Busby Primary School. The headteacher is supported by six depute headteachers and a senior leader, who has responsibility for the Communication Support Service, located within Williamwood High School.

Attendance is generally above the national average.

Exclusions are generally below the national average.

In September 2022, 4 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals.

In September 2023, one per cent of pupils live in 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland.

In September 2023, the school reported that 25 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

| 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment | very good |
|---|---|
| This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and  achievements. The themes are:<br><br>■ learning and engagement<br>■ quality of teaching<br>■ effective use of assessment<br>■ planning, tracking and monitoring | |

■ Senior leaders, staff and young people have worked together very successfully to develop a highly positive culture for learning at Williamwood High School. The strong culture of mutual respect across the school supports a constructive climate for learning where young people feel valued and heard. This learning environment embodies the school's values of respect, ambition and kindness. It reflects the school community's commitment to promote and live the articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Well-established positive relationships are a major strength of the school. Almost all young people feel that they are encouraged by staff to do the best they can.

■ Senior leaders have recognised the value of learners' motivation and articulate contribution to developing successfully a strong culture of learning. Central to this successful process has been the creation by staff and young people of the classroom expectations for teachers and learners. These expectations are described in the 'Proactive' core principles of learning and teaching. This has supported the creation of a common 'language of learning' across the school community, which supports young people to review more effectively their learning and progress. Teachers use these principles well to support highly effective planning of learning,

teaching and assessment. Commendably, young people from all year groups are involved regularly in using these principles to review learning across the school. For example, as Young Leaders of Learning and as part of 'pupil pop-ins' to observe classroom activities. Young people use 'How good is OUR school?' and other frameworks with teachers to support reviews and changes to classroom practice.

■ Young people are highly motivated and exhibit a strong determination to do their best. Most young people enjoy learning at school and almost all young people participate well in their lessons. Young people appreciate the opportunities for active, engaging and motivating activities which they experience in most lessons. The voice of young people is at the heart of learning experiences. They benefit from a wide range of opportunities to have their views heard and acted on at individual, class, faculty and whole school level.

■ Young people enjoy increasing opportunities to make choices in and lead their own learning. In most lessons, young people benefit from high quality opportunities to learn independently with their peers and in larger groups. Learners are eloquent when sharing ideas and responses with their teachers and each other. As a result, almost all young people benefit from the opportunity to develop further these important skills. Young people are beginning to identify and articulate meta-skills and are at the early stages of applying them effectively in different contexts.

■ Staff work together very effectively, with a relentless focus on further improving young people's learning experiences. Through collaborative professional activities, staff identify key areas for improvement and areas of effective practice. Commendably, these evaluations are undertaken alongside teachers from other schools and young people on a regular basis. This well thought through approach is having a positive effect on the further development of approaches to learning and teaching. For example, teachers have successfully developed a range of enjoyable and creative teaching approaches with which young people engage well. As planned, senior leaders should continue to embed this work further into the daily life of the school. For example, how to ensure greater consistency in the use of formative assessment to inform day-to-day responsive planning of learning experiences and support for young people.

■ Teachers have embedded successfully a clear and flexible structure to their lessons. In almost all lessons, teachers share effectively both the purpose of learning and how young people will know they are successful. Most teachers across the school share regularly with learners very clear and helpful examples of high quality work which exemplify success. This is supporting pace, understanding and motivation among young people in their learning.

■ Staff know young people very well as learners. They plan effectively and with a strong awareness of individual learning needs. Pupil support assistants support effectively young people who have barriers to their learning in class or in small groups. Young people are increasingly benefiting from high quality examples of challenge in their lessons. As planned, staff should extend and embed approaches to support greater individualised challenge further across the school.

■ In all subject areas, learners' experiences are supported by teachers' use of digital technologies. Young people benefit from regular and consistent use of online learning and resource platforms. In a few highly effective examples, teachers employ digital technologies very creatively to enhance learning experiences through virtual or immersive learning tasks or multiple online resources.

■ Almost all teachers use questioning regularly and very effectively to check for understanding and to prompt recall among young people. They are skilful in their use of questioning as a tool

to maintain the pace of learning and to check understanding throughout a lesson. The majority of teachers promote deeper thinking through effective use of questioning and prompt activities.

■ Young people benefit from highly effective and regular feedback from their teachers. This feedback includes frequent learning conversations with teachers, feedback forms highlighting next steps and regular verbal and written feedback. Teachers use this range of approaches very well to support young people to evaluate their learning. As a result, almost all young people are confident in describing their progress in their learning and identifying the next steps they need to take. Young people in the broad general education (BGE) are able to understand and discuss the progress they are making in classes confidently as a result of a straightforward new approach referencing 'bronze, silver and gold' levels.

■ All teachers engage regularly in moderation activities within faculties and with teachers in other schools. An increasing number of departments are beginning to engage in moderation activities between curricular areas. As a result, almost all teachers have a strong shared understanding of assessment standards. This regular and robust approach to moderation informs effectively curriculum planning. In the BGE, a few subject areas are developing increasingly sophisticated approaches to assess learners in a range of ways. Teachers in almost every subject area work with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). This supports further their understanding of national expectations. They use their experience well to support their colleagues' understanding of national assessment standards. This helps teachers support young people to progress confidently through their learning in the senior phase.

■ All departments in the BGE and senior phase have highly effective arrangements in place for tracking and monitoring the progress of young people. All teachers make frequent use of this information to understand better the progress being made by all young people. Teachers also use this data very effectively to plan series of lessons and to make appropriate adjustments for individual young people.

## 2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

■ The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

| 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement | excellent |
|---|---|

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

At Williamwood High School, staff have a relentless focus on ensuring that all young people flourish in a range of creative ways that encourage learners' aspirations, skills and talents. Senior leaders, with the enthusiastic support of the school community, build on the principle of 'no-one left behind' to nurture a culture of belonging, ambition and excellence. Staff at all levels recognise their responsibility to improve outcomes for every young person. They provide highly equitable access for all young people to all aspects of school life. As a result, young people, including those who may face barriers to their learning, are attaining and achieving very successfully and making strong and sustained progress throughout their time in school.

**Attainment in literacy and numeracy**
**BGE**
- In 2023/24 almost all young people achieved Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) third level or better in literacy and numeracy by the end of S3. Almost all young people achieved CfE fourth level in numeracy and most young people achieved CfE fourth level in literacy in 2023/24 by the end of S3. Performance in literacy and numeracy has been consistently outstanding over time.

**Leavers**
**Literacy**
- Almost all young people who left school between 2019/20 and 2022/23 achieved Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 5 or better in literacy, in line with the virtual comparator (VC). Most young people who left school between 2019/20 and 2022/23 achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy, significantly higher than the VC in the same period.

- Almost all young people who require additional support achieved literacy at SCQF level 4 or better 2018/19 to 2021/22. Most young people who required additional support from 2018/19 to 2021/22 achieved literacy at SCQF level 5 or better, showing steady progress over these years and improving to almost all young people in 2022/23.

**Numeracy**
- Almost all young people who left school between 2019/20 and 2022/23 broadly achieved Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 5 or better in numeracy, in line with the VC, improving to being significantly higher than the VC in 2022/23. A majority of young people who left school between 2019/20 and 2022/23 achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy, significantly much higher than the VC in the same period.

- Almost all young people who require additional support achieved numeracy at SCQF level 4 or better between 2018/19 and 2021/22. Most young people who required additional support from

2018/19 to 2022/23 achieved numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better, maintaining steady progress over these years.

**Cohorts**
- Teachers are improving young people's attainment in literacy and numeracy as they move through the school. Staff are working well across Williamwood High School and the local authority to ensure a shared understanding of standards.

**Literacy**
- At S4, almost all young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy from 2019/20 to 2022/23. This has improved from in line with the VC between 2019/20 and 2021/22 to significantly higher than the VC in 2022/23 and 2023/24. By S5, based on the S4 roll, most young people between 2018/19 and 2023/24 achieved literacy at SCQF level 6, significantly much higher than the VC over the same period. By S6, based on the S4 roll, most young people achieved literacy at SCQF level 6 from 2021/22 to 2023/24, significantly higher, or much higher than the VC in the same period.

**Numeracy**
- At S4, almost all young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy from 2019/20 to 2023/24 generally significantly higher than the VC. By S5 and S6, based on the S4 roll, a majority of young people between 2018/19 and 2023/24 achieved numeracy at SCQF level 6, significantly much higher than the VC over the same period.

- Across S4 to S6, the percentages of young people entering and achieving grades A to C and grade A at National 5 and Higher in English and mathematics are considerably above the national figure in 2023/24.

**Attainment over time**
- Class teachers, pupil support staff, curriculum leaders and senior leaders contribute to very well-structured and regular analysis of young people's ongoing attainment data. All teachers consider the progress of identified groups of young people, such as young people with potential barriers to their learning. Staff use data to successfully implement a range of skilled and effective interventions to further support identified young people. This is based on robust judgements of learner progress in both the BGE and the senior phase, building on skilful planning of learning teaching and assessment. Young people are attaining more highly than other young people of similar backgrounds.

**BGE**
- Almost all young people are attaining very well in all curriculum areas. By the end of S3, almost all young people are achieving third CfE level or better in almost all curriculum areas. Attainment in the BGE has improved over time. Highly effective approaches to tracking, monitoring and the use of data are helping to ensure that all young people are supported to progress appropriately through the BGE successfully across the curriculum, including those facing barriers to their learning.

**Senior Phase**

■ Based on average complementary tariff scores, the lowest attaining 20%, the middle 60% and the highest 20% young people are achieving consistently significantly above the VC as they leave school. Young people with additional support needs generally achieve above the VC.

■ As young people move through the school, based on complementary tariff scores, the lowest attaining and middle attaining young people are attaining significantly higher and much higher than the VC from 2019/20 to 2023/24. The highest attaining 20% attain in line with the VC. There is a pattern of consistent improvement as young people progress from S4-S6, based on complementary tariff scores.

**Breadth and Depth**

■ At S4, there are very high standards of attainment being consistently sustained at SCQF level five or better over time. The percentage of young people attaining National Qualifications at SCQF level 5C or better and those attaining top-quality passes, for one or more to eight or more courses is significantly higher or much higher than the VC. A majority of young people attain six or more at A-C.

■ By S5, a majority of young people attain at SCQF level 6C or better, generally significantly much higher than the VC. The attainment of young people at SCQF level 6C or better, including top quality 'A' grade passes, for one or more to five or more awards is higher and significantly much higher than the VC for the last five years from 2019/20 to 2023/24.

■ Young people at S4 are presented for a significantly higher number of SCQF qualifications than the national average and are experiencing success.

■ In almost all subject areas, young people are performing much higher than national comparators and high-quality passes are a notable strength.

**Overall quality of learners' achievement**

■ There is a strong culture of achievement in the school. Young people develop their skills and confidence through participating and leading in a wide range of groups and activities both within school and in their local communities. In the BGE and senior phase, young people speak confidently about a range of useful skills which they are developing. Importantly, young people recognise how these skills better support them with their learning in class. Young people also speak positively about how they use these skills in other contexts such as supporting and leading at extra-curricular clubs, working with younger pupils, volunteering at school events, taking responsibility for school publicity and supporting with preparing information for the school website.

■ Participation in activities both in and out of school is tracked very effectively by senior leaders. This data is reviewed in a systematic way by school leaders to identify young people who are not participating. The well considered school intervention of 'check and connect' with the Pupil Support team is supporting the school to better identify and support young people to participate in activities. Young people appreciate how their views are collected, considered and then acted on by staff to shape their experiences. This is resulting in confident and successful young people who have a strong sense of agency across their school.

■ Collegiate activities and improvement plans have a focus on recognising the success of all young people. This has resulted in the celebration of achievement being fully embedded

across all year groups and all curricular areas. Young people value the recognition given to all types of achievement both in class and out of class. Young people and parents speak positively about the wide range of ways the school recognises achievements such as house tokens, achievement badges, certificates, pupil of the month, assemblies and award ceremonies. Young people value the recently introduced 'Williamwood Awards' which recognise achievement for demonstration of the school values. Young people feel that this has helped to keep the school values in focus and relevant.

- An increasing number of young people are developing effectively their skills of communication, commitment, leadership and teamwork through participating in an extensive range of activities. Young people talk confidently about their volunteering experiences both within the school and the community. This is supporting them well to develop further their communication and leadership skills.  A large number of young people achieve Saltire awards. The recently introduced Barista level 5 and mental health and well-being award at level 5 is providing valuable volunteering opportunities for a targeted group of young people. These young people talk confidently about improvements in their confidence, time management and employability. Commendably, the school takes active steps to have young people's achievements accredited through qualifications and awards.

- Senior and middle leaders should continue their plans to develop their whole school approach to skills development in conjunction with the well-considered and already embedded wellbeing tracking. This will support all young people to better understand the impact of the well-planned extended curriculum offer.

**Equity for all learners**
- A culture of ambition and high expectations for all is highly evident across the school. Staff at all levels recognise their responsibility in improving outcomes for every young person. The school systematically and robustly tracks the attainment and achievement of young people facing additional challenges. Through close monitoring, senior and middle leaders identify the barriers facing groups and individuals and plan targeted interventions and supports to ensure they achieve as highly as possible. As a result, young people who face additional challenges attain more highly than those of similar needs and backgrounds nationally.

- At tracking periods, individuals and groups of learners are identified for support to improve attainment and achievement. In BGE, literacy and numeracy interventions have successfully improved attainment. In the senior phase, targeted supports such as the Library Group, study support and small group tutoring are leading to improvements in attainment in National Qualifications for identified learners from key equity groups.

- The school has a 'Promoting Positive Attendance and Timekeeping' policy, subtitled 'an ongoing story of maximising attendance'. This policy lays out clear procedures and describes the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in achieving high levels of attendance. A few young people have persistent absences of more than 10%. Staff approach each instance on an individual basis. Pupil support staff work closely with primary colleagues to plan bespoke approaches for young people whose attendance has been irregular in primary school. A few young people are engaging with tailored support for emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA). Very few young people have part-time or adapted timetables.

- The proportion of young people leaving Williamwood High School to go on to a positive destination is consistently higher than the VC. The school has developed highly effective

partnerships to support young people on to the next stage including those most at risk. As a result, almost all go on to a positive and sustained destination.

**Context**

The Communication Support Service (CSS) for East Renfrewshire Council was established in 2014 to provide an enhanced level of targeted support for those secondary-aged pupils who have identified core language and social communication needs. Senior leaders recently reviewed and amended the staff remits to include a senior leader for the service. This was in response to the increasing numbers of young people attending the service. The CSS is accommodated within an area of Williamwood High School. A number of the pupils who attend the specialist service have a diagnosis of autism.

There are currently 51 young people attending the CSS from S1 – S6. Young people who attend the CSS have a range of additional learning needs. Almost all young people benefit from targeted support in the CSS, as required and access parts of the mainstream environment. The CSS provides a well-resourced learning environment in the centre of the school. This comprises a range of classroom spaces, break-out areas, a 'digi-den' and a sensory circuit room.

**QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment**

■ The majority of young people in the CSS participate well in learning activities in a calm and deliberate manner, sometimes showing focus and resilience to remain on task when others are experiencing visible distress due to their additional support need (ASN). Young people are occasionally disengaged in lessons because activities are too worksheet based and do not hold their interest. Teachers need to take greater cognisance of young people's learning needs and provide more activities which are set at the right level for each young person. Teachers also should engage more with young people to provide learning activities which are more relevant to them individually and better matched to their individual needs and interests.

■ The CSS has recently introduced an approach to support young people to reflect on their emotions and readiness to learn. While not yet consistent, a few young people are using this approach effectively at the start of lessons to help them settle to learning. On a few occasions, young people take increasing responsibility for their learning and show strong self-advocacy skills when discussing their ambition and motivation for learning. This is not yet consistent across the CSS. Staff should now consider how this approach can be used more effectively to demonstrate improvements in young people's engagement with their learning.

■ A few young people benefit from well-matched approaches using a range of digital technologies to support their learning. Young people use desktop publishing software enthusiastically in core skills lessons. They choose different ways to present information on topics of their interest to good effect. While on a few occasions teachers and support staff provide well matched support in dialogue with learners, this could be more consistent. Staff need to improve the use of questioning, giving young people time to answer and checking for understanding.

■ Most teachers plan across a variety of levels to provide differentiated learning within lessons. On a few occasions the learning experience provided was the same for all young people. Teachers use a variety of summative assessments to inform their judgements of achievement of a CfE level. They engage in moderation activities across the CSS, and occasionally beyond to ensure assessment information is valid and reliable. Staff do not yet have a consistent approach to assessing and recording progress of young people working at early levels in the BGE. Young people's progress is tracked across BGE levels and in National Qualifications using the whole school system to identify progress. Leaders in the CSS recognise the need to

develop systems and processes to capture, track and monitor progress for all young people in the CSS.

■ Senior leaders have recently changed the way the CSS operates. Consequently, senior leaders have also made changes to reporting to parents the progress their child is making. This individual feedback relates largely to young people's wellbeing. Staff should continue to consult with parents on the effectiveness of these reports and develop further reporting on progress across the curriculum.

**QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement**
**Attainment in literacy and numeracy**
■ Young people's progress and attainment is expressed in 'overall' statements rather than for specific cohorts. This is because of the small numbers of young people who attend the CSS.

**BGE**
■ Overall, the majority of young people make good progress in literacy and numeracy from their individual starting points. Teachers focus on literacy and numeracy skills during 'core' time. Senior leaders track progress through CfE levels in literacy and numeracy three time per year. Staff should now also consider using CfE milestones in order to reflect better the progress of all young people.

■ In literacy and English, most young people talk well to each other and to adults and enjoy quiet time to read. They would benefit for more opportunities to write for extended periods of time.

■ In numeracy and mathematics, the majority of young people are aware of the time, both digital and analogue and have a good knowledge of fractions. They need more opportunities to develop their knowledge and use of information handling through for example class surveys.

**Senior phase**
■ Young people in the senior phase study literacy and numeracy through a variety of different courses and at different levels from SCQF level 1 to SCQF level 5 depending on their abilities and prior learning. Senior leaders are at the early stages of using data to analyse progress and attainment. They should continue to develop systems which enable them to see clearly how each young person is progressing through a range of levels and curriculum areas. A few young people could achieve more.

**Attainment over time**
**BGE**
■ Teachers use local authority pathways to plan learning activities for young people throughout the BGE. Young people are working within early to fourth CfE levels. Overall young people make appropriate progress from prior levels of learning across the BGE. Senior leaders are at the early stages of developing more bespoke methods of capturing young people's attainment using a wider range of measures.

■ Senior leaders track progress across expressive arts, social subjects, science and health and wellbeing in the BGE in 2023/24. The majority of young people achieve expected CfE levels by the end of S3 in these areas.

**Senior phase**

- Young people at the senior phase study a range of NQs and other awards. Staff in the CSS work closely with the English and mathematics departments to provide additional support for identified young people. On average young people increased the number of awards they achieved from three in 2022/23 to four in 2023/24.

- Staff should continue to keep under review the curriculum for each individual young person to ensure that they are able to maximise their achievements and attainment by the time they leave school.

**Quality of learners' achievements**

- Young people at all levels develop personal, social and life skills through a range of activities, courses and programmes of work.

- Staff provide structured activities outdoors at lunchtimes and after school to support young people's developing independence. Young people enjoy participating in whole school activities such as rugby and football which help them develop resilience in unfamiliar contexts.

- Young people record visits beyond the school through their weekly diaries. They record how they have contributed to school events such as the Christmas fayre and any learning they have particularly enjoyed. This helps them reflect on their contributions to the wider community and develop a sense of belonging to Williamwood High School.

- All young people belong to one of the eight houses in Williamwood High School. They actively take part in house events and take pride in adding to the points total of their individual houses. Young people in the CSS gain house points by, for example, working for extended periods of time in class, demonstrating good timekeeping or travelling safely and independently on school transport.

- 'Young people who demonstrate the school values are nominated for the Williamwood Awards. This whole school award recognises and celebrates young people's successes in, for example, being kind and respectful towards others.

- A few young people successfully develop valuable life skills through their participation in John Muir, personal development and wellbeing awards. Young people in S5 and S6 also work towards an employability award which supports them well as they prepare to leave school. Staff should continue to seek more ways in which to accredit young people's achievements.

- Staff are at the early stages of tracking and monitoring young people's participation in activities within or beyond the school. They should continue with their plans to develop such a system, which also recognises young people's developing skills. This should enable staff to identify those young people who may be at risk of missing out from these valuable opportunities.

**Equity for all learners**

- Staff across the CSS know and understand the circumstances in which young people and their families live. As a result, they sensitively and discretely provide support for a few young people with for example, school uniform or financial support for school trips. Young people are

supported to participate in range of local work experience placements or to visit further education establishments.

- In both 2022/23 and 2023/24 all young people who left the CSS entered positive destinations on leaving school. The majority of young people move to supported college places. A few young people move to mainstream college courses.

# Other relevant evidence

- Young people use the school library to support their learning and promote their interest in reading for pleasure. For example, young people value visits to the library with their English teachers to select books for personal reading. The library is staffed by the school librarian, who also works in another school library within the local authority.

- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and young people. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of young people through food in school. Minor areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider. Aspects of good practice were identified in relation to food and health promotion in the school.

- The school's work to provide a relevant 'appropriate' curriculum with pathways for all has led to improved attainment for pupils facing additional challenges. The introduction of the Wellbeing Wing provides a coordinated and supported approach for a few young people which is improving attendance and engagement. Highly effective partnerships, for example, with Community Learning and Development, Active Schools and the Rangers Charitable Foundation are providing relevant learning experiences. Flexibility in curriculum offer at the senior phase have improved attendance, engagement and attainment for targeted young people.

- Staff use a range of approaches to ensure equity for all learners. Recent work on the cost of the school day has reduced barriers to participation. The introduction of 'Everything Oak-y?' allows young people and families to self-refer and access a range of essentials in a discrete and sensitive way.

- School staff have developed very strong relationships with families through a coordinated approach that targets support where it is needed. An example is family learning events like the family cooking classes which have led to improvements in attendance for targeted young people.

# Practice worth sharing more widely

## Use of data to improve learning experiences, attainment, participation in achievement and attendance.

Class teachers, pupil support staff, curriculum leaders and senior leaders contribute to very well-structured and regular analysis of young people's ongoing attainment data. All teachers make frequent use of this information to understand better the progress being made by all young people. All teachers consider the progress of identified groups of young people, such as young people with potential barriers to their learning. Teachers use this data very effectively to plan series of lessons and to make appropriate interventions for individual young people. Staff use data to successfully implement a range of skilled and effective interventions to further support identified young people. This is based on robust judgements of learner progress in both the BGE and the senior phase, building on skilful planning of learning teaching and assessment. Young people are attaining more highly than other young people of similar backgrounds.

The school systematically and robustly tracks the attainment and achievement of young people facing additional challenges. Through close monitoring, senior and middle leaders identify the barriers facing groups and individuals and plan targeted interventions and supports to ensure they achieve as highly as possible. As a result, young people who face additional challenges attain more highly than those of similar needs and backgrounds nationally.

Participation in activities both in and out of school is tracked very effectively by senior leaders. This data is reviewed in a systematic way by school leaders to identify young people who are not participating. The well considered school intervention of 'check and connect' with the Pupil Support team is supporting the school to better identify and support young people to participate in activities.

Senior and middle leaders monitor closely attendance data. A few young people have persistent absences of more than 10%. Staff approach each instance on an individual basis. Pupil support staff work closely with primary colleagues to plan bespoke approaches for young people whose attendance has been irregular in primary school. The introduction of the Wellbeing Wing provides a coordinated and supported approach for a few young people which is improving attendance and engagement.

# Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

| All | 100% |
| --- | --- |
| Almost all | 91%-99% |
| Most | 75%-90% |
| Majority | 50%-74% |
| Minority/less than half | 15%-49% |
| A few | less than 15% |

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.

# Williamwood
## High School
**Mighty oaks** from little acorns grow

# CSS Post-inspection Action Plan

March 2025

Respect * Ambition * Kindness

**Mighty Oaks from Little Acorns Grow**

**Respect, Ambition, Kindness**

**Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Effective Contributors, Responsible Citizens**

The National Improvement Framework (NIF) is designed to help deliver the aims of excellence and equity. The NIF priorities are:

- **Placing the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of education**
- **Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing**
- **Improvement in achievement, particularly in literacy and numeracy**
- **Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people**
- **Improvement in skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people**

The NIF sets out six key drivers for improvement which provide a focus and structure for gathering and analysing evidence:

1. **School leadership**
2. **Teacher professionalism**
3. **Parental engagement**
4. **Assessment of children's progress**
5. **School improvement**
6. **Performance information**

| CSS Action Plan - March 2025 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ERC vision is one of *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences.* Our vision mirrors this with *mighty oaks from little acorns grow.* Our target outcomes for the Education Scotland Action plan for the CSS will be: | | | |
| **Empowerment and Leadership** | **Social Justice and Wellbeing** | **Pedagogy and Learning** | **Attainment, Achievement and Progress** |
| An ethos of high expectations and achievement.<br><br>A skilled and confident workforce.<br><br>A culture of inclusion and ambition.<br><br>A collaborative and collegiate workforce.<br><br>A culture of continuous professional learning including ASN focussed professional enquiry, ASN qualifications.<br><br>Higher levels of parental engagement in their young person's learning and the overall CSS service in general.<br><br>An empowered and confident group of young people from S1 to S6. | A rights based culture, centred on Getting It Right For Every Child in line with UNCRC.<br><br>Practices and experiences which ensure that the needs of young people are identified and addressed.<br><br>Improve attendance rates of young people.<br><br>A positive culture in health and wellbeing.<br><br>A range of educational resources in place and being utilised by all practitioners which lead to improvements for learners. | An ethos of ambition for all learners.<br><br>A culture of self-evaluation and continuous improvement.<br><br>A curriculum which enables all young people to be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors in totality.<br><br>Learners' experiences support them to develop their meta-skills and personalities.<br><br>An increase in opportunities for young people to develop knowledge, understanding and the skills for life and active participation in society. | Improved breadth of attainment in the senior phase.<br><br>An increase in the number of young people with well-developed employability skills through an inclusive curriculum.<br><br>Improved literacy and numeracy attainment throughout the BGE.<br><br>A sustained culture of celebrating pupils' personal achievements. |

Respect　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Ambition　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Kindness

| Priority: | Empowerment and Leadership | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| NIF Priority: P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 | | QIs: 1.3, 2.3 …. | |
| NIF Drivers: D1 …. | | | |

| Outcome & Impact (what we will measure and report on) | Action (what will we do to bring about improvement) | Personnel | Timescale | Resources | Monitoring & Evaluation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| An ethos of high expectations and achievement. An inclusive environment for all. | Initiate distributive leadership roles. | CSS Teachers, PSAs | March/April 2025 | Time for Interim PRD | Interim PRD PRD CLPL |
| A skilled and confident workforce with young people ready to thrive in life after school.. | Prioritise staff agency to support with knowing and developing individual needs to improve learning, teaching and assessment. | CSS Teachers, PSAs | March to June 25 | Time to be PROACTIVE, CLPL, Peer Learning Visits | PT & SL Observations PT LTA Observations Peer Observations Planners Assessment Outcomes |
| A culture of inclusion and ambition. | Prioritise staff agency to support pupil voice and a range of pupil experiences in and beyond the classroom. | CSS Teachers | March to Dec 25 | Distributive leadership roles | Extra-curricular activities Surveys, focus groups, parental feedback, community projects. |
| A collaborative and collegiate workforce all contributing to the culture of inclusion and ambition. | Policies, procedures and practices to be implemented to allow staff to understand and carry out their role in line with GTCS standards. | Senior Leader, PT | March 25 to March 26 | Time to collaborate. | Policies in place GTCS Standards |
| A culture of continuous professional learning including professional enquiry, in particular ASN qualifications. | Prioritise staff agency to support with individual development needs to increase knowledge and understanding of supporting young people with additional support needs. | CSS Teachers | March to Dec 25 | CLPL, Reading, Research, Learning visits | Interim PRD PRD Planners Excellent experiences in the classroom |
| Higher levels of parental engagement in their young person's learning and the overall CSS service in general. | Review all communications with parents including family learning events, newsletters, reports, parents' evenings, Google Classroom etc in line with PIE. | Senior Leader, PT | March to June 25 | Time Parental Newsletter | Calendar for session 25-26 in place for August 25 |
| An empowered and confident group of young people from S1 to S6. | Initiate leadership roles across the year groups. | Senior Leader, PT, CSS Teachers | August 2025 to June 2026 | Time to collaborate. Visits to other establishments, Distributive leadership roles. | Williamwood Awards, CSS Awards, Leadership roles in place. |

Respect                                             Ambition                                             Kindness

| Priority: | Social Justice and Wellbeing | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| NIF Priority: | P1, P2, P4 | QIs: | 2.2, 3.1 |
| NIF Drivers: | D1, D2 | | |

| Impact & Outcomes | Action | Personnel | Timescale | Resources | Monitoring & Evaluation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A rights based culture, centred on Getting It Right For Every Child in line with UNCRC. | Improve and embed wellbeing plans to ensure SMART targets are commonplace and reviewed, moderated and reported on every 6 weeks. | CSS Teachers | March 25 to June 25 | Time | PT/SL to quality assure plans every 6 weeks. JST/Parental reviews based on wellbeing plans. |
| Practices and experiences which ensure that the needs of young people are identified and addressed. Profiles for each individual in place and utilised for all young people. | Develop an inclusive, holistic and flexible curriculum to prepare young people for life and work. | Senior Leader, PT | Apr 25 to June 26 | Look outwards visits | Decrease in dysregulation. Increase in attainment & achievement. |
| Improve attendance rates of young people. | Develop a daily routine for CSS teachers to take registers on C&G. Develop a daily routine for PT to communicate attendance concerns with parents. Develop a regular routine for staff to update Google classroom with learning tasks. Develop a weekly routine for reaching out to partners for assistance with EBSA young people | CSS Teachers PT | March 25 | Training on Google Classroom | Increase in attendance. |
| A positive culture in health and wellbeing. | Embed the health & wellbeing questionnaire into CSS calendar and practice. PSHE entitlement embedded into the curriculum. | CSS Teachers/PT/SL | Apr 25 to June 26 | CLPL for staff | Increase in positive responses. |
| A range of educational resources in place and being utilised by all practitioners which lead to improvements for learners. | Implement the Circle, Zones of Regulation, Boardmaker visuals, Safeguarding practices, UNCRC and GIRFEC into daily practice. Introduce Show Me boards, jotters, individual files, digital applications, PSHE resources, visuals etc. | CSS Teachers PT Senior Leader | Apr 25 to June 26 | CLPL | Decrease in dysregulation. Increase in pupil leadership opportunities. Reduction in AIRs submissions. Increase in young people stating they feel safe in school. |

Respect                                   Ambition                                   Kindness

| Priority: | Pedagogy and Learning | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| NIF Priority: P1, P3, P4, P5 | | QIs: 1.1 | |
| NIF Drivers: D1 | | | |

| Impact & Outcomes | Action | Personnel | Timescale | Resources | Monitoring & Evaluation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| An ethos of ambition for all learners. | Build capacity in staff to assess, moderate, track, monitor and report of pupil progress in all curricular areas and on our school aims. | CSS teachers | March 25 to June 26 | PTs Dev & DHTs (WWHS) to train all CSS staff | CSS data vault in place. Robust TJs. Clarity in communications to staff. |
| A culture of self-evaluation and continuous improvement. | Embed a quality assurance calendar. Develop self-evaluation for self-improvement routines to evidence impact. | Senior Leader, PT | Apr 25 to June 25 | PTCs & DHTs (WWHS) to share mainstream practices. | Monitor QA practices with SLT. |
| A curriculum which enables all young people to be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors in totality. | Build capacity in staff to offer experiences in line with the four capacities. Develop a skills based framework of progression for all young people. | CSS teachers | Apr 25 to June 26 | Practical resources | Profiling of skills in collaboration with School Improvement Network and National guidelines. |
| Learners' experiences support them to develop their meta-skills and personalities. | Build capacity in staff to offer excellent experiences in: numeracy; mathematics; literacy; English; digital provision and skills for learning, life and work. Develop a consistent approach to visual approaches in L,T & A. | CSS teachers | Apr 25 to Oct 25 | Show me boards OTI PROACTIVE Trios PT DEV (L&T, WWHS) to support staff | QA observations. Feedback from pupils. Feedback from parents. Progression through BGE levels. |
| An increase in opportunities for young people to develop knowledge, understanding and the skills for life and active participation in society. | Improve the offerings from staff in outdoor learning and skills based qualifications from the SCQF framework. | CSS teachers Senior Leader, PT | Aug 25 to June 26 | CLPL Time Planning WWHS Teacher (outdoor learning) | QA of planners Observations |

**Priority:    1.  Attainment, Achievement and Progress**

| NIF Priority:    P3, P4, P5 | QIs:    1.1 |
|---|---|
| **NIF Drivers:    D1** | |

| Impact & Outcomes | Action | Personnel | Timescale | Resources | Monitoring & Evaluation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Improved breadth of attainment in the senior phase. | Support and challenge staff to utilise data to raise attainment for all. Support and challenge staff to be PROACTIVE. Support and challenge staff to look inwards, outwards and forwards. | CSS teachers | Aug 25 to Aug 26 | Planning PROACTIVE PT (WWHS L&T) Time | SCQF totality of points. Increase in attainment & achievement. |
| An increase in the number of young people with well-developed employability skills through an inclusive curriculum. | Embed the SCQF framework of skills based experiences and courses in the curriculum. Staff to be creative in offering a range of experiences in lessons to develop skills. Develop a skills profiling toolkit to track progression of skills. | CSS teachers PT SL | May 25 to Dec 25 | CLPL Look outwards Research | Observations Pupil feedback |
| Improved literacy and numeracy attainment throughout the BGE. | Build staff capacity in teaching the responsibility of all. Build-in staff time with English and maths staff to offer progressive experiences in the classroom. Embed appropriate courses to meet the needs of all learners. | CSS teachers PT | March 25 to Oct 25 | CLPL Time | Planning Courses Observations Data |
| A sustained culture of celebrating pupils' personal achievements. | Embed a CSS pupil voice, leadership and achievement programme. | CSS teachers PT SL | March 25 to June 25 | Time | Pupil feedback Parent feedback |

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 12 JUNE 2025

Report by Director of Education

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE ANNUAL REPORT


**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.      The purpose of the report is to update Education Committee on the approaches taken to develop Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) services.  The report outlines the steps taken to improve further the quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability of provision and experiences for young children.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2.      Education Committee is asked to:
- a) note and comment on the continued progress of the delivery of 1140 hours ELC; and
- b) agree the proposed sustainable rate for funded providers and consent to back date payment to the 1 April 2025.

**BACKGROUND**

3.      The Scottish Government set a transformational agenda to almost double the entitlement to free ELC from 600 hours to 1140 hours per year by 2020 for all 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds, with underpinning key principles of quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability.

4.      The Scottish Government delayed the statutory duty on education authorities to make 1140 hours of early learning and childcare (ELC) available to each eligible child from August 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, with a new implementation date of August 2021.

5.      In East Renfrewshire, all families applying for 1140 hours of funded ELC for eligible children have been able to access this since August 2020.  Full implementation, which includes the provision of food at lunchtime, has been ongoing since August 2021.

**REPORT**

*Quality*

6.      The quality of ELC in our local authority settings continues to exceed the National Standard in most settings with (83%) achieving evaluations of very good or better across all key questions as shown in Chart 1 below.  This compares very favourably with data published by the Care Inspectorate which shows that nationally 30% of settings, up to 31 March 2025, had evaluations of very good or better across all key questions.

*Chart 1*



Care Inspectorate Grades in East Renfrewshire ELC Settings
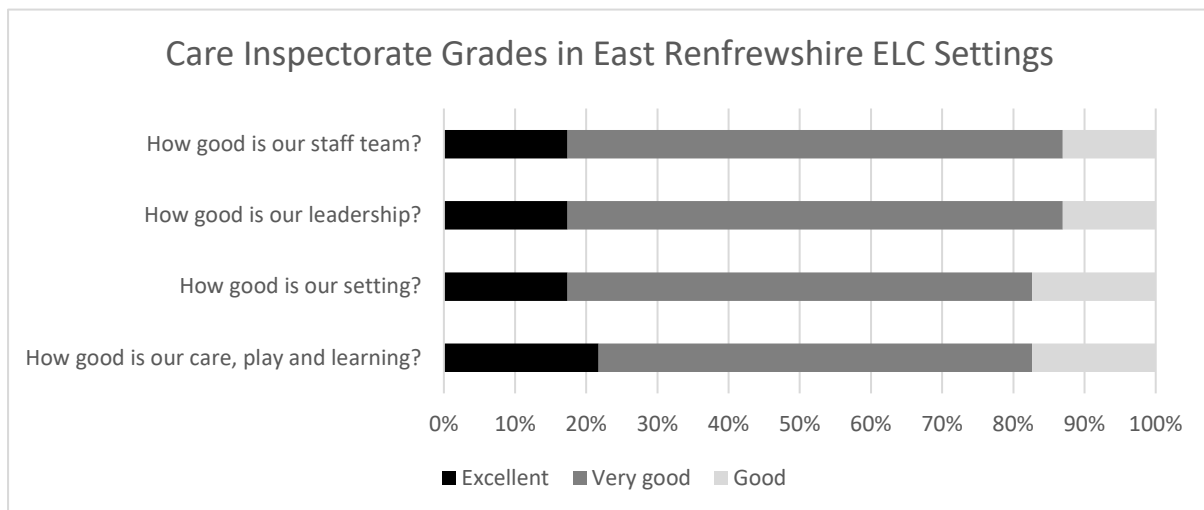
7.      These grades reflect all 23 local authority settings which have been inspected by the Care Inspectorate.  St John's Nursery Class, which opened in August 2024, has not yet been inspected.

8.      Almost all Funded Providers delivering funded ELC in East Renfrewshire also meet and, in some cases, exceed the National Standard requirement to achieve grades of good or better, as illustrated in Chart 2 below.  This reflects the 12 Funded Provider settings who continued to work in partnership with the local authority this session.   One of these settings was inspected in February 2025, however the grades have yet to be published.

*Chart 2*



CARE INSPECTORATE GRADES IN PRIVATE, VOLUNTARY AND INDEPENDENT ELC SETTINGS WITHIN EAST RENFREWSHIRE
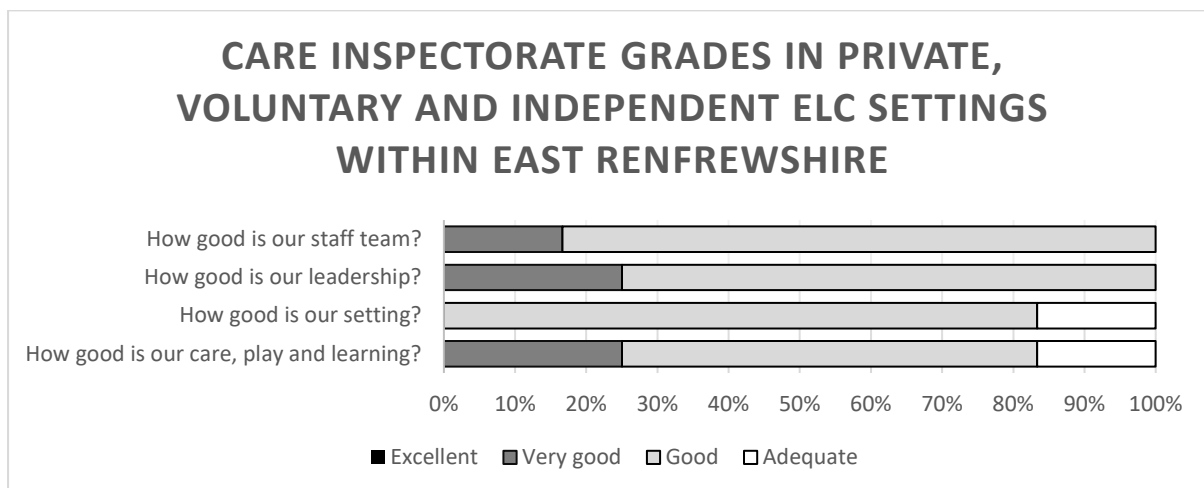
9.      As a result of Care Inspectorate evaluations which fall below the required National Standard, and on-going quality assurance by the Education Department, there are currently 3 funded providers currently on Service Improvement Periods.  Each of these settings are being supported by the department and engaging in the Care Inspectorate's ELC improvement programme that has been made available for local authority, private and third sector settings which do not currently meet the quality evaluations.

*Flexibility*

10.     The models available across nursery classes and family centres seek to provide flexibility and choice for families whilst also ensuring efficient service delivery through the utilisation of our staffing capacity.  Core placements which mirror the school day continue to be a popular choice for parents, followed by Stretched B (two and a half days, year round in family centres), and extended (3 days term time in nursery classes).

11.     In response to parental demand, from session 2022/23, families have had the option to access a full time place in either a nursery class or a family centre, supplementing their child's statutory entitlement with purchased additional hours.  This maximises the efficient use of capacity across all of the available ELC provision.  This model has proven to be very popular with families, with 110 children accessing this model throughout the 24/25 session.  In addition to supporting families, this has contributed towards the department's ambitious income target, contributing towards wider service delivery.  Whilst every effort is made to make this additional provision available as widely as possible, there are finite spaces available based on staffed capacity of each individual setting. The department will continue to review the availability of spaces ahead of each session and ensure as wide availability as possible, whilst ensuring the efficient delivery of services.

12.     All nursery places are allocated using the published priorities with a ballot being held where demand exceeds space available. In the biennial consultation in October 2024 almost half (49%) of parents indicated that the setting was more important to them than the model they were allocated.   For the 24/25 session, 95% of families applying for ELC were allocated their first choice of setting, the same as the previous year.   In addition, 81% also received their first choice of model, a 3% decrease from 2023-24.

*Accessibility and Affordability*

13.     In the 2024/25 session, 264 children have accessed 'add-on' through families purchasing additional hours above their child's entitlement, a small increase of 10 on those who accessed the scheme in 2023/24.  In addition to providing greater flexibility and choice to families, this has contributed further to the department's income target, utilising vacant sessions across different ELC settings.

*14.*     The Early Years Intervention Group (EYIG) allows the department to use our discretionary powers to support children and families who need our help most, through the allocation of a range of services and resources.  This includes access to funded ELC for children who may not otherwise be eligible, such as babies, two year olds, and three year olds who may gain early access to their funded placement.  To date, in session 2024-25, 245 referrals have been made through the EYIG, 14% less than the previous year.  Health Visitors make the most referrals to the EYIG for children on their caseload, followed by the Educational Psychology Service and family centres.  Of all referrals to the EYIG 8% received additional free early learning and childcare hours over their entitled 1140 hours and 39% were allocated a funded nursery place prior to their entitlement.  Further detail relating to EYIG referrals is included in Appendix 1.

15.     In August 2023 all children deferring entry to primary 1 automatically became entitled to funded early learning and childcare in their deferred year.  This followed a change to legislation which means that parents of children who are still 4 years old on the date they are eligible to start school (i.e. children with birth dates on or between the day after the school commencement date in August – last day in February) can choose to defer their child's start at primary school for a year and continue to access funded ELC.  Prior to August 2023 only children born in January and February were automatically entitled to an additional year of

funded ELC, with those born between August-December able to apply for funding on a discretionary basis.

16.     For session 2025/26, 189 children have applied for an additional year of funded ELC through this process, an increase of 5 applications compared to 2024-25.  Chart 3 below shows the increase in deferrals over the past 3 years.

*Chart 3*
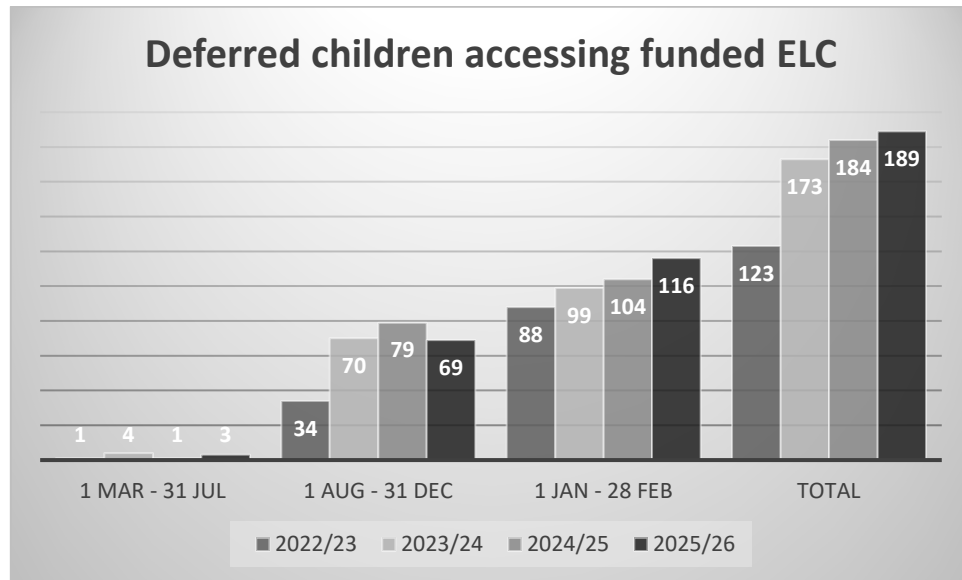


17.     When the new legislation came into effect in August 2023 the number of deferral applications for children born between the start of term in August and the end of December more than doubled, with a further increase last session.  This year the total number of children deferring entry to school has increased however there were fewer applications made for this older group (Aug- Dec birthdays) representing 37% of all requests, a 6% drop from last year.  Overall, the proportion of children deferring represents 15% of all pre-school children allocated funded ELC , the same figure as last year, rising from 14% in 2023/4.  Chart 4 below shows how the children who defer are spread across the different communities.

*Chart 4*
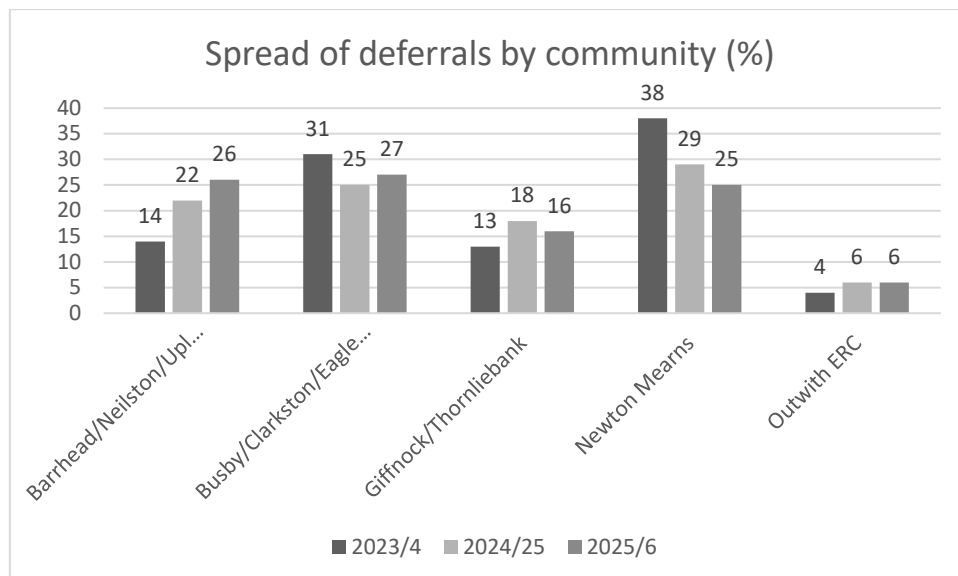
18.        Four applications were made for children to defer where their 5th birthday is before the start of term in August, half the number received last session.  Three of these have been granted, with the other child being allocated suitable school age provision, shown in chart 3.  There had been an average of 4 requests for exceptional deferrals such as these between 2020 and 2023, however the change in legislation saw eight families apply last year.  Each request is assessed on a case by case basis to establish whether an additional year of ELC is more beneficial to the child than going to school. Our schools are well placed to meet the needs of all pupils, therefore it is only in very exceptional circumstances that these discretionary requests are granted.  The deferral guidance was updated last year to clarify this point, the impact of which can be seen in the number of applications returning to the previous level.

***Sustainable Rate – Uplift in Payments for 2025/26***

19.        In line with the Scottish Government's *Funding Follows the Child* approach, families are able to access their child's statutory entitlement in an independent provider or childminder.  These are collectively known as funded providers.  Funded providers are paid an hourly rate for providing this entitlement, known as the sustainable rate.  This rate is determined by each local authority, based on guidance produced by the Scottish Government.

20.        In February 2025, the Scottish Government produced updated guidance jointly with COSLA.  This guidance was accompanied with an agreement for a minimum fixed uplift of 3.75% to the existing rates paid by individual authorities to support the continued commitment to pay the Living Wage across the sector, with funding provided by the Scottish Government for this purpose.

21.        Following a review of the sustainable rate paid locally within East Renfrewshire, in line with the national guidance, it is proposed to apply an hourly rate of £6.59 per hour for 2025/26.  This represents an increase of 4.3% on the current rate of £6.32 per hour.  Given the increase in the Living Wage from April 2025, it is proposed that the new rate be backdated to all funded hours delivered since 1st April.  This will ensure providers are able to provide this salary increase to their staff.

22.        The national guidance also sets out a commitment for an enhanced sustainable rate to be paid for the provision of eligible 2 year old places within funded providers.  This enhanced rate is required to reflect the probable increased costs of delivery of 2-year-old provision given the higher staffing levels required to meet statutory ratios.  Within East Renfrewshire, almost all 2-year-olds with a statutory entitlement choose to access this provision within a local authority setting, however, they are able to choose a funded provider where this is the preferred option.

23.        In recognition of a national cost collection exercise set to be undertaken later this year, there is a need to establish a new baseline rate for 2-year-old provision.  It is proposed that an interim rate of £7.46 per hour be implemented for 2025/26, again being backdated to 1st April 2025 where required.  Following completion of the wider cost collection exercise, the department will be in a position to undertake a wider review of the sustainable rate payable for 2-year-old provision, contributing to subsequent rate review exercises for future years.

**FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS**

24.        The department continues to deliver ELC through efficient models within each establishment, seeking to provide flexibility and choice for families. The deployment of staff across settings continues to be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure the service is being

delivered efficiently, whilst ensuring continued regulatory compliance, and minimise the need for significant additional recruitment.

25.    The introduction of full-time provision, add-on hours and the Early Access scheme have resulted in increased opportunities for income generation across the service.  Within the 24/25 financial year, the department exceeded the already ambitious income target, generating £962,690 in income.  The income target for 2025/26 has been set at a further increased level, set out through the Council's annual budget setting process.

26.    The provision of hot food, as required as part of the statutory entitlement, is budgeted to cost £3.40 per child, per day.  All local authority settings are registered with the Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme providing fully funded milk and snack for children attending nursery.  All funded providers delivering funded ELC are now also benefitting from this scheme.  This scheme is fully funded by Scottish Government grant.

27.    To meet the nationally agreed increase in the sustainable rate paid to local funded providers, the Scottish Government has provided additional resource to meet these costs.  It is anticipated that these additional costs can be met from within this funding.  Due to the small number of 2-year-old children accessing a statutory place within a funded provider, this increase can be met from within existing departmental resources.  The Education Department has committed to reviewing this rate on an annual basis, however, it should be noted that there should be no assumption of continual annual increases.  As noted by the Scottish Government, any rate must be sustainable for both funded providers and the authority and, on this basis, the department will continue to carefully monitor ongoing revenue costs in this area.

28.    Currently a cross boundary charging protocol is in place across the West Partnership to take account of children who reside in one local authority but access ELC within another local authority area, reflecting the *Funding Follows the Child* approach.  Presently, the total cost of funding is met by the resident authority and, paid on their behalf by the host authority (i.e. where the child attends nursery), being charged back at set dates throughout the year. Following changes to the national ELC funding model, these arrangements are under review, with an expectation of a reduction of payment to reflect the money the host and resident local authorities receive for individual children.

**CONCLUSION**

29.    The 1140 hours policy continues to be successfully implemented in East Renfrewshire, with evidence gathered highlighting continuous improvement in terms of quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability.  Appendix 1 of this document provides further information.

30.     The increase in entitlement of early learning and childcare is a mitigating factor on the impact of Covid-19 and reducing the poverty related attainment gap, with performance showing evidence of recovery and a return to pre-pandemic levels.

31.    There is a strong commitment and capacity for continuous improvement.

**RECOMMENDATION**

32.    Education Committee is asked to:
   a) note and comment on the continued progress of the delivery of 1140 hours ELC; and
   b) agree the proposed sustainable rate for funded providers and consent to back date payment to the 1 April 2025.

Mark Ratter
Director of Education
June 2025

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<div align="right">**Appendix 1**</div>

<div align="center">**Additional Information**</div>

*Quality*

1.      Quality is at the heart of the delivery of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) entitlement.  ELC settings are subject to scrutiny by two separate inspection bodies. The Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland. This session, one local authority setting and four Funded Providers have been inspected by the Care Inspectorate, with 3 having their reports published.   Clarkston Nursery and Broom Nursery were inspected by Education Scotland in May and June 2024 respectively.  These were the first Funded Provider settings to be inspected by Education Scotland in East Renfrewshire since 2018.   Both settings had short model inspections and received grades of 'good' for the quality indicators inspected.  St Cadoc's Nursery Class was also inspected by Education Scotland on a short model inspection and also received grades of 'good'.

2.      In January 2025 the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland published a new shared [Quality Improvement Framework for Early Learning and Childcare Settings](#).   From September 2025 this will replace the current inspection and self-evaluation frameworks used by each body.  The Education Department has created supporting guidance which has been shared with all ELC settings to support them with on-going self-evaluation and improvement planning during this transition phase.

3.      The latest data published by Public Health Scotland (2023/24) shows that the proportion of children in East Renfrewshire undergoing a 27/30 month assessment with their Health Visitor with one or more concerns recorded, has reduced from 17% in 2022/23 to 14.4%.  This is the lowest level recorded since these assessments were introduced in 2013, with the previous lowest figure of 14.6% in 2020/21.  Nationally, there has also been a slight reduction from the peak of 17.9% in 2022/23 to 16.7% in 2023/24 as shown in Chart 1 below.

*Chart 1*
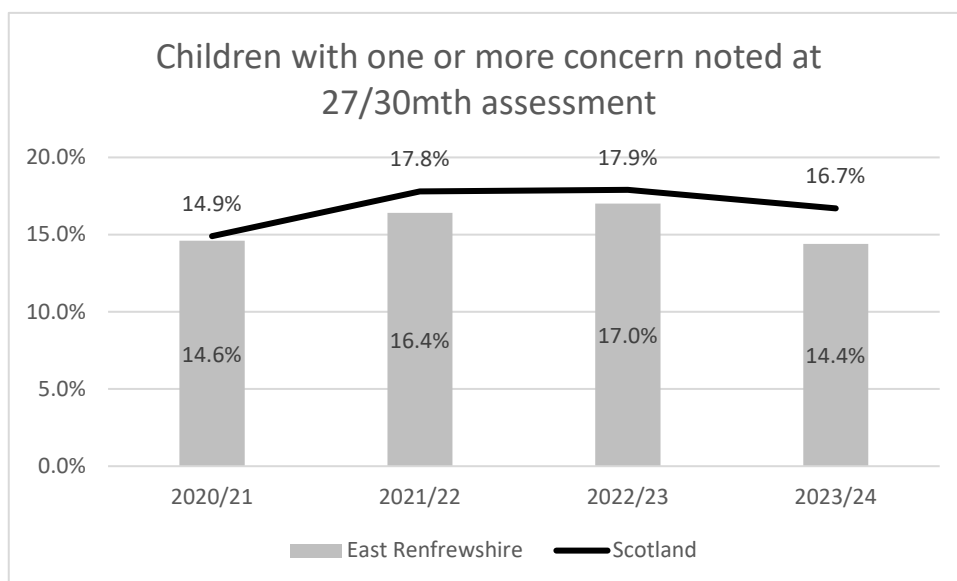


4.      This suggests that challenges which arose during the pandemic are not affecting children's development in the same way as they have in recent years for this age group born after all the public health restrictions had been lifted in 2021/22.

5.      Since 2013-14 data has been gathered in schools on the percentage of children achieving the expected levels of development on entry to primary 1. The following developmental components are assessed: Social, Emotional, Attention, Speech, Expressive Language, Receptive Language, Communication, Gross Motor Skills, Fine Motor Skills and Behaviour.  This session 77% of children achieved their developmental milestones, this is a decrease of 3% on the previous year as shown in Chart 2 below.

*Chart 2*



Developmental Milestones: History: by SIMD: 2022-23 to 2024-25
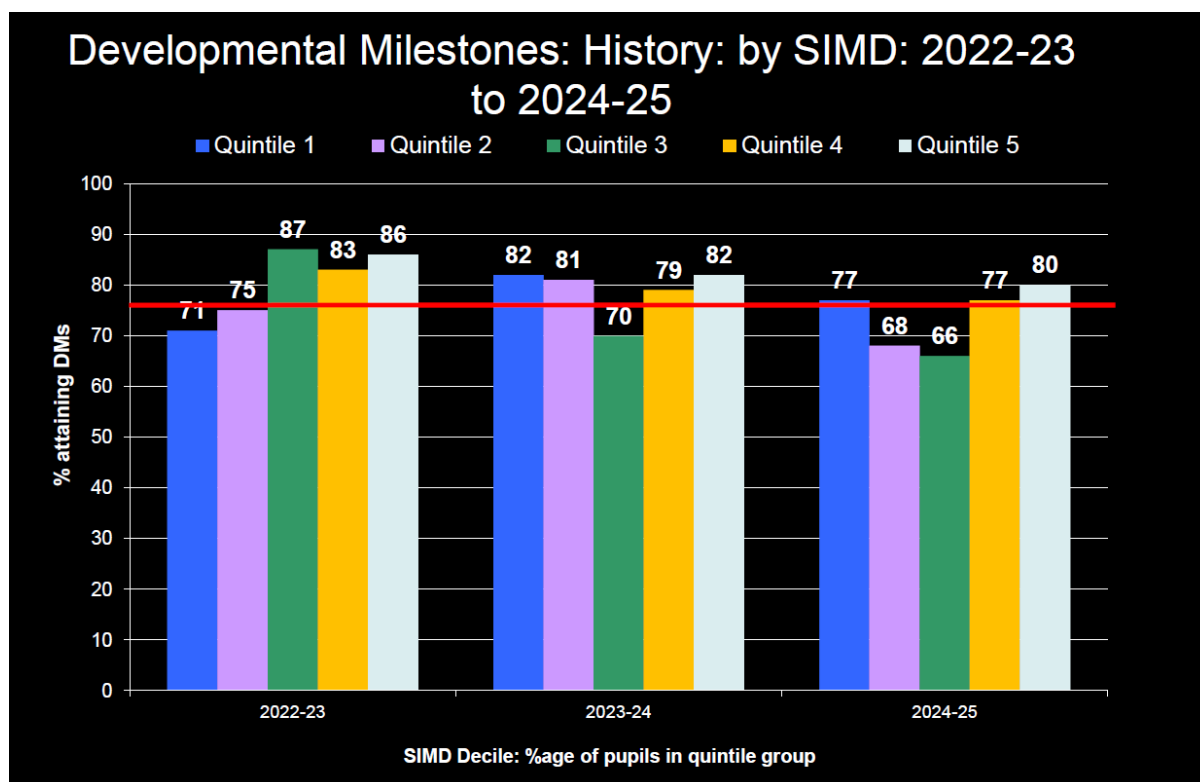
6.      For the second year, the proportion of children achieving their developmental milestones has fallen.  This is not unexpected as these children would have been less than one year old when the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic came into effect in March 2020.  Public Health reports have shown that children's social, emotional and language development were impacted as a result of the pandemic.  Although there was a 3% gap between those in Quintiles 1 and 5, there is a marked decline in Quintiles 2 and 3 , however this represents only 194 (17%) of the P1 cohort.  Analysis shows that, within the group of children in Quintiles 2 and 3 who did not achieve the developmental milestones, there was a higher proportion of boys than girls (chart 3) along with a higher proportion of children with English as an Additional Language (EAL), an entitlement to Free School Meals, (FSM) or Additional Support Needs (ASN).

*Chart 3*

## Comparison of P1 cohort with children in Quintiles 2 & 3 who did not achieve developmental milestones
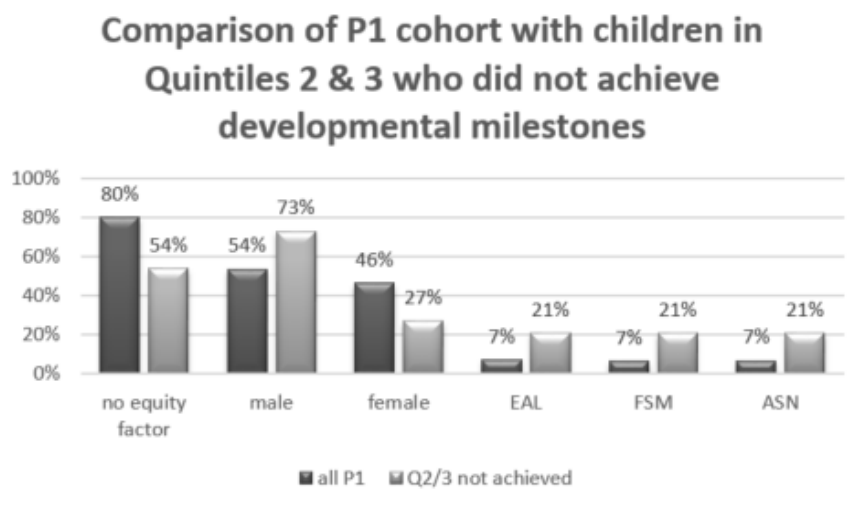


7.     ELC settings track children's developmental milestones throughout their learning journey using a bespoke online tracking tool.  Data from this tool has been gathered with increasing consistency and rigour since 2017 when it was introduced as part of our expansion planning.  It is anticipated that the more accurate data now being gathered directly from ELC settings will remove the need to formally assess children's progress in this way in primary one, whilst retaining the focus on children's skills and next steps in learning.

8.     A Baseline Assessment has been in place since 2005-06 to assess children's attainment in literacy and numeracy on entry to primary one.  In contrast to the Developmental Milestones, overall performance in literacy and numeracy remains broadly consistent with previous years as shown in Chart 4. There is a persistent gap between children in Quintile 1 and those residing in Quintile 5.  This session there was a gap of 9 points in literacy and 5 points in numeracy.  We will continue to provide professional learning opportunities for staff to develop children's literacy and numeracy skills working in partnership with colleagues from across the council through the multi-agency Early Years Improvement Team.

*Chart 4*

**Quality of the Early Years Workforce**

9.      Quality of staff teams in East Renfrewshire ELC settings continues to be a major strength, with most (87%) having evaluations of very good or better from the Care Inspectorate for this theme compared to the national average of 55%.  The Public, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector has faced increasing challenges in staff recruitment and retention as a result of the ELC expansion to 1140 hours.  This is reflected in Care Inspectorate's evaluations of our funded providers where 17% have grades of very good.  In addition, the quality of leadership is evaluated as very good or better in 83% of local authority settings and 25% of our funded providers compared to a national figure of 43.5%.

10.     In recognition of the challenges across the sector to release staff for attendance at Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) events, we have continued to focus on supporting learning online.  This ensures that all staff can access training at a time and place that suits them, as well as being used in-house for staff meetings and in-service days.  Throughout 2024-25, ELC practitioners have continued to make effective use of the '0-6 Pedagogy' online hub which provides staff in schools, local authority and funded provider settings with a wide range of high-quality learning materials. Usage data continues to show a decreasing level of engagement with the materials with 1,476 views in the past year bringing the total number of views to 15,760.  Most of these materials available online were created between 2017/18 and 2021/22.  These will now be updated to take account of the new Quality Improvement Framework from the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland along with up to date exemplars and research, hopefully resulting in increasing engagement over the coming year.

11.     Our established partnerships with East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust, Starcatchers and Screen Scotland enabled us to provide a range of in person training sessions for practitioners.  These sessions gave the practitioners practical skills to promote children's physical and emotional development and improve children's experiences.

12.     Senior leaders benefitted from a bespoke leadership seminar for all head teachers with a focus on literacy and numeracy within Early Level of Curriculum for Excellence.  This session was designed to share key messages to support continuity and progression for children across Early Level as they move from ELC settings to P1.  This was complemented by 6 sessions for P1 teachers from June –October 2024 to support them in meeting the needs of children in their classes as the change in deferral legislation means that there is now a broader range of age groups and abilities in both ELC settings and P1 classes.  Feedback from head teachers was extremely positive with a range of comments valuing the discussion with colleagues about learning and teaching approaches and the opportunity for critical reflection: *"it is good to be challenged on certain 'perceived wisdom' and accepted practice and to be reminded of the criticality of our role as head teachers to ensure quality".*

13.     East Renfrewshire ensures all children have access to a teacher.  This is extended to all children who attend a Funded Provider nursery in East Renfrewshire.  Each setting is supported on a flexible basis, with delivery of aspects of learning and teaching in line with their improvement plans.  Contributions are highly valued by the Funded Providers who report that everyone benefits from her visits as "*a great source of information and support",* bringing "*lots of new ideas to our setting".*

14.     The West Partnership has an established relationship with Edinburgh University, allowing us to access high quality professional learning linked to current research, policy and theory underpinned by the principles of Friedrich Froebel.  There are now 60 established Froebelians working in our ELC settings and schools, with 10 Froebelian Leaders included in this figure.  Almost all local authority settings (96%) have at least one trained Froebelian, and

a further 75% of Primary Schools supporting quality for children across the Early Level. These educators created a professional network in 2018 called Froebel Friends, each year they continue to provide learning opportunities for all with a focus on creativity, sustainability and children's rights which helps to ensure this knowledge and practice continues to be developed across Early Level. In addition to this local network, the West Partnership established a Froebel Family network in 2024 for all practitioners across the region. They received funding from the Froebel Trust to provide a series of online CLPL sessions from leading tutors and educators across the UK. These sessions were attended by an average of 400 practitioners across the region helping to improve practice as they enact changes based on their learning.

**Flexibility**

15.     Families in East Renfrewshire can choose from a variety of attendance patterns in order to access their entitlement to 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare. These are reviewed every two years in line with the duty to consult with parents outlined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. As a result of the consultation in autumn 2022, the following models have been available for families to choose from:

| Provision | Attendance Pattern | Term Time/Full Year |
|---|---|---|
| Core | 9am – 3pm, 5 days per week | Term Time |
| Extended | 8am – 6pm, 3 days per week | Term Time |
| Stretched A | Morning or afternoon session, 5 days per week | Full Year |
| Stretched B | 2 full days and one half day per week | Full Year |
| Full Time | 8am 6 pm, 5 days per week | Either |
| Blended | Entitlement split between 2 ELC providers | Either |
| Funded Provider | Up to 30 hours per week OR 23 hours 45 minutes over 48 weeks | Either |

16.     A total of 2,224 children were provided with funded ELC in 2024/25. Chart 5 shows how these children were allocated across each of the models available in each year.

*Chart 5*
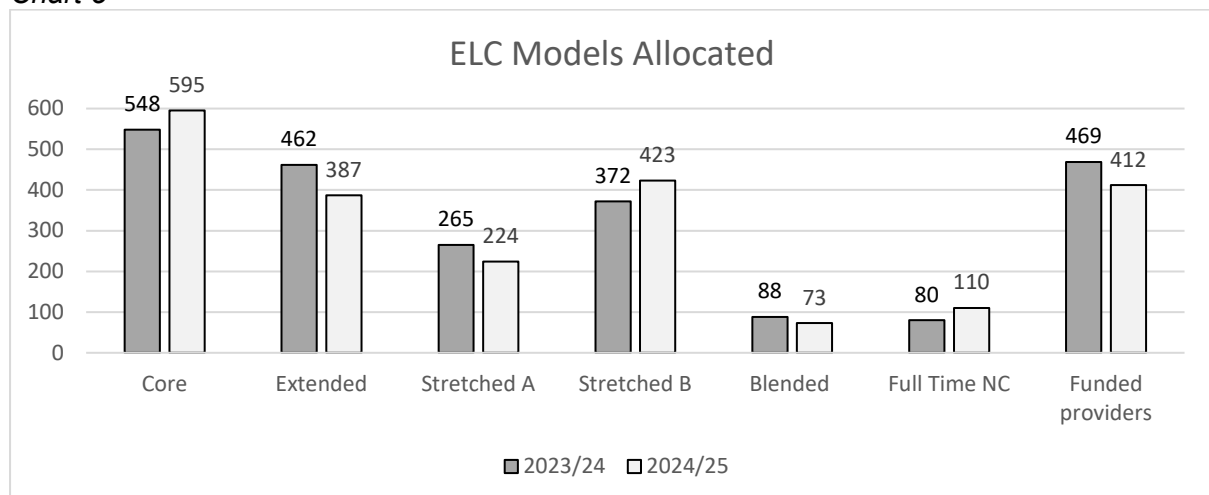


17.     Children with additional support needs and other vulnerabilities were supported through the Early Years Intervention Group (EYIG) with 77% of referrals being successful throughout 2024/5, a decrease of 5% on the previous year. Of those receiving support, in addition to increased access to ELC, 11% of children accessed support within the Preschool Assessment and Development Unit (PSADU) across their sites at Carlibar, Arthurlie and

Carolside, with a further 11% benefitting from the Early Years Outreach Service which was funded for a second year. An additional 10% were referred for further assessment / intervention with Educational Psychology Service.

18. Eligibility for early learning and childcare is determined by the date of the child's birthday, local school term dates and, where relevant, whether the parent has chosen to defer the child's start at primary school for a year.

19. The Provision of Early Learning and Childcare (Specified Children) Order 2014 sets out starting and stopping dates for eligibility to access funded ELC. Eligible 2 year olds and all 3 year olds are eligible for funded early learning and childcare from the beginning of the first term after the child's 2nd or 3rd birthday. Where a child's birthday falls on or between the following dates, the child will become eligible from the terms set out below:

- Child's birthday: 1 March – 31 August
  Eligible from: August (autumn term) occurring in that year

- Child's birthday: 1 September – 31 December
  Eligible from: January (spring term) following their birthday

- Child's birthday: 1 January – last day February
  Eligible from: March/ April (summer term) following their birthday

20. To support early intervention and prevention, we use our discretionary powers to ensure that children and families who have been allocated a two-year-old place through either the EYIG or the LAP, transition to their 3 year old placement following their third birthday. As well as supporting the children and families, this also ensures that there are sufficient two year old places to meet demand.

21. From August 2023 children within East Renfrewshire have been able to access their statutory entitlement in line with the Scottish Government's national guidance. To ensure wider support for all families, the Early Access scheme has been introduced, enabling families to purchase hours to bridge the gap between their child's third birthday and the commencement of their eligibility for 1140 hours. Throughout the 2024/25 session, 163 families took advantage of this scheme, a 12% increase on last session when it was first introduced.

22. This year, for the second consecutive year, the department did not receive any applications from parents wishing to apply for early entry to primary school. In the 3 years prior to 2023 two applications for early entry were received each year.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

23. Digital applications for ELC are open throughout December and January each year, publicised through the Council's social media channels and directly across education establishments. For session 2025-26, 827 applications were received within the application window. Of the total applications received, 807 were allocated a place for next year. The remainder were either withdrawn or were from families seeking a change in their child's existing allocation which we were unable to accommodate.

24. Since the expansion to 1,140 hours in 2020, there has been continued pressure on ELC places within the Barrhead/Neilston community. In seeking to ensure the Council meets its duties under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, a new nursery class

opened in St John's Primary School, providing additional capacity for 3 and 4 year old children from August 2024. Initially St John's nursery class is working with a capacity of 60, with scope to further increase to 95 including provision for 2-year old children.

25. All eligible 2 year olds continue to be offered 1,140 hours of ELC with the majority accessing the Stretched A and B family centre models which allow 2 children to take up one place. For this reason the Council has been able to meet the demand for places for eligible 2 year olds for the tenth consecutive year.

26. In partnership with the Scottish Government and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Education Department has been proactively targeting families who may have an eligibility to a 2-year old place, based on benefit and income data. Over the last year, 166 children have been allocated through the Local Admissions Panel or EYIG to date, a decrease of 8% compared to the previous year.

27. In addition to providing Early Learning and Childcare for eligible and vulnerable 2 year olds, where there is capacity to do so we continue to support other working families who have no eligibility, with the offer to purchase nursery places. Demand for this service increases year on year. This session a further 167 children and families with children aged under 3-years old and benefitted from this service. This is a 2% increase on the previous year.

28. Detailed in Table 3 is the number of available places, from August 2025, across the communities as determined by the delivery models. To maximise efficiency, staff budgets for each setting are determined according to the number of children who are allocated a place. Where capacity allows additional spaces are available for parents to purchase.

*Table 3*

| Community | Available Places (25/26) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 0-2 | 2-3 | 3-5 |
| Barrhead/Neilston/Uplawmoor | 45 | 135 | 601 |
| Busby/Clarkston/Eaglesham | - | 25 | 441 |
| Giffnock/Thornliebank | 27 | 50 | 308 |
| Newton Mearns | - | -* | 653 |
| Total | 72 | 210 | 2,003 |

*\* Isobel Mair Family Centre provision is for children with Additional Support Needs, with flexibility of age range, therefore capacity for different ages may alter to meet needs.*

29. Private, Voluntary and Independent settings achieve partnership status to deliver funded ELC based on quality and meeting the National Standard. For 2025/2026 East Renfrewshire will continue to work with 12 providers, provided that have the necessary Care Inspectorate evaluations. New providers, or previous partners who meet the National Standard during this 3 year period, can apply for partnership status at any time. Table 5 below, details the current partners.

*Table 5*

| Provider | Status |
|---|---|
| Belmont Nursery Class | Independent |
| Broom Nursery | Voluntary |
| Clarkston Nursery | Voluntary |
| Elmwood Nursery | Private |
| Greenbank Woodland Play | Private |
| Happy Days Too (Busby) | Private |

| Happy Days Too (SF) | Private |
| Innocence Nursery | Private |
| Kirkhillgait Nursery | Private |
| Kirktonholme @Mearnswood | Private |
| Kirktonholme Nursery Thornliebank | Private |
| Railway Cottage | Private |

30.     In addition to the nurseries listed above, 8 childminders will also work in partnership to deliver funded early learning and childcare in session 2025/26.  At present 16 children are accessing funded placements with these childminders.

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 12 JUNE 2025

Report by Director of Education

EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT ON EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL'S EDUCATION DEPARTMENT'S APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.      To inform elected members of the report by Education Scotland on the Education Department's approaches to supporting school improvement.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.  Education Committee is asked to:

   a)     note and comment on the contents of the Education Scotland report.

**BACKGROUND**

3.      In June 2024, His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education announced a national thematic inspection of local authorities in Scotland. The focus of this thematic inspection was how local authorities support schools to improve.

4.      Through the national thematic, HM Inspectors gathered evidence on the following themes:

   • How local authorities support schools to improve the quality of education through implementing effective improvement planning and standards and quality reporting?
   • How local authorities support schools to improve the quality of education through self evaluation and quality assurance?
   • How local authorities support schools to improve the quality of education through professional learning?
   • How local authorities deliver universal support and challenge for all schools, and targeted support for specific schools to improve the quality of education?

5.      In September 2024, two of His Majesty's Inspectors and an Associate Assessor from another local authority spent 4 days in East Renfrewshire analysing documentation and speaking to a range of stakeholders including:

   • School Staff
   • School Leaders
   • Quality Improvement Team
   • Education Leadership Team
   • Parents
   • Education Committee Members

6.     A short report was published and shared in March 2025 (appendix 1) along with the national report detailing a summary of the position across all 32 local authorities.

**REPORT**

7.     In assessing the four themes as detailed in paragraph 4 above, no evaluations were provided.  This was consistent for all 32 local authorities.

8.     The visit and report overwhelmingly acknowledged the role of the Education Department in supporting its schools to improve the quality of education, leading to improved outcomes and ultimately the continuation of East Renfrewshire as the highest performing local authority in Scotland in relation to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) levels of attainment.

9.     The inspection team commented that there is clear correlation between individual school's self-evaluation and evaluative gradings from HM Inspectors in school inspections over recent years. Noting that between August 2016 and September 2024, HM Inspectors of Education have inspected 44% of schools in East Renfrewshire, with all of these being positive inspections.

10.     It was pleasing that the report recognised the commitment to professional learning within the Education Department and identified leading practice that was worth sharing nationally:

> *The local authority promotes and supports very well continuous professional learning for staff at all levels. The personal and professional commitments of staff reflect the expectations of high-quality learning and teaching from the local authority. Opportunities for staff at all levels to participate in and lead authority-wide improvements are creating a culture of ownership and pride in education, resulting in improved outcomes and experiences for learners.*

> *Staff talk about how much they value opportunities to develop resources and strategies that lead to authority-wide improvements. These opportunities provide professional learning, collaboration with others and sharing of effective practice. As a result, staff feel empowered and that they are important contributors to improving outcomes for all learners across the authority.*

11.     The National Thematic Inspection Report also highlighted the following with regards to East Renfrewshire:

> *The local authority promotes the collaboration of all stakeholders, especially learners, as essential to self-evaluation. The Director of Education engages regularly with children and young people from all schools to seek their views on a range of themes. The local authority gathers information from surveys completed by children and young people in schools. Through the Young Leaders of Learning approach, children and young people are developing an understanding of how to evaluate aspects of their own and other schools. Pupil and parent-friendly versions of school improvement plans are available in all schools. This is supporting children, young people, and parents to have a better understanding about school improvement. Parents welcome these school improvement plans and standards and quality reports that avoid educational jargon.*

12.    Considering the 4 themes of focus, the inspection team highlighted some clear impact and outcomes of the department in terms of supporting school improvement.  These included:

- Headteachers are very well supported by their link local authority officers to develop improvement plans. In addition, headteachers share and moderate their improvement plans and standards and quality reports with their peers using an online collaborative platform. This allows headteachers to share their priorities and gain an understanding and knowledge about other schools. This is building the capacity of headteachers to understand high-quality improvement planning approaches.

- The local authority promotes the collaboration of all stakeholders, especially learners, as essential to self-evaluation. There is very strong practice in how the local authority gathers learners' views. The Director of Education engages regularly with children and young people from all schools to seek their views. The local authority gathers information from surveys completed by children and young people in schools. Through the Young Leaders of Learning approach, children and young people are developing an understanding of how to evaluate aspects of their own and other schools.

- There is a deeply embedded culture of self-evaluation across the local authority. Staff, at all levels, understand the importance of evaluating their practice to bring about improvements for learners.

- The local authority has a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach to quality assurance that provides rich intelligence on school performance and practice. Local authority officers regularly discuss as a team the outcomes of quality assurance visits. Collectively, this provides useful information on school performance. This is also supported very effectively with analysis of data on performance measures and other sources of evidence such as questionnaires.

- Annual excellence and equity visits to schools, undertaken as quads involving school-based senior leaders, provide a rich source of intelligence for the local authority. This collaborative approach to quality assurance is empowering school leaders who feel that they have an input into system-wide improvement. This is a strong feature of practice in the local authority.

- The local authority prioritises the ongoing learning of staff in education as a key driver to achieve their ambitions for learners. Staff at all levels talk enthusiastically about the extensive range of opportunities to build on their skills and contribute to system-wide improvements. They feel empowered and motivated to participate in professional learning that supports the vision of 'Everyone achieving, everyone attaining through excellent experiences.' Staff recognise their individual and collective responsibility and embrace the high expectations of schools, staff and learners. Staff describe a very supportive culture which nurtures their enthusiasm for professional learning.

- Staff talk positively about leadership opportunities and how these support their professional knowledge and skills. The updated 2023-2028 Leadership Strategy recognises the importance of building leadership capacity at all levels. This includes leadership of learners and middle leadership capacity, as well as challenges in building further on current successes.

- A team of centrally based principal teachers provide mentoring and guided support to improve learning, teaching and pedagogical approaches in schools. This support is tailored to meet the needs of individual school, stages and groups of staff.

Headteachers and staff are positive about the impact this support is having on building their capacity and improving outcomes for learners.

- All schools across the authority benefit from positive and collaborative working relationships with the education leadership team and local authority staff involved in school improvement. The team of local authority officers know schools very well and provide appropriate and relevant support that reflects the individual context of schools. They have an in-depth knowledge about the performance of schools. This knowledge of schools, together with a range of quality assurance processes such as visits and analysis of data ensures that all schools are very well supported and challenged about their performance.

- Elected members are highly knowledgeable about how the local authority supports schools to improve the quality of their education. They are provided with a wide range of information and data about the performance of schools. They have regular opportunities to meet with the ELT and these meetings provide appropriate opportunities for elected members to offer support and challenge.

13.    The report did provide evidence that the department will consider in its continuous journey of improvement.  This includes:

- Continue to support and challenge schools with improvement planning.

- Refresh and continually update the Career Long Professional Learning Framework.

14.    Along with the Quality Improvement Team, the Head of Service (Performance and Quality Improvement) will address the areas shared in paragraph 13 above and align with operational action plans linked to the Local Improvement Plan 2025 – 2028.


**FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY**

15.    There are no financial or efficiency implications related to this report.


**RECOMMENDATIONS**

16. Education Committee is asked to:

a)  note and comment on the contents of the Education Scotland report.


Mark Ratter
Director of Education
12 June 2025


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Appendix
1. Education Scotland report on East Renfrewshire Council
2. [Local authority approaches to supporting school improvement A national thematic inspection report from His Majesty's Inspectors of Education 12 March 2025](#)

**National Thematic Inspection: Local authority approaches to supporting school improvement.**

**Summarised Findings**

| Local Authority | East Renfrewshire Council |
|---|---|
| Lead HM Inspector | Monica Reilly |

In September 2024, a team of inspectors from Education Scotland visited East Renfrewshire Council. During our visit, we talked to senior leaders, local authority officers, parents/carers, headteachers, teachers, representatives from professional associations and elected members.

**Purpose and themes**

The purpose of the visit was to gather evidence about how East Renfrewshire Council supports school improvement, with a focus on how they support schools to improve the quality of education through:

- the implementation of effective improvement planning and standards and quality reporting
- self- evaluation and quality assurance
- professional learning
- universal and targeted support and challenge

**Context of the local authority**

More than 87% of the population in East Renfrewshire live in a large urban area, as classified by the Scottish Government's Urban-Rural Classification (2020). A further 9% live in communities with populations between 3,000 and 10,000 people, designated as small towns. Almost 4% of the population live in rural areas with populations of less than 3000. Twenty-five percent of children and young people attending schools in East Renfrewshire are from an ethnic minority background. Seventy different languages are spoken by learners in schools across the authority.

Six percent of children and young people in primary and secondary schools live within deciles 1-2 of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).

Approximately 21% of children in primary schools and 30% of young people in secondary schools have been assessed as requiring additional support with their learning.

The average attendance in 2022/23 was 93%. The national average is 90.2%. In 2023/2024 in East Renfrewshire Council, children and young people are educated across 24 primary schools, seven secondary schools, one specialist school and three supported learning centres within mainstream schools which provide support for children and young people with communication difficulties. One school provides Gàidhlig (Gaelic) Medium Education. Outreach centres

1

provide support for children and young people with sensory needs and for those learners who have social, emotional and behavioural challenges.

The Education Leadership Team (ELT) comprises of the Director of Education, three Head of Education Services and three Senior Education Managers. The ELT is supported by three quality improvement managers and four quality improvement officers. Eight centrally based principal teachers and educational psychologists are part of the team of staff that support school improvement.

**Theme 1 - How do local authorities support schools to improve the quality of education through implementing effective improvement planning and standards and quality reporting?**

- *How clear and effective is the local authority's arrangements and advice to schools on self-evaluation, improvement planning and standards and quality reporting?*
- *How does the local authority ensure that schools' self-evaluation is accurate, rigorous and robust, based on reliable and comprehensive data and information?*
- *In what ways does the local authority promote collaboration with all stakeholders, especially learners, as essential to effective self-evaluation and identification of priorities?*
- *What is the role of central teams in providing critical feedback to school leaders on the quality/robustness of their self-evaluation and school improvement planning processes?*
- *To what extent does the local authority use the data from individual school or cluster improvement plans and standards and quality reports, to direct their officers' work?*

Across the local authority, there are very strong approaches to self-evaluation, school improvement and quality assurance. As a result, headteachers and staff demonstrate high levels of confidence and ability to lead and improve their schools. There is clear correlation between individual school's self-evaluation and evaluative gradings from HM inspectors in school inspections over recent years. Since August 2016, HM Inspectors of Education have inspected 44% of schools in this local authority. These were all positive inspections. In session 2023/2024, all gradings were very good or excellent. At the time of the visit, East Renfrewshire was the highest performing local authority in Scotland in relation to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) levels of attainment.

The local authority provides clear advice and guidance to schools on self-evaluation, improvement planning and standards and quality reporting. Guidance is included within an interactive portal where headteachers can access a wide range of information. This supports them well in evaluating the work of their school and identifying priorities for improvement. This portal is supported by effective professional learning. Headteachers welcome the interactive and iterative nature of the portal. It is updated regularly. Headteachers are very well supported by their link local authority officers to develop improvement plans. In addition, headteachers share and moderate their improvement plans and standards and quality reports with their peers using an online collaborative platform. This allows headteachers to share their priorities and gain an understanding and knowledge about other schools. This is building the capacity of headteachers to understand high-quality improvement planning approaches.

The local authority promotes the collaboration of all stakeholders, especially learners, as essential to self-evaluation. There is very strong practice in how the

local authority gathers learners' views. The Director of Education engages regularly with children and young people from all schools to seek their views. The local authority gathers information from surveys completed by children and young people in schools. Through the Young Leaders of Learning approach, children and young people are developing an understanding of how to evaluate aspects of their own and other schools. Pupil and parent friendly versions of school improvement plans are available for all schools. This is supporting children, young people and parents to have a better understanding about school improvement. Parents welcome school improvement plans and standards and quality reports that avoid educational jargon. The local authority should continue as planned to support schools to ensure that information about school improvement is easily accessible for all learners and their families.

Local authority officers provide feedback to headteachers on the quality of their improvement planning processes. This is delivered in a range of ways such as in-person verbal feedback and email correspondence. Local authority officers should continue to engage in moderation activities, using the agreed features of effective improvement planning, when reviewing Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) improvement planning, school improvement plans and standards and quality reports. An initial start has been made to formalising the approach to collating improvement plan priorities across all schools. This has the potential to provide a strategic overview of patterns and trends over time of what schools are working towards. Local authority officers have very good knowledge of their schools. They share with each other data from individual school improvement plans and PEF plans. This allows them to direct headteachers to schools with similar priorities.

**Theme 2:  How do local authorities support schools to improve the quality of education through self-evaluation and quality assurance**?
- *What methods does the local authority use to evaluate school performance (review the quality of education) for example, gathering evidence from stakeholders, review/validated self-evaluation visits, attainment analysis)? How effective are these methods? How often does this take place?*
- *To what extent do officers carry out regular and rigorous evaluation of the quality of school provision? How is this work quality assured?*
- *How does the local authority evaluate the quality of learning, teaching and assessment?*
- *How clear and effective is the advice and support for schools on approaches to self-evaluation and their quality assurance? How effectively does the local authority moderate this at strategic and school levels?*
- *How does the local authority identify and share effective practice through quality assurance? Is this making a difference across the authority?*

There is a deeply embedded culture of self-evaluation across the local authority. Staff, at all levels, understand the importance of evaluating their practice to bring about improvements for learners. As a result of a review of quality assurance approaches, a short-life working group was set up that proposed a collaborative improvement visits (CIVs) approach across all school. This approach involves local authority officers and senior leaders from schools. Collaborative improvement visits provide detailed information about school performance and allow headteachers to be involved in evaluating the work of other schools. Each school is the focus of a CIV a minimum of every seven years. Schools are able to identify a school-based improvement priority as an area of focus as part of the CIV. Senior leaders in schools view CIVs as positive and they value the supportive nature of these visits. They identify that CIVs are building the capacity

of senior leaders in schools to evaluate school performance, leading to improved outcomes and experiences for learners.

The local authority has a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach to quality assurance that provides rich intelligence on school performance and practice. Local authority officers regularly discuss as a team the outcomes of quality assurance visits. Collectively, this provides useful information on school performance. This is also supported very effectively with analysis of data on performance measures and other sources of evidence such as questionnaires. Local authority staff, in collaboration with school leaders, gather very effectively information about schools through thematic or aspect reviews such as that on literacy in 2024 and the PEF thematic review in 2023. These reviews provide important information about individual schools and an overview of strengths and areas for development across the local authority. Information from these reviews is then used to direct improvement priorities for the local authority.

Annual excellence and equity visits to schools, undertaken as quads involving school-based senior leaders, provide a rich source of intelligence for the local authority. Following success with secondary schools, these visits have been introduced this session to primary schools. This collaborative approach to quality assurance is empowering school leaders who feel that they have an input into system-wide improvement. This is a strong feature of practice in the local authority.

Senior leaders in East Renfrewshire Council model the importance of quality assurance very effectively. They attend schools frequently and are highly visible to staff and learners. The Director of Education visits schools regularly to talk to staff and learners. Local authority officers conduct informal visits to schools. This provides them with ongoing information about the strengths and practice within individual schools. Importantly, these visits contribute to building a culture of teamwork and collective responsibility across the authority.

The local authority evaluates the quality of learning, teaching and assessment as part of CIVs and thematic visits. In addition, moderation of assessment evidence is also carried out by school leaders. This provides an opportunity to calibrate professional judgements of Curriculum for Excellence achievement of levels. The CIV learning visit template is based on quality indicator 2.3 from How good is our school?4. Local authority officers should consider the addition of theme 4, planning, tracking and monitoring to the template. This would allow the discussion of how monitoring and tracking of progress informs subsequent planning. The online portal on learning, teaching and assessment allows school-based staff to self-evaluate their practice in relation to learning and teaching. In addition, it provides a rich source of information and case studies such as higher order thinking skills and differentiation to support effective practice. The local authority should continue to develop sharing effective practice through their online portal.

The local authority identifies highly effective practice through their quality assurance approaches. Local authority officers then cascade this to their peers, who are well positioned to signpost this to headteachers. This is particularly helpful for schools who have priorities in their school improvement plans aligned

to the effective practice. In addition, regular headteacher meetings and networks also share highly effective practice, including inspection evidence, which is then used to support system wide improvement.

**Theme 3: How do local authorities support schools to improve the quality of education through professional learning?**
- *What professional learning does the local authority currently provide to support school improvement?*
- *What is the impact of this on developing the skills and knowledge of school leaders and staff on school improvement?*
- *What support systems (e.g., mentoring, networks of practice, peer support groups, cluster support) are available for school leaders and staff? How are these approaches improving school performance and outcomes for learners?*
- *To what extent do senior leaders have opportunities to support improvement beyond their own establishment? What difference is this making?*
- *How effectively does the local authority utilise Associate Assessors (if applicable) to support school improvement across establishments.*
- *Does the local authority's professional learning strategy draw on support from national organisations?*

Overall, there is strong enthusiasm for professional learning. Senior leaders and staff recognise their individual and collective responsibility for improvement of inclusive practice across the local authority. The central team supports this very well through providing opportunities and facilitating capacity to participate in developments such as working parties. Staff contribute to developing resources and strategies that support authority-wide improvement. Collaborative working within the West Partnership Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC) provides valuable opportunities for staff at all levels to evaluate and improve their pedagogy.

The local authority prioritises the ongoing learning of staff in education as a key driver to achieve their ambitions for learners. Staff at all levels talk enthusiastically about the extensive range of opportunities to build on their skills and contribute to system-wide improvements. They feel empowered and motivated to participate in professional learning that supports the vision of 'Everyone achieving, everyone attaining through excellent experiences.' Staff recognise their individual and collective responsibility and embrace the high expectations of schools, staff and learners. Staff describe a very supportive culture which nurtures their enthusiasm for professional learning. Staff at all levels are clear about the links between professional development and school improvement planning. Headteachers manage well the capacity of staff to engage in professional development including the effective use of working time agreements and collegiate agreements.

Staff talk positively about leadership opportunities and how these support their professional knowledge and skills. The updated 2023-2028 Leadership Strategy recognises the importance of building leadership capacity at all levels. This includes leadership of learners and middle leadership capacity, as well as challenges in building further on current successes. The leadership strategy was evaluated, with progress recorded in a report in 2024. This report recognised impact in a number of key areas, including an increase in practitioner enquiry, and additional qualifications such as masters level learning.

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School leaders report positively that professional learning is helping to support them in their role. They value the learning opportunities provided during CIVs and opportunities to collaborate with colleagues. Authority-led conferences, seminars and headteacher-led forums provide beneficial opportunities to develop knowledge and share practice with peers.

Staff are very positive about the range of resources that are available to support their professional learning. Examples such as the learning and teaching online portal are readily accessible and focus on improving aspects of learning and teaching. Other examples support development work in the curriculum. These resources facilitate access to professional reading, use of data and development of pedagogical approaches. Central staff are working with schools to extend opportunities for sharing practice using these platforms. Centrally based staff evaluate aspects of professional learning through measures such as participation and increased confidence and knowledge. In partnership with psychological services, they are exploring ways in which to gather information about professional learning in a manageable way. This will better demonstrate the impact on children's experiences and outcomes over time. As they continue with this work, local authority staff should ensure they include the impact of the extensive range of professional learning that takes place within the local authority.

There is a wide range of networks in place to support professional dialogue and sharing practice. These build on a culture of trust and collaboration where staff are enthusiastic about engaging in professional learning. There are facilitated opportunities to engage in professional reading groups. Teaching Sprints have also recently been implemented. These are designed to provide staff with opportunities to engage in small scale research to implement a change in their classroom practice.

Collaborative learning networks provide support for staff in planning learning, teaching and assessment. Staff use forums and conferences to develop their knowledge and understanding. They proactively seek out the skills and expertise of colleagues to continue to make improvements to their practice.

A team of centrally based principal teachers provide mentoring and guided support to improve learning, teaching and pedagogical approaches in schools. This support is tailored to meet the needs of individual school, stages and groups of staff. Headteachers and staff are positive about the impact this support is having on building their capacity and improving outcomes for learners.

The local authority makes effective use of Associate Assessors to support ongoing school improvement. Associate Assessors support a consistent understanding of what high-quality learning and teaching looks like. They participate in CIVs and support headteachers during forums and meetings to develop a consistent understanding of high-quality learning and teaching. They are valued by colleagues and work together to support schools as peers and critical friends. The local authority should continue with plans to extend the role of Associate Assessors and explore how they can contribute further to professional learning and school improvement.

Staff have a proactive approach to working with other agencies and forming partnerships to support professional learning. Staff form networks with other local authorities, including those within the RIC. They speak very positively about the benefit of learning from out with the authority.

The East Renfrewshire professional learning offer is set out in the Career-Long Professional Learning document 2021-2023. Staff have identified an increasing variety of approaches to support professional learning across the authority. There is an opportunity to refresh and update the 2021-2023 strategy. This will enable the local authority to show the connections with key priorities emerging from the local improvement plan, school improvement plans, self-evaluation and approaches to quality assurance.

**Theme 4: How do local authorities deliver universal support and challenge for all schools, and/or targeted support for specific schools to improve the quality of education?**
- *What is the universal offer of support and challenge for all schools?*
- *How does the local authority use the data from individual school or cluster improvement plans and standards and quality reports, to provide targeted support?*
- *What measures are used to identify the need for targeted support?*
- *Is there targeted support for specific schools? What might that look like? (examples?) What action is taken if a review of a school concludes that a school is not performing satisfactorily and requires targeted support?*
- *What support systems (for example: mentoring, networks of practice, peer support groups) are available for school leaders and staff?*
- *What is the role of central staff in facilitating/contributing to collaborative approaches, which improve school performance and outcomes for learners?*

All schools across the authority benefit from positive and collaborative working relationships with the education leadership team and local authority staff involved in school improvement. The team of local authority officers know schools very well and provide appropriate and relevant support that reflects the individual context of schools. They have an in-depth knowledge about the performance of schools. This knowledge of schools, together with a range of quality assurance processes such as visits and analysis of data ensures that all schools are very well supported and challenged about their performance.

In addition to universal support and quality assurance approaches that are provided for all schools, local authority officers identify and categorise schools requiring additional interventions. The categories of "supported," "guided" and "independent" are used by local authority officers. These categories indicate the level of support and interventions required by individual schools. This approach allows local authority officers to monitor and track the progress schools make as a result of support and interventions. For example, a school requiring a significant level of support will be categorised as "supported." As they make progress, they will move to "guided" support. When local authority officers are confident that performance in the school has reached an expected level, the school is categorised as "independent." The level and nature of support for schools varies, depending on the need and performance. Support might be targeted on a short- or long-term basis depending on the improvement priorities. Whilst headteachers are aware that schools are being supported and are positive about receiving support, they are less aware of the categorisation system used by the local

authority. Parents and elected members are unaware that the local authority has specific categories in place to provide targeted support. However, they are very confident that local authority officers know schools well and are proactive in providing support if required.

Local authority staff scrutinise data and information from schools robustly to direct targeted support. They use a range of evidence to provide interventions to support all aspects of school performance. For example, CIVs and learning walks provide local authority officers with information about the quality of learning and teaching. If required, and in collaboration with headteachers, support is then provided to address issues identified. Local authority officers use attainment and other data very well to provide targeted support in specific areas of the curriculum such as literacy or numeracy.

Centrally-based principal teachers are integral to targeted support approaches for schools. They work closely with quality improvement managers and officers to provide planned and cohesive interventions to identified schools. Centrally-based principal teachers are allocated to specific schools or to particular stages or departments within schools. Their work includes modelling effective practice in the teaching of subjects such as literacy and numeracy. This supports well the capacity of teachers to deliver high-quality learning and teaching. Headteachers and staff welcome their support. Staff in schools value the positive impact of the work of centrally-based principal teachers. They identify improvements in areas such as the learning and teaching of reading and the use of resources to support effectively children with additional support needs. Principal teachers monitor closely the impact of their interventions and work with schools and local authority officers to determine next steps. As planned, they should continue to evidence how their work leads to improvements.

Across East Renfrewshire schools, there are very effective opportunities for headteachers and staff to work together and share practice. Collaboration is a key strength of the local authority. Collaborative approaches promote empowerment and facilitate headteachers and staff to seek support from colleagues within the authority and beyond. For example, staff-led headteacher forums allow senior leaders in schools to work together to share practice and seek support from colleagues to address challenges in their schools. The wide range of leadership groups across the authority creates valuable opportunities for staff to work together, share practice and support each other.

## 5. Any other relevant information

Elected members are highly knowledgeable about how the local authority supports schools to improve the quality of their education. They are provided with a wide range of information and data about the performance of schools. They have regular opportunities to meet with the ELT and these meetings provide appropriate opportunities for elected members to offer support and challenge.

## 6. Effective practice worth sharing

The local authority promotes and supports very well continuous professional learning for staff at all levels. The personal and professional commitments of staff reflect the expectations of high-quality learning and teaching from the local

authority. Opportunities for staff at all levels to participate in and lead authority-wide improvements are creating a culture of ownership and pride in education, resulting in improved outcomes and experiences for learners.
Staff talk about how much they value opportunities to develop resources and strategies that lead to authority-wide improvements. These opportunities provide professional learning, collaboration with others and sharing of effective practice. As a result, staff feel empowered and that they are important contributors to improving outcomes for all learners across the authority.

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EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

12 June 2025

Report by Director of Education

WEST PARTNERSHIP REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE:
LESSONS FROM 2017-2025

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To inform East Renfrewshire's Education Committee of the key actions undertaken by the West Partnership (Glasgow City Region Education Improvement Collaborative) between 2017 and 2025, their impact and the lessons learned for future regional collaboration.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2. Education Committee is asked to note and comment on the achievements of the West Partnership.

**BACKGROUND**

3. Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) were established in 2017 as a national initiative to bring about improvement for all schools in Scotland. They were intended to bring together local authorities and Education Scotland, facilitate collaborative working and provide educational support to practitioners.

4. The Glasgow City Region Education Improvement Collaboration, known as the West Partnership brings together authorities from across the Glasgow City Region; East Renfrewshire is a member of the West Partnership.

5. Education Committee noted the progress of the West Partnership and the contents of its Improvement Plan in September 2024.

6. This report summarises evidence from two recent papers on the West Partnership and draws out key lessons for future collaboration.

**REPORT 1: THE WEST PARTNERSHIP REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE – 2017 TO 2025**

7. The report attached as Appendix 1 details the work of the West Partnership Regional Improvement Collaborative between 2017 and 2025. The report sets out the context in which RICs were established before describing the maturation of the West Partnership over time.

8. The report is broken into four distinct chronological sections, with brief studies of activity provided for each period.

9. Section One covers 2017 to 2020 and details the early establishment of the West Partnership.

10. Section Two covers 'the pandemic' years – 2020 and 2021. This section focuses on how the West Partnership dynamically responded to a once-in-a-lifetime event to support our educators and children and young people.

11. The third section covers the years 2022 to 2024 – a period categorised by as a returning to a focus of improvement. During this period the West Partnership activity focused on upscaling impactful interventions and contributed to the development of new system knowledge, for example, in relation to Artificial Intelligence and the implementation of 1140 hours.

12. The fourth section, covering 2024 to the present day, explores what comes next for Scotland's biggest regional collaborative. Following the tapering of RIC funding nationally, the section details work which has been undertaken to ensure positive elements of collaboration remain.

13. Importantly, as well as noting the key actions undertaken by the West Partnership and their impact, the report summarises lessons from this period. These include:

    - The West Partnership governance arrangements have been responsive to the environment and ensured a focus on meeting emergent needs;
    - The ability of the education system to innovate and rapidly upskill – The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in the learning of new technologies which have seen sustained use; and,
    - The role of RICs in spreading knowledge and skills around a system and in creating new learning and understanding.

14. Throughout the report, reference is made to the Robert Owen Centre's external evaluation, and evaluations of RICs by the Scottish Government to demonstrate how West Partnership work has been externally examined over time.


**REPORT 2: DRAWING OUT LESSONS FROM REGIONAL COLLABORATION IN SCOTLAND 20217-2025**

15. This report summarises evidence generated over the past seven years and draws on the experience and reflections of Professors Chapman and Donaldson in relation to the evolution of the West Partnership.

16. The paper clearly demonstrates the impact of the West Partnership in a number of key areas highlighting:

    - The impact directly on schools and classrooms (page 13) through high quality professional learning programmes; and,
    - Enhanced sharing of ideas, tools and resources leading to a network learning system (page 14).

17. Professors Chapman and Donaldson conclude that *'The findings from various evaluations suggest that the WP is making very strong progress in supporting improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in educational establishments and promoting positive outcomes of children and young people.'* (Page 15).

18. The paper also identifies a number of key factors that enabled the West Partnership to collaborate effectively (page 16); these include:

- strategic leadership;
- networked learning and collaboration;
- building data-informed systems, tools, and resources;
- evidence-based models of good practice;
- practitioner-led programmes;
- planning and organisation;
- scaling through peer recommendation;
- focusing on 'hot issues';
- awareness of opportunities; and,
- workforce capacity.

19. Finally, the paper sets out considerations designed to ensure that the benefits of regional collaboration continue to be realised. These considerations will support the West Partnership as it implements the new Collaborative Framework.


**FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY**

20. There are no financial or efficiency implications arising from this report.


**PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

21. The progress of the West Partnership in supporting effective partnership working has been recognised in both of these reports and externally through analysis carried out by the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government review was published in January 2024 noted that across Scotland RICs:

- were engaging with approximately 30% of schools whilst accounting for 0.1% of education spending in Scotland; and,
- have continued to strengthen collaboration across and between local authorities, between RICs and with other partners.


**CONCLUSION**

22. Evidence from these two papers along with the West Partnership Evaluation Report 2023-24 demonstrate the impact in enhancing collaboration, improving knowledge and confidence and changing practice. The focus in the West Partnership on excellence and equity, underpinned by an approach with enables staff to take collective action and deliver improvement is clearly adding value.

23. Originally RICs were established to:

- *provide excellent educational improvement support for headteachers, teachers and practitioners through dedicated teams of professionals. These teams will draw on Education Scotland staff, local authority staff and others;*
- *provide coherent focus across all partners through delivery of an annual regional plan and associated work programme aligned with the National Improvement Framework; and,*

- *facilitate collaborative working across the region, including sharing best practice, supporting collaborative networks and pursuing partnership approaches*.

24. Based on the external evaluation of the Robert Owen Centre and Professors Chapman and Donaldson, along with the data on engagement from practitioners, the West Partnership is delivering on these aims and is well placed to continue to meet the needs of its stakeholders and support improvement in the future.

## RECOMMENDATION

25. Education Committee is asked to note and comment on the achievements of the West Partnership.

Mark Ratter
Director of Education
12 June 2025

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Appendix 1
The West Partnership Regional Improvement Collaborative – 2017-2025

Background Papers
West Partnership Improvement Collaborative: Improvement Plan 2024-25
https://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/media/10803/Education-Item-09-26-September-2024/pdf/Education_Item_09_-_26_September_2024.pdf?m=1726766002680

West Partnership Improvement Collaborative Evaluation Report 2023-24
https://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/media/10802/Education-Item-08-26-September-2024/pdf/Education_Item_08_-_26_September_2024.pdf?m=1726766002490

# THE WEST PARTNERSHIP REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE – 2017 TO 2025

## Executive Summary

This report tells the story of the West Partnership Regional Improvement Collaborative between 2017 and 2025. The report explains the context in which Regional Improvement Collaboratives were established before detailing the maturation of the West Partnership over time. The report is broken into 4 distinct chronological sections, with brief case studies of activity provided for each period. The first section covers the years 2017 to 2020 and details the early establishment of the RIC. The second section covers 'the pandemic' years – 2020 and 2021. This section focuses on how the West Partnership dynamically responded to a once-in-a-lifetime event to support our education system in a time of need. Examples of support given to leaders and practitioners are provided whilst also showing the direct impact of West Partnership activity on the learning experience of our children and young people. The third section covers the years 2022 to 2024 – a period understood as returning to a focus on improvement. Examples are given of West Partnership activity which contributed to system knowledge, upscaling of impactful interventions and responding to new systemic issues. The fourth section, covering 2024 to the present day, explores what comes next for Scotland's biggest regional collaborative. Following the winding down of RICs nationally, the section details work which has been undertaken to ensure positive elements of a networked learning system remain. Finally, a conclusion reflects upon 7 years of West Partnership work, drawing out key lessons from a highly disrupted period in Scottish education. Throughout this report, reference to the Robert Owen Centre's external evaluation, and evaluations from the Scottish Government, are provided to demonstrate how West Partnership work has been externally examined over time.
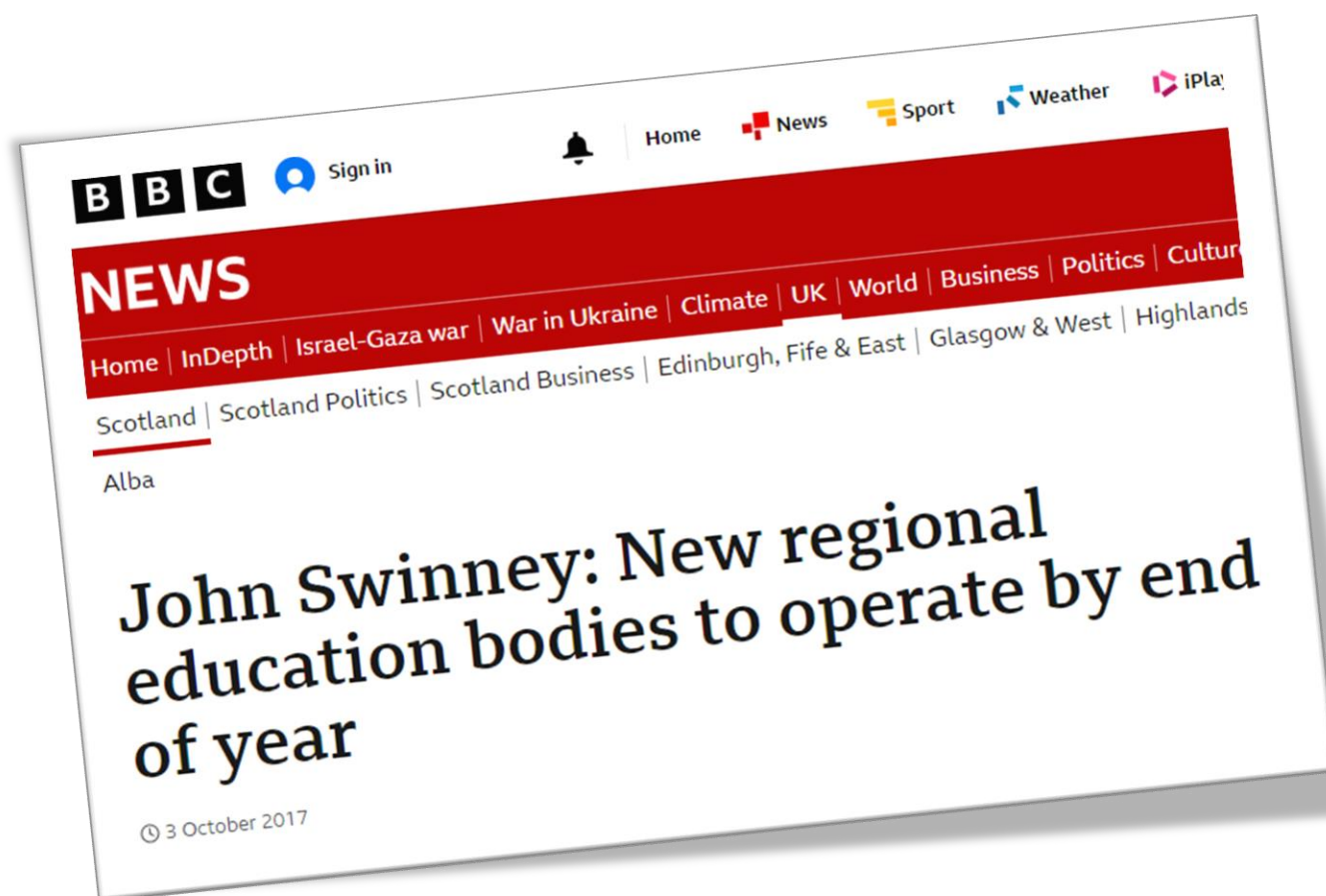
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# Introduction

The West Partnership is made up of 8 local authorities based in the Glasgow City Region. These local authorities are East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire. The RIC accounts for approximately 35% of Scotland's pupils – almost a quarter of a million pupils spread across just over 700 primary, secondary and special schools. Over half (55%) of all West Partnership pupils reside in SIMD quintiles 1 and 2, with data from the Children in Low Income Families dataset suggesting that 40% of Scotland's children living in low-income families reside in West Partnership local authorities. The West Partnership is diverse along several demographic lines. Many of Scotland's most and least deprived SIMD zones are present within our region. Most of our pupils reside in urban areas, yet many of our local authorities operate within remote and rural areas. We have 2 primary schools with 10 or less pupils and Scotland's biggest secondary school.

This report provides a chance to reflect upon the work of Scotland's biggest Regional Improvement Collaboration (RIC) between 2017 and 2025. The report is broken into four chronological sections. First, we explore the context in which RICs were established and detail some of the early work of the West Partnership. Second, we examine the work of the West Partnership as it charted through the waters of a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic. Here we see how the RIC supported school leaders and practitioners alike. Third, we investigate how the RIC returned to improvement work after the initial disruption of the pandemic. In this section we look at how the RIC itself turned to generating new knowledge in our system, how effective programmes were upscaled to reach a wider audience, how pandemic-enforced changes to work were harnessed in new ways and how evaluation was revitalised within the partnership. Fourth, we analyse how the West Partnership moves on following the curtailment of RICs in 2024.

Finally, we conclude by summarising lessons from this period. This report is written from the West Partnership's perspective, yet we draw upon evaluative evidence presented by both the Robert Owen Centre at the University of Glasgow and the Scottish Government via its own evaluation processes. Alongside this external evaluation, we use case study examples throughout the report to evidence how the West Partnership responded to the challenges of those times and of emergent areas of interest for improvement. One key question that this report wishes to address is to what extent did/does the West Partnership meet the needs of those who work in our system, and did it fulfil its intended purpose. To answer this question, we first need to explore the context in which RICs and the West Partnership were established.

# Launching the RIC – The West Partnership's Early Years (2017-2020)



BBC NEWS

John Swinney: New regional education bodies to operate by end of year

3 October 2017

## The Wider Context of Regional Improvement Collaboratives

Regional Improvement Collaboratives were announced by the then Cabinet Secretary for Education, John Swinney, in 2017. In the Scottish Government's *Education Governance; Next Steps* (2017, p7) report, the aspirations of RICs were detailed as follows (1):

*Regional improvement collaboratives will:*

*• provide excellent educational improvement support for headteachers, teachers and practitioners through dedicated teams of professionals. These teams will draw on Education Scotland staff, local authority staff and others;*

*• provide coherent focus across all partners through delivery of an annual regional plan and associated work programme aligned with the National Improvement Framework;*

*• facilitate collaborative working across the region, including sharing best practice, supporting collaborative networks and pursuing partnership approaches; and*

*• be led by a Regional Director, to be appointed by the Scottish Government and to report to the HM Chief Inspector/Chief Executive of Education Scotland.*

Whilst RICs were formally launched in 2017, their creation was situated in the context of other key policies or recommendations from external agencies. The value and importance of collaboration as a tool to generate improvement was a key focus of the work of the International Council of Educational Advisors (ICEA) (2017, p2), who had briefed ministers that collaboration in education was *"uneven and ... not sufficiently ingrained throughout the education system(2)*. The promotion of collaboration at a regional level was also recommended by the Institute of Public Policy (2017, p7) (3), who recommended that

> *Regional education partnerships should be created above the level of local authorities to lead on workforce planning, teachers' continuing professional development and to take responsibility for funding, evaluating and measuring the impact of attainment activity in schools at a regional level.*

The suggested focus on continuing professional development was also generated in the context of what the OECD (2015) framed as "strengthening the middle" (4), which the Scottish Government (2016, p11) understood as (5):

> *enhancing the capacity of teachers, practitioners, early learning and childcare settings and schools to collaborate and become mutually accountable for improvement; how they work with other partners; and the role of local authorities and other partners in leading and supporting improvement in education.*

The need to drive improvement across the system was also a response to wider recommendations and policies around the poverty related attainment gap. The OECD's (2015) focus on "strengthen the middle" was also proposed alongside "relentlessly closing the gap and raising the bar simultaneously". As such, the Scottish Attainment Challenge policy of 2015, and its focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap, was a key precursor to Regional Improvement Collaboratives.

In summary, the theory of change around RICs was that they would strengthen collaboration between schools, local authorities, Education Scotland and government which would generate improvements within the classroom that would ultimately close the poverty related attainment gap.

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## Starting The West Partnership

The RICs were established via a two-phase process (6). Phase one covered October 2017 to August 2018, with the West Partnership launching in January 2018. In February of 2018, a draft version of the West Partnerships initial improvement plan was presented to the City Region Education Committee. In this first improvement plan, two of the West Partnerships values which remain today were stated for the first time (7):

> "The aim of the West Partnership is clear. We want to ensure we bring about **excellence and equity** in education across the entire region" (emphasis added)

The draft plan outlines three key areas of focus which built on work existing within the region. These were 1) quality improvement, 2) learner journey and 3) early learning and childcare. Suggested critical indicators were offered for each thematic area. An update to the committee in April 2018 noted that alongside three thematic workstreams, a fourth was working on evaluation of RIC related activity and constructing a comprehensive set of critical indicators to assess the impact of the West Partnership (8).

An updated Improvement Plan was taken to committee in August 2018 which explicitly stated the West Partnership's vision as *Equity, Excellence and Empowerment (9)*. At this point the West Partnership had moved on from three workstreams and now proposed 8 workstreams covering *collaborative learning networks, empowerment, curricular networks and networks of ASL schools, CLPL which will build learning networks, systems improvement, curriculum design, leadership and succession planning, and families and communities (10)*. The plan also detailed remits and actions for each workstream, whilst also identifying members of each local authority who constituted a steering group for individual workstreams.

The Scottish Government evaluation of the phase one establishment of RICs was completed in 2018 and published in February 2019 (11). The interim review (2018, p5) concluded that:

> *Overall, stakeholders felt that RICs were in their early days of operation, and that the timetable for setting up structures and developing plans had been tight. Stakeholders also felt it was important to recognise that phase one RIC activity has largely been taken forward without additional resources. The availability of resources to support phase two plans was welcomed.*

Governance arrangements for RICs were broadly seen as successful, with strong buy-in from senior officers and clear links between partners and local authorities. The planning process was positioned as well-informed by data and research, and whilst RIC plans aligned with national priorities, the interim review suggested there was a need for better integration with school priorities and more effective measurement of progress. It was also noted that the full impact of RICs, including joint working and sharing best practices, would take time to materialise. Phase two of the establishment of the RICS began in the 2018/19 session – the session to which we now turn.

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# Early work in the RIC

The West Partnership's first full evaluation report was presented to the Glasgow City Region Education Committee in August 2019 (12). The report (2019, p4) noted that early activity in the partnership had:

> *focused on working with headteachers, depute headteachers, heads of early learning and childcare settings and senior council officers. As the year progressed, more practitioners were included and involved through the assessment and moderation activities, collaborative learning networks and extensive stakeholder consultation to develop proposals for curricular/specialist networks. Harnessing the collective responsibility of staff to shift the ownership of change is central to achieving the ambition for the West Partnership.*

The report provided an overview of work completed in each of the workstreams. Collaborative enquiry and the partnership between the RIC and the Robert Owen Centre via collaborative learning networks was described for the first time:

> *Collaborative learning networks were formally launched in May 2019, attended by 40 schools/early learning and childcare (ELC) settings and 80 staff. Sessions led by University of Glasgow and practitioners framed the concept, characteristics, potential of collaborative learning networks to positively impact on learning and teaching.(13)*

The report also notes that the plan was for collaborative learning networks to develop over several years:

> *A comprehensive plan was agreed by the Board in May 2019 to take these collaborative learning networks forward over the next five years. On an annual basis two new collaborative learning networks will be launched each May and September. With each new cohort being made up from a minimum of 40 school or early learning and childcare setting from across the region. Each cohort will involve a maximum of 100 participants who will be matched into eight to twelve collaborative learning teams (14).*

Collaborative learning networks as a standalone workstream would be removed a few years later but the approach would remain across all workstreams. This early work provided the basis for that later decision. Furthermore, the report provided a definition of collaboration that would also remain relevant to the West Partnership in the following years (13):

> *"Collaboration involves working together to understand and improve pedagogy for agreed purposes, which leads to better outcomes, informed by evidence and critical self-reflection".*

The 2018/19 evaluation report also covered a few activities which pre-dated the RIC, such as Improving Our Classrooms (IOC) and the Making Maths Count annual conference. The report notes that '*four local authorities expressed an interest in participating in a West Partnership version of the* [IOC] *programme'(15)*, which had run in Glasgow over several years. A positive evaluation of the first West Partnership Maths Conference, which ran in September 2018, is provided. The conference was run in collaboration with Making Maths Count, which was set up in 2015 (16). Both IOC and the maths/numeracy specialist network would develop over the following years.

Unsurprisingly for the time, professional learning opportunities were run in-person. Whilst the report paints a predominantly positive picture of the session's activities, it is noted that some CLPL work was limited by "limited capacity of the venue and financial implications" meaning that "it was unfortunately not possible for all heads to participate" (17). The report explains that places were offered to each local authority on a pro-rata basis based on the size of each authority. In the coming years limitations around venue capacity would be less influential as new ways of working meant that online delivery could boost the reach of West Partnership activity.

The report also demonstrates the infancy of some activity. For example, the leadership workstream which was orientated around succession planning had mainly focused on analysing each authority's leadership programmes to identify best practice. There is also an acknowledgement of where potential work had been stopped after exploration revealed practical challenges. For example, the report notes that the leadership steering group had considered a shared West Partnership assessment centre and a process of "job swapping" for teachers and promoted post holders. Both of which were stopped and perhaps show an example of the West Partnership finding its feet in terms of its governance position.

# Robert Owen Centre: External evaluation of early West Partnership activity

In December 2019, the Robert Owen Centre published an interim highlights report. The purpose of the report was to "*develop a baseline of establishment capacity for collaboration and positive change, and by repeating the survey periodically to determine if the support available across the West Partnership is enhancing the conditions for effective collaboration*" (18). The report draws from a survey of 1730 practitioners who were questioned on five thematic areas (enquiry and reflection; Planning; Involvement; Career Long Professional Learning; and Leadership). This baseline survey suggested the following of the West Partnership system at this moment in time (19):

- *Enquiry and Reflection - there is evidence of good practice in talking about and reviewing classroom practice. However, sharing practice with colleagues from other establishments and working collaboratively using enquiry is much less frequent, particularly for Staff practitioners.*
- *Planning - both groups of practitioners have knowledge of and involvement in planning and prioritisation in their establishments. However, there is a great deal of disparity, between the groups, in terms of degrees of knowledge and levels of involvement.*
- *Involvement - children and young people are asked for their views before establishments make major changes, but it does not seem to be happening all that frequently. Parents views are taken into consideration when changes are being made to the curriculum, but it is more likely to happen sometimes rather than frequently.*
- *CLPL - is very valued by the participants, but the extent to which depends upon the position of respondent. It would also seem to be more focussed on classroom/playroom practice rather than building leadership capacity.*
- *Leadership - SLT are frequently given opportunities to take on leadership roles, but this is much less likely for Staff. There are also opportunities for leadership in sharing learning externally, more so for SLT and it`s not happening frequently.*

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The report explained the implications of these findings for the West Partnership here and mapped out several opportunities that the RIC had to address such issues.

In February 2021, the Robert Owen Centre published their evaluation of the early work of the West Partnership (20). The report covers the period of January 2018 to October 2020 and is broken into three sections; 1) key findings from their evaluation; 2) reflections and 3) issues and implications that could inform how the West Partnership developed in future years. With regards to key findings, the report suggests that the West Partnership's

> *strategic vision and aims and objectives are clear and expressed in relation to attainment, learning and teaching and building capacity. Effective collaboration is believed to be the driver of systems change that should be greater than the sum of its parts.*

In terms of enablers and barriers of/to progress, the report (21) notes that

> *The key factors which have enabled progress are: establishing the infrastructure for systems improvement through collaborative networks and culture, early buy-in from directors and a collective commitment to the Learning System. Relationships and the role and capacity of key intermediaries have been crucial to the process. It is recognised that the impact on learning and teaching and positive outcomes for children and young people takes time, but there were signs those were beginning to happen.*

> *Key factors or features which hindered progress at strategic level centred around the establishment of the Partnership. Early on key factors included time, building consensus on approach, purpose and vision and agreeing respective roles and responsibilities. Communications could be further enhanced, both internally, by having more opportunities for informal communications between the Board and lead officers and between workstreams and externally, through 'external messaging' to classroom practitioners. Workloads were raised as a concern by the local authority officers, in terms of sustaining partnership activity, which is also the case for those who lead the ever-growing span of partnership networks that will require support for future activity. Time required to attend and travel to meetings was considered a barrier*

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Several other key findings were highlighted (22):

- *Partnership activity is promoting a collaborative ethos and infrastructure, building agency and capacity within, between and beyond schools and implementing a range of innovative and valued resources and approaches across the Partnership.*
- *Opportunities for knowledge mobilisation and empowerment continue but face challenges regarding the sustainability of innovation and networks.*
- *Systematic as well as informal collaborative efforts led to significant learning and teaching developments.*
- *The work of the WPS had contributed to the work of local authorities. The extent of this contribution was dependent partly on the authorities' capacity for collaboration. The Partnership had been active, increasingly online, in sharing knowledge and ideas in extending professional relationships and networks and promoting collective action.*
- *Capacity building has taken place through knowledge mobilisation and individual agency and development of professional capital.*
- *Collective agency was being built, but there is less evidence of accelerated improvement.*

In summary, the Robert Owen Centre (23) concluded that

> *The RIC is still at an early stage in its development and that evidence of impact on learners will take time. Nevertheless, the evidence of its influence and progress regarding its objectives to date is encouraging. We highlight key themes to support this: traction regarding the concept and practice of collaborative learning as a driver for improvement; developing an effective internal architecture for change including the role of lead officers; knowledge mobilisation; adding value to the local authorities and capacity building and increased personal agency and professional capital.*

As the interim evaluation report covered 2018 to 2020, the report inevitably covers a short period of time around the pandemic. The Robert Owen Centre (2021, p3) state that the West Partnership "was seen as responding swiftly to the pandemic" (22). It is to this period that we now turn.

# Establishing the new normal – The West Partnership enters the pandemic (2020-2021)
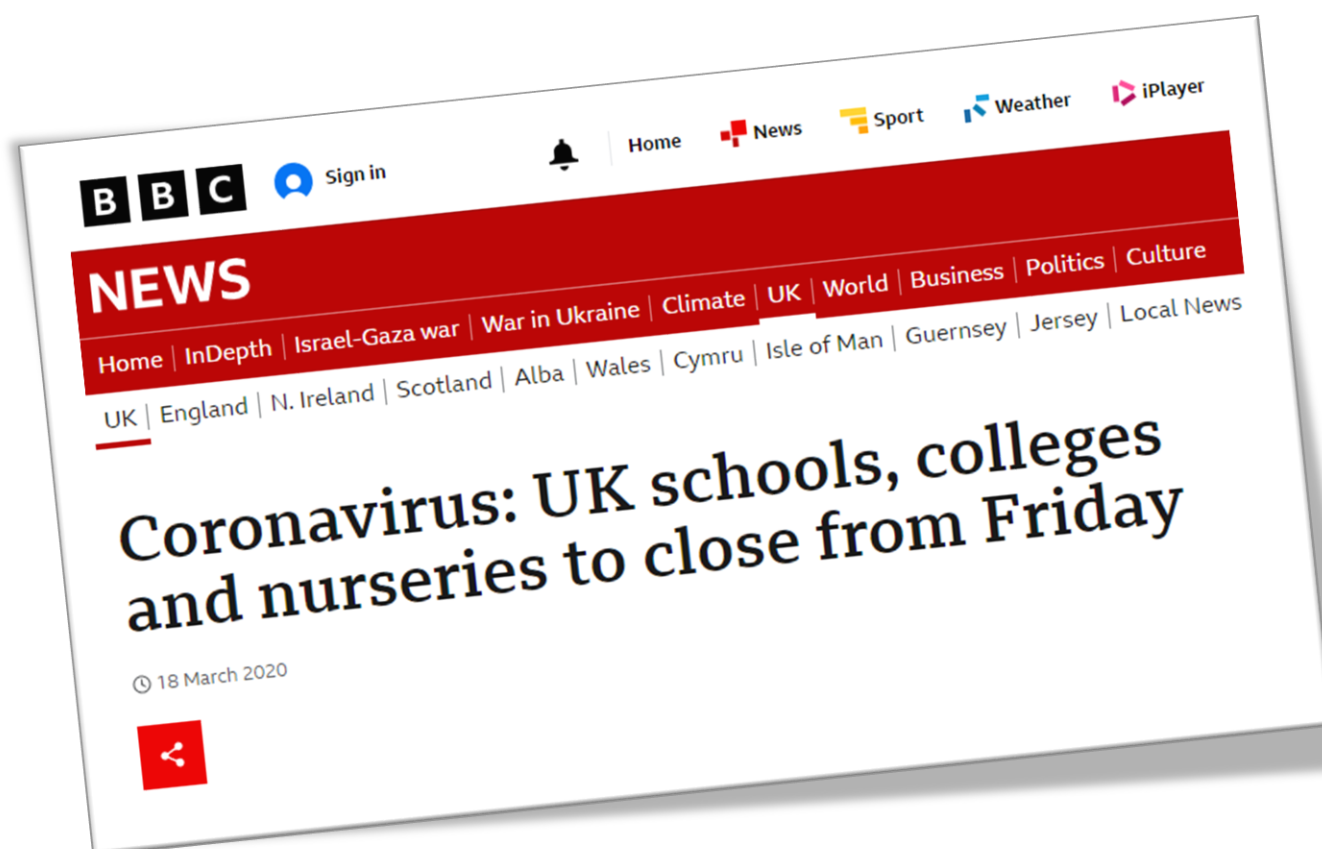


The first confirmed case of coronavirus in the UK was reported on the 31st of January 2020 (24). The first case of coronavirus in Scotland was reported by the Scottish Government on March 1st 2020 (25). Nineteen days after the first confirmed case in Scotland, the UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson ordered all schools in the UK to close for most pupils from the afternoon of March 20th (26). Schools would remain open for children of key workers and those with vulnerabilities.

With regards to the RIC and the pandemic, the Robert Owen Centre interim report (27) suggested that the West Partnership

> responded very quickly, by cancelling all professional learning events and activities. It was the first RIC in Scotland to do so. This allowed staff to focus on immediate priorities and for some seconded staff involved in WPS activities to return to their local authorities, to help deal with the impacts of COVID-19

In our own evaluation report for the 2019/20 session (28), we concluded that the

> session has undoubtedly been one of the most challenging we have ever experienced. The impact of the Coronavirus pandemic has been profound and presented us with unparalleled challenges. The school and early learning and childcare closures in March 2020, resulted in significant changes in working practices and routines.

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At a strategic level, the Robert Owen Centre evaluation concluded that the pandemic had given the West Partnership board an *"opportunity and impetus...to develop a cohesive stance and response in relation to issues associated with COVID-19"*. A response which was positioned as beneficial to the RIC and its constituent local authorities.

This section of the report details a few case studies of work during this period which impacted different elements of our system. The first case study explores how the West Partnership acted as a platform to transfer knowledge on new pedagogical approaches that were thrust upon practitioners because of the pandemic. Remote and blended learning were for many practitioners' new pedagogies which the West Partnership provided accessible research informed overviews. The second case study relates to the responsive move of the leadership workstream to create virtual leadership networks which met online to discuss leadership issues in what was an undeniably unique situation. The third case study looks at how the West Partnership supported pedagogy through the development of West OS – an online school resource which supported practitioners during the pandemic. This final case study provides an example of West Partnership work which had impacts on our national system.

## Responding to emergent need- Supporting practitioners

The end of March 2020 saw schools operating on a mixed model of delivery, with most pupils staying at home whilst a minority remained within school buildings. Speaking to the Scottish parliament on March 19th, the Cabinet Secretary for Education said (29):

> *Teaching, learning and support will continue, albeit in different ways for different groups of children. For the majority, that will be through distance learning and online learning, with different forms of on-going contact with teachers rather than in-school, face-to-face teaching. Teachers and other staff who are well will continue to work.*

In the surrounding weeks, discussion of online, digital, remote and blended learning would litter discussions around how our children and young people would learn. Whilst terms such as asynchronous remote learning or virtual learning environments had been commonplace in Higher Education prior to the pandemic, their impact on primary and secondary education was much less universal in the early months of 2020. To address the emergent need to understand such pedagogical approaches to deliver remote learning, the West Partnership produced several reports which aimed to accessibly package what research and evidence was available on such approaches.

The West Partnership's first contribution, published in May 2020, was on '*Effective Remote and Digital Learning'* (30). The paper set out to define key terms such as remote/distance learning, blended learning, and asynchronous/synchronous learning, whilst also offering tips to practitioners and parents. A small bank of resources was created drawing from academic and grey literature. In June 2020, two papers were published. The first paper was titled "*An Introduction to Blended Learning*" (31), with the second following shortly afterwards and focusing on *"Effective Blended Learning" (32)*. A series of webinars ran to support the work, and each paper was also turned into accessible Microsoft Sway documents. The West Partnerships 2019-20 annual evaluation report noted that the papers had been viewed by over 11,000 practitioners and over 700 had attended online webinars (33).

Unsurprisingly, a focus on remote, digital and blended learning was not present in the Regional Improvement Plan 2019-22, which was presented to the regional education committee in August 2019 (34). Indeed, the originally penned three-year improvement plan was necessarily replaced by a revised 2020-23 plan (35), which saw West Partnership activity pivot significantly to respond to the new environment caused by the pandemic. The West Partnership responded to the closure of schools within 6 weeks to support practitioners pedagogically. The RIC also provided a space for leaders to collaborate – an activity that we will detail next.

## "Reassurance" - Supporting decision making in times of crisis

The West Partnership Virtual Leadership Networks (VLN) planned to provide a virtual space for leadership teams to effectively collaborate on issues around the response to the pandemic. The networks aimed to support and facilitate professional dialogue on key response areas to build staff capacity to improve outcomes for children and young people within the context of Covid19 and beyond.

As a response to home working and the inability to meet in-person, the West Partnership team set up Virtual Leadership Networks that were hosted on Microsoft Teams. Separate networks were created for Headteachers and Depute Headteachers and both networks were advertised to all West Partnership schools via local authority communications. To create a space for effective collaboration, four VLN meetings ran between September 2020 and May 2021 for each participant group.

Prior to meetings, participants received professional reading relating to the area of focus. After a short introduction, a guest speaker with expertise in the area of focus, delivered a keynote presentation. Participants were then organised into facilitated breakout rooms where they could discuss the area of focus. Breakout rooms were organised by sector, but randomised by local authority. This meant that each room could discuss issues in a way that was relevant to their school type and share ideas from outside of their own local authority.

Evaluations from each session were captured for two purposes. Firstly, the evaluations captured feedback from those who had attended on the initial impact of the session, highlighting what they had found useful and detailing how the sessions could better meet their needs. Secondly, the evaluation process allowed practitioners to suggest future areas of focus/discussion. Analysis of this data meant that the lead officer would curate the next session to complete the evaluative feedback loop – a process which best met the needs of leaders at that moment in time.

Evaluation of impact was both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Quantitative data was collected after each session regarding how valuable they found the session, how likely they would be to attend the next meeting, how often they would like to meet and how the session had impacted their confidence. Whilst this information was useful, the qualitative feedback really allowed us to understand what impact the session was having in a more meaningful sense. Over the course of 4 sessions, 235 evaluations had been submitted. The key qualitative theme from across these datasets was that of reassurance.

Reassurance related to the ways in which participating in the West Partnership's VLN series had provided a means to confirm or reinforce local decision making. Participants found it reassuring that other school leaders, who were in the same situation, had also arrived at the same decisions or conclusions. As such, the VLNs acted as a pooling of experience and knowledge which supported new thinking or legitimised existing thinking. Examples from each of the four sessions are provided below:

> *"Reassured me that what we are doing here is very similar to other schools and is the right thing for our context. Picked up a few good ideas"*
>
> (Secondary DHT, Renfrewshire – VLN 1)

> *"It was reassuring to see that current challenges are being experienced by practitioners across all settings and that we are all doing the best we can to deliver high quality learning and teaching in challenging circumstances"*
>
> (Primary DHT, East Dunbartonshire, VLN 2)

> *"Lots of great ideas to take back to school and implement, but also very reassured that colleagues are facing similar challenges"*
>
> (Secondary DHT, Glasgow City, VLN 3)

> *"I really enjoy these events. Great for reflection and discussion. I enjoy looking at practice across the RIC"*
>
> (Primary HT, North Lanarkshire, VLN 4)

In reflecting on the impact of the VLN's, the Robert Owen's (2022, p10) external evaluation (36) stated:

> *The VLNs were perceived as crucial in providing a supportive and safe environment to meet the needs of leaders (HTs/DHTs) to address the challenges of the pandemic. This peer collaboration also allowed for space to reflect upon those challenges and to inform strategic and operational improvements for both staff and students in their schools. VLNs were designed to offer integral support to the system. Almost 500 HTs and DHTs took part, which represented a significant proportion of school senior leaders, from all the WP LAs at the time. In addition, many examples of 'collective learning' spring boarded individual learning, as leaders in the system sought more qualifications or knowledge on areas of interest.*

The work of the West Partnership Virtual Leadership Networks played a key role in providing space for leaders during unprecedented times. One regional stakeholder interviewed as part of the Scottish Government's 2021 evaluation of RICs was quoted as saying that *"the virtual networks have been a 'game-changing' moment, they are a much more effective way to engage"(37)*.

So far, we have addressed how the West Partnership responded quickly to meet the needs of practitioners and leaders alike. The final part of this section explores how the West Partnership adapted quickly to support learners.

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## Supporting learners – West Online School (West OS)



As weeks grew into months the value of high-quality online resources had become more and more necessary. The West Partnership, in collaboration with other RICs across Scotland, set out to improve the digital learning landscape for Scottish learners through a comprehensive set of recorded lessons. These were conceptualised as supporting teachers through avoiding duplication of effort whilst also providing a means by which remote learning pupils could engage with high quality resources at home.

West Online School (West OS) was conceived in the summer of 2020. Early discussions from West Partnership local authorities were completed to understand what each authority had in terms of recorded resources, with the idea being to share resources to avoid duplication. In a committee paper submitted in November 2020, West OS was described as (38):

> *an online school created by teachers, providing recorded learning experiences for children and young people. Each West OS video comprises 10 minutes of input from an experienced teaching practitioner and can be used as a standalone experience or as part of a wider programme guided by a teacher*

By November, some 5 months after its conception, West OS had full online courses in Higher and Nat 5 maths, Nat 5 Biology and Higher Chemistry, whilst also covering units in Higher Modern Studies, English and Physics. Senior phase resources were prioritised in this early phase, yet 20 online lessons for Primary BGE were also produced over this period. By the following July (2021), the West Partnership evaluation report noted that over 175 teachers had published 2339 quality assured videos which had been accessed by over 46,000 pupils across the West Partnership (39).

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After 12 months of West OS, all West Partnership secondary schools had accessed the resource and 87% of all establishments (Primary, Secondary and Special schools) had logged into West OS. Evidence also suggested that 38% of all video views were from Staff users, whilst the remaining 62% was made up of primary (28%) and secondary (34%) pupils directly accessing the materials (40).

In its 2022 evaluation, the Robert Owen concluded that (41):

> *The West OS appears to be a leading edge example of people coming together, within and across the education system at local, regional, and national level to deliver online learning accessible to the whole school population of Scotland. It is a very powerful example of effective collaboration, comprising a wide range of organisations including ES, through the national elearning offer, E-Sgoil, all six RICs, the 32 local authorities and a range of other stakeholders.*

> *It has had a major impact in enhancing online learning within, across and out of schools; providing the collective capacity and understanding of how to use and create video lessons, which otherwise would have meant schools attempting to identify/create resources themselves. This would have had a significant impact on workloads and school capacity.*

Evidence from usage data also demonstrated how West OS had developed into a tool that was being used nationwide. Each dot on the map below denotes a school that used West OS videos during the 21/22 session:
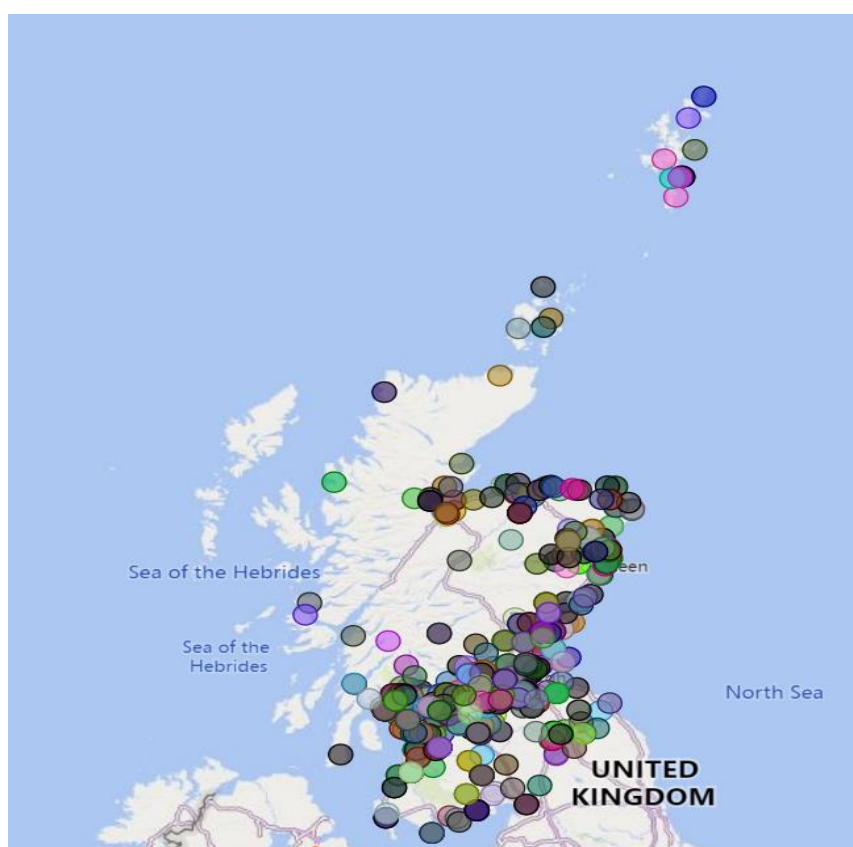
# Scottish Government RIC Interim Review

In reflecting on the first few years of Regional Improvement Collaboratives, the Scottish Government published their review of RICs in December 2021. Illustrations of good practice from the West Partnership were featured, with sections devoted to work on Improving Our Classrooms (p25), Community Learning and Development (p32), West OS (p34 and p48), and virtual leadership networks (p45) (42).

The review noted the ways in which RICs had responded to the pandemic, which

> *encouraged more collaboration and development of strong, trusting relationships. Many stakeholders highlighted that there had been a real shift among elected members, with many becoming much more supportive and understanding of the added value of the RIC. (43)*

There was also recognition that

> *RICs supported schools by developing online learning opportunities for pupils for use during lockdown, as part of blended learning and more widely to increase pupil opportunities. RICs have also played a key role in contributing to Education Scotland's national e-learning offer, through the use and development of platforms such as e-Sgoil and the West Online School (West OS), and the contribution of both live and recorded lessons. (44)*

In terms of the impact that RICs had at this point, the Scottish Government report (44) concluded that there was evidence of impact on:

- *developing the skills of school staff*
- *delivery of lessons in the classroom - introducing new approaches and*
- *developing more consistency in pedagogical approach*
- *skills and consistency around assessment and moderation*
- *leadership and improvement planning skills*
- *building a collaborative culture between local authorities.*

# After the crisis – returning to improvement (2022-2024)

## Revising evaluation

In the West Partnership's fifth year (2022), a revised evaluation approach was devised. This emanated from reflections on evaluative activity over the previous 4 sessions. The experiences of 2020-22 were key in drawing out exactly how the West Partnership would drive improvement.  The approach aimed to provide a more systematic way of reflecting on how the RIC was adding value whilst also articulating a clear theory of change model. The result of these reflections was the three drivers of improvement, detailed below:

Diagram 1:  Drivers for improvement



**Driver 1**
Facilitating various forms of collaboration

**Driver 2**
Enhancing practitioner knowledge, understanding and confidence

**Driver 3**
Supporting practice change at various levels
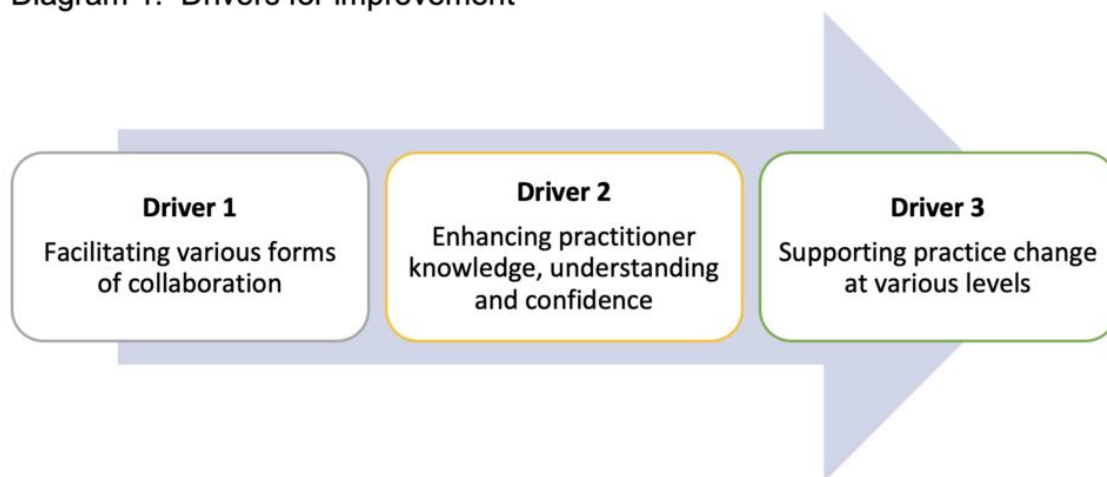
The logic model of the West Partnership at this point focused on how its work would stimulate collaboration of various forms, enhance practitioners through upskilling and ultimately support change to practice at practitioner, school, authority and regional levels. A more detailed description of this work was presented via a highlight report in January 2022 (45). The revised evaluation approach was internally understood as our maturing approach to evaluating the impact of our work.

The Robert Owen Centre's 2023 evaluation report (46) reflected on the experience of stakeholders through 2021-22 and how it aligned to the West Partnerships revised evaluation approach:

> *Key findings demonstrate that whilst there were many similarities over the two rounds of external evaluation in terms of members' definitions of impact or differences made there is a sense that more significant impacts or changes occurred in 2021-2022. There is no doubt that the effects of the pandemic strengthened relationships, (across the eight WP LAs) ,which led to more openness and willingness to **collaborate, which in turn led to increased opportunities for practitioners to learn and try new approaches to practice.** (Their emphasis)*

## Building from the pandemic – developing delivery and pivoting where appropriate

One narrative which developed throughout the pandemic years was that this once in a lifetime event would mean that a "new normal" would replace old ways of working. Various suggestions were made as to how Scottish education could re-invent itself following the unique circumstances through which it had traversed (47). One element which perhaps exemplifies this new way of working within education was using digital platforms for the purposes of professional learning. Indeed, Education Scotland (48) noted in 2021 that "*many staff engaged in upskilling themselves in the use of digital technology*". The mass use of MS Teams or Google Classroom was in someways forced upon practitioners through the requirement to complete remote/blended learning. Emerging from the other side of the pandemic did not mean that these new skills would be dropped in a return to traditional models of professional learning.

Moving to online delivery or at least using it as part of a mixed model of professional learning, brought about some obvious logistical benefits. The geographical spread of the West Partnership means that travel from its periphery to its centre can take beyond an hour each way – a volume of time that our practitioners and leaders don't always have. A twilight online session, hosted on MS teams, avoids many of these logistical challenges. Aside from the logistical challenges, the pandemic years provided challenges within schools that, at times, meant that attending professional learning opportunities was a struggle. Re-establishing a culture of professional learning was in some ways necessary following two sessions with lockdown periods and increased pupil/staff absence.

Data on the reach of West Partnership activities from the 20/21 session through to 23/24 suggests that practitioners were increasingly likely to attend professional learning events, many of which were held online. For example, the visual below shows the number of sign-ups to professional learning events across a four-year period:



West Partnership Sign Ups by Number and Session

Session ● 20/21 ● 21/22 ● 22/23 ● 23/24
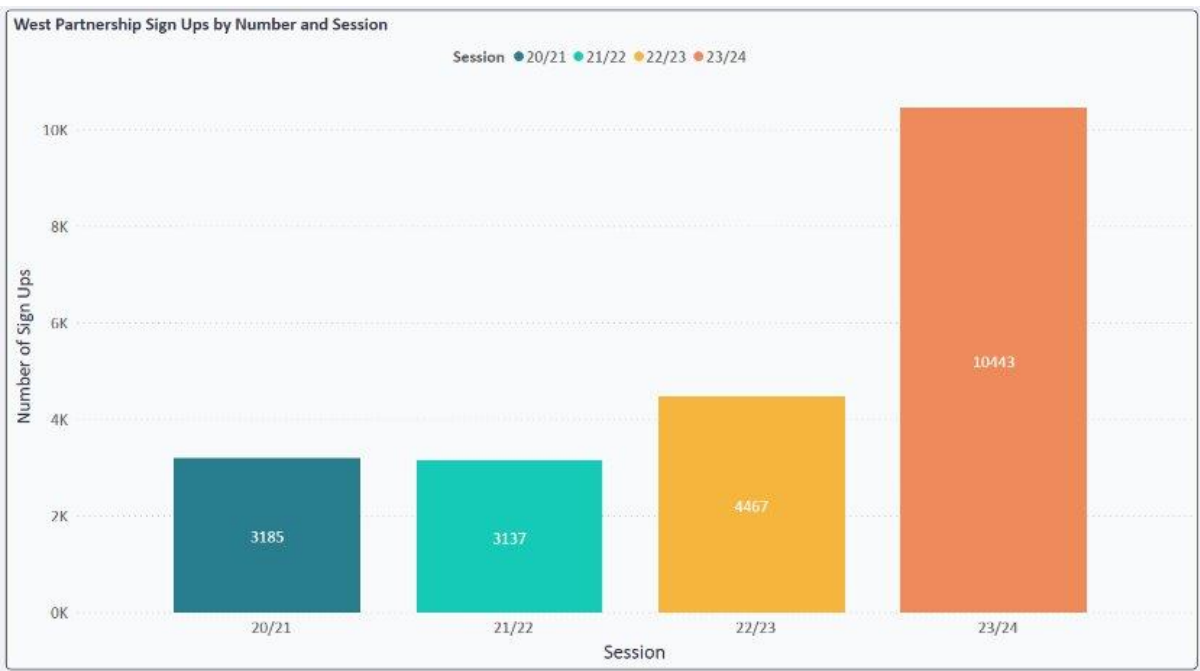
The 10443 sign-ups across the 23/24 session marked a 134% increase on 22/23 and 227% increase on 20/21 sign up numbers. Whilst engagement numbers were increasing through this period, the percentage of practitioners reporting an increase in their knowledge following participation in West Partnership activities remained at 85%, as experienced in 21/22 and 22/23 (49). As such, over this period the West Partnership developed capacity to deliver professional learning without an impact on the quality of the offering.

Aside from developing capacity, other pieces of work went through a pivot to continue meeting the needs of learners and practitioners. One example of this is in West OS, which was detailed earlier in this report (see pages 16-17). The initial iteration of West OS was designed to create a comprehensive bank of video resources which could support learners and practitioners across the curriculum. As detailed above, the context of this was that of remote/blended learning and the unknown impact of a pandemic as it was unfolding in real time. As the threat of lockdowns became less likely, the need of remote learning became lesser than during times of crisis. Despite this, there was still evidence of widespread use of the video resources held on West OS. For example, in the week beginning 25th April 2022, just under 2400 videos were viewed by senior phase pupils in preparation for upcoming assessment (50). Nevertheless, there was an understanding that West OS should diversify to best meet the needs of learners and practitioners (51):

> *Whilst the recorded element produced by teachers remains at the heart of West OS, it was necessary to extend the range of resources to ensure West OS continued to add value to the work of schools; to support teachers and young people. This includes a series of videos focusing on educational transitions; a selection of careers videos and brochures which provide advice on navigating primary to secondary transition. These guides have also been translated into the five most spoken languages across the West Partnership.*

As time passed, the diversification and pivoting of West OS was realised, with the change between April 2022 and May 2024 noted as moving from "*purely an online bank of recorded lessons to a resource that [includes].... an open access podcast series for young people and practitioners; Masterclass series for Senior Phase learners and delivers BGE LIVE lessons*" (52).

One challenge in evaluating the impact of West OS continued to be truly understanding exact numbers of users. For example, in its initial iteration, a single West OS video shown by a teacher to a class of 20 would be recorded as a single view from a single user. In its later iterations, West OS's live sessions had the same issue. For example, the update in May 2024 (52) noted that

> *BGE LIVE lessons have gained traction with 50-170 different classes signing up to participate in each series of lessons. Each BGE Live is offered as a curricular package with 3-5 lessons being offered for each theme and an accompanying Padlet with links to resources; prior and post reading for practitioners and follow up tasks for learners.*

The average primary class size in Scotland in 2023 was 25.5 (53). If we take a cautious estimate of 20 pupils being in the room, then each BGE Live lesson was being viewed by between 1000 and 3400 pupils at any given time.

The examples given here demonstrate how the West Partnership transitioned from being necessarily reactive through 2020 and 2021 before returning to a focus on improvement activities. To achieve this, they developed delivery through harnessing the system wide upskilling that its practitioners had undertaken. In addition to this, activities completed pivots where appropriate in cognisance of shifting environments in which their work was situated.

## Scaling up effective programmes – Improving our Classrooms.. and the rest

Another area which exemplifies the focus on building capacity through delivery can be found in the Improving Our Classrooms (IOC) programme and the associated Improving Our programmes (department, school, faculty etc). One unique difference in the development of this activity is that it had origins in a single authority and has been scaled up and delivered to multiple West Partnership local authorities.

The earliest mention of Improving Our Classrooms in Glasgow City Committee Papers was a Glasgow City Council Standards and Quality report covering the 2011-12 session (54). The report states that '*sixty primary teachers participated in Improving Our Classrooms. A development programme which focuses on practice-based learning to bring about improvements in learning and teaching (55)'*. Several standards and qualities reports throughout the 2010's detail the growth of Improving Our Classroom within Glasgow City Council.

The first mention of Improving Our Classrooms in a West Partnership context can be found in the 2018/19 Improvement Plan, which was delivered to committee in August 2019 (56). Referring to IOC, the plan (57) notes that

> *four partner authorities expressed an interest in participating in a West Partnership version of the programme – Inverclyde, East Renfrewshire, East Dunbartonshire and South Lanarkshire started collaborating, thus increasing the reach and impact on learners in the classroom.*

The 19/20 session saw the first running of a West Partnership version of IOC (58). The programme ran through the sessions impacted by the pandemic, and by the end of the 21/22 session had engaged with '422 teachers from 247 schools' (59), amounting to approximately 140 teachers per session. In detailing changes the programme went through to become RIC-wide, a 2022 committee report (60) states that IOC

> *has undergone very significant changes to meet the needs of the WP as well as expanding the programmes offered to include IOS and IOD/F. The most significant changes that have taken place have focused on:*
>
> > *- developing opportunities for teachers to collaborate across schools and local authorities; and*
> >
> > *- updating and streamlining the structure and content of the programmes to make best use of participants' professional learning time.*

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The report also details the extension of the IOC programme to other parts of our system. The 21/22 session saw the pilot of Improving Our Schools (IOS). The same 2022 committee report detailed above (59) notes that

> IOS uses the same high quality professional learning materials as IOC. It has a much greater degree of flexibility than IOC and the focus is driven by each school's self-evaluation and data. The focus identified becomes a priority in the school improvement plan. The timescale for the programme is decided by each school. The shortest amount of time the programme can run for is one year and it can be run over multiple years to suit local needs.

In its pilot session, 10 schools engaged with IOS, with the wider impact of the work stretching to around 170 school leaders and teachers. By the start of the 22/23 session Improving Our programmes were operating at both the practitioner and school level – providing improvement activities across all eight local authorities. The 22/23 session also saw the development of Improving our Departments and Faculties (IOD/F), a secondary focused addition which operated at that meso-level between the school and individual practitioners.

Evaluations of the Improving Our programmes have consistently been positive. The West Partnership's 22-23 session evaluation featured an illustration of impact from IOC. Survey responses from 83 participants found that 94% believed they were using data more, 96% said they were more confident to change practice in their classrooms, 96% said their skills as a practitioner had increased and 98% said they had furthered their understanding of the area of improvement. Regarding the impact on their learners, 95% said they saw a positive impact on both attainment and engagement (61).

In external evaluation, the Robert Owen Centre (84) stated that

> The IOC programme has built collective agency to drive/accelerate improvement in learning both in and out of school, from the impact on teachers' pedagogy and self-evaluation capabilities to learner outcomes and attainment. The challenges of the pandemic brought greater focus on the foundations of good learning and teaching and more reflection on practice.

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# Dealing with new problems – School Attendance



'Alarming' rise in school pupil absence rates, says report

26 October 2023

After the initial direct impact of the pandemic, it became apparent that new problems needed to be addressed. One area which achieved much attention is that of school attendance, with rates dropping across many countries – a problem not unique to Scotland or the West Partnership. Data from the 22/23 sessions shows a decrease in overall secondary school attendance of 5.2% against 10 years previous. Lateness also appeared to have risen, accounting for 5.1% of all attendance in 22/23 but only 2.5% in 12/13 (62). Persistent absence, measured as any pupil with less than 90% attendance, had also increased from 27% of all pupils nationally in 12/13 to 41% in 22/23 (63).

To support local authorities and schools, the West Partnership ran a collaborative action research programme aimed at improving attendance. The programme ran between November 2023 and May 2024 and involved 64 participants from 7 of the 8 West Partnership local authorities. The 2024 West Partnership evaluation report (64) notes that

> the in-person sessions took place over 1 full day and 2 morning sessions. Day 1 introduced the national picture, data analysis, self-evaluation and the process of collaborative action research. Morning 2 developed this professional learning by providing targeted support in each of these areas to establishments as required to further their research. Morning 3 provided those in attendance with a chance to share their learning and the impact upon learners and their families. Optional online check-in sessions were available throughout the programme, providing participants the opportunity to sense check their research, to review interventions and to share good practice with others

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Of those who completed an evaluation, all said they found the programme useful, suggested they were well organised and believed the programme had supported them in changing their practice. All participants said that attendance rates for their targeted cohorts/groups had improved and all stated that the CAR project supported them to create a robust, intelligence-driven plan to tackle attendance concerns (64). Whilst it is impossible to say what contribution the West Partnership programme made at a regional level; it should be noted that 7 out of 8 local authorities saw a decline in overall persistent absence rates in 23/24 against 22/23 (65).

This programme demonstrates how the West Partnership, in collaboration with the Robert Owen Centre, used tried and tested improvement methodologies as an approach to solve emergent problems that were occurring at a system level. The value of the collaborative action research approach was again references by one evaluation respondent when asked what was most beneficial about the programme (66):

> *Being able to clarify my thinking around my project and identify a target group. Professional dialogue with colleagues across the West Partnership and sharing good practice*

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## Pushing knowledge around the system

The West Partnership has consistently used collaborative activities as a platform to push knowledge and experience around the system. At times this simply consisted of exposing each local authority to ways of working elsewhere – with the hope of it stimulating reflection and potentially leading to practice change. Elsewhere the RIC has provided space for expertise to increase the knowledge of practitioners or leaders in a particular area. In this 2022-24 period, the West Partnership turned to both generating new knowledge and sharing knowledge of emergent areas of interest. The two examples below demonstrate this move.

## Sharing new knowledge: Artificial Intelligence (AI)



In November 2022, the US tech company OpenAI released a demo version of ChatGPT (67), a generative artificial intelligence (AI) bot which responds to users prompts. Generative AI produces new content in response to users' requests and can be used to complete a wide range of tasks. The potential impact of AI on education became a particular focus on 2023, with both the opportunities and risks of AI becoming a talking point across education systems around the world.

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In 2023, the West Partnership produced a scoping review of AI and education (68). The work aimed to summarise existing debates on the area in an accessible way. The review drew upon academic and non-academic literature to explore five key questions. These were:

1. What is AI and what are its uses?
2. Why do we need to know about AI and what are its future implications?
3. How can AI support the developing of curriculum, learning, teaching, and assessment?
4. How can AI enhance teacher workloads?
5. What are the challenges and risks post by AI?

The findings from this review emphasised the importance of both educators and pupils developing AI literacy to ensure this technology can be used safely and effectively. This led to the creation of an AI toolkit, structured similarly to the review, which would enable practitioners to identify their strengths and areas needing further development as a department or school. Between November 2023 and February 2024, a total of 27 schools participated in this pilot programme. Each local authority within the West Partnership was represented, as well as the primary, secondary, and ASN sectors. After delivering sessions 1 and 2 in November and December, all participating teachers were given access to the AI review and toolkit. The West Partnership sought feedback after each session and conducted a follow-up survey in February to measure the overall impact of each resource.

Evaluation data suggests that the programme was effective in sharing this new knowledge (69):

- *Prior to attending the first AI session, practitioners rated their understanding of AI at 4.3 on average (1 being poor, 10 being excellent). After attending the second session, this increased to an average of 7.7.*
- *By the end of session 2, 81% of practitioners had explored or researched AI and its use in education further. This included testing resources cited during the sessions such as Quizalize and ChatGPT, to see how these would fit in their class, and using pupil voice to evaluate how these resources could enhance learning experiences.*

Qualitative feedback also noted how the work had improved knowledge of AI:

> *Very insightful- I came in a sceptic and now going to look at ways I can use it!*

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# Generating new knowledge: 1140 Hours Evaluation



In the 2022/23 session the West Partnership began research into the impact of the 1140 hours early years policy at a regional level. The project aimed to understand what impact the policy has had within our region. Aside from understanding the impact on children and their families, the research also aimed to gather insight into the experience of practitioners in the area and central authority teams who are involved in the delivery of early learning at a local authority level. The full report was published in 2024 after drawing upon evidence from 506 children, 492 parents and 348 practitioners (70).

The research had two key research questions:

1. *What impact has the implementation of 1140 hours had on the development and attainment of children in the West Partnership?*
2. *What are the experiences and views of stakeholders in relation to the extension of ELC entitlement and the impact this has had on the development and attainment of children in the West Partnership?*

Between January and September 2023, 507 Ages and Stages Question (ASQ) forms were collected from early years settings to assess the impact of accessing 1140 hours of funded early learning on children's development. The overall results showed that 73-86% of children in the West Partnership sample were on schedule across all ASQ domains, with variations influenced by factors such as SIMD, sex, and age of eligibility. SIMD was the strongest predictor of scores, with children from more deprived backgrounds (SIMD 1) showing lower scores across domains.

The study also examined differences between sexes and age groups in relation to the ASQ scores. Overall, females scored higher in all ASQ domains and were more likely to be on schedule compared to males, aligning with previous research that suggests females excel in fine motor and communication skills. Findings from this study align with findings from the Scottish Government's evaluation.

Findings from parents and practitioners were summarised in the report (71):

> *A total of 492 parents and 348 practitioners completed the online surveys distributed across the sampled nurseries. Overall, the responses from the parent survey were positive, with many indicating they were satisfied with the quality of their child's ELC provision and the impact of this on their learning, wellbeing, and development. Just under 9 in 10 (87%) of these parents were using the full entitlement of 1140 hours. The remaining 13% not using the full entitlement stated that 1140 hours was too much for their child, that they would rather a family member cares for their child, or that they experienced issues related to accessibility or flexibility.*

> *Responses from the practitioner survey varied, with differences between respondents in term time and mixed model settings. For example, while 52% of term time practitioners agreed or strongly agreed that the overall impact of 1140 hours for their setting has been positive, 66% of practitioners in mixed model settings disagreed or strongly disagreed. Many practitioners also struggled to identify whether the extended entitlement has had any impact on children's development, largely due to the short period of time it has been in place, and the impact of Covid-19 which occurred during its implementation.*

Case studies were also completed which explored the experiences of childminders and the perceptions of primary teachers who support transition from ELC to P1. A third case study also explored experienced within an ELC centre for children with additional support needs. These case studies were initial forays into each area and the report also suggests that they should be areas of further research.

The 1140 hours project marked the development of the West Partnership's engagement with knowledge in our system. Nearly all activity prior to the 1140 hours evaluation involved the sharing of knowledge and expertise around the system. That knowledge was directly created by the West Partnership itself. One of its key drivers, explained above, was to improve the knowledge of practitioners. This work saw a complete circle of turning the experiences of West Partnership based ELC practitioners into useful knowledge that could be accessed across our system. This has also fed directly into the West Partnership's Early Years network who have used the work to identify priorities areas for improvement.

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# Moving from the RIC to the Collaborative Framework (2024-Present)

On November 7th 2023, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills announced that the funding of Regional Improvement Collaboratives would be diverted to a new university hosted Centre of Teaching Excellence (72). Funding would be tapered through the 2024/25 session and stop in 2025. Soon after this announcement, two external reviews of RICs were published.

## Scottish Government Review

Just over two months after the announcement that RICs would be wound down, the Scottish Government published their review on the impact of Regional Improvement Collaboratives on pupils and practitioners (73). Its executive summary noted the following key themes (74):

> • *RIC engagement with, and support to, pupils and practitioners across early years, primary, special and secondary settings has continued to expand and deepen since the last evaluation of the RIC.*
>
> • *evaluation of RIC supports by practitioners who are directly engaged with RICs are consistently strong.*
>
> • *while, as with other parts of a complex system, the collective impact of RIC supports on improved outcomes for children and young people cannot be quantified, a wide and increasing range of practitioner and pupil programmes are clearly evidenced.*
>
> • *while the number of staff engaged in regional activities at any time remains a minority, support has continued to increase with evidence suggesting that approximately 30% of schools engaged in some form of RIC activity across a school year, whether directly or through supports provided to school leaders and practitioners.*
>
> • *the use of research, data and evidence to focus and shape RIC supports, including evaluation from practitioners and others, is evidenced strongly.*
>
> • *RICs have continued to strengthen collaboration across and between local authorities, between RICs and with other partners.*

The review covered all RICs, with each region having a short section with examples of impactful work. The review also refers specifically to the West Partnership in commenting on its development at a governance/strategic level (75):

> *evidence of increased maturity in governance structures in providing strategic oversight and collective decision-making. This includes, for example the setting of strategic vision and the use of improvement drivers, and critical indicators to focus the work of the West Partnership.*

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One key criticism of RICs is that their reach only impacts a minority of schools and practitioners. The report (76) notes that:

> *In the most recent session for which each RIC has provided evidence, RICs have evidenced varying levels of network, workstream and programme supports to around 17,450 practitioners and leaders and with approximately 640 schools across Scotland. While it has not been possible in this Review to confirm the breakdown of all interactions across leaders, teachers and other school and ELC staff, the information provided indicates that RIC programmes may be engaging with approximately 30% of schools across a session/year (through direct school engagements and/or via leader and practitioner supports).*

Whilst stating that RICs are likely to be engaging with only 30% of schools, the report also notes that *'dedicated funding to support RIC capacity and programmed activity equates to less than 0.1% of wider education spend' (77).*

# OECD Review

In March 2024, the OECD published a policy paper on enhancing Scotland's multi-level school improvement support system. The policy paper was based on an international peer learning event in May 2023, prior to the announcement that RICs were to be wound down. The event brought together '*Scottish stakeholders and international experts from Ireland, Norway and Wales*' (78).

In a section on further strengthening the school improvement support system, the policy paper provides quite a detailed overview of where regional working should progress (79):

> *participants concurred that a clear commitment to the future of the RICs and their strengthened role in Scotland's school improvement support system would require investing in their organisational capacities. Currently, the RICs operate on an annual plan and budget and most of their staff are on secondment, which makes it difficult for them to engage in strategic planning and to attract and retain staff. Stakeholders at the local and regional levels strongly agreed that a multi-year work programme and supporting funding arrangements (e.g. a three-year budget) could significantly improve the RICs' organisational capacities. It could also reduce their reliance on seconded staff and allow them to offer more stable working conditions. To continue providing high-quality services and to take on a more prominent school improvement support role, the RICs may need additional resources and staffing.*

*The possible increase in the RICs' roles and responsibilities should be accompanied by corresponding accountability. There was a prevailing sense that the RICs were already "heavily governed", due to the annual reporting requirements that were considered administratively burdensome. The proposed multiyear work planning cycle could offer a means to revisit these reporting requirements. In addition, participants learned at the peer learning event that the RICs have already adopted a peer review approach. The suggestion was made to take this horizontal approach to accountability forward on the basis of a self-evaluation framework, which the RICs have collaboratively created over the last year. This framework of indicators could add rigour, focus and coherence to the self and peer evaluation processes, as well as serving as the basis for external inspections by the Education Inspectorate.*

Whilst the report was based on a learning event which occurred prior to the winding down of RICs, the policy paper details how stakeholders both nationally and internationally recognise the importance of regional level support within a networked learning system. Indeed, the Scottish Government's International Committee of Education Advisors stated in June 2024 that (80):

*the West Partnership is proof of concept that Scotland can become a NLS. The work across 8 local authorities (LAs) building a system of professional learning and leadership development underpinned by evidence and collaborative inquiry has been impressive and required an only a very small investment. It represents excellent value for money. The relationships, networks and joint-practice development that has grown over a relatively short period of time (including the pandemic) has been particularly successful. Here the system is beginning to show what can be achieved through subsidiarity and working smartly in localities and across a region. In this sense West offers a coherent set of mechanisms to bringing teachers (and others) together to support collaborative improvements*

Despite the Regional Improvement Collaboratives funding being cut, the desire to collaborate and the acknowledgement of its value remained. To avoid losing the benefits that the West Partnership had delivered, a move towards continuing collaboration within the region via a collaborative framework was developed.

## Collaborative Framework

A June 2024 committee paper details the process of moving from a Regional Improvement Collaborative, funded by the Scottish Government, to a locally funded collaborative framework (81). The report details how a review process of how to proceed post-RIC had been undertaken. Underpinning the work was three assumptions (82):

1. *The aspiration to build a networked learning system remains a shared priority across the West Partnership, thereby adding value to the work of individual Local Authorities;*
2. *There is continued buy-in to maintain a strong collective focus on pedagogy; and*
3. *There is support and scope for a flexible approach, to enable the participation of teachers, middle and senior leaders to shape and drive the work of the West Partnership more directly.*

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With these assumptions in mind, all West Partnership activity was reviewed with consideration given to how each activity could be redeveloped to the new funding situation. This involved a process of self-evaluation to identify which activities were, to date, most impactful and therefore most important to retain. After consideration, the report highlights four strategic themes that have been identified as priority areas. These are named:

1. Early Level;
2. Emerging issues;
3. Leadership of learning; and
4. Inclusion

From a governance perspective (83), the collaborative framework would continue to be overseen by a director's overview group, whilst a headteachers reference group would be consulted twice a year to assist in identifying improvement priorities. One core member of staff would remain and have the title of collaboration officer. Each thematic area would have a strategic group which would meet termly and be sponsored by one or two directors. Each thematic area would also have an operational group (except for the emerging issues group which would have a short-term task/finish group). This operational group would be made up of central officers, HTs, DHTs and practitioners as appropriate.

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# Conclusion

This report has described the developed of the West Partnership over an 8-year period between 2017 and 2025. The early years of the RIC saw it 'find its feet'. Early years saw quick changes to improvement plans which was an inevitable outcome of an organisation locating itself within the system. By the beginning of 2020, the West Partnership had clear workstreams and a developed governance framework that had identified priority areas for improvement work to be focused. The COVID-19 pandemic did derail existing plans, but the RIC was quick to respond to an unprecedented situation. Activity was altered quickly to respond to emergent needs. West Partnership platforms allowed leaders to feel reassured, gave practitioners an opportunity to learn about necessary changes to pedagogy and supported learners who were learning from home. West OS was accessed by thousands of teachers and pupils and well beyond the geographical parameters of the West Partnership.

After the pandemic, the West Partnership picked up where it had been in 2020 in an albeit different world. Online professional development had become common and new issues were areas of emergent concern. In this period the West Partnership pivoted where necessary (West OS for example) and developed capacity where possible (Improving our programmes). They addressed new problems like attendance and evaluated policy at a regional level (1140 hours). A revised evaluation strategy captured how the RIC would be impactful, with its three drivers showing the mechanism between West Partnership activity and changes in the classroom.

The announcement of November 2023 was of course disappointing. External evaluation from the Robert Owen Centre, the Scottish Government and the OECD has confirmed many of the findings that internal evaluation has found. As such, the desire for regional working has remained and the West Partnership as a vehicle to do it has not been abandoned by those who live and work within it.

In terms of lessons learned, this reflective account of the West Partnership over 8 years suggests to us the following:

- Governance arrangements have been agile to meet local needs
  - The past 8 years have been generationally unique in terms of instability within our education system. The governance of the West Partnership board has been responsive to the environment in which they work. This has involved the rapid re-prioritisation of staff and focuses to meet emergent needs.
- There is an ability of our system to rapidly upskill
  - Whilst the pandemic was uncontestably undesirable, it did demonstrate that widespread upskilling is possible. The enforced learning of new technologies and their sustained use post-pandemic demonstrates that our system is open to innovation and new ways of working/learning.
- Regional collaboration can be a platform to spread knowledge and skills round a system but also one that can create its own knowledge for useful purposes.
  - In addition to providing exposure to practice elsewhere, regional improvement collaboratives can also act as a vehicle to systematically understand experience amongst its regions practitioners and turn this into strategically useful information.
- The is a growing appetite for cross-authority professional learning
  - Sign up data over the last 4 sessions has found engagement to have increased whilst evaluative data has found that the impact on participants knowledge has remained high. Qualitative feedback has consistently found respondents voicing value in seeing practice elsewhere to stimulate reflection.

At the beginning of this report, we asked the question to what extent did/does the West Partnership meet the needs of those who work in our system, and did it fulfil its intended purpose? With regards to the latter, it is worthwhile reiterating the stated aims of Regional Improvement Collaboratives from the Scottish Government in 2017 (1). For each of these purpose statements (in bold), evidence from a March 2025 paper from Professors Chapman and Donaldson are provided:

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*Regional improvement collaboratives will:*

*• provide excellent educational improvement support for headteachers, teachers and practitioners through dedicated teams of professionals. These teams will draw on Education Scotland staff, local authority staff and others;*

> *The findings from various evaluations suggest that the WP is making very strong progress in supporting improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in educational establishments and promoting positive outcomes of children and young people. While the degree of progress varies across establishments and authorities, it must be recognised that such ambitious and large-scale systems change takes time, especially when the context is challenging, and resources are scarce. (85)*

*• provide coherent focus across all partners through delivery of an annual regional plan and associated work programme aligned with the National Improvement Framework;*

> *The WP has already recognised the diverse and complex nature of these challenges, and the partnership has been particularly innovative in the focus of its programmes and the use of technology to support developments. The overall WP strategy of creating a Networked Learning System underpinned by collaboration across different types of boundaries and systematic enquiry and evidence building is now yielding dividends and is worthy of future investment, especially in times of financial austerity. (86)*

*• facilitate collaborative working across the region, including sharing best practice, supporting collaborative networks and pursuing partnership approaches*

> *The effects of the pandemic are still being experienced throughout the system, particularly on staff and children and young people's health and wellbeing and levels of attendance. The WP was found to accelerate the process of regional collaboration during the pandemic and has supported recovery through their professional learning offer and support mechanisms. (87)*

In addition to the external evaluation of the Robert Owen Centre, and Professors Chapman and Donaldson in particular, the data on engagement from practitioners in our region supports the contention that the West Partnership has met the needs of its stakeholders. The reach of the West Partnership grew significantly during the 23-24 session, with sign-ups for professional learning activities growing 227% against the 20/21 figures. Such figures suggest that the West Partnership offer has presented itself as a conduit of activity that meets systemic needs.

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EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 12 JUNE 2025

Report by Director of Education

REPORT ON UPDATED APPROACH TO GETTING IT RIGHT FOR EVERY CHILD IN
EAST RENFREWSHIRE

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.      To update Education Committee on the refresh of national GIRFEC guidance and
subsequent update of East Renfrewshire Council's GIRFEC Manual (Appendix 1) and creation
of Getting it Right for Every Child Information Sharing Guidance (Appendix 2).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.      Education Committee is asked to:

a)  Note the refreshed national GIRFEC guidance; and,

b)  Note the updated East Renfrewshire GIRFEC Manual (Appendix 1) and GIRFEC
Information Sharing Guidance (Appendix 2).

**BACKGROUND**

3.      Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is the National Policy Framework in
Scotland designed to improve outcomes and support the wellbeing of our children and
young people by offering the right help, at the right time, from the right people.

4.      It is a strengths-based approach which seeks to realise children's rights, promote
equality and value diversity. It is underpinned by key values and principles that place the child
or young person and their family at the centre of service provision, with full participation in
decisions that affect them.

5.      Most children and young people get all the support and help they need from their
parent(s), wider family and local community. There may be times, however, when a child
or family need additional advice or support. The GIRFEC approach ensures children and
their families can work in partnership with services that can help them when they need it.

6.      As a result of Angela Morgan's review into Additional Support for Learning, a
National Action Plan was created which set out a range of actions to address the findings
of the review.  It included a continued commitment to the refresh of GIRFEC policy.

**REPORT**

7.       In East Renfrewshire, we are committed to getting it right for all of our children and
young people, to ensure they can thrive and be given every opportunity to achieve their
potential.  We want them to grow up safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected,
responsible and included.

8.      East Renfrewshire Council's A Place to Grow is the Community Planning Partnership's vision, setting out the shared hopes and aspirations between now and 2040 so that East Renfrewshire is a place where everyone can flourish, thrive and grow.  A Place to Grow is built on three pillars that will be the foundation for all our strategic planning going forward.  The refreshed ERC GIRFEC Guidance highlights how we will work in partnership to contribute toward the three pillars:

- Our children and young people flourish;
- Our communities and places thrive; and,
- We all live well.

9.      In 2022/23 updated GIRFEC guidance (Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) - gov.scot) was published by The Scottish Government, further strengthening a rights-based approach in line with the UNCRC (Scotland) (Incorporation) Act (2024). Funding was also provided to all local authorities to support Whole Family Wellbeing and early intervention in line with the GIRFEC principles. This national guidance was to be used to refresh our own guidance in East Renfrewshire and a GIRFEC Refresh Team was established within the children's services partnership to take this forward.

10.      The East Renfrewshire Children's Services Partnership, Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People, has oversight of the implementation of the National (GIRFEC) Practice Model and GIRFEC is included as a key priority within our Children's Services Plan 2023-26.

11.      GIRFEC is integral to child protection and the national practice model is a critical feature of East Renfrewshire's revised child protection guidance and procedures. There is a clear articulation of the importance of GIRFEC to protect children, particularly in recognising that all children must receive the right help at the right time.  Given the close link to child protection and inclusion across ERC it is important that elected members are aware of the updated documents and approach.

12.      The aim of the revised multi-agency framework and guidance is to support our practitioners to embed the values and principles of GIRFEC in all areas of their practice with confidence, so they can ensure that our children, young people, and families receive the right support at the right time.  Effective partnership working and collaboration is crucial to the success of our approach, as we strive to realise this ambition for all and keep *The Promise* to our care experienced children and young people.

13.      Our refreshed GIRFEC Manual (Appendix 1) contains a number of key changes in line with the updated National model and these include:

- Greater emphasis on child-centred, rights-respecting, strengths-based practice and the inclusion of children, young people and their families at every stage of the process;
- Increased recognition of the impact of child poverty on GIRFEC;
- Simpler language identified which can be used when working together with children, young people and families;
- A deeper understanding of the impact of trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in considering the My World Triangle; and
- Further detail provided on the Resilience Matrix.

14.      The GIRFEC Information Sharing Guidance (Appendix 2) provides overarching practice principles around information sharing and supports specific guidance within East

Renfrewshire Council departments and services, and East Renfrewshire HSCP in relation to the wellbeing of all children and young people as set out in the Scottish Governments Getting it Right for Every Child and ensures understanding of:

- How to positively engage with children and young people (and their families) in making decisions on who and when to share information with and why;
- The limitations and constraints of confidentiality and consent; and
- How staff are empowered to share personal and/or sensitive personal information, where it is considered a child or young person is at risk (or likely to be) if no action is taken.

15. The GIRFEC refresh aligns closely with the work of the ASN review being taken forward by the 4 workstreams; Vision, Culture and Climate, Specialist Provision and Career Long Professional Learning. Through these workstreams, there are a number of key actions being taken forward to ensure we get it right for every child and include:

- Use of mobile phones in our schools – we have consulted through pupil council and head pupil meetings, parent council chair meetings and staff forums. In addition to this we have audited current practice in our secondary schools. Our next step will be to design and implement a fuller consultation which will involve designing a questionnaire which will be issued to parents/carers, pupils and staff in schools. The results of this consultation will inform how we update guidance for schools in East Renfrewshire.

- Gender based violence (GBV) - work has been done to raise awareness of GBV through a focus within the curriculum. Preventative measures have included all secondary schools participating in the Mentors in Violence programme and we are now rolling this out to Primary Schools. The Scottish Government GBV in Schools Guidance has been shared with all schools and this has been a theme of the Equalities Co-ordinators Group as well as the Equalities Parent Group. We are supporting our schools with professional learning and signposting them to the Equally Safe in School Resource. School staff have received training on the SEEMIS Click and Go Module for recording bullying behaviour and this now has a GBV recording section.

## CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

16. The Children's Services Partnership oversees the planning, implementation and evaluation of GIRFEC in East Renfrewshire. Our approach to GIRFEC has been informed by consultation with key stakeholders, including those with lived experience, through:

- Additional Support for Learning Review in ERC;
- The Promise Engagement Events; and,
- Questionnaires to stakeholders as part of the ERC Joint Inspection of Children's Services for Children and Young people at Risk of Harm.

## FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

17. There are no financial and efficiency implications.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

18      An Equality, Fairness and Rights Impact Assessment has been undertaken and has found that the refresh is likely to have a positive impact on children, young people and their families.


**CONCLUSION**

19.     The National Practice Model and the GIRFEC principles are well embedded within East Renfrewshire and our approach to GIRFEC was highlighted as being excellent in the 2022 Joint Inspection of Children's Services for Children and Young people at Risk of Harm in East Renfrewshire.  The refreshed GIRFEC Manual builds upon strong practice and will further support practitioners across East Renfrewshire in our work towards getting it right for every child.   To support this, a series of professional learning sessions will be planned and implemented from August onwards.


**RECOMMENDATION**

20.     Education Committee is asked to:

a)  Note the refreshed national GIRFEC guidance; and,

b)  Note the updated East Renfrewshire GIRFEC Manual (Appendix 1) and GIRFEC Information Sharing Guidance (Appendix 2).

Mark Ratter
Director of Education
12 June 2025

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**Appendices**
Appendix 1 – Getting it Right for Every Child and Young Person in East Renfrewshire
Appendix 2 -  Getting it Right for Every Child Information Sharing Guidance

# Getting it Right for Every Child and Young Person in East Renfrewshire



## A GIRFEC Framework and Guidance Manual for Partner Agency Practitioners

| Document Name | Getting It Right for Every Child and Young Person in East Renfrewshire: A GIRFEC Framework and Guidance Manual for Partner Agency Practitioners |
|---|---|
| Owner | Education and HSCP |
| Version Number | 7 Chris Atherton / Arlene Cassidy / Siobhan McColgan / Debbie Lucas / Caragh McNamee |
| Date Completed | 16 May 2025 |
| Review Date | 16 May 2028 |

# Contents

# PART 1 – THE GIRFEC FRAMEWORK

## 1. THE POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

1.1 Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is central to our shared ambition for Scotland's children and young people; ensuring that their rights and wellbeing will be at the heart of everything we do. In East Renfrewshire, we are committed to getting it right for all of our children and young people, to ensure they can thrive and be given every opportunity to achieve their potential. We want them to grow up safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included. We want them to have people in their lives that can offer them love, support and hope for the future, beginning with their families and friends, and enhanced through the relationships they develop with practitioners across integrated services for children and young people. Our GIRFEC approach is fundamental to our shared vision for East Renfrewshire as "A Place to Grow", where children and young people are supported to flourish, thrive and live well (Diagram 1).

1.2 The aim of this revised multi-agency framework and guidance is to support our practitioners to embed the values and principles of GIRFEC in all areas of their practice with confidence, so they can ensure that our children, young people, and families receive the right support at the right time. Effective partnership working and collaboration is crucial to the success of our approach, as we strive to realise this ambition for all and keep _The Promise_ to our care experienced children and young people.

1.3 Our GIRFEC approach sits within a legislative context, specifically through:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024;
- The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017;
- The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014;
- The Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011;
- The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act (2004) as amended (2009); and,
- The Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

1.4 Key policy areas relating to GIRFEC and the work of integrated services for children and young people include:

- GIRFEC resources - Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) - gov.scot (www.gov.scot);
- The Promise and Plan 24-30;
- Realising The Ambition;
- The Christie Commission;
- The ASL Review;
- National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021); and,
- The National Performance Framework (2018).

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Diagram 1 - East Renfrewshire A Place to Grow

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**EAST RENFREWSHIRE**
**A PLACE TO**
**GROW**

a future where . . .

**our children and young people**
*flourish*

**our communities and places**
*thrive*

**we all**
*live well*

In East Renfrewshire by 2040 . . .

**Our ambition** is that every child and young person, regardless of background or circumstance, will fully flourish on their journey to adulthood.

**Every child and young person will:**
- Be loved, safe and happy
- Be as healthy as they can be
- Have friends and adults they trust
- Be successful learners and well prepared for the future
- Have their voices heard and their rights recognised, respected and nurtured

**Our children, young people and families that face challenges and disadvantage will:**
- Access the right support as early as possible
- Receive support that is compassionate and aspirational and builds on their strengths

**Our learning establishments will:**
- Deliver a curriculum that inspires and prepares children and young people well for the future
- Continue to improve achievement for all

**Our ambition** is an inclusive, connected and green place, with a fair, sustainable and healthy local economy, that our residents are proud to call home.

**Our places will:**
- Be attractive and safe
- Have sustainable and well-designed housing options
- Have an accessible and connected network of active travel and public transport routes
- Have good digital connectivity through a modern technological infrastructure
- Provide opportunities to live, work, play and participate in community life

**Our residents will:**
- Have access to more affordable housing
- Have opportunities to develop new skills and learning
- Have flexible and accessible fair work opportunities

**Our local economy will:**
- Have a strong and diverse mix of local businesses
- Attract new investment
- Provide a wide range of work opportunities

**Our environment will:**
- Be reaching net zero carbon emissions
- Have protected natural spaces for biodiversity and wildlife
- Be well prepared for climate challenges

**Our ambition** is that everyone can live well at all stages of life and communities will be taking the lead in driving change for good health and wellbeing.

**Our communities will:**
- Be stronger, connected and leading the way in solutions to support each other to live well
- See health inequalities reduced
- Be actively involved in volunteering and community leadership
- Have varied and diverse groups and third sector organisations that are respected and valued partners

**Our residents will:**
- Be supported to age-well and live healthy, active lives
- Have routes out of poverty
- Be empowered to make healthy choices and have access to high quality sports and physical activity facilities
- Have access to creative and vibrant cultural experiences and opportunities to celebrate diverse heritages
- Have opportunities and support to participate in lifelong learning

**We will achieve this by committing to our three capabilities**

PREVENTION

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

DIGITAL CHANGE

**and living our values in everything we do**

Ambition

Kindness

Trust

## 2. OVERVIEW OF KEY CHANGES

2.1 The Scottish Government revised GIRFEC Policy and Practice in 2022, and outlined key changes, which are summarised as follows:

- Use of the phrase children **and** young people;
- Greater emphasis on child-centred, rights-respecting, strengths-based practice and the inclusion of children, young people and their families at every stage of the process;
- Simpler and more positive language identified which can be used when working together with children, young people and families;
- An emphasis on working together;
- Alignment to The Promise and key policy areas such as the commitment to eradicate child poverty;
- A deeper understanding of the impact of trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in considering the My World Triangle, and further development of the Resilience Matrix;
- Promotion of the GIRFEC approach to benefit all children and young people; and,
- Clarity through new Information Sharing Charters for children and young people, and for parents/carers.

## 3. VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

3.1 GIRFEC values and principles are embedded very well within the work of integrated children's services in East Renfrewshire. However, the Scottish Government refresh provides a timely platform for us to review, plan and implement necessary changes and enhancements to service delivery that will improve outcomes further for all of our children and young people.

3.2 GIRFEC is underpinned by the following values and principles:

- *Placing the child or young person and their family at the heart, and promoting choice, with full participation in decisions that affect them;*
- *Working together with families to enable a rights-respecting, strengths-based, inclusive approach;*
- *Understanding wellbeing as being about all areas of life including family, community and society;*
- *Valuing difference and ensuring everyone is treated fairly;*
- *Considering and addressing inequalities;*
- *Providing support for children, young people and families when they need it, until things get better, to help them to reach their full potential; and,*
- *Everyone working together in local areas and across Scotland to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.*

GIRFEC Policy and Practice (2022)

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## 4. CORE COMPONENTS

4.1 The GIRFEC approach has strong foundations in its core components, and these empower practitioners to enhance wellbeing for all by providing flexible, timely support when it is needed:

- A **named person** who is a clear point of contact for children, young people and families to go to for support and advice. A named person can also connect families to a wider network of support and services so that they get the right help, at the right time, from the right people;
- A **shared and holistic understanding of wellbeing** and a single model of how this can be considered and supported; and,
- A **single, shared and rights-based approach to planning** for children and young people's wellbeing where support across services is needed, co-ordinated by a **lead professional**.

*GIRFEC Core Components (2022)*

*More information on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child can be found in Appendix One*

## 5. GETTING IT RIGHT FOR EVERY CHILD AND YOUNG PERSON IN EAST RENFREWSHIRE

5.1 We are ambitious in our aim of delivering positive outcomes for all children and young people in East Renfrewshire by driving *cultural and systemic improvement* across practice within integrated children's services. Our local framework for practice will ensure everyone fulfils their roles and responsibilities, keeping our values of ambition, kindness and trust at the heart of our partnership approach with children, young people, and their families. Our framework involves:

- *Promoting the wellbeing of individual children and young people*: through our understanding of how they develop and thrive within their families and communities, and by meeting their needs holistically through prevention, early intervention and appropriate, proportionate support through to adulthood;
- *Promoting equity and equality*: with a particular focus on eradicating child poverty;
- *Celebrating diversity*: children and young people should feel valued in all circumstances, and practitioners should create opportunities that celebrate difference and make sure everyone has a sense of belonging;
- *Ensuring children and young people have a safe and secure base* because emotional security and physical safety is fundamental;
- *Ensuring that children, young people and families participate fully as partners* in all aspects of assessment and planning, thereby ensuring their voice is at the heart of decisions that are made for their wellbeing;
- *Supporting informed choice,* so that children, young people and families understand their rights and entitlements, the help that is available to them and what their choices may be;

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- *Respecting confidentiality and sharing information:* seeking agreement to share information that is relevant and proportionate while safeguarding children and young people's right to confidentiality;
- *Building on strengths and promoting resilience:* using a child or young person's existing networks and support where possible;
- *Trauma-informed practice:* where practitioners at all levels understand that trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can have an impact on the development and wellbeing of children and young people, and where skilled practitioners are available to offer advice and support to meet their needs;
- *Providing a Named Person for every child and young person* as policy across our universal services, with the recognition that children, young people and families have the right to opt out of this offer of support;
- *Providing a Lead Professional where there is multi-agency involvement*, with clear protocols to determine who fulfils this role in all predictable scenarios;
- *Safeguarding through a proportionate approach in the assessment of concerns and risks*, using Signs of Safety and Safe and Together approaches, rooted in our national Child Protection Guidance (2021);
- *A One Child, One Assessment, One Plan approach* so far as possible, reflecting all relevant views and assessments, streamlining processes for families, and taking account of all relevant legislation (e.g. where a statutory Coordinated Support Plan is also necessary);
- *Effective partnership working between all practitioners* that is characterised by mutual respect, integrity, solution-focused collaboration and with appropriate professional challenge and scrutiny to ensure the best outcomes are achieved for children and young people;
- *Ensuring the use of the National Practice Model; and,*
- *Empowering a skilled and confident workforce* to promote and support our children and young people's wellbeing, underpinned by the [Common Core of Skills, Knowledge & Understanding and Values for the "Children's Workforce" in Scotland](#).

## 6. SIGNS OF SAFETY ®

6.1 In East Renfrewshire we use the Signs of Safety model to support multi-agency assessment and planning. This is fully compatible with our GIRFEC approach. Signs of Safety® is a relationship-based practice approach, it provides a framework and tools to help promote relationships in practice. It is a strength and safety organised approach to case work that analyses detailed information for a balanced risk assessment.

6.2 Signs of Safety® integrates professional knowledge with knowledge from families and their wider networks to rigorously explore harm and complicating factors alongside existing strengths and safety. It aims to work in true partnership with families to reduce risks and increase safety by building upon the family's strengths, resources, and networks, and to change the everyday lived experience of the child through effective safety planning, so that we are confident the child is safe and well.

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6.3 East Renfrewshire's implementation journey has focused on introducing the practice approach across the entire system to support the growth of relationship-based practice, and to strengthen protective networks for children, which includes family, friends and community members, alongside professionals.

6.4 Children/young people need networks that can support, care, keep them safe and help them heal from trauma and difficult experiences. East Renfrewshire has used the framework to help children remain at home with their families wherever possible, and worked to empower the voices of children, young people and their families by encouraging them to build on their own solutions. Central to this has been a shift in the way we plan with families. It is used across all our work with children and their families.

# PART 2 – GIRFEC IN PRACTICE

## 7. PROMOTING GIRFEC AND WELLBEING WITHIN SERVICES

7.1 The values, principles and core components of GIRFEC must lie at the heart of all our work. To ensure the potential of all children and young people is realised, practitioners across integrated children's services are required to promote wellbeing and ensure that this is fundamental in service design, development, collaboration and improvement to create better outcomes for all children, young people and families. We are also required to act responsively where children and young people require individualised wellbeing assessment, support and intervention.

7.2 The wellbeing indicators are outlined as Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included, or (SHANARRI) as referred to within section 96(2) in Part 18 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

- *"Safe – growing up in an environment where a child or young person feels secure, nurtured, listened to and enabled to develop to their full potential. This includes freedom from abuse or neglect.*
- *Healthy – having the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health, access to suitable healthcare, and support in learning to make healthy and safe choices.*
- *Achieving – being supported and guided in learning and in the development of skills, confidence and self-esteem, at home, in school and in the community.*
- *Nurtured – growing, developing and being cared for in an environment which provides the physical and emotional security, compassion and warmth necessary for healthy growth and to develop resilience and a positive identity.*
- *Active – having opportunities to take part in activities such as play, recreation and sport, which contribute to healthy growth and development, at home, in school and in the community.*
- *Respected – being involved in and having their voices heard in decisions that affect their life, with support where appropriate.*
- *Responsible – having opportunities and encouragement to play active and responsible roles at home, in school and in the community, and where necessary, having appropriate guidance and supervision.*
- *Included – having help to overcome inequalities and being accepted as part of their family, school and community."*

Scottish Government (2022)

## 8. ERADICATING CHILD POVERTY

8.1 Practitioners across all services in East Renfrewshire have an important role in making sure that low-income families have access to the right support and advice to help improve their lives and those of their children.

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8.2 According to [national data](#), six family types are at higher risk of poverty; lone parent families, minority ethnic families, families with a disabled adult or child, families with a mother aged under 25, families with a child under one, and families with 3 or more children.

8.3 Through our relationships, we can make parents and carers aware of local supports and opportunities that may help them to overcome financial hardship, and make sure that their children do not miss out as a result.

8.4 Just some of the ways in which we can do this include:

- Encouraging uptake in [Free School Meal and Clothing Grant](#) entitlement;
- Ensuring young people and their families are aware if they are entitled to the [Education Maintenance Allowance](#);
- Organising activities that can help families with the cost of living at particularly difficult times, for example through school uniform and toy recycling, and the Christmas Gift scheme;
- Understanding what local charitable organisations are offering for East Renfrewshire's most vulnerable;
- Encouraging participation in adult learning opportunities to develop employability skills;
- Raising awareness of local recruitment opportunities that offer fair, well-paid work;
- Increasing awareness and uptake of social security benefits;
- Signposting families to the [Money Advice and Rights Team (MART)](#) and [Citizen's Advice Scotland](#); and,
- Through our relationships, our understanding of our community, and by making effective use of our local data, we should be able to identify the families that might need our support and advice.

## 9. TRAUMA INFORMED APPROACH TO SUPPORT AND INTERVENTION

9.1 Trauma informed practice considers the impact of trauma and makes appropriate adjustments to meet the needs of children, young people, and adults. The approach centres on relationships and aims to enable individuals to feel safe to engage with support and protection processes.

9.2 In line with the vision outlined by the National Trauma Transformation Programme (NES, 2024), East Renfrewshire Council is committed to the development of a trauma informed and responsive workforce which:

- Realises how common the experience of trauma and adversity is;
- Recognises the different ways that trauma can affect people;
- Responds by taking account of the ways that people can be affected by trauma to support recovery, and recognise and support resilience;
- Actively resists re-traumatisation; and,
- Recognises the central importance of relationships (https:/www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/our-work/trauma-national-trauma-transformation-programme).

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9.3 When supporting children, young people, adults and colleagues, trauma informed practitioners give consideration to the following:

- Safety - what might individual service users need to feel physically and psychologically safe;
- Choice - where possible and appropriate service users have choice around where, when and how interventions, procedures etc. take place and who is involved;
- Collaboration - the experience of staff and service users is valued and informs service delivery;
- Trust - services explain what they are doing and why and ensure a shared understanding between staff and service users;
- Empowerment - service users are supported to make informed active decisions, they are listened to and the impact of trauma is acknowledged; and,
- Cultural background - services are able to move past cultural stereotypes and biases whilst ensuring they have an accurate understanding of the impact of previous experience on service users and respond appropriately.

(Working definition of trauma-informed practice - GOV.UK)

## 10. PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT

### 10.1 The Right Of The Child To Be Heard

Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides:

*"1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.*

*2. For this purpose the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law."*

*UNCRC*

10.2 In line with The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 all children and young people have the right to participate and be involved in decision-making that will affect them. They have a right for their views to be sought and recorded, and for their voice to be heard. Appropriate ways should be identified to achieve this based on the child or young person's age and taking into account their capacity to understand and any additional support needs they may have.

10.3 Whilst the views children and young people are crucial factors in decision-making, they need to be set in the context of all available information and so are not necessarily determinative of decisions that may need to be taken by practitioners in line with their duty of care.

**10.4 Parental Rights and Responsibilities**

Parents have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the health, development and welfare of their children. In order to fulfil their responsibilities, they have the right:

- To have the child living with them or otherwise to regulate the child's residence;
- To control, direct or guide, in a manner appropriate to the stage of development of the child, the child's upbringing;
- If the child is not living with them, to maintain personal relations and direct contact with the child on a regular basis; and,
- To act as the child's legal representative.

Children (Scotland) Act 1995

10.5 There are a range of ways in which practitioners across services ensure the participation and involvement of children, young people and families and uphold their rights.

*10.6 Education*

In Education, revised single agency assessments and planning guidance places renewed emphasis on the views of children, young people and families being kept at the heart of decision making.

10.7 Child Wellbeing Plans (CWPs) are written in the first person to make them more accessible and to demonstrate that they belong to the child or young person. There are discrete sections for gathering the views of the child / young person and those of the parent / carer.However, the views of children, young people and families should inform all aspects of the plan, review process and be central partners alongside education staff and other agency practitioners. The CWP details agreed roles and responsibilities of all contributors.

10.8 The views of all children and young people should be gathered, irrespective of their age and verbal capacity or additional support needs. Practitioners can establish their views through structured observations, recording how they respond to different experiences, and by using multisensory approaches to explore their thoughts, feelings, interests and talents. This information should be included within the plan and can be written or captured using, for example, photographs, video clips or drawings.

10.9 It is the core business of all education establishments to seek feedback from children, young people and families and actively involve them in making decisions about ELC and School activities. Their participation and involvement is crucial to effective self-evaluation and continuous improvement. All establishments are expected to consider the wellbeing of children and young people in their community, and have access to effective tools to support this, for example through East Renfrewshire Schools' Be-Well Survey.

*10.10 HSCP Children's Services*

Practitioners within HSCP Children's Services use an interactive online tool called Viewpoint with individual children and young people to inform assessments, planning and review meetings. There are also regular events and activities to ensure wider participation, coproduction and effective self-evaluation with children, young people and families.

10.11 Practitioners use a variety of tools such as Three Houses, Wizards and Fairies etc. to help children express their views.

10.12 HSCP commission's advocacy for care experienced children, children involved in CP process and children with additional support needs. Advocacy is also available to all children who are referred to the Children's Hearing System (national contract).

*10.13 Specialist Children's Services*

Specialist Children's Services use a range of methods and tools to ensure children are fully involved in their support and treatment and to gather their views on the care they have received. In Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) for example, the following tools are utilised at the appropriate times:

- Experience of Service Questionnaire - at 6 months and end of contact if later;
- Goals based outcome measure - can be used at each session - measures the young person's goals for change;
- Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire; and,
- Asking what matters to children, young people and their families.

*10.14 Principles of Effective Participation And Involvement Of Children And Young People*

Practitioners should give serious consideration to how they are ensuring that children and young people are meaningfully involved in decisions that affect them. The Lundy Model of child participation offers a framework for practitioners to think about how they successfully achieve this:

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The Lundy Model
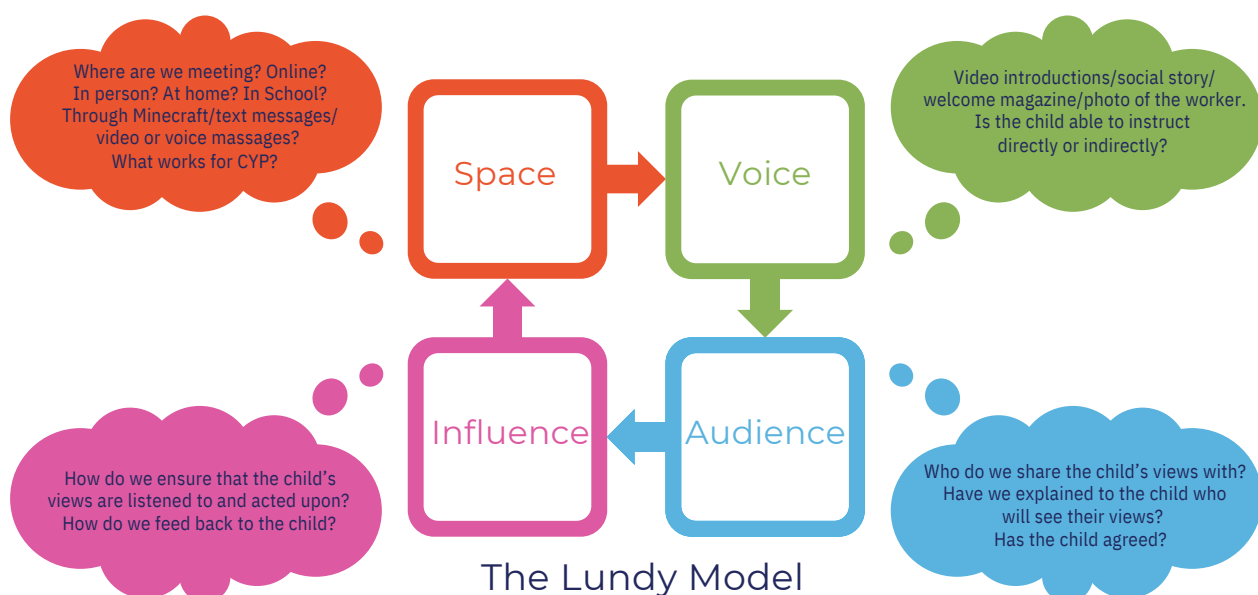
**My Rights, My Say (Enquire) – adapted from Lundy, L. (2007).** 'Voice' is not enough: conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. British Educational Research Journal, 33(6), 927-942.

*"There are barriers to successful participation that practitioners need to overcome, including:*
*• Barriers that are cumulative - the more barriers a child face, the further adults can inadvertently remove them from their rights*
*• "Complex needs" covers a wide range of intersecting barriers to communication and is not always a helpful term…*
*• Barriers to communication can come from factors other than non-verbality / developmental delays / physical needs*
*• Mental health, lack of faith in practitioners, anxiety, disassociation and frustration can be barriers as well*
*• The onus is on us as adults to break down those barriers - it is not on the child to facilitate participation – the barriers are ours, not the young child's"*

*My Rights My Say, 2024.*

10.15 Once the views of children and young people are gathered, they should be analysed and considered using the SHANARRI indicators. The next step for practitioners is to consider how they implement an effective feedback loop, where children and young people can understand how their views have been taken into account, what decisions have been made as a result of these, and why.

For more information, see: *Golden Rules on gathering the views of children and young people from the CYP Commissioners Office*.

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# PART 3 - GIRFEC ASSESSMENT: GUIDANCE FOR PRACTITIONERS

## 11. GIRFEC ASSESSMENT

11.1 Prevention and early intervention are fundamental in the *Getting it right* approach. Children and young people should be given opportunities and experiences that enhance their wellbeing in a holistic way. When there are signs that a child or young person may need support in a particular area, practitioners should respond proportionately and as quickly as possible.

11.2 All children and young people will require support for their wellbeing at one time or another. Most of these needs will be met through universal supports that are available to all. However, for some, there may be concerns raised and factors within their life that require robust wellbeing assessment, at times resulting in the need for an individualised wellbeing plan and targeted or intensive support.

11.3 Several important elements underpin the GIRFEC assessment process:

- The Child or Young Person's Record;
- The Chronology;
- The Single Agency or Multi Agency Assessment; and,
- The Child or Young Person's Plan.

## 12. THE CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON'S RECORD

12.1 The child or young person's record details important personal and biographical data. This includes information such as their; name, date of birth, sex, ethnicity, religion, registered GP, dentist, educational establishment, and any other professionals involved in their life. It may also contain information about family members and support they are receiving if it is relevant to the well-being of the child or young person.

12.2 The record should be reviewed for accuracy and updated accordingly on a regular basis, particularly when a single agency, multi-agency assessment, or specialist assessment is required. The record should enable families to move with ease between one agency and another, allowing services to be accessed quickly, easily and with no duplication, in line with GDPR and consent protocols, and minimum data standard requirements.

## 13. THE CHRONOLOGY

13.1 The chronology is an important record of significant events and changes in a child or young person's life. The purpose of a chronology is to identify and record *positive* and *negative* patterns, changes or events that may impact significantly on them and/or their family. It should be historical, covering the entirety of their life, and be factually accurate indicating the source of the information.

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13.2 Information recorded in a chronology should centre on key events in a child's life, and include dates and references to other people and agencies who were involved. A chronology must be kept within each agency and must be kept up to date, with the most recent event recorded last. The named person should ensure chronologies are updated within universal services.

13.3 All agencies have a responsibility to provide relevant information when chronologies are brought together for assessment and planning purposes. In accordance with guidance on information sharing and consent, a Lead Professional should bring this information together to complete a multi-agency chronology. A multi-agency chronology should include relevant and proportionate information drawn from each agency's single agency chronology. Professional judgement will be required when assessing relevance to the purpose for which it is required, and care must be taken not to produce unmanageable lists of events that make it impossible to identify risks or patterns.

13.4 It is the responsibility of the lead professional to draw together the separate single agency chronologies into one multi-agency chronology. This will be a retrospective exercise initially before becoming an ongoing record. Even when a child has a multi-agency chronology and a child/young person's multi-agency plan, each single agency will be required to keep their single agency chronology updated to inform the ongoing support to the child/young person and family. Updates to the single agency chronology should be shared for maintenance of the multi-agency chronology.

13.5 The Chronology should not replace existing case notes or records which will include much more detailed and sensitive information, and a clear distinction must be made between the two. This brief and summarised account of events provides accumulative evidence of emerging needs and risks, and flags up when a multi-agency response might be necessary.

13.6 In simple terms chronologies are a list, in date order, of all the significant events in the life of a child or young person. A chronology provides a clear summary of key events to allow for an overview and analysis.

**13.7 We Use Chronologies Because They:**

- Are extremely important in identifying critical events;
- Assist practitioners in decision making;
- Provide practitioners with a useful, holistic history of significant events;
- Demonstrate the effectiveness, or otherwise, of previous interventions, involvements and support;
- Can be a valuable tool to consider the immediate cumulative impact on the adult/child; and,
- Enable additional needs to be identified.

**13.8 When A Chronology Must Be Opened:**

- When all children or young person become known to universal services;
- At the point a social worker is allocated to an unborn baby or a child.

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In addition, GIRFEC requires that a child or young person in need of a child's plan has a multi-agency chronology and/or a harm matrix.

**13.9 What Are The Key Elements Of A Chronology?**

Chronologies must identify:

- Significant events in the child or young person's life;
- The date of any significant events;
- The impact on the individual;
- The source of the information;
- Any action taken, including a note when there was no action; and,
- Statements of fact and verifiable reports.

Chronologies should not include opinions and long narrative reports on incidents that have occurred.

**13.10 What Is A Significant Event?**

A significant event is one that has a significant impact, positive or negative, on a child or young person's circumstances and welfare. Significant events need to be identified in a context, and the impact of an event needs to be highlighted.

13.11 Significant events can stand alone, or can include several incidents that, in isolation, may not constitute a significant event, but when taken together indicate a significant impact.

13.12 Events that may not seem significant to most may, depending on an individual's circumstances, be regarded as carrying more significance. The significance of an event can be exacerbated in more complex cases, if a child or young person has additional needs, or if vulnerability has increased as resilience is low.

## 14. ASSESSMENT

14.1 Assessment is a core function for professionals working within our integrated children's services. Services will have different types of assessment relating to the function of their agency and the different needs of the children and young people they work with. However, The National Practice Model must be evident in wellbeing assessment, and certain principles must be followed by all services to ensure the best possible outcomes.

14.2 GIRFEC Wellbeing Assessment is required when a genuine concern is raised by or communicated to a practitioner within any service. Concerns can come from any source, including children, young people, parents, families, community members and practitioners.

### 14.3 Principles of Assessment

In East Renfrewshire, the following principles of assessment apply:

- The key purpose of assessment is to improve outcomes for children, young people and families;
- Assessment is an ongoing process, not a one-off event;
- Assessment is a dynamic process between all contributors and an equal partnership rather than a power dynamic;
- Everyone involved in assessment, including children, young people, parents/carers and practitioners understand the reason for assessment, and their role in gathering, structuring and analysing information; and,
- The information gathered for the purpose of assessment should be an accurate and factual representation of strengths, needs and risks and this should inform the child's plan.

### 14.4 Assessment Qualities

A good quality assessment process will be:

- **Inclusive**: involving and empowering the child / young person and their parents/carers, and supporting them to participate and take responsibility for their contribution to the assessment, as well as any necessary actions;
- **Solution-Focused**: supporting the child / young person, parents/carers and practitioners to adopt a self-determining, solution-focused approach to the discussion and agreed actions;
- **Accessible**: for all concerned, including the efficient use of time and access to the means needed to undertake assessment;
- **Transparent**: the purpose of the assessment is clear; the discussion is open and honest and there is no hidden agenda;
- **Developmental**: acquiring a good understanding of the child or young person's growth and development e.g. their journey with their family, their friends, their experience of different environments, and any additional support needs arising from developmental or neurodevelopmental differences that they may have (e.g. physical, sensory, social communication, learning differences etc.);
- **Relational**: exploring the relationships the child or young person has with and between family members, their relationships with their peers, and also the relationships they have with practitioners within the agency;
- **Interactional**: acknowledging that all factors, even those which can be considered within-child (e.g. anxiety, low mood, social communication differences) only become problematic as a result of the individuals' experience of their environment and their interactions through people, places and rules / expectations; and,
- **Targeted**: though holistic wellbeing assessment that is ecological and contextual, taking account of home, education and community factors, leading to clear targets and actions that minimise risks and maximise opportunities to improve the child or young person's wellbeing.

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## 15. THE NATIONAL PRACTICE MODEL
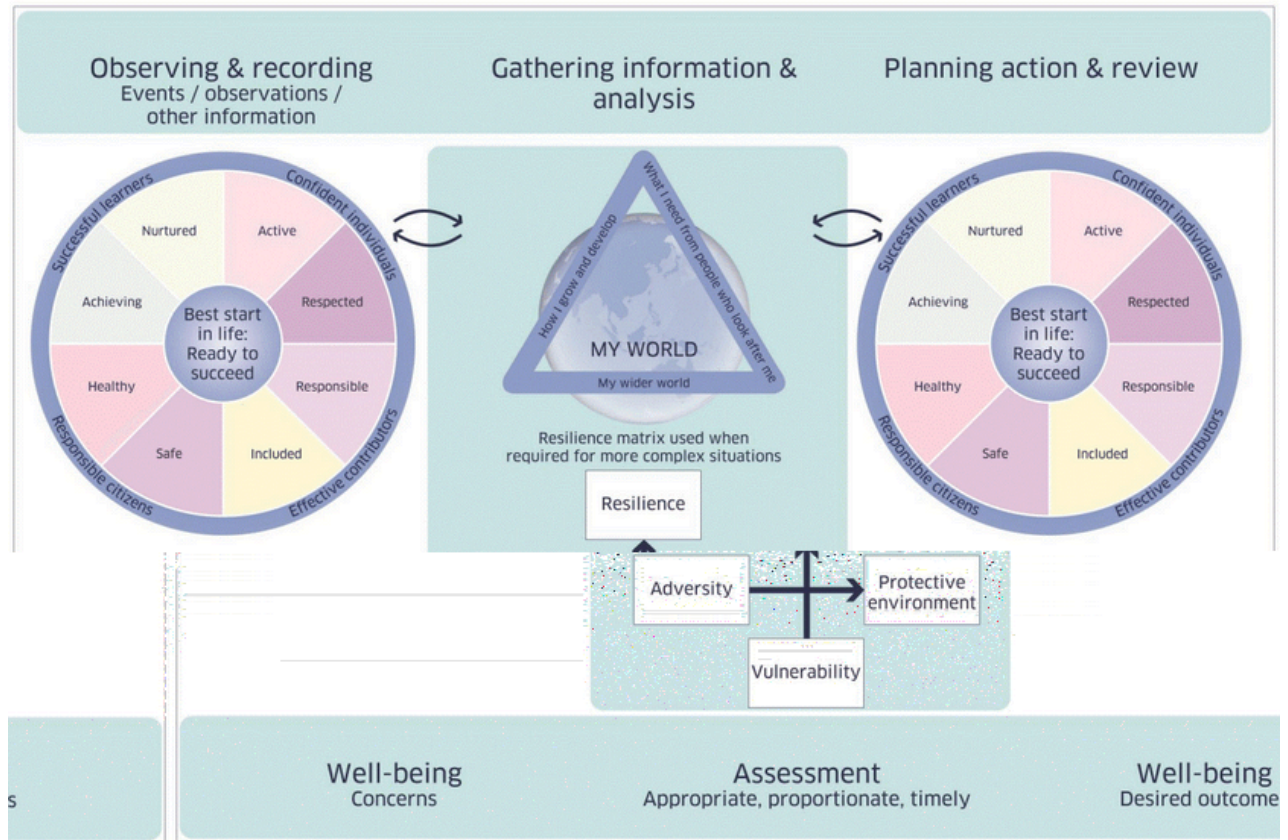


[Scottish Government Guidance on Using the National Practice Model](#)

15.1 The National Practice Model provides practitioners in all services with the questions, considerations and tools they need to identify concerns, initiate an assessment, gather information, and plan to enhance children's wellbeing. The model can be used flexibly to meet the needs of all children and young people, and to guide assessments that routinely take place within our services.

15.2 Where a specific wellbeing concern or risk is identified, a single-agency or multi-agency assessment is necessary. The National Practice Model should always be used to guide these assessments. Assessment may result in targeted and on some occasions intensive support being provided for children, young people and families. This support may be provided by one or more agencies.

### 15.3 The Six Key Questions

The National Practice Model begins with us asking ourselves the following six questions when we have a concern about a child or young person:

1. What is getting in the way of this child or young person's *wellbeing*?
2. Do I have all the information I need to help this child or young person?
3. What can I do now to help this child or young person?
4. What can my agency/service do to help this child or young person?
5. What additional help, if any, may be needed from other services/agencies?
6. What is the view of the child/young person and the family?

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## 15.4 The Three Assessment Tools

There are three components or tools in the National Practice Model that can be used throughout the process of assessment, planning, support and review:
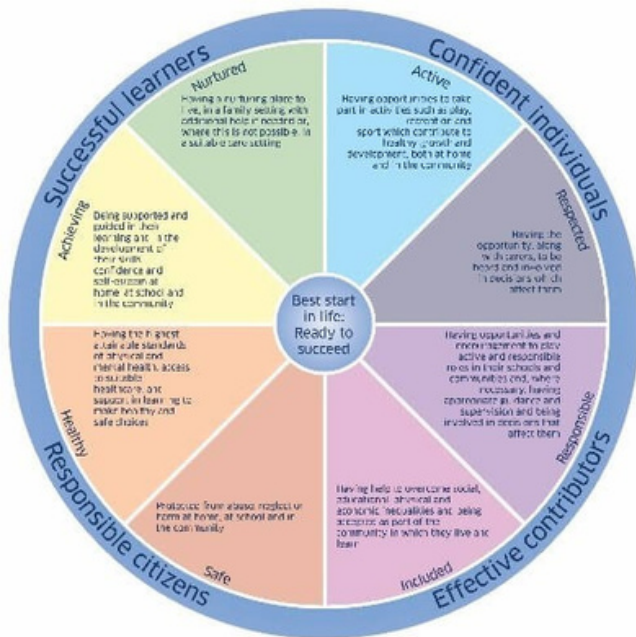


**THE WELLBEING WHEEL:** Practitioners should use this in observations, assessment, the identification of concerns, the recording and sharing of information, and when requesting assistance from other agencies. It must be used throughout the planning and review stage, specifically when developing outcomes for children and young people.

**THE MY WORLD TRIANGLE:** Practitioners should use this to explore how a child or young person is growing and developing, what they need from the people who look after them, and the impact of their wider world, including their family, friends, and community. It helps to explore strengths, needs and risks, and how these might be interconnected.

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**Resilience Matrix**

With the right support at the right time, every child and young person can reach their full potential.

**Resilience**

Characteristics that contribute to the child or young person's resilience, such as positive self-esteem, secure attachment, problem-solving skills.
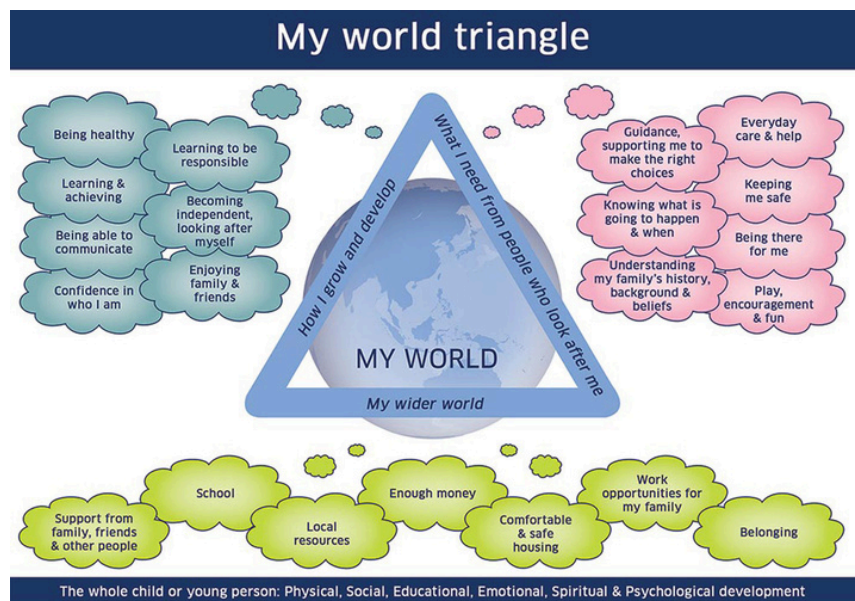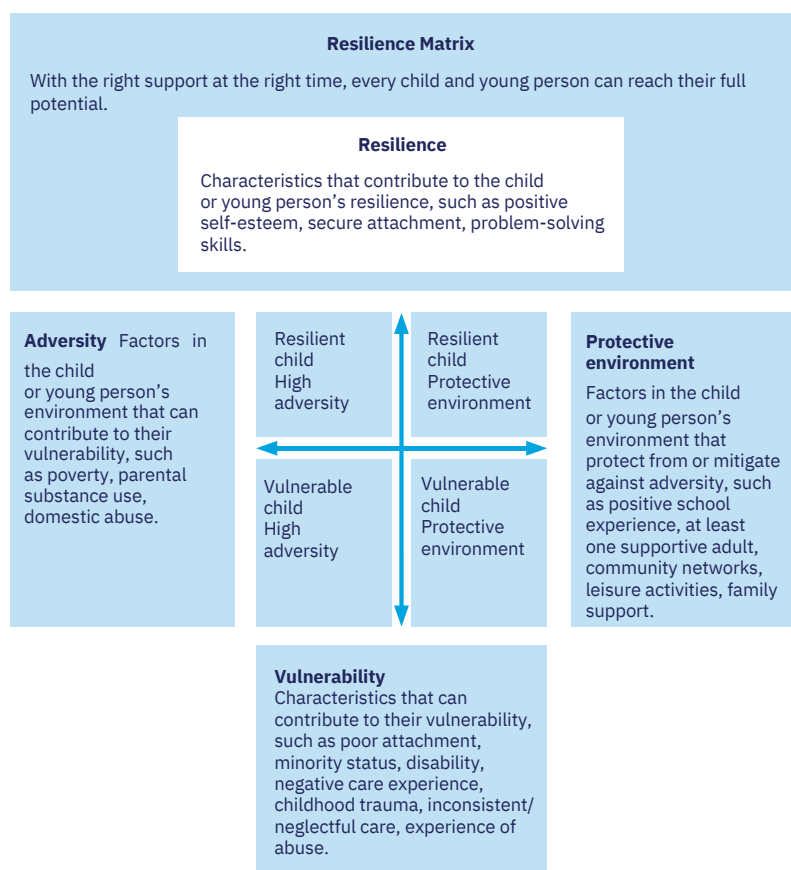
**THE RESILIENCE MATRIX:** Practitioners should use this in more complex situations to analyse the risk and protective factors that are present in the lives of children and young people.

**Adversity** Factors in the child or young person's environment that can contribute to their vulnerability, such as poverty, parental substance use, domestic abuse.

| Resilient child High adversity | Resilient child Protective environment |
| Vulnerable child High adversity | Vulnerable child Protective environment |

**Protective environment**

Factors in the child or young person's environment that protect from or mitigate against adversity, such as positive school experience, at least one supportive adult, community networks, leisure activities, family support.

**Vulnerability**
Characteristics that can contribute to their vulnerability, such as poor attachment, minority status, disability, negative care experience, childhood trauma, inconsistent/ neglectful care, experience of abuse.

15.5 Once practitioners have considered these questions and made appropriate use of the three assessment tools, they will be in strong position to know what needs to be done to support a child or young person, enabling them to take the appropriate next steps to access the right support at the right time.

15.6 The National Practice Model encourages child-centred, rights-respecting, strengths-based practice, where inclusion of children, young people and families lies at the heart of the assessment process.

15.7 Where concerns that are more significant are identified, or where a statutory assessment is required, the National Practice Model will be supplemented by appropriate specialist assessments, for example where a Coordinated Support Plan is merited, or in circumstances of Child Protection, using Signs of Safety approach. More information can be found on the intranet here.

## CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS

IF YOU IDENTIFY CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS, YOU MUST TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION IN LINE WITH YOUR AGENCY CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES. THESE CONCERNS WILL NEED TO BE JOINTLY INVESTIGATED AND ASSESSED BY APPROPRIATELY TRAINED PRACTITIONERS BEFORE A DECISION IS MADE REGARDING NEXT STEPS. THE NATIONAL PRACTICE MODEL WILL BE USED IN THIS PROCESS, ALONGSIDE A SPECIALIST CHILD PROTECTION RISK ASSESSMENT.

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## 16. KEY STAGES OF ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING

16.1 There are several stages involved in the GIRFEC Assessment and Planning process:

1. Gathering information
2. Structuring information to make sense of it
3. Analysing information to understand the impact on the child's life
4. Outcome focused planning - taking decisions about what needs to be put in place to improve outcomes
5. Agreeing on acceptable time scales to complete actions
6. Agreeing on who will ensure that the plan is implemented and reviewed
7. Reviewing progress against the agreed actions and outcomes

16.2 Each agency will have its own bespoke system and documentation for supporting practitioners through these stages, but the process of single agency and multi-agency assessment is consistent for all.

16.3 As children, young people and their families may present with differing levels of need, the type of assessment required will vary and may involve:

- Initial assessment of a wellbeing concern;
- Single Agency Assessment; and/or,
- Multi-Agency Assessment.

### 16.4 When A Wellbeing Concern Is Raised About A Child Or Young Person

All practitioners within universal services have a duty to identify wellbeing concerns and respond to these appropriately following East Renfrewshire's GIRFEC process. The Named Person is crucial in this, as they will often know the child or young person best, but there is a collective responsibility to ensure positive wellbeing outcomes are achieved for vulnerable children and young people, and everyone has a role to play.

16.5 Children, young people, families, community members and practitioners can all raise a wellbeing concern with a service. A concern can be an event, a series of events or attributes, which may affect the welfare, well-being, potential, or happiness of a child or young person.

16.6 If a concern is identified by a practitioner within a universal service, or a concern is brought to the attention of a universal service, the Named Person should lead the assessment of the concern using _The Wellbeing Wheel and the 6 Key Questions as described above_.

16.7 Agencies should ensure that there is evidence of the SHANARRI indicators and Key Questions having been used to assess the concern. The outcome of this preliminary assessment should be shared with the child or young person and their parents / carers unless there are child protection concerns that indicate such information sharing could exacerbate immediate risk.

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16.8 The outcome of this initial assessment of a wellbeing concern may result in:

- No further action;
- Single Agency Assessment and Plan;
- Multi-Agency Assessment and Plan; or,
- Child Protection procedures being initiated.

16.9 When children and young people are identified as being at risk or in need of significant help for their wellbeing and development, the GIRFEC Assessment Process should be followed. The process, as outlined in the following flowchart, may not always be linear: services may need to initiate procedures in parallel to develop a robust multi-agency assessment and plan for intervention.

## 16.10 EAST RENFREWSHIRE GIRFEC ASSESSMENT PROCESS

**A wellbeing concern is raised about a child / young person within a universal service**

**Named Person is notified**
The wellbeing concern is recorded and assessed using the SHANARRI Indicators and 6 Key Questions

**No Further Action Needed**

**Consent is obtained to share information proportionately with relevant other professionals within the agency**

**A Child Protection Concern is identified**

**Single Agency Assessment**
**(Named Person Leads)**
Evidence of SHANARRI Indicators, Views of Child / YP, Parents, Professionals

**Single Agency Child's Plan**
Evidence of SHANARRI Indicators, Views and Roles / Responsibilities of Child / YP, Parents and Professionals. Outcome-Focussed Plan, Do, Review Cycle

With consent, short-term consultation, advice or specialist assessment can be sought from another agency to inform the Single Agency Plan

**Follow Agency Child Protection Procedures**

**Single Agency Assessment and Planning process indicates the need for direct involvement and collaboration with another agency**

Education practitioners should consider whether a Coordinated Support Plan is required. If a CSP is required this process should be initiated in parallel with the multi-agency GIRFEC process. ALL AGENCIES must contribute to this legal process. If a CSP is not required then record the decision using CSP Pro-forma

**Consent is obtained to share information proportionately with relevant other professionals outwith the single agency**

**Request assistance from other relevant agencies**

**Outcomes inform single and / or multiagency assessment and plan**

**Multi Agency Assessment**
**(Lead Professional Appointed)**
Evidence of SHANARRI Indicators, Resilience Matrix, My World Triangle, Views of Child / YP, Parents, Professionals

**Multi Agency Child's Plan**
Evidence of SHANARRI Indicators, Resilience Matrix, My World Triangle, Views and Roles / Responsibilities of Child / YP, Parents and Professionals Outcome-Focussed Plan, Do, Review Cycle

## 17. SINGLE AGENCY ASSESSMENT

17.1 A Single Agency Assessment is initiated when a wellbeing concern is raised about a child or young person, and preliminary assessment of the concern using the key questions and wellbeing indicators highlights that there are factors putting their wellbeing at risk.

17.2 Each service has a responsibility to assess a child or young person's wellbeing from their own agency perspective, even if there are early indications that a multi-agency response is likely to be required. Services should use their own pro-forma and tools; however, all Single Agency Assessments must evidence use of the Six Key Questions and the Wellbeing Indicators from The National Practice Model.

All practitioners should inform the child, young person and parents / carers where there is a requirement to share information within agency and record their reasons for deciding to share information. They should seek their consent in line with information sharing and consent guidance.

17.3 **The Named Person** is responsible for leading the Single Agency Assessment and promoting the principles and qualities of assessment in East Renfrewshire. See Roles and Responsibilities of Practitioners for more information on the role of The Named Person.

17.4 In a Single Agency Assessment, the child or young person's strengths and needs must be assessed and recorded using the SHANARRI indicators from the Wellbeing Wheel. In most cases, written assessment and recording will be required only under those indicators that relate to the wellbeing concern(s) and relevant protective factors, not every indicator. In more complex cases, there may be a need to assess and record under all indicators.

17.5 The Single Agency Assessment should capture all relevant information and be guided by reference to the Resilience Matrix and My World Triangle. These tools encourage all agencies to consider the child or young person's needs and circumstances holistically, reducing the potential for the assessment to focus too narrowly on needs that can be met by a Single Agency's resources.

17.6 Through the Single Agency Assessment process, the Named Person will consult with relevant colleagues, the child or young person, and their family to address needs and identify existing or required supports from internal or external agencies. This process considers previous professional involvement, action plans, and the reasons for their success or failure.

17.7 The Single Agency Assessment should be current and align with the child or young person's age and stage of development. If the assessment indicates that other agencies should be or are already involved in proving support for the child or young person's wellbeing, the Named Person should consider whether a multi-agency assessment and plan is appropriate and liaise with relevant agencies to identify a Lead Professional.

17.8 In some instances, discrete specialist professional assessments may be required within or from other agencies. The Single Agency Assessment is best served by summarising outcomes and recommendations rather than capturing the full detail of a specialist assessment (for example neurodevelopmental assessment of Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia etc.)

17.9 The existence of a specialist assessment does not necessarily indicate the need for a single agency or multi-agency plan. Inclusive universal practices within agencies may mean that no targeted or intensive supports are required for the child or young person.

17.10 The Child's Record and Chronology should inform the Single Agency Assessment process and be updated as required through the assessment and planning process. If information needs to be shared with other staff or agencies, the Named Person will record that they are doing so and how they have established informed consent to do so.

More guidance is available in the INFORMATION SHARING AND CONSENT SECTION.

**17.11 Outcome Of The Single Agency Assessment**

When the single agency assessment is complete, the conclusion may be that:

- **No further action** is required, as the support that is needed is Universal and available to all;
- **That a Single Agency Child's Plan is required** (Child' Wellbeing Plan (CWP) in Education), as targeted or intensive individualised support is needed; or,
- **That a Multi-Agency Assessment and Child's Plan may be required**, as there is evidence that help and support may be needed from other agencies.

## 18. MULTI-AGENCY ASSESSMENT

18.1 Multi-agency assessment and planning is required in circumstances where more than one agency is involved to provide the right support at the right time for children and young people.

18.2 Multi-agency assessment enables practitioners to work across professional boundaries, develop a shared understanding of the child or young person and their family, and draw upon each professional's specialist knowledge, skill set and experience. This should lead to a clearer and more holistic picture of the child or young person's wellbeing strengths and support needs.

18.3 Effective multi-agency planning is underpinned by practitioners working in partnership with colleagues across agencies to produce coherent, holistic and complementary supports to promote the wellbeing potential of children and young people.

18.4 Multi-agency assessment and planning should evidence full use of the *National Practice Model*. The child/young person and their family will be partners in the process of assessing and identifying strengths and needs, and must be supported to participate fully and be kept informed throughout.

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18.5 A key aim is for the child or young person to benefit from the one assessment and one plan approach.

18.6 A multi-agency assessment and plan must be actioned when any one of the following criteria is met:

1. There are indications at an early stage that a child or young person will require the involvement of two or more agencies;
2. After the completion of a single agency assessment it is evident the child or young person requires more specialist interventions and supports;
3. Concerns over the wellbeing of a child or young person continue after a review of single agency assessment, planning and support: the agency believes it cannot meet those wellbeing needs alone and requests for assistance from other agencies require to be actioned;
4. A multi-agency meeting such as the Joint Support Team (JST), Early Years Intervention Group (EYIG), Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), Young People's Referral Group etc. highlight the need for a multi-agency assessment and planning;
5. Multi-agency assessment and planning is an identified need following a child protection investigation. (In most cases a child's multi-agency assessment and plan will be conducted using the National Practice Model to assess needs and risks, although a specialist child protection risk assessment may be used for this purpose.);
6. A Children's Panel report is requested; or,
7. A Coordinated Support Plan is required by virtue of the ASL Act.

18.7 A **Lead Professional** will be appointed from within the lead agency, holding responsibility for leading multi-agency assessment and planning, and promoting the principles and qualities of assessment in East Renfrewshire. See Roles and Responsibilities of Practitioners for more information on the role of The Lead Professional.

18.8 The Lead Professional should inform the child, young person and parents / carers where there is a requirement to share information with other agencies and record their reasons for deciding to share information. The Lead Professional should seek their consent in line with information sharing and consent guidance. The Lead Professional will notify the other key agencies and coordinate the collection of information to be included within the assessment and production of the child or young person's plan.

18.9 The Lead Professional will complete and monitor the multi-agency chronology of significant events.

18.10 The Lead Professional will share the completed assessment and plan with the multi-agency team as appropriate, and this should be subject to an effective plan, do and review cycle in line with the needs and progress of the case, with a minimum standard of every six months being advised. If there is no time to convene a multi-agency meeting (e.g. where the child or young person requires immediate support and service provision, or a report has been requested at short notice by the Children's Reporter), the assessment and plan will be shared with the child or young person and their family, and other agency contributors, to seek agreement on its contents.

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**18.11 Key Steps In Completing a Multi-Agency Assessment and Plan:**

1. Appoint a lead agency and, from that agency, a lead professional;
2. Explain the multi-agency process and purpose to the child or young person and their parent/carer, obtaining consent from all as appropriate and in line with information sharing and consent guidance;
3. Identify the relevant agencies and professionals for involvement, ensuring everyone is aware of relevant timescales;
4. Gather and analyse information, including existing records and risk factors, using The Three Assessment Tools from the National Practice Model, alongside Signs of Safety® and National Risk Framework Tools as applicable;
5. Summarise findings and discuss with the child or young person and their family;
6. Convene a meeting to finalise and approve the child or young person's plan; and,
7. Assign responsibilities to a lead professional to implement and review the plan within six months.

**18.12 Multi Agency Assessment and Planning Using the National Practice Model**

**The Wellbeing Wheel**
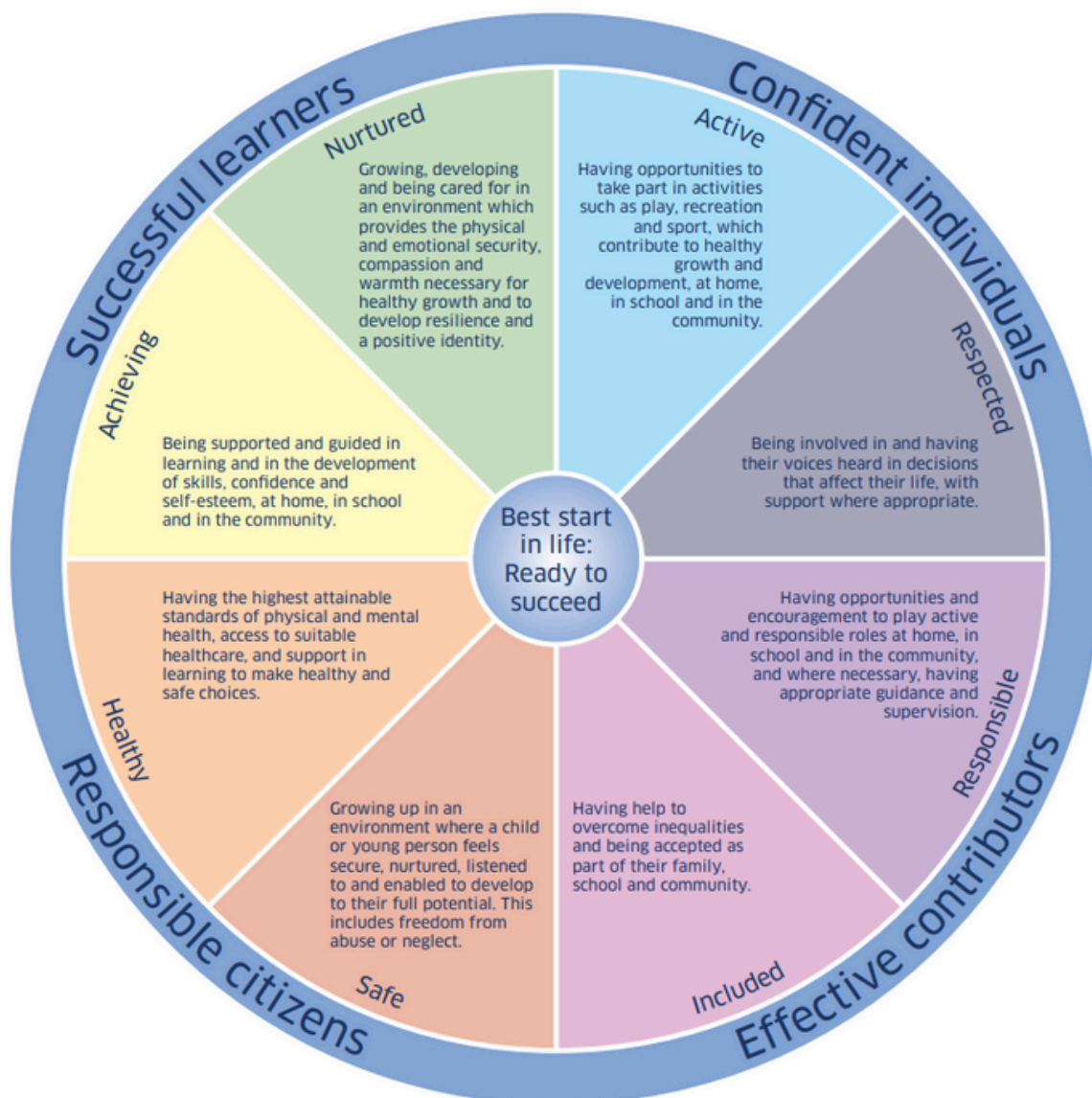
18.13 To identify and record concerns in a consistent way, the *National Practice Model* uses the eight *Well-being Indicators*. These eight indicators represent the key areas that are essential to help children flourish. They provide a common language for all practitioners to note where children's well-being is not reaching the level that it should. There are eight indicators of wellbeing: healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible, included, and above all safe. The *Wellbeing Indicators* are the basic requirements for all children and young people to grow and develop and reach their full potential.

### 18.14 The My World Triangle
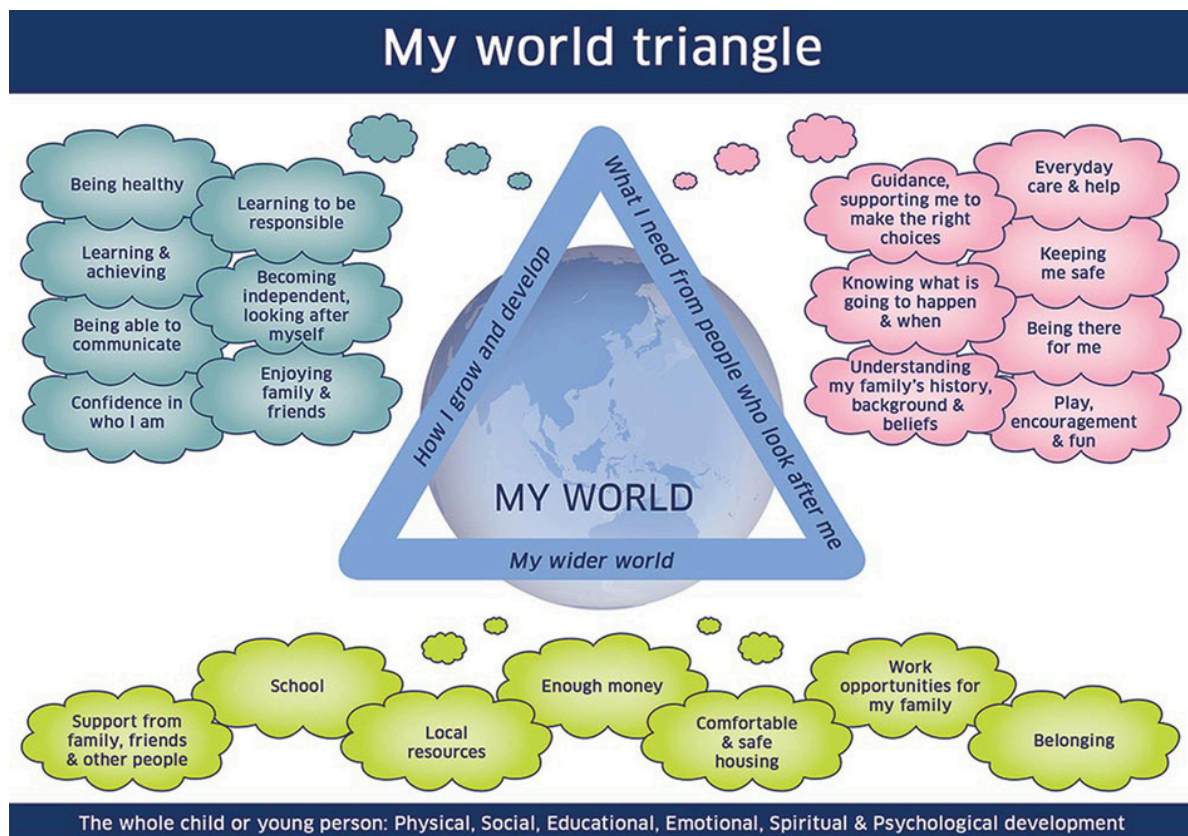


18.15 The **My World Triangle** supports effective assessment as it encourages practitioners to consider the child or young person's world holistically. Practitioners can then assess how these factors may be interacting to the benefit or detriment of the child or young person's wellbeing.

18.16 The *My World Triangle* promotes a model of practice that considers the child or young person's needs and risks as well as the positive features in their lives. Strengths and pressures are given equal consideration and can be structured around the triangle. Information gathered around these areas should be proportionate and relevant to the issues at hand.

18.17 Assessment should capture information that is directly relevant to any presenting issue or need. However, it is still important to keep the child or young person's whole world in mind and most importantly, provide immediate help where it is needed.

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18.18 Using the *My World Triangle* allows practitioners to consider 3 key areas systematically:

1. Is the child or young person growing and developing in line with their full potential?
2. What does the child need from the people who look after them?
3. What is happening in their wider world that may impact on their wellbeing?

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## Being healthy

This includes full information about all aspects of a child's [...] health and development, relevant to their age and stage. Developmental milestones, major illnesses, hospital admissions, any impairments, disabilities, conditions affecting development and health. Health care, including nutrition, exercise, physical and mental health issues, sexual health, substance abuse.

## Learning and achieving

This includes cognitive development from birth, learning achievements and the skills and interests which can be nurtured. How additional needs are supported. Achievements in leisure, hobbies, sport. Education and social development milestones need to be recorded. Personal learning plans and other educational records should provide evidence of what has been achieved and what supports are needed or being provided for. Is the child's progress with formal education in line with expectations? Attention should also be given to further education or training needs and potential employment opportunities for young people moving or have moved towards semi- or full independence.

## Confidence in who I am

Child or young person's temperament and characteristics. Nature and quality of early and current attachments. Emotional and behavioural development. Resilience, self esteem. Knows views are listened to. Ability to take pride in achievements. Confidence in managing challenges, opportunities, difficulties appropriate to the age and stage of development. Sense of identity which has an appreciation of ethnic and cultural background and is comfortable with gender, sexuality, religious belief. Skills in social presentation.

## Being able to communicate

This includes development of language and communication. Being in touch and communicating constructively with others. Ability to express thoughts, feelings and needs. What is the child or young person's preferred language or method of communication? Are there particular people with whom the child communicates that you will need to involve? Are aids to communication needed?

## Learning to be responsible

Learning appropriate social skills and behaviour. Values: sense of right and wrong; Consideration for others; Ability to understand what is expected and act on it. How does the child respond to key influences on social and emotional development at different ages and stages - e.g. collaborative play in early childhood, peer expectations at school and outside.

## Becoming independent, looking after myself

The gradual acquisition of skills and confidence needed to move from dependence to independence. Early practical skills of feeding, dressing etc. Engaging with learning and other tasks, acquiring skills and competence in social problem solving, getting on well with others, moving to independent living skills and autonomy. What are the effects of any impairment or disability or of social circumstances and how might these be compensated for?

## Enjoying family and friends

How is the child or young person responding to relationships that support, value, encourage and guide them; to family and wider social networks; opportunities to make and sustain lasting significant relationships; encouragement to develop skills in making friends, to take account of the feelings and needs of others, and to behave responsibly? This links and overlaps with what a child or young person needs from those who look after them and the wider environment.

How I grow and develop

What I need from people who look after me

**MY WORLD**

My wider world
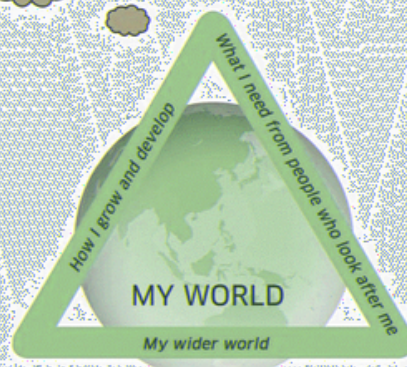
# What I need from people who look after me

## Everyday care and help

This is about the ability to nurture which includes day-to-day physical and emotional care, food, clothing and housing. Enabling healthcare and educational opportunities. Meeting the child's changing needs over time, encouraging growth of responsibility and independence. Listening to the child and being able to respond appropriately to a chid's likes and dislikes. Support in meeting parenting tasks and help carers' own needs.

## Keeping me safe

Keeping the child safe at home; exercising appropriate guidance and protection outside. Practical home safety such as fire guards and stair gates., hygiene. Protecting from physical, social and emotional dangers such as bullying, anxieties about friendships. Is the care-giver able to protect the child consistently and effectively? Seeking help and solutions to domestic problems such as mental health needs, violence, offending behaviour. Taking a responsible interest in child's friends and associates, use of internet, exposure to situations where sexual exploitation or substance misuse may present risks, staying out late, staying away from home. Are there identifiable risk factors? Is the young person being encouraged to find out about risks and confident about being safe? Are the child's concerns being listened to?

## Being there for me

Love, emotional warmth, attentiveness and engagement. Listening to me. Who are the people who can be relied on to recognise and respond to the child or young person's emotional needs? Who are the people with whom the child has particular bond? Are there issues of attachment? Who is of particular significance? Who does the child trust? Is there sufficient emotional security and responsiveness in the child's current caring environment? What is the level of stability and quality of relationships between siblings, other members of the household? Do issues between parents impact on their ability to parent? Are there issues within a family history that impinge on the family's ability to care?

## Play, encouragement, fun

Stimulation and encouragement to learn and enjoy life, responsiveness to the child or young person's unique needs and abilities. Who spends time with the child or young person, communicating, interacting, responding to the child's curiosity, providing an educationally rich environment? Is the child or young person's progress encouraged by sensitive responses to interests and achievements, involvement in school activities? Is there someone to act as the child or young person's mentor and champion and listen to their wishes?

## Guidance, supporting me to make the right choices

Values, guidance and boundaries. Making clear to the child or young person what is expected and why. Are household roles and rules of behaviour appropriate to the age and understanding of the child or young person? Are sanctions constructive and consistent? Are responses to behaviour appropriate, modelling behaviour that represents autonomous, responsible adult expectations? Is the child or young person treated with consideration and respect, encouraged to take social responsibility within a safe and protective environment? Are there any specific aspects which may need intervention?

## Knowing what is going to happen and when

Is the child or young person's life stable and predictable? Are routines and expectations appropriate and helpful to age and stage of development? Are the child or young person's needs given priority within an environment that expects mutual consideration? Who are the family members and others important to the child or young person? Is there stability and consistency within the household? Can the people who look after her or him be relied on to be open and honest about family and household relationships, about wider influences, needs, decisions and to involve the child or young person in matters which affect him or her? Transition issues must be fully explored for them during times of change.

## Understanding my family's background and beliefs

Family and cultural history; issues of spirituality and faith. Do the child or young person's significant carers foster an understanding of their own and the child's background - their family and extended family relationships and their origins? Is their racial, ethnic and cultural heritage given due prominence? Do those around the child or young person respect and value diversity? How well does the child understand the different relationships, for example with step relationships, different partnerships etc?

How I grow and develop

What I need from people who look after me

MY WORLD

My wider world

# My wider world

MY WORLD

What I need from people who look after me

How I grow and develop

My wider world

## School
From pre-school and nursery onwards, the school environment plays a key role. What are the experiences of school and peer networks and relationships? What aspects of the learning environment and opportunities for learning are important to the child or young person? Availability of study support, out of school learning and special interests. Can the school provide what is needed to meet the particular educational and social needs of the child?

## Support from family, friends and other people
Networks of family and social support. Relationships with grandparents, aunts and uncles, extended family and friends. What supports can they provide? Are there tensions involved in or negative aspects of the family's social networks? Are there problems of lost contact or isolation? Are there reliable, long term networks of support which the child or family can reliably draw on? Who are the significant people in the child or young person's wider environment?

## Enough money
Has the family or young person adequate income to meet the day to day needs and any special needs? Have problems of poverty and disadvantage affected opportunities? Is household income managed for the benefit of all? Are there problems of debts? Do benefit entitlements need to be explored? Is income adequate to ensure the child can take part in school and leisure activities and pursue special interests and skills?

## Comfortable and safe housing
Is the accommodation suitable for the needs of the child and family - including adaptations needed to meet special needs? Is it in a safe, well maintained and resourced, and child friendly neighbourhood? Have there been frequent moves?

## Work oportunities for my family
Are there local opportunities for training and rewarding work? Cultural and family expectations of work and employment. Supports for the young person's career aspirations and opportunities.

## Belonging
Being accepted in the community, feeling included and valued. What are the opportunities for taking part in activities which support social contact and inclusion - e.g. playgroups, after school clubs, youth clubs, environmental improvements, parents and residents' groups, faith groups? Are there local prejudices and tensions affecting the child or young person's ability to fit in?

## Local resources
Resources which the child or young person, and family, can access for leisure, faith, sport, active lifestyle. Projects offering support and guidance at times of stress or transition. Access to and local information about health, childcare, care in the community, specialist services.

*18.19 Understanding How Wider World Factors Interact And Have Impact*

While gathering **My World** information, there are some critical questions to bear in mind:

- Who is the child or young person? What are their strengths, needs, talents, and vulnerabilities?
- Have they got positive relationships with those who looks after them that promote their development and wellbeing and help them to reach their potential?
- What factors are protective and might positively impact on their wellbeing and development?
- What factors present risk or pressure and might negatively impact on their wellbeing and development?
- What strengths and pressures are present in every part of the child's world?
- Are there factors impacting on the capacity of those who look after them that require agency intervention and or support?

## 18.20 Resilience and the Resilience Matrix

## 18.21 What is Resilience?

Resilience is fundamental to the wellbeing of children and young people. All children and young people will experience challenge and adversity throughout their life. Their resilience is their capacity to overcome or get through periods of adversity without being seriously impacted by long-term negative consequences.

## 18.22 Assessing Risk

As the impact of life's challenges and adverse childhood experiences are not absolutely determinative, resilience can be tricky to assess. It is highly individualised, so practitioners need to consider and balance a range of factors and characteristics when assessing the presence or absence of resilience and how this is likely to be influenced over the short, medium and long term.

## 18.23 The Resilience Matrix

Practitioners can use the *Resilience Matrix* tool (see below) to make sense of the strengths and pressures from the *My World Triangle* along with any specialist assessments that have been carried out, and to group that information within the four headings of resilience, vulnerability, protective factors and adversity.

18.24 A strengths based approach is fundamental to *Getting It Right For Every Child and Young Person,* and consistent with the Signs of Safety model. Therefore, practitioners should draw on what the family, community and universal services can offer to promote resilience, whilst acknowledging adversity and points of vulnerability and planning support from appropriate sources to address these.

**Resilience Matrix**

With the right support at the right time, every child and young person can reach their full potential.

**Resilience**

Characteristics that contribute to the child or young person's resilience, such as positive self-esteem, secure attachment, problem-solving skills.

**Adversity** Factors in the child or young person's environment that can contribute to their vulnerability, such as poverty, parental substance use, domestic abuse.

| Resilient child High adversity | Resilient child Protective environment |
|---|---|
| Vulnerable child High adversity | Vulnerable child Protective environment |

**Protective environment**

Factors in the child or young person's environment that protect from or mitigate against adversity, such as positive school experience, at least one supportive adult, community networks, leisure activities, family support.

**Vulnerability**
Characteristics that can contribute to their vulnerability, such as poor attachment, minority status, disability, negative care experience, childhood trauma, inconsistent/neglectful care, experience of abuse.

Resilience/Vulnerability Matrix is taken from *The Child's World: Assessing Children in Need, Training and Development Pack* (Department of Health, NSPCC and University of Sheffield (2000)

18.25 As they are not constant states, it can be helpful to view Resilience and Vulnerability at opposite ends of a continuum (See below). An individual will move between these points through life as they experience risk and protective factors. The presence or absence of these factors can help to explain why one child or young person may cope better with similar adverse life events than another, or why they might cope better or worse at different points in their life.

| **Vulnerability** | ←→ | **Resilience** |
|---|---|---|
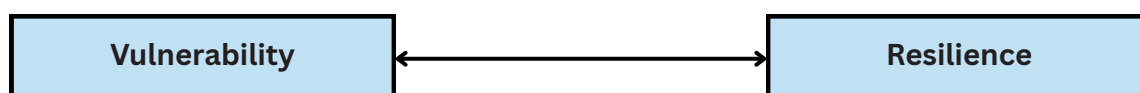
18.26 The second consideration within the resilience matrix is whether the child or young persons' environment carries with it adversity or offers protection. Practitioners therefore need to assess the likely impact on resilience of factors that have been established through a robust *My World Triangle* assessment, particularly focussing on family, school and community experiences.

| **Adversity** | ←→ | **Protective environment** |
|---|---|---|

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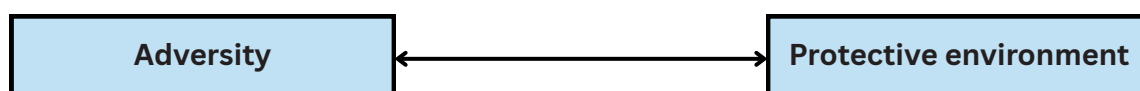
18.27 The Resilience Matrix is a helpful assessment framework that will assist in practitioner assessment of risk, and where to target support effectively to promote a child or young person's resilience.

18.28 Resilience is a complex issue and nothing can be taken for granted when assessing how resilient a child or young person is (Daniel and Wassell, 2002). Some children and young people may appear on the surface to be coping well with adversity but may still be struggling. Assessment must be ongoing where risks are present.

18.29 Assessing and Promoting Resilience in Vulnerable Children (Daniel and Wassel, 2002)[1] can provide more information for practitioners and is available through the East Renfrewshire Council Intranet.

**18.30 Applying the knowledge – The resilience matrix for analysing information**

Resilience tends to develop through incremental exposure to adversity and risk. As a result it can be difficult for practitioners to determine whether factors present in a child or young persons' life are risk factors or protective factors. Sometimes they can be both, and it is about the cumulative effects of what is happening to an individual in that moment in time.

18.31 Practitioners must use professional judgement to interpret complex information, weigh competing influences, and determine which factors are most important. Considering interactions between factors can help assess whether impacts are positive or negative. Staff assessing risk should regularly consult their supervisor to ensure accurate analysis.

18.32 Practitioners across all agencies should be offered regular supervision to reflect on assessment and analysis of risk, associated planning and decision making.

18.33 Once these judgements have been made, practitioners will be better placed to analyse the case and decide on actions that will help strengthen the protective factors that will promote resilience in the child or young person, and those which will minimise the impact of adversity by addressing their vulnerabilities.

18.34 This analysis should form the basis for discussion with the child or young person, their family and other relevant practitioners, and inform the detail of the Multi Agency Plan. This will include what needs to be done and who is going to do it. Agreed actions should form the basis of a wellbeing focussed child or young person's plan, with smart outcomes organised under the wellbeing indicators.

18.35 Reviewing progress is an essential part of the assessment and planning process and it will be necessary to revisit the Resilience Matrix in some cases.

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[1]Daniel, B Wassell, S. (2002) Assessing and Promoting Resilience in Vulnerable Children, volumes 1, 2 & 3, London and Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley Pubs Ltd

## 19. PRINCIPLES OF WRITING A SINGLE or MULTI-AGENCY CHILD/YOUNG PERSON'S PLAN

### 19.1 The Child / Young Person's Plan

Where a Child / Young Person's Plan is developed, SMART outcomes should be clear and written in the first person for the child or young person to understand. SMART outcomes are defined as:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Time-Bound

19.2 For all plans, outcomes must be detailed under the relevant SHANNARI indicators, and there should be clear links to the detail of the single or multi-agency assessment. The core record, assessment and plan should form one document alongside the chronology. Individual agencies are responsible for making their own templates.

19.3 Plans should clearly capture the views of the child or young person, the parents and all professionals involved in the plan's delivery. Children and Young People should be directly involved, considering age and capacity, in the plan, and review process.

19.4 Actions should be clear and concise and illustrate the targeted or intensive nature of the support needed and who is directly responsible for providing it. Clear timelines for implementation, evaluation and review should be captured, with a minimum standard of every six months being advised. Plans should be formatted in ways that are child or young person friendly, as the plan belongs to them.

### 19.5 A Child or Young Person requires a plan:

- If they are highlighted as having a wellbeing need as assessed by the wellbeing indicators; and/or,
- To identify what support is necessary to meet the identified need.

### 19.6 The Purpose of the Child's Plan Meeting

The Child's Plan Meeting aims to streamline and simplify planning processes, reduce duplication and provide clarity for children, families and practitioners. It focuses on efficient use of resources, reducing anxiety, supporting better decision making, and improving outcomes for children and young people.

19.7 Plans should be strength-based and focussed on the desired outcomes for the child/young person. They should be specific to each wellbeing indicator, the difficulties identified in the assessment and relate to the child or young person's individual circumstances. Outcomes and the stated impact because of help received should have an associated time frame. Outcomes should be written in the first person.

19.8 The child's multi-agency plan will consider the range of services and professionals involved. For children with complex needs, the plan will detail each partner's role, while simpler cases may involve just one service or enhanced universal provision. A statutory plan is required if needs cannot be fully met without targeted intervention (i.e. beyond that which is generally available). The plan streamlines co-ordination across services to meet the child's specific needs.

19.9 The child's multi-agency plan resulting from the assessment process will take account where relevant, of the multiplicity of services and professionals who may be involved. For a child or young person with very complex needs, the plan will need to show considerable detail to indicate the part played by all partners. Conversely, the plan may be very simple and involve just one service, or the enhancement in the delivery of a universal service. The child's multi-agency plan is a tool to support and streamline planning for children, who require support from multiple services, to ensure this is coordinated to meet the specific needs and circumstances of individual children.

19.10 Using the Wellbeing Indicators the child's plan should also provide clarity about the purpose of intervention and anticipated outcome, rather than an overemphasis on the process e.g. who, where, when and for what reason someone is visiting a child, or their family is preferable rather than stating 'the child will be visited once a week'.

19.11 Where the child is subject to compulsory measures of supervision the child's plan should be guided by any conditions made by the Children's Hearing.

**19.12 The Child's Plan Meeting**

The term Child's Plan Meeting is used to describe the face-to-face exchange to which each member of the child's current network of support is invited to discuss, agree, and plan in a way forward which helps the child. The aim is to reduce the number of meetings particularly those taking place in multiple settings across services and create a streamlined opportunity for interested parties to meet and discuss all issues in the child's life which need to be addressed and recorded in a formal plan.

19.13 The Child's Plan Meeting should not be confused with the routine face to face discussions that take place between individual professionals and families.

19.14 The child and their family should attend the Child's Plan Meeting. They should be supported to prepare for and contribute to the Child's Plan.

19.15 The Lead Professional and Named Person or Named Pastoral Support Person will be responsible for organising the meeting and ensuring that children and families can participate fully if that is considered appropriate in all cases. The plan should be reviewed every 6 months.

**19.16 Monitoring and Reviewing the Child's Plan**

The Lead professional oversees the plan's progress and ensures regular reviews, ideally every six months. Reviews determine if the plan is still needed, needs adjustment, or requires changes based on improvement circumstances or increased concerns.

**19.17 Changes in Circumstances**

It is the responsibility of all partners in the children's planning and reviewing process to highlight changes in the child or family's situation as they become aware of it, or their own agency's arrangements that may impact on the child's multi-agency plan. It may be necessary to review the original plan considering new information.

## 20. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PRACTITIONERS

### 20.1 The Named Person

Most children and young people will get all the help and support they need from their families and the provision available within their neighbourhoods, communities and universal services. However, at various times in their childhood and adolescence, children and young people may need some extra help, and this could be provided by universal and targeted services. The individual within the universal services of maternity, public health nursing, and education who will coordinate this help is known as the *Named Person* or *Named Pastoral Support Person*. (The Named Person or Named Pastoral Support Person's interface with the Lead Professional is detailed further on in this section.)

### 20.2 The Named Person at each stage of childhood

A Named Person will be available to all children and children and young people across Scotland from birth to 18 years or beyond if still in school.

20.3 Access to a named person is part of the GIRFEC approach to promote support and safeguard the wellbeing of children and young people. The named person will normally be a health visitor (or Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) for preschool children and promoted teacher e.g. guidance teacher or headmaster for a school age child.

| Age/Stage | Named Person | Service Type | Agency |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-Birth to Day 10 | Named Midwife (Check with health) | Universal Service | NHSGGC |
| From Birth to School Entry | Health Visitor Family Nurse Practitioner (0-2 years) | Universal Service | ER HSCP |
| Primary School Years | School to nominate promoted member of staff: Head Teacher, Depute Head or Principal Teacher | Universal Service | ERC Education |
| High School Years | Principal Teacher Pastoral Support | Universal Service | ERC Education |
| School Leaver Until 18 Years Old | Registered Secondary School / Education Services | Universal Service | ERC Education |
| Home Educated Children and Young People | Registered School / Education Services | Universal Service | ERC Education |
| School Aged Travelling Children | Registered School / Education Services | Universal Service | ERC Education |

**20.4 Other staff/practitioners and the Named Person**

Any practitioner who identifies wellbeing issues for a child or young person should also ask the 6 key questions and share this information with the Named Person to ensure the child's needs can be addressed in a coordinated way.

*20.5 The Role Of The Named Person – Duties And Responsibilities*

- First point of contact for the child/young person, family, or other professionals when concerns are raised;
- If concerns are raised about a child/young person, ask the 6 key questions and take action to coordinate any help needed;
- Maintain accurate and up to date information within the Child/young person's record, the Chronology, and The Child or Young Person's Plan and any related adults and record decisions and actions taken;
- When a child needs extra help prepare a Wellbeing Assessment and SHANARRI Plan and take a lead on implementing and reviewing;
- The plan should identify which of the eight well-being indicators of safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included needs to be addressed;

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- Review other knowledge held within their agency and analyse information needed to identify what is causing the problems, bearing in mind the 3 domains of the *My World Triangle;*
- Initiate and coordinate any help a child/young person needs from within their own agency/service;
- Seek assistance from other agencies when it is appropriate and proportionate to do so;
- Act as a point of contact for other agencies and respond to requests for information sharing;
- Encourage parents to understand and contribute towards their child's wellbeing;
- Develop and maintain positive relationships with the child/young person and their family;
- Ensure that the views of children/young people and families are sought at every stage;
- Ensure that children/young people and families are fully involved in decisions that affect them;
- When sharing information with others ensure the child/young person and family understand why this is happening and record the decision to do so; and,
- Facilitate positive transitions for the child/young person to the new Named Person.

**20.6 The Midwife as Named Person**

From the point a pregnancy is registered with maternity services and up to 10 days after the baby is born the named midwife will work collaboratively with the unborn child's prospective health visitor to ensure timely access to support where needs are identified. The midwife will carry out their normal duties and also work in partnership with the parents to develop their capacity to support the unborn/new-born infant's wellbeing. They will use the wellbeing indicators to record their observations as necessary and access additional support if required.

**20.7 The Health Visitor as Named Person**

From birth until the point the child attends primary school an identified health visitor will provide the role of Named Person to promote support and safeguard the child's wellbeing. The health visitor will introduce themselves to the parents as the child's Named Person and in line with their normal duties and responsibilities will at the point of transfer from midwifery, assess the child's needs using the universal health assessment.

20.8 Because of the assessment, they will allocate one of two categories of the Health Plan Indicator (HPI) "Core" or "Additional" dependent on whether universal support is sufficient or additional input is required to meet the needs of the child and their family. If a child is categorised as "Core" they will be offered support as per the Universal Health Visiting Pathway (Scotland) which is offered to all families by Health Visitors as a minimum standard. However, parents will be able to contact the health visitor as their Named Person at any time for advice and support, and other agencies such as nurseries will also be able to communicate with the health visitor in their Named Person role if they have a concern that the child requires additional support to address identified needs.

20.9 The health visitor as Named Person will inform the child and family of the transfer of the role to education when the child begins to attend school. The health visitor will then liaise with the appropriate primary school to ensure the transition is seamless.

20.10 Where a child's entry to education is delayed or deferred, the health visitor remains as the Named Person.

**20.11 The Named Person in Education**

At the point of entry to primary school, education will take over the Named Person role and assume responsibility as key point of contact for the child's wellbeing. In the primary school setting the Named Person will be a promoted member of staff nominated by the Head Teacher and each school will ensure that children and parents are aware of the staff member who will fulfil this role.

20.12 In high schools the role will be undertaken by a Principal Teacher of Pastoral Support. The Named Person will ensure the child/young person's wellbeing is assessed and monitored regularly in line with the staged intervention process (STINT).

**20.13 The Named Person Post School**

The young persons registered school will provide this role post school, and the expectation is that this will mainly focus on ensuring young people reach positive destinations through training or employment and signposting young people to the most appropriate sources of support and help.

**20.14 Other Circumstances**

Home Educated Children – if the child or young person was enrolled at a school prior to being home educated, the school will continue to provide a Named Person service and will be the point of contact for future parental enquiries, including proposed return to local authority education. If the child/young person was not enrolled, Education can still provide a Named Person service, but this relies on the parent or health notifying Education of the desire to receive this service.

20.15 For traveller/Roma children, Health will provide the Named Person service for pre-five children. For children over five, Education will provide the named person service for those enrolled at school, and for those who are not where the parent or health has notified Education of the desire to receive this service. The Named Person will notify other regional partners to assume responsibility for the Named Person service where it is known that a child or young person has moved out-with East Renfrewshire.

20.16 Independent sector – the independent school should provide the Named Person service.

### *20.17 A Key Role At Transition Points*

The Named Person will contribute towards the planning for children who need extra help at the key transfer points between midwifery, health visiting, primary school, high school and post school. They will ensure effective transfer of information about the child/young person to the new Named Person in the agency assuming responsibility for the child.



### 20.18 Identifying The Most Appropriate Lead Professional
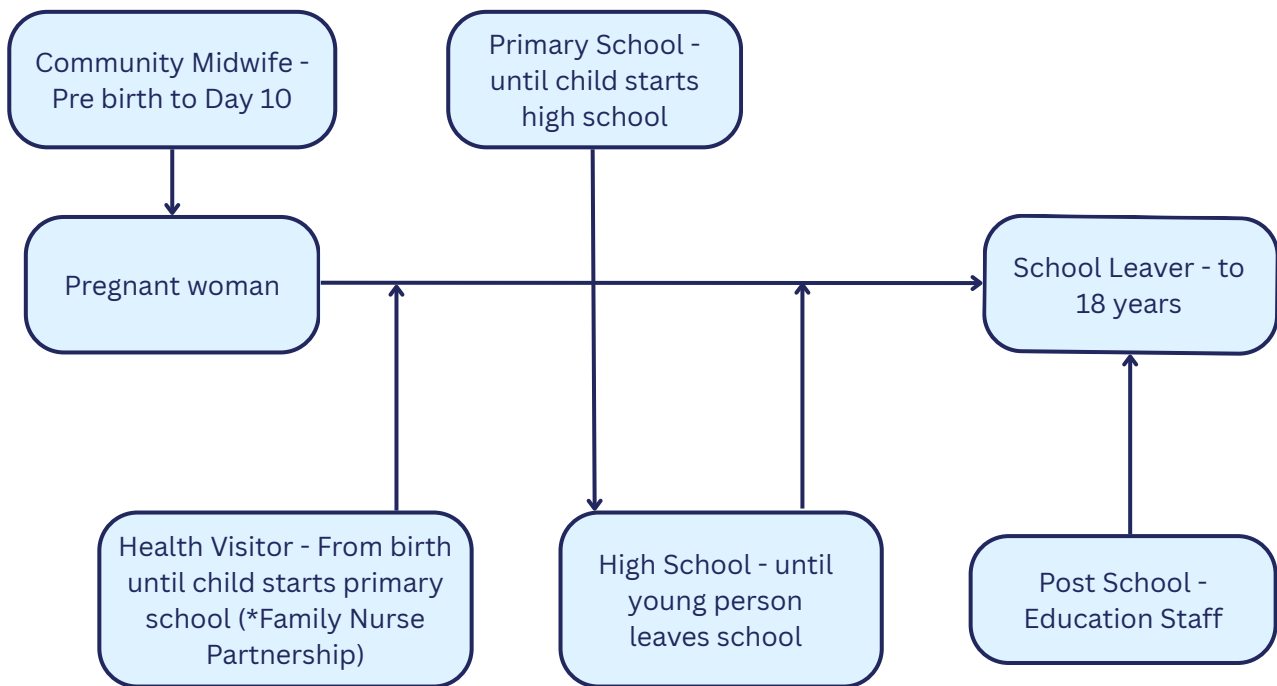
Selection of the lead professional is influenced by:
- The kind of help which the child/young person or family needs;
- Previous contact and relationship with the child or young person;
- Any statutory responsibility to co-ordinate work with the child/young person or family e.g. involvement with children's hearing; requires a coordinated support plan; and,
- In some cases, to make sure the child/young person and family get the best possible help, because the child/young person has identifiable complex needs, or there is a statutory obligation defined in law towards a child/young person, the lead professional will need to come from a particular agency.

Examples where statutory requirements need to be accounted for are:
- Where a child or child / young person requires a Coordinated Support Plan (CSP) under the Additional Support for Learning (Education) (Scotland) Act, rev. 2009, and or;
- A child/young person is currently *looked after* which includes the child/young person being subject to a requirement from a children's hearing or where a child/young person is voluntarily looked after and accommodated.

20.19 There will also be other administrative categories where compliance with procedures will help ensure a child/young person's safety, for example, for a child whose name is on the child protection register.

20.20 When the decision is taken that a multi-agency assessment is necessary for a child or young person, agreement must be reached between practitioners on the lead agency for the assessment and who will undertake the role of the lead professional.

20.21 The circumstances when a lead professional will be required and the agency that will provide this service are summarised in the table below:

**20.22 Appointment of Lead Professional and Agency**

| Needs/Circumstances of Child/Young Person | Lead Professional and Agency |
|---|---|
| Child/young person is formally looked after at home or away from home | Social Worker (HSCP) |
| Child/young person is subject to a report requested by the Children's Reporter | Social Worker (HSCP) |
| Child/young person is working on a voluntary basis with HSCP Children and Families | Social Worker (HSCP) |
| Child/young person is subject to child protection investigation, registration, or general activity | Social Worker (HSCP) |
| Child/young person will be subject to an assessment leading to a coordinated support plan, or already has a coordinated support plan | Education Services |
| Where a child / young person meets the criteria for a coordinated support plan and there are significant concerns around their home circumstances / environment being a risk to their wellbeing. | Social Work (HSCP) (With Education leading on the CSP) |
| Child/young person has complex health needs | Specialist Health Services |

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**20.23 Children's Hearing Or Child Protection Investigation**

There will be circumstances where neglect or a child's safety is the primary issue, or there is a statutory requirement for a lead professional, such as where a child is formally looked after at home or away from home, or there is a need for a multi-agency assessment *after* a child protection investigation has taken place. In such cases a practitioner from a social work team will be required to lead.

20.24 Please note existing agency and interagency child protection procedures must be initiated by practitioners if they identify a child protection concern during a multi-agency assessment process.

**20.25 The Key Responsibilities of the Lead Professional**

- Using the National Practice Model, the Lead Professional will coordinate the multi-agency assessment and lead on the construction of the child/young person's multi-agency plan;
- Notify appropriate agencies of the need for a multi-agency assessment/plan;
- Arrange for other professionals to contribute towards a multi-agency assessment;
- Ensure all agencies co-operate fully in the assessment process and provide accurate, up to date and coherent information;
- Create a multi-agency chronology of significant events, keep this updated and ensure other agencies are aware of their responsibility for this process;
- Gather and analyse the assessment information provided by the other agencies using the *My World Triangle* and the *Resilience Matrix*, draw conclusions and make recommendations;
- Ensure participation of child/young person and family throughout process and ensure their views are heard and considered;
- Be a main point of contact with the child/young person and family for the purpose of discussing the plan and its progress;
- Organise if needed the appropriate multi-agency meeting;
- With partners agree an outcome focused plan to improve the child/young person's situation;
- Ensure a review process is set and 6-month time scales for review is understood;
- Ensure a date is set for the plan to be reviewed, arrange the review meeting and circulate any necessary papers/documents for this to take place effectively;
- Monitor and evaluate how well the plan is working and determine whether interventions are achieving the outcomes set for the child/young person;
- Following the review, seek agreement on any changes required to the plan;
- The lead professional will be the key contact for the child/young person and family for the purpose of discussing the content of the assessment and plan;
- Support the child/young person and family to make the best use of services offered;
- All agencies will link directly with the lead professional to report on changes, updates or new information including the named person; and,
- Provide confident leadership and be familiar with the remits of different agencies.

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### 20.26 The Role Of Contributors

The Practice Model and the My World Triangle is used to ensure that each agency contributes all evidence they have about every aspect of the child / young person's life circumstances. The triangle has 3 dimensions - How I Grow and Develop; My Wider World: What I Need from People who Look After Me; and each dimension has 7 elements to consider, although practitioners will only comment on areas where they have knowledge, information and evidence. The Practice Model tool has been developed to assist practitioners to consider every element of a child/young person's life. Relevant information is based on evidence and fact such as personal observation, awareness and experience rather than subjective opinion gained from others.

## 21. INFORMATION SHARING AND CONSENT

Within East Renfrewshire we work with a number of partners including East Renfrewshire Council's HSCP, Education, Housing, Police Scotland, Fire and Rescue Service, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration and the Voluntary Sector. Whilst all of our partners have different functions and responsibilities, we need to share information between and among ourselves at different times.

21.1 Practitioners should share information proportionately, and informed consent should be obtained and recorded from the child / young person and or parent to share information with relevant others. This includes sharing within the agency (e.g. in education, this could be consent to refer to the Joint Support Team) and with external services and agencies.

21.2 The child/young person's right to privacy is central to any decisions that are made about them. Where the child/young person is able to consent, they should be asked to do so before any information is shared about them. If the child/young person is unable to consent then the parents should be asked to do so on their behalf.

21.3 The sharing of information without consent should take place only where clearly justified in the circumstances of an individual case, and not as a matter of routine. Information should be shared without consent where there are concerns that a child/young person is at risk of future harm, abuse or threat to life. If there is considered to be an imminent danger, child protection procedures should be instigated. Consent should only be sought where an individual has real choice over the matter.

21.4 Who can consent to the sharing of personal information?

a) Children are presumed from the age of twelve to understand what it means to give consent to the processing or sharing of their personal information. Children under the age of 12 may be deemed to have that capacity depending on their level of understanding and level of maturity.

b) Children/young people 12 - 15 years are presumed to have a sufficient level of understanding of the nature of consent and its consequences. Staff should be clear that they believe the child/young person has the capacity to consent, and they should not be treated as unable to make a decision until all practicable steps to help them have been taken. When assessing a child/young person's understanding, staff should explain the issues using the child/young person's preferred mode of communication, and use language in a way that is suitable to the child's age and stage of development. If staff are unsure whether the child/young person has the capacity to consent, then they should consult their manager or another professional adviser. The child/young person's parent or carer, another professional working with them, or an advocate may be able to provide relevant information or advice. If the child/young person does not have the capacity to consent then consent should be sought from the parent or person with legal authority to act on behalf of the child/young person.

c) Parental rights and responsibilities largely cease when the child/young person is age 16. The exception to this is a parent's responsibility to continue to provide guidance to their child/young person from age 16-18. So practitioners should seek to keep parents/guardians involved in issues affecting their children/young people, but only to the extent that this is compatible with the rights and autonomous choices of the child/young person.

d) If we disclose any information about a child/young person, who has the requisite mental capacity, to their parent or guardian without that child/young person's consent, we require to justify this in the same way as any other disclosure of information without consent.

e) For children/young people over the age of 16, we should seek consent from the individual themselves, in line with the rights of other adults.

f) In circumstances where there may be a question about the capacity of a child/young person over the age of 16 to give consent to sharing personal information, we should consider their understanding of the issues. If we believe that the person is not able to do this, we should make reference to other relevant persons and the context around the need to share the information.

21.5 To comply with GDPR, consent for sharing personal information must be fully informed, with individuals understanding who will hold their data, the purpose of sharing, and their right to withdraw consent. The Named Person must ensure that the person giving consent has been fully informed, and that the seven key principles of data sharing are observed:

1. Lawfulness, fairness and transparency;
2. Purpose limitation;
3. Data minimisation;
4. Accuracy;
5. Storage limitation;
6. Integrity and confidentiality (security); and,
7. Accountability.

21.6 Consent should be recorded in written form, however in exceptional circumstances verbal permission to share is acceptable. However, we should follow this up by obtaining written consent or, if this is not possible, we should advise the individual in writing that their verbal consent has been recorded as given. We should record in the individual's case notes:

- What information is being shared;
- With whom the information is being shared; and,
- That consent has been given.

21.7 In some cases, the individual may refuse to give consent. If a child/young person withholds consent against parental agreement, then the wishes of the child/young person should be considered as paramount, in so far as this does not adversely affect the care of the child/young person or place the child/young person in any danger.

21.8 If an individual refuses to give their consent to their information or that of their child/young person being shared, we must explain the consequences of our not sharing information to them or their carer. The professional should explain that the person may have to provide the same information to several professionals and delays in service may occur as a result. For example a service from Social Services cannot be provided, on request from a health practitioner unless information is shared between the two agencies so that social work staff understand the person's needs and how to meet these.

21.9 Equally, we need to record a decision not to share information with other agencies if permission to share is refused. The practitioner needs to discuss this decision with their line manager and have it endorsed. It is important that the basis for not sharing is recorded and noted in the case notes and the service user is informed of the decision.

21.10 NOTE: Irrespective of any refusal of consent, if there are concerns that a child/young person is suffering significant harm or will do so in the future, then immediate action should be taken and child protection procedures should be instigated.

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21.11 If a service user/parent/carer withdraws consent, the practitioner needs to fully explain the consequences of this action, advise their line manager, and record the decision in the case notes. The practitioner should advise the agency receiving the information that consent has been withdrawn and that they should cease processing and sharing the information from that point onwards.

21.12 If the perceived risk to a child/young person has not reached child protection levels, but there are concerns surrounding the child/young person's wellbeing and risk of harm, any practitioner making a considered assessment on sharing information about such a child/young person without their consent should take into account:

- Is the child/young person at risk of harm?
- Would sharing the information protect the child/young person from harm?
- Would the risk of harm to the child/young person be increased by not sharing the information?
- Is the sharing of information necessary and proportionate?

21.13 It is vitally important in such circumstances, that staff record why the decision was made, what information is being shared, with whom and who was involved in the decision. This should include notification to the receiving partner of the decision to share information without consent.

- Where sharing information is necessary in order to prevent serious crime or other seriously improper conduct and/or to support the detection, investigation and/or punishment of serious crime;
- Where sharing information is necessary in order to comply with an instruction or order issued by a court; and,
- Where sharing information is necessary to comply with a statutory requirement e.g. where the information is required by a Children's Reporter as part of their investigation of a child/young person referred to them.

In all such cases, the decision making process should be recorded and retained.

21.14 More information on consent and information sharing can be found through the Information Commissioner's Office, through our local information sharing and consent guidance, and through our Getting it Right for Every Child Information Sharing Guidance.

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Getting To Know GIRFEC modules:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOpeHIaDys4&list=PLDgTzLd2QrJHJ4EpVO8NZdwF7KdnhHAvA&index=1

Resilience Matrix Video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbRIMeAWY_Y

# Getting it Right for Every Child Information Sharing Guidance

## Version Awareness

The audience of this document should be aware that a physical copy may not be the latest available version. The latest version, which supersedes all previous versions, is available only at the Published Locations. Those to whom this policy applies are responsible for familiarising themselves periodically with the latest version and for complying with policy requirements at all times.

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# Document Management

## Revision History

| Version | Date | Summary of Changes |
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| 1.01 | 15th May 2025 | Spelling/formatting |

## Reviewers

This document was reviewed by the following people:

| Name | Designation | Department | Review Date |
|------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| Arlene Cassidy | Children's Services Strategy Manager | Health & Social Care Partnership | 24/01/2025 |
| Siobhan McColgan | Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) | Education Department | 21/01/2025 |
| Jennifer McKean | Snr Manager Intensive Services & Justice | Health & Social Care Partnership | 27/01/2025 |
| Debbie Lucas | Lead officer Child Protection | Health & Social Care Partnership | 27/01/2025 |

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# 1. Introduction to Information Sharing

The Data Protection Act 2018 (incorporating the UKGDPR) contains the rules on how to handle personal data. The legislation provides a governance framework through which personal data can be collected and used proportionately, fairly and lawfully.

In addition to data protection framework, the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) impose duties of confidentiality which also apply to sharing information.

Working within a governance framework means that information sharing can happen between different organisations and internally between departments, to do what they need to do with personal data whilst at the same time ensuring that the person's privacy is respected and everyone understands what will happen to their data.

Organisations are required by law to comply with the legislation which was enacted to ensure the fair and lawful processing of personal data. Although the legislation is complex, its ethos is simple. It aims to protect people's information including that relating to children and young people.

Individuals, including children and young people have a right to privacy, and expect personal and confidential data held regarding them to be processed and handled within legislative boundaries and good practice. If an individual considers that the Council has failed to look after their information they have a right to make a complaint to the Information Commissioner. In such circumstances, it may be necessary for the Council to justify its information sharing decision.

This guidance has been created to provide a framework to assist with information sharing decisions that you may need to make and ensure appropriate checks and balances are followed when sharing information.

# 2. Purpose

This guidance provides overarching practice principles around information sharing and supports specific guidance within East Renfrewshire Council departments and services, and East Renfrewshire HSCP in relation to the wellbeing of all children and young people as set out in the Scottish Governments Getting it Right of Every Child (GIRFEC)[1].

East Renfrewshire Council departments and services, and East Renfrewshire HSCP

The guidance will ensure:

- Understanding of how to positively engage with children and young people (and their families) in making decisions on **who** and **when** to share information with and **why;**
- The limitations and constraints of **confidentiality** and **consent**; and
- Understanding you are **empowered** to share personal and/or sensitive personal information, where it is considered a **child or young person is at risk (or likely to be) if no action is taken**.

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[1] https://www.gov.scot/publications/getting-right-child-girfec-practice-guidance-4-information-sharing/pages/2/

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# 3. Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR

Organisations are required to comply with the data protection legislation and by doing so will ensure fair, lawful and transparent processing of personal data.

Employees must ensure that they comply and how to do this is set out in the Data Protection Policy.  As children are less aware of the risks involved when an organisation collects and processes their data there is a requirement:

- When processing their data to comply with the data protection principles and in particular fairness should be central to all processing of children's personal data.

- To ensure there is a lawful basis for processing a child's personal data. Consent is one possible lawful basis for processing,  but is not the only option and sometimes using an alternative basis is more appropriate and provides better protection for the child. Further guidance is provided in Appendix 1 – Processing Conditions.

- To understand that children have the same rights as adults over their personal data including the right of access to their data, request rectification, object to processing and to have their data erased.  Further information is provided Appendix 2 – Information Rights.

## 3.1 Data Protection Principles

The UK GDPR sets out principles for the lawful processing of personal data which organisations who process personal data must follow. Processing includes the collection, organisation, structuring, storage, alteration, consultation, use, communication, combination, restriction, erasure or destruction of personal data. Detailed information about the principles can be found in Section 3 of the Council's Data Protection Policy.  These principles are:

- Lawfulness, fairness and transparency
- Purpose limitation
- Data minimisation
- Accuracy
- Storage limitation
- Integrity and confidentiality (security)

Data Protection legislation refers to personal and Special Category information.  Appendix 3 provides a definition of what type of personal details fall into these classifications.  Personal data is data or information which relates to a living individual who can be identified from the information itself or by linking it with other information.

In situations where information sharing is necessary to deliver a service, children, young people and families should be informed before they agree to engage with the service, what information needs to be shared, with whom, and for what purpose.

In many cases, it will be clear whether processing is necessary or not. A public body such the Council who deliver social care and education functions **"Public Task"** is likely to be the most relevant lawful basis (Processing Condition).  This means that it is *"necessary to process personal*

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*data for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority".*

Where processing involves special category data then a further processing condition is necessary and this is likely to be that:

- *Processing is necessary for the purposes of carrying out the obligation and exercising specific rights of the controller or of the data subject in the field of employment and social security and social protection law.*

Where it is not necessary to process personal data then the only processing condition that is likely to apply would be that of **"Consent"**.  For example referring children and parents to optional services then it is likely that it is necessary to seek consent before doing so.

Where you have shared information it is important that there is a record of why, what was shared and with whom. See appendix 4 – Information Sharing Checklist

## 4. Confidentiality

You may wish to share personal information which was originally presented to you in confidence. A duty of confidence will generally arise in circumstances where a person receives information that they know or ought to know is being given in confidence.

Information that is considered confidential is usually of some sensitivity; is neither lawfully in the public domain nor readily available from another public source; and is shared in a relationship, where the person giving the information understood that it would not be shared with others.

In such cases you are restricted from using it for a purpose other than for which it was provided, or disclosing it without the individual's consent, unless there is an overriding reason in the public interest for this to happen or another law or power permits disclosure.

Where there is a risk to a child to a child or young person's wellbeing, which may lead to harm, then it is acceptable to share confidential information if it is in the best interest of the child of young person and/or in the public interest.

If you are worried or concerned about a child or young person's wellbeing, it may be necessary to share information.  You need to be aware of the limitations and constraints of confidentiality and consent.

Confidentiality is not an absolute right and circumstances making the sharing of information lawful are:

- Where the individual to whom the information relates has explicitly consented;
- Where disclosure is in the public interest/function, for example, to protect a child or young person and/or others from harm or for the prevention of crime disorder; and
- A legal duty to do so, for example statutory obligation or a court order.

## 5. Information Sharing to Support and Protect Children.

In line with **Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)** the safety, welfare and wellbeing of a child, is of central importance when making a decision to lawfully share information with or about them.  Great care must be taken with children's information at all times.  However, data protection

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should **never be an obstacle** to sharing information, when necessary for the purposes of Child Protection.

There are many situations when information can, and legally must be shared. When you have any concern about a child or young person's wellbeing and believe that they require some support consider the following five key questions, in accordance with GIRFEC National Practice Model:

1. **What is getting in the way of this child or young person's wellbeing?**
2. **Do I have all the information I need to help this child or young person?**
3. **What can I do now to help this child or young person?**
4. **What can we do to help this child or young person?**
5. **What additional help, if any, may be needed from others?**

A concern can relate to a single issue or incident or from a series of events. If you cannot answer all five questions you should consider the need to share information to help build a more robust assessment and/or plan of intervention.

## 5.1 Information Sharing Considerations

Data protection is **not a barrier** to prevent sharing. It provides a framework to ensure personal information about living individuals and in this case children and young people is shared **appropriately, proportionally** and on **a need to know basis**.

**Why share information?**

The safety, welfare and well-being of a child are of central importance when making decisions to lawfully share information with or about them. The reason why information needs to shared and any actions should be communicated openly and honestly with children, and where appropriate their parent/s or guardian.

Information may be shared for the following reasons:

- Provision of information to help develop the wellbeing assessment
- Accessing a resource or changing the way a resource is provided
- Requesting a specific assessment
- Provision of a service where it is considered a targeted intervention meets an identified wellbeing need as part of the Child's Plan.

**What information should be shared?**

Information should be shared which helps to answer the five key GIRFEC questions and which clearly identifies the child or young person you have concerns about. As part of your professional judgement and taking a common sense approach you should also consider:

- Does it relates to your current concern;
- Current living and family circumstances;
- You consider to be relevant even if it is historical;
- Only share on a need-to know basis.

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Only share information which you consider **relevant, necessary, legitimate, appropriate** and **proportionate** to your worry or concern about the child or young person.

You may find it helpful to write down the information you have, the options available to you, in order to consider the likely risks of each option. It is essential that you then document and date in the child's records, why you have reached your decision.

### What are my next steps?

If you are worried or have a concern about a child or young person's wellbeing you should discuss this with the child, young person and/or parent. You may also wish to explain why you need to share information and actively seek and record informed consent.

The exception to this is where there are concerns seeking consent would increase the risk to the child, others or prejudice any subsequent investigation.

### What is meant by consent?

Consent must be:

### Freely given.

If the individual has no real choice over the information sharing consent will be invalid. Individuals must be able to refuse consent without detriment and must be able to withdraw consent easily at any time.

### Specific and informed.

The individual (child or young person and if appropriate parent or guardian) must understand what is being asked of them. Information should be provided of the possible consequences of withholding information.

### Explicit and Unambiguous

The individual (child or young person and if appropriate parent or guardian) positively gives their consent for their information to be shared by a clear statement or affirmative action. The granting of consent should be recorded, when, and why it was given. Details of consent not granted should also be recorded.

### When should I seek consent?

If you have decided that there is a need to seek consent and/or that the situation is not one where information can be shared for any other purposes or the criteria stipulated in Article 9 of the UK GDPR - Appendix 4 – Processing conditions or legal basis, the need for explicit consent should then be considered before any information is shared.

Consent should only be used when the individual has a genuine choice over how their data is used. There is a difference between telling someone what you intend to do with their information and getting their consent to do it.

You should review whether a consent you have been given remains adequate as the Council's relationship with an individual develops or as individuals circumstances change.

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**Who can give consent to information sharing?**

Where a child or young person is under the age of 12, consent for information sharing should be sought from the parent or guardian. However the child or young person has a right to be kept informed and to participate in the process. There may be circumstances where you consider the child or young person under 12 to have capacity to provide informed consent and where there is a difficulty in the child's relationship with parents/guardian then a request by the child or young person that consent should not be sought from their parents should be respected.

Children over the age of 12 are presumed to have the legal capacity to give informed consent and to take decisions in their own right. It is likely they have a sufficient level of understanding of the nature of consent and its consequences. If there is any doubt you should seek further advice.

Parental rights and responsibilities largely cease when a child 16, however, a parent/carer's responsibility to continue to provide guidance to their child from age 16 to 18 is the exception. In these circumstances, you should seek to keep parents involved in issues affecting their child, but only to the extent that this is compatible with the rights and autonomous choices of the young person.

**How should I ask for and obtain consent?**

Where you decide it is appropriate to seek consent to share information, you should make sure consent is given on a specific and informed basis by explaining and gaining agreement on:

- The purpose for which the information is to be shared;
- What information is to be shared; and
- With whom it is to be shared.

**What should I do if consent is refused?**

If consent to share has been refused and there is no child protection or other legal issues, then you must respect the wishes of the child, young person or parent. A record that consent to share has been refused and if possible, the reason why, should be made within the appropriate chronologies of the child's record.

Children have a right to express their own views and have them taken into account when decisions are made about how their personal data should be used. It should be noted that the age of legal capacity in Scotland is 12 and this should be considered in the decision making process.

**Capacity**

When consent has been refused, unless there are other factors about the child or young person's ability to understand the implications of refusal, or risk exists, the child or young person's right to refuse must be accepted and recorded. Wellbeing should be monitored and risk assessed routinely.

Where there is doubt about the child or young person's capacity and understanding, or risks exists, you should weigh up the balance between the child or young person's **right to privacy** and their **need for protection.**

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Where there are concerns about capacity in relation to giving consent to share information consider the following:

- Do they understand the nature of consent and its consequences?
- Is it necessary to share information?
- Will failure to share mean that assistance and support will not be provided?
- Will the child or young person be at risk?

Where it is deemed they do not have capacity it should be recorded on the child's files;

- Why the decision was made;
- Who was involved;
- The purpose of the sharing the information; and
- What information was shared, with whom and the date.

**Should the child, young person or parent be informed that their information has been shared without consent?**

You need not inform individuals of information sharing if to do so would create further risk to them or others. However, where the circumstances are such that the risk is no longer present subsequent to information sharing, then consideration should be given effectively informing the child, young person or parent and recording the decision.

**How information should be shared (handling controls)?**
You have now made the decision to share and must ensure that the information you intend to share is:

- Accurate and up to date.
- Proportionate to the circumstances of the child.
- Limited to those who have a need to know.
- Shared safely and securely

In addition, you should:

- Inform the person that the information has been shared, if they were not aware of this and it would not create or increase risk of harm.
- Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it, even if it is not to share information. If you decide to share, then record, including the date, what you have shared, with whom, and for what purpose, in the individual's record.

You have both a legal and moral responsibility to ensure that information is managed appropriately, and that your colleagues will be able to create, locate, understand and retrieve information as and when required. Good information and records management:

- Having an organised approach to record keeping
- Sharing information appropriately
- Being able to locate and retrieve records when required
- Providing evidence of activities, decisions and actions

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- Ensuring you only keep the information for as long as is required i.e. apply appropriate retention rules and always check your local operating procedures.

Sharing information can take many forms. For example, verbally over the telephone, or face to face meetings, written reports or assessments or by secure email systems.  Ensure you share information quickly, efficiently, effectively and securely.

**Sharing information at transition points**

Consideration should be given to information sharing at points of transition.  You should discuss and agree with children, young people and parents or guardian what information should be shared.  Points of transition could include a change of school, moving to a new area or a change in social worker supporting the child/young person.  Information sharing should always be guided by the best interests of the child or young person.

**When you are receiving information from others**

Where you are receiving information from another agency in a case where the individual has not consented to that sharing, it is reasonable, if you are in any doubt , to ask the agency which legal basis or processing condition satisfy the sharing.  It is really important that you ascertain which processing condition is being used to justify the sharing.  Understanding this will help inform what your next steps may be in using that information.

## 6. Data Rights

Children and young people have the same rights as adults over their personal information and where they are deemed to be to competent to do so, are able to exercise their own data protection rights.

The most common right that an individual has is a right to access  and receive a copy of their personal data and this is usually referred to as a subject access request (SAR).

Data protection legislation provides that in Scotland, children aged 12 or over are presumed to be mature enough to provide their own consent or exercise the rights conferred by data protection legislation, unless there is any reason to think that they are not.  Further guidance about data rights can be found on the intranet at this link - https://intranet.erc.insider/information-rights.

## 7. Summary - Seven Information Sharing Golden Rules

1. Data Protection is not a barrier to justified information sharing.  It is a framework to work within to ensure personal information about living individuals (and children) is shared appropriately.

2. Be open and honest with the individual/child (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will or could be shared and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.

3. Without disclosing the identity of the child, young person or their family, seek advice from your line manager, if you are in any doubt about the sharing of information.

4. Share with informed consent, where processing is not necessary, and respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information.  You do not need consent to share information, if in your judgement, there is a lawful justification (processing condition) to do so. Judgments must be made on a case by case basis, based upon the facts of the case.  When sharing or requesting personal information from a child, young person or parent be certain of your lawful basis.  Where you have consent be mindful that an individual may not expect information to be further shared. If there is a requirement to do so, essential that you re-visit and obtain consent.

5. Consider safeguarding and wellbeing.  Base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and wellbeing of the child and others who may be affected by their actions.

6. All information sharing should be necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, timely and secure. Ensure that information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it and that it is:

   - Shared only with those individuals who need to have it.
   - Accurate and up to date.
   - Shared in a timely manner.
   - Shared securely.

7. Keep a record of your decision and the reason for it, whether it is to share information or not. Record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose and the date it was shared.

## 8. Further Information

Further information in relation to GIRFEC and Information Sharing can be located at the following links:

Information Commissioners Office

[Children and the UK GDPR](#)

[Data Sharing Code of Practice](#)

Scottish Government

https://www.gov.scot/publications/getting-right-child-girfec-practice-guidance-4-information-sharing/pages/2/

If you require guidance or wish to discuss and instance of information sharing, in the first instance, contact your line manager.

Guidance on data protection and information sharing can be obtained from the Data Protection Officer by emailing DPO@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

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## Appendix 1 – Conditions for Processing (or Legal Basis)

The data protection principles set a general standard for processing data. Principle 1 imposes a general requirement to process fairly, lawfully and transparently, but also imposes specific conditions. It makes an explicit requirement that processing is not allowed unless you have established a valid lawful basis to process the personal data. When processing special Category Data an Article 9 condition is required.

| Lawful basis for processing personal data – Article 6 | |
| --- | --- |
| **(a) Consent** | the individual has given clear consent for you to process their personal data for a specific purpose |
| **(b) Contract** | the processing is necessary for a contract you have with the individual, or because they have asked you to take specific steps before entering into a contract. |
| **(c) Legal Obligation** | the processing is necessary for you to comply with the law (not including contractual obligations) |
| **(d) Vital Interests** | the processing is necessary to protect someone's life. |
| **(e) Public Task** | the processing is necessary for you to perform a task in the public interest or for your official functions, and the task or function has a clear basis in law. |
| **(f) Legitimate interests** | the processing is necessary for your legitimate interests or the legitimate interests of a third party, unless there is a good reason to protect the individual's personal data which overrides those legitimate interests. (This cannot apply if you are a public authority processing data to perform your official tasks.) |

| To lawfully process special category data, you must identify both a lawful basis under Article 6 and a separate condition for processing special category data under Article 9. These do not have to be linked. Lawful basis for processing special category data – Article 9 | |
| --- | --- |
| **(a) Consent** | The Individual has given explicit consent to the processing for one or more specified purposes. |
| **(b) Employment, Social Security or Social Protection** | Processing is necessary for the purposes of carrying out the obligation and exercising specific rights of the controller or of the data subject in the field of employment and social security and social protection law. |
| **(c) Vital Interests** | Processing is necessary to protect the vital interests of a data subject or another individual where the data subject is physically or legally incapable of giving consent. |
| **(d) Non-Profit Body Disclosure** | Processing carried out by a not-for-profit body with a political, philosophical, religious or trade union aim provided the processing relates only to members or former members (or those who have regular contact with it in connection with those purposes) and provided there is no disclosure to a third party without consent – It is logical for these organisations to be provided with special rights for processing because their members beliefs fall within the definition of special categories of data. |

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| To lawfully process special category data, you must identify both a lawful basis under Article 6 and a separate condition for processing special category data under Article 9. These do not have to be linked. Lawful basis for processing special category data – Article 9 | |
|---|---|
| (e) Personal data made public | Processing relates to personal data manifestly made public by the data subject – This would apply, for example where a politician has made public his political beliefs. However, the condition does not apply when the information is made public by someone other than the data subject and without the data subject's consent, such as publication by a newspaper. |
| (f) Legal Claims | Processing is necessary for the establishment, exercise or defence of legal claims or where courts are acting in their judicial capacity – This allows for special categories of data to be processed for the purpose of exercising, establishing or defending legal rights and the application of this condition extends not only to the data subject but also in relation to other persons, so for example, the processing of special categories of data to allow HR to defend a claim under the Equalities Act. |
| (g) Substantial Public Interest | Processing is necessary for reasons of substantial public interest on the basis of Union or Member State Law which is proportionate to the aim pursued and which contains appropriate safeguards – For example where the processing is necessary in areas of public health, which includes all elements related to health, such as, morbidity and disability, health care needs, resources allocated to health care as well as health care expenditure and financing. Such processing of data concerning health for reasons of public interest should not result in personal data being processed for other purposes by third parties such as employers or insurance and banking companies. |
| (h) Health & Social Care | Processing is necessary for the purposes of preventative or occupational medicine, for assessing the working capacity of the employee, medical diagnosis, the provision of health and or social care or treatment or management of health or social care systems and services on basis of Union or Member State Law or a contract with a health professional.   GDPR (obligation of secrecy) |
| (i) Public Interest in public Health | Processing is necessary for reasons of public interest in the area of public health, such as protecting against serious cross border threats to health or ensuring high standards of healthcare and of medicinal products or medical devices and is carried out by or under the supervision of a health professional, or by another person who in the circumstances owes a duty of confidentiality under an enactment or rule of law. |
| (j) Archiving, Scientific or Historical Research | Processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, or scientific and historical research purposes or statistical purposes, but shall be subject to appropriate safeguards for the rights and freedoms of the data subject. Those safeguards shall ensure the technical and organisational measures are in place in order to ensure respect for the principle of data minimisation. Those measures may include pseudonymisation. Where those purposes can be fulfilled by further processing which does not permit or no longer permits the identification of data subjects, those purposes shall be fulfilled in that manner. |

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## Appendix 2 - Information Rights

The UK GDPR gives individuals (data subjects) specific rights over their personal data. These rights are set out within the Data Protection Policy. Individuals have specific data rights which they can exercise under particular conditions they can exercise. These rights are never absolute and are subject to conditions and exceptions i.e. it will depend on our reason for the processing of the personal data.

**Data Subjects Rights are:**

| Right: | Explanation |
|---|---|
| **Access** | An individual can request whether or not we are using or storing their personal information also ask for copies of their personal information, verbally or in writing. This is commonly known as Subject Access Request (SAR) - http://intranet.erc.insider/information-rights |
| **Rectification** | Where an individual challenges the accuracy of personal data held about them they can ask for it to be corrected or deleted. This right always applies and in exercising this right the individual should:<br>• State clearly what they believe to be inaccurate or incomplete<br>• Explain how we should correct it (this may be obvious i.e. amend address, DOB but where it relates to an opinion this may be factual but the individual does not agree). |
| **Erasure** | This is sometimes referred to as the "right to be forgotten". An individual can ask for their data to be deleted and depending on the reason and basis for processing we may be required to delete their data. For example the processing basis is consent and this is withdrawn, the data has been collected or used unlawfully or it has been retained for longer than is necessary. |
| **Restrict processing** | An individual can limit the way an organisation uses their personal data if they are concerned about the accuracy of the data or how it is being used. Where necessary, they can also stop an organisation deleting their data. |
| **Object to processing** | An individuals has the right to object to the processing (using) of their personal data at any time. This effectively means that they can stop or prevent the organisation from using their data. However it only applies in certain circumstances, and we may not need to stop where strong and legitimate reasons to continue using the personal data can be made. For example an individual can object where their data is being used for:<br>• A task carried out in the public interest;<br>• The exercise of official authority;<br>• Our legitimate interests;<br>• Scientific or historical research, or for statistical purposes; or<br>• Direct marketing purposes. |
| **Data portability** | Only applies to information you have given us. You have the right to ask that we transfer the information you gave us from one organisation to another, or give it to you. The right only applies if we are processing information based on consent or under, or in talks about entering into a contract and the processing is automated. |

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## Appendix 3 – Definition of Personal and Special Category Data

The heart of data protection is about people. The law says there are certain types of personal data that have a higher sensitivity, and where an organisation holds this data, there is a higher risk to a person's rights as a result. Therefore, this data must have a higher level of security. Much more care has to be taken when processing this type of data.

| Personal | Special Category (previously sensitive) |
|---|---|
| **Personal** (names, addresses, contact details including business numbers and email addresses, age, gender, birth details, physical descriptions, NI number, personal owned property i.e. vehicle registration, passport number, fitness data) | Racial or ethnic origin<br><br>Political opinions |
| **Family** (marriage, partnership or marital history, details of family & other household members, habits, housing, travel details, leisure activities, membership of charitable or voluntary organisations) | Religious or other beliefs of similar nature<br><br>Trade union membership |
| **Employment** (employment & career history, recruitment & termination details, attendance record, health and safety records, performance appraisals, training records, security records, payroll or User ID) | Physical or mental health<br><br>Genetic Information |
| **Financial** (income, salary, assets and investments, payments, credit worthiness, loans, benefits, grants, insurance details, pension info) | Biometric Information<br><br>Sexual life or sexual orientation |
| **Goods or services** (goods or services supplied to a person, licences issued, agreements and contracts | Criminal convictions or proceedings |
| **Expressions & Opinions** - any expression of opinion about an individual and any indication of the intentions of the data controller or any other person in respect of the individual | Criminal outcome & sentences<br><br>Offences (including alleged offences) |
| **Digital Footprint** – digital identities such as avatars, usernames/handles, gamer IDs, email address from club memberships etc, login name, screen name, nickname, IP Addresses (when linked to user), Geo-tracking data, location based services), web surfing behaviour, MAC address or other host specific persistent identifier. | |

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## Appendix 4 – Information Sharing Checklist



**Information Sharing Checklist**

Is there a need-to-know? Established rational/reason for information sharing? — NO → Information may **not** be shared

YES ↓

Is a living person being identified? — NO → No need to consider data protection implications. Consider other factors such as confidentiality or business/commercial sensitivity

YES ↓

Is purpose of sharing to protect a human right or necessary to protect an individual from risk of harm? — YES → Information may be shared

NO ↓

**Personal Data** Can you meet a processing condition under from Article 6 of DPA? — NO → Does an exemption apply? — NO → Information may **not** be shared

YES ↓

**Special Category1 Data** sometimes known as sensitive personal data?

Does an exemption apply? — Yes → Information may be shared

YES ↓

**Special Category1 Data** Can you meet a processing condition under from Article 9 (2) a-j of DPA? — NO → Does an exemption apply? — NO → Information may **not** be shared

YES ↓                                          YES ↓

Information may be shared                      Information may be shared

**Checklist**
- Establish decision - share or not to share
- Record your purpose for sharing
- Obtain and record consent where this is applicable
- Record method of sharing e.g. verbal or email
- Record party you have shared with
- Ensure it is appropriate and proportionate
- Distinguish fact from opinion
- If in doubt check with you line manager

AGENDA ITEM No. 9

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

12 JUNE 2025

Report by Director of Education

THE CLOSURE OF GLEN FAMILY CENTRE AND FUTURE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AGED 0 – 3 YEARS RESIDING IN THE EAST OF THE AUTHORITY FOR SCHOOL SESSION 2026/27 AND BEYOND

**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.      To seek approval to undertake a statutory education consultation on the proposal to rationalise the education estate by closing Glen Family Centre and introducing 0 to 3 year old services, (currently provided at Glen Family Centre), to Glenwood Family Centre before the commencement of the 2026-27 academic year.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.      Education Committee is asked to approve that the Director of Education proceeds with a consultation on the proposal to:

   a.  rationalise the education estate by closing Glen Family Centre and introducing 0 to 3 year old services (currently provided at Glen Family Centre) to Glenwood Family Centre before the commencement of the 2026-27 academic year; and,

   b.  instruct the Director of Education to report on the consultation at the re-arranged Education Committee of 13 November 2025, on 18 December 2025.

**BACKGROUND**

3.      The Council is required to consult formally on a proposal to close an early learning and childcare establishment.  How this is carried out and who must be consulted is clearly set out in the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010 which came into force in April 2010 and amended in 2014.

4.      In Scotland, local authorities have a statutory duty, mandated by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, to secure a specified amount of funded early learning and childcare for eligible children, currently set at 1140 hours per year.

5.      Eligible children are defined as all 3 and 4-year-olds and some 2-year-olds, if their household receives certain benefits, or if the child has been looked after by a local authority, is the subject of a kinship care order or has a parent-appointed guardian.

6.      Almost all early learning and childcare settings across East Renfrewshire accommodate children from 3 years of age until the date at which they start primary school,

with a small number of settings offering spaces for 2-year-olds. Additionally there are two family centres which provide provision solely for children aged 0 – 3 years of age; Glen Family Centre and McCready Family Centre in the east and west of the Council area respectively.

7.      The ambition of East Renfrewshire Council is to ensure that all of our children are educated in an estate which is fit for purpose and ensures that they are provided with the optimum conditions in which to thrive.

8.      Ensuring sufficiency of early learning and childcare places in facilities which are optimum for learning, teaching and play, whilst rationalising the estate of older inefficient buildings, will support the wider council by ensuring a best value approach, through the most effective and efficient use of Council resources, and supports its wider objectives such as being net carbon neutral by 2045.

**REPORT**

9.      The Giffnock / Thornliebank early learning and childcare neighbourhood is served by four settings catering for children aged 3-5 years of age at Braidbar Primary School Nursery Class, Giffnock Primary School Nursery Class, Thornliebank Primary School Nursery Class and Glenwood Family Centre; with Glen Family Centre offering provision for children aged 0-3 years of age, and being the only centre in the east of the Council to offer 0 to 2 places.

10.     At present Glen Family Centre is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide care to a maximum of 50 children aged between 6 weeks and 3 years old at any one time, whilst Glenwood Family Centre is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide care to a maximum of 180 children, aged between 3 and 5 years old at any one time.

11.     As detailed in paragraphs 27 to 30 of appendix 1 (the consultation proposal), the Education Department is confident that Glenwood Family Centre would be able to accommodate 0-2 year old children who would attend Glen Family Centre in future years.

12.     Analysis by the Education Department demonstrates that as Glen Family Centre is the only establishment in the east of the authority to offer 2 to 3 year old places, around three quarters of children who attend on this basis do not reside within the Giffnock and Thornliebank community, as detailed in table 1 in paragraph 32 of appendix 1. As noted in paragraph 36, the Education Department is aware that there are a number of families who may be eligible for 2 to 3 year old provision who are not accessing this. This suggests that families may be encountering logistical challenges and further costs associated with travel, dissuading them from accessing the service, which is at odds with the accessibility objective of early learning and childcare in Scotland.

13.     The Education Department continually reviews early years provision for those entitled children and families, including 2-year-old places, and adjusts accordingly.   Considering the data presented in table 1, the department has plans to align and distribute more widely the provision of 2-3 year old places with the community model, allowing for: more effective and efficient use of the estate and increased accessibility of places in each locale.

14.     The Education Department's analysis concludes that based on the proposed maximum places (at any one time) at each age range, and the ability to increase the number of distinct places through the various models which can be employed, that Glenwood Family Centre

would comfortably continue to have sufficient capacity to accommodate the demand for 3-5 year old provision in the area.

15.     Providing 0 to 5 year old places at Glenwood Family Centre will improve experiences for children by reducing the number of transitions for children and aligns strongly with parental choice as detailed in paragraph 37 and table 2 appendix 1.

16.     Glen Family Centre is the second oldest stand-alone early learning and childcare building having been built in 1980, whilst Glenwood Family Centre was built in 2021.  As may be expected for a building of its age, Glen Family Centre is less energy efficient and more costly to operate with regards to utilities, maintenance and compliance costs.  In addition there is a need for major maintenance at Glen Family Centre to be undertaken to ensure the long term ongoing appropriate conditions for service users, which is detailed in paragraphs 39 to 45 in appendix 1.

17.     It is proposed that Glen Family Centre would close prior to the commencement of the 2026-27 academic term, and that 0-5 year old provision would be provided at Glenwood Family Centre from the commencement of the 2026-27 academic year.

18.     Children and their families will be able to record their preference for the location of early learning and childcare which best suits their needs in advance of the closure of Glen Family Centre.  Given transition trends it is likely that many will opt for Glenwood.

19.     Parents who have already applied, or apply during the consultation period, for a nursery place in Glen or Glenwood family centres, would be informed of the consultation and that the process of allocating places may be delayed as a consequence

20.     The educational benefits and implications of the proposal are set out in paragraphs 50 to 67 of the attached appendix 1.


**FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS**


21.     It is estimated that there would be potential savings to the early learning and childcare revenue budget of circa £197k per annum for property, utilities, other running costs and staffing.

22.     Any potential savings in relation to staffing costs will be dependent on the ability to redeploy staff to other appropriate vacant posts at the time of the closure of Glen Family Centre which is dependent on natural attrition and any required re-evaluation of posts.

23.     In all matters staffing, the Council's HR policies and procedures will be followed at all times and guidance and support sought from HR colleagues with affected staff supported appropriately.

24.     It is anticipated that the projected costs of the adaptations to Glenwood Family Centre to enable accommodation of children aged 2 and under could be met from the year 1 savings from the closure of Glen Family Centre.

25.     Should the proposal be approved, the current Glen Family Centre establishment and grounds will require to be managed.  Details of the options for the site are provided in paragraphs 49 and 77 of appendix 1.

26.     This proposal supports a local authority's duty in accordance with the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, "…to secure best value by continuous improvement in performance of the authority's functions, while maintaining an appropriate balance between quality and cost and having regard to economy, efficiency, effectiveness, equal opportunities and the achievement of sustainable development."

27.     Further information is included in the section on Financial Considerations in paragraphs 73 to 81 in the attached consultative proposal document.


**CONSULTATION**


28.     The purpose of this paper is to seek elected member approval to undertake a consultation exercise as is required by the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010.

29.     Note on Corrections: If any inaccuracy or omission was discovered in the Proposal Document either by the Education Department, or any person, the department would determine if relevant information has been omitted or, if there had been an inaccuracy. The Education Department would then take appropriate action which may include the issue of a correction or the reissuing of the proposal paper or the revision of the timescale for the consultation period as appropriate. In that event, relevant consultees and Education Scotland would be advised.

30.     The operational detail and timescales of the consultation are also set out in the consultative document in paragraphs 84 to 105.

31.     The consultation period will last from Wednesday 13 August 2025 until midnight on Friday 25 September 2025.

32.     The legislative timescales required for the various elements of statutory consultation as defined by the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, means that it is difficult to align the process of consultation with planned local governance processes and timelines such as Education Committee. As a consequence of the required timescales, the report on the results of the proposal will not be available for consideration by the next Education Committee (13 November 2025), following the end of the Consultation on 25 September 2025. This means that a decision on the proposal and associated findings of the consultation by Education Committee cannot be progressed for some time, and likely no earlier than January 2026.

33.     In order to avoid a lengthy delay between the end of the consultation and a decision by Education Committee, it is proposed that the planned Education Committee on 13 November 2025 be re-scheduled for 18 December 2025, as defined in the Recommendations.

34.     Further implications of the proposals are set out in the consultative document and await the outcome of the consultation. The Director of Education will report the results of this consultation exercise, including the report submitted by Education Scotland, to the Education Committee on 18 December 2025.

35.     If, following the consultation exercise, the decision is made to agree the proposal, then it is proposed to:

     a.     rationalise the education estate by closing Glen Family Centre and introducing 0 to 3 year old services, currently provided at Glen Family Centre, to Glenwood Family Centre before the commencement of the 2026-27 academic year

36.     This proposal is subject to ministerial call in and further details of this process are contained in paragraphs 86 to 93 of appendix 1.

37.     East Renfrewshire Council's legal section has been involved and is aware of the proposal and consequential outcomes for the Council.

## CONCLUSIONS

38.     Closing Glen Family Centre will allow for rationalisation of the early years estate whilst still ensuring high quality learning experiences for children, staff and families, and ensuring sufficiency of ELC places, by extending the provision at Glenwood Family Centre to 0-5 years from its current provision or 0 to 3 year olds.

39.     Closing the Glen Family Centre will result in a more effective and efficient use of the estate and best value approach, reducing on ongoing revenue and maintenance costs as well as one off major capital costs to address required remedial actions and contribute to the Council's wider carbon neutral aspirations.

40.     The proposal aligns with the Council's Capital Asset Management Plan and Property Asset Management Plan as well as the Scottish Government's and Council's objective of being net carbon neutral by 2045.

41.     It is proposed that 0 to 5 year old provision will be available from Glenwood Family Centre and that Glen Family Centre will close, from the start of the 2026-27 academic year.

42.     Current legislation requires the Council to undertake a statutory consultation on the proposed changes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

43.     Education Committee is asked to:

approve that the Director of Education proceeds with a consultation on the proposal to:

a.   rationalise the education estate by closing Glen Family Centre and introducing 0 to 3 year old services (currently provided at Glen Family Centre) to Glenwood Family Centre before the commencement of the 2026-27 academic year; and,

b.   instruct the Director of Education to report on the consultation at the re-arranged Education Committee of 13 November 2025, on 18 December 2025.

Mark Ratter
Director of Education
June 2025

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<u>Appendices</u>
Appendix 1: Consultation Paper: The closure of Glen Family Centre and future early learning and childcare provision for children aged 0 – 3 years residing in the east of the authority for school session 2026/27 and beyond.

**EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL: EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

**THIS IS A FORMAL CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT**

**THE CLOSURE OF GLEN FAMILY CENTRE AND FUTURE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AGED 0 – 3 YEARS RESIDING IN THE EAST OF THE AUTHORITY FOR SCHOOL SESSION 2026/27 AND BEYOND**

**JUNE 2025**

This document has been issued by the Education Committee of East Renfrewshire Council for consultation in terms of the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010.

**EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL: EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**


**THE CLOSURE OF GLEN FAMILY CENTRE AND FUTURE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AGED 0 – 3 YEARS RESIDING IN THE EAST OF THE AUTHORITY FOR SCHOOL SESSION 2026/27 AND BEYOND**


PURPOSE OF THE CONSULTATION

1.    This consultation is on the following proposal to:

      a.    rationalise the education estate by closing Glen Family Centre and introducing 0 to 3 year old services (currently provided at Glen Family Centre) to Glenwood Family Centre before the commencement of the 2026-27 academic year.


BACKGROUND

*Vision and Ambition*

2.    East Renfrewshire Council's Education Department is committed to *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences*, and has a well-earned reputation for providing excellent early learning and childcare for children.  This is evidenced in the assessments and subsequent reports received on our family centres and nursery classes following inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) and the Care Inspectorate.

3.    East Renfrewshire Council's *A Place to Grow* is the Community Planning Partnership's vision, setting out the shared hopes and aspirations between now and 2040 so that East Renfrewshire is a place where everyone can flourish, thrive and grow.  A Place to Grow is built on three pillars that will be the foundation for all our strategic planning going forward. This proposal further drives the Council's ambition for East Renfrewshire to be a place where:

      i)    Our children and young people flourish;

      ii)   Our communities and places thrive; and,

      iii)  We all live well.

*Delivery of Early Years in East Renfrewshire*

4.    In Scotland, local authorities have a statutory duty, mandated by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, to secure a specified amount of funded early learning and childcare for eligible children, currently set at 1140 hours per year.

5.    The Council has responded to national policies which have led to the expansion of early learning and childcare as appropriate, and in some cases has done so ahead of statute. For example the provision of 1140 hours of early learning and childcare was in place in East Renfrewshire 1 year before (August 2020) the Scottish Government made such mandatory in August 2021.

6. Eligible children are defined as all 3 and 4-year-olds and some 2-year-olds, if their household receives certain benefits or if the child has been looked after by a local authority, is the subject of a kinship care order, or has a parent-appointed guardian.

7. The early learning childcare education estate across East Renfrewshire Council comprises of 24 early learning and childcare establishments and nursery classes, all of which are non-denominational.

8. Unlike primary and secondary education, there are no formal catchment areas associated with each early learning and childcare establishment with all settings aligned across 4 neighbourhoods:

- Barrhead / Neilston
- Busby / Clarkston / Eaglesham
- Giffnock / Thornliebank
- Newton Mearns

9. Whilst families are encouraged to select provision within their home neighbourhood, children may attend an establishment located in another neighbourhood if this is the wish of the parent/carer and the request can be accommodated in line with the department's admissions procedures. The admissions criteria for early learning and childcare gives a degree of priority to those families who apply for an establishment located in the community neighbourhood where they live.

10. Almost all early learning and childcare settings across East Renfrewshire accommodate children from 3 years of age until the date at which they start primary school, with a small number of settings offering spaces for 2-year-olds.

11. East Renfrewshire has two family centres which provide provision solely for children aged 0 to 3 years old. Glen Family Centre, located in the Thornliebank area aligns with the east of the authority, whilst McCready Family Centre located in Barrhead, aligns with the west of the council. Whilst these family centres are located in two neighbourhoods, they serve families from across the authority.

12. A wide range of private, independent and voluntary providers within East Renfrewshire also provide 0 to 3 provision across the authority.

13. The Local Admissions Panel (LAP) and the Early Years Intervention Group (EYIG) are the bodies which process and allocate places at early learning and childcare establishments. The LAP considers applications for children aged 2 years and older, with those eligible being guaranteed a place in one of our early learning and childcare settings that offers 2-year-old provision. As well as fulfilling our statutory duty for eligible children, East Renfrewshire uses an early intervention and preventative approach by using its discretionary powers to allocate places to children who would benefit from an early learning and childcare place. The EYIG governs the allocation of these places and meets on a monthly basis to review applications and offer additional support to vulnerable children and families.

14. Parents of children not eligible for free early learning and childcare, or who wish for provision greater than the statutory entitlement, can also make an application to purchase an early learning and childcare place in either a local authority or a funded provider setting. Where availability in the local authority allows, applicants are approved and the Council receives income.

*Education Estate in East Renfrewshire*

15.      The ambition of East Renfrewshire Council is to ensure that all of our children are educated in an estate which is fit for purpose and ensures that they are provided with the optimum conditions in which to thrive.  Particular focus is placed on the condition and suitability of the education estate in this regard.

16.      In accordance with national legislation and guidance for the provision of the education estate, East Renfrewshire primarily categorises the investment needs of its educational premises with respect to sufficiency of education places and the condition and suitability of the estate.

17.      Like all 32 local authorities in Scotland, East Renfrewshire Council has a statutory requirement to ensure sufficiency of education places to meet the demand from local residents, but with due regard to efficient use of resources and best value approaches. Occupancy rates are monitored to ensure best value for money for the service. Low levels of occupancy are neither efficient nor effective and can commit valuable resources that could be targeted at improving the condition and suitability of the learning and teaching environments, and raising attainment and achievement for East Renfrewshire's children and young people.

18.      The capacity of early learning and childcare settings is defined by the maximum number of children who can attend an establishment at any one time, set by the Care Inspectorate. The number of children that can be accommodated in an establishment is affected by several factors, with three of the main considerations being the age ranges of the children in attendance, the physical size of the establishment and the model of provision available.  However it is possible for an establishment to be able to cater for a greater number of distinct children given the different models and attendance patterns which can be used.

19.      East Renfrewshire Council acts in accordance with the Scottish Government's guidelines *Space to Grow*[1], which provides the defined area required per child to allow them to play, move and explore and takes cognisance of the developmental stage of children and their needs.

20.      The condition (fabric and mechanics) of the education estate focuses on ensuring that buildings and their outdoor surrounds, are in a good state irrespective of age or design, and that buildings are safe, secure and well maintained and are legislatively compliant at all times.

21.      Education facilities which are in good condition, ensures that they are fully operational at all times, and signal that learning in East Renfrewshire is a valued activity, where learning environments are a priority and make a difference.  Being educated in, working in, and accessing facilities which are in good condition can give that all important 'feel-good factor' to children, young people and staff and results in those users feeling valued; in turn service users also respect and care more for their environment.

22.      As defined in the Council's Corporate Asset Management Plan (CAMP) 2023-2028[2] the Council's asset management processes and procedures must seek to manage, operate,

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[1] Space to Grow: https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2017/06/space-grow-design-guidance-early-learning-childcare-out-school-care/documents/space-grow-design-guidance-early-learning-childcare-out-school-care-settings/space-grow-design-guidance-early-learning-childcare-out-school-care-settings/govscot%3Adocument/00522564.pdf

[2] East Renfrewshire CAMP 2023-2028: https://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/media/8626/Cabinet-item-10-26-January-2023/pdf/Cabinet_item_10_-_26_January_2023.pdf?m=1673610780253

maintain, improve and dispose of assets effectively; East Renfrewshire Council must ensure its assets deliver best value.  This proposal accords with the CAMP objectives to:

     i)    Retain or acquire only assets that are necessary and appropriate to our needs;

     ii)    Maximise utilisation of assets and match fitness for purpose with our needs;

     iii)    Optimise value for money in investment.

23.     As detailed in the Council's Property Asset Management Plan (PAMP)[3], the education estate equates for around 43% of the number of properties managed by the Council but around 59% of the total of the Council's property costs with regards to capital investment, maintenance and energy consumption. Accordingly, as is the case for all services at a time of reducing resources (financial and physical), there is a requirement to continually monitor and consider if and when any areas of the education estate can be rationalised without negatively impacting learners and wider stakeholders

24.     Such rationalisation will contribute to reducing capital and revenue costs associated with maintaining older facilities, reduce pressure on council services, and support the wider aspirations of the Council in its drive towards becoming carbon neutral by 2045 as required by the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019[4].

25.     The evaluation of how suitable an establishment is considers how well the environment supports the aspirational education outcomes that we wish to deliver to our children and young people.  Numerous factors are considered with regard to suitability including the environmental conditions such as: temperature control, acoustics, ventilation, natural light and the ability for these factors to be controlled; as well as other factors such as accessibility. Within ELC there is a focus on learners having personalisation and choice in their learning with easy access to outdoor learning; the ability for free flow movement across the internal and external areas of a facility are of key consideration.

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[3]ERC PAMP: https://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/media/10259/Cabinet-Item-04-25-April-2024/pdf/Cabinet_Item_04_-_25_April_2024.pdf?m=1712854745347

[4] The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2019/15

<u>REPORT</u>

26.     The Giffnock / Thornliebank early learning and childcare neighbourhood is served by four settings catering for children aged 3-5 years of age at Braidbar Primary School Nursery Class, Giffnock Primary School Nursery Class, Thornliebank Primary School Nursery Class and Glenwood Family Centre; with Glen Family Centre offering provision for children aged 0-3 years of age, and being the only centre in the east of the Council to offer 0 to 2 places.

*Sufficiency of Places*

**27.**     At present Glen Family Centre is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide care to a maximum of 50 children aged between 6 weeks and 3 years old at any one time.

28.     At present Glenwood Family Centre is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide care to a maximum of 180 children, aged between 3 and 5 years old at any one time.

29.     The proposal to accommodate children from 0-5 years of age at Glenwood Family Centre would require small adaptations to be made to the building to introduce the 0-2 year old provision.  These adaptations, and accompanying space areas required for 0-3 year olds, would result in a variation to the 180 any one-time capacity to 153, on the basis of 15 places for 0–2 year-olds, 18 places for 2-3 year olds and 120 places for 3-5 year-olds.

30.     The number of places which are planned to be available at Glenwood for 0-2 year-olds, would have been able to accommodate the children who attended Glen in each of the last three years, and as anticipated in 2025-26.  This, aligned with a decrease in the number of births in East Renfrewshire since 2017[5], gives the Education Department confidence that the number of children who will require a 0-2 place in the east of the Council will be able to be accommodated at Glenwood Family Centre in future years.

31.     Glen Family Centre and Cart Mill Family Centre (Busby/Clarkston/Eaglesham) are the only two local authority providers in the east of the Council area that offer 2-3 year-old places.

32.     Table 1 details the neighbourhoods of the children and families who currently access a funded 2-3 year old place in Glen Family Centre. As is provided in table 1, nearly three quarters of the children who attend the centre for funded 2–3 year old provision, do not live within the Giffnock/Thornliebank community where Glen Family Centre is located, with over a half of children residing in the Newton Mearns community area.

| Community | Percentage of Eligible 2-year-olds attending in 2024/25 |
| --- | --- |
| Barrhead/Neilston/Uplawmoor | 4% |
| Busby/Clarkston/Eaglesham | 16% |
| Giffnock/Thornliebank | 28% |
| Newton Mearns | 52% |

*Table 1*

33.     Although the department has always managed to meet its duty to provide a place for eligible 2 year olds living in the east of the authority, Table 1 illustrates that many children and families have to access this out with their early learning and childcare neighbourhood,

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[5] Planning for the Future: https://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/media/688/Planning-for-the-future-2024/pdf/Planning_for_the_Future_2024.pdf?m=1706805886763

potentially encountering logistical challenges and further costs associated with travel, which is at odds with the accessibility objective of early learning and childcare in Scotland.

34.     Based on an analysis of the uptake of funded places for those eligible children aged 2-3 years of age, the Council is aware of a number of families residing within Newton Mearns who do not appear to be accessing this provision, despite potentially having an entitlement to do so.  The Council is aware that there could be over 30 families residing within the Newton Mearns community who may be eligible for this enhanced provision however, within session 2024/25 only 13 families have chosen to access this.  Although no information is available to the reason for this, it is reasonable to assume that accessibility may be a likely factor.

35.     The Education Department continually reviews early years provision for those entitled children and families, including 2-year-old places, and adjusts accordingly.  Considering the data presented in table 1, the department has plans to align and distribute more widely the provision of 2-3 year old places with the community model, allowing for: more effective and efficient use of the estate and increased accessibility of places in each locale.

36.     The Education Department's analysis concludes that based on the proposed maximum places (at any one time) at each age range, and the ability to increase the number of distinct places through the various models which can be employed, that Glenwood Family Centre would comfortably continue to have sufficient capacity to accommodate the demand for 3-5 year old provision in the area.

*Transition and Parental Choice*

37.     When a child reaches the age of 3 years old, the child will transition to an alternative location for their continuation of early learning and childcare, prior to transitioning to primary education at the age of 5 (or later if the child's entry is deferred).   Details of the largest transition patterns for children from Glen FC are detailed in Table 2:

|  | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Glenwood FC | 48% | 45% | 45% | 48% |
| Crookfur Family Centre | 16% | 11% |  | 9% |
| Calderwood Lodge Family Centre |  | 8% |  | 6% |
| Carolside PS Nursery Class | 8% |  |  |  |
| Hazeldene Family Centre |  | 8% | 7% |  |
| Maidenhill PS Nursery Class |  | 8% | 10% |  |
| Overlee Family Centre |  |  | 7% |  |
| Giffnock PS Nursery Class |  |  | 7% |  |
| Thornliebank PS Nursery Class | 8% |  |  | 6% |
| Mearns PS Nursery Class |  |  |  | 6% |

**Table 2: Please note only those establishments who received more than 5% of children from Glen are included in the table**

38.     The information in Table 2 demonstrates that a significant proportion of the children who attend Glen Family Centre transition at the age of 3 to Glenwood Family Centre, with almost half the children each year transitioning in this way; the proposal aligns strongly with parental choice of 3 to 5-year-old early learning and childcare.

*Building Condition and Experiences*

39.     Glen Family Centre is the second oldest stand-alone early learning and childcare building, having been built in 1980.  The Council's Property Asset Management Plan (PAMP)[6] notes that the facility is regarded as being C grade for condition as defined by the Scottish Government's core facts assessment grading values, which range from A-D. Grade C condition is regarded as:

*C Poor – Showing major defects and/or not operating adequately*

40.     Glen Family Centre is operating at D grade for energy use as measured by the Energy Performance Certificate scale which ranges from A to G.  A D rating is regarded as:

*A D rating signifies that a property is reasonably efficient but could benefit from upgrades to reduce energy usage and costs.*

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[6]Est Renfrewshire Council Property Asset Management Plan:
https://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/media/10259/Cabinet-Item-04-25-April-2024/pdf/Cabinet_Item_04_-_25_April_2024.pdf?m=1712854745347

41.     The condition, suitability and energy efficiency of Glenwood Family Centre is sector leading.  A comparison of the two sites, as detailed in the PAMP, is provided below:

| | Age | Condition | Suitability | Maintenance & Compliance Costs: Full Yr / Per m$^2$ | Energy Rating | Energy Costs: Full Yr / Per m$^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Glen FC | 1980 | C | B | £19,739 / £43.00 per m$^2$ | D | £11,381 / £25.00 per m$^2$ |
| Glenwood FC | 2021 | A | A | £2,441 / £2.50 per m$^2$ | A | £19,247 / £20.00 per m$^2$ |

*Table 3*

42.     As would be expected for a building of its age, there is a need for major maintenance to be undertaken to ensure the appropriate conditions for service users at Glen Family Centre. Assessments of the condition of roofs, boilers and the need for rewiring at Glen Family Centre have been undertaken, in addition to previously identified works.

43.     A roofing condition survey has identified that the entire roof structure has now passed its life span and consequently: has potential for water ingress; has reduced light source impacting natural light intake; and the energy efficiency is being impacted as a consequence of its condition and heat loss.  The cost to replace the roof has been estimated at £210,000.

44.     The establishment's boiler is 15-years-old and has also exceeded its expected life span and consequently requires to be replaced.  The cost to replace the boiler has been estimated at in excess of £50,000.

45.     Windows have been identified as requiring to be replaced.  However on previously initiating plans for the replacement of windows at Glen, unfortunately it was found that other more extensive infrastructure works would also be required to allow this to happen.  The estimated cost to replace the windows and additional works is £40,000.

PROPOSAL

46.     It is proposed that for the commencement of the academic year 2026-27, that Glen Family Centre will close.

47.     Parents of children attending Glen Family Centre at the time of closure, would be offered the following options for the commencement of school session 2026–2027 and beyond:

   i)   for those with children not yet aged 2-years at the time of closure:

        a.  transfer their children to Glenwood Family Centre;

   ii)  for those with children who will be 2 years old at the time of closure:

        a.  transfer their children to Glenwood Family Centre;

        b.  transfer their children to another family centre within East Renfrewshire that provides 2-year-old provision;

        c.  transfer their children to a provider from the private, voluntary or independent (PVI) sector which works in partnership with the Council as

part of the Funding Follows the Child model of early learning and childcare funding.

48.    Operationally:

   a.    Children and their families will be able to record their preference for the location of early learning and childcare which best suits their needs in advance of the closure of Glen Family Centre.  Given transition trends it is likely that many will opt for Glenwood.

   b.    Parents who have already applied, or apply during the consultation period, for a nursery place in Glen or Glenwood family centres, would be informed of the consultation and that the process of allocating places may be delayed as a consequence.

*Glen Family Centre Site*

49.    Once vacated and assuming there are no requirements for the Education Department to retain the facility, it would be deemed as surplus to requirements and passed to the Council's Estates Department to consider future options for the site and property.  There may be security and demolition costs that will need to be factored whilst options are considered, assessed and approved.  Future proposals for either asset disposal or re-purposing of the site will be the subject of separate reports and appropriate approval.

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

50.    The vision and aims of the Education Department, *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences,* is at the heart of the work that department and early learning and childcare staff undertake as they seek to provide the highest quality education and services to develop the whole child.

51.    The department regards early learning and childcare as crucial to the delivery of a broad general education for all children.  The Pre-birth to 3 and Realising the Ambition[7] national guidance, aims to ensure that every child in Scotland gets the best possible start in life through supportive, high quality early learning and experiences.

52.    The aim of *Curriculum for Excellence* is to enable all children and young people to develop their capacities as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society.  The department's vision and values embody these aims.

53.    The number of early learning and childcare places in the east of the authority would continue to adequately serve the residents of this area.

54.    By hosting 0 to 3-year-olds at Glenwood Family Centre, there would be no need for children at the age of 3, from the designated neighbourhood, to transition to a new environment (subject to ELC admissions process) in which they are not familiar with staff and friends. Whilst transitions between Glen and the receiving centres for 3 year olds are very effective, hosting the children in one establishment for the duration of their early learning and childcare will result in a better experience for the child, with staff who are fully knowledgeable and experienced in supporting the child and the family and will allow the children to stay in a setting with friends that they are familiar with.  This will further support the department's objective of securing continuous and progressive learning experiences for children aged 2 to

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Realising the Ambition [7] https://education.gov.scot/media/3bjpr3wa/realisingtheambition.pdf

5 years. This would help to unify children's early learning and childcare in the setting of their families' choice.

55.     Increasing the availability of places for eligible 2-year-olds across all 4 neighbourhoods would better serve to meet the specific demand for places in particular communities, making early learning and childcare more accessible, and helping to address the issue of non-uptake of a 2-year-old place.  Like the proposed changes to Glen and Glenwood, increasing the availability of places for eligible 2-year-olds across the authority will support further the department's agenda of improving the transitions of children within the early learning and childcare stage, as these children will be more likely to be hosted in the one location from the age of 2 years of age.

56.     As noted in para 37, for 2025/26, 48% of children moving from a 2-year old place at Glen Family Centre will transition to Glenwood Family Centre, thus the proposal aligns with current parental preference.

57.     The purpose-built spaces at Glenwood include open-plan playrooms, outdoor learning areas, and flexible rooms that encourage creativity, movement, and collaboration; the facility supports free flow movement, allowing children to move independently between indoor and outdoor environments, following their interests and natural rhythms. This freedom to explore encourages self-confidence, decision-making skills, and a sense of ownership over their learning.

58.     Modern layouts also allow for greater personalisation, with flexible spaces that can be adapted to suit each child's individual needs, learning style, and pace. The thoughtfully designed Glenwood Family Centre helps nurture a child's independence, confidence, and curiosity, laying a stronger foundation for their future learning.

59.     Glenwood Family Centre meets the latest standards in ventilation, lighting, and accessibility, creating environments that are healthier and more stimulating for young children.

60.     Hosting a wider age range of children, along with a greater number of staff members in one location, would result in greater opportunities for staff professional development and collaboration.

61.     The level of early learning and childcare at both Glen and Glenwood family centres is of a very high standard as evaluated locally by the Education Department and externally by the Care Inspectorate.

62.     The timing and evaluation framework utilised by the Care Inspectorate at the time of its visits, differed for each centre.

63.     Glen Family Centre was most recently inspected by the Care Inspectorate in September 2018[8] when it was evaluated against two key themes as: Very Good for its Care and Support; and Very Good for its Environment.

64.     Glenwood Family Centre was most recently inspected by the Care Inspectorate in March 2023[9], with the centre being evaluated against four key themes as: Excellent for How

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[8] Care Inspectorate Reports:  Glen Family Centre: https://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/care-services?detail=CS2003017005
[9] Care Inspectorate Reports:  Glenwood Family Centre: https://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/care-services?detail=CS2003014614

Good is our Care, Play and Learning; Excellent for How Good is our Setting; Excellent for How Good is our Leadership; and Very Good for How good is our Staff Team.

65.     The Head of Education Services (Performance and Quality Improvement) and the Quality Improvement Team would work with the senior management teams at both centres to manage the amalgamation and ensure as smooth a transition as possible.

66.     If the proposal is accepted, then careful consideration would be given to managing the integration of staff and children from Glen to their new setting. For some children with Additional Support for Learning requirements there may be the need for an extended period of transition with staff from both early learning and childcare settings working with parents to ensure that the transfer is as smooth as possible.

67.     Whilst the Education Department does not consider that the proposal would have an adverse impact on any child or staff member with regards to protected characteristics, an Equality Fairness and Rights Impact Assessment (EFRIA) will be undertaken as part of the consultation exercise.  In carrying out this assessment the department will take account of (and address) any equality issues raised via the consultation process to ensure each child and family will be given any required support.  The EFRIA will be included in the consultation results response document.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE PROPOSAL

68.     Should it not be appropriate for all staff to transfer to Glenwood Family Centre following the allocation of early learning and childcare places and staffing deployment for August 2026, the Education Department would seek to manage staff changes by ensuring appropriate alternative options in other early learning and childcare settings; this is the same approach employed each year through the early learning and childcare annual staffing exercise, and can impact any staff member in any establishment, as staff are located to establishments each year on the basis of need and family demand.

69.     In accordance with the Council's position on compulsory redundancy, there would be no compulsory redundancies associated with this early learning and childcare restructure proposal.

70.     Glenwood Family Centre is located 0.2 miles from Glen Family Centre and so for those families who currently make their way to the establishment using active travel, this proposal is likely result in no change to their means of getting to and from Glenwood.

71.     As the registered number of children at Glenwood Family Centre would remain within that which was originally planned for, the levels of traffic in the area should not be in excess of what was originally planned for, when the facility was developed.

72. Should the proposal be approved and Glen Family Centre closed, there would be a reduction in the overall carbon footprint of the Council as a result of energy saving in heating, lighting and other electrical equipment.

73.     It is estimated that there would be potential savings to the early learning and childcare revenue budget of circa £197k per annum for property, utilities, other running costs and staffing.

74.     Naturally, there are many factors which may influence the possibility of achieving full possible savings, particularly with regards to staffing costs.  Any potential savings in relation to staffing costs will be dependent on the ability to redeploy staff to other appropriate vacant posts at the time of the closure of Glen Family Centre which is dependent on natural attrition and any required re-evaluation of posts.

75.     In all matters staffing, the Council's HR policies and procedures will be followed at all times and guidance and support sought from HR colleagues with affected staff supported appropriately.

76.     It is anticipated that the projected costs of the adaptations to Glenwood Family Centre to enable accommodation of children aged 2 and under could be met from the year 1 savings from the closure of Glen Family Centre.

77.     As noted earlier in paragraph 49, there will be various options for the Glen Family Centre site should the proposal be approved.   These proposals will come with financial considerations, for example (but not limited to):

a. Securing the premises, including the annual cost to provide security, key holding, minimal power, rates, emergency repairs, fire-intruder and other service contracts at the closed premises.

b. Demolition of the site and making good the grounds.

c. A capital receipt for the site.

d. Alternative use of the site based on needs of the Council.

78.     Should the proposal be approved, the long-term plan for the current Glen Family Centre will be considered by the Council's Corporate Asset Management Group which will consider the options for the site and ultimately make a recommendation to the Council's Corporate Management Team.

79.     As recorded in the PAMP[6], Glen Family Centre is not an energy efficient building, with energy costs per square metre 25% more than those of Glenwood Family Centre, and with average maintenance and compliance costs which are over 17 times the cost associated with Glenwood.  The closure of Glen Family Centre would reduce the Council's utility and maintenance costs. Any savings made on maintenance costs for Glen Family Centre could be used to help maintain other services.

80.     It is challenging to project the entirety of the required ongoing lifecycle and maintenance costs which would be required to maintain Glen Family Centre to an appropriate standard without a full condition survey being undertaken.  However, the Council's Environment Department has had the facility assessed with regards to its roof, boiler and windows and there is a need to upgrade the outdoor learning areas which would result in a total estimated cost of at least £300k. The closure of the Glen Family Centre

would likely result in the Council not requiring to undertake these remedial works, thus supporting maintenance work in other establishments.

81.    This proposal supports a local authority's legislative duty in accordance with the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003,   "…to secure best value by continuous improvement in performance of the authority's functions, while maintaining an appropriate balance between quality and cost and having regard to economy, efficiency, effectiveness, equal opportunities and the achievement of sustainable development."

CONSULTATION

82.    In accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, the Council is required to formally consult on the proposal to permanently discontinue Early Learning and Childcare provision at Glen Family Centre.  How the consultation is carried out and who must be consulted, are clearly set out in the act.

*Affected Establishments*

83.    The family centres affected by the proposal are: Glen Family Centre and Glenwood Family Centre in East Renfrewshire.

*Consultation Period*

84.    The consultation period will last from 13 August 2025 until midnight on 25 September 2025 (13 August until 25 September inclusive).

85.    Note on Corrections: If any possible inaccuracy or omission in the Consultative Document is discovered by the Education Department or is suggested by any other person, the department will determine if relevant information has been omitted or if there has been an inaccuracy. The Education Department will then take appropriate action that may include the issue of a correction or the reissuing of the proposal paper or the revision of the timescale for the consultation period as appropriate. In that event, relevant consultees and Education Scotland will be advised.

*Call-In*

86.    As the proposal relates to the closure of an early learning and childcare centre, if the proposal is approved the Council must notify Scottish Ministers within the period of six working days of the decision. The Council must publish on its website that it has notified Scottish Ministers of the decision and explain that there is a three-week window for anyone to make representations to ministers on whether the decision should be called-in, and the date on which the three-week period ends.

87.    Ministers have the power to call in a closure decision where it appears to ministers that the Council may have failed in a significant regard to comply with the Act's requirements or may have failed to take account of a material consideration relevant to the proposal.

88.    If Scottish Ministers consider that the education authority has failed to comply with regulations, or has not taken proper account of a material consideration relevant to the decision to implement the proposal, then the proposal can be called-in.

89.    During the call-in period, the council may not proceed further, in whole or part, with the proposed closure.

90.    Ministers have up to eight weeks from the date of the council's decisions to decide whether or not to issue a call-in notice, but may come to a decision sooner, but in any case, in no less than three weeks.

91.    Where a decision is called-in, ministers will refer the closure to the Convener of the School Closure Review Panel (SCRP) - an independent public body whose Convener has responsibility for establishing and supporting Panels to consider school closure decisions – who must constitute a panel within seven days of receiving the notice.

92.    The panel is required to review the authority's decision and determine an outcome within eight weeks of being constituted, on whether the education authority has failed in a significant regard to comply with the requirement imposed on it by (or under) the Act so far as they are relevant to the proposal, or has failed to take proper account of a material consideration relevant to its decision to implement the proposal.

93.    There are three possible outcomes for the panel to consider:
   i)   Grant consent with or without conditions;
   ii)  Refuse consent;
   iii) Refuse consent and remit the proposal back to the education authority for a fresh decision.

*Interested Parties*

94.    We will consult with the following Interested Parties:

1.  parents/carers of all children in the affected early learning and childcare settings;
2.  parents of any child(ren) expected to attend an affected setting within the next 2 school years;
3.  children of each affected early learning and childcare setting (in so far as the education authority considers them to be of a suitable age and maturity);
4.  staff of each affected early learning and childcare setting;
5.  trade unions representing staff employed in the affected early learning and childcare settings;
6.  local elected members representing residents within the present neighbourhood area of the affected early learning and childcare settings;
7.  local Members of Parliament and local Members of Scottish Parliament representing residents within the present neighbourhood of the affected early learning and childcare settings;
8.  Giffnock and Thornliebank Community Councils;

9. Current community users of the affected early learning and childcare settings;

10. members of East Renfrewshire Council's Education Committee;

11. His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education (HMIe).

95. This report is issued as a formal consultative document and will be made available to all interested parties. A copy of the report is available for inspection at both affected early learning and childcare settings and at the Council's Head Office, Eastwood Park, Rouken Glen Road, Giffnock, East Renfrewshire, G46 6UG; and at the Council Offices, 211 Main Street, Barrhead, East Renfrewshire, G78 1SY. An electronic version can be accessed at the East Renfrewshire Council website (www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk).

96. During the consultation period a public meeting will be held in Woodfarm High School (Robslee Rd, Thornliebank, G46 7HG) at 7:00 pm on Thursday 11 September 2025. Elected members and senior officers of East Renfrewshire Council will be present to discuss the proposal and there will be an opportunity to ask questions at the meeting.

*Responding to the Consultation*

97. East Renfrewshire Council invites all interested parties to make written representation on the proposal. Interested parties are encouraged to complete and return the response form via the online survey, directly via the link below:

www.getinvolved.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/glen-glenwood-consultation

98. A copy of the survey is attached and this can be completed and returned.

99. Written responses regarding the proposal will also be accepted by letter or email. Such responses should be clear about who you are, where you live, why you are interested including your relationship with either early learning and childcare setting (e.g. parent of child in an affected setting, member of staff at an affected family centre, relative of a pupil at an affected family centre etc.) and whether or not you agree with the proposal, or have any alternative solutions or comments. Petitions will be treated as a single response.

100. Please send all written representation on the proposal (via the response proforma attached, or by a letter or an email) to:

East Renfrewshire Council,

Education Department,
Council Offices,
211 Main Street,
Barrhead,
East Renfrewshire,
G78 1SY

or by email to:

glenglenwoodconsultation@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

101. Responses must be received no later than 23:59:59 hours on Thursday 25 September 2025. Responses received after this time will not be considered.

102.     At the end of the consultation period HMIe will be sent details of the consultation responses including issues raised at the public meeting and other relevant documentation. HMIe will then prepare and submit a report to the Director of Education within three weeks. In preparing their report HMIe may visit the affected schools.

103.     The Director of Education will report the results of this consultation exercise, including the report submitted by HMIe, to the Education Committee at the earliest possible time after the closure of the consultation period; it is proposed that this will be 18 December 2025 or at the next Education Committee immediately after this date.  The consultation results report will be available for public inspection at least 3 weeks before the date of the Education Committee where the report will be presented for consideration by committee. This report will be available for inspection at all reasonable times at Council offices at Eastwood Park, and Barrhead Main Street, in each of Glen and Glenwood family centres, and published on the Council's website.

104.     Reasonable requests for alternative forms of consultation papers or response documents will be accommodated wherever possible e.g. audio support or language translations.  For this support please contact Customer First: telephone 0141 577 3001 or email customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk or write to the address in paragraph 114 above.

105.     The final report and the decision taken by the Education Committee will be made available on the Council's website.  Printed copies of the report will be made available on request to anyone who has responded to the consultative document.

Mark Ratter
Director of Education
June 2025

**EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL: EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

**THE CLOSURE OF GLEN FAMILY CENTRE AND FUTURE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AGED 0 – 3 YEARS RESIDING IN THE EAST OF THE AUTHORITY FOR SCHOOL SESSION 2026/27 AND BEYOND**

**FORM FOR YOUR RESPONSE**
*Please provide information to all sections. Should you not wish to specify some of the details in the ABOUT YOU section, we will still take your response into account.*

## ABOUT YOU

Name: _____

Address: _____

Post Code _____

☐ Tick the box if we should keep your name and address confidential

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**Please select all that apply and complete as appropriate:**

☐ I am a Parent/Carer of a child/ children attending an *affected establishment(s)* as noted below. *(Carer means the responsible adult with whom the young person lives)*

☐ Glen Family Centre  ☐ Glenwood Family Centre

☐ My child / children reside(s) in the early learning and childcare community of the establishments above

Name(s) of my child(ren): _____

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☐ I am a member of staff at _____

☐ I am responding on behalf of a group or organisation.
Name of group/organisation _____

☐ I am related to a young person attending any of the *affected establishments*

☐ I provide care to a young person attending any of the *affected establishments*

☐ I reside within East Renfrewshire

☐ Other (*please specify* _____

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**WHAT YOU THINK** (*tick only one box*)

☐      I agree with the proposal.

☐      I do not agree with the proposal.

**PLEASE WRITE YOUR REASON(S)/ COMMENTS BELOW**

The reason(s) I have for reaching my decision is/are:

Any other additional comment:

Signed

Send your reply to East Renfrewshire Council, via the online consultation website or post to Education Department, Council Offices, 211 Main Street, Barrhead, East Renfrewshire, G78 1SY, no later than **23:59:59 hours on Thursday 25 September 2025.**