

Our Promise to the Children of Moray

Moray Children's Services Plan Report 2024-2025

All children and young people in Moray grow up loved, safe, respected and equal, because our services and workforce put people first and support families with the right help at the right time




we will
#KeepThePromise


Moray Community
Planning Partnership


getting
it right
for every child
in Moray

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Introduction

Welcome to Moray's Children's Services Plan, Our Promise to the Children of Moray, annual report for 2024 -2025.

Moray's Children Services Plan and reporting also incorporates the other key partnership plans that have an exclusive focus on children, young people and their families. They are:






- Child Poverty Plan
- Children's Rights and Participation Plan
- Corporate Parenting Plan
- Child Protection Improvement Plan

Progress in the delivery of the plan was showcased at a family fest event ran in partnership with employability, with child poverty prioritised at the event in response to the rising rate. A total of 330 people attended the event which included a marketplace showcasing the range of free family activities and services available in Moray including those offering families financial support.

The second year of our plan has coincided with some key challenges felt both locally and nationally both families and our children's workforce are facing:

- Increased violence and aggression within and outside the school community has continued, with school attendance and meaningful engagement remaining an issue,
- The struggles of neurodiverse parents and children remain prominent, with diagnosis, support and education attainment being the concerns of families,
- challenges associated with cost-of-living and child poverty continue, escalating costs and changes to national insurance have resulted in additional pressure within the 3rd sector with some smaller organisations in Moray folding.

Our action plans are structured around the five foundations of The Promise with children's rights underpinning every foundation.

	Voice	Explains how we will seek out and act on the voice of children, young people and their families
	Family	Details the actions we will take to; tackle child poverty, improve the mental wellbeing of children, young people and families, keep children and young people safe from harm, strengthen support for families and meet the challenges children, young people and families face due to disability and neurodiversity
	Care	Outlines how we will support our looked after and care experienced children and young people to reach their full potential
	People	Describes how we will support the workforce to listen and be compassionate in their decision making, develop trusting relationships with our children, young people and families and deliver the services and support they need
	Scaffolding	Outlines the key actions strategic leaders will take together to ensure that the 'system' supports the delivery of improvements outlined within this plan

Our strategic outcomes are outlined below, followed by individual progress reports for each of the 9 priority areas.

PRIORITY AREAS

Voice



Hearing children's voice

- The voice of children and young people is evident in all things that impact on them
- Adults successfully seek out and hear the voices of children and young people of all levels of ability
- Engagement activities are more co-ordinated, minimising the risk of children and young people being over consulted

Family



Tackling Child Poverty

- Parents claim all the welfare benefits to which they are entitled and do not feel stigmatised when seeking support
- The impact of poverty on children, young people and their families is minimised
- Young adults and parents experience no poverty related barriers to entering and sustaining training and employment





Improving Mental Wellbeing of Families

- Parents are confident and able to support their child(ren) to sustain good mental wellbeing
- The right mental health and wellbeing support is available to children, young people and their parents as soon as they need it
- Community based mental wellbeing support is strengthened
- Children, young people and their parents experience a smooth transition between support services, including transition to adult services






Keeping Children Safe

- Children's Services Workers are confident and supported to identify and understand risk
- Children, young people and families are empowered to participate in child protection processes
- Children and young people develop healthy relationships with peers, online and in the community
- Children and young people are safer because risks have been identified early and responded to effectively
- Children and young people at risk of or who come into conflict with the law are supported with compassion and care

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people are supported through recovery and do not experience further trauma related to the causes of their trauma or recovery
 <p>Overcoming Challenges Experienced by Children with Disability or Neurodiversity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people’s education and care needs are met, regardless of need • Parents and young people with neurodiversity challenges can access early help and support • Children, young people and families with additional support needs have improved access to support, leisure and community-based activities • Families can access a neurodiversity diagnosis in a timely way • Children with additional support needs experience a smooth transition to adult services
 <p>Strengthening Family Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s and families’ needs are addressed early through implementation of effective child’s planning processes • There is a clear pathway of non-stigmatised support available to parents throughout Moray. • Children’s transition into Nursery is consistently good. • Parents are supported and enabled to be the best parents they can be.

Care

 <p>Improving Outcomes for Care Experienced Young People</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The gap in educational outcomes of looked after and care experienced young people is reduced • Looked after and care experienced young people enter and sustain education, training or employment after leaving school • The health needs of looked after children and young people are met • Looked after and care experienced young people, and their parents/carer feel their voice has been heard through the provision of independent advocacy • The number and range of placements available meets the needs of children and young people in need of care • Life transitions feel and are experienced as integrated, with maintaining relationships being paramount • Brothers and sisters are supported to maintain positive relationships with one another • Children and young people seeking asylum are fully integrated into school and community life • Looked after and care experienced young people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system • Our improvement activity is shaped by the voice of our looked after and care experienced young people
<p>People</p>	
 <p>Supporting our Workforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated working practice is enhanced through joint development opportunities which supports our shared vision, core principles and values • Staff facilitate and enable the relationships, networks and connections that support our children, young people and families
<p>Scaffolding</p>	
 <p>Working in Partnership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a partnership, we are aware of the changing needs of children, young people and their families • As a partnership, we maximise all opportunities to lever in additional funding and work together to ensure it supports the delivery of our shared priorities • The risk of silo working across children and adult services is minimised • We more consistently and effectively measure the impact of the actions we are taking to improve outcomes for children, young people and families • The co-ordination of continuous improvement activity improves

The voice of the child is more than seeking their views, it is about enabling children and young people to take as active a role as possible in making decisions about things which affect them

Voice: Hearing children and young people's voices	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>The voice of children and young people is evident in all things that impact on them.</p> <p><i>“We are delighted E got to take part in the nativity play. She is never included in anything except activities in Options Moray. It was wonderful.” Parent</i></p> <p>When asked was he ready for the Nativity play the young people were presenting a young person was observed to smile, threw up his arms</p>	<p>In Moray, children’s voices are captured through a variety of approaches, with a strong focus on improving the coordination and impact of how these voices influence decision-making. At the child protection level, processes have been strengthened, and hearings and child protection meetings now do not proceed unless the child’s voice has been captured to inform decisions.</p> <p>The implementation of the Better Meetings guidance and continued investment in a solution-oriented approach have created supportive conditions for children to express their views, particularly when involved in processes addressing their additional needs.</p> <p>Tools for capturing children's voices have been compiled and integrated into updated child planning documentation. The new paperwork was piloted in two school ASG areas and, following refinements, will be fully launched to replace previous documentation. Additionally, a pilot project aimed at capturing the non-verbal communication of infants has been introduced, building on successful work previously carried out in Aberdeenshire.</p> <p>Moray’s locality planning structure continues to engage professionals providing direct services to gather insights into the experiences and concerns of families. Wellbeing Co-ordinators collate themes from child planning meetings and share them to support a partnership-based approach to identify areas for improvement. One example of this in action is a partner-led initiative which established a regularly accessible safe space for parents of children with complex needs. This space allows parents to share concerns, receive peer support, and access relevant information.</p>

Voice: Hearing children and young people's voices	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>in a happy gesture and said “aye”. <i>Worker</i></p>	<p>Parent voices are gathered and used by the Locality Networks to co-develop solutions, raise issues at a strategic level, and highlight examples of good practice. A notable example is Aberlour Options children’s nativity play, designed for children with complex needs, including non-verbal children. In this initiative, children were supported to direct and participate in their own nativity performance for their families. One parent shared, “It’s great for V to be part of the activities at Halloween and the Nativity—it allows me to meet other parents.”</p> <p>Looking ahead, Moray’s Children’s Services partners are exploring a new model: a central exchange point where young people can share their views and where organisations can connect to hear from them. This model will be supported by a multi-agency youth participation strategy. Its aim is to reduce over-consultation of individuals, ensure broader representation of views, and provide a clear mechanism for young people to reach those who need to hear them. This initiative will be a key focus in the final year of the current plan.</p>
<p>Adults successfully seek out and hear the voices of children and young people of all levels of ability.</p>	<p>Work has been undertaken to improve how we hear the voices of those with barriers in being heard.</p> <p>Voice of the Infant</p> <p>A tool was initially developed and piloted in Aberdeenshire, with further testing extended to Moray in 2024. Designed for use in early years settings, the tool supports practitioners in capturing the perspectives of babies and pre-verbal children. Now integrated into a wider toolkit, it is actively used by health professionals across Moray. To support implementation, 92% of health team staff completed dedicated training. An audit of health service records conducted in December 2024 demonstrated a positive impact on practice.</p> <p>Key findings included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Descriptions of infant body language and facial expressions increased from 19% to 40%. ✓ Documentation of what infants or young children enjoy rose by 10%. ✓ Observations of play and social interactions improved from 34% to 49%. <p>These outcomes highlight the effectiveness of both the tool and the associated training in enhancing practitioners’ ability to interpret and record infant communication cues. Ongoing audit activity is planned to ensure the tool continues to be embedded in practice and to promote sustained positive outcomes for infants, children, and young people.</p>

Voice: Hearing children and young people’s voices	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>“We need information about safe sex.” LGBTQ+ youth.</p> <p>“Sexual health services are hard to access—services with an LGBTQ+ focus are non-existent.” Young person, Moray Pride.</p>	<p>Asylum seekers and refugee children Dedicated processes have been developed to ensure that unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugee children are supported in expressing their views and identifying any barriers they face in having their needs met. The resettlement team and the education-based English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) team has worked closely with these children and their families, where appropriate, to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and challenges.</p> <p>LGBTQ+ young people Targeted efforts have amplified LGBTQ+ youth voices on sexual health, with outreach during Moray Pride activities revealing concerns about unmet needs. These insights are shaping NHS Health Improvement Team content for Personal and Social Education (PSE) classes. School nurses have also introduced drop-in sessions and partnership working has piloted sexual health focused events, advancing inclusive, accessible education for all young people.</p>
<p>Engagement activities are more co-ordinated, minimising the risk of children and young people being over consulted</p> <p>“I was delighted to see some of the things suggested had been able to be included.” – Parent, Children 1st feedback on GIRFEC website</p> <p>“...particularly pleased with the introduction section on</p>	<p>Developing the Youth Voice Model and Community Engagement in Moray</p> <p>We continue to strengthen the Youth Voice model, with a focus on minimising the risk of over-consultation. Current developments include exploring the introduction of a Youth Ambassador role for Moray, aimed at ensuring meaningful representation and leadership opportunities for young people.</p> <p>In addition, two key areas of work are progressing:</p> <p>GIRFEC in Moray Website: Children, young people, and families have played a central role in shaping a new Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) website for Moray. This platform will serve as a single point of reference for families to access clear, accessible information and support.</p> <p>Moray Engage – Community Engagement Platform: Moray Engage is a new online tool designed to gather feedback, ideas, and opinions from the community in an organised and interactive way. It provides a centralised space where community voices can be heard and ensures transparency by offering a full overview of consultation activities. Although progress has been slow, it had initially been put on hold last year for financial reasons, therefore we are</p>

Voice: Hearing children and young people’s voices

Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
child’s planning – the role of the Named Person service is now clearer.” – Parent, Children 1st	happy to be able to report progress. These developments reflect our commitment to co-production and inclusive practice, ensuring the voices of children, young people, and families are embedded in the design and delivery of services.

Poverty impacts on the health and wellbeing of the whole family and for children it can have long term effects on outcomes in adulthood.

Family: Tackling Poverty	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
What poverty looks like in Moray is understood by all	<p>Despite a low unemployment rate of 3.0% (May 2024), economic inactivity in Moray has risen to 24.7%, exceeding the national average. Moray’s average working week is longer than the national one and the average full time weekly wage is lower (£647.20 compared to £702.80), evidencing Moray’s low-income economy.</p> <p>Between 2014 and 2022, child poverty increased to 24.1%, although below the national average of 24.5%, this was the fastest increasing rate. Moray’s Poverty Ranking (based on the Child Poverty After Housing Costs data) is 14 of 32 local authorities and rated second highest against the 8 comparable areas. Early indications show the rate is expected to decrease slightly this year.</p> <p>Moray includes areas ranked in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) decile 1, with more families now in Quintile 1 following Scottish Government reclassification. Four areas are among the most deprived in Scotland. In 2023/24, 383 pupils (3.2%) were in SIMD Quintile 1 and 1,722 (14.2%) in Quintile 2. However, SIMD does not fully capture rural and urban poverty in Moray, therefore a bespoke data set was developed in 2024, dividing Moray into 126 zones, rating them on a combination of poverty and financial vulnerability factors.</p> <p>The dataset shows that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More people in Moray (41.3%) live in rural areas compared to the national average of 17% • 26% of children living in urban areas are in poverty, in contrast to 21% who live rurally • 48% of the 66% of the children experiencing poverty are living in urban areas and living in just 30% of the most deprived areas (as opposed to the 14.5% identified if we use the SIMD ranking system only) • 85.5% of children in Moray live out with the most deprived areas • the level of poverty experienced ranges from 0% to 64.8% in different areas of Moray <p>Factors like rural isolation, high transport costs, higher food costs in rural areas and higher numbers of households which rely on alternative fuels for heating significantly affect family income. This data is enabling more targeted engagement.</p>

Family: Tackling Poverty	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>“Thank you for providing such delicious food for free and organising activities for the children during school holidays.” Lunch attendee</p> <p>Thank you for all your hard work—it’s such a nice thing to do for the families in our local community.” Event Attendee</p> <p>We connected with multiple internal and external partners, shared our service, learned about others, and even gained four potential volunteers. The event had a great buzz, was well-planned, relaxed, and welcoming. We’d attend again.” Stall holder, Family Fest.</p>	<p>Place-Based Community Events</p> <p>Using insights from the dataset, a series of community events were organised during the October school holidays in areas identified as having the highest levels of need: Lossiemouth, New Elgin, Forres, Keith, and Buckie. These events aimed to initiate early engagement with families through a place-based approach.</p> <p>Local community groups were invited to participate, alongside key partners such as Public Health, Childsmile, and the Period Poverty Team—organisations that play a vital role in mitigating the impact of poverty. Over the course of the week, 270 people attended community breakfasts.</p> <p>Sustaining Local Support: Community Space Grant</p> <p>Through conversations with community groups, a clear need emerged for financial support to sustain their presence in high-need areas. In response, the Community Space Grant was developed, allocating just under £70,000 to enable services to access and use local community spaces. This funding has supported both individual and group-based meetings, helping to bring services closer to the communities they serve.</p> <p>Family Fest: Supporting Families Through Connection, Wellbeing, and Opportunity</p> <p>The Family Fest event attended by 330 people, was a collaborative initiative between the Children’s Services Team (who share progress of the Children Services Plan) and Moray Pathways (Employability Partnership), designed to support families by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting ways to maximise household income • Encouraging positive mental wellbeing • Showcasing low-cost or free family activities <p>Examples of the range of provision included income maximisation support, play activities like Lego, STEM and messy play, family themed mental wellbeing services and free products like fruit, period products and pre-loved (pre-owned) sport kits.</p>

Family: Tackling Poverty	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>What poverty look like in Moray is understood by all (cont.)</p> <p>“As a single mum, I loved this event. Thank you for all the useful info—this was awesome.” Parent</p>	<p>Professional feedback focused on networking and connecting while families focused on the availability of information, the fun activities and a desire for repeat events.</p> <p>Poverty Toolkit and Community Support</p> <p>The Poverty Toolkit, developed with support from the Independent Food Aid Network and Moray Council, continues to be a valuable resource. During this reporting period the “Worrying About Money?” leaflet received 881 views, and 255 individuals made phone calls seeking financial advice or support.</p> <p>Child Poverty Self-Evaluation</p> <p>As directed by the Community Planning Board, members of the Child Poverty Strategic Group collaborated with the Improvement Service to develop a Child Poverty Self-Evaluation system for the entire Community Planning Partnership (CPP). This was distributed to over one hundred managers across public and third sector organisations.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the response rate was below 4%, making the results non-representative. Further work will be needed to improve engagement and gather meaningful insights.</p> <p>Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Move beyond data by directly involving families affected by poverty to ensure services reflect real, local needs and create ongoing opportunities for families to share experiences and co-design solutions that lead to change ➤ Recognise that while common themes exist, solutions must be adapted to the unique circumstances of each community ➤ Drive forward the objectives of Tackling Child Poverty work through collaboration, shared learning, and community-led action

Family: Tackling Poverty	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>Parents claim all the welfare benefits they are entitled to and do not feel stigmatised when seeking support</p>	<p>Income Maximisation and Financial Support in Moray</p> <p>Income maximisation support is now embedded within several intensive family support services. To improve access and streamline referrals, the Money Advice Moray Team is actively reviewing referrals from Health Visiting and the Family Nurse Partnership teams, ensuring families receive timely and appropriate financial guidance.</p> <p>Key Referral Data (This Year) includes 749 referrals to Money Advice Moray, 542 for financial guidance with the Income Maximisation Team and 207 for debt advice via the Money Advice Service. The main sources of referrals are housing services, the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), and social work services. The total financial gains for families through welfare benefits was £99,800.96.</p> <p>These figures highlight the growing demand for financial support and the importance of coordinated referral pathways.</p> <p>Mapping Support Services Across Moray</p> <p>In collaboration with the Fairer Moray Forum Action Group, a comprehensive mapping exercise was completed to identify all available support services across Moray. This work provides a clearer understanding of what services were available and where and service gaps. The findings were shared with the Strategic Child Poverty Group.</p> <p>To maximise impact, going forward a centralised resource needs to be identified to support better co-ordination, reduce duplication, and help families and professionals navigate available support more effectively.</p> <p>Child Poverty Accelerator Funding (CPAF) Project: Maximising Incomes for Families with Disabilities</p> <p>Moray successfully secured Child Poverty Accelerator Funding through a joint bid by the Children’s Services and Employability teams. The project focused on exploring how to better support families with disabilities in maximising their household income.</p> <p>Phase 1: Lived Experience Engagement</p> <p>Families of children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) were engaged through face-to-face sessions, online discussions, and surveys to better understand the financial challenges they face.</p>

Family: Tackling Poverty	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>Parents claim all the welfare benefits they are entitled to and do not feel stigmatised when seeking support (cont.)</p>	<p>The findings revealed that income-related challenges were more complex and interconnected than initially anticipated. Four key themes emerged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost of accessing health services • The monetary impact of limited educational opportunities • The complexity of claiming Self-Directed Support (SDS) and other disability-related benefits • A strong need for free or subsidised activities during term time and school holidays <p>Phase 2: Action and Collaboration</p> <p>Health and Education: insights were shared with service managers. NHS Grampian used the data to secure additional CPAF funding for the Health Equity & Learning Project (HELP), focused on reducing barriers to NHS access. Social Work teams also used the findings to inform planning.</p> <p>Access to Activities: A multi-agency test-of-change project is planned for summer in two SIMD-priority areas. A schedule of free/subsidised activities is in development. Active Schools Coordinators, in partnership with Disability Sport Scotland, are training session leaders to ensure inclusive delivery.</p> <p>Phase 3: Raising Awareness and Building Capacity</p> <p>Child Disability Payment: Updates on changes to the Child Disability Payment were shared at Locality Network meetings with Family Support Workers and other direct service professionals. These professionals are now better equipped to inform and support families in applying for the benefit.</p> <p>The information was shared at ASN Parent Drop-In sessions, where local authority staff provided one-to-one support. As a result, awareness of the Child Disability Payment and other financial supports has increased significantly.</p> <p>Step by Step is a local charity supporting vulnerable families by building confidence, friendships, and life skills. Through partnerships with services like Moray Citizens Advice Bureau and Moray Food Plus, it offers informal group sessions where families access support and referrals in a welcoming setting. The charity also promotes Social Security Scotland benefits, including the Scottish Child Payment, encouraging families to claim their entitlements.</p>

Family: Tackling Poverty	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
Parents claim all the welfare benefits they are entitled to and do not feel stigmatised when seeking support (cont.)	<p>Positive Indicators of Impact</p> <p>Current trends show a decrease in the number of referrals to external organisations and a reduction in emergency voucher distribution. While further analysis is needed, this may indicate that household incomes are improving—potentially because of increased benefit uptake and better access to financial support.</p> <p>Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Improve understanding across services to reduce duplication, better support families and strengthen awareness of tools such as ALISS to promote support ➤ Evaluate the financial inclusion pathway through the midwifery service ➤ Raise awareness of the infant feeding in crisis pathway further and extend to wider NHS services supporting families with young children ➤ Strengthen monitoring of referrals from family support services to Money Advice Moray for better follow-up and outcomes
The impact of poverty on children, young people and their families is minimised.	<p>Expanding Access to Family Activities</p> <p>At the Family Fest event, families were introduced to a range of services, including Libraries, Active Schools, Peep Groups, and PlayTalkRead. In New Elgin, a LOIP priority area, The Link Project provides free after-school and holiday activities, offering vital out-of-school support.</p> <p>The Sport Development and Active Schools teams have expanded free activity sessions, resulting in an 18% overall increase in participation, including a 9% rise among children eligible for free school meals.</p> <p>A new partnership with Stella’s Voice has launched a free bike initiative for children, with 18 applications received to date.</p> <p>Centralised Holiday Activity Information</p> <p>Locality Networks collected holiday activity details from various services and shared them via the Active Schools “Sports in Moray” platform, ensuring families had easy access to a single, centralised source of opportunities.</p>

Family: Tackling Poverty	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
The impact of poverty on children, young people and their families is minimised (cont.)	<p>Transport was a key barrier identified in relation to accessing holiday activities. M: Connect briefed the locality networks and have now introduced a group booking system to support service coordination which services can promote.</p> <p>Progress has been made through a standardised process introduced to ensure all P7 pupils receive bus passes before secondary school. A challenge remains regarding low uptake among under-12s, and further awareness and support is needed.</p> <p>Housing and Child Poverty</p> <p>Improved strategic alignment through housing services is now being represented at the Child Poverty Strategy Group.</p> <p>Downsizing Incentive Scheme: 27 households rehoused in 2024/25, highest uptake since 2012, reducing energy costs and easing overcrowding.</p> <p>Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2025–2030 is in development with poverty a key consideration.</p> <p>Fuel Poverty (ECO4 Flex) £808K in energy efficiency upgrades and 45 low-income households have been supported, with the average investment being £18K per home and ongoing investment continues.</p> <p>Affordable Housing: the open market purchase scheme has added 4 family homes and supported homelessness prevention and reuse of empty homes.</p> <p>Period Plus Project</p> <p>The project is co-designed with young people to address period poverty with dignity. A new co-ordinator was employed in January 2025.</p> <p>The key actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free single-use and reusable products in public buildings • Community feedback gathered during Challenge Poverty Week • Promotion of eco-friendly options and the PickupMyPeriod app

Family: Tackling Poverty	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
The impact of poverty on children, young people and their families is minimised (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative delivery, e.g., distribution via Moray Food Plus’s Big Blue Bus <p>Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Promote and monitor uptake of bus entitlement cards ➤ Consider any poverty related issues identified in the current Housing Survey ➤ Gain an understanding of the number of vulnerable priority groups within temporary accommodation and what, if any, additional targeted support requires to be implemented ➤ Record the impact of the trained digital champions
Young adults and parents experience no poverty related barriers to entering and sustaining training and employment.	<p>The Local Employability Partnership in Moray, known as Moray Pathways, is funded through the Scottish Government’s Child Poverty Funds and No One Left Behind initiative. The partnership collaborates to allocate this funding strategically, ensuring it addresses identified local needs.</p> <p>Moray Pathways (employability consortium) including Progress for Parents offer</p> <p>Progress for Parents, formed under the banner of Moray Pathways continues to deliver personalised support to families experiencing multiple barriers to employment and wellbeing.</p> <p>The service has finished the reporting period with 123 active cases, which included 63 participants carried over from the previous year and 60 new referrals. The case load through the year has includes 126 participants from the poverty related priority family types. There are a wide range of referral partners established with an active programme of awareness raising at community events.</p> <p>Support services developed in response to barriers to employment include counselling, group work, creative arts and volunteers.</p> <p>Outcomes over this reporting period include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27 parents have moved into employment of which 21 are part time • 13 of these roles were supported through MERI funding • 10 individuals began volunteering

Family: Tackling Poverty	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>Young adults and parents experience no poverty related barriers to entering and sustaining training and employment (cont.)</p> <p>“I know I am happier. I have a much greater sense of self-worth and achievement. I feel proud that I can provide for my family, and my mental health continues to improve.” Parent</p> <p>“As I became stronger, both physically and mentally, my pathway became clearer and so I made my application to UHI and was accepted onto the BSc (Hons) Integrative Healthcare course.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 progressed into further education <p>In total of 47 cases have been successfully closed.</p> <p>Childcare</p> <p>Access to school-age childcare remains a major challenge in Moray, particularly in rural areas, with recent closures, such as at Kinloss Barracks, and staffing shortages further limiting availability. A Project Officer is now leading efforts to expand provision, with two pilot areas identified. A successful collaboration between a childcare provider, M: Connect transport, and employability services has improved access and reduced costs for families, supporting the sustainability of rural childcare.</p> <p>This model may be extended to other areas. Local and regional working groups, with national input, continue to address these issues, now raised to ministerial level. Two test-of-change pilots are planned, and the “Step into Childcare” course continues to support workforce development.</p> <p>Young People</p> <p>A total of 377 young people engaged with the Employability Partnership—156 new starts and 221 carried over. The Young Person Service is fully integrated into education’s Pathways Planning, supporting school leavers without a clear post-school plan.</p> <p>Keyworkers provide holistic support, including access to financial advice, digital tools, ID documentation, tenancy preparation, and financial literacy training.</p> <p>Outcomes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 43 into employment • 140 referred to SWAP for vocational training • 30 supported by CLD • 28 referred for counselling • 78 joined the Creative Skills Network • 46 progressed to Further or Higher Education

Family: Tackling Poverty	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>Young adults and parents experience no poverty related barriers to entering and sustaining training and employment (cont.)</p> <p><i>“Thanks for sticking by me, it’s been a bumpy ride” Young Person</i></p>	<p>Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) in Moray has enabled schools to implement targeted, relationship-based interventions that address poverty-related barriers to learning, engagement, and wellbeing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Buckie, youth workers supported P5–S2 pupils through one-to-one and group sessions, leading to improved attendance, wellbeing, and 18 youth awards • New Elgin Primary School embedded a youth worker to support P6 pupils at risk of exclusion, focusing on resilience and communication, which resulted in increased engagement, wellbeing, and 22 awards • Lossiemouth ASG used SEF to fund a Home School Link Worker and Project Coordinator, delivering targeted support to pupils and 20 families, boosting attendance by 17% and laying the groundwork for a community wellbeing hub • At Elgin High School, a wide range of SEF- and PEF-funded interventions—including literacy and numeracy support, wellbeing groups, and a breakfast club—led to reduced exclusions, improved attendance, and strong pupil and parent feedback <p>Collectively, these projects demonstrate how SEF is effectively tackling the impact of poverty on education through tailored, community-driven support.</p>
<p>Next Steps</p>	<p>Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase referrals to the Parent Employability Team and continue to collaborate with partners to tackle lack of school age childcare provision

Positive mental wellbeing greatly improves the experience of growing up and provides a solid foundation upon which a person’s lifelong health and wellbeing outcomes

Family: Improving the mental and emotional wellbeing of children, young people and their families	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>Parents are confident and able to support their children to sustain good mental wellbeing</p>	<p>A gap in parent-focused support led to the Moray Parent Project, launched initially as a 6-month pilot. During this time, 235 parents, mostly self-referred (98%), accessed the service. 76% reported improved confidence, with main concerns around children’s self-esteem and confidence. 46% of parents reported their own mental health struggles.</p> <p>The project has now been extended for two years and is open to all parents and carers of children aged 4–18. Workshop topics have expanded and are tailored to children’s developmental stages. Feedback from parents and schools shape session content and delivery. The number of 1-to-1 sessions has increased, and peer support groups have been trialled. Virtual sessions remain the most popular. This project continues to develop, we have expanded the opportunities for parents to receive more focus on their own mental wellbeing to support building resilience within the family.</p> <p>Since October 2024, 249 parents and carers have accessed the service, with anxiety and emotional regulation being key concerns. 15% reported being either formally or informally the carer of a child (rise since the pilot), 47% are single parents, and 72% report having low confidence in supporting their child. Following support, 88% report improved confidence.</p> <p>Additionally, for families with children under 5, a universal Peep family learning programme is being developed to support emotional and social wellbeing. The Early Birds autism programme offers targeted support to families with young children recently diagnosed with autism.</p>
<p>The right mental health and wellbeing support is available to children, young people and their parents as soon as they need it.</p>	<p>A survey of staff and parents showed good awareness of available support but highlighted concerns regarding high demand and waiting times. Demand has risen, but most services maintain an average 4–6 week wait. CAMHS sees most children within 5–6 weeks, with 97–99% starting treatment within the 18-week target. Redirected CAMHS referrals have dropped from 21% to 18%.</p> <p>School counselling saw a 13% rise in demand, with 35% more referrals for primary pupils, showing earlier intervention. Community mental health services are being re-commissioned following engagement work and market</p>

Family: Improving the mental and emotional wellbeing of children, young people and their families

Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>The right mental health and wellbeing support is available to children, young people and their parents as soon as they need it (cont.)</p>	<p>exploration, with a focus on aligning with our developing family support hubs. An evaluation of an under 10's counselling pilot showed an unmet emotional regulation-based need in children with ASN. This need is not best met by counselling services.</p> <p>Moray is strengthening a system-wide approach to mental health, with regular partner meetings and plans to explore a single referral point in 2025–2026 after the completion of procuring new community mental wellbeing services.</p> <p>Key progress this year includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing the counselling model to include family sessions when appropriate and linking to the parent project so parents felt more included without compromising the client/counsellor relationship • More school-based staff accessing LIAM training to support symptoms of anxiety earlier • Ensuring all MH service staff are suicide and self-harm safety planning trained • Case-based discussions to smooth service transitions • Life skills courses piloted for S3 pupils to boost resilience prior to the senior school phase • A trial of an online emotional school avoidance programme in 6 primary schools • ASIST suicide training prioritised for residential and social care staff from through care and after care social work teams, a programme of suicide awareness involving more than 500 students at Moray University of Highlands and Islands has been delivered and work exploring creating suicide safe schools incorporated into an all-age Suicide Prevention Delivery Plan • £16K ring-fenced to support care leavers, to respond to mental health needs timely and address loneliness in the first year of leaving care
<p>Community based mental wellbeing support is strengthened</p>	<p>A survey by Quarriers, discussions in PSE classes, and feedback from young people in our social prescribing project revealed barriers to accessing community services, such as anxiety, cost, transport, and wanting to attend with friends. There were also gaps in the services young people wanted.</p>

Family: Improving the mental and emotional wellbeing of children, young people and their families	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
	<p>Our response includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Services partnering with Moray Wellbeing Hub, Sports Development Team, and CAMHS to create a training programme for community and sports organisations. This programme aims to build confidence in engaging with young people struggling with mental health and neurodiversity. The pilot is ongoing, with plans to explore course accreditation for Moray groups • The Locality Networks organised a fresher style showcase event for free activities • Decider skills: A 6-week group activity for S1 pupils, with almost all attendees reporting increased management of anxiety, feeling more confident, increased focus on learning, and the majority reported they felt happier. Action for Children continues to pilot these groups in various settings
Children, young people and their parents experience a smooth transition between support services, including transitions to adult services.	<p>Progress has been made in creating strategic governance for both adult and children's mental health, allowing for better collaboration. We continue developing a system that ensures smooth transitions between services. The Digital Health Institute is setting up a mental health living lab to focus on the needs of teenagers and young adults, including transitions from child to adult services.</p> <p>Care leavers feel vulnerable when leaving care and transitioning to adult services. Many do not qualify for adult mental health support and only receive help during a crisis. Action for Children has secured funding to pilot a transition worker to support care-experienced young people during their first year after leaving care. We have ringfenced financial resources to purchase immediate mental health and wellbeing support if required and to help minimise the impact of loneliness.</p>

To be safe means growing up in an environment where a child or young person feels secure, nurtured, listened to and enabled to develop to their full potential

Family: Keeping Children and young people safe	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>Workers are confident and supported to identify and understand risk</p> <p><i>"The insights into what stops children from coming forward and how we can shift the focus from relaying on children to tell"</i></p> <p><i>The multiagency approach to child sexual abuse and how it highlights how other agencies approach this"</i></p>	<p>Learning reviews and new case review approaches have led to plans for refreshing the national risk assessment framework and developing an inter-agency assessment protocol. The PRISM approach is used to share learning. Updated procedures for Sudden Unexplained Death in Infants and parental drug use have been launched, and child sexual abuse training has been introduced.</p> <p>Basic child protection training has been updated, with 80 practitioners trained. Feedback from sexual abuse training showed high relevance and improved understanding among attendees, and senior management reported confidence to support other staff. Responses to the Question "what is the most valuable aspects of the course?" are included. Two more learning reviews have been agreed upon.</p> <p>These reviews improve safety, identify evolving risks, and ensure practices align with current legislation and national guidance. The ongoing work aims to provide better support, incorporate children's perspectives into decision-making, and empower families to understand their rights and participate in assessments. Learning reviews promote transparency, continuous improvement, better multi-agency communication, and a more integrated system.</p>
<p>Children, young people and families are empowered to participate in Child Protection Processes</p> <p><i>"I actively seek solutions to problems. I carefully consider the language I am using. I listen to the problem, validate pain before helping</i></p>	<p>Solution orientated Child Protection Planning Meetings (CPPM) are fully implemented, and regular quality assurance dip sampling is reported to the Child Protection Committee. 125 practitioners have attended training this year. All CPPMs subjected to quality assurance in this period were held in a solution orientated manner. Examples of feedback on the training are included.</p> <p><i>"I listen carefully and do not interrupt with questions. When setting goals, I make them relevant, manageable and achievable."</i></p> <p><i>"I feel more confident in chairing meetings with parents and feel that there is a more positive outcome for all involved."</i></p>

Family: Keeping Children and young people safe	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p><i>to find a solution” Training attendee</i></p>	<p>The new Advocacy service and contract monitoring are now in place. The Child Protection Committee (CPC) and commissioned services are working on how to quantify, evaluate, and report activities. During this period, half of the quality-assured CPPMs reported the advocacy service was available to the child, and in 5 cases, it was available to the parent. In 2 cases, the child was too young to understand the process, and in 1 case, the team felt they could advocate well for the child (accepting this is not independent advocacy) due to strong working relationships. Examples of feedback include:</p> <p><i>“I don’t know where I would be without you explaining all the things I have to do to help get my kids back” – Parent.</i></p> <p><i>“I wouldn’t have managed my children being removed without your support and guiding me through my rights in this awful situation I’m in. Thank you.” – Parent.</i></p> <p><i>“I have never said what I want or who I want to live with as it always causes a fight between my mum and dad, but I can tell you now”. – Young Person</i></p>
<p>Children and young people develop healthy relationships with peers, online and in the community.</p> <p><i>“I can talk about my feelings...I don't feel like walls are caving in anymore.” (Young survivor aged 13)</i></p>	<p>The Moray – Let’s Chat Online Safety Campaign, which officially ended in February 2024 has been extended through school sessions, information stalls at events and both professionals and parent/carers sessions held online and in person. Focus has been increased on sharing nude images and sextortion and new materials are being developed to explore misogynistic influences. Awareness has been raised of the role of the CPC, and of the new Moray Protects information website.</p> <p>128 S4 pupils were involved in sextortion sessions delivered by the CPC in partnership with Police Scotland and 42 campaign leaflets and 73 top tips leaflet were distributed at the RAF Lossiemouth Friends & Families Day, with the leaflet on how to manage screen time with children proving the most popular.</p> <p>Sexual violence prevention work with young people in Moray Moray Rape Crisis delivers the national Sexual Violence Prevention Programme to young people aged 11–25 across Moray. The programme includes four age-appropriate workshops tailored to different year groups, aiming to prevent sexual abuse by increasing understanding of key issues like consent. Between April 2024 and March 2025, 119 workshops were delivered to 2,054 young people.</p>

Family: Keeping Children and young people safe	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>“This has helped me be able to talk to someone instead of bottling it all up and the support I've been getting has helped me a lot with liking myself again.” (Young survivor aged 15)</p>	<p>Therapeutic and advocacy support for young people in Moray affected by sexual violence.</p> <p>The Rise Up project at Moray Rape Crisis offers trauma-informed support, advocacy, and information to young people aged 11–18 affected by sexual violence. In 2024–25, 38 young people were supported through 1,436 appointments and contacts. There were 28 new referrals from various partners, with 15 currently on the waiting list. From a sample of 19 evaluation forms, 87% felt more able to interact with others, 67% more able to cope, 60% reported increased self-esteem, and 60% felt more hopeful.</p>
<p>Children and young people are safer because risks have been identified early and responded to effectively.</p>	<p>Graded Care Profile 2 training continues alongside briefing sessions for the wider workforce.</p> <p>Safe & Together training continues, an evaluation report has been completed and presented to the CPC. A retrospective file audit is planned to evaluate the difference in practice and impact on children & families, this is to be led by social work staff.</p> <p>Following CPC self assessment of implementation in 2023, Moray procedures were updated and re-launched, August 2024.</p> <p>A Contextual safeguarding short life working group has been established to conduct a self evaluation exercise, which will inform the plan for adopting a framework locally, utilising the scale up toolkit from the Contextual Safeguarding Network. A self-evaluation exercise is underway to review our approach to safeguarding young people at risk of harm within the community.</p>
<p>Those who come into conflict with the law are supported with compassion and care</p>	<p>Moray’s Protection from Serious Harm process (equivalent of Care and Risk Management) was agreed by CPC in April 2024 and operational from 30 August 2024 as part of Moray’s revised multiagency child protection procedures. The first protection from serious harm meeting was held in Moray towards the end of the reporting period, which has enabled the team to follow the new procedures, and Social Work Services and Police will meet to discuss, reflect and de-brief on the process.</p>

Family: Keeping Children and young people safe	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
	<p>Following this there will be a session developed for IRD (Inter-agency Referral Discussion) chairs and service managers to distribute the learning.</p>
<p>Children and young people are supported through recovery and do not experience further trauma</p>	<p>Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM) in Moray is fully implemented. Annual Evaluation report completed and presented to CPC and regular evaluation reports will be provided to CPC utilising the national SCIM QA and data framework. Between 1st April 2024-31st March 2025 100% of joint interviews in Moray were conducted by the SCIM team.</p> <p>Feedback from older children and young people in the Northeast (due to low numbers, feedback is not broken down by area) included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% felt interviewers worked with them, gave them choices, made them feel safe, and helped them tell their story • 94% would be happy to talk to the interviewers again <p>Feedback for younger Children included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 72% were happy with the interview process explanation, 21% were okay with it • 79% felt happy speaking with the interviewers, 21% felt okay • 100% felt safe/happy in the room and would speak to the interviewers again <p>A trauma informed development officer post has been recruited.</p> <p>Moray’s application for 2025/26 Bairns’ Hoose funding at the end of this reporting period has been confirmed as successful. The application was completed in collaboration with Police, Health, Social Work Services and Quarriers, our commissioned Children’s Rights service provider. Our application builds on learning from pathfinder sites and includes a test of change to align with Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire project plans in 2025/26.</p> <p>In addition to the Development Fund application, Moray has applied for test of change funding to include a Health Coordinator post and specialist Speech and Language Team (SLT) provision. Based on learning from other</p>

Family: Keeping Children and young people safe

Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>Children and young people are supported through recovery and do not experience further trauma (cont.)</p>	<p>pathfinder sites, proposals were initially developed by NHS Grampian to cover Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. If the Moray application is successful, it will maintain consistency for the SCIM team in all three authority areas and ensure equity of healthcare coordination and specialist SLT service provision for children and young people in Moray.</p> <p>Moray’s application represents a strategic move to transform how we support children impacted by trauma, particularly those involved in abuse investigations. The Bairns’ Hoose model aims to reduce anxiety and build trust, fostering a more positive and productive experience for the child. The inclusion of a dedicated health co-ordinator and specialist speech and language therapy within the application underscores a commitment to addressing the holistic needs of traumatised children, recognising that trauma often manifests in both physical and communication-related challenges.</p>

Children with disability and neurodiversity and their families will receive the support they need to enable the children to reach their potential

Family: Supporting children and families who experience challenges due to disability and neurodiversity	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
Children and young people's education and care needs are met, regardless of need.	<p>The ASN education review is ongoing, focusing on adapted curriculums, resource allocation, policy guidance, training, and ASN provision in Moray. A survey of parents and carers received 800 responses, which are being analysed.</p> <p>Progress includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ All education staff completed a 5-component training program before the 2024/25 academic year to better support a variety of young people's needs ➤ The Moray Adapted Curriculum (MAC) was launched for children with the most complex and varied support needs, when either mainstream or enhanced provision may not be suitable. The focus is on individual learning plans managed through the child planning process. Currently, 14 children are supported by MAC, 11 of whom were previously not attending school ➤ The Flexible Framework: Curriculum for All was introduced to provide education out with school settings, with 12 approved providers. Evaluation and a promotional video are in progress
Parents and young people with neurodiversity challenges can access early help and support	<p>We continue to deliver the Early Bird programme for families of children under 5 with neurodiversity challenges, supporting 33 families to date.</p> <p>Partners have restarted ASN parent drop-ins with the support of the locality networks. These sessions help families discuss available support and activities, including financial assistance. Based on parent feedback, they will now be held monthly.</p> <p>The Moray Parent Project has introduced neurodiversity workshops to build parents' skills and confidence. These workshops are very popular, with 15 held in the last 6 months. We are working to combine these workshops with</p>

Family: Supporting children and families who experience challenges due to disability and neurodiversity	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
	<p>self-care sessions for parents to emphasise positive mental wellbeing. These sessions are now linked with schools to provide more peer support and improve home to school communication.</p> <p>The workshop has also been adapted for community organisations to increase understanding and inclusion of neurodiversity.</p>
<p>Children, young people and families with additional support needs have improved access to sport, leisure and community-based activities</p> <p>“It was amazing to see a pupil with complex ASN struggling to learn to cycle to the develop into a safe, competent cyclist. His parents, myself and other staff have noticed that his overall confidence and maturity has grown as a direct result of this cycling project” School staff lead</p>	<p>A system-based approach has been used to create a plan to improve physical activity in Moray developed with various partners. In 2025/2026, they will focus on improving access for individuals with additional support needs (ASN).</p> <p>A pilot project using the new flexible framework is developing at Mortlach Primary School and focuses on care-experienced young people, including those with ASN/disabilities. The project uses sports to boost confidence and positive school experiences as part of an alternative curriculum provision.</p> <p>The Moray Disability Sport Hub was created to develop more opportunities for individuals with ASN/disabilities through collaborative working. Twenty adults completed a disability inclusion course by Scottish Disability Sport.</p> <p>The Moray Active Schools Programme tracks participation rates of young people with ASN or disabilities in extracurricular activities. Of 3749 pupils, 1109 have ASN and 112 are assessed as disabled. Moray's ASN rate is 41.6%, with 32.9% accessing the programme. The gap in participation is -8.7% for ASN and -1.5% for disabilities, compared to national gaps of -14% and -0.8%, respectively.</p> <p>New activities include relaxed sports for neurodiverse children at Keith Primary ASN base and an ASN cycling project. So far, 179 participants have attended 48 cycle sessions, with 98% feeling healthier, 96% more confident, 80% making friends, and 82% feeling their needs were met.</p> <p>Social Work Services commissioned a 3rd sector organisation to provide fun-based group sessions for children with disabilities between the age of 5-18 years afterschool, on weekends and during holidays to help further address the gap of accessing suitable provision. The preparation is complete, and sessions begin in April 2025.</p>

Family: Supporting children and families who experience challenges due to disability and neurodiversity	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
Families can access a neurodiversity diagnosis in a timely way	<p>Work in relation to a Grampian neurodevelopmental pathway has been slow to progress. However, there has been learning from a pilot project which ran in Aberdeen. The project utilised a multidisciplinary team to assess children in schools, with a family link worker supporting the family. This reduced the referral-to-diagnosis time from 34 weeks to 6 weeks. Funding has now been secured to extend the pilot which will include a family link worker covering Moray.</p> <p>In Moray, diagnosis has remained possible through, the Autism Diagnosis Assessment Pathway Team (ADAPT) in addition to children with complex needs, who receive a diagnosis through CAMHS.</p> <p>In 2024, ADAPT received 182 referrals—an increase of 37.7% compared to the previous year. Very few (1%) referrals were declined. During the same period, 85 children received a diagnosis, representing a 165% increase from the previous year. However, the number of referrals has continued to rise, up by 38% from 2023. This trend highlights a persistent challenge: demand continues to outpace capacity, resulting in long waiting times for diagnosis in Moray.</p>
Children with additional support needs experience a smooth transition to adult services.	<p>A review of continuing care for young people with complex needs is being led by Social Work Services. So far, they have reviewed case samples, developed a draft continuing care policy, and updated the transition policy.</p> <p>Transition planning starts when the transition screening tool is completed by education services and the team around the child at age 14. The next step is a procedure within the child planning review to ensure application of "getting it right" principles, supporting effective transitions which reflect the needs of young people.</p>

SPOTLIGHT ON Young Carers

Quarriers provide Moray's carers service and currently have 199 young carers (YC) on their register. 119 referrals were made to the service this year. For those young carers who go on to register (which may include completing a young carer statement) a range of support is available.

- Information and advice, 48 YC received information including referrals to appropriate agencies, 15 YC supported with emergency planning for when not at home
- peer and social activities, 33 YC enjoyed activity theme days out or to shows like the Christmas pantomime
- emotional support, 16 YC were supported one-to-one including completing resiliency workbooks (developed through MHWB funding)
- skills development, 2 YC were supported to manage their feelings regarding being at school while their parent was at home
- access to small grants and short breaks, 16 YC in total attended two residential camps and £4831 in grants awarded

Feedback includes: 'It was an amazing experience and nice to meet other kids, it was fun being a kid for a couple of days.' (YC who attended SYCF), 'YC had a fabulous time at the art workshops. It was such a nice way for them to express themselves, and I loved seeing her work with everyone else's.' (Parent).

We want to make sure families can access the help they need, where and when they need it.

Family: Strengthening family support	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
Children and their family's needs are addressed early through implementation of effective child's planning processes	<p>There has been a continued rise in the number of children and young people entering the child planning process. A review of this trend highlighted the need for clearer guidance and training on when child planning is appropriate.</p> <p>Consultation on the new child planning paperwork continued this year. The Child Planning Thematic Group engaged children and young people throughout the process, including incorporating design input from a young person on work experience with the Children's Services Network Team. The paperwork has been piloted across several Associated School Groups, Health Visiting Teams, and Early Learning and Childcare centres. Feedback from these pilots has informed further improvements.</p> <p>Multi-agency training in Solution-Oriented approaches to meetings is underway, with a rolling programme in place. Currently, 12 trainers are delivering sessions, and 75% of key education staff have received the refreshed training. Third sector partners are also included in these opportunities to ensure a consistent approach across all contributors to the child planning process.</p> <p>To support families and professionals, a dedicated GIRFEC in Moray website has been launched providing local and national information on the GIRFEC approach, the child planning process, and available support. The site is linked to the national ALISS platform, enabling broader searches for services and community-based provision.</p> <p>Next steps include audit and self-evaluation to explore how effective the paperwork, and the wider child planning process is at responding to and supporting children to have their needs met. Further training will be developed specific to the process and learning. A multi-agency self-evaluation calendar will be incorporated into our wider performance and self-evaluation framework.</p>
There is a clear pathway of non-stigmatised support available to parents throughout Moray	<p>Family support remains a key priority in Moray. Multi-agency funding has been invested throughout the current Children's Services Plan to develop support across various settings, with ongoing work to align these efforts into a single, coordinated pathway.</p>


Family: Strengthening family support	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>Parents are supported and enabled to be the best parents they can be</p> <p>“She has helped X in situations where people often automatically blame X and has taken the time to listen and hear his version of events” Parent feedback, New Elgin Primary School SEF based work</p> <p>“The information has been rich & very helpful as a first-time mum. The professionals are knowledgeable & the practical demonstrations were very valuable.” Parent to be, PEEP</p>	<p>Family Support in Moray: A Coordinated and Evolving Approach</p> <p>Family support remains a central priority in Moray, with multi-agency investment driving the development of services across a range of settings. Throughout the current Children’s Services Plan, efforts are being made to align these supports into a single, coordinated pathway.</p> <p>Education’s Role in Strengthening Family Engagement</p> <p>Education has played a pivotal role using Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) and Scottish Equity Funding (SEF) to support initiatives such as parent coffee mornings, and weekly newsletters. The roles of Home School Link Workers and Family Link Workers have been enhanced through increase family engagement, home visits and tailored support.</p> <p>Lossiemouth High School is advancing plans to create a one-stop wellbeing hub for the wider Associated School Group (ASG) community, further improving local access to integrated family support.</p> <p>Early Intervention: The Peep Programme</p> <p>At the foundation of Moray’s emerging family support pathway is the universal Peep offer—a family learning approach that strengthens parent-child relationships and recognises parents as a child’s first educator. Peep availability is being increased to all families from pregnancy until school entry.</p> <p>Key developments include a 150% increase in Peep groups since April 2023, £180,000 of Whole Family Wellbeing Funding (WFWF) being invested to establish Moray’s first dedicated Peep team, delivery of sessions across Moray through partnership working with a further 35 additional staff and volunteers trained in March 2025 and 7 new partners joining the delivery network.</p> <p>By February 2025, 93% of pregnant women in Moray were invited to begin their Peep journey. Feedback highlights the value of relaxed, informal sessions where parents can ask questions, build peer networks, and better understand their baby’s needs. In addition, peep can be offered in one-to-one or very small groups over a longer period where more need is identified. We continue to offer this support through the Equity & Excellence Lead in the Forres Area currently.</p>

Family: Strengthening family support

Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>“After every session, I felt far more uplifted. The things you (Therapist) said has helped us to see things in a different way” – Parent, Functional Family therapy. May 2024</p> <p>It’s been really helpful to have a sounding board, someone outside of the family to talk to and to feel like we are involved, part of something” – Parent, Families Together, March 2025</p> <p>I had not heard of Youthpoint before and was sceptical, the staff were warm and soft spoken, they seemed to have an understanding of what family life was like for us and yet we were all strangers, I appreciated the support from the very first hello” – Parent, AYP. 07/03/2025</p> <p>“I have never been able to say what I think or what I want to happen. I can tell</p>	<p>Tier 2 Support: AB56 Futures Delivered by Action for Children and funded through early years investment, AB56 Futures provides holistic, tailored support to families with children aged 0–12, where a child aged 0–5 is present. Operating from hubs in Elgin and Buckie, the service offers parenting guidance, learning through play, strengthening family relationships, help with forms and appointments, signposting to financial and food support.</p> <p>Between April 2024 and March 2025, 81 families were referred, and the following outcomes achieve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 90% improvement in parenting skills, community engagement, and social connections ➤ 75% improvement in financial management ➤ 85% improvement in school attendance, practical skills, play, and emotional wellbeing <p>Intensive Family Support Children and Families Social Work invests £1 million annually into three intensive family support services and one advocacy service. These services support families at higher risk of breakdown, justice involvement, or care proceedings. They work with families both pre- and post-statutory intervention using evidence-based approaches.</p> <p>Key highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 328 referrals received across the three services ➤ The Family Together Service includes a financial support component, helping 30 families gain £56,304 and reduce debt by £9,517.81 ➤ 28 families received Functional Family Therapy ➤ 24 families participated in Family Group Decision Making <p>Advocacy Service is an independent service provided by Quarriers. Launched in October 2023, the advocacy service has supported 259 children and young people and 175 parents, carers, or siblings. Further details are available in the Safe and Care priority sections.</p>

Family: Strengthening family support	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>you and everyone listens and things are getting better”- Young Person August 2024</p> <p>I feel more able to go out and do things because of the time we spend together” Young Person, Aberlour Youth Point. August 2024</p>	<p>Additional Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aberlour Youth Point’s Early Help and Mentoring: Offers personalised, relationship-based support to around 125 young people annually, including holiday activities • YPZone: A drug and alcohol risk reduction service funded through a unique match-funding model. Since October 2022, 183 young people have accessed the service, which includes education, outreach, and one-to-one support. A local parent-led support group also meets regularly at the service’s premises <p>The Parent Project is detailed further in the Mental Wellbeing and WFWF report sections. The key next steps is the quality assurance of these services and the coordination into support pathway which has no gaps and is easily accessible.</p>
<p>Children’s transition into Nursery is consistently good</p> <p>“The phone calls and visits from Health Visitor to discuss new children's work. It would be great to continue collaborating in this way” ELC provider feedback.</p>	<p>A new template has been developed to share outcomes from the 27–30-month child development review between health visitors and nurseries. After a successful pilot in one ASG and refinements in a second with more nurseries, the process is being trialled Moray-wide during summer 2025 transitions. Nursery feedback has been very positive, particularly for transition planning, with full impact evaluation planned post-summer.</p> <p>The Early Bird programme, supporting parents of children diagnosed with autism or neurodiversity, has reached 33 families since staff training, including 7 this year. While uptake is low due to later diagnoses, feedback is highly positive. However, delivery has been limited by staff cuts linked to funding constraints.</p> <p><i>A parent “I’ve enjoyed attending the EarlyBird programme. It’s been so nice to listen and share our experiences and strategies with other parents. It’s helped me feel just a little bit more normal being around others in the same boat. I’ve learned a few tips and got a better understanding in autism.”</i></p> <p><i>A parent stated “Great programme, non-judgemental and safe place to share ideas and tips and stories and get advice while learning about autism”</i></p>

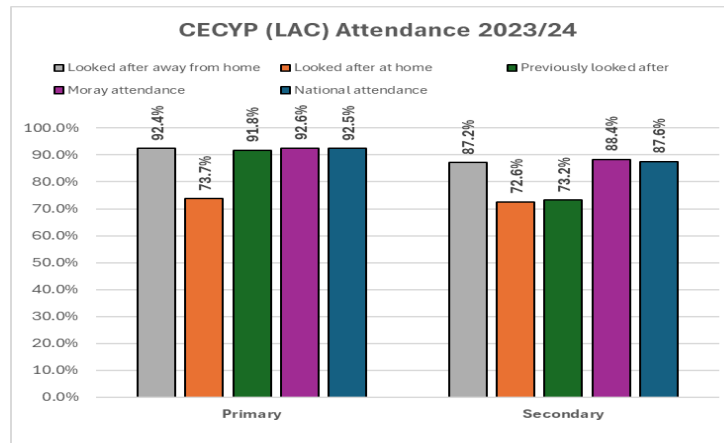
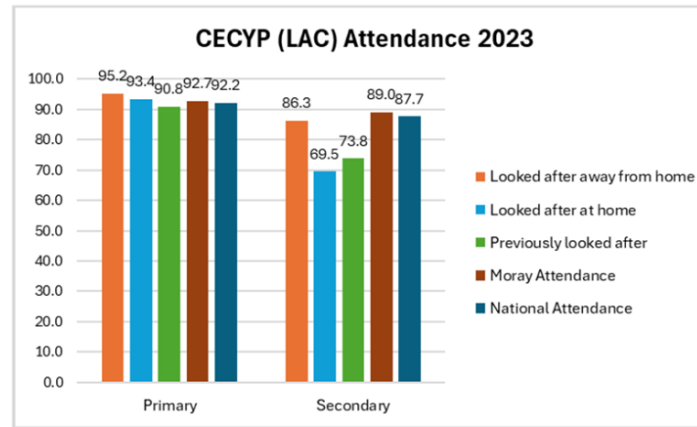
As Corporate Parents we are committed to working together in partnership to ensure our children and young people with experience of care receive the right support to reach their full potential and can be all they want to be

Care: Improving Outcomes for looked After and Care Experienced Children and Young People	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>The gap in educational outcomes of looked after and care experienced young people is reduced.</p> <p><i>“Many of our pupils are within the care experienced statistics and as a team we were reminded of the immense responsibility we all have as corporate parents. Every action and interaction with our children and young people became part of a reflective review, to ensure we were not only offering, but also providing the most positive experiences possible.”</i></p> <p>Feedback on Promise training award</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Case Study (Exlusions).docx</p> </div>	<p>Under the leadership of the Virtual School Head Teacher and strengthened partnership working, steady progress continues in improving outcomes for care-experienced children and young people. Enhanced data has enabled more targeted support.</p> <p>Key improvements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sharing through the Head Teachers’ handbook and briefings. Co-ordination with Quality Improvement officers to direct support appropriately to schools, this includes for CSP’s, Child’s Plans and SEEMIS data • A corporate parent self-evaluation toolkit piloted in secondary schools to enable secondary schools to track, and quality assure their processes in school • Rollout of the Education Scotland Keeping the Promise Training Award, now completed by 40% of schools. This supports inclusion and early intervention for all care experienced children & young people • Support for young people most at risk through attendance at children’s hearings, review meetings, child’s planning and education planning meetings, this in turn supports information sharing through the CARE Priority Group • The Children at Risk in Education (CARE) Priority Group, established in February 2024, ensures coordinated multi-agency responses for vulnerable pupils. Targeted interventions and advice and guidance have led to a 57% reduction in exclusions among looked-after children over the past year • Moray’s quarterly Scottish Attainment Challenge report shows that the combined impact of Strategic Equity Funding (SEF), Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), and the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund (CECYPF) is showing Moray is on track to meet our poverty and care experienced related stretch aims are on track

The gap in educational outcomes of looked after and care experienced young people is reduced.

Attendance:

The ongoing review of attendance data highlights that, while Moray continues to exceed national averages for both primary and secondary sectors, the attendance of care-experienced young people—particularly those looked after at home or previously looked after at the secondary stage remains an area of focus.



Empowering Care-Experienced Young People in Moray through Promise Groups:





Following a successful £75,000 funding bid from the Corra Foundation—driven by the voices of care-experienced young people—Moray has established a network of Promise Groups. These groups offer safe, inclusive spaces for care-experienced children and young people to share their views and influence change in their school communities. There are currently six active groups across primary and secondary schools, plus one at Moray College UHI.

Highlights include:

- Primary schools offering enhanced opportunities such as cooking, sports coaching, and outdoor learning with Outfit Moray and Wildthings
- Buckie High School students leading their own Promise Group, supported by Youthwork, and collaborating with Wildbird Visual Arts on a film project
- Moray College UHI group reflecting on educational barriers and working to raise awareness of support pathways for care-experienced learners transitioning to further education

Active Schools

We have worked closely with Active Schools colleagues to raise awareness of *The Promise* and the unique needs of our care-experienced children and young people. This collaboration has led to steady and meaningful progress. Participation from care-experienced young people has increased from 50 to 67 individuals in the 2023/24 academic year. Active schools have supported Champions Board events to explore further opportunities with young people. Encouragingly, some care-experienced young people are now involved as young leaders within the programme—an area identified for further development in 2025/26.

<p>Looked after and care experienced young people enter and sustain education, training, or employment after leaving school.</p>	<p>In the 2023/24 academic year, 70% of Looked After Children (14 out of 20) progressed to a positive post-school destination—a slight increase from previous years. Six young people did not, highlighting the continued need for sustained post-leaving support and the challenges faced during transition. Further Education remains the most common pathway, representing 45% of all leavers and 64% of positive outcomes. Over the reporting period, 36 care-experienced young people engaged with Moray Pathways, including 19 supported through the Mentoring Young Talent programme. The below cases studies demonstrate how the support can be impactful.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  Megan.docx </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  Case Study (Henry).docx </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  Amy.docx </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  Case Study (Tom).docx </div> </div>
<p>The health needs of looked after children and young people are met.</p>	<p>Health needs of looked after children continue to be addressed through a coordinated, multi-agency approach. Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) are completed when a child or young person becomes looked after. 72% of IHAs are now completed in four weeks, up from 56%, with delays only occurring when young people declined the assessment. Emotional wellbeing is monitored using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), though further work is needed to ensure consistent completion to support timely referrals.</p> <p>Joint working remains strong across children’s homes, fostering, adoption, kinship care, CAMHS, and education. Monthly consultations with a CAMHS psychotherapist for children in residential care provides expert guidance and tailored support. Carer feedback continues to be positive, reflecting the value of this collaborative approach.</p>
<p>Looked after and care experienced young people, and their parents/carer feel their voice has been heard through the provision of independent advocacy.</p>	<p>Moray’s Children’s Rights Service continues to support the rights and voices of young people, and their families. Over the past year, the service has engaged with 162 young people and 86 parents, carers, and brothers and sisters, including 82 looked after children.</p> <p>During the last year there has been a 34% increase in looked after children accessing independent advocacy. This rise reflects systems improvements, ensuring timely and consistent access to independent</p>

<p>“I feel a lot better about my Education. I feel more supported by school, and I want to try and return as I know I have choices and a voice to say when it is too overwhelming.” [Millie 12years old]</p> <p>“I’m happy to stay with my family.” [Lily, 8 years old]</p>	<p>advocacy throughout young people’s care journey, including young people preparing to leave care and care leavers.</p> <p>All children and young people have had their voices heard and represented at statutory review meetings and Children’s Hearings, reinforcing our commitment to upholding their rights.</p> <p><i>“We have made more progress in the last month with Moray Children’s Rights than in the last two years. The support has been life changing not only for our daughter but us as parents. We can’t recommend this service enough.” [Parent of Looked After Child]</i></p>
<p>The number and range of placements available meets the needs of children and young people in need of care.</p>	<p>The number of approved foster carer households in Moray has seen a slight decline during 2024. While our ongoing carer recruitment campaign continues to bring in new fostering households, this progress is offset by others ceasing to foster or changing the type of care they provide. This challenge reflects a wider issue, locally and nationally, on the recruitment and retention of foster carers.</p> <p>Despite these challenges, the carer recruitment campaign remains a key priority in the year ahead. Alongside recruitment, efforts to improve support for carers are being prioritised. These include enhanced supervision, access to bespoke training, and improved financial support for carers. Over the past year, four new fostering households have been approved.</p> <p>During this reporting year we have seen a reduction in the number of care disruptions and unplanned endings for children and young people. Work is underway to limit the number of young people cared for out with Moray. We recognise that out-of-area care can disrupt important relationships and access to local support services, including health care, education, and connections with family and friends.</p>
<p>Transitions feel and are experienced as integrated, with maintaining relationships being paramount.</p>	<p>The Maintaining Relationships Project is a grass roots project that secured Corra funding for an Improvement Officer to develop a policy that alongside young people and practitioners to ensure relationships are protected during and after transitions.</p> <p>During the last year 11 young people were supported to raise awareness of the project, undertaken a range of engagement events to gather stories of transitions and are currently working with our local policy team to</p>

	<p>co-design the policy. A celebration event is planned for the end of the year and will include an evaluation of the impact of the project.</p> <p>Our local children’s house has developed their own maintaining relationship’s protocol to ensure young people do not lose connections with those who cared for them, they continue to support 9 young people who have left care over the past 2 years. Additionally, Action for Children have received funding to employ a care worker with a specific role to support transitions, commencing in the summer of 2025.</p>								
<p>Siblings are supported to maintain positive relationships with one another.</p>	<p>Moray benefits from being a small, rural area. Almost all of brothers and sisters have been able to stay together in homes found by our Fostering and Adoption teams, the numbers are small for those who cannot live together with plans in place to support brothers and sisters.</p> <p>On average 86% of brothers and sisters are accommodated together in Moray, the national average as of 2023 is 79%.</p> <p>We have undertaken awareness raising sessions across the partnership to upskill Corporate Parents on brothers and sisters rights. This includes targeted work with:</p> <table border="0" data-bbox="595 783 1951 927"> <tr> <td>Fostering and adoption team</td> <td>9 Action for Children workers</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Social work leadership team</td> <td>2 parent participation groups – Children 1st</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6 Foster carers</td> <td>6 Birth parent groups- Children 1st</td> </tr> <tr> <td>19 Young people</td> <td>Locality planning network- brothers and sisters’ workshop</td> </tr> </table>	Fostering and adoption team	9 Action for Children workers	Social work leadership team	2 parent participation groups – Children 1st	6 Foster carers	6 Birth parent groups- Children 1 st	19 Young people	Locality planning network- brothers and sisters’ workshop
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<p>Children and young people seeking asylum are fully integrated into school and community life.</p>	<p>Over the past year, Moray has supported nine New Scots (formerly Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children) through the National Transfer Scheme. Allocated by the Home Office, these young people are classed as looked after and supported by the Throughcare and Aftercare Team. Initially placed in Supported Lodgings or Accommodation, they are successfully supported into independent housing once asylum is granted. COSLA has recognised Moray’s flexible, needs-led approach as a <i>good practice</i> model.</p> <p>New processes have been introduced to ensure timely access to health, wellbeing, education, and training for all newly arrived young people. Engagement in community life has grown, with increased participation in events such as the Moray Champions Board, helping young people connect with peers and build a sense of belonging.</p>								

<p>Looked after and care experienced young people are not overrepresented in the children and family’s justice system.</p>	<p>Care-experienced young people (CEYP) remain overrepresented in the justice system. As of 2024/25, 8.3% (44 of 532) of individuals in the justice system up to age 26 were CEYP, with 13 children receiving Youth Justice support. These figures have remained below 12% throughout the year. Early identification and intervention remain key, with partners working to reduce reoffending and time spent in justice services. Police Scotland has expanded its Prevention and Intervention Team, including a Youth Engagement Officer who now acts as a single point of contact for local children’s houses and the Throughcare and Aftercare Team and an Early and Effective Intervention Worker.</p> <p>Moray continues to embed trauma-informed practice across services. A dedicated Trauma-Informed Lead has consulted with 47 teams across children’s, adult, justice, health, education, housing, and internal services. This approach has contributed to a reduction in the use of restraint—no incidents were recorded in local children’s houses over the past year. These homes use therapeutic approaches such as Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy to provide nurturing care. For children out of area, a robust tracking system ensures restraint reduction plans are in place where appropriate.</p>
<p>Our improvement activity is shaped by the voice of our looked after and care experienced young people.</p> <p><i>“I did not notice any difference during the transition. My relationship with my foster carers stayed the same.” (Young person in continuing care)</i></p>	<p>Care-Experienced Young People: Driving Change</p> <p>Care-experienced young people play a vital role in shaping their services. Key participation highlights from the past year include:</p> <p>Digital Access - All care leavers now receive Wi-Fi and mobile data support to ensure digital inclusion</p> <p>Champions Board Podcast - Created to amplify young voices across Moray</p> <p>Service Design - Young people helped redesign Youth Justice feedback forms and co-developed the Better Ideas Group</p> <p>Recruitment - Actively involved in staff selection processes</p> <p>Language Matters - Promoted trauma-informed language, helping young people feel “cared for” and “heard”</p> <p>Mentoring Young Talent - Informed model improvements and now co-deliver mentor training</p> <p>Continuing Care - Consultations led to clearer information and a new leaflet co-designed by young people.</p>

	<p>These initiatives reflect a strong commitment to co-production and ensuring young people's voices lead to meaningful change</p>
<p>Next Steps</p>	<p>The Corporate Parenting Strategic Group, responsible for delivering the care priorities outlined in the Children's Services Plan, has undertaken a streamlining exercise to review current data and identify key actions for the year ahead. Priorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving educational outcomes and supporting positive post-school destinations for care-experienced children and young people • Roll out and implementation of the Maintaining Relationships Project to help young people sustain important connections • Enhancing data collection and analysis through a robust data and self-evaluation model • Promoting better health outcomes for care-experienced young people • Increasing support for foster and kinship carers to improve care stability and outcomes

Our workforce includes all volunteers, carers and employees who have a role in improving the wellbeing of children, young people and their families

People: Supporting Our Workforce	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>Integrated working practice is enhanced through joint development opportunities that supports our shared vision, core principles and values.</p>	<p>In 2024/2025, over 300 practitioners attended various multiagency training sessions, including child protection and online safety. An additional 350 attended specialised training on gangs, county lines, and child sexual abuse.</p> <p>A new training framework has been developed focused on four priority areas: mental health, substance use, parenting, and vulnerability & exploitation. It identifies six practice areas: relationships, record keeping, trauma-informed practice, challenging conversations, boundaries, and strengths-based working. This framework helps map existing training, identify gaps, and plan future training. Practitioner feedback confirms the content is relevant to their day-to-day work.</p> <p>We are aligning new training with National Child Protection Guidance and GIRFEC Policy to enhance practice-based learning. Stronger partnerships and increased cross-sector training <i>sign-ups</i> reflect the feedback when staff see how the training will benefit their day-to-day roles, and they feel their needs have been heard.</p>

<p>Staff facilitate and enable the relationships, networks and connections that support our children, young people and families</p>	<p>Since May 2024, the dedicated Trauma Informed Development Officer has been working to embed trauma-informed practices across our partnership. All existing training has been updated to include trauma-informed and strengths-based principles, and these are now part of all new learning opportunities. Additionally we have focused on the importance of language, introduced more relational language that reflects our core values of kindness, compassion and connection.</p> <p>A Trauma Implementation Group was formed, and Moray joined a national pilot. So far, 36 teams have received introductory briefs, and 12 teams have completed the full reflective process using the "walk through lens" tool.</p> <p>A training plan is being developed to ensure access to informed, skilled, or enhanced level training. A trauma-informed practice page has been added to the Moray Interchange, and tools to evaluate the impact of these practices are being explored.</p> <p>This role is helping to embed a trauma-informed approach across our children's services partnership with shared responsibility for being trauma informed. Consistent shared language acquired through shared learning sessions is strengthening trust between services when working together to support the same child or family.</p> <p>Work continues the implementation of a new Children Services Partnership Self- Evaluation and Continuous Improvement Approach. We have introduced more formal audit activity into learning & development as opposed to evaluation on initial training feedback and attendance by utilising reflective tools like the walk-through lens. We are more able to identify which parts of training require reinforcement and consider the impact of training over time.</p>
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We will strive to ensure that our governance, culture, systems and processes empower our paid and voluntary workforce and local communities to deliver the improvements children and young people have told us matter most to them

Scaffolding: Working in Partnership	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>As a partnership, we are aware of the changing needs of children, young people and their families.</p>	<p>Partners collaborated to produce a comprehensive Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for the Children’s Services Plan. In 2024, the adult JSNA was updated, offering deeper insight into the challenges facing families and communities.</p> <p>Our governance structure brings together cross-sector data and insight. We are preparing to update both the JSNA and wellbeing indicators through the upcoming Health & Wellbeing Survey to inform the next Children’s Services Plan.</p> <p>Emerging data includes a sharp rise in poverty, Moray ranking fifth in Scotland for suicide rates, and persistent issues of violence, anti-social behaviour, and contextual safeguarding. There has been an increase in children entering care and being placed out of area, affecting wellbeing and budgets.</p> <p>Progress from the ASN review has enabled more children with complex needs to engage in education, though staffing shortages continue to limit progress.</p> <p>Moray relies heavily on small, community-based organisations for local support, with fewer national providers than other areas. Financial pressures, reduced volunteering, and rising costs have led to service closures. Many small providers are struggling to sustain their workforce and access training to meet the increasingly complex needs of children, young people, and families.</p>

Scaffolding: Working in Partnership	
Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>As a partnership, we maximise all opportunities to lever in additional funding and work together to ensure it supports the delivery of our shared priorities.</p>	<p>Moray has intentionally focused on a small number of priority areas within children’s services, recognising the challenges of recruitment and securing the right expertise, which can impact delivery and funding.</p> <p>Key areas of progress include:</p> <p>Youth Participation - £75K was secured from Corra to develop a youth participation model, focused on care-experienced young people. Building on Aberdeenshire’s Promise Group model, six local groups have been established. Funding is devolved to each group, enabling young people to identify and act on local priorities. Activities to date include filmmaking, art, sports, and community trips, with summer opportunities identified as a key focus. This work is delivered in partnership with Education, the Children’s Services Network, and community youth workers</p> <p>Transitions Support - Action for Children secured Williamson Grant funding to pilot a transition worker post. Additional funding from the Mental Wellbeing Partnership supports care leavers facing mental health challenges during the transition to adulthood—an especially vulnerable period</p> <p>Bairns’ Hoose - both development and test for change funding has been confirmed to ensure consistency in the SCIM team activities across all 3 areas of Grampian and to complete a test for change to transform how we support children impacted by trauma, particularly those involved in abuse investigations, addressing the holistic needs of traumatised children, recognising that trauma often manifests in physical and communication-related responses</p> <p>Maintaining Relationships: Ongoing work with Corra supports care-experienced young people in maintaining important relationships, including brothers and sisters, through improved procedures and practice</p> <p>Community-Led Mental Health Research: Moray Wellbeing Hub secured long-term funding to lead community-driven mental health research and co-create solutions. The focus is on building “mental wealth” and reducing stigma through locally informed, participatory approaches</p>

Scaffolding: Working in Partnership

Our focus for improvement	Our actions and progress
<p>The risk of silo working across children and adult services minimised.</p>	<p>A partnership-based governance structure has been established to support children’s services planning. However, limited capacity has been a significant barrier to progress. In response, the structure is being temporarily streamlined to focus efforts on delivering key actions within the current plan.</p> <p>Amid change and challenges across all three lead partners—Moray Council, NHS Grampian, and Health & Social Care Moray—silo working remains a risk. To address this, partnership chairs and improvement officers are empowered to identify and challenge siloed approaches, promoting greater collaboration and alignment.</p>
<p>We more consistently and effectively measure impact of the actions we are taking to improve outcomes for children, young people and families.</p>	<p>Our recent inspection recognised the ambition of our Children’s Services Plan (CSP), while also highlighting the need to support our workforce through change. In response, we are refining our focus for the remainder of the year, with key priorities outlined at the end of this report.</p> <p>A new self-evaluation and performance framework is being embedded. To strengthen our impact, we recognise the need to become more outcome-focused, with clearer, measurable indicators. Our aim is to make meaningful progress in the final year of the current plan and carry forward learning into the next planning cycle.</p>
<p>The co-ordination of continuous improvement activity improves</p>	<p>Work continues to establish a more coordinated approach (see the previous outcome) with a cross-sector development session scheduled as part of our effort to achieve this.</p>

Next Steps

For the final year of our CSP, we have streamlined our focus to two key outcomes in most priority areas. To support delivery, a temporary streamlined governance structure will also be introduced to target staffing capacity to drive forward the outcomes identified.

We are continuing to embed our performance and self-evaluation framework to better evidence *what's working well* and where improvement is needed. This will include work to ensure regular updates on how we are doing against the national wellbeing indicators.

Work has begun on the next CSP with the next iteration being more streamlined and outcome-driven, ensuring we build on key successes while maintaining a clear focus for the next 3–5 years.

The following areas of improvement will be focused upon by:

- ✓ Developing a youth voice network and youth participation and voice strategy
- ✓ Tackling child poverty by working to minimise impact on families by tackling barriers to young adults and parents to entering and sustaining learning, training and employment through employability support and addressing childcare challenges
- ✓ Improving access to the right mental health & wellbeing support for children, young people and their parents at the time they need it and continuing to strengthen community based mental wellbeing
- ✓ Empowering children, young people and families to participate in child protection processes and identifying risk earlier and responding effectively
- ✓ Continuing work to ensure children and young people's education and care needs are fully met regardless of their nature of need and continuing to improve access to neurodiversity diagnosis in a timely manner
- ✓ Developing a clear pathway of non-stigmatised family support for parents to be the best parents they can be
- ✓ Continuing to close the educational outcomes gap between looked after and non-looked after children and support care experienced young people to sustain post school destinations
- ✓ Expanding the range of care available when a child needs care and continuing to maintain their important relationships
- ✓ Delivering the workforce development priorities including trauma informed practice
- ✓ Ensuring we consistently and effectively measure impact of improvement actions through coordinated improvement activity
- ✓ Evidencing how children, young people and families' voices are shaping services

Appendix I

Whole Family Wellbeing Report

Section 1: Outline the individual activity being undertaken and how it related to the Outcome logic model including evidence of impact and detail of cost and % of funding used on each activity.

Activity 1: Based on evidence from parent surveys, JSNA family engagement and service feedback a gap highlighted the need for a parent-focused service aimed at building parental confidence and skills to support both parental wellbeing and child's mental wellbeing and resilience.

Parent Wellbeing and Resilience Project

The service offer consists of a combination of group workshops, 1-1 wellbeing consultations, and 1:1 support offers to parents of children 4-18 years. To date we have strong evidence of positive outcomes for parents of increased knowledge of mental wellbeing and resilience, greater confidence and self-esteem in parenting, improved strategies to support children's mental health and reported enhanced empathy, understanding and connection with their children.

Following a successful 6-month pilot, the project was extended into a 2-year development phase through WFWF funding. The pilot included 235 parents, with a 98% self-referral rate and included 19% single parents, 11% of parents reporting financial hardship, and 20% experiencing mental health challenges of their own.

Six months into the second phase (WFWF supported), 249 parents have participated of which 47% are single parents, 20% report having financial struggles and 38% report mental health challenges of their own. Impact Highlights include positive changes on all measures in self-reported knowledge, parental self-esteem, in use of supportive strategies and parent-child relationships. As shown in the figure below

Baseline Measures	Parents reported	Outcome Measures	Parents reported
Lack of Knowledge	42%	Increase in Knowledge	90%
Low Confidence	50%	Increase in Confidence	88%
Low Self-esteem	33%	Increase in Self-esteem	85%
Lack of Strategies	46%	More Strategies	100%
Relationship Issues	12%	Stronger Relationships	70%

Additionally:

- 14% of referrals involve children in formal/informal care arrangements
- 76% of children have become engaged in school-based interventions.

The project not only upskills parents but also enhances the effectiveness of child-focused interventions, reinforcing a whole-family approach.

Aligned with WFWF outcomes, the service is co-designed with families, stigma-free, preventative, and accessible—offering flexible support that meets families’ needs and evidenced improved family wellbeing. The next stages include co-developed support offers for foster carers and increased connections to financial support provision.

Included is the presentation shared at the Community MH national forum.

COSTS OF £29,143 THIS ANNUM, 5.6% OF ANNUAL FUNDING, COMMITTED TO TOTAL OF £120K OVER 2 YEARS.



The Exchange -
Moray Parents Present

Activity 2: PEEP Universal Pathway (also see family section of annual report)

Over the past 18 months, we have built a robust, partnership-based model to deliver early, preventative family learning support. Starting with core partners—NHS, Health Improvement, Early Years, a national third sector charity, and employability services—we have expanded to include libraries, family learning, Army Welfare, local charities, childminders, and early years providers, all now trained in Peep.

A key milestone was securing a space on the nationally funded Peep Learning Together Programme. We also commissioned the third sector using local WFWF to develop front-facing Peep roles and resources, coordinating delivery and working to embed key messages, including financial support, into sessions. A quality assurance framework is in development to ensure consistency as staff and volunteers become established, ensuring equity of offer and experiences across Moray.

In just two years, we’ve progressed from no provision to 93% of pregnant women in Moray (as of Feb 2025) being invited to join Peep sessions, continuing until their child turns five. Group numbers have grown from 6 to 15–18 sessions running most weeks, with a further 30% increase planned by September. A summer programme will launch for the first time this year.

This model represents a strategic shift toward sustainable, community-led early help. It empowers families and communities, with Moray’s approach now showcased nationally and drawing interest from other local authorities. We are also developing a parent-led “experts by experience” group to shape future delivery. Pre- and post-session feedback is now collected, enabling us to track immediate impact and against long-term outcomes such as reduced developmental concerns and fewer children entering P1 needing wellbeing support.

Core components (WFWF outcomes) include increased access and availability of family support, families are at the centre of service design with the model developed ensuring support for all as close to home as possible, and workforce development including upskilling community-based

organisation and community volunteers.



PEEP FLT Expression
of interest .pdf

COSTS: £37,500 THIS YEAR, 7.2% OF CURRENT YEARS FUNDING, COMMITMENT IS 2 YEARS: TOTAL OF £180K.

Activity 3: Employment of a Learning & Development Officer

The role has focused initially on the collation and analysis of a range of information sources to develop a training needs-based framework. It is intended to support the embedding of principles of family support across multi-agency practice. The role is taken the lead within our learning & development group, with the purpose of shifting emphasis from remedial and reactive practice to prevention, early support and diversion.

Priority areas have been identified of mental health, substance use, parenting and vulnerability and exploitation. The Learning & Development Officer has developed a new suite of training covering risk, harm and vulnerability, child sexual exploitation and gangs. The suite of training is in part is responding to increased contextual safeguarding concerns evidence in rising anti-social behaviour, drug use and risk-taking behaviours and associated training needs. The role holder has specific experience in relation to contextual safeguarding, supporting developing new processes and policy within this area which will help all to safeguard children and families.

This work relates to WFWF outcomes of leadership, workforce and culture. Activities have been recruitment to create capacity to undertake the needs analysis and develop a plan in relation to training across whole sector. Training has been both developed and procured.

Next steps are the training roll out and evaluation of impact on practice to see if families are better supported and have increased wellbeing.

COST; £27,868 (COVERS FIRST 6 MONTHS OF 18 MONTH POST). 5.3% OF CURRENT YEARS FUNDING

COMMITMENT TO 18 MONTH POST. TOTAL COST OF £85,193.

Activity 4: Investment in 3rd sector to lead the locality networks.

The networks are made-up of community organisations and frontline practitioners from across children services who have a remit to improve outcomes for children and families within the individual communities which make up Moray. The networks are focused on two-way communication, sharing practice and supporting the operationalisation of CSP strategic priorities while gathering local intelligence on emerging issues. A range of issues have been supported this year at an early stage including developing ASN family peer support, improving access to sexual health information for teenagers including the LGBTQI+ community, supporting collaborative responses to emerging community based anti-social behaviour and trialling low level intervention approaches in schools to improve community engagement.

The development of paid chair positions was a recommendation within the external evaluation of the locality planning structure, ensuring 3rd sector leadership, prioritisation of support and strengthening the capacity of the 3rd sector to take the lead in responding to issues.

COSTS: £18,247 (3.5% OF CURRENT YEARS FUNDING), CONTRACT TO END JUNE 2025, REMAINING COSTS FOR 25/26 ARE £4,971.24.

Activity 5: Wellbeing Coordinators

The roles were expanded to better support the team around the child, removing barriers to access and ensuring timely, appropriate support. This approach replaces previous scattergun methods that overwhelmed families, instead acting as both gatekeeper and bridge to specialist services. By improving referral quality and accuracy, the roles help streamline the process of accessing support, enabling quicker assessments and reducing unnecessary waits for unsuitable services. They have contributed to the development and rollout of new child planning paperwork in Moray and delivered solution-focused training to enhance the quality of meetings and the overall experience for families. This year saw a 28% increase in referrals to wellbeing coordinators and a 31% rise in child planning meetings, totalling 298.

A key focus has been supporting new education staff in their named person roles and increasing awareness of available support. In addition to family support, key issues addressed include school attendance, additional support needs, and behavioural challenges. We believe the role has reached its current potential and are now reassessing needs with families and professionals to explore support access routes further. Despite improved referral accuracy, service capacity remains strained. As a result, we are developing additional support roles and reviewing existing service offers.

This work aligns with outcomes under availability and access, enhancing support for children, young people, and families through improved workforce knowledge, refined processes, and more effective gatekeeping. While access to the right support has improved, ongoing high demand highlights the need for continued development

Cost: £119.975 PER ANNUM PLUS TRAVEL EXPENSES. 22.9% OF CURRENT ANNUAL FUNDING, ROLES ARE CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW.

Activity 6: Mentoring Young Talent: Expanding Opportunities for Young People

A successful mentoring programme originally designed for care-experienced young people has been expanded to support a broader group of young people aged 12 and over. The initiative employs dedicated keyworkers who carefully match young people with trained volunteer mentors. These mentors provide consistent support, encouragement, and inspiration—often engaging in new activities together to build confidence and broaden horizons. Each mentoring relationship lasts a minimum of one year, with a particular focus on key life transition points.

This programme forms part of a wider employability pathway that also supports post-school transitions and parental employability. Positive outcomes have included improved school attendance, enhanced engagement in learning, increased rates of positive post-school destinations, and measurable personal growth. Progress is tracked using self-assessment tools focused on wellbeing and social intelligence. Former mentees have also contributed to service development, helping to shape a more responsive and impactful programme.

Although funding from the WFWF officially began in September 2024, the revised approach was piloted from April 2024. This included expanding eligibility to young people aged 12+ and exploring new methods for involving parents. Since these changes were introduced, 64 young people have been referred to the Mentoring Young Talent programme.

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This initiative is one example of how family-focused services are addressing poverty-related challenges by connecting both young people and their parents to employability support.

Looking ahead, we plan to continue exploring the role of befriending and mentoring approaches in strengthening family support over the coming year.

Please see the case studies within the care section of the annual report and a selection of additional feedback quotes are included.



Mentoring Young
Talent feedback.pdf

FUNDING- £53,158 FROM THIS YEAR FUNDING, 10.1 % OF ANNUAL FUNDING. COMMITTED TO £77,312 IN 25/26.

Context: In response to rising youth risk-taking linked to substance use, staff training gaps, and family's concerns about losing control, we implemented a multi-component drug education programme. Its goals are to empower young people to make informed decisions, boost awareness and use of local support services, and build the confidence of both staff and families to engage constructively with young people on these issues.

Activity 7: Daniel Spargo-Mabbs Drug Education Programme – Moray Implementation

The Daniel Spargo-Mabbs (DSM) Drug Education Programme is a flexible, multi-component initiative tailored to meet the specific needs of each school community. Designed to increase knowledge, life skills, and resilience, the programme empowers young people to make informed, safer choices around substance use. A key focus is equipping both school staff and parents with the tools to have supportive, open conversations about drugs. Following a successful Grampian-wide pilot involving three Moray schools, a local decision was made to roll out the programme to all secondary school communities across Moray.

The programme includes tailored delivery across school groups, interactive workshops, talks, and forums, a powerful theatre production, "I Love You, Mum – I Promise I Won't Die.

Interim reports show:

1,347 students had attended the theatre production and participated in follow-up workshops and forums. Surveys showed significant increases in students' understanding of drug-related consequences with most students reported feeling more confident resisting peer pressure and more able to talk to parents/carers.

Young people shaped delivery to focus on ketamine and cannabis, with key takeaway identified of where to find reliable information, the importance of knowing what you're taking and where to seek help

Staff training focused on the current data on substance exposure and availability, practical harm-reduction strategies for young people, understanding risk factors influencing drug and alcohol misuse,

Alignment to WFWF outcomes relates to those under leadership, workforce, and culture delivered through upskilling staff, young people, and parents and enhancing awareness of and access to early and intermediate support services



FUNDING: £17,818, FROM THIS YEARS FUNDINGS, 3.4% OF ANNUAL FUNDING, COMMITTED TO SPEND A FURTHER £30K in 25/26.

Section 2: Progress Narrative for your overall WFWF plans

Question 4. Please consider the key recommendations from the Year 2 Evaluation report that are most relevant for your area. From your activities in Section 1, please provide any specific examples of how they are responding to these issues (or planning to do so during Year 4), this does not need to be comprehensive but focused on the most important recommendations.

Moray has focused on improving awareness, access to support, and addressing challenges such as scattergun referrals, which previously led to families missing timely, appropriate help. We've strengthened the child planning process, enhanced staff knowledge of services, and promoted solution-focused practices through training and support for managing difficult conversations.

Services have been adapted to embed whole family support principles. Where services are protected spaces, like counselling, we've developed ways for parental involvement. New local websites and digital pathways have improved signposting and access, including wider use of ALISS across child and adult services.

Over the past two years, we've expanded support at both ends of the family support pathway—from universal prevention to intensive interventions nearing social work thresholds. Families report that services feel more stigma-free, rights-led, and equitable across localities.

A new performance and self-evaluation framework in children's services is helping us assess the impact of our investments and improvements in outcomes. In response to evaluation recommendations, we're monitoring service visibility through digital and service use data and plan to introduce community hub drop-ins.

While differing case information systems remain a challenge, we're increasing co-working and shared locations to bridge gaps. We're also mitigating the third sector interface's withdrawal by strengthening multi-agency collaboration through locality networks.

The 10 principles of family support are now embedded in procurement and commissioning, supporting a system-wide approach. We plan to adopt the revised “How Good is Our Family Support” tool in 2025/26. Our performance framework is also enhancing data collection and multi-agency improvement efforts

Question 5

Based on your evidence provided in Section 1, please describe how the activities of the WFWF Programme overall are supporting services to shift towards (1) more preventative interventions and (2) early interventions.

While a full family support pathway remains in development (see challenges), two key early help approaches have emerged, both focused on prevention and accessibility without requiring families to meet thresholds.

The parent-focused service was developed in response to families seeking a better understanding of how their children are supported. It provides a safe, non-judgemental space for parents to explore personal and family wellbeing, access information on child and adolescent issues, and receive support across a range of needs. Recognised as good practice and now commissioned in other areas, the service is designed with flexibility, allowing it to adapt to families’ evolving circumstances. For example, it has recently supported parents directly in cases involving contextual safeguarding concerns.

The partnership Peep model is evolving into a universal offer from pre-birth to age five, shifting the culture of support from reactive to proactive. It is becoming the foundation of our family support pathway, with targeted interventions to follow once the universal offer is fully embedded.

Both approaches aim to identify concerns earlier, improve access to specialist support when needed, and reduce long-term negative impacts on children’s wellbeing. By embedding flexibility into procurement and strengthening partnerships with providers, we are creating more accessible entry points and building a whole-system approach. This is expected to reduce demand for specialist services and lower the number of families reaching crisis point

Question 6: Describe the main successes to delivery and how specific factors enabled these successes.

The children’s *workforce-wide*, needs-based training framework is aligning development across the system with priority areas, enhancing staff skills and knowledge. A new annual audit will ensure the local training offer remains current and responsive. A recent example is the success of a pilot manosphere workshop—due to high demand, additional sessions are already planned. Ongoing feedback and uptake monitoring help drive continuous improvement and identify access barriers early.

Flexible, community-based approaches are also progressing, with increased partnership working and innovation in service delivery. More adaptable procurement processes have enabled greater collaboration, including with smaller organisations that previously felt unheard. Our locality planning model, with a strong focus on third sector involvement, is central to this progress.

In response to parents' calls for more involvement and opportunities to upskill, we are reshaping our model to prioritise early, inclusive support. Historically, support was reactive and often excluded parents—especially in school-based or protected interventions like counselling and mentoring. Our parent-focused service now shares the knowledge behind these interventions, increasing transparency and helping families sustain positive outcomes. We are also adapting the mentoring programme to better involve families, fostering a more collaborative and proactive approach to children's wellbeing.

Question 7: Describe the main challenges to delivery, and how these have been mitigated or plans to mitigate them.

Since our original proposal, Moray has experienced significant change, including leadership transitions, staff turnover, structural reorganisation, and ongoing financial pressures. These shifts have created substantial challenges for the workforce, particularly while exploring system-wide transformation.

Early progress included embedding key aims into the Children's Services Plan, establishing a new governance structure and engagement with families to understand the challenges of the pre-existing provision. However, leadership changes across the council, Health & Social Care Moray, and Children's Services have taken time to stabilise, with temporary arrangements still transitioning to permanence. Simultaneous structural changes and financial constraints have also impacted the third sector, which is struggling with rising costs, reduced capacity and all our larger 3rd sector partners also undergoing leadership change.

While initial momentum slowed, we are working hard to regain pace with limited capacity, focusing on embedding our hub and spoke model and developing a plan to deliver a central family centre. Some core assumptions of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (WFWF) have not held true locally. Despite investment in prevention and early help, rising adult mental health issues, youth violence, and drug availability have led to crisis spikes and contextual safeguarding challenges, all leading to increased demand and costs for care.

Procurement flexibility has improved, but commissioning evolution to engage successfully with funding which is not long term remains a challenge. Short-term financial pressures hinder the third sector's ability to attract and retain staff, limiting sustainability and willingness to accept shorter term funding arrangements.

Leadership of the WFWF has been challenging to maintain due to key staff absences. However, under new leadership, we are continuing our locality planning approach, ensuring the third sector voice remains central. The hub and spoke model is progressing, with a physical family centre at its core.

Delays have opened new opportunities for deeper family, community, and third sector involvement, and with larger contracts approaching renewal, we are well-positioned to explore more sustainable, long-term solutions.

Question 8: Please give details of your spend for 24/25 and your expected spend in the following financial years.

This remains an evolving situation as we have changed direction and are currently exploring costs associated with developing a family centre along supporting hubs across Moray. Therefore, these are proposals

FY 24/25: £349.962 or 67% of these years budget used (this included £46,254 of a contract ending from previous year)

FY 25/26: Current forecast associated with contracts and current staff are to spend £486.869 of the £619K. (79%). We are however expecting staffing changes and looking to invest into hubs and a family centre development utilising our unallocated funding to date.

FY 26/27: It is difficult to forecast this far ahead, with that funding only being confirmed in the last few months and contracts we have are shorter than that period. We will be evaluating that work further prior to extending commitments.

FY 27/28: We have not received any clarification of funding for this year.

