

Agenda Item	4.
Report No	CPB/07/21

Community Planning Board – 9 June 2021

Highland Integrated Children’s Service Plan 2021-2023

Report by: Head of Integrated Children’s Services

Recommendations:

The CPP Board is asked to:

- Note the work undertaken by the Integrated Children’s Service Plan Board in producing a draft of the Highland Integrated Children’s Services Plan 2021 - 2023.
- Consider and agree the Highland Integrated Children’s Services Plan for 2021-2023

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 In February 2014 The Scottish Government passed the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill. The Bill places duties on public bodies to coordinate the planning, design and delivery of services for children and young people with a focus on improving wellbeing outcomes, and report collectively on how they are improving those outcomes. For Highlands Children 4 (FHC4) is the current Integrated Children’s Service Plan which responded to the requirements of this legislation.
- 1.2 FHC4 is a five-year Plan which completed its cycle during 2020.
- 1.3 In December 2019, Scottish Government wrote to each of the strategic leads for ICS planning issuing new guidance to support the development of ICS Plans across Scotland. This guidance determined that ICS Plans should be embedded within Community Planning Partnerships.
- 1.4 The Integrated Children’s Services Board has in recent months reflected on the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and its impact upon communities including children, young people and families. Our needs assessment work in developing this draft of the Highland Integrated Children’s Service Plan has taken cognisance of the impact of the pandemic and our priorities for improvement are reflective of what has been learnt in recent months.

- 1.5 In August 2020, Scottish Government wrote out to strategic leads for ICS planning recognising that the impact of the pandemic would result in an inevitable delay in meeting requirements to publish the Plan. They advised that partnerships could provide an update on progress in developing the Plan by 1 October 2020 with a view to publication by April 2021. The update was sent on behalf of the ICS Board on 26 September 2020.

2. Developing the Plan

- 2.1 Over the last 18 months considerable work has been undertaken to draft this iteration of the Highland Integrated Children's Services Plan. The pre-existing framework for integrated children's services planning has been replaced with a framework which is aligned to the Highland Community Planning Partnership as outlined in the draft Plan.
- 2.2 An Integrated Children's Service Plan Board was established to develop the new Plan and has met monthly to progress this draft. The board membership includes partners from Highland Council, NHS Highland, Police Scotland and a range of other local and national bodies including the Highland Third sector interface.
- 2.3 The draft Plan has been developed in line with the Scottish government guidance for partnerships issued in December 2019.
- 2.4 The draft Plan outlines what partners are doing to ensure that services are integrated for service users including children, young people, and families, that we make the best use of resources and are meeting our aims to safeguard, support and promote wellbeing, early intervention and prevention.
- 2.5 The draft Plan sets out a clear, ambitious shared vision and has been developed to ensure it reflects relevant National Performance Framework Outcomes and incorporates a robust evidence-based joint strategic needs assessment. It includes analysis of quantitative and qualitative evidence and data relating to both service performance and child wellbeing.

3. Reporting and Governance

- 3.1 The Highland Children's Service Plan is set within a complex planning and reporting landscape and has links to a number of other planning responsibilities and reports. In particular, our Community Planning Partnership Plan (The Highland Outcome Improvement Plan) includes ambitions that seek to improve wellbeing and life chances for children and young people.
- 3.2 Our draft Highland Children's Service Plan assists partners to achieve these aspirations. In addition, the understanding of local needs and circumstances that are developed to

inform the HOIP and Locality Plans, also underpin the strategic needs assessment for this draft Plan.

4. Links with the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan

- 4.1 The Highland Outcome Improvement Plan 2017—2027 (HOIP) is focused on working together to reduce inequalities in Highland and outlines our aspirations for Highland and the specific actions we will undertake to deliver them. It was developed following extensive engagement with communities across Highland.
- 4.2 The HOIP's main ambition is to tackle the issues that lead to inequalities, to make the Highlands a fairer place, so that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of our region.
- 4.3 Whilst the aspiration of the draft Highland Integrated Children's Service Plan is consistent with those of the HOIP Plan it is recognised that there are distinct features of partnership planning for children, young people and their families which requires a distinct planning infrastructure.
- 4.4 The draft Plan has been developed through embedding children's rights articulated within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The participation of children and young people was central to both the development of the Plan and determining future priorities for improvement. That evidence for our priorities for improvement are established through improved processes for needs assessment providing evidence for the priorities contained within the Plan.

5. The Structure

- 5.1 The Plan reflects the values and principles of Getting it Right for Every Child. It places individual children at its centre, and considers services and support for those children individually, support for their wider families, community assets and more specialist services.
- 5.2 The Plan articulates where partnership working improves outcomes for children, young people and their families. Individual services will have their own Plans and where partnership working would enhance the priorities of discrete Service Plans, they are included within our priorities.
- 5.3 Where pre-existing partnership groups exist, these have been brought into the Integrated Children's Service Plan framework to provide oversight and governance. This includes the Highland Child Protection Committee, The Corporate Parenting Board and Highland Alcohol and Drug Partnership.

- 5.4 Pre-existing HOIP delivery groups have discreet subgroups for integrated children's services including those with a focus on poverty and mental health. These provide a partnership place to develop a coherent approach to child poverty and to determine a whole system approach to mental health.
- 5.5 The Integrated Children's Planning Board have also established a discrete group to progress planning around equalities and children's rights.

6. Commitments

- 6.1 The Plan outlines our commitment to implementing The Promise to ensure that services and support are shaped by the voices and needs of children, young people and families in order that Highland can be the place where every child can grow up loved, safe, respected and able to realise their full potential.
- 6.2 The Plan outlines our commitment to ensuring all its corporate parents fully integrate the principles of the care leavers covenant to ensure better life chances and outcomes for care experienced children and young people and care leavers.
- 6.3 The Plan articulates our commitment to developing a trauma informed and responsive approach to supporting families. This will involve developing services that are informed and shaped by people with lived experience and places the voice of infants, children, young people and families at the heart of service improvement.
- 6.4 The Plan demonstrates our ongoing commitment to the National Practice Model (Getting it Right) using the ecological approach to support underpinned by the values and principles of Getting it Right.

7. Priorities

- 7.1 The Plan outlines our priorities for improving outcomes for Highlands Children. It articulates where partnership working improves outcomes for children, young people and their families acknowledging that individual services have their own Plans.
- 7.2 Our partnership priorities for improvement are set around the following themes:
- Health and Wellbeing including Mental Health
 - Child poverty
 - Children's rights and participation
 - Child protection
 - Corporate parenting
 - Alcohol and drugs

8. Recommendations

8.1 The CPP Board is asked to:

- Note the work undertaken by the Integrated Children's Service Plan Board in producing a draft of the Highland Integrated Children's Services Plan 2021 - 2023.
- Consider and agree the Highland Integrated Children's Services Plan for 2021-2023

Author: Ian Kyle – Head of Integrated Children's Services



**Highland Integrated
Children's Service Plan
Plana Sheirbheisean
Chloinne Amalaichte na
Gàidhealtachd
2021–2023**



Foreword

Highland's integrated children's service plan sets out our shared vision, values and priorities over the next three years. The Plan, which articulates our strategic priorities for improving the lives of children and young people, has been developed considering the views and experiences of children, young people and families.

The impact and experience of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought challenges and disruption to everyday life that none of us had ever envisaged. The effects of the pandemic have impacted on employment, education, leisure activities, and general social interaction. Further, for those individuals and families who were already experiencing challenges, the impact has been considerable. We still do not know how children and their families have reacted to and coped with lockdown. However, we are aware that applications for Universal Credit and other financial assistance funds have soared. As a result, we know that we will have to ensure that all partners work together to ensure that the potential long-term harm of COVID-19 is kept to a minimum.

This plan sets out a bold but clear vision describing how we will work to support, protect and promote the wellbeing of our children, young people and their families. Through the pandemic, staff in all organisations have shown their willingness and ability to work differently. By utilising technology, we have been able to maintain contact with some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. Moving forward, we want to continue using this blended model of working and look at other ways of improving how we work with those who need our support.

Whilst this is a challenging time, it is also a very exciting time. Within the partnership, we are committed to working together to help provide support to those that need it, at the time when they need it. By improving

services and targeting resources appropriately, our vision is to help improve better outcomes for all of our children, young people and families in the Highlands.

Our Shared Vision

Our partnership vision is for all Highland's Children:

- to have the best possible start in life and enjoy being young
- are loved, confident and resilient
- and can achieve their potential

Our Plan

Our Partnership Approach

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Part 3), outlines the need to improve outcomes for all children and young people in Scotland by ensuring that local planning and delivery of services is integrated, focused on securing quality and value through preventative approaches, and dedicated to safeguarding, supporting and promoting child wellbeing. It aims to ensure that any action to meet need is taken at the earliest appropriate time and that, where appropriate, this is taken to prevent need arising.

Section eight of the Act requires every local authority and its relevant health board to jointly prepare a Children's Services Plan for the area of the local authority, in respect of each three-year period. This is Highland's Integrated Children's Service Plan.

Our priorities

Our plan outlines our priorities for improving outcomes for Highland's Children. It articulates where partnership working improves outcomes for children, young people and their families acknowledging that individual services have their own plans.

Our partnership priorities for improvement are set around the following themes:

- Health and wellbeing including mental health
- Child poverty
- Children's rights and participation
- Child protection
- Corporate parenting
- Alcohol and drugs

Our Overarching Principles

Tackling Inequalities

Reduce the gap in outcomes between the most and least deprived children and young people in Highland by working to reduce child poverty within our communities and keep our children and young people safe from harm.

Love and Support for our Care Experienced Young People

Ensure children and young people who are care experienced are loved and supported to improve their life experiences and life chances.

Good Health and Wellbeing

Ensure all children and young people are supported to achieve and maintain good physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Promote Children's Rights and Participation

Work to ensure we are delivering on the provisions of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as incorporated into Scots Law

Planning framework

Our partnership recognises that children's services planning is an ongoing process and that central to good planning is to ensure robust connect between all national and local strategic planning. Our plan connects partnership strategic planning within a single framework. This framework provides both the tools for planning, self-evaluation, reporting, performance management and assurance.

The use of shared improvement language and tools strengthens and aligns the partnership approach across Highland, with the Highland Child Protection Committee, the Corporate Parenting Board, and Alcohol and drug Partnership plans sitting within the Integrated Children's Service Plan Framework.

The plan articulates how partners work together to provide services which are organized, equipped to deliver high-quality, joined-up, trauma-informed and responsive and preventative support to children and families.

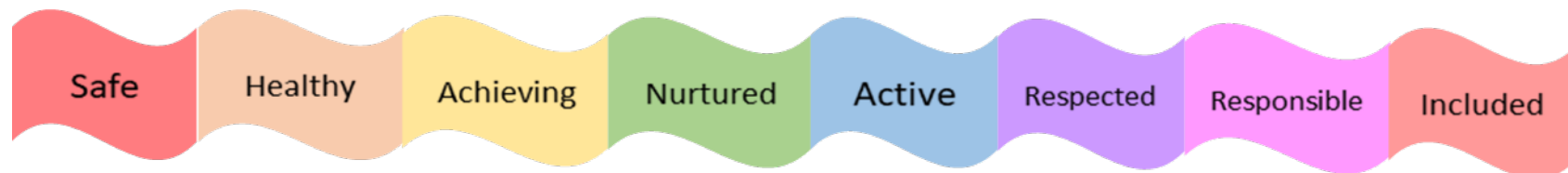
Our objective

The achievement of better outcomes for Highland's children, their families and the communities in which they live is the overarching objective of our integrated children's services partnership.

Our outcomes

Using the SHANARRI indicators, our outcomes consider the ways in which children and young people;

- receive the help and support they need to optimise their well-being at every stage.
- get the best start in life and enjoy positive, rewarding experiences growing up.
- benefit from clear protocols, procedures and effective systems for recording observations and concerns which take account of best practice in information-sharing.



Our commitments

Highland and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child



'Our Partnership is committed to upholding the rights of infants, children and young people in ensuring they are protected from unfair treatment (discrimination, harassment and victimisation) under the Equality Act 2010 and that every child has the opportunity to grow up to maximise their full potential'.

The UNCRC is one of the core United Nations human rights treaties. It sets out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities and is recognised internationally as the "gold standard" on children's rights. Our partnership respects and protects the UNCRC rights to help deliver its aim that children grow up loved, safe and respected, so that they reach their full potential.

The principal themes of the UNCRC reflected in 54 articles include the right to life, survival and development. the right to protection from violence and abuse, the right to an education that enables children to reach their potential and the right to be raised by or have a relationship with their family. The UNCRC also underpins children and families right to be heard and given voices and opportunities to shape service design and delivery.

Our Partnership is committed to upholding the rights of infants, children and young people in ensuring they are protected from prejudice (Equality Act 2010) and that every child has the opportunity to grow up to maximise their full potential.

A rights respecting approach in Highland will reflect the principles of UNCRC due to be adopted in Scottish legislation into 2021. This provides a framework of expectation and aspiration for what infants, children and young people need to thrive in the day to day and across their lives.

Highland and 'The Promise'



Our Partnership is committed to implementing 'The Promise' to ensure that services and support are shaped by the voices and needs of children, young people and families in order that Highland can be the place where every child can grow up loved, safe, respected and able to realise their full potential.

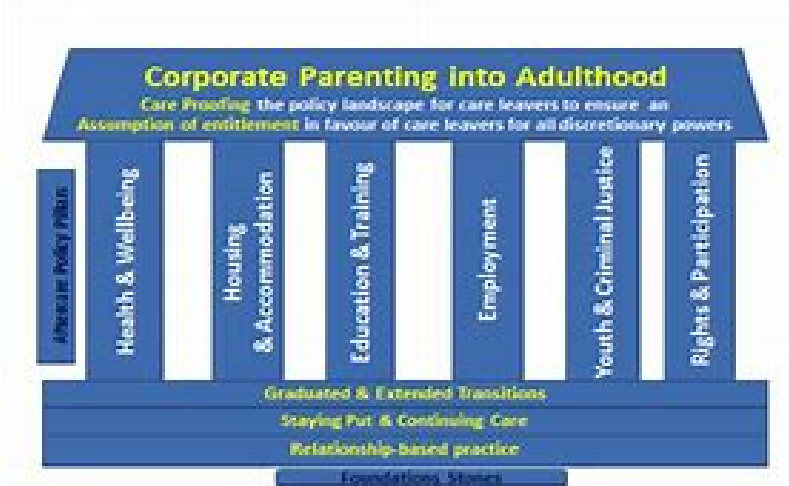
Our Partnership will ensure:

- The **VOICE** of children and young people are listened to.
- Children and young people should stay in their **FAMILY** wherever they feel loved and safe.

When living with their family is not possible, children and young people should have family-based **CARE**, alongside their brothers and sisters. Children and young people who have experienced care must be actively supported to develop relationships with **PEOPLE** in the workforce and wider community, who in turn must be supported to listen and be compassionate. The **SCAFFOLDING** of help and support must be read and responsive when it is required.

The Promise is already at the heart of our partnership activity to re-shape and improve care and support for Highland's children and young people. It sits alongside the Practice Model and the UNCRC, but demands ambitious, imaginative approaches that re-think the ways in which professionals across our partnership work alongside young people and families to build positive lives. In the context of a unique period of disruption, created by COVID-19, The Promise presents an unprecedented opportunity to think radically about care. All workstreams that flow from The Promise will be co-produced, finding innovative ways of bringing the insight of those with experience of care alongside the expertise of professionals and leaders.

Highland and the Care Leavers Covenant



Our Partnership is committed to ensuring all its corporate parents fully integrate the principles of the covenant and actions into core planning and service improvement to ensure better life chances and outcomes for care experienced children and young people and care leavers.

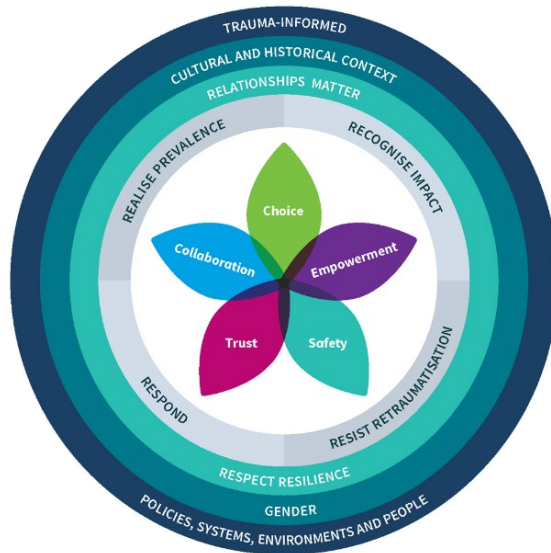
Highland's care experienced children and young people and care leavers have a right to additional support as they move into adulthood so that everyone of them is supported to reach their potential. Our partnership is committed to ensuring the Care Leavers Covenant principles are enshrined across the six key pillars of policy in respect of:

- Health and wellbeing
- Housing and accommodation
- Education and training
- Employment
- Youth and criminal justice
- Rights and participation

The Scottish Care Leavers Covenant will transform the way care leavers are supported by us as they move into adulthood. The Covenant sets out the principles and actions needed to support the implementation of Part 10 (Aftercare) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. It builds on the principles of "Getting it Right for Every Child" (GIRFEC) and takes a holistic, person-centred approach of 'One Child - One Plan - One Care Journey'.

The covenant recognises that care experienced children, young people and care leavers have some of the poorest life outcomes of the population. Whole system change is needed to tackle inequalities and child poverty which promote adversity within families which may precipitate family breakdown. As care leavers move into adulthood and require support, services need to be develop an intelligent, trauma informed and flexible approach to understanding lived experience and hearing the voices of care leavers, ensuring support is available to them at the time, in the place and in the way they need it.

Highland and a trauma informed approach



Our partnership is committed to developing a trauma informed and responsive approach to supporting families.

We are developing services that are informed and shaped by people with lived experience and place the voice of infants, children, young people and families at the heart of service improvement.

As a partnership we will ensure services:

- Recognise the importance of health and wellbeing
- Recognise where people are affected by trauma and adversity
- Respond in ways that prevent further harm
- Support recovery from trauma and adverse experience
- Address inequalities and improve life chances.

A trauma informed and responsive approach reflects:

An understanding that the nature and quality of the earliest experience of relationships informs and shapes how infants, children and young people and their parents see, understand and respond to the day to day across their lives.

An associated shift in culture and practice from 'What is wrong to you?' to 'What happened to you?' when assessing a range of needs and or wider related risks and vulnerabilities.

An understanding that the fundamentals of trauma informed and responsive care: safety, trust, collaboration, choice and empowerment shape and inform engagement health care and wider service experience with a related influence on the experience of care.

That all staff understand and experience that they are valued and supported within their organisation, service and team and the quality and nature of the relationships they have with those they provide a service to matters. This the more important when working in high risk situations with the potential for relational conflict and vicarious trauma.

Highland and 'Getting it Right'



Our partnership is committed to the National Practice Model (Getting it Right). Our plan places individual children at its centre, and considers services and support for those children individually, support for their wider families, community assets and more specialist services. This plan articulates how these preventative supports build up as required, on a person to person basis, according to local priorities, through early intervention and onto specialist services ensuring the right support will be delivered by the right people at the right time.

The approach illustrates:

- Family and community providing everyday support and care
- Universal provision supporting and building resilience
- Additional support working to overcome disadvantage and supports learning
- Specialist help addressing more complex needs that impact health and wellbeing
- Compulsory intervention ensuring action to overcome adversity and risk.

This system of care approach reflects:

- The understanding that the health and wellbeing of infants, children and young people is heavily influenced by parental relationships and family life, the support and services they can access and the wider structural and community environments in which they grow and develop.
- The necessity of taking age appropriate approaches that reflect the differing needs, risks and opportunities for each individual and the time sensitive developmental windows that need to inform service design and delivery to maximise improved outcomes.
- A nested and layered preventive approach from high quality universal services (primary prevention), to promote health and wellbeing, to work preventively as health needs, vulnerability and risks present (secondary prevention) and sustained intervention and support (tertiary prevention) where health care needs, risks and needs require intensive support in the moment or over periods of time.

In Highland, we use the THRIVE model to differentiate between those children, young people and families who are:

- 'Getting By' and benefit from Promotion and prevention
- 'Getting Help' mainly from universal service staff
- 'Needing More Help' from early intervention services and specialist supports.

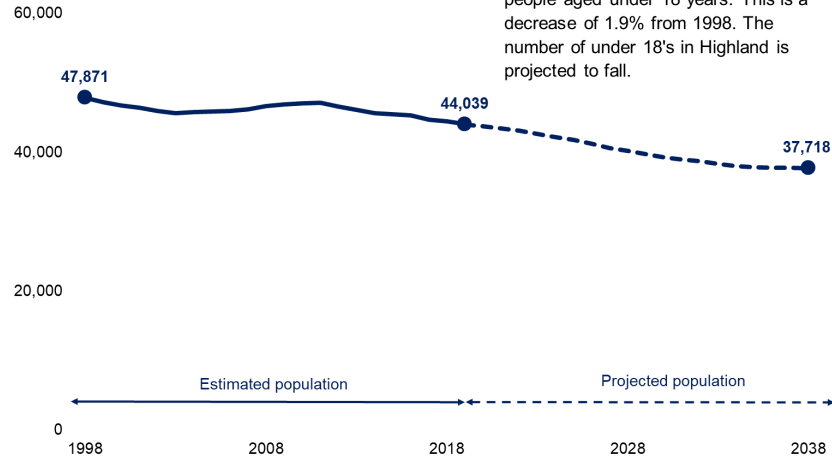
Our context

“If we are to have effective and sustainable public services capable of meeting the challenges ahead reforms must empower individuals and communities receiving public services by involving them in the design and delivery of the services they use. Public service providers must be required to work much more closely in partnership, to integrate service provision and thus improve the outcomes they achieve. We must prioritise expenditure on public services which prevent negative outcomes from arising and our whole system of public services – public, third and private sectors – must become more efficient by reducing duplication and sharing services wherever possible.”

Dr Campbell Christie, The Future Delivery of Public Services in Scotland

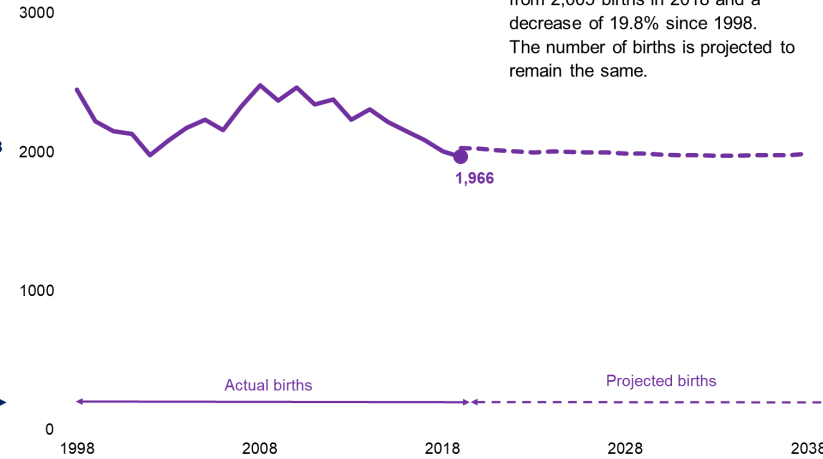
Highland Council area has a population of around 235,830 with around 2,000 births per year. The National Records for Scotland projects that between 2018 and 2028, the population of Highland will increase from 235,540 to 236,664. This is an increase of 0.5%, which compares to a projected increase of 1.8% for Scotland as a whole. Highland covers an area of 25,657 km² covering urban, rural, sparse and super sparse geography. Delivering services across our geography is challenging however our partnership recognises that its strength lies within our communities. We recognise and support a drive toward localism where services and support are developed from within communities. Integral to our plan as it progresses over the timeline is a recognition that there will be a move towards greater local planning, service delivery and support to improve the lives and outcomes of Highland’s children in the communities where they belong.

Highland
Number of children aged under 18 years



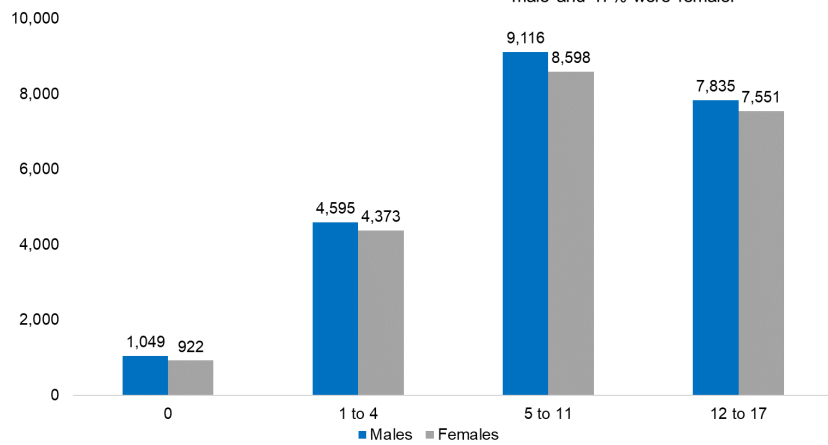
In 2019, there were an estimated 44,039 infants, children and young people aged under 18 years. This is a decrease of 1.9% from 1998. The number of under 18's in Highland is projected to fall.

Highland
Number of births by year, 1998 to 2038



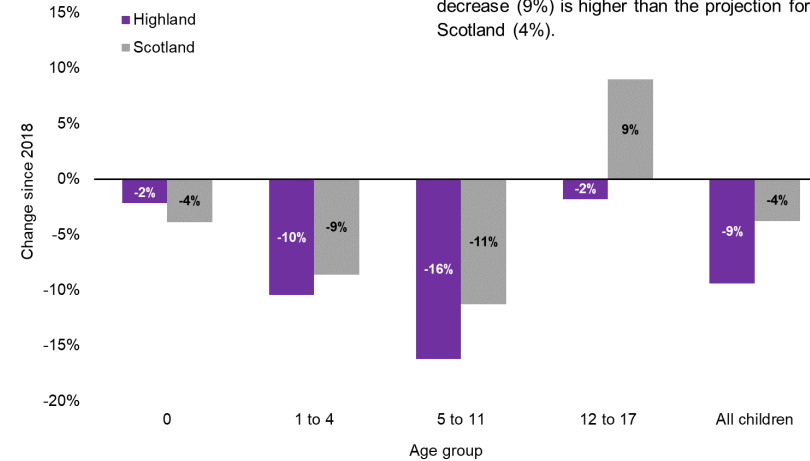
In 2019, there were 1,966 births in Highland. This is a decrease of 1.9% from 2,005 births in 2018 and a decrease of 19.8% since 1998. The number of births is projected to remain the same.

Highland
Number of children aged under 18 years by sex and age group, 2019



In 2019, there were 33,100 children of school age and 10,939 children under 5 years of age. 53% of children were male and 47% were female.

Highland and Scotland
Projected population change by age group mid-2018 to mid-2028



Between mid-2018 and mid-2028, Highland is projected to have decreases in the number of children in all age groups. The overall rate of decrease (9%) is higher than the projection for Scotland (4%).

In the school session for 2020/2021, across Highland around 35,500 children were supported in Early Years, Primary and Secondary Education. We have 171 Primary, 29 Secondary and 3 Special Schools in 29 Associated School Groups (Secondary Schools and their associated catchment schools). As part of this we have eight 3-18 campuses and 35 cluster schools where a shared Head Teacher has a remit across 2-3 Primary Schools and their Early Learning and Childcare settings. We have 188 Early Learning and Childcare settings, 140 of which are run by The Highland Council and 48 operated by Partner Centres.

There are 16,835 children enrolled in Primary schools, 13,834 enrolled in Secondary Schools, 157 in our three free standing Special Schools and 3,952 children enrolled in our Early Learning and Childcare settings.

The Highland Community Planning Partnership

[Community Planning Partnerships](#) is integral to a community approach to the planning, support and delivery of services for Highland.

Community Planning Partnerships must:

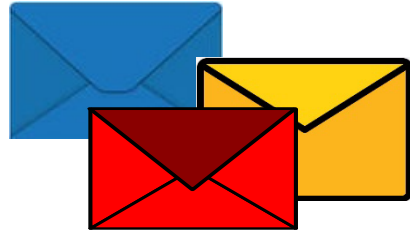
“Consider which community bodies are likely to be able to contribute to community planning having regard in particular to which of those bodies represent the interests of persons who experience inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage. They must make all reasonable effort to secure the participation of those community bodies in community planning and, to the extent (if any) that those community bodies wish to participate in community planning, take such steps as are reasonable to enable the community bodies to participate in community planning to that extent.”

The Highland Community Planning Partnership brings together public agencies, third sector organisations and other key community groups to work collaboratively with the people of Highland to deliver better outcomes.

The Highland Community Planning Partnership works strategically at a Highland level, through a series of nine geographical local Community Partnerships as well as regional thematic groups. Ultimately these deliver our Local Outcome Improvement Plan.

The Highland Outcome Improvement Plan sets out the vision, purpose and focus for the Highland Community Planning Partnership from 2017-2027. The five core outcomes have been chosen and agreed upon with communities. The partnership believes working towards these outcomes will have a significant impact on reducing inequalities in Highland.

Highland’s Integrated Children’s Service Plan sits within a context of the Community Planning Partnership and delivering the [Highland Outcome Improvement Plan](#).



Letters from lockdown



The last year has seen the most significant global pandemic in generations. Highland Children and Young People's Forum Report 2020 'Letters from lockdown' illustrated the variability in the experiences of our children and young people.

"Doing schoolwork at home, for me, has been so much better than being in a classroom full of people and not being able to concentrate. I don't have to feel so anxious all the time and I can get on with my work. I feel like I have learnt so much in such a short amount of time. COVID-19 has made me smart!"

Helen age 14

The COVID-19 Psychological Research Consortium has found that the majority of the UK population (56.5%) have been resilient throughout 2020-2021. It did however note that a small group (6.5%) have been unwell throughout and some (8.5%) have improved in relation to their mental health. There is emerging evidence around the health and socio-economic impacts of Covid-19, however the full extent of these is not yet fully known.

"I have a private chat with my teacher, and I try to talk to her every day. I also send her pictures of most of my work, so she can see, and one day I received a postcard from her, which was nice, and my friends also gave me a letter, so it's good to know that people are still trying."

Karen age 11

"...you must remember that there were and still are families out there suffering miserably and are missing their loved ones. Just remember to be thankful you have a life. Just remember to be thankful for what you have. Please just remember you are loved... Just remember."

Carrie age 14

Our performance framework

[Scotland's National Performance Framework](#) articulates the vision of creating a more successful country. It sets out the purpose of ensuring opportunities for all people in Scotland to flourish through increased wellbeing and sustainable, inclusive economic growth.



The National Performance Framework sets out eleven 'national outcomes' that collectively need to work towards across Scotland in order to fulfil the purpose of creating a more successful country. All of the national outcomes are interlinked and are all crucial to improving the lives of children and young people.

Linked to the National Performance Framework, the Scottish Government is currently developing a set of wellbeing outcomes for children, young people and their families in order to both provide coherence to Scottish Government policy intended to improve the lives of children and young people and support joint working between national and local government and other delivery partners.

Our performance will be measured through listening to the voices of children and young people, learning from self-evaluation, analysing intelligence and scrutinising an agreed set of qualitative and quantitative improvement measures.

The Integrated Children's Service Planning Board has responsibility for monitoring progress towards achieving the outcomes outlined within our plan and will use a fully developed Performance Framework to achieve this.

Within our planning processes lead officers from partner organisations have been identified for each themed group along with a lead officer for each of the improvement priorities. Partners will work together and take responsibility for co-ordinating performance reporting on a regular basis.

Governance arrangements

Highland's Integrated Children's Service Plan uses an improvement model to determine outcomes, identify priorities and quality assure the plan.

Highland's Integrated children's Services Board provides oversight to the on-going work of the plan. This group has broad membership, including lead officers from The Highland Council, NHS Highland, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and a number of Third Sector organisations. The Board reports to the Community Planning Partnership Board with additional reporting to Highland Council and NHS Highland Board.

To support the improvement model, partnership groups, reflecting the priority themes, have been established to drive forward service improvement across Highland.

- Theme 1:** Health & Wellbeing Improvement Group
- Theme 2:** Child Poverty Group
- Theme 3:** Children's Rights and Participation Improvement Group
- Theme 4:** Highland's Child Protection Committee
- Theme 5:** Highland's Corporate Parenting Board
- Theme 6:** Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership Board

In forming these multi agency groups, a clear articulation of the work and relationship between them has been developed with the chairs of each themed group coming together as core members of the Integrated Children's Service Planning Board.

It is the responsibility of each group to develop the priorities and actions within their individual plans, based on the agreed outcomes and needs assessment. Plans are monitored and evaluated and updated on a regular basis and formally reviewed annually. Our thematic plans are dynamic and regularly reviewed and updated.

Detailed plans for each thematic group can be found at:

<https://www.forhighlandschildren.org/1-childrensplan/strategy.htm>



Theme 1: Health & Wellbeing

“A child who is living in an environment with supportive relationships and consistent routines is more likely to develop well-functioning biological systems, including brain circuits, that promote positive development and life-long health. Children who feel threatened or unsafe may develop physiological responses and coping behaviours that are attuned to harsh conditions they are experiencing at the time, at the long-term expense of physical and mental health and wellbeing, self-regulation and effective learning.”

Highland Community Planning Partnership

Key policy drivers

[Public Health Scotland \(2020\) Ending childhood adversity: A public health approach.](#)

[Education Scotland Curriculum for Excellence: Principles and Practices: Health and wellbeing across learning](#)

[Part 2 \(Section 9\) NHS Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2004. Duty to promote health improvement](#)

[Mental Health Strategy:2017 – 2027, The Scottish Government; Early intervention and Prevention](#)

[Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services: national service specification. Feb 2020. The Scottish Government.](#)

To improve the physical, social and mental health and wellbeing of children and families, services need to have a strong vision and service delivery which is health creating within the family through being proactive and building on personal strengths and resources, child centred through ensuring the focus is on supporting the needs of the child within the context of their family and through a child in their community approach in understanding their wider community.

When the relationship between health and inequality are understood and addressed in tandem, the greater are the gains for children, young people, families and our communities. Our partnership will focus on the following key areas to support the creation of health and wellbeing.

- 1. Mental Health and Relationships**
- 2. Physical Health and Development**

1. Mental Health and Relationships

The development of secure, stable relationships is known to improve physical, mental and social health and helps address the effects of adversity and trauma. Relationships are integral to how children live and grow and learn how to navigate their world and develop internal resource and resilience to carry them through life. These skills are mostly learned through the experience children have with the adults around them such as parents, family, carers and those in their community

Improving the connect and family centred approaches that are accessible and non-stigmatising and cover a full range of needs from “normal distress” to significant mental health or contextual issues are likely to positively impact on general health, development and mental health outcomes.

Young people have told us (HCYPF & SPEAK Mental Health Consultation 2019)

“ there was an opportunity to intervene earlier as there were signs of the stress and distress building. If parents and people working with young people were better able to read the signs (truancy, change in diet, change in sleep pattern, change in achievement, impulsive behaviour, emotional mood swings, low self-esteem, anxiety, low mood or depression) help may have been provided earlier”

“having someone to talk to and being listened to was essential.”

In Highland we will

- Ensure all Highlands children have the access to mental health support in a way and at the time they need it most
- Implement a trauma-informed infant mental health strategy to support very young children and their parents.
- Develop a whole system approach ensuring families receive the support they need and ensuring service support positive childhood experiences within families and communities
- Understand and respond to the research of the impact of Covid 19 on children, young people and families.
- Developing the skills, knowledge and confidence of Highland’s staff to enable them to better support children, young people and families
- Implement Planet Youth Model through the Caithness and Sutherland Pathfinder.
- Refresh the Highland Parent Support Framework for families with young children.

2. Physical Health and Development

A healthy diet, activity and good sleep are all known to support good physical and mental health. Play and activity has a key role in mitigating the physiological consequences of adversity and stress and helps create and sustain resilience whilst a healthy diet from pre-birth supports good physical development and mitigates against adverse health events through childhood into adulthood.

In Highland we will

- Ensure there is an early health prevention and intervention focus which meets the needs of infants, children and families
- Ensure services address health inequalities through acknowledging the wider determinants of health and developing services which actively work for all families suffering from the consequences of inequalities.
- Ensure the joins with green spaces and active travel initiatives as they present

Theme 2: Child poverty

Key policy drivers

In 2017, the Scottish Government introduced the [Child Poverty \(Scotland\) Act](#). This replaced the previous UK Child Poverty Act 2010 and includes duties on both the Scottish Government and local partners to address child poverty.

The legislation requires:

- The Scottish Government to produce a Child Poverty Delivery Plan every four years highlighting how it intends to meet the child poverty targets laid out in the Act. It must also publish annual progress reports setting out progress towards meeting the child poverty targets. The Scottish Government's first Delivery Plan – [Every Child, Every Chance](#) sets out policies and proposal to help reach the child poverty targets set for 2030.
- Local authorities and health boards to jointly prepare annual Local Child Poverty Action Reports which set out activities that have been undertaken in the local authority area during the previous year to reduce child poverty and contribute to the delivery of the national targets and any planned future activities.

Evidence suggests that there are three key drivers which influence the experience of child poverty. These are income from employment, costs of living and income from social security and benefits.

The need for change

Increasing incomes and reducing costs of living are mechanisms for reducing child poverty but there are many other actions that take place to improve children's quality of life and life chances.

Employment outcomes

People in Highland are more likely to be economically active than across Scotland as a whole. 80% of people are economically active in Highland compared to 76.5% across Scotland (Oct 2019-Sep 2020). Within Highland though, there are particular economic challenges as a

result of the predominantly rural area with the average annual income being lower than the Scottish average and the increased seasonal and part time nature of employment.

Across the Covid-19 pandemic period unemployment has risen from 2.4% to 5.7% with youth unemployment rising significantly from 3.9% to 9.9%. Individuals aged under 25 are around 2.5 times more likely to work in one of these affected sectors and will include families with young children.

In Highland there has been a 158% increase in families reaching out for financial support (August 2020 Children 1st Parentline) with an 88% increase from families seeking support from the Scottish Welfare.

Educational Outcomes

Educational attainment is both a cause and a consequence of poverty. In May 2020, the Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland (CPAG) undertook research about the experiences of school closures for children and families. They found that 40% of low-income families were missing at least one essential resource to support their children's learning during the Covid-19 pandemic when schools were closed, with one third of the families most worried about financing digital hardware to support education whilst at home

Service users reported in a recent survey that

“Reliance on digital communications both to deliver services and provide information was reported to be inappropriate and ineffective in some cases”.

“Some service users had limited financial resources and did not have access to the necessary devices, Wi-Fi, data or credit”

Cost of living

Minimum Income Standard for Remote Rural Scotland” outlines that families living in rural areas required between one tenth and one third more than families in urban parts of the UK due to the increased cost of living (food, clothing, fuel, household energy and goods)

Fuel poverty and access to child care are particular pressure areas for Highlands families with families in the most deprived areas being more likely to use the 1140 funded hours with a local authority nursery, playgroup, family centre or childminder.

Food insecurity

Whilst 4,700 P1 – S6 pupils receive alternative free school meals using vouchers, food insecurity within families, has been an ongoing challenge with the Foodbank reporting a 20% increase since 2019, this has been supplemented by a range of local organisations supporting their local communities.

Income from social security and benefits

During Covid-19, there has been a rise in claims for Universal Credit. A key focus for services should be to ensure families receive the benefits entitlement as part of the wider support they receive.

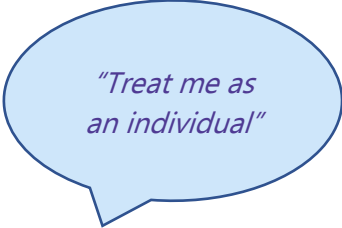
Welfare Support Teams, Citizens Advice and Health and Social Care services should continue to work to support families and ensure they are signposted for all the relevant help and advice

Priorities for improvement and change

- Work to reduce the poverty related attainment gap through ensuring educational equity, promoting the attainment Scotland fund, develop the young workforce, supporting the use of Pupil Equity Funding and engaging with the Northern Alliance
- Improve opportunities for training and apprenticeships for parents and young people as part of the Council's Economic Prosperity Fund, Support the roll out of Parental Employability Support Fund programme, Support the development of the Young Person Guarantee work placement programme as a way to support job creation and develop the Modern Apprenticeship Scheme for 16-65 year olds
- Address food insecurity by increasing equity of access to good quality food, recognise the value of financial support for families during the school holidays, Support the development of sustainable food tables and fridges in order to reduce the stigma associated with accessing food support and Develop strategies to increase the uptake of free-school meals.
- Reduce the financial barriers of families by Promoting the uptake of clothing grants, encouraging the uptake of concessionary leisure schemes for children with low income backgrounds, promoting awareness of fuel discounts and grants and energy advice and switching services and Implementation of the Northern Alliance 'Cost of the School Day Toolkit'.
- Increase access to and uptake of affordable and flexible childcare, increase the uptake of 1140 hours ELC provision, Support the uptake of eligible 2-year-old ELC provision, develop a strategy to promote awareness of access to support for childcare costs and access to tax free childcare. Explore options with partnerships to support flexible models of childcare in individual communities.
- Maximise update of child related social security benefits and child specific benefits including; Best Start Grants.

- Maximise uptake of DWP benefits, including those with childcare costs, including outcomes from the Council's Advice & Information contract.
- Raise awareness of entitlements and where to get support with a particular focus on changing circumstances with services, organisations, groups.
- Implementation of health visitor financial inclusion pathway.

Theme 3: Children's Rights and Participation



"Treat me as an individual"

Key policy drivers

Ensuring the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are embedded in Policy and Practice.

Children's Rights and Participation is primarily underpinned and informed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Our plan aims to ensure the articles of the UNCRC is embedded in Policy and Practice.

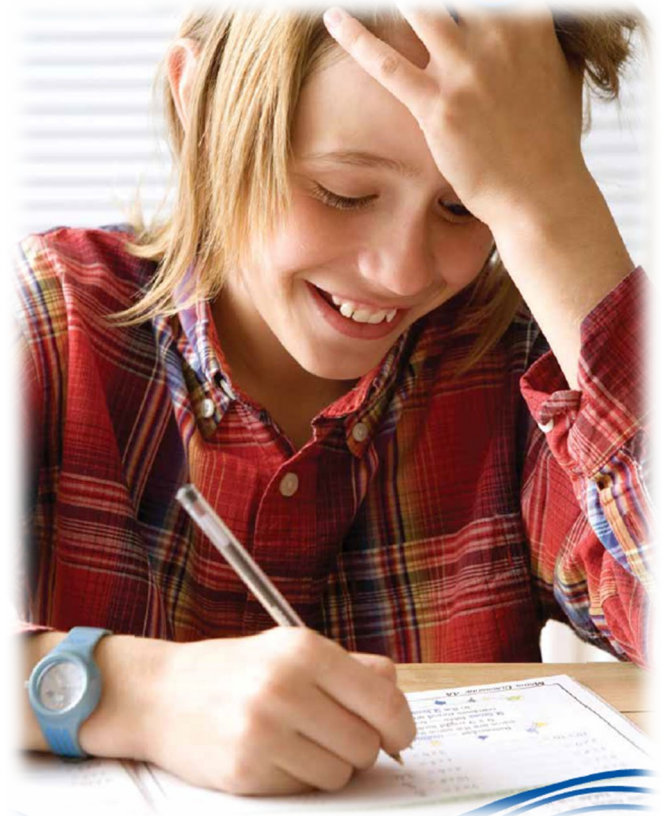
The public sector equality duty in [Section 149 of the Equality Act](#) requires public bodies, including local authorities, schools and health boards, to proactively take steps to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between those who have protected characteristics and those who don't, and
- Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who don't

The need for change

Robust self-evaluation of our systems and processes tells us that:

- Our curricular resources often perpetuate stereotypical views of children and they are not always representative of gender diversity, different family make-ups. Our curriculum is not always differentiated to meet individual needs. Some aspects of our curriculum do not enable participation and feedback from children to shape the content and delivery.
- Play needs to be a high priority at all stages and particularly preschool and in the early level.
- Children's views are not always taken into account when planning their educational programme and placement, particularly where they have additional needs or are very young.
- Our Personal, Health, Social and Emotional curriculum requires to be better informed by the views and needs of children and young people.
- A wide range of children and young people should be increasingly involved in any process where consultation is undertaken to shape our curriculum.
- Children's rights are not yet central to the processes or decisions made by services and service managers.
- Sometimes adults believe they know what the children would want or say and act on this with little evidence and sometimes participation is tokenistic, rather than real participation and that there remains a clear power differential between the adults making decisions and the participation of children and young people.
- Children's views are not always included in their plans.
- Engagement with children and young people is not always appropriate to their age or developmental needs.
- Adults don't always have the confidence or understanding of the UNCRC or the various aspects to support children effectively and our children and young people are not always aware of their rights and how to exercise these.



Priorities for improvement

- Take the time to provide support and embed initiatives across our systems.
- In order to empower families to improving health and wellbeing, our services need to develop mechanism to better support groups with protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010) and ensure that the UNCR is at the heart of the commitments in service delivery.
- Gathering and reporting data, ensuring that our data gathered by and from children.
- Embedding Children's Rights in our curriculum.
- Ensure Children's Rights and participation are evident in practice.
- Gather views from a variety of different children and young people and ensure that we do not reach out to the same children and young people and ensure that development and age are not barriers.
- Provide support and training on the why and the how of including Children's Rights and Participation. This requires ensuring developmentally matched approaches, an understanding of trauma and the understanding of behaviour as communication to enable our children and Young people to grow confidence and competence.

Theme 4: Child Protection

"Pay attention to how I am feeling"

Key policy drivers

- The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\) 1989](#) in 1991. Under Article 19, protecting children from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and mistreatment and Article 34 protecting children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.
- The [Children \(Scotland\) Act 1995](#) Local authorities have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area and to take legal steps to protect children where necessary. Section 19 sets out the responsibilities for each local authority to prepare plans for children's services in their area.
- The [Protection of Children and Sexual Offences \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#) is to improve the protection given to children and young people from those who would wish to cause them sexual harm, or exploit them for sexual purposes.
- Under the [Adult Support and Protection \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#) (section 42), Adult Protection Committees have been placed on a statutory footing. In some areas, there has been integration with Adult Protection Committees and Child Protection Committees.



The need for change



The Care Inspectorate Review of Inspections 2012-2017 identified leadership as a key measure of child protection practice within local areas. The Public Protection Chief Officer Group was established in 2018 to consider child protection alongside public protection themes within Violence Against Women, Criminal Justice, MAPPA and Adult Support and Protection. The Child Protection Committee (CPC) is required to report to Chief Officers on a quarterly basis as well as keeping them informed of findings from Significant or Initial Case Reviews regarding individual children.

Child Protection Committee and Chief Officer Responsibilities set out the functions of CPCs required by the Scottish Government. CPCs must use the learning from Significant Case Reviews and Initial Case Reviews to promote good practice, improve practice and contribute to improved outcomes for children and young people across Highland and this will be further informed by the National Learning Review Guidance due in Spring 2021. The national guidance for CPC and Chief Officers also highlights that the alignment with integrated children's services processes and wider planning structures is essential.

The CPC must support practitioners in building strong relationships with parents and carers to work in partnership to protect children and young people wherever possible. Significant Case Reviews have also highlighted the importance of developing effective relationships with parents/carers with the ability to support and/or challenge parents/carers particularly in cases where parental behaviour contributes to the risk of harm. Article 19 (protection from violence, abuse and neglect) states that Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence,

abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them. The Analysis of Case Reviews report 2018 found that practitioners need to be able to identify and respond to signs of non/disguised compliance and practice with respectful uncertainty. This can be achieved and acted upon effectively where constructive relationships with parents/carers are developed.

The 2018 Analysis of Case Reviews report highlighted the necessity for effective and timely intervention to minimise risks to children. Significant Case Reviews have demonstrated that 'drift' particularly in cases of neglect and parental substance misuse can have severe consequences for children and young people. Likewise, in Reviews people within the local community have been aware of the risks posed to the child but were unwilling and/or unable to report these.

Work undertaken to increase staff knowledge and confidence in relation to child protection issues has resulted in better working relationships with Police Scotland and local Social Work teams with more appropriate sharing of concerns about children.

The majority of case reviews highlight flaws or gaps in information sharing within and between agencies. In Highland's Analysis of Case Reviews 2018, Dr Vincent acknowledged strengths in relation to appropriate information sharing across Highland, particularly in relation to child protection concerns. However, the length of time taken to share information was highlighted, along with a reluctance to retain some ownership of the concerns once shared, and a lack of feedback and further discussion between agencies. The need for integrated chronologies which clearly identify significant life events is also highlighted within the 'Analysis of Case Reviews' report and the Care Inspectorate's 'Review of Findings Joint Inspection services for children and young people 2012-17'.

In keeping with the ethos of the Highland Practice Model agencies and practitioners must work together with families to ensure that children receive the right help at the right time in order to promote the best possible outcomes.

The Child Protection Committee Dataset evidences that Neglect, Domestic Abuse and Substance Misuse remain the three highest risk indicators in child protection registrations across Highland. Child protection plans are required to have clear goals, outcomes and actions in order to reduce or minimise risk of harm and practitioners require support to develop effective plans which can lead to improved outcomes for children.

Priorities for improvement and change

- Review CPC and Sub-Committee Membership to ensure representation at the appropriate level from all services as outlined in the National guidance for CPCs and Chief Officers.
- Review and update CPC Improvement Plan to reflect current and emerging priorities and in response to COVID-19 pandemic.
- Ensure quality assurance processes are in place to assess quality of interagency child protection practice.
- Recruitment of Training and Communications Officer to support ongoing development of confident and competent workforce.
- Develop culture and practice in relation to trauma informed and responsive approaches to child protection.
- Review and update Highland Child Protection Guidance in line with updated National Guidance.
- Implementation of National Learning Review Guidance locally.
- Work with the Corporate Parenting Board in developing plans to deliver on 'The Promise'.
- Identify methods for consulting with parents and carers about their experiences of child protection processes.
- Community Engagement Strategy and Plan to be developed to raise awareness of child protection in local communities and encourage communities to report concerns.
- Develop a suite of recommended resources for use with young people in relation to exploitation.
- Develop and deliver training on exploitation awareness for residential staff, front line practitioners and community groups.
- Work in partnership with Alcohol and Drugs Partnership to ensure funded projects within children's services meet the needs of children, young people, families, communities and services as commissioned.
- Deliver training in relation to trafficking and the National Referral Mechanism to ensure timely sharing of concerns.
- Update local trafficking protocol to ensure practitioners and managers are clear how to share information in relation to trafficking concerns.
- Work with Violence Against Women Partnership to develop 'Safe and Together' proposal.



Theme 5: Corporate parenting

Corporate Parenting is “An organisations performance of actions necessary to uphold the rights and safeguard the wellbeing of a looked after child or care leaver, and through which physical, emotional, spiritual, social and educational development is promoted” (The Scottish Government’s Corporate Parenting Guidance (2015)).

Key policy drivers

[The Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#): Part 9 (Corporate Parenting) and Part 10 (After Care)

[The Independent Care Review. Feb 2020](#): Keeping the Promise

[The Scottish Care Leavers Covenant](#): Making a change for Scottish Care Leavers

[The Adoption and Children \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#): Reforming adoption for Scotland’s Looked After Children

[The Looked After Children \(Scotland\) Regulations. 2009](#): Statutory duties in respect of Scotland’s Looked After Children

Highland’s corporate parents all have a responsibility to fulfil their corporate parenting duties. These duties aim to ensure the attention and resources of corporate parents are focused on the task of safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of Scotland's looked after children and care leavers. Corporate parents should listen to the needs, fears and wishes of children and young people, and be proactive and determined in their collective efforts to address these and to shape services and support in a way which meets need and improves outcomes and life chances.

The Independent Care Review found that care experienced children and young adults have found it hard to access the right mental health support and have found they have to be in acute crisis before support is available. Highland needs to ensure support that is trauma-informed and thoughtful and which act as a cushion to all those that require it, regardless of diagnosis and that there is a clear pathway which enables access to specialist support across age and stage.

In May 2020 Who Cares? Scotland published a second report into the impact of COVID-19 on care experienced young people. This indicated that a number of care experienced people and kinship carers were reporting an emotional impact of bereavement during the lockdown period. For most, these bereavements had happened prior to COVID-19, and often within the past year. Many people reported struggling to cope with the grief of losing important relationships, and with extra time at home, often alone or with limited social interaction, expressions of grief have come to the fore. Through Highland CHAMPS, young people have also reported regular experiences of bereavement and loss and the need for all care experienced young people to have access to bereavement counselling and/or support at the time of need.

Corporate parenting commitments

Highland's Corporate Parenting Board membership reflects strategic leadership from all of the responsible organisations in Highland. The Board is responsible for developing and implementing the agreed priorities within the plan and for ensuring transformational change across all services and support which meets the needs and improves the life outcomes for care experienced children young people and care leavers.

Highland's Corporate Parenting Board has identified three key commitments as part of the 2021 -2024 Corporate Parenting Plan:

1. **Leadership** - The Corporate Parenting Board will provide strategic leadership to the transformational change across Highland services and support to improve the lives and outcomes of care experience children, young people and care leavers.
2. **The Promise** - The Corporate Parenting Board identifies and delivers tangible, ambitious action to build on the foundations of The Promise.
3. **Mental wellbeing** - The Corporate Parenting Board will provide support for the mental wellbeing of Care Experienced People ensuring it is available in a timely manner and is accessible, and effective.
4. **Bereavement and Loss** - The Corporate Parenting Board will ensure Care Experienced People have access to support in relation to Bereavement and Loss and work to support prevention and early intervention for young people at risk of early death.



Priorities for improvement

- Learning and Development for Highland's corporate parents to ensure a clear understanding of duties and issues affecting care experienced people.
- Developing meaningful approaches to ensuring the voices of care experienced children and young people at the heart of service improvement.
- Corporate parenting organisations develop improvement plans which reflect the priorities within Highland's Corporate Parenting Plan.
- Develop of Highland's workforce to ensure it becomes trauma informed and responsive to the lived experience of children and young people.
- Promote digital inclusion for all Highland's Care leavers.
- The development of housing and employment opportunities for care experienced young people and care leavers.
- Implementation of 'The Promise' and 'Care Leavers Covenant' to ensure transformational change to service delivery and support.
- Improve mental health services and support for care experienced children, young people and care leavers.

Theme 6: Alcohol and drugs

Key policy drivers

- [The Scottish Government: Supporting alcohol and drug services during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- The Programme for Government 2019-2020 to [tackle illicit drugs, reduce harm and stop the rising number of drug deaths](#)
- Rights, Respect and Recovery, [our alcohol and drug treatment strategy](#)
- Supporting [the 20 key measures](#) in our [Alcohol Framework 2018](#) which sets out our national prevention aims
- Working to reduce the number of people with problem drug use in Scotland through [drugs education and prevention](#) activity
- Supporting [the Drug Deaths Taskforce](#) to tackle the rising number of drug deaths in Scotland
- Continuing to ensure the effective delivery of [alcohol brief interventions](#) (ABIs) by providing [national guidance on the local delivery plan standard for ABIs](#)
- Supporting actions, milestones and timeframes for implementing the ['Rights, respect and recovery' alcohol and drug treatment strategy](#)
- The [Alcohol Framework](#) published in November 2018
- The [alcohol and drugs treatment strategy](#) published in November 2018
- Supporting the alcohol and drugs strategy [Rights Respect and Recovery](#) (2018) provides commitment to improving outcomes for children and families affected by alcohol and drug use by ensuring they are safe, healthy, included and supported.

The need for change

National and local alcohol and drugs strategy [Rights Respect and Recovery](#) (2018) provides commitment to improving outcomes for children and families affected by alcohol and drug use by ensuring they are safe, healthy, included and supported.

The more we can do on prevention and early intervention; the less harm will be caused by alcohol and drugs. There are clear links between problem alcohol and drug use, health and other inequalities. Work on prevention has to therefore be framed within the context of tackling broader inequalities. Problematic alcohol and drug use disproportionately impact deprived communities.

In Highland, people living in deprived communities are 3 times more likely to die as a result of an alcohol-related death. Many people in recovery report that their alcohol and drug use started at a young age, in many instances under the age of 16. The most recent [SALSUS](#) (2018) found that in Highland; an increasing proportion of young people have used drugs and that attitudes are changing quite significantly but particularly among 15 year olds where almost 1 in 5 think it is OK to try cannabis. In relation to alcohol, almost two thirds of 15-year olds have been drunk, with many experiencing adverse consequences as a result with a steady increase in the numbers of 13 and 15 year olds allowed to drink at home. Trend data shows also shows that fewer young people under 25 are accessing treatment services.

Priorities for improvement and change

- Establish a Prevention and Education post to strengthen the Prevention and Education Framework support the Substance Aware School (SAS) Award and promote positive activities and pilot the Icelandic Prevention Model.
- Increase access to quality and evidence based online resources for young people, parents and professionals via Highland Substance Awareness Toolkit.
- Establish a specialist maternity service for pregnant women with alcohol and drug problems.
- Extend CAMHS psychological support for young people experiencing alcohol or drug related harm and increase workforce development opportunities for trauma-informed interventions.
- Establish a pilot project to support whole family approaches and implementation of forthcoming whole family practice standards.
- Involve vulnerable young people and families in alcohol and drug partnership design, delivery and evaluation.

