

Agenda Item	<b>7</b>
Report No	<b>HSW/02/23</b>

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Health, Social Care and Wellbeing

**Date:** 9 February 2023

**Report Title:** Families 1<sup>st</sup> Strategy

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1. **Think family, Families 1<sup>st</sup>.** This report sets out Highland's Children's Services (Health and Social Care Directorate), Families 1<sup>st</sup> strategy. The Families 1<sup>st</sup> vision is simple:

***to safely ensure that children and young people remain with their families and within their Highland communities.***

1.2 Underpinning this overarching strategy is a set of principles of family support, which are outcome focused in preserving, protecting and upholding the rights of children within their families in the Highlands. Families 1<sup>st</sup> sits within a broader national and local strategic policy and legislative landscape. The strategy is underpinned by GIRFEC, UNCRC and The Promise. This report details the evidence, and why supporting families in Highland is critical to whole family wellbeing. It then moves from the why to the how we get there. It seeks to deliver on improved outcomes for families whilst at the same time achieving cost reductions.

1.3 Families 1<sup>st</sup> shall encompass the concept of Follow the Money evidenced in the Promise. In other words, a radical shift in spend is required where we are investing in family support and family-based care (kinship, fostering), as opposed to high-cost residential placements. We want to intervene earlier and where possible, keep children in the Highlands. Our aim is to reduce family breakdown whilst also reducing the significant cost attributed to external placements.

1.4 The investment in Families 1<sup>st</sup>, has the power to have a lasting positive impact that could achieve tangible positive wellbeing outcomes for children and families throughout the Highlands.

### 2. Recommendations

2.1 To note, support and approve the Families 1<sup>st</sup> Strategy to enable us to achieve improved outcomes for our children and their families.

### **3. Implications**

#### **3.1 Resource**

Families 1<sup>st</sup> shall require existing resource alignment through structure and redesign and will be supported by the £1m one-off funding agreed through the Health and Prosperity Strategy. Redesign is near completion with the last stage being linked to the Health & Social Care support worker roles streamlined into two tiered models of Family Support:

1. early and preventative help, and
2. intensive support targeted for those families whose children and young people are on the cusp of care.

Trade Unions have been kept abreast of developments at the Health and Social Care Staff Partnership meetings. Further, senior managers have held several development meetings (virtual) with staff to update on progress.

#### **3.2 Legal**

Children's Health & Social Care services encompass a broad range of statutory duties. Corporate Parenting duties are set out in Part 9 the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. Specifically, in respect of family support, this is set out in Part 12 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (the 2014 Act) and the relevant services in relation to children at risk of becoming looked after etc (Scotland) Order 2016 (the 2016 Order) which came into force on the 31 August 2016. Relevant services are specified as: Family Group Decision Making and support services in relation to parenting. The services provided to families whose children are at risk of becoming looked after are duties set out under Part 12 of the 2014 Act.

#### **3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)**

Families 1<sup>st</sup> seeks to ensure there is a multi-dimensional vision and strategy that is focused on tackling poverty and the associated adverse experiences that many children and families experience across the Highlands. Families 1<sup>st</sup> must be placed based with resources and services being maximised and tailored to the specific needs of all communities across Highland from urban, to remote and rural.

#### **3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever**

The mix of hybrid working options added to the increased use of technology (particularly virtual), is helping to reduce our energy and carbon footprint whilst also making service delivery more flexible to needs.

#### **3.5 Risk**

Families 1<sup>st</sup> model evidences that the human costs associated with family breakdown is often linked to inter-generational adversity, trauma and disadvantage for children, families and communities. The economic cost is completely unsustainable in the delivery of public services. The delivery of family support services across the partnership - particularly to families whose children are at risk of becoming looked after - represents a crucial component of our early intervention and prevention strategy.

### 3.6 Gaelic

Families 1<sup>st</sup> is rooted in working with families based on values of rights and relationships that respects religious, spiritual, cultural, linguistic identity and needs.

## 4. Introduction

### 4.1 Families 1st

4.1.1 The Families 1st vision is simple:

***to safely ensure that children and young people remain with their families within their Highland communities.***

4.1.2 For children and families to thrive, the broader ecological system of welfare in health, education, economy and social security, are the universal building blocks of developed societies, and, crucially, developing children. Most children thrive within the context of the family with universal welfare services and the need to retain local community connections being key. All families need connections and support to thrive in their lives. By giving support to families (including extended family members) – when required - relationships can be maintained thus reducing trauma on our children.

### 4.2 Family Support Up Close

4.2.1 Family support from outwith the family network should be available when needed for as long as it is needed. Some families need more support focused on a range of parental needs, including, poverty, mental health, substance use, parental imprisonment, domestic abuse and disability. We need to be addressing the needs of children and adults in a family at the time of need rather than at crisis point, thus reducing the chances of family breakdown and of children entering the care system.

4.2.2 The Promise has a clear vision that:

***Where children are safe in their families and feel loved they must stay – and families must be given support together, to nurture that love and overcome the difficulties which get in the way.***

### 4.3 A Happy Life

4.3.1 In a recent UK research report, *Children's Views on Wellbeing and What Makes a Happy Life, UK 2020*, it was noted that feeling loved and having positive, supportive relationships, particularly with friends and family, including having someone to talk to and rely on were consistently found to be a key driver to ensure children to have a happy life. Children also described the importance of feeling safe as an essential element of their happiness, and referred to safe places to meet friends, while noting the key need to feel safe at home, in the community, on-line and at school.

4.3.2 Increasingly, more children and families are facing profound inequalities, resulting in a society where many are experiencing or at risk of major disadvantage. It is recognised that COVID and the economic cost of living crisis has resulted in unprecedented health and wellbeing challenges for families. **Appendix 1** details those groups of children and young people who are significantly at increased risk of

adversity and trauma. Families 1<sup>st</sup> will focus on these children and families throughout all localities in the Highlands.

#### 4.4 **Scottish Context – National Policy Drivers**

4.4.1 The national landscape has multiple cross-cutting interdependent drivers for policy and legislative change for children and families. These drivers will change the landscape of children's services in Scotland over the next decade. Two fundamental independent reviews take centre stage: the Independent Review of Adult Social Care in Scotland (IRASC, 3.2.21) - known as the Feeley report which has led to the Scottish Government commitment to a National Care Service. The second is the Independent Care Review (5.2.20) leading to The Promise. This Families 1<sup>st</sup> Strategy is fundamentally predicated on The Promise, UNCRC and GIRFEC. This is not a quick fix; but a strategy for the next five years and beyond that aligns Highlands' aspirations with national policy drivers.

4.4.2 This work also shares its ambition and works in harmony with the following national drivers:

- COVID Recovery Strategy
- Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26, and the
- National Strategy for Economic Transformation.

#### 4.5 **Highland Health and Social Care Children Services Planning Framework**

4.5.1 Families 1<sup>st</sup> in Highland sits within the context of strategic partnerships that have strong foundations of strategic planning and collaborative leadership demonstrated in key strategic plans: The Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (2017-2027) with a vision of Working Together to Reduce Inequalities in Highland. The Programme for the Highland Council – Our Future Highland (2022-2027). The Health and Prosperity Strategy (2021-2022), and specifically for children and families, Highland Integrated Children's Services Plan (2021-2023). That plan confirms the partnership vision that children:

- Have the best start in life and enjoy being young.
- Are loved, confident and resilient.
- Can achieve their potential.

4.5.2 It is within this context that Children's Health and Social Care is focused on ensuring the workforce truly understand this refreshed vision, underpinned by engagement with them, and the community we serve. The Children's Health and Social Care Service is an integrated Health and Social Care Partnership. We work across our Community Planning Partnership with a broad range of partners including 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Voluntary Organisations, Education, Housing, Police Scotland, Children's Hearing Scotland, The Scottish Reporters Administration and across the full range of Adult Health and Social Care Partnerships with NHS as the Lead Agency. The contribution of those partners is key to good outcomes.

4.5.3 **Families 1<sup>st</sup> - the Vision in Focus (2023 – 2026)** is the next planning cycle of integrated children's service planning.

## 4.6 Families 1<sup>st</sup> Strategy - Following the Money - HECM

- 4.6.1 Highland shall focus on the concept of Follow the Money, interlinked with the Human and Economic Cost Modelling (HECM) of working as a partnership to shift the balance of spend further upstream (ie at an earlier stage) and thus that will lead to greater investment in early intervention and prevention. Crisis and acute service provision (for example out of area residential and secure care services) shall gradually contract and shift for the critical few with the most complex needs. The Promise goes further stating that over the next ten years such services shall become obsolete. That is a high aspiration, but it is important that Highland also shares that national aspiration for Highland's children.
- 4.6.2 The Early Intervention Foundation has estimated that the cost of late intervention nationally is £16.6 billion a year. Whilst not all late intervention is avoidable, there are considerable resources being spent tackling issues that could have been dealt with sooner and at less cost to the individual and to services. An essential part of reducing the number of children who are vulnerable to poorer outcomes is investing in early years and early intervention services. Interventions should focus on supporting positive, nurturing relationships, reducing the sources of stress in a child's life, promoting resilient and stable families, and considering the social determinants of poverty.
- 4.6.3 This Families 1<sup>st</sup> strategy is Highland's Promise to mobilise collectively as a partnership with a focus to keep children and families Safe, Together, Achieving, underpinned with the foundations of Rights and Relationships being strengthened, respected and protected. In doing so, we believe we shall enable the conditions that help Highlands' children and families thrive.

## 4.7 From Strategy to Delivery

- 4.7.1 Given such aspirations for Highlands' children and families, we need to hold ourselves as a partnership to account. No one service can deliver such improved outcomes without partnership support. Collaborative leadership across the integrated children's services partnerships will be fundamental to achieving ambitions for Highland's children and families. It is recognised that change on this scale is not easy. The Promise emphasises this very point, noting that organisations shall need to radically 'change shape' and transform over the next 10 years. Families 1<sup>st</sup> sets out how Highland will do that.
- 4.7.2 We will actively be engaging with staff and our communities to enable outcomes to be achieved. A high-level Delivery Approach (Road Map) will be developed to ensure we focus on delivery and take decisive action if there are obstacles in the way.

## 5. An outline framework of the Delivery Approach is detailed below:

### Families 1<sup>st</sup> – Delivery Approach:

1. **Structure** - conclude the latter stages of the restructure to ensure structural alignment and design with Families 1<sup>st</sup>. Multi-disciplinary place-based teams, (family hubs) working collectively, working with, and not doing to, to meet the whole family's needs.

2. **Workforce** - to ensure our workforce 'owns' this vision and are supported to deliver services that achieves our Families 1<sup>st</sup> aspirations for Highland's children and families. Training and development will be key to this.
3. **Sustain** - develop our Commissioning Framework with 3<sup>rd</sup> sector partners to invest in the spectrum of sustainable early intervention/prevention services and intensive targeted family supports aligned to Families 1<sup>st</sup>.
4. **Refocus** - strengthen the Highland Practice Model in line with refreshed national GIRFEC guidance as the policy foundations of the right help at the right time.
5. **Shift** - building a cultural paradigm shift towards more restorative, strengths-based, rights respecting approaches across services, namely, Safe & Together and Family Group Decision Making, which seeks to empower children and families at the heart of decision making.
6. **Growth - development in Family Based Care** with a sharpened focus on Highland Kinship Care, and Foster Care and Adoption within a child's community for those critical few children who cannot safely remain at home and with their immediate family.
7. **Connect** - ensuring voice and lived experience are heard, and where possible, co-design services with them to keep to the aspirations set out in Families 1<sup>st</sup> and The Promise.
8. **Strengthen** - our quality assurance and performance processes to enable continuous improvement with a focus on understanding our impact and the tangible outcomes for children and families.
9. **Count what matters** - making better use of data to understand changing needs in our communities and how we strengthen our planning across services. Monitor the impact of Family 1<sup>st</sup> on reducing numbers of children being placed in residential care whilst increasing numbers remaining within the family unit. Reduction in costs and cost avoidance figures to be collated.

#### **Families 1<sup>st</sup> – where we should see contraction and reduction:**

1. **Identity & belonging** – reduction of Highland children and young people having to leave the Highlands to secure loving, nurturing, safe care.
2. **Identity & belonging** - reduction of brothers and sisters being separated in trying to secure safe nurturing care.
3. **Identity & belonging** – evaluation of the highly successful Home to Highland programme to build on our strengths of bringing children and young people back to the Highlands from out of area provision in secure care and residential care.
4. **The critical few** – not all young peoples' needs can be met in family-based care given their lived experiences of complex abuse and trauma. Highland residential care must be a positive option for what should be a small number of young people, particularly if they experience love, relationships, and stability. Highland shall keep as many of our young people within our own residential

estate until they are able to safely return home, or are secured in longer-term local care, with a stable loving and nurturing care team.

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 The importance of recognising the family as the critical infrastructure for the wellbeing and development of children in society is at the heart of the Families 1<sup>st</sup> strategy. A happy life for children involves a loving family within a broader system of friendships, community networks and universal services. Families will get the right help, at the right time, by the right people. Families 1<sup>st</sup> is set within the national policy landscape of UNCRC, The Promise, underpinned by strong GIRFEC roots in Highland.
- 6.2 The economic cost of delivering care in accordance with the current model is unsustainable and does not deliver optimal outcomes. Collective courageous leadership and integrated partnerships will be critical to align to Families 1<sup>st</sup> moving from strategy and vision to delivery and improved outcomes for the most vulnerable sectors in Highland.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care

Date: 31 January 2023

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Background Papers: Appendix 1 – Children at greater risk of disadvantage  
Appendix 2 – 10 Principles of Intensive Family Support

## **Appendix 1 – children at greater risk of disadvantage**

There are many children at greater risk of disadvantage and this plan is specifically targeting some of those children and families at greatest risk:

- Being a young carer
- Care experienced
- Young people who are homeless or whose families are homeless
- Children who identify as being lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender (LGBT)
- Parental poor mental health
- Young parents and teenage pregnancies
- Children who experience child abuse, including physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect.
- Children who are being sexually or criminally exploited sometimes linked to serious organised crime.
- Children in secure care.
- Children who offend.
- Children with a disability or long-term limiting illness
- Children with special educational needs
- Children with symptoms of mental ill-health
- Children living in poverty and material deprivation
- Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking children.

## **Appendix 2 - 10 Principles of Intensive Family Support** (The Promise, p57-58)

***Where children are safe in their families and feel loved they must stay – and families must be given support together, to nurture that love and overcome the difficulties which get in the way*** (The Promise, p46).

1. Community Based
2. Responsive and Timely
3. Work with Family Assets
4. Empowerment and Agency
5. Flexible
6. Holistic and Relational
7. Therapeutic
8. Non-Stigmatising
9. Patient and Persistent
10. Underpinned by Children's Rights