

Agenda Item	8
Report No	HCW-16-24

The Highland Council

Committee: Health, Social Care and Wellbeing

Date: 29 August 2024

Report Title: Family Centre, Inverness - Self Evaluation

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report shall introduce a fuller annual self-evaluation and reflective report of the Family Centre, Inverness, which is attached as the main report as **Appendix 1**. The report details the two key services in the Family Centre - Early Learning (nursery) provision, supplemented with a community-based Family Support Service. The report evidences the extensive range of services that are being accessed by the community in high numbers. Importantly, the journey of the Family Centre and how it has evolved, adapting and responding to the needs of families, is captured in this important first report. The report is highly reflective with rich feedback evidencing the ethos and values of the Family Centre team in building compassionate relationships. It is clear that the team nurture feedback and 'voice' and use this to underpin their on-going improvement and development of services tailored to families' needs. The report captures the powerful 'stories' of families, including hopes for the future, as we look forward, building on the strengths of the Family Centre and the transformational impact of the service on children and families' lives.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Note the report.
- ii. Scrutinise and comment.
- iii. Support the aspirations for community family support to grow across Highland.

3. Implications

3.1 **Resource** – The work of the Family Centre is within existing budget to grow community-based family support services, aligned to the Family 1st Strategy, which was approved at committee in February 2023. Highland Council had already committed £1million funding in 2023/24, and recently a further £2million funding over the next two years (2024-2026) as part of the new HOIP Delivery Plan, under the People Centred Transformation Portfolio to further develop and accelerate the ambition of the Family 1st Strategy (to safely maintain children with families in their Highland communities).

- 3.2 **Legal** – There are a range of statutory duties in respect of supporting families. Part 12, services in relation to children at risk of becoming looked after, of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, came into force on 31 August 2016. Relevant services are specified as: Family Group Decision Making and Parenting Support Services. There are also broader universal statutory duties in respect of Health and Education Services.
- 3.3 **Risk** – Failure to have a range and sufficiency of family support services could breach statutory duties and would have significant implications in terms of risks to children’s wellbeing and development. It is well recognised that lack of early family support services, will result in higher numbers of children requiring more targeted statutory social work interventions, including higher numbers of children entering child protection and care systems at considerable cost.

3.4 **Health and Safety** (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) – None

3.5 **Gaelic** – None.

4. Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children’s Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 Integrated Impact Assessment - Summary

4.3.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken on 31/07/24. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.

4.3.2 The Screening process has concluded that there are only positive impacts in addressing the first four Impact Assessment Areas with no impact on the remaining 3 areas. Members are asked to consider the summary in **Appendix 2** to support the decision-making process.

4.3.3

Impact Assessment Area	Conclusion of Screening/Full Assessment
(1) Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and Young People – <i>Positive</i> • Children affected by disability – <i>Positive</i> Older adults – <i>no impact</i>

(2) Socio-economic	<i>Positive</i>
(3) Human Rights	<i>Positive</i>
(4) Children's Rights and Well-being	<i>Positive</i>
(5) Island and Mainland Rural	<i>No Impact</i>
(6) Climate Change	<i>No Impact</i>
(7) Data Rights	<i>No Impact</i>

5. Introduction

- 5.1 I am delighted to introduce the first annual report highlighting the work of the Family Centre, Inverness (previously known as Merkinch Family Centre). The report details the wide range of services and support accessible to families in Inverness. The Centre has two key services – early learning nursery provision, supplemented with a strong focus on community-based family support, provided by a small team of Community Early Years Practitioners.
- 5.2 The report also details the important journey of the Family Centre as services have evolved and adapted to the needs of children and families in their communities. For example, the age range of children has shifted from a focus on early years 0-5 to 0-12+ years. The journey also demonstrates that while the history of the Family Centre began in Merkinch, Inverness, the team have stretched out to other areas of the Highlands, as best they can, to support families who need their help.
- 5.3 In September 2022, the team moved to the old school Merkinch, which has been beautifully renovated into a warm, inviting family space. A celebratory event was hosted by the team, welcoming families, professionals, and Elected Members to mark the official opening and the new chapter in the journey.
- 5.4 The Family Centre is focused on early intervention and prevention, working alongside universal Health, including Midwifery, Education and with an extensive range of community partnerships formed with charities, third sector organisations, and linkages with some small local businesses. They also undertake targeted intensive support with families with more complex needs, alongside Social Work, based in the Family Teams. The report highlights through 'stories' risks to children, being significantly reduced, linked to intensive family support, focused on developing parenting capacity and confidence, which in turns builds safety for the child.
- 5.5 The ethos of the Family Centre is important - they do not fit families into a 'system' or 'criteria'; instead, if the family need support, help will be provided. Crucially, this support will be there for as long as needed. Working 'with' and not doing 'to' is fundamental to the approach. This is strengths based, rights respecting real family support in action.

This is the key foundation of Family, in The Promise, which states:

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, p9).

- 5.6 The report extensively highlights that building trusting, nurturing relationships is the foundation of the whole service.

Enabling children and families to thrive in their communities is the overarching vision. One-to-one and group interventions spotlight the diverse range of significant supports offered throughout the report.

- 5.7 The report shines a light on nurturing the child's development with a big emphasis on early learning, communication, speech and language, health and wellbeing, often expressed through the world of play. Happiness and having fun for all the family shines throughout the report!
- 5.8 The Family Centre's stories, captured through the voices of children and families, are powerful. Voices, feedback of experiences and the difference to peoples' lives, are deep in the story of the Family Centre. Of course, these are more than stories, the relationships, the play, the parenting scaffolding and growth, and the rich learning experiences, e.g. through the PEEP programme, to name one example, demonstrates the quality and qualitative impact of holistic, non-stigmatising family support.
- 5.9 These combined approaches support the overarching thriving development of the child, including in the early years, building the very foundations of brain development, which can powerfully set the trajectory from pre-school to school years and beyond into adulthood. The Royal Centre for Early Childhood (RCFEC) evidence is clear that early childhood represents, *one of the best investments we can make for the long-term health, wellbeing and happiness of our society*. Our future outcomes, whether they be academic, economic or health related, including mental health, are profoundly shaped by *our first five years*.
- 5.10 Experiences in early childhood are often the root cause of today's hardest social challenges, such as addiction, family breakdown, poor mental health, suicide and homelessness. Many of these problems can be traced back to the earliest years of someone's life. The intersection of these complex parental vulnerabilities, within the broader context of structural inequalities, linked to poverty, ethnicity, disability and social isolation means too many children experience acute disadvantage. The impact of COVID, which will be experienced for decades, and the cost-of-living crisis, exacerbate and compound deep seated inequalities. Thus, the report highlights the underpinning focus of the team in using all the possible levers to support families in poverty, while at the same time providing a safe space for those harder to reach voices such as the Women's Gypsy & Travelling Community Group
- 5.11 The report looks forward with dreams and ambitions to grow family support across Highland, adapting to local needs. This is our shared ambition, which completely fits with our local Family 1st Strategy (*to safely maintain children in their families in their Highland communities*). The dream also aligns to one of the most ambitious Scottish Government policies of Whole Family Wellbeing. This is alongside the 10-year transformation of the care system encapsulated in The Promise. WFWB is SGs direct response to the Family Foundation of The Promise.
- 5.12 The Family Centre is one small, but very important service that we can say, with confidence, is transforming lives. This is a bold statement that we can evidence, as the report also concludes with the recent (unannounced) inspection of the service in April 2024. The Care Inspectorate graded the service, through a range of quality indicators, as, **Very Good** and **Excellent**. It's important we recognise that such gradings mean that we have a small team who are *outstanding* and *sector leading* in their provision of services and the difference they are making in family's lives. That's

one of the reasons why the model does indeed need to grow, although there's more to it than striving to replicate excellence.

- 5.13 The Promise's extensive work, captured in the Human and Economic Cost Modelling (HECM) powerfully illustrates the point. This model can be applied to Highland by comparing and contrasting the broad reach and high-volume of families accessing the services provided by the Family Centre with other services. Notably, the budget to run the service, as detailed in the report, is split into two parts: just over £326,000 for Family Support Services and just under £360,000 for Early Learning Provision. If we compare that with our total budget spend, for example, with a very small number of children in purchased residential care, often out with the Highlands, which sits at just under £8million, we can see the stark contrast. One placement, for one child alone, can cost more than what it costs to run the entire Family Support Service. So, we can categorically evidence that any investment in early intervention services, such as the Family Centre, is indeed a wise investment.
- 5.14 More broadly given the unprecedented financial pressures in local government, preventative, community-based family support services, may provide the keys to unlock the future sustainability of public services. Members know through other reports to committee, we are halting what was an increasing trajectory of children having to be placed in high-cost residential provision, but to continue to reverse that trend, noting all the increasing complexity of need and demand across our communities, we must ensure we continue to use the public pound wisely by shifting our spend into a stronger infrastructure of community-based family support.
- 5.15 The Promise should have the final word:

Scotland must ensure that there are places in every community for parents of young children to go for support and advice, to meet other local parents and to stay and play with their children (The Promise, p49)

The Family Centre, Inverness, is a shining example of exactly what the Promise is clear is needed across Scotland and across Highland.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care

Date: 26 July 2024

Author: Margaret McIntyre, Head of Social Work (Children and Justice)
and Jennifer MacDonald, Manager, Family Centre

Background Papers:

Appendices: Appendix 1 - Family Centre Annual Report 2023-2024
Appendix 2 - Integrated Impact Screening



Family Centre – Inverness



Evaluation report		
Reporting Period	From: 1 st May 2023	To: 31 st May 2024
Project Title	The Family Centre – Inverness	
Project Address	The Family Centre – Inverness, Telford Road, Inverness, IV3 8HY	
Contact Person	Jennifer MacDonald	
Contact Position	Family Centre Manager	
Contact Details	The Family Centre- Inverness	
Telephone	01463 245926	
Email	jennifer.macdonald4@highland.gov.uk	
<p>The Service</p> <p>The Family Centre Inverness is funded by the Highland Council and is the only one of its kind in the council area. We work alongside children and their families from pre-birth to adulthood within the Inverness and surrounding areas. The centre is twofold: we offer early intervention and support to children and their families through therapeutic trauma informed one to one work and/or groupwork. The other element is a fully funded Early Learning and Childcare provision for eligible 2-year-olds.</p> <p>The centre’s aim is to take a strength-based approach to support children to feel safe, loved, nurtured, respected and cared for within their own family and to make life better for them. To achieve this, we support and empower parents to be the best they can be, and for each member of the family to realise their worth.</p> <p>We take time to build meaningful, positive transparent relationships built on trust and honesty, where openness with the family is key. We are not a time limited service and will work alongside a family for however long they require the support. We will shape and mould the service around the needs of the child and family providing a bespoke and personalised range of support which can look very different for each person.</p> <p>Working alongside the family we look at what is going well/strengths for the family and what can be changed or improved to ensure the safety, health and well-being of the child or children. The child is always at the centre, we feel it is important to work, support, empower and strengthen the systems surrounding that child. This means that we will work alongside whomever is a key part of the child’s life (parents, partners, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, family friends, school, nursery, neighbours etc).</p> <p>It is our aim to provide a high-quality service which is non stigmatising, non-threatening and inclusive for families where principles of equality, inclusion and diversity underpin our ethos.</p>		

¹ For brevity The Family Centre Inverness is often referred to as ‘the centre’.

The Family Centre – Inverness – Vision and Aims

Our Vision

Our vision is to work in partnership with all children and families to support each individual reach their full potential.

Aims

Our aims are to provide the Health and Social Care Standards My Support My Life (Scottish Government 2017).

These are:

Dignity and respect:

We aim to listen, be easy to approach, kind, friendly and supportive.

Compassion:

We try and build good positive relationships where families feel accepted, comfortable and don't feel judged.

Be Included:

We create a welcoming environment where families from all cultures and communities feel comfortable and at home, supporting each person's life journey.

Responsive Care and Support:

We aim to respond appropriately, giving time to listen to children and families.

Wellbeing:

We aim to support all aspects of individual wellbeing, helping children and families to feel safe, nurturing a healthy lifestyle from pre-birth into adulthood.

Our vision and aims is a live document which families will regularly give feedback to help us ensure we are getting it right for our children and families.

- ♥ *Staff have always made sure to pass on any information*
- ♥ *It is a very welcoming environment*
- ♥ *Amazing staff *** feels very comfortable around them all*
- ♥ *We were going through a lot and the staff were extremely helpful through it all*
- ♥ *From the minute we started with the family centre we have felt welcome and accepted*
- ♥ *Yes always very kind to myself and ***, always feel heard by staff*
- ♥ *Family being the key word Staff are angels I count myself lucky to have my child here!*
- ♥ *Very welcoming and comfortable*
- ♥ *They've saved my family and myself countless times, forever grateful*
- ♥ *Amazing staff I feel comfortable around them all*

Our team

Leadership

Jennifer MacDonald - Centre Manager 35 hrs (Mon-Wed & Fri)

Gillian Forbes - Peep Coordinator 35hrs (Mon-Thurs)

Pamela Harkness - Senior Early Years Practitioner 35hrs (Mon, Tues, Thurs & Fri)

Janice Wilson - Equity and Excellence Lead 26.25hrs (Mon, Wed & Thurs)

Early Learning and Childcare /Nursery

Early Year Practitioners

FY - Full Year and TT Term Time **35 hrs**

(FY) Abbie McAdie (Mon-Fri)

(FY) - Aleksandra Trunk (Mon-Wed & Fri)

(FY) Carol MacDonald (Mon, Wed- Fri)

(FY) Danielle Knox (Mon-Fri)

(FY) Jackie Crennell Mon, Tues, Thurs & Fri)

(TT) Fiona McClurg (Mon-Fri)

(TT) Izabela Redzik (Mon-Fri)

Support Workers

(TT) Grace Habibi (Mon-Wed) 15 hrs

(TT) Lorna McGurk (Mon-Thurs)21hrs

(TT) Tracy Hanlon - (Mon- Fri)25 hrs

(TT) Jax Sutherland - (Mon-Fri) 30 hrs

(FY) Susan Wiseman (Mon-Fri) 30 hrs

Catering assistant

(TT) Kasia Spence – 15 hours (Mon-Fri)

Community

Community Early Years Practitioners

Charlotte Macleod – 35 hrs (Mon-Thurs)

Kirsteen Miller – 30 hrs (Mon-Fri)

Mairianne Nairn – 35 hrs (Mon-Thurs)

Sheena Mackay – 35 hrs (Mon-Wed and Fri)

Wendy Gallacher 21 hrs (Mon-Thurs)

Vacant Post – 14 hrs (Tues and Wed)

Business Support Clerical Assistant –

Lynn Matheson - 26 hours (Mon-Thurs)

Budgets annually

Family support; **£326,911.00**

2-year-old provision; **£359,240.00**

Background and history:

The Family Centre – Merkinch was created in November 2006 due to the area being in the top 5% of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and the impact this was having on children’s outcomes and opportunities. The aim was to help build positive relationships within the community and empower parents to improve the home learning environment for children.

The Centre at this time was in a standalone building in Coronation Park, Merkinch. The focus at that time was to deliver 3-&4-year-old nursery provision as well as offer outreach support work. Small groups were delivered in the centre or within the community in bigger venues. Groups offered included baby massage, messy little feet, cooking with confidence, weaning workshops and Peep. Some of the groups were targeted intervention but mostly universal. The focus of the Centre moved from offering 3-&4-year-old nursery provision to provide 600 hours of nursery care and education to 2-year-olds in 2015.

The centre has evolved and changed over time due to identified need and gaps in services for children and families.

Some of the changes and developments:

- 1st February 2016 - New manager with a background in Family Support and service development.
- Designated team for the nursery to offer consistency for the children and to also allow the Community Early Years Practitioner’s to be in the community
- Introduction of 1140 hours of funded nursery provision for 2-year-olds. 30 hours for those choosing term time and 23 hours for those attending all year
- Another significant change was to protect the Peep coordinator role so that the focus was on developing PEEP (Parents as Early Education Partners) across the Highlands.
- focus of delivery changed from children 5 and under to children up to 12+ years old within the family.
- Wider Geographical area – historically, the centre offered support to families within the Merkinch and South Kessock area. Due to identified needs support was offered to the Black Isle and Ross-shire and online to Fortwilliam, Caithness, Lochaber, and Skye.
- Equity and Excellence Lead (EELS) – Scottish Government Initiative, 6 areas across the Highlands allocated an EEL due to statistics showing extremely high differences in the attainment gap for children and young people living in extreme poverty. Reports highlighted that these children were less likely to have a wide range of opportunities and experiences due to their home environment. Part of the role of the EELs is to support, encourage and empower parents/carers to take an active part in their child’s education and home learning environment. To open up a wider world to children and offer experiences and increase opportunities.
- Children’s Library - In 2019 the children’s library was opened – this was to support children’s literacy and home learning opportunities. All the books have been donated.

(More information later in report).

Library opening [news views jul2019.pdf \(merkinch.org.uk\)](#)



- New premises – involvement in the design of the centre, creating a space which would offer support in more practical ways, including a family bathroom with a bath and shower, washing machine and tumble dryer to be used and accessed by Families. Bigger kitchen to offer more cooking groups, family meals and encourage parents to cook from scratch on a budget. Spaces to deliver small and large groups, training or one to one support in group rooms.

New Premises:

In September 2022, the Family Centre moved location from Coronation Park to the old Merkinch Primary School on Telford Road. The building was renovated to include two nursery areas which open onto a courtyard and garden. A family kitchen, family bathroom, group space and two office rooms.



You enter the Family Centre into a reception area which is open, airy and welcoming.

From the reception area you have access to stairs which takes you to the upper floor accommodating one large group space and two smaller cosier rooms. Also, from the reception area you have access to the rest of the building on the ground floor. The bright large central hall hosts access to the nursery, children's pegs and a dining area.

Off this area you have access to all other areas of the Family Centre.

Family Kitchen - There is a large kitchen, this space is used by parents, to bulk cook, to have family time – where families can share fun baking or cooking together, then sit round the table to enjoy.

Family bathroom -

There is a family bathroom where people can have access to hot running water, a bath or shower, and the use of a washing machine and tumble dryer. We are able to support parents to bath their children, show a new parent how to safely bath their baby, supporting confidence or offer a parent the chance to have a nice relaxing bath or shower.



Group rooms – can be booked out to be used for groups, training, meetings, family time, clinic, counselling, SCIM (Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM) for Joint Investigative Interviewing (JII) or for one-to-one support.

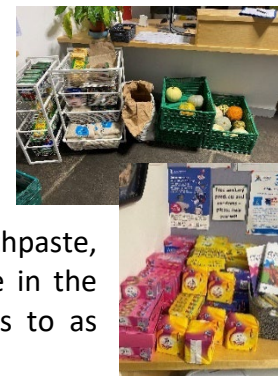


We have included families in designing the décor and some have come into the centre to paint and decorate. We have tried to create a warm and welcoming environment and try to make the centre as warm and welcoming as possible and are always looking for the families to give us ideas of what they would like to see at the Family Centre.

Tackling poverty - food, fuel and period poverty:



Many of the families struggle financially to help reduce poverty and alleviate the stress on families they have access to free sanitary products, toiletries, toothbrushes, toothpaste, condoms, and food items. These are available in the reception area for families to help themselves to as much or as little as they want or need.



We are linked in with two national charities, Fareshare who fight food waste and hunger and Cfine who help end period poverty they regularly deliver to us. We also have clothing, toys and baby items donated for the families to take.

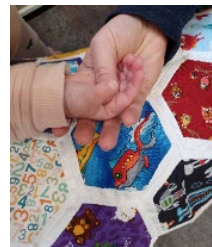
Food bank – as well as having a small foodbank in the centre we are a referring agent for the local food bank run by Blythswood Care (funded through the Trussel Trust) if families are struggling and need food we can signpost onto them through an online referral.

If a family is in crisis with no food, nappies, electricity, or gas and have no means of getting support from family or friends we will do our utmost to support. We will also raid the pantry and fridge to ensure that children will not go without. We will then support the family to look at their finances, spending and priorities.

We work closely with some local charities **Grace and the Gap** who provide toiletries, nappies and cleaning items for families living in the Hilton and Ness Side part of Inverness. Highland Action for Little Ones (**Halo**) who can provide clothing, toys and bedding for children across the Highlands. In June 2023 Halo contacted us to be part of an initiative to give children new shoes for starting nursery or school. We were given 18 £50 vouchers for Beggs shoe shop in Inverness to give out to 18 children to get their feet measured and properly fitting shoes.

['How big are my feet?' – Highland charity aims to provide school shoes for families during cost-of-living crisis \(inverness-courier.co.uk\)](https://www.inverness-courier.co.uk/news/how-big-are-my-feet-highland-charity-aims-to-provide-school-shoes-for-families-during-cost-of-living-crisis)

Project Linus – All children and families in the nursery, have been given the opportunity to have a beautiful handmade quilt to keep warm in the winter and all year round.



Family Support and community work

How we connect with families:

- ♥ Home visits or wherever is comfortable for the family, could be local café, family centre, community centre, friend's house.
- ♥ Support children in school
- ♥ Family time hosted by Family Centre – play and fun sessions with a focus on relationship building, modelling positive interactions and having fun as a family.
- ♥ Groups
- ♥ Parenting assessments
- ♥ 1:1
- ♥ Telephone support
- ♥ Text support
- ♥ WhatsApp messages/calls
- ♥ Email
- ♥ Supervised family time for children to see their parents and or siblings on behalf of social work

Some of the areas we support with are:

Child's needs – what do I need to grow and develop

Routines and Boundaries

Managing challenging behaviours

Low school attendance/non attenders

Healthy sleep routines and patterns

Attachment

Domestic Abuse,

Relationship breakdown, healthy relationships

Parental addictions

Mental Health (children's and parents)

Financial guidance – welfare support

Developmental milestones, age and stage

Weaning, food and fussy eating

Housing support

Understanding feelings and regulating emotions

Support with NDAS (Neuro developmental assessment service) process

Parents choices, lifestyle and impact on child

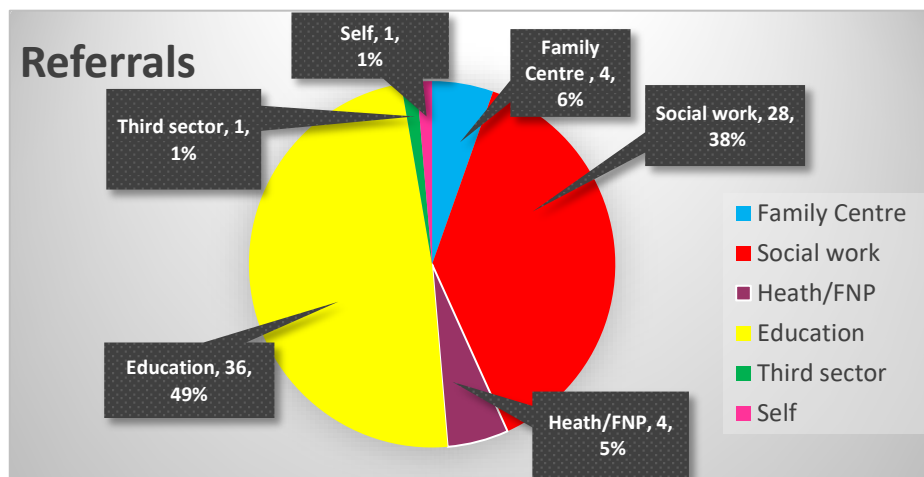
Family time to promote relationships, bonding and positive time together.

This list is not exhaustive and just some of the areas of support we offer.

Referrals: we accept referrals from any source which may include Social Work, Health, Education, Police, or from family, self-referrals, or other organisations

During this reporting period we have supported through family support: **74** families.

- **171** children and **114** adults



Following receipt of referral the worker will text the family to introduce themselves and say when they will be phoning. The family can then store the workers details and are more likely to answer a phone call if they know who is phoning them.

It is important that support offered is discussed and agreed with a family prior to referral we want to work alongside children and families, work at their pace and be flexible in the work that we do. We will meet with the family to speak with them about their view of the situation and what they would find supportive.

Examples of a family's stories

Family 1:

Initial referral from Primary School Head Teacher for support for family – Dad, Mam and 4 children, one who exhibits extremely challenging behaviours which are impacting on the whole family and he is struggling in school, on reduced timetable and dad support son in school. His sibling requires support with toileting. There are physical and mental health issues impacting on the parents and financial pressures.

Support:

Relationship building is key and giving family a voice and choice. As the introductions were during Covid restrictions, initial sessions were online with the children and Dad then leading to face-to-face when restrictions allowed. The family were able to benefit from using the space at the family centre and text and telephone support continued with Mam joining in when she was able to and as she began to trust the staff. Weekly telephone calls to dad and mam to talk over their week any worries or concerns, worker would talk over strategies and ideas that the parents could try in the family home.

In addition, weekly family sessions took place these included arts and crafts, playing games, baking, cooking meals and eating together. Throughout these sessions the adults and children were learning how to interact positively with each other, take turns, share, listen to each other and respect the rules and boundaries set. As a family they set family rules and made a contract to help establish boundaries and parameters within the home. The Community Early Years Practitioner would model how to appropriately respond to the children's behaviours which parents were able to learn from.

Areas of support:

- Strategies to help middle son regulate his emotions
- Support both parents with establishing and sticking to boundaries
- Parenting strategies.
- Confidence building and empowerment – highlight what was going well, praise, modelling
- Challenge areas that needed changing
- Support with NDAS process and diagnosis
- Housing support letter
- Support children within school
- Advocacy
- Support to attend appointments
- Support to engage with other services and professionals, - speech and language, The Pines, dietician,
- Support with diagnosis of a mams life threatening and limiting condition.
- Support with parents and children's past trauma.

Feedback and voice from the family:

***** from the family centre has been working with our family for some time now, originally referred for our son to support the family, she has been amazing support. As myself and ***** don't have parents, we don't have parents/grandparents you would usually turn to for advice and guidance with kids, however ***** has been great for advice/guidance when asked and if she doesn't know she will find out. She has helped with form filling and ideas of active play with kids. Kids are attending the family centre to paint, play and do crafts. She has also took our pre-teen daughter for some breaving space and a chat if needed. Such a great valuable all round family service. It is not often I have much nice to say about the highland council but family centre is one thing they got right, much needed service and highly valued. Don't think anything can be improved apart from choccy biscuits

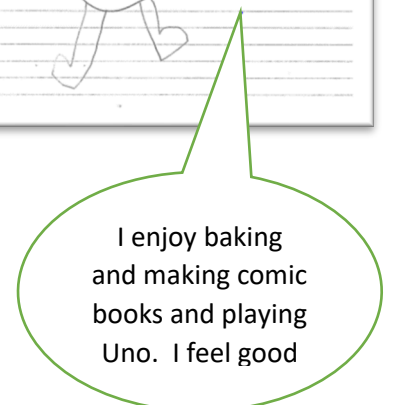
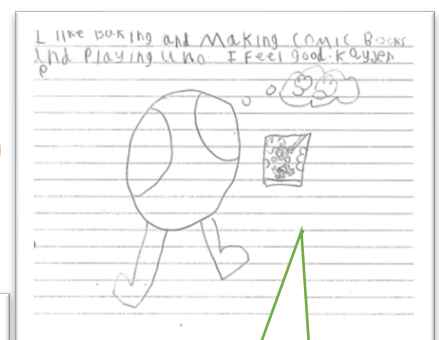
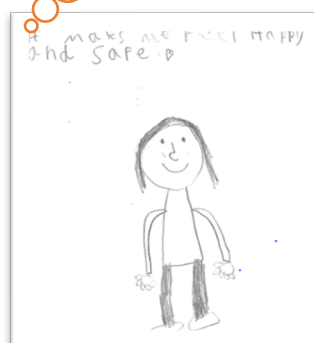
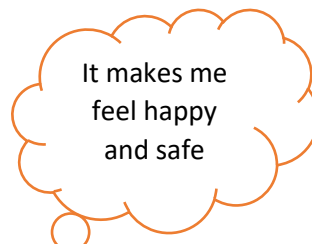
Support offered:

- Ongoing support to all 3 children weekly in school focusing on building confidence, supporting with schoolwork as all are significantly behind in school, share worries and emotions.
- Play sessions with each of the children separately and then together.
- Weekly home visits with mam
- Practical support in the home – support mam to put routines in place, to keep on top of the cleanliness in the house.
- Support with mam to recognise children’s needs,
- Support Mam to attend appointments and remind her of these.
- Emotional support for mam – regarding past trauma, health worries, relationships,
- At times daily telephone, text support and home visits

The outcomes

- ♥ Child has been through NDAS process with workers support and has a diagnosis.
- ♥ Referral to Welfare team for benefit check – income maximised.
- ♥ Children’s attendance at school improved
- ♥ Children opening up and talking about their worries, they don’t appear to be as worried about their mam.
- ♥ Improvements in school due to them being there regularly, children’s appearance better and middle child not falling asleep in class.
- ♥ Home environment improved, routines put in place and cleanliness and standard improved
- ♥ Mam beginning to see impact of past trauma on her children
- ♥ Family dynamics and relationships improved between siblings
- ♥ Children now living in Kinship care due to bereavement

Feedback and voices from the children



Feedback from referrer

The family centre is a crucial and invaluable service to families who are struggling for different reasons. The service has always responded promptly and efficiently with staff who are committed, skilled and knowledgeable. They have made a huge difference to several families and are our one remaining reliable support provider. We absolutely could not provide our families with the support they need without this service

Voices and thoughts from some of our families

Always answer my questions and if they don't know they will find out

Just brilliant

Really good at supporting us

When there was a problem always spoke nice to me, never made to feel bad

Always open and honest with me about my son

Nice to have a worker, very helpful

Good at listening

Would have been lost without the support

Definitely, no judgement. Worker would say have you thought about trying this or what about this idea.

Worker doesn't judge

Feel supported

Definitely, no judgement.

It's all been positive

Come at the right time, really helped my children, linked them into young carers. The don't feel so alone now.

You walk in some places and atmosphere isn't great, nice atmosphere at the family centre

Its been brilliant, pretty hard to say anything I would change

Really good so it is

Very happy about the support offered. Couldn't imagine anyone saying any bad stuff.

Lots of support from the worker

Very warm welcome from all the staff

Joked with my worker about knowing us, she was my worker when me and my sister were younger, she used to take us out to do activities. That was comforting, as it's come full circle and she is helping me with my kids.

Its been good and helpful



Highland Peep Coordinator Gillian Forbes oversees the development and delivery of Peep in the Highlands. All Peep groups are delivered with children and parents together and support families from antenatally to early primary school age.

We have recently been awarded funding through the Family Wellbeing Fund/Scottish Government for a number of training places in all of our Peep programmes (Antenatal Peep, Learning Together Programme – LTP and Peep Progression Pathway.)

Peep Learning Together programme (LTP) – <https://www.peeple.org.uk/node/3>

This helps parents, carers and practitioners make the most of the learning opportunities in everyday life, supporting babies and children’s learning through play. Research has found that the main influences on young children’s outcomes are the quality of the relationship with their parents and carers, and what they do with their family, from birth (known as the Home Learning Environment). Early intervention makes a real difference.

The LTP contains 74 Topics covering five **strands** of child development: **personal, social and emotional development** ~ **communication and language** ~ **early literacy** ~ **early maths** ~ **health and physical development**. Threading through each of the sessions are **Opportunities, Recognition, Interaction and Modelling (ORIM)**. These are four practical ways that parents and carers support their children's learning and development.

Peep Antenatal Programme (PAP)– <https://www.peeple.org.uk/node/34> Peep antenatal programme supports expectant parents to be from 26 weeks gestation. This can be offered in groups or on a 1:1 basis. Practical and information sharing sessions with parents which covers components such as bathing, nappy changing, safe sleep practices, sling demonstration, feeding, “How life might change” and supportive networks. Research indicates that strong relationships enhance parents' confidence and self-esteem. They also contribute to better outcomes for the child in terms of their cognitive development (learning and understanding), the relationships they build, and their resilience to cope if life gets tough.

Peep Progression (PPP) <https://www.peeple.org.uk/progression-pathway-training> Pathway offers nationally recognised units to cover three qualification levels for parents and carers as learners. Each participant will create a keepsake portfolio of their children learning from each session, with photographs and little stories.

At each of these levels, learners can follow a unit covering:

- ♥ any of the five Peep learning strands - Personal, social and emotional development, Communication and language, Early literacy, Early maths, and Health and physical development, *and/or*
- ♥ any of the four developmental stages - Babies, Toddlers, Pre-schoolers or Early Childhood

Gillian has secured an agreement with the local college/university that any parent/carer who completes and gains a qualification will get an automatic interview for any social or child care course. Gillian in discussions with UHI about extending this to cover any course.

Parenting assessments – Gillian Forbes has completed **3** parenting assessments on behalf of the social work. CEYP's will provide information which can input into parenting assessments.

Throughout this reporting period we have delivered **Peep – Learning Together Programme (LTP)** to **211** children and **208** adults



Peep Botanic Gardens (outdoors LTP)

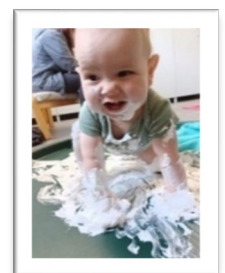
The Centre has been running a successful outdoor peep group at the Botanic gardens, Inverness for several years. This is an opportunity to introduce families to learning through play and to promote the importance of interacting and communicating with their child and how this develops brain growth, confidence, and independence whilst enjoying the outdoors and nature. Being outdoors helps to promote feelings of wellbeing.



As well as covering the identified topics, support and advice is given on such issues like toileting problems, fussy eating and diet, sleep issues, behavioural matters, and communication. We will also sign post families to other agencies for help and support.

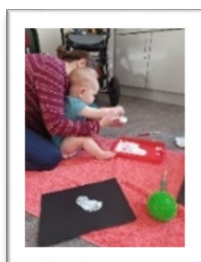


Peep LTP – is run where parents/carers and children enjoy a wide range of activities, using everyday items such as shaving foam, material, plastic bottles, pots, pans, kitchen utensil, etc. Parents choose what topic they would like to cover in the next session which will hopefully tie in with something their child is experiencing in their development.



Baby Peep groups currently running are in Ness Castle Primary School, Smithton Primary School and the Family centre x2.

Toddler Peep groups currently running are at the family Centre, Smithton Primary School.



Dads/male carers group (LTP) **16** dads and **16** children



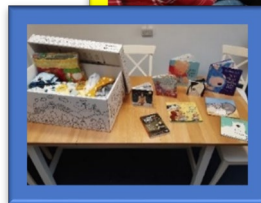
Peep group for dads/male carers – structured Peep group, covering 5 core elements – Welcome & Hello song, Talk time – different peep topic, story time, songs, joint activity, goodbye song. This gives dads the opportunity to meet and socialise with other dads, reduce isolation and to enjoy activities



with their baby or child.

Antenatal Peep

Couples Workshops AP – **44** expectant parents join in sessions together, form friendships, prepare for parenthood, bond with their unborn baby, learn new skills and opportunities to practice before baby arrives.



“Feel much more prepared for baby arrivals, much more confident. Really grateful that Gillian was able to come to the house and work with us individually”.

“Most useful was nappy changing, it was my first time navigating nappies and seeing a reusable one. Plus feeding, no idea about cluster feeding!”

“All really useful”

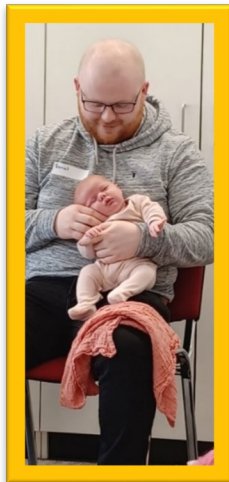
“Very supportive staff – lovely & friendly”

“Learnt a lot, got to think about things from a different perspective, learnt from the interactive sections - Great friendly environment, given us more confidence overall.”

*“The sessions has helped myself & K*** feel more confident and not alone. It has given us more knowledge, especially about safe sleep.”*

“I liked the practical part where we could see and do what we will have to do when the baby is here”

1:1 support **25**



Covering antenatal Peep programme – topics include – Getting to know you, Supportive networks, how life might change, early brain development, how babies communicate.

We also cover some of the practical elements as detailed above – Nappy changing, bathing, safe sleep as well as other topics that parents would like to cover

Reunion sessions **10**

Get together for parents once babies are born – opportunity for parents to meet and socialise and share experiences. Staff also discuss opportunity to join Peep groups and other groups in the local community

Feedback - *“The workshops were brilliant and so informative! A lot less worry of the unknown now. I’ll definitely keep in touch and let you know when the bump arrives”*

“Thanks for the classes, they were great, we both really enjoyed having a couple of hours interrupted time to chat everything baby. We will definitely be back in touch when baby arrives and look forward to joining your other classes”

“Well delivered with friendly approachable staff”

“What did you like most about the classes – Practical learning, bathing, nappy changing, safe sleep etc”

Feedback from FNP observing Couples workshop- *“Thanks Gillian, to be honest I found the whole group session really interesting and enjoyed it all! I learnt loads and even used the resources today with one of my clients! It was extremely helpful, and I really liked the way you linked each topic”*.

Clava – 68 adults

Parent craft sessions delivered alongside the community midwives – Elements of the antenatal programme covered as mentioned above)

Peep Progression Pathway (PPP) groups ran in HM prison Inverness, currently there is no suitable dads to run another group but Gillian is in talks with them regularly for case study please open link [HM Prison Inverness | www.peeple.org.uk](https://www.peeple.org.uk)

Peep Programmes case study:

An Antenatal Peep referral was received by Community Midwife in February 2021 requesting support for a family who had recently moved to the Caithness area, both parents had children from previous relationships but none of their children were in their care. Due to concerns raised, Social

Work were also involved. Due to location of the family, sessions were delivered shortly after via MS Teams. Prior to delivery of the baby in April 21, the decision was taken that the baby would be placed in Foster care but Peep support to continue through supporting family time. Due to the location of the foster placement this meant that Peep Learning Together (LTP) sessions could be offered to the family, face-face in the Family Centre. This created a safe environment for the family and continuity of Peep practitioner. It allowed Peep practitioner and Social worker the opportunity to observe their parenting skills and gauge whether they were able to put their Peep learning into practice.

The family engaged well with the practitioner and took on advice and suggestions, putting these into practice with their child, the commitment and hard work from the couple meant that the child was returned to their care in July 2021.

Peep LTP sessions/parenting support was provided to the family for a further eight-month period after the child returned home. These sessions were carried out via Teams, supporting the family with child development topics and providing emotional support.

Fast forward three years.....

The family keep in touch from time to time with the practitioner which demonstrates the supportive relationship that was developed, they send updates on the children through texts and emails. The family gave recent feedback (January 24) reflecting on their previous Peep journey. The couple now have two children aged 2 ½ years and 1 year, with no social work intervention. The family have spoken of how helpful the peep programmes were for them in enhancing their parenting skills. They felt that the support was delivered at a pace that was suited to them, highlighting the sessions were helpful and supportive. The topics that they found most helpful included early brain development, communication & language, babies making choices, baby massage, the importance of routines and helping children to understand their feelings.

The family report that they are still utilising strategies and ideas suggested at Peep. Dad spoke of the importance of supporting his children at their pace and having a better understanding of his children's emotions. He gave examples of giving his children choices and the importance of this. The family incorporate singing, modelling and sensory play into their daily lives and would "100% recommend peep to other families".

Other groups within the centre

Gypsy / Traveller Women's Group 12 woman and 17 children

The initial idea to develop a Travellers Women's group came from one of the Women in the Longman's community. The group was established in October 2022 as a 'safe space' for Women and their children to come together and explore issues and activities of their choice. This has been vitally important since the Travellers Sites currently have no gathering space and traditional meeting places for Gypsy / Travellers have declined, due to barriers impacting on traditional cultural 'shifting' and seasonal work (berry picking) and unacceptable levels of stigma & discrimination.

The group has been supported by Highland Council Tenants Participation, NHS Highland, MECOPP Community Health Worker & Family Centre – Inverness; using a ‘Conversation Cafe’ approach.

Areas attended from: Inverness (Longman), Fort William, Elgin, Grantown and Skye

Sessions held: Crafts, Baking, Child Smile, Petting Farm Visit, Frankie and Lola’s visit, Easter Special, Valentines Platters, Christmas Wreath making led by older Travelling woman, Site development engagement, TPAS engagement.

Some of the discussions held around the following topics:

- ♥ Parental Mental Health
- ♥ Children’s Oral Health
- ♥ Children’s Nutrition
- ♥ Accommodation & Environmental impacts on Health
- ♥ Access to Primary Care
- ♥ Pregnancy, Fertility, Menopause and Sexual Health
- ♥ Smoking Cessation

Outcomes:

- ♥ Signposting to external agencies for particular issues
- ♥ New and shared skills and knowledge in baking and crafts
- ♥ Increased confidence in external agencies
- ♥ Increased confidence in using pre-school services
- ♥ Re-engaged with other Travelling Women - Having a nice space to come together

Feedback from Women: *“I think it’s a brilliant place, lovely environment. The ladies there have always been nice and make us feel welcomed, even though we’ve not used all the facilities inside, I think it is brilliant and good to know it’s there if we needed it”.*

“ The group is fantastic and a great way for women to socialise especially after covid, a lot us were very isolated and I feel that this group has really brought us together again. There is a lot of great support from all the staff that attend the group”

Feedback from worker - *Having a welcoming room at the Family Centre and a worker has been key to the success of the group. Thank you.*

Bookbug 42 adults and **40** Children - universal and targeted groups these sessions are a great way for families to spend time bonding with each other and meeting other families in their local area. Bookbug Sessions can also help to build children's social skills and support their speech and language development.

Currently we run a group for children birth to two years of age and their parents/carers. The second one is for eligible two-year-olds who are due to start nursery in January, this is a good way for children and parents to get to know the centre and staff before they start coming. Parents can sign up to join our Bookbug WhatsApp group where we can communicate with families, share

photos from the session (all with the appropriate permissions of course). There is always the opportunity for families to use the library too.

Feedback:

- ♥ *'Xxxx benefits from being around other youngsters'.*
- ♥ *'Baby really enjoys the sessions'.*
- ♥ *'Bookbug has helped me increase my 'brain library' of songs and rhymes which has been great to help us play and connect, and the signing is fabulous for our communication.'*

Play Talk Read Bus 15 adults and **17** children

In September, families had the opportunity to take part in sessions on the 'Play Talk Read' bus. There were five sessions over the day, with four families able to attend each session. PlayTalkRead is part of the wider range of support provided for parents and families through the Scottish Government's Parent Club. PlayTalkRead is aimed at promoting positive parenting in order to give children the best start in life and a strong platform for healthy growth, development and attainment.



Bonnie is a unique bus with an extendable pod giving children the opportunity to get on board and have a play with activities to support children's learning and development.

Wee Music Matters (Artsplay Highland)



5 adults **7** children

In the July 2023 we had a block of sessions for children and families. This was a great opportunity to give children and their families the chance to sing, dance and play musical instruments which took place in our garden.

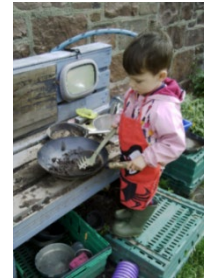
ELC/nursery – **66** children attended throughout this reported period.

Our setting offers funded early learning and childcare nursery for eligible 2-year-olds, there is set criteria set out by the Scottish Government;

- ♥ a family must be in receipt of certain benefits and be below a financial threshold.
- ♥ have experience of care or on the edge of care.
- ♥ Discretionary places can be given if a child is at risk or an identified need.

The Family Centre nursery is registered to accommodate 50 eligible two-year-olds at any one time, the provision is operational 50 weeks of the year and offers parents the choice of term time or full year. Children are entitled 1140 annually, 30 hours if term time and 23 hours if full year.

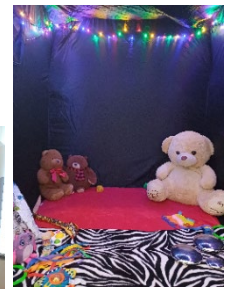
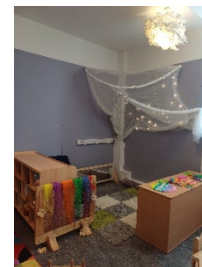
The accommodation hosts two separate nursery areas joined by an outdoor courtyard area. Children enjoy the opportunity to play and explore inside and outdoors.



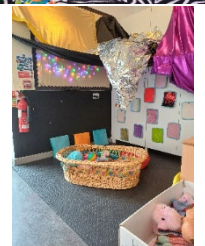
Once confirmation is sought that a family meets the criteria and allocated a place, the family will be invited along to a 'getting ready for nursery' group, this gives both children and parents the opportunity to meet with staff, child's keyworker, other children and families starting at the family centre. The group will take place in one of the nursery areas where the children can play, listen to stories and sing songs just like they will when they start with us. We aim to visit each of the children in their own home which helps build relationships and the children and parent/carer feel more comfortable with us. It also gives us a better understanding of home life.



It is important that the children settle into the nursery at their own pace, so parents are encouraged to stay and play in the playrooms for as long as is required. Some children settle very quickly and for others it might take longer.



Photos of some of our indoor play areas;



Throughout a child's time at the family centre nursery workers will be observing and logging what the child is achieving and if there are any areas for development. Resources will be then used around the child's



interests to extend their learning and development. Each child has their own 'learning adventure' which is a keepsake book of their time at the family centre it is filled with photographs and written observations, funny stories and parents are able to feed into this from the home learning environment. Children will often go into their tray and take out their learning adventure to look at their photographs. Parents meet regularly with the keyworker to look over this booklet and see for themselves their child at play.



66 children attended throughout this reported period

12% of these children have Child Plan

20% of these children have had support from Speech and Language Therapy

17% of these children have been referred by us to Pre School home visiting teacher services

32% of these families have had support from Community Early Years Practitioners' (either Family Centre or Health Team)

5% children have had support from Physio Therapy

23% of these children have had medical conditions of varying severity

14% of these children have English as their second language

5% Children are Looked after Children

5% of these children are on the child protection register



Some feedback received from parents over this period of time:-

- ♥ "We think you have gone above and beyond in helping us as a family"
- ♥ "all the staff are very friendly"
- ♥ "all the staff communicate well with me"
- ♥ "it's like walking into a friends home"
- ♥ "I am very happy with ***'s progress, she loves nursery"
- ♥ "It's been really good! Its built ***'s confidence up a lot. At first he was a bit unsure but now just runs in, it makes me so happy"
- ♥ "The ladies are lovely, the bookbags are amazing!"

It is so important for us to hear the voices of our children and their families one of the ways we do this is by asking parents to complete a questionnaire: Feedback from families of children settling into nursery:-

- ♥ Staff communicated with us well **before** my child was due to start nursery?
Strongly agree = 92% Neither agree nor disagree 8%
- ♥ My child and I were invited to spend time getting to know the nursery staff **before** my child started nursery?
Strongly agree = 100%
- ♥ Staff supported my child to settle at the Family Centre?
Strongly agree = 100%
- ♥ The Family centre environment feels relaxed and welcoming?
Strongly agree = 100%

- ♥ I feel confident to ask my child's key worker questions about my child's care, learning and development?
Strongly agree = 92% The remaining person didn't have time to complete
- ♥ The nursery staff communicate and listen to me in a respectful way?
Strongly agree = 92% The remaining person didn't have time to complete
- ♥ My child and I feel accepted and valued by Family Centre staff?
Strongly agree = 92% The remaining person didn't have time to complete the questions

Feedback from nursery families

Praise isn't high enough for the centre, everyone is equal.

Very welcoming and info is perfect.

The Family Centre supported us. They explain everything about new nursery. It's a great help for us.

Words from children and families made into a wordle



Family Story sacks:

We give all our nursery families the opportunity to borrow a family story sack to take home and share as a family, usually for a couple of weeks. We try, where possible, to include dual language story books. Currently 46% of our families have used and access our story sacks, with 92% in quintile 1 (based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation).

The Very Hungry Caterpillar



Each family story sack is filled with activities, books, games for children to try at home with their families.

Here are some comments from some parents who have used a story sack: -

'It brings the family together!'

'Becoming a thing! We all sit down as a family and do it together; I tell everyone about the story sacks!'

'Nice thing to have [and to] spend quality time with each other'.

'It's a really great idea the story sacks!'

'He loved the story sack!'

'He loves the Makaton, using frog and dog'.

'Used the 'Words-up', big car. Encouraging xxx words and speaking'.

'We were also coming back to the story books enjoying them both in English and Polish'.

'The children loved the snails [recipe in the Gruffalo cookbook]. It was nice having things to do; the children got excited and messy, especially the baking!'



Within each of the story sack are words up SLT key messages, Makaton signs and our family centre songs and activity booklet

Elmer the Elephant



'Elmer' made by Maya June 2024

Also to encourage communication from families about children's home learning environment we have introduced Bosie (meaning hug).



Bosie bear goes home with children for sleepovers, he has his own backpack with a toothbrush, toothpaste, pyjamas, a bedtime story book. This book is a picture book so that all families can join in regardless of their literacy levels or if English is an additional language.

Families will send photographs of tales of Bosie's adventures. The children are so excited to have him home for a night or two.

Other ways of capturing voices of families:

Cuppa and Cake event – Voices In Project (VIP group) parents from the nursery and community were invited along to an afternoon cuppa and cake to ask for feedback about the centre, anything we could do differently and if there was anything they would like the family centre to be doing that we weren't. **30** parents attended and gave some feedback. The consensus was that they would like to have the cuppa and cake on either monthly or 6 weekly. They felt it was a good idea and felt valued and listened to.



What do you think of the family centre?

Really happy here

Nursery wise you guys – the best. The facilities are great. The staff are amazing

You're good, over and beyond. We feel confident coming. Everyone is happy

Always feel welcome

Wouldn't change it

This is a great idea, nice for adults to get together good chance to get to know others. Monthly be good

I love the family centre

What would you like from the centre?

Activities for children over the school holidays

From this request we have arranged Family Fun days to happen 5 out of the 7 Mondays of the summer school holidays offering families the opportunity to come together, have fun trying out different activities, having a story, songs and dance together. Free activities for the whole family.

The Family Centre Library

69 families registered



Literacy is a key foundation for life, a doorway that can open up many opportunities. Research suggests that children from socio-economically disadvantaged groups tend to have fewer books at home and are less likely to be read to by their parents. Alongside other approaches when working with families, we wanted to have an easily accessible resource for books that families can use, and a space where we can support and develop relationships.

The library has been moved downstairs recently, making it more accessible for families. Nursery families are using the space along with families from the local community. Staff take small groups of children into the library regularly, giving all children the experience and opportunity. As a result, there are more families starting to use the library and taking books to share at home. This is an ongoing project continually evolving and includes some dual language books to support and include EAL families/children.

We have books suitable for children from birth to late teens. The library has books in a variety of languages, including dual language, wordless books and books for 'reluctant' readers (Barrington Stoke).

From November 2023 to 31st of May 2024

Number of Adults visiting - **95**

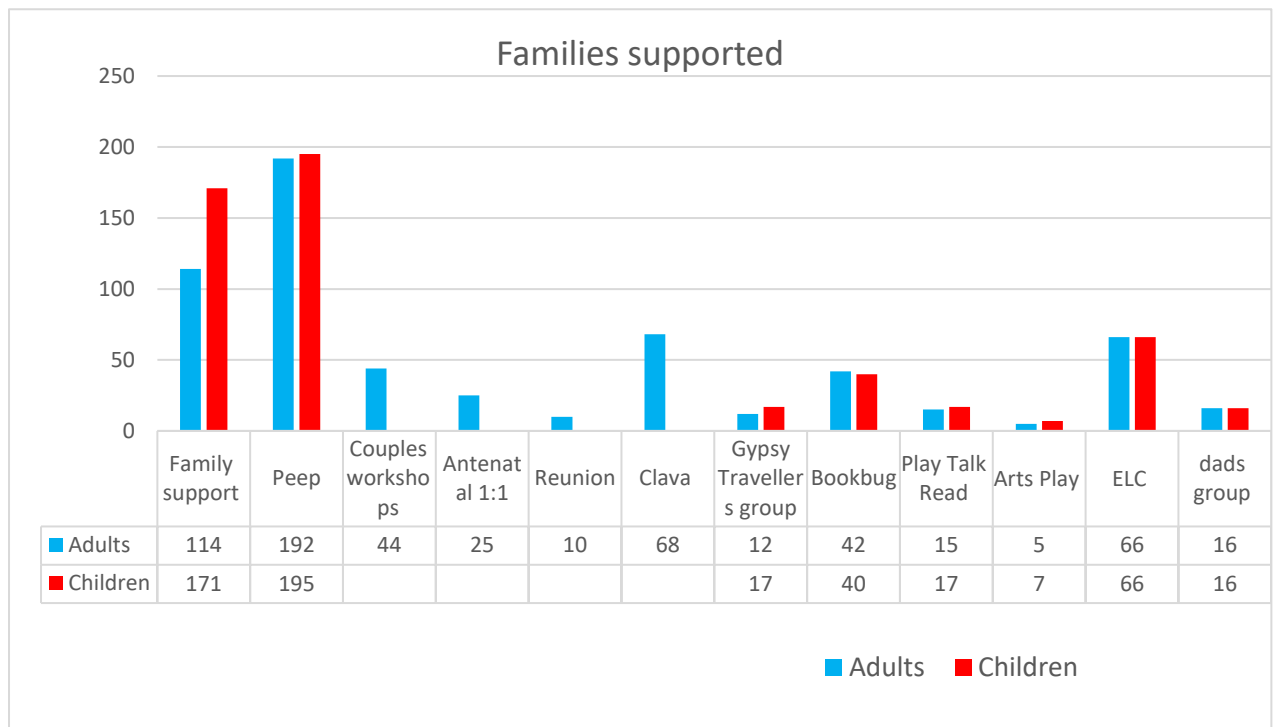
Number of Children visiting- **115**

Here are some comments from a few of our families: -

- ♥ *'The library is great! It's not just for young children, families can go. Also, there is lots of interaction, families can go have a chat with you, have a cuppa; it's not just about the books. A normal library you get shown the books then left.'*
- ♥ *'The children learn all different cultures from around the world; they're learning lots! It's better downstairs now, people can access more easily, it was difficult with young children getting up the stairs even though you would help.'*
- ♥ *'A surprising Aladdin's cave of delights!'*
- ♥ *'Lokomotywa' by Julian Tuwim (Polish) – one of our dads noticed this book in our library. He shared that this brought back memories of his mother (in Poland) reading this story and singing the song at bedtime. He then took the book out and shared it with his family.'*
- ♥ *It feels safe*

A special thank you to all those who donated books and the many authors who have worked closely with us. A particular thank you to local authors Pauline Mackay and Barbara Henderson for their continued support, encouragement, and generosity. Thank you to our latest supporter local business Securitay Limited who have asked us to make a wish list for the library as a way of supporting their community work.

Families supported in this reporting period are **704** adults and **672** children



The centre is busy and is in constant use by children, families, community and other agencies since September 2023 we have gather stats on people across the threshold since we started gathering stats in September 2023 is approximately **6,311**.

Proud moments

There are so many moments to be proud off, but some are:

- ♥ Families feel comfortable to talk to the centre staff about anything and everything as we have built strong trusting relationships with those using our services.
- ♥ Proud of creating a warm and welcoming space for children and families to access support. Still a work in progress, the addition of photographs, artwork on the walls, some soft furnishings and softer lighting will go some way to creating an aesthetically relaxing and homely space. But it is also the people that make the space feel warm and welcoming.
- ♥ Proud of the team, their loyalty, dedication and hard work make.
- ♥ Delighted to have officially opened the Centre on the 13th June 2023 where approx **200** children, parents/carers, agencies, professionals and representatives from the local community attended. On the night we had approximately thirty information stalls, live music, refreshments and a poem and speech by a parent.

- ♥ Other services and professionals choosing to take on the ideas from the Family Centre and replicate elsewhere.
- ♥ Parents involved in painting and decorating the building giving opportunity for ownership and belonging.
- ♥ Families have moved with us – they are still coming to the service. Families will get in touch even though they have moved on from the centre.
- ♥ Feedback from children, families, and referrers has been so lovely, positive and heartfelt.
- ♥ Developed systems to ensure we capture the voices of children and families working alongside us. Feedback forms, VIP events, chatting and asking for thoughts and opinions every step of the way. Empowering families to feel valued, accepted, listened to. Ensure that we develop services around the voices of our families.
- ♥ In October 2023 the entire ELC staff team completed Makaton level 1 and 2 which is fully implemented into daily nursery life. We have already noticed the difference in the level of communication from our children. We are developing ways of linking this in with the child's home. Simple Makaton videos are recorded by staff and sent to families to practice at home, signs are also given with family story sacks.

Extremely proud of the latest Care Inspectorate report – unannounced inspection on the 23rd April 2024

How good is our care, play and learning? **5 - Very Good**

How good is our setting? **5 - Very Good**

How good is our leadership? **5 - Very Good**

How good is our staff team? **6 – Excellent**

The report stated:

Children received extremely high levels of nurturing care and support from a passionate and dedicated staff team who created an inclusive, nurturing and loving ethos. Exceptionally strong working partnerships with parents had been established, which contributed to supporting the holistic needs of each child and their family to improve their wellbeing. Families were made to feel extremely welcome in the service. Highly skilled staff empowered and enabled children to reach their full potential. Play spaces were carefully created and a variety of rich resources across the whole service promoted children's natural curiosity and imagination, learning and growth. Highly effective self-evaluation and reflection on practice enabled the senior leadership team and staff to clearly identify what was working well and what could be developed further.

Children and their families were at the heart of the service. Staff had established strong and trusting relationships with the children and their families which resulted in children feeling safe, secure and loved.

Everyone in the service had high aspirations for the children attending.

A core strength of the nursery was the high level of support provided to families. As part of the Family Centre, the nursery staff worked very closely with their colleagues who worked directly with families in the community. There was also a wide range of meaningful support, resources and

services available to families including emotional and practical help for families in crisis. Within the building families could access various support groups and activities run by either centre staff or visiting professionals, for example Book Bug, baby massage and PEEP sessions.

There was a strong positive ethos within the service. Staff were extremely skilled, dedicated and nurturing, and committed to providing a positive experience for the children in their care. They demonstrated positive team working, which promoted a happy, welcoming, and inclusive environment. They were responsive and respectful of children during interactions and play, which supported children to feel safe and secure.

To read full report please follow link:

<https://www.careinspectorate.com/berengCareservices/html/reports/getPdfBlob.php?id=319690>

Future hopes and dreams for the centre:

- ♥ To continue to have children's voices, needs and choices at the heart of what we do
- ♥ To continue to embed the Promise principles across the service
- ♥ To develop the centre further around what families need and want, open evenings and weekends not just an 8am-6pm 5 days a week service
- ♥ To develop the work with dad/male carers and employ male workers
- ♥ To continue to grow the service and replicate it in other parts of the Highlands
- ♥ To secure further funding to be able to employ more practitioners so that we can reach more families
- ♥ To continue to take on board the voices of families to develop the service
- ♥ To support the growth of the Peep and Antenatal Peep programmes and to support the Peep Coordinator to have her own developmental team. Antenatal Peep to become a universal service which is offered to all.
- ♥ To continue to invest in the staff team, developing their skills and knowledge
- ♥ Become a centre for excellence and Flagship service
- ♥ For the centre to offer training and job opportunities to help grow the next workforce.
- ♥ To develop a volunteering pathway to employment
- ♥ Secure funding to be able to offer specialised therapeutic activities, music and art therapy.
- ♥ Team to be trained in International Future forum KIT bags and use as part of their toolkit of support. Pilot initially in with family centre children and families as a test of change. Then roll out across Highlands.
- ♥ Continue to be involved in the 3 workstreams Early Intervention, Targeted Support and Intensive Support
- ♥ Continue to develop links with other Family Centres across Scotland
- ♥ To continue to work in partnership with other services and agencies
- ♥ To continue to network locally and nationally
- ♥ Keep up to date with current legislation and policy changes which could impact on service delivery
- ♥ To strive for the best lived experiences for our children and families

Final words from our families – capturing how they feel about the centre



Welcomed, safe, feel heard, kind, accepted, comfortable, feels like home, welcoming environment, understanding, feel heard, listen and everyone is equal.

Thank you, gifts, from a family when they moved on.



I chose these special words

Because I wanted you to know

I'm so grateful for your hard work

In helping me grow

For your constant understanding

And always being there

To telling me I can do it

And showing me that you care

Although we have to part

From my heart you'll never be far

So I will always remember

That you were my guiding star

Thank you for taking the time to read over this report

Family Centre, Inverness – Self Evaluation

08b – Appendix 2 Integrated Impact Screening Summary

The IIA Screening at stage 1 identifies very positive impacts with a FIA not required.

Equality, Poverty and Human Rights

Protected characteristics are positively supported through the services provided by the Family Centre, Inverness. The report highlights that the Family Centre, Inverness, was specifically set up a number of years ago to specifically ensure a range of early help and preventative services for a diverse range of children and families. The Centre has a strong focus on supporting child development particularly in the early years to ensure babies, infants and children get the best possible start. Supporting child development means supporting parents through one-to-one emotional and practical parenting support and in groups. The Centre recognises that families and parents are diverse and actively welcome parents and carers from diverse backgrounds, including, gender, race and disability.

Poverty and socio-economic factors are positively supported through the work of the Family Centre, Inverness. The Centre was initially set up to deliver services in the most deprived data zones in Inverness - Merkinch North, South, East, Inverness South Kessock, Inverness Central and Longman. The Centre has evolved over the years and works across a much broader Highland area, within the capacity of existing resources. The service works with a range of partners across the Council, with 3rd Sectors, Charities and small businesses with a very strong focus on reducing poverty and inequalities through welfare rights, food banks, free hygiene products, free fun family activity days, toys etc. Parenting support has a focus on nurturing the child, but also supporting adults with learning, development and linkages to colleges to progress further study to empower parents to achieve personal goals and aspirations.

Human rights are positively protected through the services provided by the Family Centre, Inverness. The whole ethos of the service is to protect and respect all rights. The focus on early intervention is to prevent children coming deeper into statutory social work systems. e.g. child protection, linked to parental neglect and other harms that impact on the health and wellbeing of children. It could therefore be suggested that the early help approach, which is a voluntary approach in which the parent agrees to support, respects and protects Article 8 - respect for private family life.

Children's Rights

There are very strong positive direct and indirect impacts through the services provided by the Family Centre, Inverness. At the heart of the services is a focus on the welfare and development of the child as paramount. This is demonstrated through the provision of rich and nurturing early learning (nursery) provision alongside a broader range of services that promote emotional literacy, speech and language, fun and play. Children live in diverse families and therefore parenting support in groups, and one-to-one, through a wide range of activities with parents and children together, directly and indirectly promotes the rights of the child.

Island and Rural

No Impact

Climate Change

No Impact

Data Rights

No Impact