



Children's Services Plan Annual Report 2025/26

CONTENTS

1. The First Word	3
2. Introduction	4
3. How Did We Measure Up?	4
4. Key Service Developments	6
5. 2023-2026 Children and Young People Service Priorities	14
• Priority 1. Our Children and Young People feel respected, listened to and influence change.	
• Priority 2. We are working collaboratively, reducing the impact of social and economic poverty on our Children and Young People. Aligned to UNCRC	
• Priority 3. Our Children and Young People feel safe.	
• Priority 4. Our Children and young people have the best start in life and achieve their potential.	
• Priority 5. Our Children and Young People’s Mental Health & Wellbeing is improving.	
6. The Last Word.....	54

1. The First Word

A message from Provost Claire Leitch

Across our communities, we want every child and young person to grow up feeling safe, supported, respected and able to achieve their full potential. As East Ayrshire's Children's Champion, it is always a privilege to celebrate the many achievements of our children and young people.

While many children and families across East Ayrshire are doing well, we recognise that some continue to experience challenges linked to poverty, inequality and increasing levels of need. These challenges remind us of the importance of working together with compassion, understanding and a shared commitment to improving outcomes for every child.

Over the past year, colleagues across education, health, social work, the third sector, Police Scotland, NHS Ayrshire and Arran and our wider Community Planning Partnership have continued to strengthen how we work together. This has helped us provide more joined-up, responsive support for children, young people and families. Our shared focus on early intervention, prevention and whole-family support is helping ensure that families can access the right help, at the right time, and within their own communities.

We have continued to embed the principles of GIRFEC and The Promise in our work, while the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is helping to ensure that children and young people's voices, rights and experiences remain at the centre of everything we do. Through our UNCRC Champions Model, we are continuing to build a culture where children and families feel listened to, valued and supported to shape the services around them.

Tackling child poverty and reducing inequalities remains a key priority for all partners. We understand that poverty can affect many aspects of a child's life, including their health, wellbeing, education and future opportunities. Through initiatives such as the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund, Fairer Future Partnerships and the Council's Early Intervention and Prevention Fund, we are continuing to invest in community-based support that helps families build resilience, access the support they need and manage financial challenges.

We have also seen positive progress through a range of preventative and supportive approaches, including enhanced speech, language and communication support, expanded ASN summer provision, and the ongoing development of locality-based models of care. While there is more to do, the commitment shown by staff, partners, communities and families across East Ayrshire continues to be strong and encouraging.

I would like to thank everyone involved in supporting children, young people and families across East Ayrshire. By continuing to work collaboratively, listening to lived experience and focusing on early and preventative support, we can help build communities where all children and young people feel safe, respected, included and able to flourish.

Provost Claire Leitch

2. Introduction

As we reach the conclusion of our Children and Young People's Services Plan 2023–2026, this annual report sets out the outcomes partners aspired to achieve for all children, young people and families in East Ayrshire. It also highlights the strong commitment of partners to delivering these improved outcomes through active participation in joint planning and integrated service delivery arrangements.

The vision of our Plan is to make East Ayrshire a place where all children and young people grow up loved, safe and respected, enabling them to realise their full potential. To support every child in experiencing the best start in life and building a strong foundation for the future, partners have worked collaboratively towards the following priorities:

1. Our children and young people feel respected, listened to and are able to influence change.
2. We work together to reduce the impact of social and economic poverty on our children and young people.
3. Our children and young people feel safe.
4. Our children and young people have the best start in life and achieve their full potential.
5. The mental health and wellbeing of our children and young people is improving.

This Children and Young People's Annual Report 2025/26 outlines the progress and improvements made throughout the third and final year of the Plan in advancing these shared priorities. In doing so, it highlights and celebrates the achievements, talents and contributions of our young people.

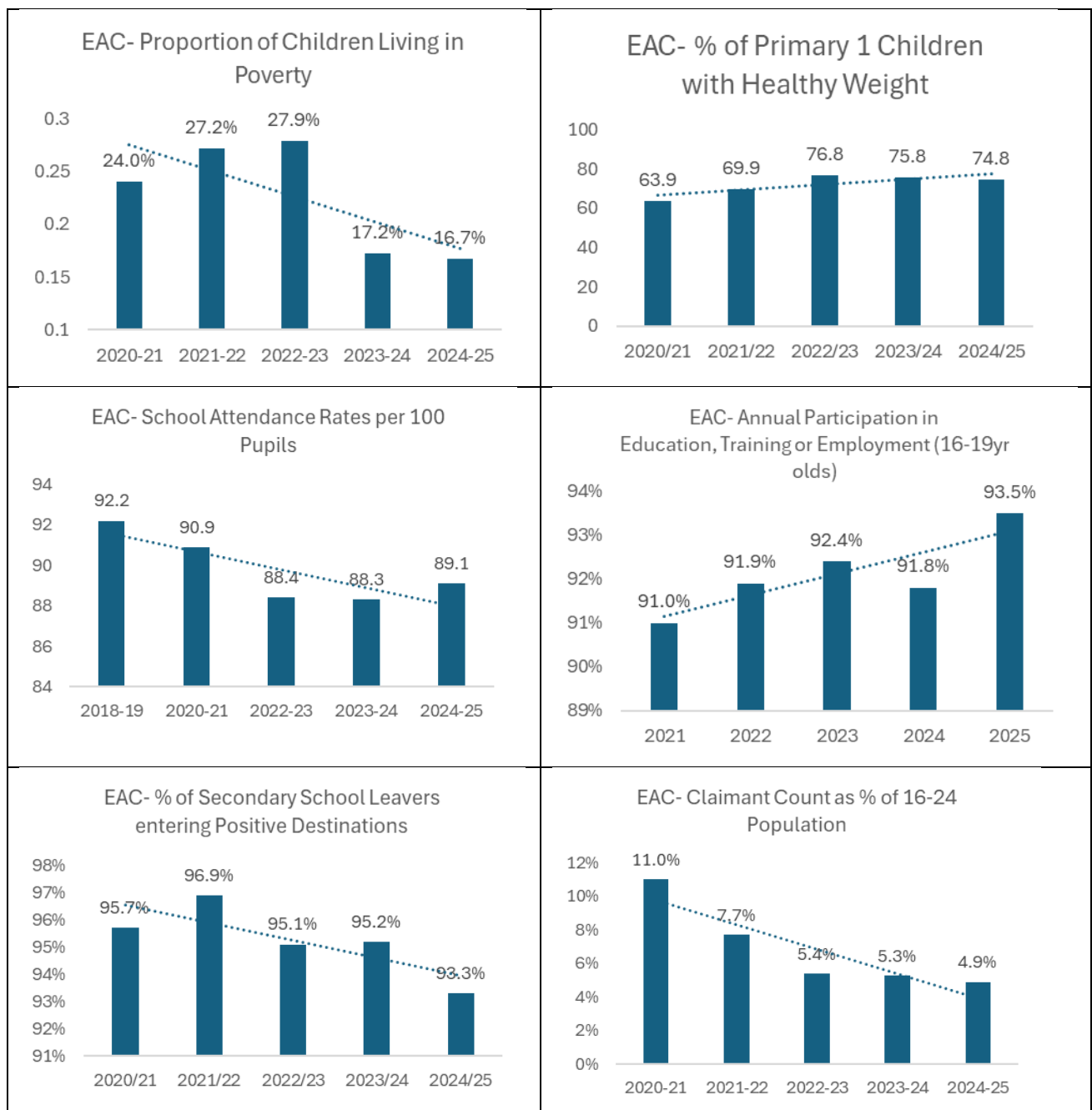
3. How Did We Measure Up?

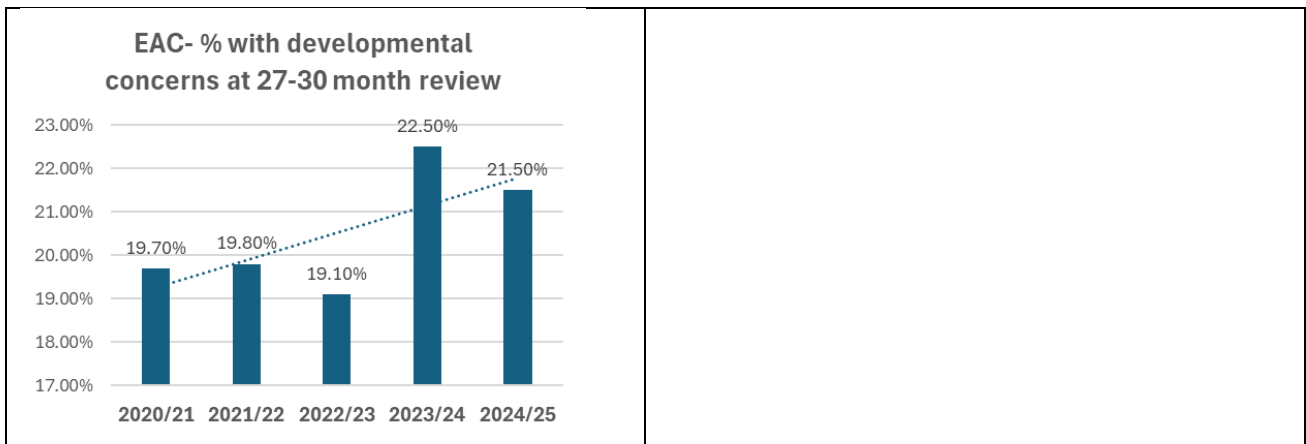
Over the course of 2025/26, partners have achieved positive levels of improvement across a range of key measures associated with the health, wellbeing and educational outcomes for our children and young people. These improvements are a positive indication of the effective collaboration of all partners in East Ayrshire who work with our children, young people and families.

We also know that children and families continue to face significant challenges and that even more collaborative working across all community planning partners is needed to continue to deliver better outcomes for all our children and young people.

Appendix 1 of this report provides a detailed update on the performance indicators that were identified in the Children and Young People’s Services Plan 2023-2026. The [Community Planning Local Outcomes Improvement Plan \(LOIP\) dashboard](#) also includes a number of key indicators that relate directly to our children and young people, reflecting the commitment of the wider community planning partnership to ensuring that all children and young people in East Ayrshire get the best possible start in life.

While we see some signs of progress, we are ambitious and recognise that there is still more to do.....





4. Key Service Developments

We want all children and young people in East Ayrshire to grow up in communities where they can thrive, feel valued, and have their rights upheld. While many are doing well, we recognise that some children, young people and their families experience significant challenges that can impact on wellbeing and future outcomes.

During 2025/26, partners introduced a range of strategies and services to address these challenges, with a strong emphasis on early intervention, prevention and whole-family support. This has been supported by strengthened collaboration across education, health, social work, the third sector and Community Planning Partners, enabling more integrated and responsive services. Progress has also been made in further embedding The Promise and GIRFEC, alongside continued investment in trauma-informed, relationship-based practice.

There have also been advances in community-based support, including the development of family support models and enhanced early help services, providing timely and flexible assistance to reduce the need for statutory intervention. A greater focus on participation and co-production has ensured that the voices of children, young people and families inform service design, while improved use of data and digital approaches has supported more targeted delivery. Together, these developments are contributing to improved wellbeing, reduced inequalities and better long-term outcomes across East Ayrshire.

Collaborative Leadership Review Update

The 2023/24 strategic review of collaborative leadership across children's services in East Ayrshire examined the drivers and barriers to effective multi-agency working, with a focus on improving outcomes for children and young people. The review identified key areas for development, including governance and structures, communication and data sharing, planning and resource allocation, engagement and participation, and organisational relationships and behaviours.

Revised governance arrangements have been introduced and have been in place since January 2025. The Executive Leadership Group, chaired by the Chief Executive of East Ayrshire Council is supported by the Integrated Children's Services Group. This strengthened structure has provided a clearer strategic oversight and a more integrated, outcome-focused approach to service delivery. A joint leadership development programme, supported by Insight Discovery has helped to further strengthen collaborative leadership and shared ways of working. These groups bring together senior representation from across local authority services, health and social care partnerships, NHS Ayrshire and Arran, Police Scotland, SCRA, third sector partners and other key agencies. Collectively, they provide strategic leadership, governance and oversight of planning and performance, including delivery of the Children and Young People's Services Plan 2023–2026.

The review also highlighted the need to improve access to shared data to support integrated planning, resource use and decision-making. In response, the development of a comprehensive strategic needs assessment for children, young people and families is currently underway with a completion date expected in July 2026. This will inform the next Children and Young People's Services Plan (2026–2029), as well as future Community Planning and Council strategic priorities.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

The development of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) in East Ayrshire reflects a clear shift towards a more holistic, whole-family and community wellbeing approach. This recognises the interconnected nature of children's outcomes with family circumstances and wider social determinants, supporting a stronger focus on prevention and early intervention. The approach aligns closely with GIRFEC and UNCRC principles, while encouraging greater collaboration across services to improve integration, reduce duplication, and make more effective use of resources.

Progress to date includes agreement on the scope, establishment of a multi-agency data group, benchmarking against best practice, and the development of a structured framework to guide analysis and reporting. A strong emphasis has also been placed on improving the use of data and strengthening participation. This includes expanded datasets, enhanced data analysis, and the introduction of consistent engagement methods through the VOiCE platform to ensure the views of children, young people and families—particularly those with lived experience—inform the assessment. Key themes emerging from leadership engagement highlight a shared vision for change, collaborative working, better use of data, and a commitment to targeting resources more effectively. Overall, the JSNA is positioned as a critical tool to inform future strategic planning, commissioning and service delivery, with the aim of improving outcomes for children, young people and families across East Ayrshire.

Future Direction of Children's Services

Our Children's Services Wellbeing Model was an innovative approach to improve how children and families are supported in East Ayrshire. Its vision was to ensure that our

children and families can access support at an early stage within their community, in a way that challenges discrimination and stigma. Multi-disciplinary team working and the GIRFEC principles were central to this model, and it was given the name 'HEART' (Help Everyone At the Right Time).

HEART was developed as a strategic driver for change in response to feedback from families who were struggling to obtain help when and where they need it. The model fundamentally seeks to improve the way that children and families are supported, ensuring they get help at an early stage and in the communities in which they live, through a 'no wrong door' approach. This model has not been as well embedded as anticipated. There is an aspiration, following service discussions in preparation for this report and the information from the CARH Inspection, that we move forward to reinvigorate the aspiration and principles of HEART across our communities in the coming year.

The CARH Inspection staff survey highlighted a disconnect between service leaders and practitioners in creating a vision and understanding strategic vision and decision making. As a result of this feedback the future direction of Children's Services in East Ayrshire has been shaped through continued practitioner engagement over the last year, to build on earlier discussions and provide greater clarity on a locality model of service delivery. This work has focused on defining what effective locality working should look like in practice, how children, families and communities experience services, and the leadership support required to move from planning into delivery. The approach is grounded in the principles of GIRFEC, strengthened by a clear commitment to children's rights, and aligned with The Promise.

Practitioners highlighted strong existing foundations, including a shared commitment to place-based working, the important role of schools, early years settings and community venues as trusted anchors, and the value of third sector partners. There is also increasing recognition that strong relationships, trust and visibility are just as critical as formal structures in delivering effective support.

Practitioners described an effective locality model as one that is connected, collaborative and centred on children, families and communities, with shared responsibility across partners and a strong focus on outcomes. However, challenges remain, including inconsistent understanding of locality boundaries, gaps in communication and trust, and pressures linked to workforce capacity and short-term funding.

To address these issues, practitioners emphasised the need for clear and visible leadership, aligned vision and expectations, and sustained support for collaboration and co-production. The agreed direction of travel includes defining locality based on lived experience, strengthening delivery through community-based, multi-agency approaches, improving information sharing, and embedding participation in decision-making. Ongoing learning, use of data and lived experience, and continued practitioner engagement will be central to refining this approach and ensuring that services are responsive, sustainable and focused on improving outcomes for children, young people and families.

Implementation of the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024

East Ayrshire Council has taken a comprehensive and proactive approach to implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) following the introduction of the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024. The Council, working closely with Community Planning Partnership (CPP) partners, has embedded children's rights into the core of its governance, planning and service delivery. Strong strategic leadership from the Chief Executive, Elected Members and senior officers has ensured that children's rights are being considered in all key decisions, supported by strengthened use of Children's Rights Impact Assessments and integrated impact approaches. This has enabled a shift towards a rights-based culture, aligning local practice with national frameworks such as GIRFEC and The Promise, while responding to local challenges including child poverty and inequalities across communities.

Central to this implementation is East Ayrshire's UNCRC Champions Model, which plays a key role in driving cultural and organisational change. Champions are now embedded across most service areas, acting as advocates for children's rights and supporting colleagues to incorporate rights-based thinking into everyday practice. They promote awareness, build confidence in applying the UNCRC, and facilitate meaningful participation with children and young people whenever appropriate. Through this distributed leadership model, the Council is strengthening its capacity to ensure that children's rights are consistently understood and upheld across services and partnerships.

The Champions Model also supports the practical delivery of children's rights by linking workforce development, participation and service improvement. Champions contribute to training and reflective practice, helping staff to apply rights-based approaches such as the FAIR model and trauma-informed practice. They also play an important role in encouraging the use of tools such as VOiCE to ensure that engagement with children and young people is purposeful, consistent and impactful. This integrated approach is helping to ensure that children's views are not only heard but are actively shaping policy, planning and local decision-making.

Together, East Ayrshire's strategic approach and Champions Model demonstrate a strong commitment to embedding the UNCRC across the whole system. While challenges remain, including addressing rising levels of need and ensuring consistency across partners, the foundations are in place for sustained progress. By continuing to invest in leadership, workforce development and participation, East Ayrshire is well positioned to further strengthen its rights-based approach and improve outcomes for children and young people across the area.

Childhood Poverty

Child poverty remains a significant and persistent challenge in East Ayrshire, shaping both the scale and complexity of need experienced by children, young people and their families. With around 23.6% of children aged 0–15 living in poverty, many households continue to

face financial hardship linked to low income, unemployment, insecure work and the ongoing cost of living pressures. Poverty is often concentrated within particular localities, leading to inequalities in access to opportunities, health outcomes and overall wellbeing. These circumstances can affect children's ability to fully realise their rights, including their right to an adequate standard of living, education, health and participation in everyday life.

The impact of child poverty is wide-ranging and interconnected. Children growing up in poverty are more likely to experience poorer physical and mental health, reduced educational attainment, and limited access to social, cultural and recreational opportunities. Families often face additional pressures such as housing instability, food insecurity and increased stress, which can in turn affect relationships and family wellbeing. In East Ayrshire, these challenges are further compounded by wider socio-economic factors, including rurality in some areas and the long-term impact of deprivation in others. As a result, addressing child poverty requires a coordinated, multi-agency response that recognises both immediate needs and the underlying causes.

East Ayrshire Council and its Community Planning Partnership are actively working to tackle child poverty through a range of strategic and locality-based approaches. The Child Poverty Delivery Plan, alongside the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan and locality plans, have provided a framework for targeted action, focusing on early intervention, prevention and whole family support. Investment in initiatives such as family support hubs, community anchor organisations and employability programmes funded by Whole Family Wellbeing Fund and Fairer Futures Partnerships aims to provide practical support, improve financial inclusion and strengthen resilience within communities. There is also a clear emphasis on ensuring that services are accessible, joined up and responsive to the lived experience of families.

Tackling child poverty in East Ayrshire is closely linked to the delivery of children's rights under the UNCRC. Ensuring that children have what they need to live well, feel safe and thrive is central to the partnership's approach. Moving forward, continued focus on reducing inequalities, strengthening early intervention and ensuring that children and families are actively involved in shaping services will be key. By aligning resources, improving data sharing and maintaining a strong focus on prevention, East Ayrshire aims to mitigate the impacts of poverty and create the conditions for all children and young people to reach their full potential. The East Ayrshire Local Child Poverty Action Plan sits within the East Ayrshire Children and Young People's Strategic Plan 2023-26, and the update provided under Priority 2 of this report represents our Local Poverty Action Plan update report for 2025/26. Key indicators within the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan Annual Report 2025/26, particularly in relation to economic growth, are also relevant to this work.

Whole Family Wellbeing Fund

The Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (WFWF) allocation in East Ayrshire provides a significant opportunity to deliver early, relationship-based support that strengthens families and improves outcomes for children and young people. By investing in preventative

approaches, the WFWF enables services to shift from crisis response to early intervention, ensuring that families receive the right help at the right time. This includes enhancing multi-agency collaboration across health, education, social work, and the third sector to deliver coordinated, person-centred support. A focus on building resilience within families, addressing inequalities, and promoting emotional wellbeing will help children and young people feel safe, nurtured, and able to reach their full potential.

Through this funding, East Ayrshire is well positioned to further develop holistic, whole-family models of care that recognise the interconnected needs of parents, carers, and children. Initiatives such as family support models delivered from hubs in communities, community-based services, and trauma-informed practice will strengthen protective factors and reduce the need for more intensive interventions. By prioritising participation and listening to the voices of children, young people, and families, services can be shaped in a way that reflects local needs and promotes sustainable change. Ultimately, the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund will contribute to improved life chances, enhanced wellbeing, and more resilient communities across East Ayrshire.

Fairer Future Partnerships

The Fairer Future Partnership in East Ayrshire continues to play a pivotal role in tackling poverty and inequality, with a renewed focus on embedding preventative, community-led approaches. Recent updates highlight strengthened collaboration across partners, including local authority services, health, education, and third sector organisations, to ensure a coordinated and targeted response to the needs of children, young people, and families. The partnership has prioritised data-informed decision-making to better understand the drivers of poverty locally, enabling resources to be directed where they can have the greatest impact. There is also an increased emphasis on aligning activity with national priorities, including The Promise and the Child Poverty Delivery Plan, ensuring a consistent and strategic approach.

Progress has also been made in expanding community-based supports and enhancing access to early help for families experiencing financial hardship and wider vulnerabilities. Initiatives such as income maximisation support, family wellbeing services, and inclusive community programmes are being further integrated to create a more seamless system of support. Importantly, the partnership continues to prioritise the voices of people with lived experience, ensuring that services are shaped by those who use them. This ongoing development reflects a shared commitment across partners to deliver sustainable change, reduce inequalities, and improve long-term outcomes for children and young people across East Ayrshire

Early Intervention and Prevention

The Council and the Community Planning Partnership aim to prioritise investment in prevention so that people, including children and young people, can thrive and lead inclusive, fulfilling lives within our communities. To support this ambition, the Council established the

Early Intervention and Prevention Fund in February 2024 as part of its annual budget setting process.

Through this fund, approximately £4 million is allocated each year over a ten-year period to support early intervention and prevention initiatives. In its first two years, the fund has delivered significant investment focused on children and young people. This includes measures to tackle child poverty through Fairer Futures Partnerships, the provision of free and subsidised school meals, expanded speech and language therapy for infants and early years, additional out-of-school support for those with additional support needs and extending clothing grants to include 3 and 4-year-olds.

ASN Summer Supports

In 2024, East Ayrshire Council secured £150,000 per annum over four years through the Early Intervention and Prevention Fund to support the ASN summer provision. This enabled a shift from a previously externally commissioned model, delivered by Aberlour, to an in-house service led by an executive leadership group and supported by a multi-agency implementation team. The programme was designed to be child-centred, inclusive and responsive, with planning shaped through engagement with parents, carers, and young people to ensure it reflected their needs and preferences.

The 2025 ASN summer programme was delivered across Willowbank School, Park School and Crosshouse Communication Centre, alongside a bespoke family-centred model at Hillside. Across the four-week programme, strong engagement was recorded, with high attendance levels and a wide range of activities, including additional residential and targeted support opportunities. Provision was delivered in familiar settings by known staff, supported by additional recruitment from East Ayrshire Leisure Trust, helping to create a safe and supportive environment. Feedback from families and young people was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting enjoyment, meaningful engagement, and the value of the programme in reducing pressures over the summer period. While evaluation identified areas for improvement—including earlier planning, enhanced staffing, and expanded provision—the programme demonstrated strong outcomes and provides a solid foundation for continued development of a sustainable, responsive in-house model.

Speech, Language and Communication

The Roots Team has secured funding to deliver a three-year project aimed at promoting interaction and communication skills from pre-conception to 30 months, with a strong emphasis on early intervention and prevention. Taking an upstream public health approach, the project seeks to ensure every child has the best possible start in speech, language and communication. This will be achieved through a blend of universal and targeted interventions that empower families and professionals with evidence-based training and coaching.

Alongside this, the team is sharing clear and impactful public health messaging to encourage responsive interaction from birth, while strengthening partnership working across health, education and the third sector. A consistent focus will be placed on embedding practical

communication strategies into everyday routines and ensuring access to high-quality information. Continuous use of quality improvement tools will help measure impact, support sustainability, and ensure responsiveness to the specific needs of East Ayrshire while aligning with national priorities.

To date, the project has made strong early progress. Face-to-face drop-in sessions have been well received, with 26 out of 37 invited families attending so far, and two therapy demonstration sessions already delivered. These sessions provide timely advice, coaching, and signposting without adding families to waiting lists, with appointments offered within four weeks. Feedback has been highly positive, with families reporting increased reassurance, practical tips, and clear next steps. The team has also established collaborative links with key partners, including neonatal and maternity services, Ayrshire College, and community groups such as PEEP and Bookbug, delivering training and hosting information stalls at a range of community venues and events. Community engagement has included promoting initiatives like Chatting Together and BBC Tiny Happy People, supporting BabyChat with strategies and Makaton resources, and attending local play events to share advice and key messages.

In addition, the team is working closely with the Family Nurse Partnership and Social Work kinship care teams to upskill practitioners and raise awareness of early language support. Looking ahead, the focus will be on expanding drop-in sessions as part of a robust early intervention pathway, increasing parental capacity through initiatives such as Bookbug at Home, PEEP, and BabyChat, and strengthening links with Health Visiting, Maternity Services, and the Family Nurse Partnership to enhance targeted support. Plans also include developing a structured intervention package, delivering training and coaching within early childhood centre baby rooms and for college students, and continuing to build partnerships supported by data-driven quality improvement. Ongoing promotion through newsletters, social media, and community outreach will help extend the project’s reach and impact.

Public Health data for Speech, Language and Communication concerns for East Ayrshire. These are combined figures for both new and previous concerns within this developmental domain.

□

	13-15m	27-30m	4-5y	Total
2022-2023	7.55%	14.08%	9.44%	31.07%
2023-2024	8.44%	16.37%	10.34%	35.15%
2024-2025	8.38%	15.08%	10.46%	33.92%

2023-2026 Children and Young People Service Priorities

Priority 1: Our children and young people feel respected, listened to and influence change.

Embedding children's rights is central to East Ayrshire's approach to delivering services, as set out in our Children and Young People Services Plan 2023–2026. These rights are shaping how we strengthen collaboration across our Community Planning Partnership. Across all partner services and agencies, children's rights guide how we support children and young people. We have also introduced a range of approaches to ensure children and young people are empowered to play a central role in decisions about their own lives, as well as in the design, delivery, and improvement of services.

We said we would

- Develop and implement a broad range of programmes and structures that will encourage participation and co-production by our children and young people in our work
- Develop a strategic framework to involve our children and young people across our partnership in line with the ambitions of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child.
- Develop a training programme to support our workforce in enhancing and developing their ability and skills to involve and empower our Children and Young People.
- Put in place a clear system to ensure feedback on our approaches to involvement is heard, considered and acted upon.

We Did – Key Delivery Examples

VOiCE toolkit

It is imperative as we deliver our services moving forward, that we ensure as a Community Planning partnership we are addressing children's rights in accordance with UNCRC Implementation. East Ayrshire Council's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for children and families (JSNA) will be completed in 2026 and will allow children's services to be more focused about the services they should deliver collaboratively in the communities' children and families live to address the needs identified. The information and data will also inform East Ayrshire's priorities for the development of our next Children and Young People's Services Plan 2026–29. Hearing the voice of our children and families is central to ensuring our data reflects the needs of our families. Codesign and co-production with our children and families is imperative as we begin to move towards a new model of locality working across East Ayrshire. This supports Article 3 as the JSNA ensures planning is centred on the needs and wellbeing of children and young people.

Identifying best practice across Scotland on how the voice of our children is captured has led us to agree as a leadership group to utilise the national VOiCE platform for all communication and engagement with children and families. This will ensure consistency of approach in

capturing the information provided by our children, young people and families. Our children and young people have told us we consult with them consistently, but we don't feed back or close the loop and help them understand how their voice has influenced service design and policy development. This is an area that we will continue to develop across all Council business. This directly promotes Article 12 ensuring children and young people can express their views in decision-making processes.

We are currently working alongside children and young people to identify and develop a range of engagement methods which will help to reduce barriers relating to participation and ensure a wide range of children, young people and families' voices are heard. This promotes Article 13, as different methods give space for varied types of communication. It also supports Article 2, by actively reducing participation barriers. Where accessibility considerations are included, this further supports Article 23.

East Ayrshire's Children and Young People's Cabinet (CYPC)

The Children and Young People's Cabinet (CYPC) enables young people to use their energy and passion to influence positive change in East Ayrshire. Grounded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the CYPC ensures that young people's views are actively sought, listened to and taken seriously in decisions that affect their lives, in line with Article 12 and Article 13.

The CYPC promotes meaningful participation and advises on policies and procedures affecting children and young people. Members have co-chaired the Joint East Ayrshire Council Cabinet and contributed directly to Community Planning Partnership discussions, ensuring that children's and young people's views inform corporate priorities and public service reform. These opportunities provide practical mechanisms through which duty-bearers can demonstrate accountability to children, supporting Article 4, which places responsibility on public bodies to realise children's rights.

The CYPC is a representative committee for young people aged 10–25 and is designed to reflect a broad range of lived experiences. A range of engagement methods—including questionnaires, informal discussions and formal Cabinet meetings with elected members and Heads of Service—support inclusive participation and ensure that different communication preferences and abilities are respected.

Participation in the CYPC contributes to positive personal and developmental outcomes for members, supporting Article 29, which sets out the role of education in developing confidence, skills, and respect for democratic values. Young people report increased confidence, enhanced employability, progression into further education and employment, and involvement in local, regional and national forums. Many members progress from initial engagement into leadership roles, demonstrating the sustained impact of meaningful participation.

Despite this positive development, the CYPC does not yet fully reflect the diversity of all young people's experiences. Current school-based selection processes tend to favour those who are already highly engaged or academically confident, limiting opportunities for some

groups to participate. To fully realise Articles 2 and 12, there is a need to strengthen representation from young people who are under-represented, marginalised or harder to engage.

East Ayrshire Council is therefore strengthening its layered approach to youth voice by improving the connectivity between services, schools and community organisations. Ongoing developments within the Children's Services model will support more joined-up, rights-based working, ensuring that participation is inclusive, sustainable and meaningful—particularly as financial and capacity pressures increase. This approach helps ensure that children's rights are not an added extra, but a core element of how decisions are shaped and delivered.

Rights Respecting School Awards

UNICEF UK's Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) supports schools to embed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) within their culture, policy and daily practice. A Rights Respecting School places children's rights at the centre of its ethos, curriculum and relationships, ensuring that every child is treated with dignity, respect and fairness in line with the principles of non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, survival and development and respect for the views of the child.

The RRSA framework is structured across three progressive levels — Bronze: Rights Committed, Silver: Rights Aware, and Gold: Rights Respecting — supporting schools to develop rights based leadership, increase children's and adults' knowledge of the UNCRC, and create inclusive environments where children feel safe, valued and empowered to participate meaningfully in decisions that affect them. This approach directly supports the commitment to children's wellbeing, equity, empowerment and participation, and aligns with the GIRFEC wellbeing indicators by strengthening children's sense of inclusion, respect and voice.

In East Ayrshire, all schools have a designated Rights Lead, ensuring that responsibility for children's rights is embedded within leadership, improvement planning and daily practice. Currently, 15 schools have achieved Gold, 21 have achieved Silver, and 22 have achieved Bronze, demonstrating steady and sustained progress across the authority. The journey to Gold typically takes three to four years, with re accreditation every three years to ensure that rights-based practice remains embedded, reflective and responsive to the evolving needs of children and young people. Schools have been funding this since April 2025 when the Scottish Government funding ceased.

Through the RRSA, schools are supported to develop rights respecting relationships, promote children's participation and voice, and uphold the values of respect, equality and fairness, contributing to improved experiences and outcomes for all learners and reinforcing East Ayrshire's commitment to keeping the promise to its children and young people.

Participation in Early Learning

Across our Early Childhood Centres (ECCs), we have focused on involving children directly in the design of their own play environments, embedding a strong rights-based approach grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In line with

Articles 12 and 31 of the UNCRC, children are actively supported to express their views, influence decisions that affect them, and engage in play environments that respect their right to play, learn, and develop. As we work alongside children, they take an active role in planning their playrooms, sharing their ideas, emotions, interests, and preferences. Their voices guide the revamp of each space so that all children can access the full curriculum and have their learning needs met by our team.

This approach reflects East Ayrshire Council's commitment to putting children's rights into practice, ensuring children are seen, heard, and valued within services. Practitioners use an environment reflection tool to consider children's stages of development and individual needs, supporting equitable access to high-quality learning experiences. This aligns with our focus on inclusion, participation, and early intervention, particularly for children who may require additional support or appropriate challenge.

The impact of these changes has been evidenced through a range of qualitative sources, including case studies, planning sheets, and extracts from HMiE reports. The inspections have highlighted strong commitment to children's rights and praised the respectful, nurturing relationships between practitioners, children, and families. The highly effective balance of responsive, child-led learning and focused, adult-initiated experiences have also been recognised. Practitioners' deep understanding of child development was reflected in creative and curiosity-driven play invitations, as well as in tailored support that upheld children's right to thrive, be safe, and achieve positive outcomes.

Almost all children were making very good progress in health and wellbeing, confidently expressing their emotions, making choices, and demonstrating empathy, kindness, and teamwork—further evidencing an environment where children's rights are embedded in everyday practice. The inclusive ethos across the centre supports the East Ayrshire's strategic priorities by using information and data effectively to promote continuous improvement and positive outcomes for all children and families.

As this work continues, the environment reflection tool is further developed to strengthen rights-respecting practice. Ongoing feedback from children ensures environments continue to reflect what matters most to them, supporting sustained improvement, shared learning across settings, and a consistent UNCRC-informed approach across East Ayrshire.

Cleaner Communities

The Cleaner Communities team consists of six Community Waste Officers (CWOs) who work with schools, Early Childhood Centres (ECCs) and local communities to deliver education on waste, recycling and the wider climate-change strategy. Because this work directly involves children and young people, it must uphold their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The nature of the engagement—covering topics such as reuse, recycling, the natural environment, energy and transport—supports children to receive clear, age-appropriate environmental information in line with Article 13 and Article 17. CWOs also play a key role in respecting children's evolving capacities, reflecting Article 5, by

supporting their understanding of environmental responsibility in a developmentally appropriate way.

During school and community sessions, CWOs actively encourage participation and ensure that children's views on environmental issues are listened to and taken seriously, upholding Article 12. Children are often supported to take part in group discussion and collaborative eco-initiatives, which aligns with Article 15, recognising their right to meet and participate with others. Much of this work also contributes to children's safety and wellbeing within their local environment, linking to Article 24, which highlights their right to a healthy environment, and Article 27, which recognises the importance of safe, clean surroundings as part of an adequate standard of living. As environmental education forms part of the curriculum, these engagement opportunities also support Article 28 and Article 29, which emphasises developing children's skills, talents and understanding of responsible citizenship.

To uphold these rights in practice, CWOs complete UNCRC training to ensure they understand how children's rights apply in their work. They know how to identify, and report concerns where a child's rights may be at risk. All educational resources used during sessions must be rights-based and accessible. CWOs also support participation by consulting children and young people during Waste Review Actions and when planning future service improvements, ensuring their lived experience shapes local environmental initiatives in line with Articles 12 and 13.

Several review actions are planned to strengthen this approach. Moving forward presentations in schools and communities will be updated to include more interactive activities that promote participation and support children to express their views confidently. Feedback methods such as surveys and structured discussions will gather richer insight into children's experiences of waste and recycling. Children and young people will be involved in research and design work prior to major service changes, ensuring decisions reflect their needs and perspectives. These developments will be monitored and evaluated regularly, with all Waste Review Actions due for completion by March 2027.

Priority 2: We are working collaboratively, reducing the impact of social and economic poverty on our children and young people.

Local Child Poverty Action Plan Report (LCPAR)

Following updated Scottish Government guidance, East Ayrshire partners incorporated child poverty planning and reporting into the Children and Young People's Services Plan 2023–2026. This is reflected under Priority 2, focusing on reducing the impact of social and economic poverty through collaborative working. This report therefore also serves as the East Ayrshire Child Poverty Action Report 2025/26.

Wider partnership activity, particularly around inclusive economic growth, also contributes to tackling the root causes of poverty and is reported through the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan Annual Report 2024/25. During 2025/26, a new Community Planning Partnership Anti-Poverty and Inequalities Strategy was developed, recognising the need for a whole-system, multi-agency approach. This is launched in Autumn 2025 and complements existing activity across East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership.

Child poverty in East Ayrshire remains high, with rising living costs continuing to impact families, particularly those already vulnerable. Addressing this requires sustained, collective effort across partners, combining immediate support with long-term inclusive economic growth.

A key example is the Fairer Futures Partnership, which brings together the Council, third sector and Scottish Government to support families through a place-based approach. Children's Services have aligned the three key drivers of child poverty—income from employment, cost of living, and social security—with relevant UNCRC articles to guide this work.

We said we would

- Work collaboratively to support our children and young people and families maximise their income and mitigate against the cost-of-living crisis
- Develop and implement new and innovative work-based learning programmes that improve employability prospects for our young people.
- Ensure that collaborative, creative and innovative programmes are developed that encourage equitable access to participation in play, sport and active recreation opportunities.
- Ensure all children, no matter what their financial challenges have access to opportunities to thrive, develop and gain life experiences in their communities.

We Did – Key Delivery Examples

Welfare Rights Service

The Welfare Rights Service focuses on income maximisation to improve outcomes for low-income families by increasing income from social security, benefits, cost-of-living supports and administration of the Tenant Support Fund. This work aligns with the Local Child

Poverty Action Plan and the Children and Young People's Strategic Plan, which place a statutory duty on the service to provide advice to pregnant individuals and families with children. It also contributes to the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Strategy. Children and young people were engaged through Child Poverty Action Group workshops exploring social security as a right under the UNCRC, including discussions on Cost of the School Day. Schools, ECCs and academies were supported to develop local plans and involve children, young people and families in shaping support within their settings.

The Welfare Rights Service plays a vital role in realising a wide range of UNCRC rights for children, young people and their families. Central to this work are Articles 3, 18, 26 and 27, which emphasise acting in the child's best interests and ensuring families have the financial security needed to provide safe, stable and nurturing homes. Through income-maximisation support, the service helps prevent the challenges associated with poverty, inadequate housing and financial stress, contributing to family stability in line with Article 9.

The service also safeguards the rights of children with disabilities by ensuring the correct benefits and supports are in place, while helping families navigate entitlements across DWP, Social Security Scotland and local authority systems. This strengthens access to clear, reliable information in line with Article 17. Protection duties under Articles 32–36 are embedded throughout practice, with concerns routinely shared with HSCP partners and contributions made to child-protection processes where needed.

More broadly, the Welfare Rights Service enhances children's rights to education, health, nutrition, development and parental support, and provides targeted assistance to care-experienced young people and their families. Through this holistic rights-based approach, the service helps make children's rights tangible and meaningful for families across East Ayrshire.

The service has incorporated UNCRC into team meetings, strengthening staff understanding and ensuring that children's rights will inform our planning and delivery. The service has also initiated a procurement process for a Case Management System, which will enhance the ability to identify and support Scottish Government Priority Family Groups and better respond to wider risks and vulnerabilities within our service delivery.

School meal provision

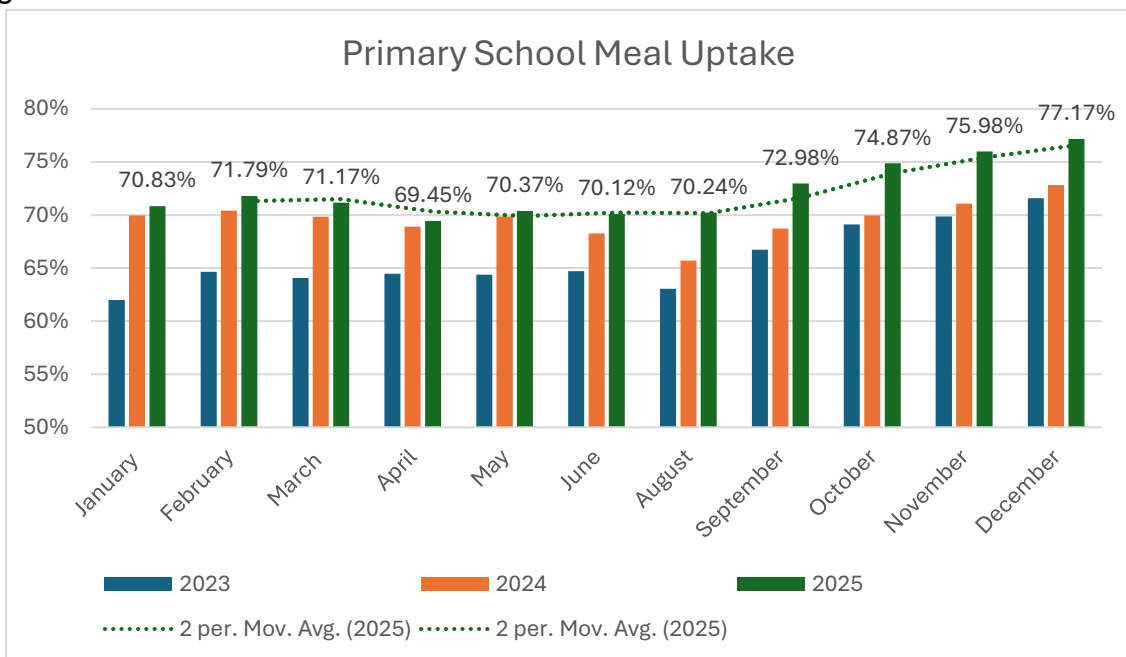
East Ayrshire Council currently provides around 12,500 meals per day across Early Years, Primary, Additional Support Needs (ASN) and Secondary schools. This year, the Council approved the extension of Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) to P6–P7, meaning all primary pupils are now entitled to a free meal. As a result, primary school uptake has increased, with pupils receiving a nutritionally balanced two course meal.

Upgrades to the cashless catering system now let parents pre order lunches up to three weeks in advance, view menus with pictures, nutritional details and allergen information, and discuss choices with their child.

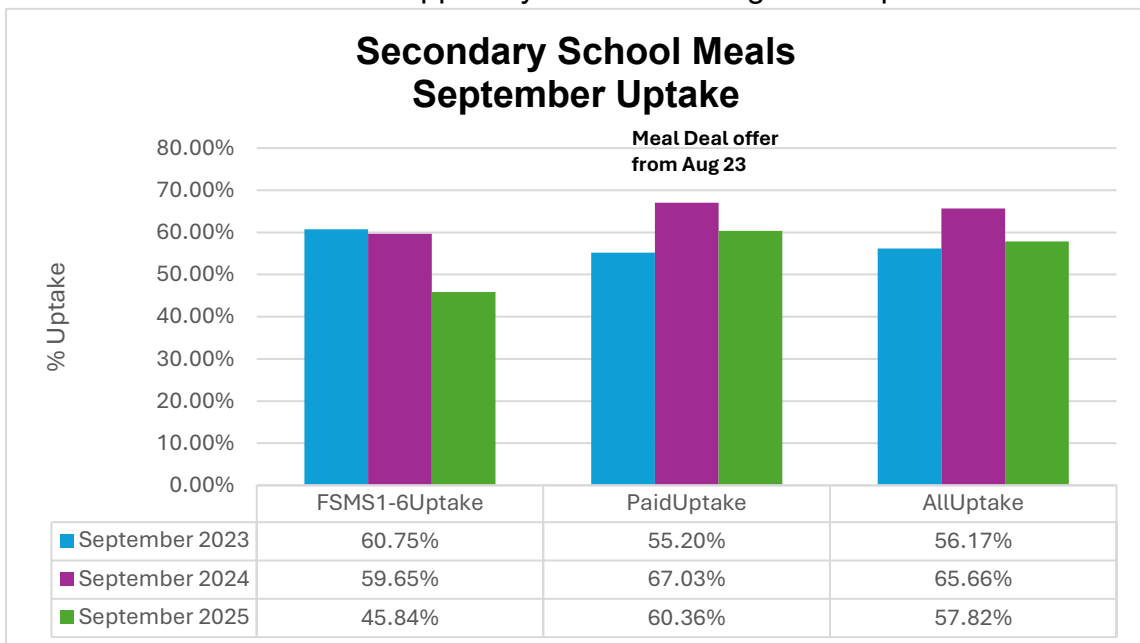
Pre ordering is also available in classrooms, with information going directly to Catering Managers, improving efficiency, reducing food waste and ensuring pupils receive their chosen meal. This supports families with an average annual saving of £475.

East Ayrshire Council has also extended subsidised Secondary School meals for a further two years, allowing a nutritionally balanced meal to be offered at £1.25, saving families around £237.50 per year.

Over the past three years, Primary School meal uptake has shown a consistent upward trend, reflecting the impact of subsidised meals and the Council’s extension of UFSM to P6–P7 from August 2025.



Secondary School has shown a similar picture with a positive outcome of paid school meal uptake due to the introduction and support by Council funding for half price school meals.



Poverty and Equality funding provides free toast and fruit in all primary schools to ensure that children have access to food before the school day begins, particularly those who may not attend breakfast clubs. This supports children's right to the highest attainable standard of health and their right to an adequate standard of living by helping to ensure that no child starts the school day hungry. The funding also subsidises school breakfasts by £0.20 per meal, supporting an average of 133 children each day across 11 breakfast clubs.

East Ayrshire Council also provides school meal holiday payments, funded by the Scottish Government, at a rate of £2.50 per day for all pupils entitled to income based Free School Meals. This year, 3,474 children received holiday payments, equating to £165 per pupil. This financial support further protects children's rights under Article 27, ensuring families can meet basic living needs throughout school holiday periods. It also reflects Article 26 by ensuring that children in lower income households receive targeted support to promote their wellbeing and reduce the impact of poverty.

This year, two funded Food Education courses were delivered—one at Hurlford Primary School and one at Logan Primary School—supporting children's rights under the UNCRC. Each four week course provided pupils and parents/ cares with opportunities to learn essential skills in cooking, nutrition and food safety, aligning with article 24 by helping children understand healthy eating and how to prepare nutritious food. Thirty four pupils and parents/ carers took part in the Hurlford programme, with the Logan course following in March. In addition, two practical food demonstrations were delivered to primary pupils, giving them hands on experience in preparing fresh vegetables and fish.

These activities also support article 29 by helping children develop life skills, confidence and knowledge to make informed choices, and article 12 by encouraging discussion, participation and active engagement throughout the sessions. Together, these programmes promote health, wellbeing and empowerment for children and families.

Cost of the School Day

All educational establishments continued to provide 'Cost of the School Day' (COSD) projects and used Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to support children and young people where poverty is a barrier to their learning. This helped fund a range of initiatives including school uniform and equipment support, breakfast clubs and fully funded school trips all designed to increase engagement and participation. All our Heads of Establishment have been signposted to the [Cost of the School Day Toolkit](#), published by Child Poverty Action Group. This provides an evidence-based approach to approaching COSD projects alongside case studies of successful interventions and projects.

School Example – Kilmarnock Academy

In September 2025, Kilmarnock Academy Cares (KA Cares) pupils and staff began to work alongside the Scottish Government to support the national Cost of the School Day agenda and wider child poverty priorities. During session 2025/26, representatives from the group attended the national Cost of the School Day conference to share examples of effective practice and contribute

to discussions around reducing financial barriers within education. Pupils were also invited to attend a meeting with the First Minister at Bute House, to represent the views and experiences of young people and highlight the importance of equity within schools. This opportunity allowed pupils to contribute directly to discussions linked to the Scottish Government's Cost of the School Day manifesto. Information and learning from these experiences were shared across the school through wellbeing lessons and House assemblies.

In August 2025, the KA Cares group developed the school's Breakfast Club, in partnership with Magic Breakfast, and Late Lunch initiatives to support pupils and families experiencing financial pressures. This work helps to reduce food insecurity and ensures support is provided in a dignified manner. Alongside this, the school's Late Lunch initiative continues to provide pupils and families with the opportunity to collect food at the end of the school day discreetly and respectfully, supporting wellbeing and inclusion across the school community.

KA Cares has continued to reduce financial barriers for pupils and families through the provision of school uniform and access to ICT. Throughout session 2025/26, school uniform items were purchased and distributed to support families experiencing financial hardship. This initiative is aimed at reduce the costs associated with attending school and support all pupils feel included at school. In addition, ICT equipment was provided for vulnerable learners to support engagement with online learning and East Ayrshire's Enhancing Opportunities programme.

Housing Services

East Ayrshire Council's continued progress in improving outcomes for children, young people and families experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness reflects a child-centred, rights-based approach consistent with Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) 2019–2026 places the best interests of the child (Article 3) at the heart of strategic and operational decision-making, with a strong focus on early intervention, prevention and promoting children's wellbeing.

Through its housing-led and prevention-focused approach, the RRTP supports children's right to an adequate standard of living (Article 27) and to life, survival and development (Article 6) by prioritising stable, safe and secure accommodation. Key actions, including the expanded acquisitions programme, prevent homelessness by purchasing properties with sitting tenants, enabling children and families to remain settled in their own homes. In doing so, the programme supported 33 households, including 22 children across 13 families, to avoid homelessness, protecting family stability, attachments and community connections and promoting the GIRFEC wellbeing indicators Safe, Nurtured and Healthy.

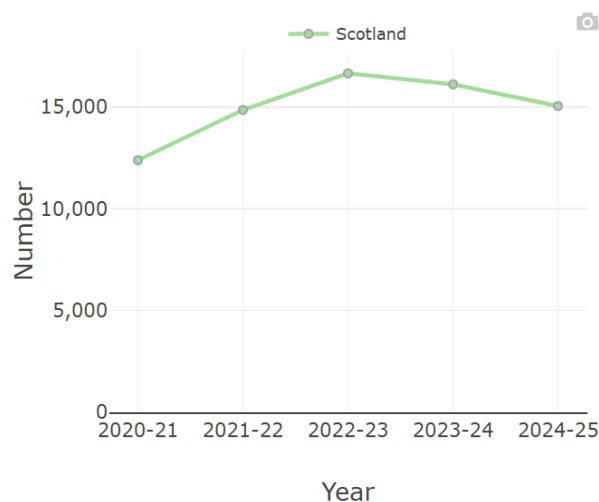
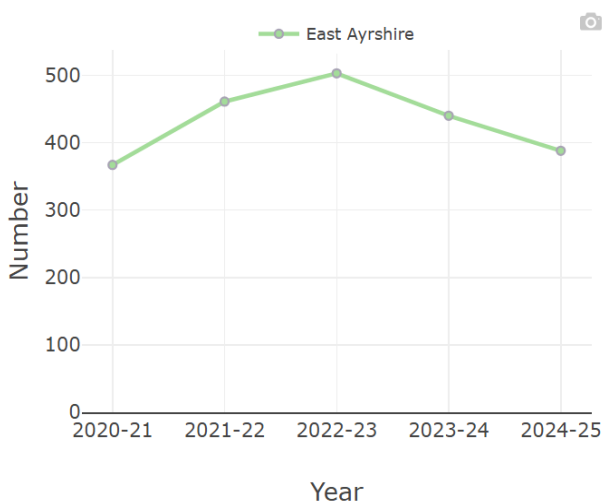
Keeping children within their family environment wherever possible also supports their right not to be separated from their parents unless it is in their best interests (Article 9). By avoiding displacement into temporary accommodation, children experience greater emotional security and continuity of care, supporting positive developmental outcomes and resilience.

This prevention-focused, multi-agency approach has led to demonstrable improvements in outcomes for children. The number of children associated with homelessness applications reduced to 388 in 2024/25, a 12% reduction from 440 in 2023/24. The number of children living in temporary accommodation fell by 30% to 25 as of 31 March 2025, while households with children or a pregnant woman in temporary accommodation reduced by 25% down from 20 in 2024 to 15 in 2025. These outcomes evidence effective action to reduce the impact of adversity on children and to promote early help, in line with GIRFEC principles.

Where temporary accommodation is required, the RRTP prioritises swift rehousing to ensure stays are for the shortest appropriate time, supporting children’s wellbeing and minimising disruption to their lives. Average lengths of stay of 120 days for single-parent households and 123 days for couples with children are significantly below national averages. This approach supports children’s right to education (Article 28) by reducing disruption to schooling, attendance and learning, and contributes positively to the wellbeing indicators Achieving and Included.

By reducing prolonged stays in temporary accommodation, the RRTP also mitigates risks to children’s emotional wellbeing and supports their right to protection from harm (Article 19). Stable housing enables children to remain connected to universal and targeted services, ensuring their needs are identified and responded to appropriately.

Overall, East Ayrshire’s RRTP demonstrates a coherent, coordinated approach that aligns GIRFEC wellbeing outcomes with children’s rights under the UNCRC. Through preventative action, early intervention and a focus on stability and family life, the programme actively realises children’s rights and supports them to grow up safe, nurtured, healthy, achieving and included, in line with Scotland’s commitment to incorporate the UNCRC into law.



Pupil Equity Funding (PEF)

PEF continues to play a key role in supporting schools to reduce barriers to learning and close the poverty-related attainment gap for children and young people. Schools have continued to use this funding effectively and strategically, targeting resources where they will have the greatest impact on improving outcomes.

The PEF Planning Tool supports the monitoring and evaluation of spend across five key areas. In 2025–26, the majority of funding (63%) was appropriately directed towards attainment and achievement, reflecting the continued priority of improving educational outcomes and reducing inequity. A further 12% supported inclusion and 12% supported engagement, helping children and young people to access and participate fully in their learning. Participation accounted for 7% of spend, while 6% was targeted towards attendance, with investment in this area doubling from the previous year in response to identified needs. This demonstrates schools' ongoing responsiveness and commitment to addressing emerging barriers to learning through targeted and evidence-informed approaches.

Workforce and Future Skills

The Workforce and Future Skills (W&FS) Team within East Ayrshire's People and Culture Service leads the delivery of Modern Apprenticeships, Graduate Internships and Graduate Apprenticeships, offering supported work-based learning opportunities for young people aged 16–25. The programme includes regular progress reviews, mentoring and an end-of-programme survey, and has seen strong outcomes, with 87 Modern Apprentices sustaining employment with the Council since 2022. The programme is rooted in safe and supportive working environments, reflecting the UNCRC's requirement that decisions and arrangements are made in the best interests of the child or young person. There is an increasing emphasis on early guidance to ensure that apprenticeships are the most suitable pathway for each young person.

Youth voice is embedded through ongoing dialogue, progress reviews and end-of-programme feedback, supporting young people to share their views and influence their experience. While feedback remains consistently positive, there is scope to strengthen how this insight directly shapes programme design—particularly decisions about which Modern Apprenticeship frameworks the Council seeks to offer. Apprentices frequently report increased confidence, improved workplace skills and a stronger understanding of employment expectations, all of which contribute to meaningful participation and increased independence in line with Articles 28 and 29 of the UNCRC.

The W&FS Team is also taking steps to reduce inequalities by developing more inclusive pathways into employment. A recent pre-apprenticeship programme in Dalmellington engaged six young people from Doon Academy, all of whom progressed to interviews or placements across Council services. This targeted work supports young people who may not otherwise access traditional apprenticeship routes and demonstrates how accessible, supported entry points can broaden participation. Apprenticeships continue to play an

important role in providing high-quality vocational pathways that support personal development, confidence and long-term employability for young people.

Barriers remain for some groups, including inconsistent promotion of apprenticeships within schools, challenges with digital application processes and limited access to information for families. These barriers can limit young people's ability to access their right to education, information and guidance, as set out in Articles 17 and 28 of the UNCRC. Strengthening communication with parents and carers, and ensuring information is accessible and inclusive, will support more informed decision-making and help ensure that opportunities reach young people who may be less engaged in traditional careers activity.

Overall, apprenticeships offer meaningful employment, transferable skills and sustainable career pathways when engagement is strong, supporting young people's development of skills, confidence and independence in line with Articles 28 and 29 of the UNCRC. The introduction of the Pre-Apprenticeship Programme has further improved accessibility and inclusion, helping to address inequality of opportunity and promote children's rights in practice. Continued focus on early guidance, youth voice and inclusive communication will strengthen alignment with the UNCRC and ensure the programme remains equitable, rights-based and responsive to the diverse needs of young people across East Ayrshire.

Skills, Learning and Employability

Skills and Learning, part of East Ayrshire Council's Education Service, supports young people and families to achieve positive, sustained destinations through a person-centred, rights-based approach. Established in 2020, the service provides a coordinated "one stop" model that simplifies referrals and ensures timely, joined-up support.

As an SQA-accredited centre, it offers a range of vocational qualifications and works in partnership with key agencies to deliver holistic support that promotes wellbeing, inclusion and progression. Young people at risk of disengaging from education are supported through blended learning, wellbeing provision and strong relationships, with their views central to planning.

The service prioritises equality of access, particularly for care-experienced young people and those with additional support needs, and provides safe, nurturing environments that build confidence and resilience. Reducing child poverty is also a key focus, with parent-centred employability programmes improving family financial security.

Early intervention is supported through partnership delivery of sensory play sessions, while accessible local centres across East Ayrshire ensure equitable opportunities to learn and develop skills. Progress is monitored to support sustained outcomes, helping young people build the confidence, skills and wellbeing needed to thrive.

Priority 3: Our children and young people feel safe

The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021) places children's rights and voices at the centre of child protection and highlights the importance of working with families to provide support and reduce the risk of harm. Significant work has been undertaken to implement this guidance, and we are fully compliant with all requirements.

We recognise that experiences of abuse or neglect can have lifelong and intergenerational effects. Over the past three years, our focus has been on ensuring children and young people in East Ayrshire are protected from harm, while also strengthening support for those on the child protection register and their families.

We said we would

- Work in partnership with our families to improve children's safety at home, school and community.
- Provide our workforce with the tools and training to identify, support and challenge neglect and harm against children and young people
- Develop innovative support models which will strengthen the safety of children, young people and families

We Did – Clear Delivery Examples

Child Protection Committee

The Committee undertook a range of initiatives across the year that focused on the safety of children and young people in East Ayrshire.

A Learning Needs Analysis was carried out across multi-agency partners to gather feedback on practitioner's confidence in identifying and responding to child protection concerns and identify focused areas of training. This highlighted that most practitioners felt confident across a range of child protection concerns, including child sexual exploitation, but desired refresher training in some areas. The Protection and Learning team offered a wide range of training and learning and development opportunities throughout the year, including trauma-informed practice workshops delivered by Dr Karen Treisman.

The Communication and Engagement subgroup agreed standards for seeking the views of children and young people experiencing the child protection process.

In 2025-26, a number of 'cross-strand' Public Protection work has both continued and been developed. A Communication and Engagement Strategic Oversight Group was established in 2025 to lead on the development of a communication and engagement strategy which has now been delivered. The establishment of this Group provided the opportunity to focus on how key public protection messages are aligned, communicated and how local communities are engaged with.

The new Public Protection Communications and Engagement Strategy has the following vision:

“For East Ayrshire’s communities to know where to find help if they suspect someone is experiencing harm or have experienced harm themselves and to ensure the voices of those with lived/living experience influences the work across public protection.”

The Strategy will support the five Public Protection Committees and Partnerships in communicating key messages to multi-agency partners and communities across East Ayrshire, with the purpose of increasing awareness and understanding of public protection concerns, highlighting appropriate services and supports available, and supporting people with lived/living experience to engage and influence the services they access. This strategy will be underpinned by trauma-informed approaches to communications and engagement.

In response to the rise of misogynistic attitudes, behaviours and derogatory language directed at women and girls in the classroom, the committee agreed to roll out of Sexual Violence Guidance and FAQ across partners, developed by the Ayrshire STAR Centre: Rape Crisis Sexual Violence Prevention Team.

The Young People at Risk of Harm subgroup continued to develop East Ayrshire’s approach to child exploitation and contextual safeguarding, with the development of contextual safeguarding operational guidance and work underway to establish a strategic group. Child exploitation training is offered throughout the year to all practitioners through the Protection and Learning Team. A Learning Needs Analysis in 2025 highlighted that most practitioners across social work, health, education and housing felt they were confident in identifying and responding to exploitation.

Signs of Safety and Healing

Work began in January 2025 to progress the development of Signs of Safety and Healing in East Ayrshire, with the establishment of a Social Work Implementation Team. The team have supported the roll out of 5-day training to all Children’s Services social workers throughout 2025-26, with 2-day training delivered to multi-agency partners to build a foundation and understanding of Signs of Safety principles, approach to risk assessment, and shared language across children’s services.

The implementation team have completed baseline audit activity which will support measurement of implementation in the 2026-27 period, this has included engagement with children and young people and their families, reviews of assessments and care plans and key activity, outcome and workforce data.

Safe and Together

The implementation of the Safe & Together model in East Ayrshire continues to make steady and meaningful progress. While there have been challenges, including staffing transitions and varying levels of staff confidence, the work undertaken over the past year demonstrates improvements in domestic abuse-informed practice. Funding for the Delivering Equally Safe initiative was originally scheduled to end in March 2026; however, The Scottish Government have announced this will continue for a further two-year period.

Three qualified Safe and Together trainers provide regular Safe and Together courses which results in better safety planning for children and young people at risk of harm. This supports children to stay with their non-abusing parent and recognises the actions that many women who experience domestic abuse or coercive control take to keep their children safe. Over the past year, two 4-day Core training sessions were delivered to 25 social work practitioners and 2 Women's Aid workers. Safe and Together overview training was also added to the first-year training calendar for all Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs).

The Safe and Together Facilitators (formerly Champions) group of Social Work volunteers continued to build confidence in practicing the model and promote this within their own teams, which has made a significant contribution to the appetite and commitment to change across services. The group have also adopted the Bells that Ring model for peer supervision and have provided valuable feedback on areas where more support is required.

Further audit activity is scheduled for 2026; however previous audits have shown practice moving in the right direction from 'Neglectful' to 'Pre-Competent' in the most recent audit. A recent evaluation of the model, which involved an audit of social work files, feedback from women via East Ayrshire Women's Aid and practitioner and manager feedback on the implementation, organisational culture and expectations, identified that coercive control is an area where practitioners are less confident, moving forward this will be an area of development for practitioner learning.

Children and young people affected by violence against women and gender-based violence can access a range of support through East Ayrshire Women's Aid, the STAR Centre: Ayrshire Rape Crisis, Barnardo's Safe and Together service, Break the Silence (18+), school counselling and social work children and families' teams.

Whole System Approach

The Whole System Approach model is well established and supported in East Ayrshire and over the past year there have been key progressions to ensure the needs and rights of young people are understood, upheld and supported through best practice and research. Multi-agency working ensures that there is proactive communication with Police, SCRA and the Procurator Fiscal to promote alternatives to Court. Early intervention and diversion from prosecution is also delivered by the Intensive Support Team which results in fewer children and young people having to appear at Court or enter formal justice systems. Current completion rates for diversion are high, and feedback from children and young people about the impact of diversion activities. This has also helped reduce the referral rate to SCRA: there has been a significant decline in relation to offence referrals to SCRA between 25/26 from the previous year (down from 372 (24/25) to 148 (25/26)).

Proactive partnership working with local Police has resulting in no local children or young people being held overnight in Police custody in the last 2 years and through work with the Procurator Fiscal Office and SCRA there have been only a small number of children under 18 who have appeared at Court over the same period. This has significantly reduced the number of children appearing at Court with only one child from East Ayrshire under 18 over the last year being sentenced through Court. Where young people are required to attend,

Court Action Notes are issued prior to the young person's appearance which provides relevant information to the Sheriff detailing their circumstances, strengths and vulnerabilities. The Court Action Note also highlights the range of relevant supports which are currently in place or could be put in place to reduce the likelihood of remand and afford them the liberty to remain within their communities. Post-court support includes a wraparound Multiagency Support Plan to help reduce the risk of them coming back into conflict with the law.

The Whole Systems Approach supports children and young people through a trauma-informed lens and seeks to prevent or reduce the traumatic impact that attending Court can have on young people. Support has been vital in helping children and young people with their anxieties and in helping them understand what is happening and in navigating their way through the Court. This has also helped build positive relationships with Sheriffs and Solicitors which has helped to promote communication and more positive outcomes for the children.

A range of diversionary activities have taken place throughout the year, particularly over weekends to help provide some routine for children and young people and give them pro-social activities to engage in. Examples include our positive partnership with The Killie Community has allowed us to receive some free tickets to the Kilmarnock home football games. This has given an amazing opportunity for a lot of children over the past year to support their local football club. The Intensive Support Team also utilised East Ayrshire Leisure (Ayrshire 360) spaces to provide fun, diversionary activities for children.

A Speech and Language Therapist now sit within the Intensive Support Team. This has allowed for consultations to take place offering advice to practitioners around the best ways of supporting children and young people. Assessments are being undertaken to determine what level of communication needs children may have and informal advice to the teams.

Talking Mats training is also being provided to the Intensive Support Team as well as working together to develop easy read information leaflets and East Ayrshire bespoke supports.

Training from Children and Young People's Centre for Justice took place on the criminal exploitation of children which focused around upskilling practitioners in using the national Criminal Exploitation of Children Toolkit. This included four sessions, two of which were online and two in person (with attendance required at one of each). This was available to multiagency and was attended by practitioners across different services.

In addition to this, an internal contextual safeguarding mapping exercise took place to identify where potential exploitation may be occurring for some of our children. This led to a partnership approach to identifying adults responsible for the exploitation for the Police to investigate and highlighted areas within North Ayrshire and Glasgow where there were significant risks highlighted.

Case study – Whole Systems Approach Young Person

A young person is supported to stay in independent living who was coming in conflict with the law and displaying high risk-taking behaviours.

The risks associated with the young person included concerns around substance misuse, coming in conflict with the law and accruing serious charges, having offensive weapons and child criminal exploitation. The young person at the time was on the edges of secure care. There were also concerns around the young person's mental health and anxiety.

The young person was supported by providing wraparound intensive support within their home including twice daily support being facilitated by the Intensive Support Team equating from 6-8 hours per day using a wraparound support plan. Telephone support was also provided out with these visits. This later led to support through a care provider also being offered to allow the young person to have additional care and support and encourage their independent living skills.

The young person was also supported the young person to maintain family relationships and was supported to health appointments including attendance at hospital and GP surgery.

What this achieved:

- The young person did not return to secure care
- They felt supported to live independently
- The young person was able to reflect on their decision making and the effect that substances was having on them
- They built positive relationships across the service
- Significant reduction in substance use and the child did not accrue any further charges
- They transitioned to requiring a reduced support through a gradual reduction in services to allow them to live more independently

Corporate Parenting

The Moving On, Continuing Care and Aftercare (MOCCA) Service provides targeted social work support for care-experienced young people transitioning to adulthood. The service is firmly grounded in young people's rights under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), now fully incorporated into Scots law. In particular, MOCCA promotes the best interests of the child as a primary consideration (Article 3), aligns with The Promise, the Corporate Parenting Action Plan 2024–2027, and responds to national developments including the 2025 Bill on Care Experience and Service Planning.

MOCCA support is young-person-led and can begin from age 15, reflecting young people's entitlement to be actively involved in decisions that affect their lives (Article 12 – right to be heard). Through looked-after reviews, engagement with the service is carefully paced according to individual strengths, needs and readiness for transition. A holistic Welfare Assessment informs a Pathway Plan, developed in partnership with housing, education, DWP, health and third-sector services, supporting young people's rights to development, education and preparation for adult life (Articles 6 and 28).

Young people aged 15–26 are supported, with a strong focus on voice, choice and participation, including opportunities to influence service design and delivery through youth-voice structures such as the Care Experience Cabinet. This approach reflects the UNCRC’s emphasis on respecting young people’s evolving capacities and ensuring their views are given due weight (Article 12). Levels of support are flexible and can be intensified or reduced depending on the young person’s stage of transition, ensuring proportionate and responsive care in line with individual need.

East Ayrshire Council has a long-standing partnership with Blue Triangle Housing Association (BTHA) to provide supported independent living for care-experienced young people. This includes three supported flats at Whattriggs Road, Kilmarnock and an additional five tenancies purchased by BTHA, with HSCP-funded support. At any one time, eleven young people can be supported to develop the skills, confidence and stability required for their own tenancy, progressing towards independence while having their right to an adequate standard of living upheld (Article 27).

MOCCA prioritises continuity of trusted relationships, recognising the importance of stable, caring connections for care-experienced young people. This reflects Article 20, which requires that children and young people who cannot live with their families receive special protection and support, and that continuity in their care arrangements and relationships is promoted wherever possible. Most young people remain in Continuing Care beyond age 18, with Aftercare offered up to age 26 and proactively re-offered on an annual basis, supporting long-term emotional wellbeing and recovery from earlier adversity (Article 39 – recovery and reintegration).

Housing Services and the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) work collaboratively to ensure young people have access to safe, suitable and secure accommodation, alongside wraparound support and financial assistance where required. This partnership approach supports young people’s rights to protection, development and wellbeing (Articles 3 and 27).

Future priorities for MOCCA include expanding supported tenancies, planning transitions earlier and more gradually, strengthening aspirations, education and employment opportunities, and ensuring that financial pressures never outweigh young people’s rights or best interests, in keeping with the principles of the UNCRC and Scotland’s commitment to keeping the Promise to care-experienced young people.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

East Ayrshire Council works closely with COSLA to support the National Transfer Scheme, ensuring that the Council meets its statutory and corporate parenting responsibilities to secure the very best outcomes for children and young people seeking asylum. Our Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) Team works alongside our MOCCA Team (as referenced in the Corporate Parenting section above), reflecting a whole-system, partnership approach consistent with East Ayrshire’s commitment to early intervention, inclusion and Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC).

Our model is child-centred and needs-led, promoting stability, safety and belonging. Children and young people are supported to live with foster carers or within children's houses, depending on assessed need, ensuring their right to care and protection (Articles 3, 20 and 22). As young people progress, we support planned transitions into their own accommodation through our integrated Housing Support model, where housing and social work colleagues work collaboratively to promote independence, wellbeing and sustained positive outcomes.

We have strong relationships with our public health team and school nurses. This means all our young people are health screened shortly after arriving to ensure all health needs are met, and appropriate referrals can be made. Young people are supported to engage with the Scottish guardianship project to enable them to safely make their asylum claim and receive the correct legal support. Recognising the significant impact of trauma, loneliness, isolation and fear, we actively promote opportunities for asylum-seeking children and young people to be welcomed to East Ayrshire. In practice, this has included supporting young people to arrive and live in East Ayrshire at the same time as a peer to reduce the risk of separation and disconnection. This enables them to maintain established relationships and connections, supporting their emotional wellbeing and right to important relationships (Articles 9 and 12).

Education is central to our approach. Our UASC team promotes access to ESOL provision and supports engagement with schools, colleges and universities as appropriate, upholding children's right to education and development (Articles 28 and 29). We also ensure that children and young people are supported to have a strong voice, actively participate in decisions that affect them, and have their rights, views and cultural identity respected (Articles 12, 14 and 30).

Our UASC community is supported to feel welcomed, valued and included within East Ayrshire. We recognise and celebrate important religious observances, festivals and cultural events, reinforcing our commitment to equality, diversity and respect. This approach reflects East Ayrshire Council's ambition to be a caring, inclusive place where children and young people are safe, listened to, and supported to achieve their full potential.

Protecting children through the Violence Against Women Partnership

The East Ayrshire Violence Against Women Partnership (EAVAWP) continues to play a critical role in upholding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), particularly in relation to protecting children and young people from violence, abuse and exploitation. Central to this work is Article 19, which places a duty on public bodies to safeguard children from all forms of physical or mental harm. Where violence against children is established we must use available legislative processes involving the Children's hearing, Court or both to protect children and young people. Through collaborative partnership arrangements, strategic needs assessment, the Safe and Together model, MARAC processes and specialist support services, EAVAWP works to reduce risk, enhance safety and ensure that children affected by domestic abuse, sexual violence and coercive control are identified and supported at the earliest opportunity.

National evidence shows that around 1 in 5 children experience domestic abuse, and 1 in 6 experience sexual abuse, during childhood. EAVAWP recognises that many more children experience gender-based violence than are currently known to services, and closing this gap remains a key priority. Identifying these children early and ensuring they receive appropriate protection, safety planning and support is a central focus of local improvement activity.

The partnership also acknowledges the clear link between poverty and increased risk of harm. Children living in poverty face heightened vulnerability to gender-based violence due to the stresses and structural inequalities associated with deprivation. In East Ayrshire, where child poverty rates remain a significant challenge, it is essential that efforts to reduce inequality are aligned with efforts to prevent and respond to domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women and girls.

EAVAWP's approach reflects Article 3 by placing children's safety, wellbeing and developmental needs at the centre of decision-making. The Safe and Together model ensures that responsibility for harm remains with perpetrators, while recognising and strengthening the protective actions of non-abusing parents. This supports children to remain safely within their families wherever appropriate, promoting emotional security, stable relationships and recovery from trauma. Ongoing multi-agency training continues to build practitioner confidence and capability in responding in ways that are child-centred, trauma-informed and rights-based.

The partnership's strong focus on prevention, education and cultural change supports Articles 28 and 29. School-based programmes such as Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP), Equally Safe at School (ESAS) and sexual-violence prevention inputs help challenge harmful gender norms, build equality, and empower children and young people to understand their rights and seek help. These initiatives also support Article 12 by ensuring that young people's views inform learning, practice and service development.

Targeted support for children affected by sexual violence and exploitation is delivered through services such as East Ayrshire Women's Aid and The STAR Centre: Ayrshire Rape Crisis. This provision aligns with Article 34, ensuring protection from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse, and with Article 24 through trauma-informed emotional and psychological support that promotes recovery and wellbeing. By recognising the significant impact of poverty and inequality, EAVAWP also upholds Article 2, ensuring that children facing multiple adversities are supported to realise their rights on an equal basis with others.

Digital Safety

Digital safety in East Ayrshire schools is underpinned by a children's rights-based approach in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Schools are committed to enabling children and young people to use digital technologies safely, responsibly and confidently; while ensuring they are protected from harm. Schools adopt a whole community approach to digital safeguarding, recognising that online experiences span both school and home environments. This shared responsibility ensures that children's wellbeing and best interests remain central, and that adults are informed and responsive to emerging digital risks.

The Safer Schools Scotland app plays a central role in supporting digital safety across East Ayrshire. It provides accessible, age-appropriate guidance for pupils, parents/carers and employees, including advice on privacy and safety settings, alerts on emerging risks such as online challenges and artificial intelligence misuse, and clear routes for sharing safeguarding messages. Digital safety education is embedded within the curriculum through a structured Internet Safety and Digital Citizenship framework. Learning focuses on online privacy, recognising harmful content, cyberbullying and exploitation, and managing digital footprints, supporting children to develop resilience, critical thinking and informed decision making. Schools promote the safe use of digital systems such as Glow and Microsoft Teams, supported by clear guidance, appropriate supervision and filtering and monitoring on school managed devices.

Staff receive ongoing training to ensure digital safeguarding remains embedded in everyday practice, supporting children's right to protection from harm. East Ayrshire schools work in partnership with safeguarding agencies and align digital safety practice with current legislation, including the UK Online Safety Act. Parents and carers are supported through guidance and resources that respect children's evolving capacities and promote open communication.

All online safety concerns are treated as safeguarding matters, with clear and accessible reporting pathways, including national services such as CEOP where appropriate. Responses are timely and child centred, ensuring that the best interests of the child remain the primary consideration.

Priority 4: Our Children and young people have the best start in life and achieve their potential.

We know that early childhood is a crucial period for building healthy, resilient children and young people so they can achieve their full potential. Getting it right for every child is essential, particularly in addressing challenges such as health inequalities and emotional and mental wellbeing.

Improving outcomes requires a collective effort, with professionals and local and national leaders working in partnership with families, young people and communities. Strong universal services are also vital to support all families, identify need early, and provide timely additional help where required.

We said we would

- Build upon our Community assets and the skills and talents of our children, young people and families to provide the best start in life
- Implement a series of innovative programmes which will support our children and young people to develop and achieve their potential.
- We will support all of our children and young people, particularly those most at risk to make best use of our support pathways for learning, work and wellbeing

We did – Key Delivery Examples

Family Nurse Partnership

Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) is an intensive, evidence-based home visiting programme that supports young first-time mothers and their families from early pregnancy until the child turns two. It is grounded in FNP Scotland outcomes and focuses on improving maternal health, child development and economic self-sufficiency through a strengths-based, relationship-centred approach.

During 2025/26, FNP has continued to support families experiencing multiple and significant vulnerabilities such as poverty, trauma and social isolation, which remains particularly important across Ayrshire. A Test of Change was implemented to improve early recruitment, increasing the proportion of clients enrolled by 16 weeks and 6 days gestation from 52% to 61%. Early engagement supports stronger therapeutic relationships and takes advantage of the increased motivation for positive change seen in early pregnancy.

FNP also collaborated with East Ayrshire Health Visiting on a small Test of Change through the introduction of a Colic Pathway. Parent feedback has been very positive, with increased confidence in understanding and managing infant behaviour. This work was showcased at the NHS Ayrshire & Arran NMAHP Learning from Excellence Day. Alongside this, the service has strengthened its focus on reducing inequalities through proactive referrals, including 35 to financial inclusion services, 23 to housing, 42 to mental health support and 50 to employability and other services, helping families access timely support and improve stability.

Breastfeeding continues to be actively promoted, with engagement of both clients and their partners and recognition of its benefits for infant health, attachment and family resilience. Outcomes have improved, with breastfeeding at birth increasing from 28.8% in 2024/25 to 33.3% in 2025/26, at 6 weeks from 11.4% to 16.3%, and at 6 months from 2.6% to 3.4%. A resource is currently being developed to support fathers in understanding breastfeeding and their role in sustaining it.

FNP also delivers Motivational Interviewing workshops across Ayrshire to a range of services and multi-agency partners, supporting a consistent strengths-based approach to communication and enhancing engagement with families. Strong partnership working continues across health, social work, third sector and community organisations, including SL33, SL66 and community groups such as BabyChat and the East Ayrshire Family Support Group.

Looking ahead, a further Test of Change is planned to improve programme uptake, which is currently 73% against a stretch target of 85%, ensuring all eligible families are reached. Another Test of Change is underway to better understand client demographics and needs, enabling more tailored support and effective signposting to services.

There have been several positive outcomes for families. One client fleeing domestic violence was supported to access £300 in emergency funding and connected with local services including NEST and Women's Aid, helping her rebuild confidence and independence. Another care-experienced client engaged with perinatal mental health services, resulting in improved wellbeing, and with multi-agency support secured an early nursery place for her baby; she is now attending the gym and planning to apply for a nursing access course. A further client with significant adverse childhood experiences and ongoing social work involvement successfully separated from an abusive partner, secured her first tenancy, gained employment in care services, passed her driving test and continues to work while caring for her children.

Chatting Together

8 of our settings have been working in partnership with the CYPIC (Children and Young Peoples Improvement Collaborative) Team at the Scottish Government. The settings have been applying a Quality Improvement Approach to consider how they focus on responsive interactions in their settings with every child in every space, every time by implementing the Chatting Together messages. Chatting Together are evidence based key messages which consist of four most important things that adults can do every day to nurture early language and communication.

The four key messages for children aged 2 years are; ***Get down to my level - watch and wait before joining in - copy my sounds and words and add a bit more - talk to me whatever we are doing.***

Learning from the East Ayrshire Chatting Together sessions has focused on strengthening early language and communication through consistent, reflective practice. A key theme has been the importance of responsive interaction, staff getting down to a child's level, watching, waiting, following the child's lead, and using comments to extend language rather than relying on questions.

Practitioners have engaged with practical improvement methods, particularly through the use of video and self-evaluation. Recording short interactions and using the rating scale has supported staff to reflect on their strengths and identify areas for development, building confidence and shared understanding across teams.

Data gathered through PDSA (Plan, Do, Study, Act) cycles shows increasing confidence and improvement in interaction quality over time, alongside growing awareness of "serve and return" interactions and how to maximise these in busy environments.

Overall, East Ayrshire learning demonstrates that structured reflection, supportive leadership, and simple, evidence-based strategies can lead to meaningful changes in practice, with early signs of improved staff behaviours and more engaging interactions for children. Practitioners told us that by using the chatting together messages, they have become embedded in their interactions with children and that by consistently applying this approach they have seen an improvement in the development of children's SLC.

The next steps will be to share and spread this learning with all ECCs in East Ayrshire who support two-year-old children.

CLAN (Communication Language and Nurture)

CLAN is a multi-agency group with a key focus on supporting the development of children's speech, language and communication within East Ayrshire. CLAN has an underpinning aim which is to lead and support Easy Ayrshire Localities to reduce the number of children presenting with developmental concerns at their relevant child health reviews. CLAN has developed and agreed a change theory which suggests that their three primary drivers for change are; collaborative planning with communities, implementing evidence-based interventions and monitoring progress through shared data and improvement measures.

CLAN aims to use equality and population data to inform priorities, ensure resources are aligned with interventions and workforce capacity and embed continuous professional learning linked to early language outcomes.

Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment Stretch Aims continued to provide an important framework for measuring progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap, in line with the National Improvement Framework (NIF) and the Recovery and Accelerating Progress paper (May 2023). Key measures of attainment at P1, P4 and P7 were used to monitor progress across Literacy and Numeracy.

Projected attainment data gathered throughout 2025–26 demonstrates continued improvement for learners across all stages and key measures. Encouragingly, the data also shows evidence of a narrowing attainment gap across a number of sub-measures, reflecting the positive impact of targeted support and sustained improvement activity across schools.

Academic session 2025–26 marked the final year of the Stretch Aims 2024–2026 cycle. East Ayrshire Council successfully met and exceeded almost all ACEL-related Stretch Aims in session 2024–25, demonstrating strong progress over the course of the cycle. While the highly aspirational targets set for 2025–26 were narrowly missed, overall performance remained strong and reflects the ambition, commitment and continued focus across schools and services to improve outcomes for all children and young people.

Work Experience Policy

The Work Experience Policy supports the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) particularly Article 28, which establishes every child’s right to access education and Article 29 which emphasises that education must develop each child’s personality, talents and abilities to their fullest potential. This policy supports access to good quality work experience as part of the fuller educational experience.

These rights form the foundation for creating meaningful employability opportunities, as quality education, skills development, and supportive environments equip young people with the confidence, resilience and capabilities needed for the world of work. The UNCRC also upholds children’s right to be heard in decisions affecting them (Article 12), reinforcing the importance of involving young people in shaping pathways that reflect their aspirations.

The Work Experience Policy supports East Ayrshire Council’s commitment to “The Promise” which commits to improving the lives and outcomes of care experienced young people in East Ayrshire. The commitment includes pledges to ensure young people are given equity in terms of support and resources in education and opportunities for employment, while recognising that they may lack parental or other caregiver support.

It is also recognised that Young Carers, who have developed valuable skills through their caring responsibilities, require support and flexibility to move into work and the provision of work experience opportunities will assist them to make future career decisions.

Together, our approaches aim to reduce inequalities, strengthen pathways into meaningful employment, and ensure that care-experienced young people and young carers are supported to realise their full potential.

Skills, Learning and Employability

The Skills and Learning (SL) service sits within East Ayrshire Council’s Education Service and supports young people, parents and adults to progress towards positive and sustained destinations through a person-centred, rights-based approach. Established in 2020, SL33 operates as a one stop service that simplifies referral pathways, reduces duplication and

ensures timely, coordinated support in the best interests of the child, in line with Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

As an SQA-accredited centre, the service delivers a range of vocational qualifications and works closely with partner agencies to provide holistic support that promotes wellbeing and development. Young people at risk of disengaging from education are supported through a blended model of learning, wellbeing support and trusted relationships, with their views central to planning.

The service prioritises inclusion, particularly for care experienced young people and those with additional support needs, ensuring safe, nurturing environments that build confidence and resilience. Reducing child poverty is also a key focus, with parent-centred employability programmes supporting family financial security.

Progress and outcomes are monitored through the national Shared Measurement Framework at key milestones, with ongoing follow-up and aftercare to support sustained destinations. This reflects the service's commitment to children and young people not only achieving qualifications, but also developing the skills, confidence, wellbeing and resilience needed to thrive and participate meaningfully in society, in line with the overall aims of the UNCRC.

Early intervention is further supported through partnership work, including sensory play for younger children. Delivery is place-based across local centres, ensuring equitable access to high-quality learning opportunities. Progress is monitored to support sustained outcomes, helping young people develop the skills, confidence and resilience needed to thrive.

School Nursing

School Nurses in East Ayrshire play a key role in delivering safe, equitable and child-centred care, grounded in children's rights. Working across local communities, they provide accessible support to children and young people, particularly those facing disadvantage, including looked after children, young carers and families affected by poverty. Care is coordinated in partnership with schools and services to ensure children's wellbeing, safety and development remain central. Early identification of health and wellbeing needs, along with targeted support for issues such as mental health, trauma and safeguarding, is a core focus.

Children's voices are central to practice, supported through approaches such as one-to-one conversations and communication tools. School Nurses also promote health through education, prevention work and support for long-term conditions, helping young people fully engage in school life.

Through advocacy, partnership working and trauma-informed practice, School Nursing in East Ayrshire supports children to stay safe, healthy and included, ensuring they can learn, develop and thrive.

Health Visiting

Health visitors in East Ayrshire play a vital role in upholding and protecting the rights of children and families every single day. The principles of the UNCRC are already woven into the way our health visiting teams work, shaping the compassion, fairness, and respect shown to every family we support.

In East Ayrshire, our health visiting services commit to caring for every family with the same care and attention, no matter their background, circumstances, or community. The best interests of the child remain at the heart of every clinical and professional decision, ensuring that each child's needs, safety, and wellbeing come first.

Our health visitors know that the right to life, survival, and development (Article 6) begins in the earliest days of a child's life. Through home visits, early years support, and tailored health guidance our team help to ensure that babies and young children across East Ayrshire have the strongest possible start. And at every stage, the right of the child to be heard (Article 12) is prioritised — whether through listening directly to older children or amplifying the voice of our infants through sensitive, relationship-based practice.

Safeguarding work ensures children are protected from harm (Article 19), and linking families with financial supports, housing teams, food resources, and community services helps uphold every child's right to an adequate standard of living (Article 27).

Our health visitors turn children's rights into everyday reality through warm, consistent, and relationship-based care. They tailor support to each family's needs and place the child's wellbeing at the centre of every conversation and decision. From breastfeeding support to play and attachment guidance, from early identification of concerns to reassurance during uncertain moments, they empower parents with information and choices that help them feel confident in their child's journey. This work is strengthened by close partnership with local midwives, GPs, social work, early years teams, infant mental health team and community organisations throughout East Ayrshire.

Jump Start

NHS Ayrshire and Arran's Child Healthy Weight team has continued to support children and their families in achieving and maintaining a healthy weight through the well-established Jumpstart programme. The programme works with children and young people aged 5–17 years, including those with additional support needs, and is delivered across four strands: Junior (ages 5–9), Senior (ages 10–13), Teens (ages 14–17), and Jumpstart Plus (for those with additional support needs).

During 2024/25, a total of 42 referrals were received for children residing in East Ayrshire, representing 37% of all referrals to the Ayrshire and Arran-wide service. The gender distribution of referrals was balanced, comprising 22 males and 20 females. The majority of referrals (79%) were from children living in SIMD quintiles 1 and 2, with the remaining 21% from SIMD quintiles 3, 4, and 5.

In addition to referral-based group support, the team delivered a Teen Fit programme for five young people, facilitated 86 group-based physical activity and health education sessions, and attended four events over the past year to promote the service.

Analysis of referral sources indicates that School Nurses were the primary referrers, accounting for 26 referrals (61.9%). This underscores the critical role of the school nursing service in identifying and supporting children and young people who may benefit from intervention.

Self-referrals accounted for 3 cases (7.1%), while General Practitioners and Dietitians each contributed 2 referrals (4.8%). The remaining referrals were received from a range of health and support services, including Children's 1st, Paediatric Services, CAMHS, Orthopaedics, Health Coaching, and Nursing teams, each contributing 1 referral (2.4%).

Priority 5: Our children and young people's mental health and wellbeing is improving

Mental health challenges among children and young people continue to rise, with evidence suggesting that between 1 in 6 and 1 in 4 experience difficulties at any given time. Within East Ayrshire's 2025–2026 context, this remains a significant priority, particularly given the long-term impact of poor mental health on learning, life outcomes and physical wellbeing, and the fact that many adult mental health issues begin in adolescence.

Recognising this, schools and services across East Ayrshire are continuing to build their capacity to promote positive mental wellbeing and prevent issues from escalating. During 2025–2026, there is a strong focus on early intervention and prevention, ensuring that children and young people receive the right support at the right time within schools, families and communities

We said we would

- Support the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people of all abilities across East Ayrshire using engaging and creative approaches.
- Ensure all staff working with children and families are provided with access to appropriate training opportunities in mental health interventions.
- Support children, young people and their families to develop essential skills, habits and attitudes for building resilience

We Did – Key Delivery Examples

Young Carers

East Ayrshire Carers Centre supports more than 1,500 Young Carers aged 5–25, recognising the significant impact that caring responsibilities can have on their wellbeing, development and opportunities. The service is firmly grounded in the principles of the UNCRC, ensuring that children's rights are protected, upheld and central to every decision made, in line with Article 3 and Article 6.

In line with the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, all Young Carers are offered a Young Carer Statement, which helps identify their needs, understand their caring role and set personal goals. These statements are reviewed regularly so that support reflects each young person's experiences, views and choices, supporting Article 12 (the right to be heard) and ensuring that children and young people can influence decisions that affect their lives.

In the past year we have made sure that every Young Carer we registered has a statement completed for them. Completing statements during registrations can come with challenges due to the Young Carer being shy and quiet as it is their first time meeting us. It sometimes may be the case that the parent/guardian will answer the questions for them. In these instances, we will review the statement after a few weeks when a better relationship has

been formed with the Young Carer. Table 1 shows the number of completed Young Carer Statements over the last 3 years

Table 1:

2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
91	46	160

Recently there has been a notable rise in Young Carers who are neurodiverse or have additional support needs. Many found the larger groups overwhelming, so they struggled to stay engaged. To make sure these young people weren't missing out, we set up a dedicated ASN Young Carers Group in January 2026 supported by White family Wellbeing Fund, offering a quieter and more predictable environment. This tailored group has enabled us to support an additional group of Young Carers who previously struggled to engage, making the service more accessible, inclusive and rights-based. It has also allowed these young people to enjoy meaningful respite, social connection and support that meets their individual needs. Young Carers have been able to support 19 new children and families that weren't supported previously with a total attendance this year of 48 children and young people over East Ayrshire.

Support is also provided to the wider family through a holistic, whole-family approach. The Carers Centre offers advice, advocacy and support with benefits, helping to reduce the pressures of caring on young people and supporting their right to grow up in a safe and nurturing environment.

To promote financial wellbeing and access to opportunities, Young Carers are supported to apply for resources such as Time to Live grants, the Young Scot Young Carers Package and the Young Carer Grant, ensuring their caring role is recognised both practically and financially.

Across all its work, East Ayrshire Carers Centre reflects the values of The Promise by ensuring Young Carers are listened to, valued and kept safe. Through inclusive practice, strong family engagement and partnership working with key services, support is coordinated, rights-based and focused on the best interests of the child.

Infant Mental Health

Within East Ayrshire Health Visiting services, a range of tools are used to support the developmental assessment of infants and children to identify infants who may benefit from wider input, including referrals to the NHS Infant Mental Health team where appropriate. This coordinated approach strengthens early identification and ensures that emerging emotional or relational concerns are addressed promptly.

Mini Minds Matter (MMM) is a specialist Infant Mental Health service within NHS Ayrshire & Arran that supports infants from the antenatal period up to their third birthday, alongside their parents and caregivers. The service provides a structured, evidence-based pathway

including professional consultation, assessment, formulation and both direct and indirect interventions, all aimed at promoting infants' emotional wellbeing and healthy early relationships. MMM works collaboratively with universal, targeted and specialist services to ensure that infants and families receive the right support at the right time, with a strong emphasis on early intervention, prevention and partnership working.

The Mini Minds Matter pathway is fundamentally child-centred and reflects the UNCRC requirement that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in all actions concerning children, as set out in Article 3. The service prioritises the infant's mental health, emotional development and relational safety, recognising the infant as an individual with rights, needs and experiences of their own. Assessment, formulation and care planning are consistently guided by what will best support the infant's security, development and long-term wellbeing.

By providing timely access to specialist infant mental health expertise and evidence-based interventions, Mini Minds Matter supports children's right to the highest attainable standard of health under Article 24. Addressing emotional and relational difficulties during the earliest years helps prevent escalation of need and reduces the likelihood of longer-term mental health, social or developmental challenges. The pathway integrates psychological assessment, outcome measures and therapeutic approaches, ensuring that care is proportionate, responsive and grounded in best practice.

Although infants are unable to express their views verbally, the service upholds the spirit of Article 12 by actively seeking to understand each infant's experiences through careful observation, relational assessment tools and the insights of parents and caregivers. Families are informed, supported and involved throughout the pathway, including through consent processes, written feedback and collaborative care planning. This approach promotes dignity, transparency and meaningful participation, while recognising the critical role of caregivers in supporting infant wellbeing.

Mini Minds Matter also reflects the UNCRC commitment to non-discrimination under Article 2. Referrals are accepted from health, social care and third-sector services, with careful consideration given to the wider social and environmental factors affecting infant wellbeing, including poverty, trauma, isolation and disability. The pathway's strong focus on early identification, consultation and system-wide support helps reduce inequality by enabling professionals to respond early and effectively to emerging need, particularly for infants experiencing cumulative adversity.

Kooth

Kooth is a digital mental health and wellbeing platform commissioned by East Ayrshire Council and the East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) to support young people across the region. It offers free, anonymous and confidential online support, typically aimed at those aged 14–24 (with some sources noting access from 11 years).

There is no need for a referral, GP appointment, or waiting list, as young people can self-register and begin using the service immediately via any internet-enabled device. This

accessibility ensures that support is available at the right time, aligning with local priorities to provide early intervention and reduce barriers to mental health care.

The Kooth platform provides a wide range of therapeutic and peer-support tools designed to promote emotional wellbeing. Young people can access one-to-one text-based counselling with qualified practitioners, available during extended hours throughout the week, as well as moderated discussion boards where they can connect safely with peers. Additional features include self-help articles, online journals to track emotions, and wellbeing resources created both by professionals and other young users. All content is pre-moderated to maintain safety, and the service emphasises a strengths-based, preventative approach—helping young people manage concerns early and build resilience.

Within East Ayrshire, Kooth forms an integral part of the broader mental health support system for children and young people. It complements existing services by offering flexible, out-of-hours support and integrating with local care pathways to ensure a comprehensive “toolbox” of wellbeing options. Its focus on early intervention and digital accessibility helps reduce pressure on traditional services such as CAMHS, while empowering young people to seek help independently and confidentially. Overall, Kooth enhances the local mental health offer by providing timely, inclusive and user-led support tailored to the needs of young people in the community.

Link below for last 12-month impact report:



East Ayrshire
12-Month Impact Rep

Neurodevelopmental Programme Board

Neurodevelopmental support across East Ayrshire has continued to strengthen through a more integrated, early-intervention approach, with a clear focus on identifying need as early as possible and providing timely, targeted support. Services have prioritised collaborative working across health, education, social care, third sector and community planning partners, to promote a model that will enable children and families to access the right support at the right time. This work is overseen by Neurodevelopmental Programme Board with workstreams developing improved pathways for assessment and support, particularly in the early years, ensuring that developmental concerns are recognised early and responded to consistently.

Progress has also been made in building workforce capability with two posts funded by the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund to increase the capacity of NEST in East Ayrshire. One of the recruited posts will focus on training and development to improve the knowledge and confidence of our services in supporting our children and families with neurodevelopmental needs. Staff across services have increasingly adopted strengths-based and trauma-informed approaches, supporting improved engagement with children and families. The second post will focus on supporting parents and carers to better understand their child’s

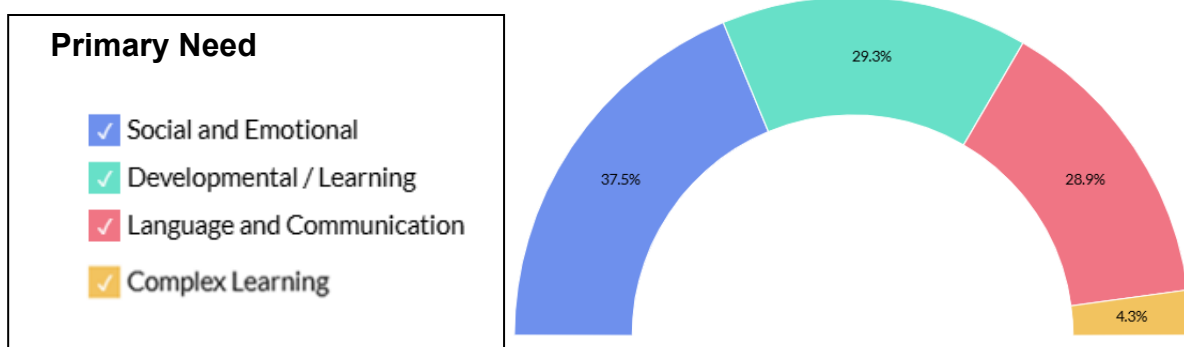
development, with accessible information, early advice and structured support contributing to increased confidence in managing behaviours and promoting positive outcomes at home.

At a pan-Ayrshire level, work has also been undertaken with colleagues across all three Councils to ensure a consistent approach for all young people and a business case is being developed around a consistent model for diagnoses and support.

In addition, there has been a growing focus on reducing inequalities in access to neurodevelopmental support, recognising that children in more vulnerable circumstances may face additional barriers. Efforts to improve joint working with community and third sector partners will enhance the range of support available, including group-based interventions and community resources. Looking ahead, there is a continued commitment to refining pathways, using data to better understand local need, and ensuring that support remains responsive, inclusive and centred on the wellbeing and potential of every child.

Educational Psychology Service

The Education Service provides a statutory Educational Psychology Service (EPS). This is a small team of HCPC Registered Educational Psychologists who support children, Early Childhood Centres and Schools to both meet the assessed additional support needs of children and address appropriate wellbeing concerns. The Educational Psychology Service also oversees the School Counselling Service in East Ayrshire. The EPS contributes significantly to the wellbeing of children and young people in East Ayrshire by providing consultation, assessment and intervention. In the last year the EP Service have developed several approaches to support the inclusion of children who have experienced trauma & adversity, who have social, emotional and/or behavioural needs and had a significant focus on meeting the needs of learners who are Neurodivergent. The Service has engaged in 302 episodes of support thus far in session 25-26. The breakdown of children's needs is below.



The EP Service has also lead on implementing East Ayrshire's approach to Relationships & Behaviour in educational settings, in collaboration with our Strategic Education Manager: Inclusion. This year we have:

1. Launched an approach to Assessing & Intervening with Significant Dysregulation in Educational Setting
2. Drafted the new Education Service Relationships & Behaviour Policy
3. Evolved the Relationships & Behaviour Continuous Lifelong Learning (CLPL) Framework to ensure that children's rights are realised, needs are met and wellbeing concerns addressed.

This has involved the EP Service leading on

- Implementing an approach to assess and intervene with problematic sexualised behaviour in schools
- Leading on the SCERTs approach which is a neuroaffirming approach to ensuring the needs of learners with Autism are met within education.
- Implementing a new assessment and consultation approach around significant dysregulation in schools

In this way the EP service continues to support the health and wellbeing of a number of vulnerable groups of children.

The EP Service also led on a new approach to assessing the needs of children in the Early Years who may require an Additional Support Needs Provision as they transition into P1. For the first time, children's needs were identified before Christmas of their pre-school year which allowed collaboration with colleagues in Planning to ensure that learning environments would be appropriately specialist to meet the children's needs. This also led to the creation of 3 new ASN Classes in localities ensuring more children's needs are met within their own communities.

The EP Service also commissions and oversees the School Counselling Service. This comprises of

1. The core school counselling service for over 10s
2. An Under 10s wellbeing service for under 10s, funded until March 2027 from The Whole Family Wellbeing Fund

The School Counselling Service is commissioned service. It currently provide 32.5 days of counselling support to over 10s through the core service and 5 days to the under 10s across East Ayrshire. The service model is highly collaborative, focusing on resilience building interventions aimed at developing emotional intelligence, self-regulation, confidence, self-esteem, optimism, problem solving, and social competence in the young person.

The service focuses on the protective factors and the strength resources a young person needs to manage adversity, "bounce back" and strengthen their psychological wellbeing in order to thrive into the future, managing their own mental health and emotional wellbeing. The service carries out an initial assessment with the child. An appropriate plan of action is identified, and up to five 1-1 or group sessions are provided.

The service supports children and young people with a range of issues such as anxiety, stress, self-worth, self-harm, and suicide ideation.

A breakdown of the service by stage, from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026 is outlined below.

Access and Outcomes	
Total number of children accessing counsellors	933
Number of female pupils accessing counsellors	575
Number of male pupils accessing counsellors	344
Number of children in P6 accessing counsellors	67
Number of children in P7 accessing counsellors	79
Number of children in S1 accessing counsellors	160
Number of children in S2 accessing counsellors	179
Number of children in S3 accessing counsellors	193
Number of children in S4 accessing counsellors	138
Number of children in S5 accessing counsellors	76
Number of children in S6 accessing counsellors	41
Number of children who have reported an improved outcome following access to a counsellor	627
By an appointed counsellor using a Young Person Clinical outcomes in Routine Evaluation (YP-CORE) or a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) or another measure	(178 yet to complete)

67% of children have reported a positive outcome, with 20% of children yet to complete evaluation. The Core School Counselling Service is well received by schools and children alike.

The Under 10s Wellbeing Service delivery broken down by school stage is outlined below.

Access and Outcomes	
Total number of children accessing counsellors	169
Number of female pupils accessing counsellors	77
Number of male pupils accessing counsellors	92
Number of children in P1 accessing counsellors	10
Number of children in P2 accessing counsellors	13

Number of children in P3 accessing counsellors	51
Number of children in P4 accessing counsellors	44
Number of children in P5 accessing counsellors	49
Outcomes	
Number of children who have reported an improved outcome following access to a counsellor By an appointed counsellor using a Young Person Clinical outcomes in Routine Evaluation (YP-CORE) or a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) or another measure	28 closed cases all reported an improved outcome.

As can be seen from the above, reported improved outcomes have been noted in 20% of children referred to this service. An outcome cannot be given for all children as they have not yet completed the intervention. However, this is a low percentage report of positive impact.

The nature of need is outlined below. It is of note that the majority of interventions are for children reported to have Emotional/Behavioural Difficulties. It is likely that this type of service may not be best placed to have an impact on children at this age and stage with this presentation.

Reasons for Presenting			
Trauma	7	Depression/Low Mood	22
Bereavement	10	Anxiety	31
Sleep struggles	8	Emotional/Behavioural Difficulties	46
Bullying	3	Poor nutrition	4
Relationship difficulties (inc family)	8	Transition Periods	6
Suicidal Ideation	9		
Self-harm			
Other	Neurodevelopmental diagnosis - 12		

A review of the above service is in place with regards to ascertaining what the best way forward is to meet the needs of children in the early-mid childhood phase with regards to what the best evidence approach should be, going forward, to meet need.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

The CAMHS Team is a Pan Ayrshire multidisciplinary team with, Psychology, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Consultant Psychiatry, Pharmacy prescribers and a Specialist GP. Over the last 5 years CAMHS have realigned their services to deliver the National CAMHS Specification, developing a seven-day crisis intervention and intensive treatment service (CUAIT) for young people from the hours of 8 am to 8pm and developing the N-CAMHS team to provide assessment and treatment for young people with co-morbid mental health illness and neurodevelopmental concerns.

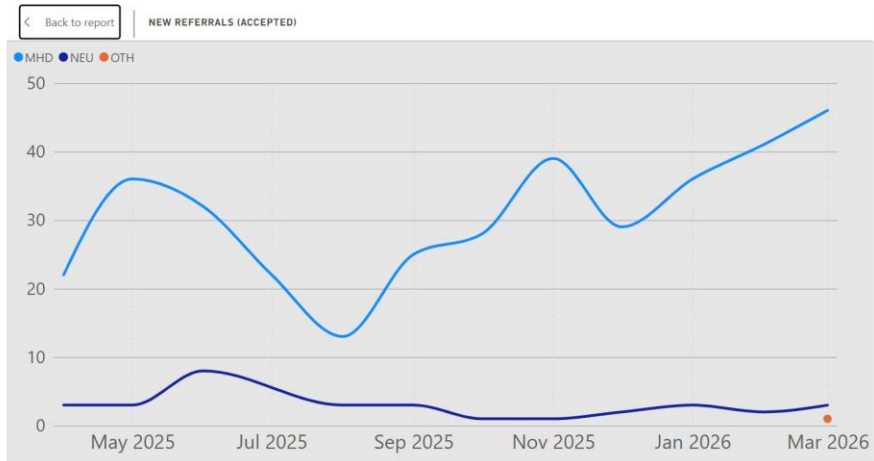
The implementation of the CAMHS specification has improved access for young people in East Ayrshire who are experiencing mental health concerns to an assessment being provided within 5.77 weeks from referral and an urgent assessment within 5 days (usually same or next day).

Data from 1st April 2025 - 31st March 2026

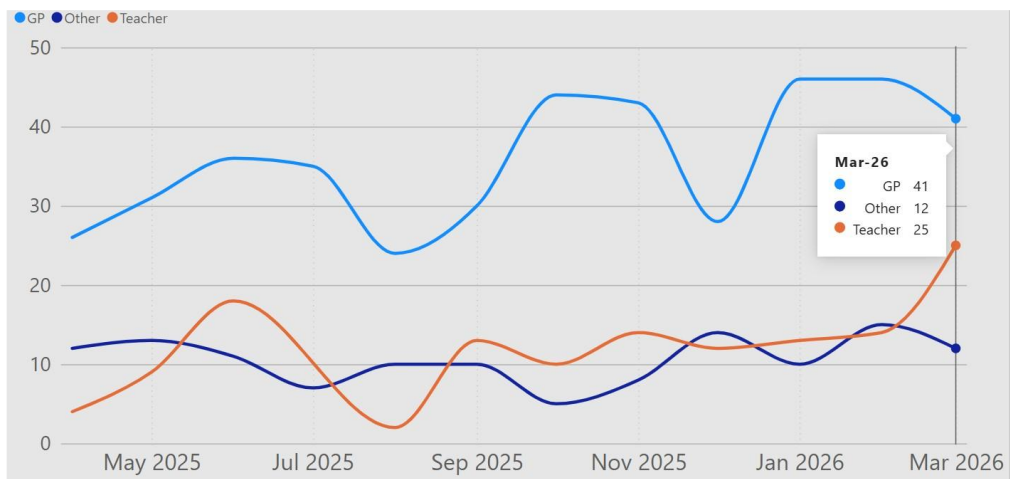
- 407 referrals were accepted from East Ayrshire into CAMHS
- 59.3% of the referrals were accepted into CAMHS
- 62% of referrals came from GP's, 19% from schools and 18% from social work and other professionals
- 11% of appoints young people did not attend or were not brought to appointments
- Patients on average were seen with 5.77 weeks for assessment
- The largest number of referrals came in for 14 - 17-year-olds
- The majority were for young people in SIMD 1-5 (Although there were a number in 6-10)
- The main reasons for referral to CAMHS from EA during this period was for
 - Suicidal ideation (17.8%)
 - Anxiety (15.3%)
 - Mood Issues (11.9%)
 - ADHD (11.8%)

Our CAMHS Participation Officer regularly works with young people, families and carers and is critical to CAMHS redesigning services. The participation officer has been involved with a number of things in the East; including the Care Experienced Cabinet and the EA Neurodevelopmental Engagement Group.

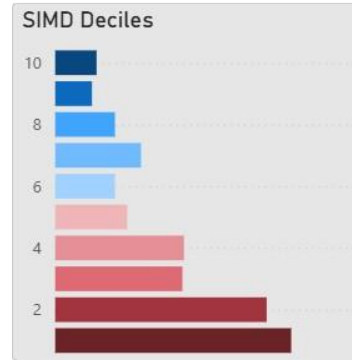
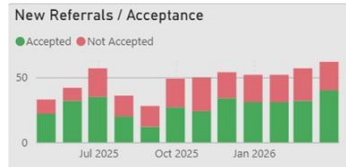
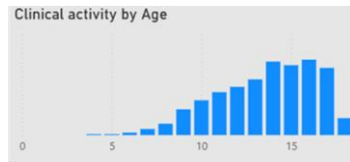
East Ayrshire CAMHS Referrals March 2025 – April 2026



East Ayrshire Referrals to CAMHS by Agency - March 2025 – April 2026



CAMHS Referrals to CAMHS March 2025 – April 2026



The Last Word

Throughout this past year as chair of the East Ayrshire Children and Young People's Cabinet, I have worked with so many amazing young people who are a credit to their communities, networked with local Councilors and enjoyed making a difference as part of our youth cabinet. I am immensely proud of the hard work and dedication that has been demonstrated over the past year to improve our Children's services across East Ayrshire and, I know that the Children and Young People of East Ayrshire will continue to be in good hands for years to come.

Our cabinet would not be as successful as it is today without the ongoing support and endorsement from Ayrshire360, East Ayrshire Council and wider community partners. Their efforts in having open conversations with our members continue to create a positive impact on our young people's services. It is great to see that over my four years in the cabinet, youth voice still plays an important role within our local community, and I cannot express my gratitude enough to those who continue to listen and engage with us.

My journey within the cabinet has helped me to gain confidence and understand just how hard-working young people within my community can be. I know that the future is bright for all the Young People involved in East Ayrshire and, I cannot wait to see the amazing work that these young people will do in the future.

Emma Simpson

East Ayrshire and Young Peoples Cabinet Chair (2025/26)

Appendix 1 – Children’s Services Plan 2023-2026 – Performance Framework

Priority 1: Our Children and Young People feel respected, listened to and influence change	2023/24 Report	2024/25 Report	2025/26 Report
% of projects with a children and young people focus that applied for Participatory Budgeting funding	11.5%	Due to budgetary issues the HSCP did not conduct a PB event in 2024-25 and as a result we are unable to submit a value for this PI for 2024-25.	Due to budgetary constraints, Participatory Budgeting funding was not progressed during 2025/26. As a result, it is not possible to submit a value for this performance indicator for the reporting period. However, through Integrated Children’s Services, the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund has been used to support children and young people, ensuring continued investment in services and positive outcomes.
Number of children / young people who engaged with youth led change projects in East Ayrshire	916 (2023/24 result)	tbc	1124 (previously VC)
Number of youth led change projects in schools and communities	4 (2023/24 result)	6 (2024/25)	8

Priority 2: We are working collaboratively, reducing the impact of social and economic poverty on our children and young people	2023/24 Report	2024/25 Report	2025/26 Report
% of schools with active Cost of the school Day / Poverty Proofing action plans	80%	90%	<p>This data has not been gathered during this session; however, there is a statutory obligation for all establishments to embed COSD within their planning for activities.</p> <p>It has been reported that all establishments have embedded COSD into their planning; therefore, a figure of 100% would be reported.</p>
% reduction in the authority's poverty related attainment gap – P1 to P7: Literacy	4.1%	<p>-2.3% (widened), overall attainment risen by 6%</p> <p>Whilst there has been a widening of the gap, attainment of children who live in Quintile 1 has improved but so has attainment of children who live in Quintile 5. Attainment of children who live in Quintile 5 has improved at a greater rate hence why the gap has increased.</p>	Available December 2026
% reduction in the authority's poverty related attainment gap – P1 to P7: Numeracy	4%	-0.7% (widened), overall attainment risen by 3%	Available December 2026

		See comment above, this applies here too.	
% of children living in relative poverty (after housing costs)	27.9% (for the period 2022-23)	23.6% (for the period 2023/24)	16.7% (for the period of 2024/25)
% of school age children registered for free school meals: Primary School	76.8%	76.8% (2023/24 result)	26.1% (2025/26)
% of school age children registered for free school meals: Secondary School	18.6%	18.6% (2023/24 result)	17.6% (2025/26)
% families receiving school clothing and footwear grants: Primary School	31%	31% (2023/24 result)	Available July 2026
% families receiving school clothing and footwear grants: Secondary School	24.7%	19.4% (2023/24 result)	Available July 2026
% of households <i>with dependent children</i> which are workless	11.2%	6.4%	Data still showing 2023 as the most recent data period for this measure. Unavailable at present.
Level of income generated for families as a result of Financial Inclusion Team support within schools and pre-5 services	£2,766,405	£1,296,316	Not reported - projects concluded in 2024.
% of children in low-income families (before housing costs)	21.1%	20.1%	15% 3,647 children out of 24,291

Priority 3: Our Children and Young People feel safe	2023/24 Report	2024/25 Report	2025/26 Report
No. of referrals to the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration on 'Lack of parental care' grounds	102	94	Available July 2026
% of children re-registered on child protection register within 12 months	4.5%	3.1%	Total number registered in this period: 136 Of which 1.5% were re-registered within 12 months.
No. of children appropriately placed on Child Protection register where 'Domestic Abuse' is noted as an area of concern.	32	53	Awaiting update.
No. of Trauma Informed Contact and Care (TICC) concerns received from the Police	86	73	From 1/6/25 – 30/5/26 we have received a total of 123 TICC referrals
% of P6 children reporting increased safety awareness through our annual Danger Detectives Partnership Programme	85%	85%	The evaluation closes June 12, so the data is not available until then. However, 34 schools have taken part with 1,140 pupils attending.
No. of HSCP staff who completed child sexual exploitation training	20	14	3
% of EEI (Early and Effective Interventions) referrals and Children's Hearings being convened for 'offence grounds'	24%		Available July 2026
Percentage of all referrals to SCRA based on offence grounds	51.8%	31.1%	Available July 2026

Priority 4: Our Children and Young People have the best start in life and achieve their potential	2023/24 Report	2024/25 Report	2025/26 Report
% of babies born a healthy weight	83.75%	80.6%	80.3%
% of P1, P4 and P7 children achieving expected CfE levels in literacy	71%	71%	Available December 2026
% of P1, P4 and P7 children achieving expected CfE levels in numeracy	78.5%	78.5%	Available December 2026
% of school leavers attaining 1 or more qualification at SCQF level 4 on leaving school	97.3% (2022/23)	96.5% (2023/24)	94.7% (2024/25) 2025/26 data available February 2027
% of school leavers attaining 1 or more qualification at SCQF level 5 on leaving school	85.6% (2022/23)	84.3% (2023/24)	83.5% (2024/25) 2025/26 data available February 2027
% of school leavers attaining 1 or more qualification at SCQF level 6 on leaving school	60% (2022/23)	60.4% (2023/24)	56.1% (2024/25) 2025/26 data available February 2027
% of annual participation (in education, training or employment) – 16-19 years	91.8%	93.5%	Available August 2026
% of school leavers in positive destinations	95.1% (2022/23)	95.2% (2023/24)	93.3% (2024/25) 2025/26 data available February 2027
% of Looked After Children in Positive Destinations	80%	78.1%	Available August 2026

% of children and young people residing within our Children's Houses who have participated in community activities supported by Vibrant Communities	75%	Not Reported	Not Reported
Priority 5: Our Children and Young People's Mental Health & Wellbeing is improving	2023/24 Report	2024/25 Report	2025/26 Report
% of Primary School pupils achieving the age and stage appropriate CfE HWB level	93.2%	94.7%	TP3 - 95.6% Full-session figures for 2025/26 to align with the methodology for 2023/24 and 2024/25 available July 2026.
% of Primary School pupils undertaking biannual Wellbeing profiles	37.4%	74.9%	TP3 - 74.4% Full-session figures for 2025/26 to align with the methodology for 2023/24 and 2024/25 available July 2026.
% of CAMHS referrals that were appropriate	76.5%	57.9%	59.3%
% of young people actively using Kooth online mental health supports	2.3%	N/A	1.8% 330 active users, service has been expanded to include all young people aged 11-24 (cohort of 18,412) which accounts for percentage reduction.

Appendix 2 – Examples of Good Practice

Listening from the Start: Embedding Children’s Voice in Early Learning

Implementation of UNCRC within ECC’s in East Ayrshire

“Dinnae Forget Your Caddy”: How Pupils at Darvel Primary Helped Shape Recycling in Their Community

Darvel Primary School is taking part in the “*Dinnae Forget Your Caddy*” campaign, an initiative delivered in partnership with East Ayrshire Council’s Cleaner Communities Team and Education’s Climate Change and Active Travel Team to encourage the recycling of household food waste and reduce waste in general refuse. School staff introduced the campaign through presentations encouraging pupils and families to register for and name their household food caddy. Pupils received weekly tokens when their family presented a caddy for collection, with each school running a monthly prize draw offering a local community voucher. When staff identified that relatively few families were using food caddies, additional support was requested from Community Waste Officers (CWOs), who worked closely with teachers to ensure the sessions were age- and stage-appropriate. CWOs delivered interactive presentations on the reasons for recycling food waste and explained how East Ayrshire’s food waste is transformed into electricity, gas and fertiliser, which pupils found surprising and engaging.

Children were actively consulted on how residents could be better supported to recycle food waste and were encouraged to share honest opinions about incentives and consequences. Pupils suggested practical measures such as clearer signage on bins and education within the home, alongside rewards for households that recycle well. Children also shared ideas on how any savings made through increased recycling could be reinvested locally, including repairing potholes, building play parks and supporting children’s clubs. Pupils agreed they could act as ambassadors for the campaign by sharing what they had learned with their families and encouraging recycling at home. As a Rights Respecting School, Darvel Primary pupils were confident in expressing their views, and CWOs listened carefully, encouraged participation, and reassured pupils that further ideas could be shared through their teachers after the visit, reinforcing children’s right to be heard under Article 12 of the UNCRC.

Staff reflected positively on how children’s rights were respected throughout the engagement.

Mrs Macleod commented, “*The Dinnae Forget Your Caddy session supported children’s right to a clean and safe environment by helping them understand how their everyday actions, like separating food waste, can protect the world around them. It encouraged pupils to take responsibility and see themselves as active citizens who can make a positive difference in their community.*”

Mrs Wilson added, “*This visit promoted respect and participation, as pupils were given a voice through initiatives such as Name the Bin Lorry. It linked strongly to children’s rights by showing that their ideas matter and that they can influence local services, reinforcing their right to be heard and involved in decisions that affect them.*”

Pupils further demonstrated meaningful participation by researching questions for the CWOs about the campaign’s aims, how households are supported, how success is measured and how information reaches families who do not engage through social media. CWOs responded by explaining data-collection methods, available educational resources, community outreach activities and future

changes to waste services, and again invited pupils to share their views on proposed developments, further reinforcing children’s participation in decisions that affect them.



Achieving Success Through Learning and Development

Brooke Campbell- Success Story

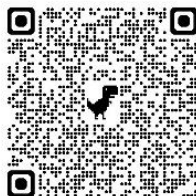
“Since starting my apprenticeship in October 2024, I have completed the Level 5 Customer Service qualification and now progressing to complete the Level 6 Business Admin qualification. Throughout my apprenticeship I have continued to develop my skills such as confidence and communication. I now feel more confident in my role as this apprenticeship has helped me gain confidence to speak to customers over the phone and develop the knowledge needed to help them. I have also continued to develop my communication skills as I have developed new relationships with my colleagues and often ask them for help when needed. I have learned so much about my role and what skills I need to deliver efficient customer serviced. I would also like to say a massive thank you to my training officer Marie for her ongoing support throughout my apprenticeship. Her determination to deliver this qualification is truly inspiring. She is always available for help and support as well as always encouraging you to try your best. She has helped me reach my potential by producing a high standard of work and gather evidence for my qualification.”

Working Together to Keep Children Safe: East Ayrshire’s Violence Against Women Partnership



East Ayrshire Violence against Women Partnership (EAVAWP) is committed in its work to prevent and end gender-based violence to women, girls and children, upholding, promoting and protecting children’s rights to be free from violence.

There is a website with resources and information which can be accessed here:



[East Ayrshire Violence Against Women PArtnership Strategic Plan 2024 to 2027](#), has four key priorities. The first priority is a strategic needs assessment which helps us understand the number of women, girls and children in East Ayrshire who experience violence against women (VAW).

The population of children in East Ayrshire is 21,668 and we know from national figures¹ that 1 in 5 children experience domestic abuse in their childhoods which means 4333 children in East Ayrshire could be currently living with domestic abuse. National figures² also tell us that 1 in 6 children experience sexual abuse which is 3833 children or young people in East Ayrshire. We know that more children will experience gender-based violence than are known to services for this reason, so we are working hard to find ways to close that gap.

We know when children live in poverty, they are at greater risk of harm through gender-based violence, due to the vulnerabilities which poverty brings. In East Ayrshire 23.6% of children live in poverty. In 2024, 34% of births were to women in the most deprived areas. It's important that when we work to improve things for children living in poverty, we understand they may also be at risk from domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women.

To support the workforce to understand what violence against women is and the impact on children and their families, East Ayrshire Violence against Women Partnership (EVAWP) offers a comprehensive training programme for practitioners working across the multi-agency arena which includes input on coercive control, domestic abuse, the impact of domestic abuse on children, sexual violence, commercial sexual exploitation, stalking, MARAC and routine enquiry, as well as other courses. This supports practitioners to deliver better services to children and their families. Throughout 2025-26 more than 430 practitioners were trained in a variety of courses, and the training programme is reviewed and updated regularly as new issues emerge.

There are also three qualified Safe and Together trainers who provide regular Safe and Together courses which results in better safety planning for children and young people at risk of harm, who may be on the edges of care or at risk of becoming care experienced. This supports children to stay with their non-abusing parent and recognises the actions that many women who experience domestic abuse or coercive control take to keep their children safe. Women who have been supported through this approach tell us how important it is to them, one woman wrote:

[the social worker was]...“my biggest supporter through one of the most vulnerable times...keeping my son safe.... genuinely caring about me ...someone I can confide in without judgment...”

East Ayrshire also hosts the Ayrshire Safe and Together Lead Officer who is responsible for leading on Safe and Together implementation and improving things for women and children affected by coercive control and domestic abuse.

East Ayrshire holds a monthly Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and all high-risk victims and children have action plans in place which reduce risks through multi-agency support. 160 children were involved in referrals to MARAC in East Ayrshire 2024-25. Both Safe and Together and MARAC are nationally recognised as best practice.

Providing service to support children and young people affected by violence against women is a key priority in the strategic plan. East Ayrshire Violence against Women partnership delivers a broad spectrum of direct services to children and young people through the specialist VAW services in East Ayrshire. There are two children's workers based at East Ayrshire Women's Aid who support children affected by coercive control and domestic abuse.

¹ Child abuse and neglect in the UK today | NSPCC Learning

² Office National Statistics (2021) Sexual offences prevalence and victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics



The STAR Centre: Ayrshire Rape Crisis offers support to young people aged 13+ who have experienced sexual violence. Both services provide emotional support and a range of interventions to support children and young people.

Another key priority is to promote culture change across key settings. Throughout 2025-26 the STAR Centre: Ayrshire Rape Crisis have facilitated 70 workshops across schools, college and youth groups and have spoken to 853 young people through their prevention programme in East Ayrshire. Due to some of the questions being asked by young people in these sessions, the STAR Centre: Ayrshire Rape Crisis has developed a Sexual Violence: FAQ for Practitioners which has been shared across all schools and will be officially launched on 13 May 2026.



The [Mentors in Violence Prevention](#) (MVP) programme is a peer mentoring programme that gives young people the chance to explore and challenge the attitudes, beliefs and cultural norms that underpin gender-based violence, bullying and other forms of violence. All secondary schools in

East Ayrshire have delivered MVP this year, supported by the Campus Police Officers.

Equally Safe at School (ESAS) is a public health approach to preventing gender-based violence through working with school communities. Throughout 2025-26, six secondary schools in East Ayrshire have engaged with this programme and four primary schools are committed to embedding [Everyone's Included](#) and / or [Gender 10 teaching resources](#) in their settings.



equally safe
at school

Between February and March 2026, East Ayrshire violence against women partnership engaged with the Scottish Government misogyny campaign for young people and parents and shared these materials across social media and within schools, the video for young people can be looked at here: [Sexist content hurts girls IRL](#)



EVAWP hosts a comprehensive 16 Days of Activism programme each year between 25 November and 10 December, with a wide range of activities on offer.

In 2025 there was a design a badge competition for young people for Reclaim the Night, this competition was circulated widely across schools and youth groups, and the winning design is below.



Lucie, 12

Age	12
What does Reclaim Mean to you?	Everything
What inspired your design	Women being scared to walk in the dark.

There was also a conference to Engage Boys and Men to end violence against women and girls which was well attended and highly evaluated focussing on pornography, intimate image abuse and the manosphere. Staff and MVP Mentors from Stewarton Academy delivered a highly rated workshop at the conference.



Each year the White Ribbon Scotland pledge [White Ribbon Scotland - Men tackling violence against women](#) is promoted across schools by the MVP co-ordinators and Campus Cops, and there is also a community wide campaign. In 2025 a young person designed the East Ayrshire White Ribbon logo which has been placed on banners, badges and coasters to support local campaigns.

Work also took place in schools, supported by the Campus Cops to work with young men to never to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women in all its forms.



Children and young people affected by violence against women and gender-based violence can access a range of support through East Ayrshire Women’s Aid, the STAR Centre: Ayrshire Rape Crisis, Barnardo’s Safe and Together service, Break the Silence (18+), school counselling and social work children and families team.

Rights Respecting Schools: Embedding the UNCRC in Education

Dunlop Primary School and Early Childhood Centre

Dunlop Primary School and Early Childhood Centre has achieved the Gold: Rights Respecting Schools Award from UNICEF, recognising the school’s sustained commitment to embedding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) across its ethos, curriculum and everyday practice. The school is one of just nine primary schools in East Ayrshire to achieve this prestigious award and was required to demonstrate that children’s rights are fully embedded, understood and actively lived by children, staff and the wider school community. As part of the assessment process, a UNICEF assessor visited the school and met with the Head Teacher, Rights Respecting Coordinator, children, and parents and carers. The assessment confirmed that children and adults across the school community had a strong understanding of the UNCRC and could clearly

articulate both how children's rights influence daily school life and how those rights apply to children locally and globally.

The assessor's report highlighted several key strengths, including *"confident pupils who clearly know they have rights and are committed to helping to realise these for other children locally and globally"*, *"a strong commitment to children's rights and to the Rights Respecting Schools Award from leaders at all levels, clearly linked to the vision and values of the school"*, and *"the extent to which pupils are listened to and involved in decision-making at all levels."* These findings demonstrated that children's participation is meaningful and embedded rather than tokenistic, and that children are trusted as active contributors to school culture.



Achievement of the Gold Award was celebrated at a special assembly, where children who played a central role in the Rights Respecting Schools journey unveiled the school's Gold banner. This was attended by pupils, staff, parents and carers, local elected members and representatives from the Early Childhood Centre, reinforcing the shared responsibility for realising children's rights across the school community. Reflecting on the award, Councillor Elaine Cowan, Spokesperson for Education and Children and Young People, noted the positive impact of Rights Respecting Schools on children's wellbeing, participation, relationships and self-esteem, emphasising that *"the aim of the journey to the Gold Award is to ensure that children and young people are healthier and happier, that they feel safe, have better relationships, and are active and involved in school life and the wider world."* She also highlighted how Article 29 of the UNCRC was central to the school's approach, promoting education that develops children's talents and abilities, supports understanding of rights and responsibilities, and encourages respect for others, peaceful relationships and care for the environment.

Head Teacher Laura Kelly reflected on the significance of the award, stating, *"It is a matter of great pride that our school has earned the Gold: Rights Respecting Award. This award demonstrates that children's rights are embedded across the school and underpin every facet of school life."* She highlighted that the assessor recognised how children confidently lead discussions on rights even when this is not part of a planned lesson, alongside practice such as monthly Dignity Spotlights and pupil-led assemblies on Fairness and Equity, which demonstrate how respect and dignity are lived through everyday interactions. Mrs Kelly concluded, *"Rights Respecting Schools is lived and breathed through staff and children; we are all invested in it, and it is our duty to make sure it is embedded."*

Muirkirk Primary School

Muirkirk Primary School recently held a special celebration to mark achieving the Silver: Rights Respecting Schools Award from UNICEF, recognising the school's commitment to embedding the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) within its ethos, curriculum and daily practice. To achieve the silver award, the school demonstrated that children's rights are not only taught but actively lived, with respect embedded within school culture and positive relationships recognised as central to creating a safe, inclusive and empowering learning environment.

As part of celebrating this achievement, Head Teacher Anne McLean invited the children to decide how they wished to mark their success, reinforcing their right to participation and influence. The children chose to hold a “Rights Respecting Rave”, a decision that was fully supported by staff and brought to life through a school celebration that placed children’s voices at its centre. Reflecting on the achievement, Mrs McLean said, *“Everyone has worked so hard throughout the school to earn the UNCRRC Rights Respecting Schools Silver Award and we thought it was important to celebrate that success and for the children to choose how they want to celebrate. And they chose a Rights Respecting Rave! It was a wonderful celebration, and everyone had a ball.”*



Mrs McLean further highlighted the values underpinning the school’s approach, noting, *“As a school we are determined to ensure that the children feel safe, build good relationships, are active and involved in school life and the wider world. The Rights Respecting Schools programme ensures that these principles are embedded and underpin all the work carried out within the school.”* She concluded, *“I am very proud of the children and all the staff within the school; earning a Silver award reflects our commitment to creating a positive and kind learning environment.”*

The achievement was also recognised at local level. Councillor Elaine Cowan, Spokesperson for Education and Children and Young People, congratulated the school, stating, *“There are four key areas of impact for children and young people at a Rights Respecting School – wellbeing, participation, relationships and self-esteem. The aim of the journey is to ensure that children and young people are healthier and happier, that they feel safe, and that they have better relationships.”* She also reflected positively on the child-led celebration, adding that the Rights Respecting Rave was *“a great way to celebrate and that the children chose this makes it even better.”* This case study demonstrates how Muirkirk Primary is embedding children’s rights in meaningful and practical ways, contributing to East Ayrshire’s wider commitment to ensuring that every Early Childhood Centre and school promotes children’s rights as a core feature of improvement planning.

Supporting a Young Neurodiverse Person through Placement at Grafix Print Studio

Jamie was a 17-year-old Neurodiverse young person that had been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum and ADHD. Jamie found out about CVO East Ayrshires employability service through a previous trainee at WG13, A strengths-based assessment was completed with Jamie, our employability manager and his kinship carer. Jamie expressed a strong interest in visual design, print work, and hands-on tasks. Jamie’s placement at Grafix was chosen because it matched his interests and offered a real-world environment that could build skills and confidence. The placement was planned to meet Jamie’s needs for structure, sensory supports, and clear communication. Regular meetings took place between Grafix staff, support staff, and Jamie’s family.

A shared communication plan was agreed, including, preferred methods of communication (visual schedules, text messages, face to face check-ins) and how to support Jamie if overwhelmed. Jamie felt involved in decisions about his placement and felt supported by his family and the Grafix team.

The placement began with a gradual introduction:

- 1 hour on the first day
- increasing to 4 hours over two weeks

- Sensory and transition supports were provided early to prevent overwhelm.

Jamie adjusted to the studio environment more quickly and was less likely to withdraw or become distressed. The team focused on improving wellbeing with wellbeing Supports. Jamie was supported to manage sensory needs (e.g., headphones, quiet workspace). Staff used clear, calm language and visual prompts. Jamie was encouraged to take regular breaks and self-regulate. By doing this Jamie reported feeling “safer” and “more in control” and his anxiety reduced over the placement.

The GRAFIX Team respected Jamies views, wishes, and feelings by Listening to Jamie and asking him what he liked/disliked about tasks and what support helped them. he was given choices in tasks (e.g., design vs. machine work vs. finishing). Jamie felt respected and able to express preferences and developed more confidence in speaking up because the team were inclusive, The studio adapted tasks and expectations to Jamie’s strengths and needs and the staff provided alternative ways to communicate or demonstrate skills. Jamie was included as part of the team, not treated as “different” and he developed a sense of belonging.

The GRAFIX team took a holistic approach to learning with employment skills (timekeeping, teamwork, task completion), social skills (working with colleagues). emotional wellbeing (managing stress) and independence (travel to the studio, managing workload. Jamie’s overall confidence improved, not just his job skills.

Our employability manager supported Jamie to apply for part time jobs, and he was successful in an interview with a local supermarket and has now been in post for 8 months but continues volunteering at Grafix to maintain his wellbeing.