

Brief 2: Support for Children Affected by Disability or Additional Support Needs

Brief for third sector commissioned service

For the period of 01 April 2027 to 31 March 2030

Introduction and Background

Children and families affected by disability often face unique challenges which are multifaceted. It is recognised that when considering the support needs of a child affected by a disability, it is essential to also consider the support needs of their caregivers and wider family resilience. In some situations, children will have a permanent, severe or profound learning or physical disability or sensory impairment and their care needs can have an emotional and physical impact on the whole family.

Where a child is diagnosed with a disability, this is likely to increase financial hardship for families due to the need to purchase equipment, undertake adaptations to the home to meet their needs or fund specialist social opportunities. Children affected by a disability have been identified as a priority group of children in need within the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Plan.

For the purposes of this brief, disability is defined by The Equalities Act 2010 as a:

“physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day to day activities. “Substantial means more than minor or trivial...”

Within Fife, approximately 1100 school aged children and 11 nursery aged children are assessed as disabled. A further 20,833 school aged children are assessed as having additional support needs alongside 342 nursery aged children. In Fife, the demand for service provision for children affected by disability and additional support needs is prevalent in all localities. Cowdenbeath has the greatest levels of need across childhood with almost three times more children assessed as having a disability between the ages of 5-18 years than any other area in Fife. There are however significantly lower levels of children identified with additional support needs in all the age ranges within the Cowdenbeath area. Data from education and early years informs the City of Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy have the highest numbers of children with additional support needs (ASN) aged 3-18 years.

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2026 – 2029 highlights that Fife has a slightly higher prevalence of disability compared to the national average and notes the correlation between families impacted by disability and poverty. These two factors can add to familial stress and impact upon the child and caregivers' emotional wellbeing. This brief will set out the model of support that will be commissioned to address these needs. This includes two distinct types of support to ensure a varied provision of services to meet the needs of children affected by disability across Fife. Throughout this brief they will be referenced as Lot 1 and 2.

The following key national and local legislation and policies inform this brief:

The Promise

The Promise Plan 2024-30 maintains a focus on improving collaboration across partnerships to enable the delivery of effective and co-ordinated early intervention support. It outlines the importance of services being available to children and families when they need it, and for as long as they need it to sustain long-term outcomes and reduce the risks of family crisis or breakdown. This includes accessible support for families caring for disabled children and those with additional support needs.

UNCRC

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child contains 54 articles which set out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled to. The Convention recognises the family unit as the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and especially children. The Convention provides clear parameters about the responsibilities member states have to protect and support the well-being of children within the family unit, and the measures that must be taken to promote their voice within all decisions which affect them. It also notes that all children have the right to benefit and thrive from being able to play and socialise in their community and shouldn't be excluded from this due to a disability.

Bringing Hope, Building Futures: Tackling child poverty delivery plan 2026-2031

This delivery plans outlines key interventions identified by the Scottish Government to reduce rates of child poverty in Scotland. Enabling whole family support is at the heart of this approach, recognising the impact that early intervention support can have on child development, including children affected by disability who are a priority group.

Children (Scotland) Act 1995

This act places a duty on local authorities to safeguard and look after the interests of a 'child in need'. The Act states that disabled children are defined as children in need. Section 23 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 requires the local authority to undertake an assessment of need if requested to safeguard and promote wellbeing, promoting the upbringing of children by their families. Section 23 of the Act is designed to minimise the effect of a disability on a disabled child offering the opportunity for children affected by a disability to lead a life as normal as possible.

Social Care (self-directed support) Scotland Act 2013

This act reinforces and extends the principles and duties within the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 ensuring a focus on:

- participation and dignity
- involvement
- informed choice
- collaboration

Children and Families Strategy 2025 – 2028 – Families First

This social work service strategy identified the vision of delivering the right support at the right time, to enable children and families to stay safe, achieve and thrive regardless of their poverty, postcode or family circumstances. Working with families on a voluntary and statutory basis, priorities include the delivery of timely strengths-based support through the delivery of early intervention, targeted and specialist support, and high-quality care to meet individual needs. This includes the development of appropriate, responsive care and support services for children with complex needs, including children affected by disability.

Fife Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2026 – 2029

This assessment identified three interconnected key priority themes:

- mental health and emotional wellbeing
- family resilience and skills
- early speech, language and communication

Children, Families and Justice Social Work Services



Third Sector Commissioning Brief 2027 – 2030

This report highlighted the positive impact that inclusion within communities can have on the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children, and the need to ensure early support to reduce vulnerabilities and improve family resilience.

Lot 1: Inclusive Social Opportunities

Aims of the Support Model:

This lot is for early intervention support for children aged 5 – 18 years affected by disability, to provide inclusive social opportunities and enable them to actively participate in their communities.

Aim of this service are:

- To provide opportunities for children and young people affected by disability to socialise, develop social skills and build positive relationships with peers in environments which meet their needs.
- To provide opportunities for caregivers to increase their knowledge and understanding of their child/young person's needs and to build support networks.
- To provide meaningful opportunities for respite for children, young people and their families via the social opportunities offered.
- To promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing for child and caregiver.

The underlying principle is to provide local and accessible opportunities for children and young people, enabling them to have positive social experiences, improving their emotional and social wellbeing. This will also have a wider positive impact on caregivers mental health, emotional wellbeing and family resilience. All applicants are required to evidence the accessibility of the proposed service and how any potential challenges in terms of rurality and/or travel will be addressed.

Who the service will support

Services should be available to children and families aged 5-18 years across Fife where the child has an additional support need or disability. It is recognised that diagnosis of need can often be a lengthy process and at times a barrier to accessing services. Therefore, to ensure the delivery of support at the earliest opportunity, services should not be subject to thresholds or diagnosis of disability but focused on inclusive support. As such referrals will come from families, alongside social work, health, education, third sector and CLD partners.

The services should be available to all school aged children to reduce the experience of criteria barriers and transitions for children and families. Applicants are encouraged to consider how they will meet the differing needs of this age range. Services will be

expected to have the knowledge, experience and skills to support children and young people with a wide range of needs, including autism or learning disabilities, which is an area of increasing demand in Fife.

The service will require to be available at key times of need including evenings, weekends and school holidays. Through their application, services are encouraged to describe how they will manage demand for services, monitor outcomes, and support a child's journey through the service to achieve positive outcomes and maximise the opportunities and availability for children and families across Fife.

In consideration of the Scottish Governments Tackling Child Poverty Plan, organisations should ensure that support is available but not restricted to the following priority groups:

- Lone parent families
- Minority ethnic families
- Families with a disabled adult or child
- Families with a parent aged under 25
- Larger families (3+ children)

Model of Support

This service is focused on early intervention support for children, young people and families where there are indicators of need and vulnerability due to the impact of a child's disability. The service model should be strongly aligned to both the National Framework Principles for Holistic Whole Family Support and GIRFEC National Practice Model.

Critical features of this service model include:

- Knowledge, expertise and understanding of disability and its impact on children and families.
- Evidence-based assessment, approaches and interventions – reflecting expertise in disability practice and offering a range of engagement methods and activities to meet the child/young person's needs and stage of development.
- Easily accessible support to all families with applicants demonstrating an understanding of solutions for accessibility challenges.
- Ability to offer flexible support to children and families at times when they need it including provision for evenings, weekends and school holidays.
- Opportunities for caregivers to build peer support networks.

- Support to access appropriate community activities with the view of promoting inclusion, belonging, wellbeing and development.
- Recruitment and support of volunteers and befrienders to increase capacity.

The voice of lived experience has been central to the design of this brief, and in their application, services should evidence how they will gather feedback and develop their model with those they support.

The values underpinning the proposed service include:

- person-centred
- strengths based
- respectful
- promoting equality
- inclusive
- participative
- empowering and rights focused

It is possible this brief will be delivered by different services across the 7 localities. All applications should clearly outline how the proposed service will operate taking into account existing provision and local needs.

Outcomes

As part of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, organisations will be expected to demonstrate and report on their capacity to support positive outcomes for the children, young people and families they work with.

The outcomes for this service brief are but not limited to:

- Opportunities for children affected by disability to socialise, develop social skills and build positive relationships with peers
- Improvement in child's inclusion / participation within their community
- Improvement in child's social and emotional wellbeing and development
- Improvement in caregivers' emotional health and mental wellbeing
- Improvement in child's access to wider community resources.
- Improvement in family relationships and opportunities for respite.
- Improvement in caregivers support network

Partnership Working and Collaboration

Partnership working is key to the success of supporting families and sustaining positive outcomes. Families caring for a child with a disability and/or additional support needs may face wider challenges and adversity, and therefore it is essential that services adopt a trauma informed approach, working in partnership with other support services where required to ensure whole family support. Where possible families should be supported to access wider services in a meaningful way, reducing their experience of signposting or re-telling their story.

As Fife is a large local authority, it is possible that this brief will be delivered by different services across the 7 localities. To support consistent delivery and development, services will be expected to engage in regular networking meetings led by the local authority, to share information around local need and delivery, and contribute towards strategic development and planning.

Scale and Budget

For Lot 1 there will be a total budget of **£400,000**. Budgets will be reflective of demand across the localities to ensure provision is matched to areas of need. Drawing upon service levels established within the current commissioning cycle (2024 -2027) services will be expected to support a minimum of 100 families per £100,000 applied for.

Lot 2: Outreach and Short Breaks

Aims of the Service

This lot is for outreach and overnight short breaks for children aged 5 – 18 years old who are affected by a significant and complex disability and receive social work support. This support will be provided where there is an assessed need to provide proportionate and meaningful respite opportunities for children and families, reducing carer fatigue and stress, and strengthening family resilience and relationships as part of a co-ordinated support plan.

Aims of the service are:

- Deliver community-based outreach services to children affected by a disability, enabling children to engage in activities and interests in their community in a supported manner.
- Provide short break care to children with complex needs.
- Support family resilience and stability through the provision of consistent planned breaks from the caregiving role.
- Improve the child and caregiver's emotional wellbeing through positive experiences out with the family home.
- Prepare families to successfully manage transitions when the child no longer requires this level of support, or approaches adulthood.

Who the service will support

The service will be available for children across Fife aged 5-18 years old who are affected by a disability and in receipt of social work support. This will require highly attuned, skilled and supportive care for children with both behavioural and medical needs, with increasing demand for short breaks for children who have autism and learning disabilities. Applicants must evidence how they will manage these complex needs to ensure proposed services are inclusive for all children identified as requiring such support including children who have:

- Learning Disabilities
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder which has a substantial adverse effect on their functioning
- Profound Physical Disability
- Significant motor or sensory impairment
- Significant/Complex Health issues or illness which is chronic or life limiting.

Services will become involved where there is an assessed need for outreach or short break care as part of a co-ordinated support plan. Through their application services should demonstrate their capacity to work in partnership with a multi-agency team and achieve positive outcomes for the child and caregiver.

All referrals to the service will come from Fife Council's resource panel. Through their application, services are encouraged to demonstrate a flexible approach to deliver support at the frequency determined by individual assessed need. This brief has been informed by the voice of lived experience, which highlights the need to deliver a flexible

and person-centred approach that meets the needs of their family rather than a fixed approach. As such the duration and frequency of respite and opportunities may look different for each family.

The service should be available to children from all localities across Fife. Through their application services should describe how they will work in partnership with community resources to deliver outreach support in the child's local community, and how they will overcome any accessibility barriers by supporting the provision of transport to short breaks where required.

Model of Delivery

A flexible, person-centred approach is a key component of this brief. Critical features of this service should include:

- Individual or small group outreach support to access community activities and improve health and wellbeing.
- Support to be available when families require this including provision for evenings, weekends and school holidays.
- Short breaks including overnight care for children.
- Support to prepare families for transitions, connecting families with local resources, strengthening community inclusion and developing sustainable support networks.
- Strengthen outreach support through use of volunteers and befrienders to connect parents and children with local activities or opportunities, developing the confidence and ability to engage in their local community.

The voice of lived experience has been central to the design of this brief, and in their application, organisations should evidence how they will gather feedback and develop their model with those they support.

Values and approaches underpinning the proposed service:

- person-centred
- family centred
- respectful
- promoting equality
- inclusive
- participative
- empowering and rights focused

Outcomes for Children, young people and families

As part of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, organisations will be expected to demonstrate and report on their capacity to support positive outcomes for the children and families they work with. Key outcomes include but are not limited to:

- Improvement in child's emotional and physical health and wellbeing.
- Improvement in caregivers mental health, resilience and family relationships through consistent provision of respite.
- Increased access to community activities and opportunities.
- Improvement in influence and control over life decisions and choices.
- Improvement in child and caregivers confidence to engage in their community and manage transitions.

Where the need for outreach or short break support is identified, it is important to ensure that services are responsive and delivered in a timely manner to reduce carer fatigue and family stress. Therefore, services should be provided within 4 weeks of referral.

Support should be provided for as long as this is required. Services will be expected to report on their model of assessment and review and contribute towards multi agency assessment of need. Services are encouraged to use a strengths-based approach to reduce the risk of service dependency, supporting families to exit the service when they are ready, ensuring ongoing capacity for support where this is required.

Partnership Working and Collaboration

Partnership working is key to the success of supporting families and sustaining positive outcomes. Children and families supported by lot 2 will be in receipt of social work assessment and support, and outreach or short break will be provided where there is an assessed need for this additional support as part of a co-ordinated support plan. Therefore, as part of the team around the child, the service will be expected to work in partnership with multi agency partners, ensuring regular communication, co-ordination of approach and understanding of role to avoid duplication and deliver effective support.

Through their application, the service should demonstrate the capacity to deliver support across Fife to ensure a consistent approach. Demand for outreach and short break care is highest in Central Fife (Kirkcaldy, Glenrothes, Cowdenbeath), but the service will be required to deliver support across all localities including rural areas as required.

As Fife is a large local authority, it is possible that more than one provider may bid together to deliver this brief in a partnership approach. In this instance, applications should outline how these services will work closely together to ensure a consistent and co-ordinated delivery model.

Scale and Budget

Based on the current commissioning cycle, the budget for outreach and short break care is **£500,000 per year**. The service would be expected to support a minimum of 40 families per year in terms of short breaks. For outreach support the service would be expected to support a minimum of 21 families per year.

Due to the ongoing development of wider resources across Fife, Lot 2 will initially only be commissioned for one year - the financial year 2027-28.

The following sections apply to both Lots 1 and 2:

Continuity of Care

The service provider will be expected to provide consistency of staffing both in levels and personnel for children, young people and families, particularly through periods of absence, sickness and holidays. The service will share their organisation's comprehensive recruitment, induction and workforce development programme for staff members of this service. This should evidence capacity building with the staff team to use effective evidenced based interventions for the specified groups.

Risk Management

For each service user, identify all situations which involve elements of risk to themselves or others, and evidence the planned response which attempts to reduce and control the risk/s.

To manage risks effectively the service must have policies and procedures on the following:

- Operational policy reflecting equalities legislation
- Staff absence and management policy
- Recruitment policies and procedures
- Procedure for lone working and working in service users' homes
- Use of volunteers
- Risk assessment and management

- Dealing with accidents and incidents
- Responding to distress related behaviours
- Protection of vulnerable groups including both an Adult and Child Protection Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Training and staff development including moving and handling, dispensing of medication and CALM training.
- Job description and details of duties
- References and enhanced disclosure check for staff
- Procedures for the supervision, appraisal and disciplinary of staff
- Whistleblowing policy

Recording & Monitoring

The service must have a record management system in place compliant with GDPR guidelines with a workforce who are knowledgeable and competent to record accurately in respect to direct contact and reports for all groups.

Information regarding the overall service provided may be requested by Fife Council at any time for example, how many hours have been worked, the type of contact that took place, the work involved, changes to service plans/interventions, complaints, successful/unsuccessful outcomes and the reasons for these.

Records kept should ensure that information on the outcomes for the service can be collected for evaluation and analytical purposes

A Monitoring Meeting will be held every quarter and a report submitted to the meeting by the service.

The grant will be monitored via Fife Councils Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, a Link Officer will be appointed to work closely with the service. The Link Worker will be supported by the Social Work Service Development Officer.

Complaints

For each quarterly Monitoring Meeting the service provider must provide information containing the following:

- The number of complaints the service provider has had during the previous quarter, by type of complaint.
- The number of complaints in respect of service provision funded by Fife Council

- The outcome of the service providers investigation.
- The number of complaints which were upheld and details on complainants who were satisfied/unsatisfied with the outcome.
- General changes to the service providers policies and procedures as a result of complaints and progress with implementing any changes.
- The service provider will be required to co-operate in any investigation of a complaint as requested by Fife Council and to remedy any concerns that Fife Council has regarding the provision of the service.