

Brief 3: Scaffolding Support

Brief for third sector commissioned service

For the period of 01 April 2027 to 31 March 2030

Introduction and Background:

It is understood that children and family's needs can be complex and multi-faceted, changing over time, especially as children grow older and enter new stages of development. These can be impacted by wider experiences of trauma, adversity and vulnerability, factors which can all contribute towards family strain, relationship challenges and family instability. There may be times when families require additional support to prevent or overcome challenging situations or family crisis. In these circumstances, the provision of responsive, co-ordinated and timely scaffolding support at the earliest opportunity is essential to reduce the risk of escalation, support family stability and longer-term sustainable change.

In relation to this brief, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2026 - 2029 identifies the ongoing correlation in Fife between families facing adversity or poverty and statutory social work involvement. In 2023/24 the most prevalent vulnerabilities recorded during child protection registration were parental mental health (60%), domestic abuse (51%) and parental substance use (48%). The assessment also notes that emotional wellbeing for young people is a continued priority, with a high proportion of young people in Fife with raised SDQ scores and reports of self-harm, particularly among females.

The above information outlines the need for timely and targeted support, provided at the earliest opportunity to reduce the escalation of need and risk. Focused on the key strategic priorities of mental health, emotional wellbeing and family resilience, this brief will set out the model of scaffolding support that will be commissioned to help to reduce vulnerabilities and improve outcomes for children and their families.

The following key national and local 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. The route maps created in 2026 indicate an expectation that services are delivered flexibly to best meet the needs of those who use them, ensuring that their experiences are non-stigmatising and joined up. This includes the provision of strengths based intensive support where required.

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.

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, helping children and families to reach their full potential.

Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Support and Service Framework

The delivery of accessible, preventive and early intervention community-based support is at the centre of this framework. It identifies that support should be available to children and their families who will benefit from additional help to promote, manage and improve their mental health and wellbeing, supporting them to develop coping strategies and resilience. Importance is placed on support being visible in local venues that are most suitable for children and families, the ability to self-refer and delivery at the most helpful times for families, not solely traditional office hours or weekdays.

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

This report highlighted the need for a collaborative approach to adopt a proactive response, supporting a system that delivers a range of timely and effective support for children and families and reduces inequalities experienced across Fife.

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 and responsive strengths based support through the delivery of early intervention, targeted and specialist support, and high-quality care to meet individual needs. A service re-design in 2025 enabled a shift of workforce resource to delivery of early intervention support, while also supporting the development of the enhanced, youth intervention and aftercare / continuing care teams to provide intensive wraparound support for those with complex needs.

Aims of the Scaffolding Service Model:

The brief is designed to support the delivery of person-centred scaffolding support to families with children pre birth – 16 years old. This broad age range reflects the understanding that family's needs and circumstances can vary significantly over time, and consistent support should be available to families when they need it.

The aim is to provide timely and co-ordinated support to children and families affected by a range of complex issues, to strengthen family stability, prevent or overcome periods of crisis and achieve sustainable positive outcomes. Support should be provided for as long as it is needed but should be proportionate to individual assessed need.

The service should deliver targeted and intensive support flexibly for children and families to:

- Reduce family conflict, strengthen meaningful and loving family relationships, resilience and stability
- Improve communication between caregiver and child, increasing understanding of the impact of underlying needs and experiences on behaviour, including disability
- Improve the mental health, emotional wellbeing and self-confidence of the child and caregiver

- Reduce the likelihood of harm from risk-taking behaviours such as self-harm, alcohol or substance use, or anti-social behaviour through person centred interventions
- Support social and emotional development, strengthening community engagement and support networks to achieve sustainable change
- Contribute to multi agency assessment of need and capacity

The underlying principle is to provide timely scaffolding support at the earliest opportunity, to reduce the escalation of risk and crisis, keeping families together and achieving positive outcomes.

Who the Service will Support:

This service should be provided across Fife to children and families impacted by trauma or adversity who are in receipt of ongoing social work support. Services will become involved where there is an assessed need for additional scaffolding support alongside the existing multi agency team around the child. The effectiveness of such relies on partnership working, including with children and families to ensure choice in the style and focus of support that best meets their individual needs.

Services should have the capacity to work in partnership with the multi-agency team, to confidently deliver trauma informed support to children and families impacted by a wide range of issues. This could include but is not limited to children and families impacted by:

- domestic abuse
- substance or alcohol use
- anti-social behaviour
- disability or additional support needs
- care experience
- child protection concerns
- mental health

Family circumstances will vary so there is a need for scaffolding support to be agile, increasing and decreasing in frequency to respond to individual needs. In Fife, there is demand for scaffolding support throughout childhood, however risk and concern around family functioning can increase at key ages and stages of development including:

- Pre - birth
- Mid primary (9 years old)
- Adolescence (12- 15 years)

Through their application services should describe flexible support provision for the whole family, including the capacity to undertake direct work with caregivers and children as required at the key stages noted above. Referrals to the service will come via Fife Council's Resource Panel.

Values and approaches underpinning the proposed service:

- person-centred
- Holistic whole family approach
- respectful
- Non judgemental
- promoting equality
- inclusive
- choice and participative
- empowering and rights focused
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The Model of Scaffolding Support:

A relationship-based approach is a key component of this brief, encouraging services to deliver 1:1 support which is person centred to meet assessed needs. Important aspects of the service model include:

- One to one parenting support to provide advice, guidance, coaching and role modelling.
- Delivery of evidence based direct work with caregivers and children to reduce harm from risk taking behaviour and improve emotional wellbeing
- Wraparound support that is consistently available in the evenings and at weekends, including a helpline to prevent crisis and respond to emerging need.
- Support to connect parents and children with local resources, strengthening community inclusion and developing sustainable support networks.

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

those they support. The model of delivery should be flexible and responsive, so services will be expected to increase or decrease levels of support as circumstances require.

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 and families they work with. The outcomes for this service brief are:

- Improvement in care givers confidence, skills and resilience
- Improvement in family relationships, communication and stability
- Improvement in the caregiver and child's mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Improvement in child's safety and reduction in risk taking behaviours within the family
- Increased engagement with community resources
- Strengthened support and social networks
- Supporting the child to meet their developmental milestones, and access additional support where required

To ensure the delivery of timely intervention across Fife, the service will be expected to report meaningful engagement within one week of the referral being agreed at Resource Panel.

Partnership Working and Collaboration:

Collaborative working is essential to effectively improve outcomes for children and their families. The voice of lived experience has been central to the design of this brief, and families have identified that they can struggle to navigate a cluttered landscape of support. 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 scaffolding support.

While there is no time limit to support provided, the service should proactively work with families towards achieving outcomes, using a strengths-based approach to identify when families are ready to move on. This will reduce the risk of service dependency and ensure continued capacity for need across Fife.

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

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

The overall budget for this brief is **£300,000 to support at least 40 families per year**. This budget is reflective of local need and demand across Fife, and draws upon service levels established within the current commissioning cycle (2024 -2027).

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
- 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 Monitoring Officer.

Complaints

For each quarterly Monitoring Meeting the service provider must provide a report detailing the following information:

- 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