

Education & Children Services: Strategic Needs Assessment Report and recommendations for commissioning arrangements 2020-21

(dated August 2020)

DRAFT

Summary

National policy and legislation have influenced planning, development and delivery of Education & Children's Services (E&CS) in Fife, and within this context the contribution of the Third sector has been significant over many years. The Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the policy directive of Getting it Right for Every Child (2006) has shaped the delivery models across the partnership to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. The Getting it Right Framework in Fife (GIRIFF) provides guidance on partnership delivery and response across the continuum of need from universal, additional and intensive need within the context of the Child Wellbeing Pathway.

This report has been developed in accordance with the Strategic Needs Assessment undertaken by the Children's Service Partnership in Fife (2019); analysis of data held within the Children & Family (C&F) Social Work Service and the incremental steps outlined in the Strategic Re-Commissioning Plan for Education and Children Services produced in June 2020.

Consideration has also been given to thematic and independent reviews undertaken over the last 3 years. Also, the report considers analysis of current policy, strategy, mapping of services against outcomes within the Children Services Plan 2017-20 and the Children & Family strategy i.e. 'Belonging to Fife'

Decisions about commissioning will be based on a key set of principles and components that are required across all services including the Third sector to support recommendations for new service specifications.

Lastly, the first stage of the recommissioning plan will focus on the priorities within the C&F strategy for 2020-21 and primarily the 'Belonging to Fife' agenda. In the short-term recommendations have been made for 2020-21 to achieve the saving target of £410,000 within the context of the wider objectives of the strategic commissioning plan.

1.0 Background – Strategy and C&F Service Priorities

As part of the [Fairer Fife Commission](#) work the [Fife Strategic Assessment report \(2017\)](#) produced a comprehensive view of Fife and what was needed across different aspects of family life and communities. The methodology of the strategic need's assessment was to adopt a whole systems approach, building a picture of what was important to citizens and communities. Local Strategic Assessments provided the foundation to build on, considering research and data leading to a set of key recommendations, many of which have been incorporated into the [Plan for Fife](#).

The 4 priority themes and principles within the Plan for Fife are relevant to E&CS and particularly Opportunities for All and Community led services, which highlight ambitious measures in respect to poverty; educational attainment, health needs and joined up services. These priorities have also influenced the [Fife Children's Services Plan \(2017-20\)](#) and

a new 1-year agile action plan for 2020-21 (currently in draft) has enabled a refocusing on improvement priorities of Safety; Wellbeing; Opportunity and Poverty.

A number of the outcome measures within the Children’s Services Plan are delivered through the [E&CS Directorate Plan \(2017-20\)](#). The Children’s & Families Social Work Service as part of E&CS has the main responsibility for improving outcomes for Fife’s most vulnerable children and families. [Phase 1 of the Children & Family Strategy \(2015\)](#) had the original aim of addressing the number of children and young people looked after out of Fife in residential and foster care. Over the three-year period to March 2018 purchased placement numbers were maintained in the range 315-360, rather than increasing to a level of 470, as would have been expected had the pre-strategy trend in demand continued.



Figure 1. The impact of the Children & Families Strategy – Phases 1 and 2.

The bars show the number of purchased placements at the end of each financial year. The dash line shows the pre-strategy trend, with a sustained increase in demand for purchased placements. The solid line shows the aim of the original strategy

The above number does not represent the number of children and young people supported by Social Work at any one. In the main Social Work support around 3000 children and young people and assess 500 new referrals each month, most children are supported at home and on the ‘edge of care’. It is within this context that fuller consideration is required on the skills, experience and added value the Third sector brings alongside redesign and development of services within Children & Families.

Phase 2 of the C&F Strategy, [Home 2 Fife](#) maintained the focus on the balance of care through investment in kinship care support and community based services for children looked after at home. It is within this context family support services were reviewed within the Children and Families Service and the Third sector with the aim of delivering targeted services to the most vulnerable due to complex wellbeing needs and risks. A saving of £450,000 was achieved by redesigning Fife Council Family Support Service and an equivalent saving target was attributed to Third sector commissioned services (£410,000 due to earlier saving of £40,000 taken in 2018-19)

A key element of the C&F strategy was strong partnership with Third sector commissioned services and in 2019 an independent review was jointly commissioned by the C&F Service and Fife Voluntary Action (FVA) as the Third Sector Interface in Fife. The purpose of the review was to consider the impact of proposed savings and the longer-term commissioning relationship between Fife Council and the Third sector. Several options were proposed in the final report which included options for Third sector models to deliver services alongside the importance on the development of a collaborative relationship between Fife Council and the Third Sector.

Phase 3 of the C&F strategy 2020-23, *Belonging to Fife* is based on the objectives below:

- Ensuring that the voice of our children and young people is at the heart of the Strategy's continued development -supported by the right to live within their own families/communities
- Achieving a significant shift in the profile of care in Fife, away from high cost residential placements (HCRP) and purchased placements and towards support at home or with friends/relatives
- Ensuring that the services supporting care experienced children and young people are better aligned, providing a coherent scaffolding around our care experienced children. Services which are agile and responsive, family focused and community facing
- Ensuring that services supporting all children, (but in the first instance for those most in need) are better aligned and sufficiently focused on preventing the need for alternative formal care, wherever safe to do so.

These objectives are not only informed by the review and analysis of service delivery in Fife but also the recommendations of the [independent care review](#). This review through a 'root and branch' approach concluded that Scotland's care system must be able to support children and young people at home with their families where it is safe to do so or ensure family connections are maintained. Key components of the review confirmed the importance on help and support including family support being readily available, responsive and flexible. Children and young people should remain connected to siblings, family and community to afford them an identity. Children's safety should remain central to practice and within this consideration given to how this is managed within existing family networks

The key findings of the independent care review are evident in Phase 3 of the C&F strategy (Belonging to Fife) including the rationale which underpins the strategy below:

- Children and young people do better at home than in care.
- Families facing poverty and other challenges need to be supported by 24/7 services that can respond in different ways to presenting need/risk.
- All work should be focussed on strength-based models, building resilience and capacity within families and communities.
- System redesign will ensure that social workers and partnership teams are enabled to provide local intensive support where and when needed and this includes the Third sector.
- System redesign will be based on best practice, driven by the voice of young people and their families
- Children, young people and families will be integral to informing what works and influencing service change.
- Improvement testing, and data systems in place to ensure meaningful data is readily available to monitor implementation of key improvement actions.
- An improved understanding of risk, in its widest context will inform the work, to improve partnership working and enable a less risk averse and interventionist approach.
- A programme of cultural change will be the driver to ensure that family and community capacity building is central to all we do, led by service user groups.

The above elements all contribute to shifting the profile of care for children and young people in Fife enabling:

- Most looked after children being cared for at home or in a family setting.
- Looked after children being cared for within a purchased foster care placement only on an exceptional basis.
- Significantly fewer (< 80) children being cared for within a residential placement.
- Almost all looked after children who require a residential placement being cared for within a Fife setting.
- Residential care being orientated around the need for short-term crises led provision, where possible.

The ambitious objectives within the Belonging to Fife strategy requires short, medium and longer terms targets and measures not just within the C&F Service but wider partnership including the Third sector. To achieve this transformational change requires behavioural, cultural and structural change, and the ambition is to drive this change within the next 6 –9 months, capitalising on the learning from our collective responses to covid-19. Within the context of covid-19 there has been an updated definition of what constitutes a vulnerable child to help inform local delivery across the partnership.

Children and young people may be vulnerable because of factors related to their personal development, features of their family life, or because of wider influences that impact on

them within their community. Those children who were vulnerable prior to the pandemic should have been known to services and are likely to have had a child's plan.

Where a child requires co-ordinated support from more than one agency, this is likely to suggest greater vulnerability, and the plan would be co-ordinated by a lead professional. This would include a range of children and young people, such as those:

- at risk of significant harm, with a child protection plan
- looked after at home, or away from home
- 'on the edge of care', where families would benefit from additional support
- with additional support needs, where there are one or more factors which require significant or co-ordinated support
- affected by disability
- where they and/or their parents are experiencing poor physical or mental health
- experiencing adversities, including problem alcohol or drug use amongst family members, domestic abuse or bereavement
- requiring support at times of key transitions

Feedback has also been sought during the pandemic across services and within the C&F service the views of children and young people have been gathered to help inform service development. In addition, feedback from a recent Third sector survey confirmed priorities for organisations for the next 3/6/12 months were:

- Focus on strong management and support of staff who are experiencing difficulties
- Recruiting more volunteers/staff
- More robust Risk assessment policy to deliver services, provide home visits
- Creating a plan for group activities/respite/short breaks
- Protecting staff and service users while moving back to face to face contact
- To continue to develop online support/resources
- Weekly conversations with families and feedback regarding support needs
- Surveys with service users
- More face to face/home visiting support

The Strategic Re-Commissioning Plan for Education and Children Services provides a framework for how the outcomes mentioned in the above strategy will be delivered and the role of the Third sector in the delivery. Key requirements include the need to:

- Identify the total resources available for services and relate this information to the needs within the C&F Belonging to Fife strategy
- Agree the desired outcomes set out within the strategy and link investment to these
- Ensure sound governance of resources is established

- Use a coherent approach to selecting and prioritising investment and disinvestment decisions linking these to budgetary and planning processes
- Create a clear reviewing and evaluation framework to assess outcomes are being achieved
- Reflect closely the needs and plans at a locality level, with a shift of focus towards additional needs based on an early intervention /preventative model

To fully realise a Strategic Commissioning Strategy takes time and for 2020-21 the scope of this work does not include a review of residential and foster care provision or a wider Council approach including Health & Social Care. On this basis the priority for 2020-21 is primarily focused on the objectives of Phase 3 of the C&F strategy i.e. 'Belonging to Fife'.

2.0 Needs Assessment and key findings (Where are we now)

For the purposes of the re-commissioning plan the needs assessment will be largely (but not wholly) based on the strategic need's assessment undertaken by the Children's Services Partnership in late 2019. The assessment was undertaken by a working group involving key data contacts from across the partnership. The outcomes from the need's assessment were reviewed and validated at a children's services development session at Cluny Clays on 19 December 2019 attended by key stakeholders including the Third sector.

Scope

The needs assessment considered a wide range of data from individual services and agencies, including data on social context, outcomes, service performance and cost effectiveness.

It included a review of key data sources held by individual partners and services, such as:

- The childstat dataset maintained by Child Health services.
- Key measures defined by the Scottish Government for National Improvement Framework for schools.
- Measures within the Local Government Benchmarking Framework published by the Improvement Service on behalf of SOLACE.
- Data from the child protection committee performance report

The data that was reviewed covered a rounded set of evidence about the wellbeing of children and young people. It also included data on outcomes for key disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, including: those living in the most deprived SIMD areas; looked after children and young people; those on the child protection register and children with additional support needs.

Several recurring themes were highlighted by the strategic need's assessment. These are summarised below.

1. Effective *early intervention and prevention* is key to improving outcomes, particularly in a challenging financial climate. This has been a goal of Scottish public policy since the Christie Commission and has informed service development and delivery in Fife.
2. *Engagement and participation* of children, young people and families is vital. It is the key source of evidence about the effectiveness of service design and delivery. It is also important in recognising a children's rights perspective should be central to practice across the partnership.
3. The behaviour of – and choices made by – children, young people and families have a significant impact on wellbeing and life outcomes. Influencing *behaviours and choices* is a key lever for improving life chances.
4. There were several areas for improvement relating to services for Fife's *most vulnerable children and young people*. These related to a range of issues, including child protection, the safety of children & young people and corporate parenting.
5. There is a varied range of data and evidence about the outcomes and experiences of vulnerable children and young people, However, this is often narrowly issue based and/or focused on particular groups (e.g. data on current LAC, children on the CPR, young carers, disability, etc). The partnership needs but lacks *a coherent over-arching framework* for monitoring the outcomes of these groups.

Fife Children's Services Partnership identified long-term, strategic priorities for improvement in early 2020, based on the strategic need's assessment summarised above; a review of progress against the 2017-20 Children's Services Plan and a qualitative review of the impact of current services and partnership working.

These long-term improvement priorities are illustrated in **Appendix 1**.

The strategic needs assessment highlighted a range of evidence that is relevant for the development of a commissioning strategy and the objectives already outlined. This evidence highlights specific aspects of social context, outcomes, service performance and cost effectiveness.

Social context

Across a range of measures, child poverty is higher in Fife than in Scotland as a whole. Typically, Fife ranks as the 8th or 9th most deprived of 32 local authorities for measures of child poverty.

Levels of child poverty in Scotland have been generally increasing in recent years. Without significant additional policy interventions, a continued upwards trend was likely, even before the impact of the current Covid-19 pandemic. (**Appendix 2**)

Outcomes for children and young people

Most of the work undertaken with vulnerable children and young people in Fife is preventative in nature. More than 2,000 children in Fife are supported through s.22 voluntary arrangements. In addition, approximately 250 children are supported within non-looked after child (LAC) kinship placements. (**Appendix 3**)

It is difficult to benchmark the scale or impact of this preventative working, as there are no national data sources to enable benchmarking. However, preventative working is likely to be a key factor in a smaller proportion of children in Fife being formally looked after than is the case in the rest of Scotland (particularly given the above-average rates of child poverty in Fife). The approach is consistent with the Scottish Government's priority of early intervention and prevention for those in greatest need. In the Fife context this requires activity not targeted at the universal level of need but focused on children and young people with additional or intensive needs (i.e. GIRIFF Continuum of Need).

With regards to formal care, however, there are some significant imbalances in the profile of placements and costs:

- Fife's use of residential placements is broadly in line with the rest of Scotland. As such it is not surprising that Fife spends a similar amount on residential placements, as measured by the LGBF measure for residential settings.
- However, Fife makes significantly greater use of purchased foster care to support looked after children than is the case for the rest of Scotland.
- By contrast, Fife is supporting significantly fewer looked after children at home with their family.
- The significant skew in Fife towards use of purchased foster care to support looked after children in a community setting, would explain the significantly greater costs apparent in the LGBF indicator for costs in community settings.

The above analysis provides evidence of the need to further develop community-based provision to be targeted at children on the edge of care or looked after at home as part of early intervention and prevention. The coronavirus pandemic resulted in significant, short-term demands on services. However, the underlying challenges revealed throughout this period confirm, rather than contradict, the conclusions of the strategic need's assessment.

Service performance, impact and efficiency

Fife Council E&CS Directorate is spending significantly more than other councils in Scotland on supporting our vulnerable children, by an amount that totals several million pounds. The root cause of this expenditure is the heavy reliance on purchased placements to support children in formal care in a community setting. The significant imbalance in placements and costs highlighted above clearly evidences a lack of adequate support for our most vulnerable families and children / young people on the edge of care.

Key Findings

Reflecting on the messages highlighted above, it is clear that:

- Fife needs to develop a community and family-facing 24/7 model of wrap around care for our most vulnerable children and young people.
- A robust approach will be needed to monitor the development and implementation of this model, to accurately reflect the impact of the model on demand, outcomes and the financial costs of provision.
- Only by adopting such a model can Fife ensure that its services for vulnerable children and young people are more agile in the future and sufficiently resilient – in the face of a likely continuing increase in demand and cost – to face challenges like the current Covid-19 pandemic and changes to the socio economic and demographic profile.

Mapping of Services (where are we now)

Commissioning activity in Fife has included thematic reviews and mapping of services and more recently a review of services for children affected by a disability. A review of family support commissioned services in 2018/19 mapped services across the continuum of need and against a matrix of high risk/low vulnerability. This work led to revision of some Service Level Agreements to ensure services were targeted appropriately.

The independent review of commissioned services in 2019 also considered issues of placed based services; overlap; duplication and funding sources (E&CS and external). The issue of services developing over time and accessing additional funds via the Pupil Equity Fund & Our Mind Matters funding highlighted a complex landscape and raised issues of long-term sustainability.

A mapping of all services in scope has been updated and the summary below provides a descriptor of the main function linked to theme /location/ key features. In addition, details are provided on the delivery model within the context of the continuum of need i.e. universal / additional and intensive. Funding information although included in the mapping spreadsheet have been omitted but the main source noted. (*E&CS overall /*C&F main budget source/** Education main budget source)

Analysis of the mapping has highlighted the following themes that should be considered in terms of 'where we want to get to' in re-shaping services, these include:

- A mixed economy of Fife wide and locality-based provision which could result in a lack of equity
- Some similarity of main service functions which could lead to duplication or a scatter gun approach by referrers to organisations
- Age differentiation depending on the focus of intervention which may not result in a family focused/ whole family approach

- Services delivering the same function, but due to charitable status are separate entities which may not be efficient and cost effective
- Limited evidence of partnership initiatives across the sector despite common objectives
- A varied range and size of organisations i.e. national and smaller charities
- Additional sources of funding from Our Minds Matter and PEF funding which could impact on delivery models/ performance reporting
- A significant number of organisations categorised as supporting children and families with needs at the additional end of the continuum but possibly not those in greatest need requiring intensive support
- A mixed range of specialist services and others focused on community-based family support
- Further development of explicit evidence-based descriptors and performance measures (coherent overarching framework)
- Greater clarity on the connections across Third sector services and the interface with public sector services which would assist with accessibility, pathways to support and better performance monitoring regarding effectiveness and reach.

Initiative/ Needs	Description	20/21	Theme	Area	Key Features
Aberlour Additional	Support through outreach and residential short breaks to children and young people with learning disabilities (0-18 yrs.)	E&CS (C&F)	Children affected by disability	Fife wide	Residential short Breaks Respite for children, parents and other family members
Barnardo's Intensive	Stronger Families provides intensive family support to vulnerable children under 12 yrs.	E&CS (C&F/ Educ)	Family Support	Fife wide	Support to families with complex issues and at risk of family breakdown
	Parenting Capacity Service (Under 12 yrs.)	E&CS (C&F/ Educ)	Assmt	Fife wide	Independent assessment to assist with decision making and child's plans

	Advocacy and Rights Service (up to 18 yrs.)	E&CS (C&F &Edu)	Advocacy	Fife Wide	Advocacy at LAC Reviews, Children's Hearings and Child Protection Case Conferences
Birthlink Universal	Support to adults affected by adoption	E&CS (C&F)	Advice	Fife Wide	Advice Counselling
Childline Scot Additional	Helpline All ages	E&CS (C&F)	Advice	Fife wide	Advice & Counselling
Clued Up Additional	Clued Up offers support to young people experiencing difficulties with substance misuse Over 12 yrs.	E&CS (C&F)	Substance Misuse	Fife wide	1:1/Drop-In & Group work sessions Diversionary activities Mobile Alcohol Intervention Team Alcohol Brief Interventions (ABI)
Crossroads Universal	Respite support to families in their own home or access to mainstream facilities. All ages	E&CS (C&F)	Children affected by disability	KDY	Respite and outreach services
Drug & Alcohol Project Ltd (DAPL) Additional	Counselling & advice to young people affected by their own or another individual's substance misuse. Over 12 yrs	E&CS C&F/E duc	Substance Misuse	Leven mouth Fife wide	Preparation for 1:1 and group work Counselling & Art Therapy Counselling Trauma Informed group sessions- schools
Early Years Scotland Universal	Support to private provider Playgroup committees to ensure effective	E&CS Educ	Early years	Fife wide	Advice and standard checks in line with EL&C.

	governance/standards (2-5 yrs.)				
Families First Additional	Support to children with Additional support needs (5-16yrs)	E&CS (C&F)	Family Support	NEF	1:1 Befriending Service Group work
Families Outside Additional	Counselling service for children & families affected by imprisonment (0-18 yrs.)	E&CS (C&F)	Counselling	FW	1:1 and telephone support CPD Training sessions with;
Family Mediation Tayside and Fife Universal	Mediation service addressing impact of family break up and loss All Ages	E&CS C&F	Mediation	FW	Counselling & mediation sessions Contact sessions with the child and non-resident parent;
Fife Women's Aid Additional	Practical, emotional, accommodation support to children and young people and carer affected by domestic abuse (0-18 yrs.)	E&CS (C&F/)	Family Support - Domestic Abuse	Fife wide W	1-1 support plans for children/young people and carer Group-work for children and young people in the refuge; Advocacy Training sessions raising awareness of domestic abuse
Fife Young Carers Additional	Support to young carers All Ages	E&CS (C&F)	Children affected by disability	Fife wide	1 to 1 sessions and short breaks Group Work Education and awareness raising activity
Fife Gingerbread Additional	Support to lone and teen parents Under 12 yrs.	E&CS (C&F/ Educ)	Family Support	Fife wide	Phone line support 1:1 parenting support Recruitment & training of volunteers: Group work

Home start Dunf Additional	Support to families with children under 5 yrs	E&CS (C&F)	Family Support	Dunf	1:1 parenting and practical support and advice Group work
Home start East Fife Additional	Support to families with children under 5 yrs	E&CS (C&F)	Family Support	NEF	1:1 parenting and practical support and advice Group work
Home start Glenrothes Additional	Support to families with children under 5 yrs	E&CS (C&F)	Family Support	Glenrothes	1:1 parenting and practical support and advice Group work
Homestart Kirkcaldy Additional	Support to families with children under 5 yrs	E&CS (C&F)	Family Support	Kirkcaldy	1:1 parenting and practical support and advice Group work
Homestart Levenmouth Additional	Support to families with children under 5 yrs	E&CS (C&F)	Family Support	Levenmouth	1:1 parenting and practical support and advice Group work
Homestart Lochgelly (Central Fife) Additional	Support to families with children under 5 yrs	E&CS (C&F)	Family Support	Central Fife	1:1 parenting and practical support and advice Group work
Includem Intensive	Intensive support to children, young people and families (5-18 yrs.)	E&CS (C&F)	Family Support	Fife wide	Advice line 1-1 Support Parenting advice and guidance Crisis management Group work
Relationship Scotland /Relate Fife Universal	Relationship Counselling service to improve mental health and wellbeing All Ages	E&CS (C&F)	Counselling	Fife wide	Couples and individuals counselling sessions
RNIB Universal	Advice, resources & information, to families / childcare settings	E&CS (Educ)	General Children's Services	Fife wide	Sensory Play and interactive storytelling Carers café Home visiting

	and staff for families affected by visual impairment and learning disability All Ages				
SCMA Scottish Childminding Association Additional	Community Childminding service (0-3 yrs)	E&CS (Educ	Family Support	Cowd Dunf Glenth KDY	Childminding support and advice (priority 3 yr. and under)
Scottish Child Law Centre Universal	Legal Advice	E&CS (C&F)	Advice	Fife wide	Specialist advice
SEAL Association Universal	Support to young people experiencing difficulties in school	E&CS (C&F)	Family Support	Dunf	Group work 1:1 counselling Diversionary activity
Snowdrop Group Universal	Parents group Under 12 yrs	C&F	Early Years	Leven mouth	Group work Creche
The Cottage Family Centre Additional	Family Centre and outreach support parenting Under 12 yrs.	E&CS C&F /Educ	Family Support	KDY	EL&C Creche Parenting advice and support Group work Counselling Support access to employment Skills development
Who Cares Scotland Additional	Advocacy for LAC in Fife Council residential resources (over 12yrs.)	E&CS C&F	Advocacy	Fife wide	Advocacy at LAC Reviews/ Children's Hearings. meetings

3.0 Conclusion and Recommendations – where we want to be

The drivers for improving outcomes for children and families are clearly set within national and local policy and a key element of the delivery of services involves the contribution of Third sector commissioned services. The re-commissioning plan for E&CS will provide the means through which the voluntary and statutory sector will work collaboratively to improve outcomes for families in Fife, working through the Belonging to Fife strategy

The Strategic Re-commissioning Plan E&CS sets out objectives and principles through which commissioning will be undertaken in an open and transparent way. To achieve these aims within a timescale dictated by the grant application process, the first part of this work will concentrate on community family support provision to achieve the objective of a 24 /7 flexible range of services for children in the greatest need within the available resources (reduction of £410,000 already approved).

A revised specification for Third sector services on the key components of the Belonging to Fife strategy will be developed and issued to the Third sector in September and feedback on the detail and process will be invited at the future engagement sessions.

Lynn Gillies
Service Manager
10/08/2020

Appendix1

Priorities for Improvement

Our main focus for improving outcomes for Fife's children, young people and families

Safety

By working together we will protect our children and young people

Wellbeing

By working together we will support and promote the health & wellbeing of our children and young people

Opportunity

By working together we will improve the life chances of our children and young people

Poverty

By working together we will mitigate the impact of child poverty on Fife families

Key Enablers

What we need to do to better identify and appropriately support the needs of Fife's children, young people and families

Rights, Engagement & Participation

We will work with our children, young people & families, respecting their rights, keeping them at centre of all assessments, planning and interventions

Empowerment, Prevention & Early Intervention

We will change the way that we work together, with families, & with communities, to develop our collective capacity to recognise and meet need by building strength within families

Support for the Most Vulnerable & Disadvantaged

We will ensure that our most vulnerable & disadvantaged children, young people & families are identified and appropriately supported

Partnership, People & Resources

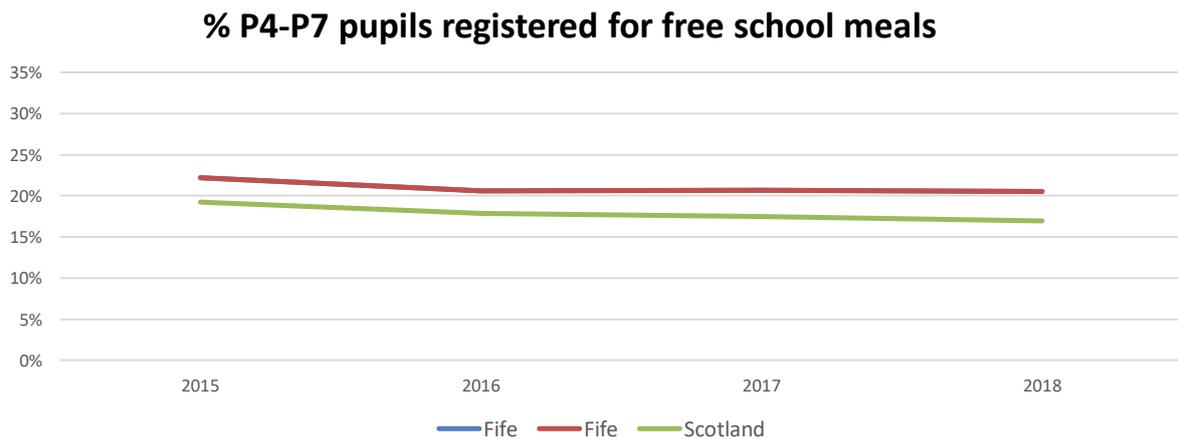
We will improve the way that we work together as a partnership, ensuring that our actions help to achieve a greater impact on the lives of children, young people & families

Appendix 2 – Evidence on social context

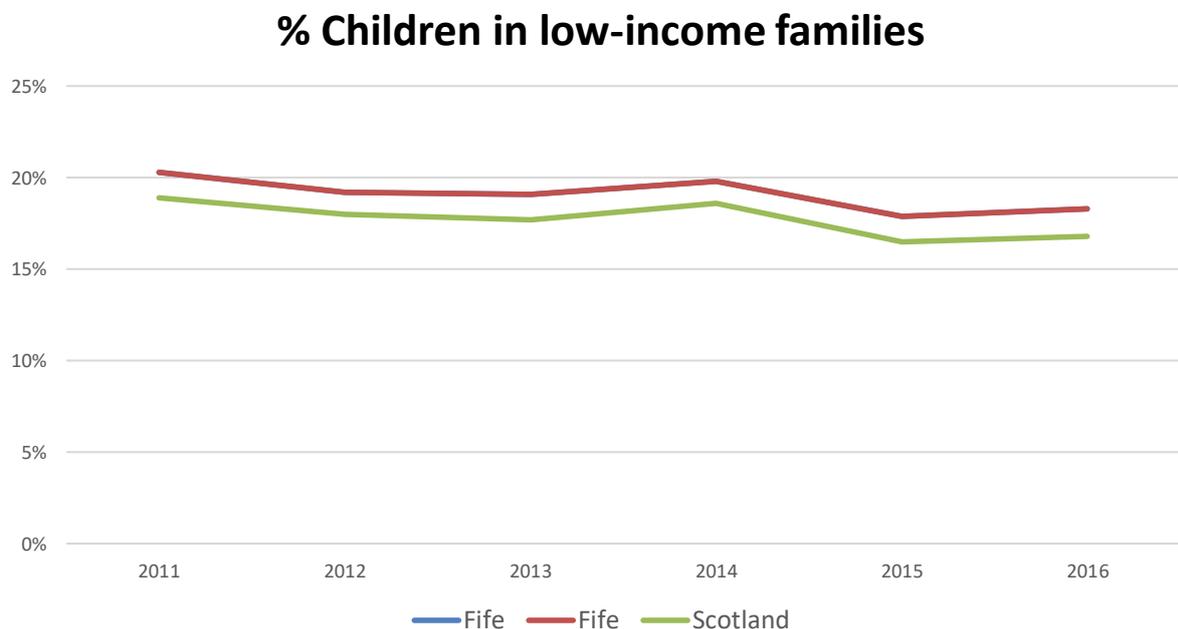
Levels of child poverty in Fife

Across a range of measures child poverty is somewhat higher than in Scotland as a whole. Typically, Fife ranks 9th most deprived of 32 local authorities for these sorts of measures of child poverty.

E.g. FMR in primary schools (20.5% in Fife vs 17.0% in Scotland)



HMRC % children living in families claiming tax benefits, etc (Fife 18.3% vs Scotland 16.8%)



These figures suggest that approximately 20% of children of school age live in households where material deprivation may be a significant factor that could affect quality / reliability etc of access to online resources.

There are 4,000 children in Fife of any given age, with approximately 70,000 children aged 0-17 years. Hence, approximately 800 children of any given age, or approximately 14,000 children aged 0-17 years in total are affected by child poverty – as measured by any given measure of child poverty.

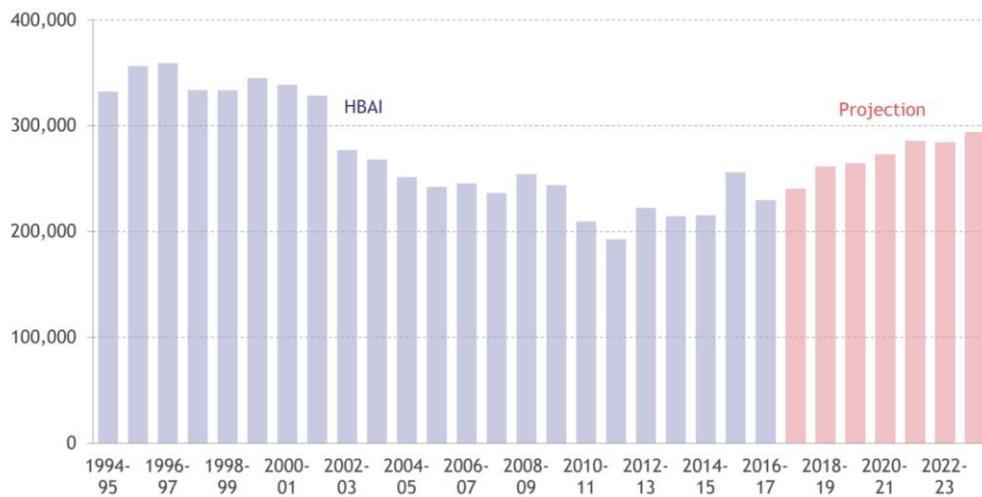
Trends in child poverty in Scotland

A range of evidence in the past year or so has suggested that levels of inequality, including child poverty, have been increasing over the past 5-10 years, during the period in which a policy of austerity has been pursued by the UK government (see e.g. “The Marmot review 10 years on” report, February 2020).

Analysis of the Scottish context also indicates that child poverty has been generally rising over recent years and that, without a significant change in policy direction, it would continue to increase (see “Wrong Direction – can Scotland hit its child poverty targets?” by the Resolution Foundation, March 2019 – evidence below).

Figure 2: Without significant policy changes, the number of Scottish children in poverty is likely to head in the wrong direction

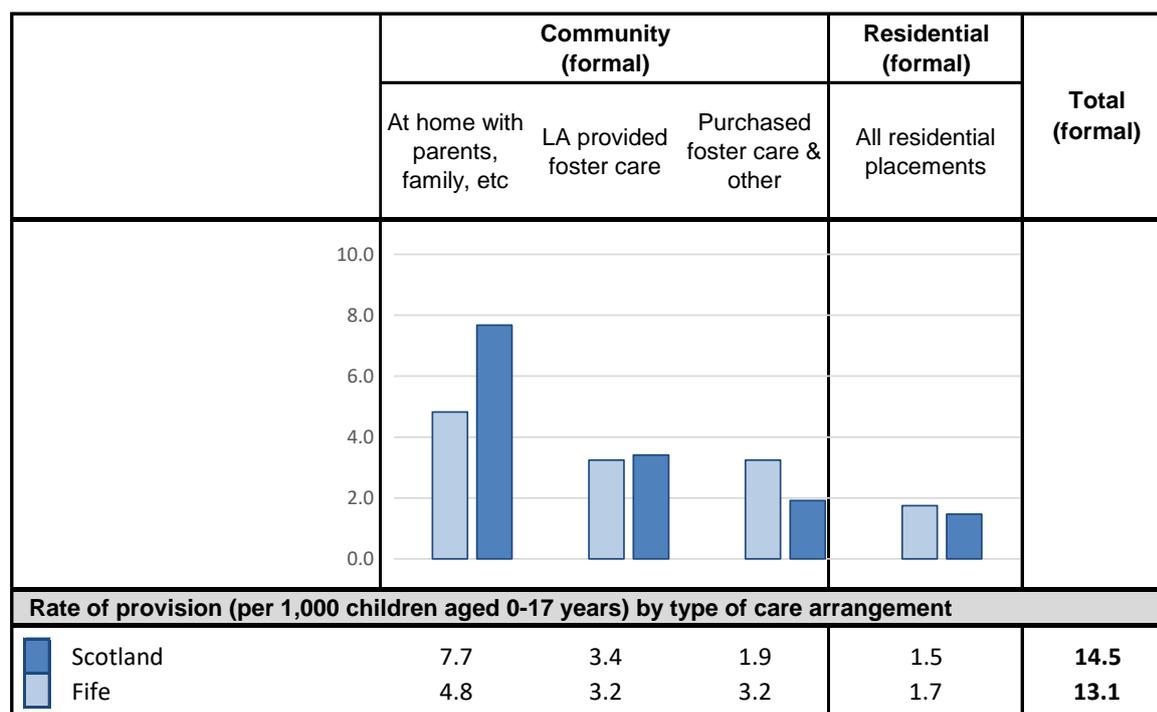
Number of children living in relative poverty (after housing costs), Scotland



Source: RF analysis of DWP, *Households Below Average Income (HBAI)*, and RF projection

Appendix 3 – Evidence on outcomes

The figure below shows the profile of care for looked after children in Fife as at the CLAS return for 2017-18 (i.e. the Children Looked After Statistics – the annual, national publication on LAC children across Scotland’s 32 local authorities). Benchmarking and service data suggest that the key features of the profile shown below also reflect the current position.



The following key features may be noted:

- Overall, a slightly smaller proportion of children in Fife are formally looked after than is the case in the rest of Scotland.
- Fife’s use of residential placements is broadly in line with the rest of Scotland. As such it is not surprising that Fife spends a similar amount on such placements, as measured by the LGBF for residential settings.
- However, Fife makes significantly greater use of purchased foster care to support looked after children than is the case for the rest of Scotland.
- By contrast, Fife is supporting significantly fewer looked after children at home with their family.
- The significant skew in Fife towards use of purchased foster care to support looked after children in a community setting, would explain the significantly greater costs apparent in the LGBF indicator for costs in community settings.

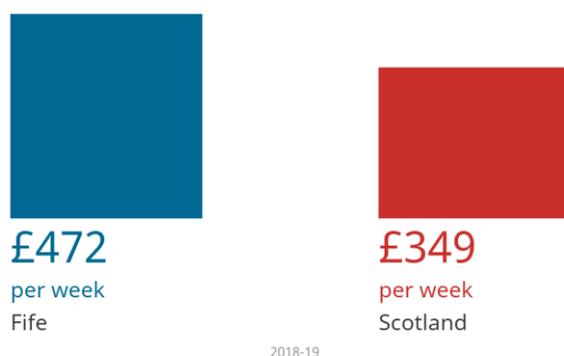
Appendix 4 – Evidence on service performance, impact and efficiency

The data below is from the most recent update of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF).

How much does my council spend on providing residential accommodation for 'looked after children' (£ per child per week)?



How much does my council spend on providing fostering/family placements for 'looked after children' (£ per child per week)?



Although the LGBF indicators do not provide a robust basis for assessing the full system costs of children and family's services, they do capture some of the key features of current spend by Fife Council. In summary:

- Spend on residential placements is not out of line with the Scottish average.
- Spend on foster care placements is significantly higher than in the rest of Scotland.

These key features are also evident in more detailed analysis undertaken by the service, using a range of available benchmarking data.

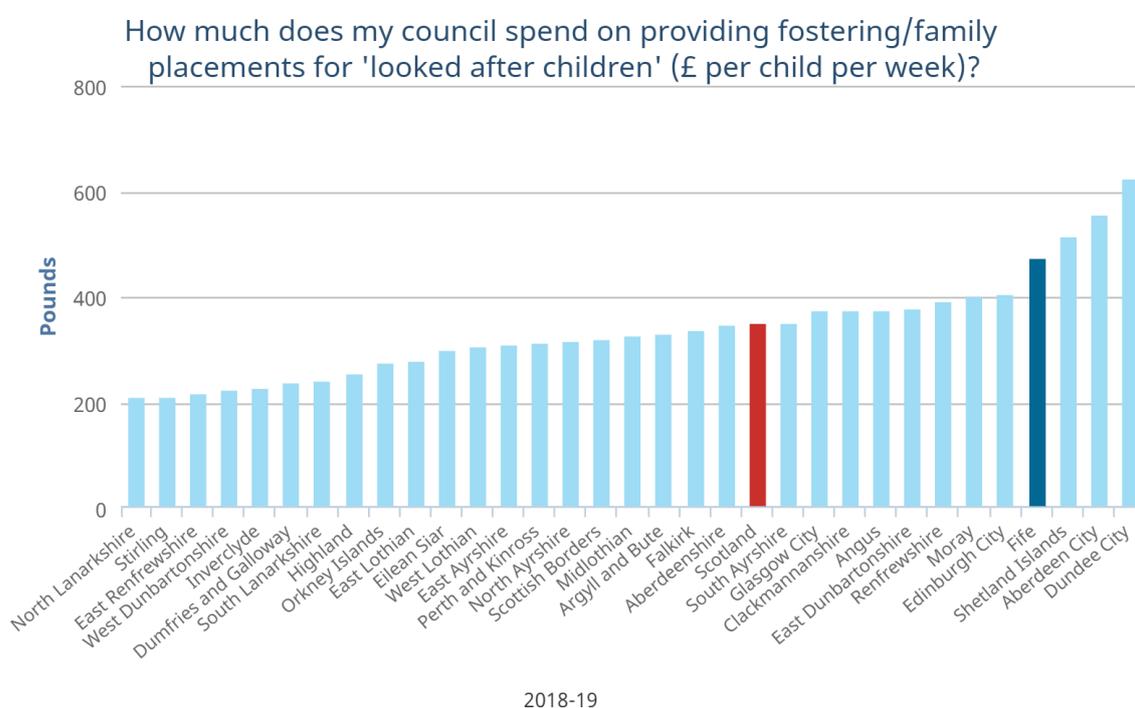
Consequently, Fife Council is spending significantly more than other councils in Scotland on supporting our vulnerable children, by an amount that totals several million pounds.

The figure below is taken from the most recent LGBF data. It shows the spend on

community placements for looked after children across all of Scotland’s 32 local authorities.

As can be seen, Fife is amongst the highest cost local authorities in Scotland. One of the key distinguishing features of councils at the opposite (i.e. left-hand end of the scale) is their greater use of community-based, family-centred, wrap-around care. This enables such councils to respond to emerging crises within families at the point of need, enabling many looked after children to be maintained in their family home, or in a kinship placement within their local community.

This is a distinguishing feature of (for example) the service structure within North Lanarkshire.



Data like the LGBF data, above, together with a range of qualitative evidence strongly indicate the need for Fife to develop a community and family-facing 24/7 model of wrap around care for our most vulnerable children and young people.

It will be important to ensure that the model which is developed is tailored to suit the context and needs of Fife’s children, young people and communities.

Furthermore, as the data underpinning the LGBF benchmarks is limited in scope, a more robust approach will be needed to monitor the development and implementation of a Fife approach. This will need to be embedded within the Child Wellbeing Pathway well-being pathways/framework and accurately reflect the impact of Fife’s emerging model on demand, outcomes and the financial costs of provision.

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