

Falkirk's Children and Young People's Services Partnership



Annual Report

2022-2023



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Foreword

Falkirk's Children and Young People's Strategic Leadership Group has developed and supported a wide range of activities across the partnership which were set out in the Integrated Children's Services Plan 2021-2023. We have continued to make progress throughout the year to fulfil our commitment and aim to ensure that children and young people in Falkirk are safe, loved and respected to reach their full potential.

This has been one of the most challenging periods nationally and locally, particularly across our communities for our children, young people, and their families, who continue to experience the impact of post pandemic recovery. This has been further compounded by the cost-of-living crisis together with the rapid increase in rising poverty, especially for our most vulnerable.

During this period the Partnership has continued to work together to seek ways through the collaboration of skills, allocation of resources and strength of leadership to enable the delivery of services where they are most needed.



Cllr. Cecil Meiklejohn
Leader of Falkirk Council and Chair
of Falkirk's Community Planning
Board

Introduction

This is our final Partnership report on the activity that has taken place to deliver the key priorities set out in our 2021-2023 Children's Services Plan. The purpose of the report is to demonstrate the progress that has been made during the reporting period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 against each of the 7 key priorities.

Our 7 priorities detailed within Falkirk's Integrated Children's Services Plan:

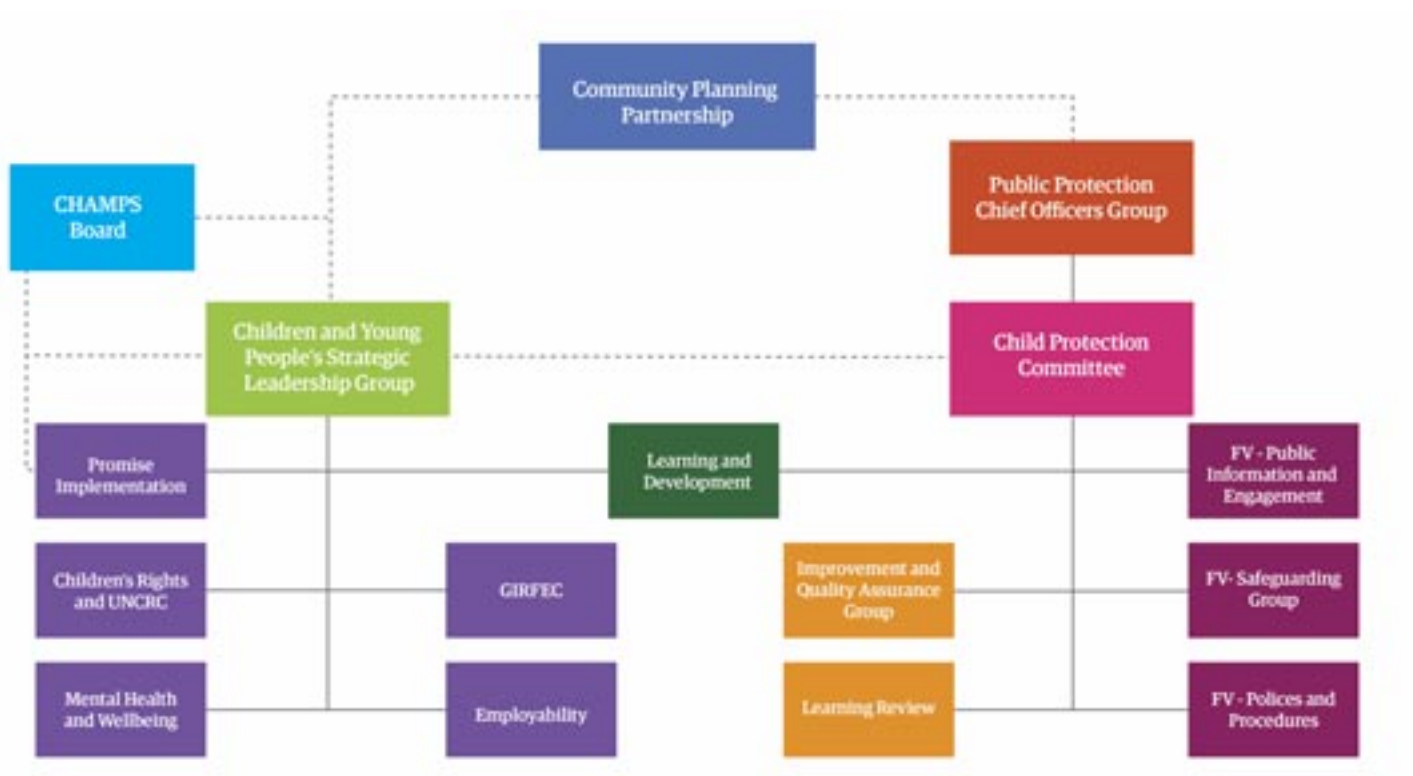
1. Mental Health & Wellbeing
2. Corporate Parenting
3. Family Support
4. GIRFEC
5. Employability
6. Children's Rights
7. Workforce Learning & Development

Reporting to our Strategic Leadership Group, each of the seven priority workstreams have outcome focused plans that sit beneath them. Each workstream reports directly to the Children and Young People's Strategic Leadership Group and the governance chart below highlights the relationship and connectivity to the wider Partnership.

The Annual Report will be tabled at the Community Planning Partnership to ensure oversight of the work of the Children's Services Planning Partnership.



Table1. Illustrates the reporting structure for the Children's Services Planning Partnership subgroups.



The following sections contain a summary of activity and progress for each priority within the Plan, with information on key successes, next steps and collective challenges.

Progress of Our Plan's 7 Priority Themes

Children's Rights and Engagement

Purpose

- To ensure a co-ordinated and collaborative approach to the promotion of UNCRC and engagement of young people within the wider Falkirk community.

Aim

- To support the raising of awareness and promotion of UNCRC within the wider Falkirk community.
- To collaborate with young people in the development of areas of mutual interest.
- To share resources to take forward areas of work that directly link to UNCRC and Falkirk's ICSP.
- To connect services/sectors/organisations more efficiently and effectively

Progress and Successes

Rights respecting school award (RRSA)

Around 80% of schools are on their Rights Respecting Journey between stages of Registered, Bronze, Silver, or Gold.

There has been a renewed focus this term for schools who have been at bronze level to progress towards their silver award. Falkirk Strategic Leads are focussing on these schools just now as the majority of our schools are currently at the bronze stage. The emphasis for this will continue with most schools communicating with the Strategic Leads on their plans to move towards Silver or reaching out for support on their journey to help push this forward with changes of teaching staff etc. The next focus will be for our schools at Registered to achieve Bronze.

Between May and June, a further 6 schools have registered for their silver accreditation visit to take place before the end of school term, with one school already scheduled in for their silver visit at the beginning of the new term in August. Many schools have also made us aware they plan on scheduling their Silver visit for September/October time and we expect to see a massive increase in silver awards before the end of 2023.

Strategic Leads in Falkirk have been reaching out to individual schools and promoting building upon relationships already previously established to help progress the award. This has proved to be successful with the uptake in accreditation visits being scheduled. Information was also submitted to all schools to help identify how RRSA links to Learning for Sustainability and Laudato Si'. We have also set up a Twitter feed to share and celebrate the milestones schools are reaching on their journey.

We are also reiterating the message to schools to support one another on this journey. We have several schools who have agreed to their evaluation being shared to support schools in using this as a template when completing their own school evaluation. We are also encouraging schools to share best practice so that rights are embedded across all communities within Falkirk.

- 8.6% of schools are Registered only.
- 17.2% are not registered or disengaged from the award.
- 12% are Gold.
- 20.7% at Silver
- 41.4% at Bronze

Falkirk's Youth Voices

- Falkirk's Children's Services Planning Partnership is working with children and young people to develop Falkirk Youth Voice (FYV). FYV will provide a range of youth participation opportunities to children and young people living within the Falkirk Council area so that they can influence public decision making at a local, regional and national levels. A group that is open and representative, where young people can talk about topics that matter to them. A place where private, 3rd sector, and public organisations can work with young people as collaborators on matters that interest them and their peers. It is proposed that FYV will be made up of: Individual young people
- Youth groups
- Youth forums
- Youth/schools councils
- Falkirk's Children's and Young People Group
- Falkirk's Champions Board
- Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament

Falkirk's Youth Voice will provide children and young people with the opportunity to:

- Engage with key local decision makers.
- Have their say on local issues.
- Meet new friends.
- Be a representative voice for young people in their area.
- Be involved and pro-actively engaged with local decision-making processes.

Members of this group have been involved along with young people from across the Regional Improvement Collaborative to design and roll out a Youth Voice Charter. This Charter sets out the way that young people want to be communicated with and how to value the outcomes that are produced from working together.

Falkirk's Youth Voices have decided that they expect any group or organisation that wish to work with them to have signed up to the Charter.



Falkirk Champs

The Champs continue to be extremely busy and active in challenging perceptions and breaking down barriers for the care experienced community in Falkirk.

The Champs have now delivered induction training to over 500 new council employees and recently delivered a pitch to all the Falkirk head teachers on why all staff in schools, teaching and non-teaching need training on what school is like for a care experienced young person. This work is following on from the training that the Champs have delivered to School nurses, local councillors and youth workers. We are working with the web design team to develop information pages for the Falkirk Council internet pages so young people and their families can find the information and support they need.

We also have two exciting developments, firstly a long-awaited home for The Champs has been identified and we are in the process of negotiations to get moved in, secondly, we successfully spoke to our Board about making Care Experienced a Protected Characteristic. This was positively received and some of The Champs are working with local councillors to bring the motion to the full council meeting to be heard. This will be a massive achievement for The Champs and ensure that the lifelong barriers and challenges that face the care community are considered when decisions and policies are being made.

The Champs have also been away on a residential and have joined the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme to recognise their learning and achievements.

To achieve this the group have established training for the Children's Services Planning Partners workforce on UNCRC. The group members and young people have:

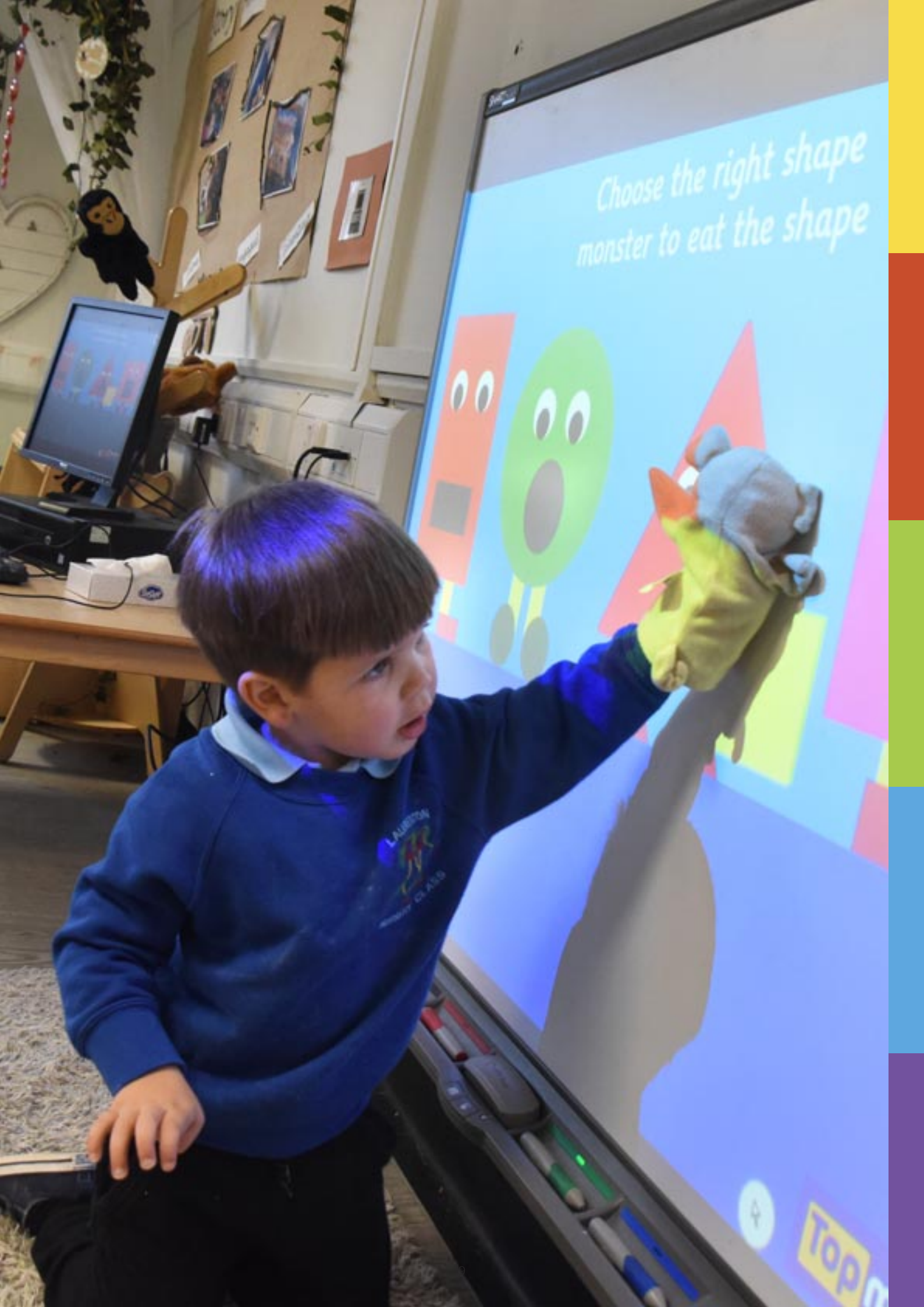
- Carried out a baseline survey of knowledge of UNCRC
- Developed training materials for use with our community planning partners
- Developed digital training on UNCRC and Children's Rights
- Co-designed, with the Falkirk Champions Board, webinars on The Promise and UNCRC

In addition to this the Group are working with young people, including local Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament, to develop tools that will measure young people's participation, engagement, and the implementation of Children's Rights.

Next Steps

- Members of Falkirk's Youth Voice have recently presented to the Children's and Young People's Strategic Leadership Group on their plans and journey so far. This was well received and a worker to support the Youth Voice project is now being sought to give the project and the young people the focus it deserves. The group have been asked to join conversations around embedding Children's Rights into all areas of life in Falkirk and they are looking forward to this and the further development of their group.
- Increase in activities which support children and young people to exercise their Rights.
- Increase organisations/services awareness of their responsibilities around UNCRC incorporation and how this will impact on their practice.
- Launch of 'Falkirk Youth Voice'.
- Develop a child friendly complaint process.

Choose the right shape
monster to eat the shape



Corporate Parenting

Purpose

- As Corporate Parents we have a duty to collaborate with each other in safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of Looked After Children and Young People and Care Leavers

Aim

- To increase multi agency partnership networks that are applying the 6 corporate parenting duties in their practice with Children and Young People

Progress and Successes

To support the Corporate Parenting agenda, Falkirk established a Champions Board in 2017, comprising Care Experienced Young People, Elected Members, lead officers from Council and partnership services. The Champions Board (Falkirk Champs) is supported by a Co-ordinator and participation workers. The Champs have advocated for Corporate Parenting in Falkirk to be known as "Falkirk Council, Family and Friends".

The emergence of "The Promise" was viewed in Falkirk as an opportunity to reframe Corporate Parenting into something that the workforce and care experienced young people could feel more connected to. Opportunities to build capacity in planning for Promise implementation were sought from both within and outside the partnership. To this end, a successful funding bid enabled recruitment to a 12 month, "Keeping the Promise" Training officer post in February 2022. From February 2022, the post holder linked with the Champs Board as a reference group and began designing learning sessions to raise awareness of Corporate Parenting and The Promise across the partnership, based on national and local information and drivers.

Communication- Falkirk's Promise Roadshow

- A Keeping The Promise Training Officer was in post for 12 months, up until end January 2023 and delivered 'Falkirk's Promise Roadshow', telling staff about Keeping the Promise and Corporate Parenting and what this means.
- The delivery of learning sessions to almost 500 multi-agency staff, included sharing examples of children and young people's voices and lived experiences and was used as an opportunity to bring to life key aspects of Falkirk's Corporate Parenting Learning and Development Strategy.
- Staff were asked to rate their knowledge and application of the new Scottish legislation relating to UNCRC (increase of 100%); of 6 Corporate Parenting Duties (increase of 99.5%); of 5 Promise Foundations (Increase of 99%), before and after attending the Learning Sessions.



Brothers & Sisters

- We have developed a dedicated space for brothers and sisters to meet in a safe and comfortable space.
- We have secured Council funding to enable adaptations to foster carers homes to increase individual carers capacity to take larger family groups.

Child Centred Recording Working Group:

- Children & Families Social Work staff are testing how to write case notes and reports directly to individual children and young people. The challenge is the thinking time it takes in 'pivoting' learned language in information gathering, assessments, reviewing and planning.

Being a good parent to one of our own;

- We recruited a care experienced young person into SVQ Admin Modern Apprenticeship. Mentored by our Keeping The Promise Training Officer, a trauma informed and relational based approach was taken in support of this post and the young person is flourishing. As expected, we are also learning from the young person who offers insight into being part of the care system.



Next Steps

- Falkirk Children and Young People Strategic Leadership group has agreed to utilise a proportion of Whole Family Wellbeing Fund allocation to recruit a dedicated “Promise Implementation” team. The team will be funded for the three year duration of the fund and will provide capacity to progress implementation of the promise across the partnership.
- Recruitment to the team began in January 2023 and when fully staffed, the team will comprise a Lead Officer, a Promise Co-ordinator, a Participation Officer, a Project Manager, a graduate data analyst and an Interagency Training Co-ordinator.
- The Implementation Team’s remit will include planning across the partnership in relation to the Promise, Corporate Parenting, and administration of and learning from the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.
- To this aim, the priorities of the team will include activities to refresh of the Corporate Parenting Board, membership, terms of reference and development of the Corporate Parenting Plan going forward.
- The partnership has also recruited a Trauma Informed Policy Officer who will inform practice and policy while influencing culture and system changes.
- We are further considering how we can increase the number of Modern Apprenticeships linked with other posts in the Council, collating lessons learnt from our Family Firm pilot project.
- Learning from the Family Firm and Relationships First Projects will be drawn upon to develop design prototypes to enhance volunteering and relationship building opportunities between the workforce and care experienced young people.
- The Champs board is considering how best to influence the Council in including Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic
- A Learning Development Strategy and framework and a Staff Handbook are under development to assist the workforce in feeling connected and confident in their ability to contribute to the wider strategic priorities of the partnership, including Corporate Parenting and Implementation of the Promise

Young People's Employability

Purpose

- The work of the group is aligned to a range of national strategies including Young Person's Guarantee, Independent Care Review and Keeping the Promise, GIRFEC, as well as our local outcome improvement plan - The Falkirk Plan 2021-2030.

Aim

- We aim to engage our young people in education, training and apprenticeships, employment, or volunteering opportunities, particularly those young people identified as most needing our help.

Progress and Successes

Get Connected - pilot year.

A Local Employability Partnership-commissioned provision which targeted recent school leaver cohorts aged 16-19 with no known destination and who were not engaging with any post-schools' service providers across the Falkirk area. The pilot year resulted in 67 unique referrals to the Council's Education Training Unit (ETU) leading to pre-employability engagement and improved positive destinations for some of most disengaged young people.

Enhanced data sharing

A new piece of collaborative work between Skills Development Scotland, FV College and the Council's ETU providing enhanced access to Skills Development Scotland Data Hub, as well as facilitating regular data update/input sessions between the partners. This work has resulted in measurably improved reporting on school leaver destinations up to age 19. In addition, it helped to identify some of the key reasons for disengagement - this will be built on during 2023-24, with partners using the data and information in the design of future provision.

Community engagement work

A range of community engagement and outreach work was undertaken by subgroup partners - these were new and additional and aimed specifically at reaching disengaged young people. Pre-pipeline sessions were delivered in community settings to aid and encourage engagement, as well as explore needs, wants and aspirations. The sessions resulted in a number of participants engaging more fully with employability pipeline delivery partners, as well as referrals into other support services. Importantly, the sessions provided lessons learned for the forthcoming delivery year.

Additional Support Needs Transitions Portfolio

Work continued on the portfolio, with further expert collaboration and input from partners in NHS Forth Valley, Falkirk Council's Educational Psychology and Children and Families Social Work Services. Once complete, the portfolio will be rolled out with all Additional Support Needs young people (pupils) from S3 onwards and will form the basis of post-schools options planning for our Additional Support Needs young people, their parents, and carers. Testing continues at Falkirk's Additional Support Needs Outreach Service and Carrongrange High School (ASL school) and full roll out is expected August 2023.

Improved outcomes for all - positive destinations

Enhanced and targeted engagement, focusing on previously identified key employability subgroup drivers resulted in the following numbers achieved in 2022-23:

- 150 students with ASN enrolled into FV College supported programmes aimed at supporting transition into college life.
- 320 school students enrolled in Foundation Apprenticeships across a range of subjects including Health and Social Care, Early Years, Business, Hospitality, Computing and Engineering.
- 750 young people accessed a range of School College Partnership courses in this academic session, aimed at providing Skills for Work, maintaining engagement, and facilitating progression into positive destinations.
- 360 16-24-year-olds started post-school provision with ETU under Young Person's Guarantee.
- 170 under 25's entered employment, with 62 of these being Modern Apprenticeship opportunities.

Please note: the above figures provide a snapshot of some of the provision delivered, giving examples of the types of targeted work delivered by employability subgroup partners. Complete 2022-23 Annual Participation Measure data will be available August 2023, published by SDS.

Other support

Providing support for young people who are furthest from the labour market requires a co-ordinated approach to facilitating warm handovers and often accessing non-employability provision to ensure successful transition from school. The 'no wrong door' approach identified in the driver diagram, means that partners have worked to improve collaborative working and facilitate access to other support services including:

- Link Academy Moving On Up
- Fedcap Healthy Minds, Inspiring People
- Cyrenians Young Adult Service
- FDAMH Young Person's Service
- Togetherall support - online mental health support
- Falkirk Shout mental health support
- Welfare Benefits
- Housing

The importance of engaging with and facilitating access to these and other supports cannot be underestimated in the delivery of person-centred provision. Young people disengage with mainstream provision for a variety of reasons and it's important that employability delivery partners recognise this and provide appropriate support and guidance through post-schools' options and onto positive destinations, no matter the length of the journey to get there.

Next steps

Many of the activities reported on in 2022-23 continue as part of the overall delivery plan of the employability subgroup, with updated data reporting and young person's feedback being added to the mix to inform future service design and delivery.

Looking forward to 2023-24, employability subgroup partners are keen to build on all of the above, with some specific targets as follows:

- Increased engagement S1 to S3 to help identify those young people who may already be starting to disengage and formulate early intervention strategies.
- Build on Get Connected pilot year increasing outreach work targeting identified school-leavers with no known destination - aim to increase engagement and work towards positive destinations.
- Work with schools' data to identify school non-attenders and facilitate early intervention, offering alternative provision where appropriate.
- Work to improve data collection around care experienced young people (under 25 years) and care leavers (up to 26 years) to proactively target individuals who are at risk of disengaging with school and/or any post-school provision.
- Work collaboratively with Falkirk Champions Board, CLD, FC Keeping the Promise Workforce Development Team and across employability subgroup partners to improve data sharing, facilitate better engagement, warm handovers and ultimately achieve better outcomes (positive destinations) for our young people.
- Monitor roll-out of joint Leaving Care Team/SDS decider skills programme, looking at next steps and options for participants.
- Roll-out ASN Transitions Portfolio across all ASL schools and units
- Work collaboratively on increasing warm handovers for our ASN young people to improve transitions and achieve best possible outcomes.
- Further develop community engagement activities aimed at reaching some of our hardest to help young people and close the participation gap between 20% most and least deprived areas (SIMD)
- Continue to work with employers to break down perception on employing any young person, particularly with a disability or other ASN to improve employment outcomes and measure progress against Disability Employment Gap

Family Support

Purpose

- The Family Support Subgroup became operational in September 2021. Prior to this date, Family Support had not been a distinct working group or workstream of the partnership.

Aim

- From September 2021 - March 22 and beyond, the group had the aim of bringing a corporate identity to the workforce within the Council's family support services with specific actions around self-evaluation and identifying gaps and challenges in service provision.

Progress and Successes

An audit was carried out in this period with the aim of identifying the range of providers and services, within Children's Services, with a locus in the provision of family support. The survey also aimed to identify where services operate and provision types. There were 22 responses to the survey.

Key points from the survey are as follows:

- Most (15) services considered itself a Family Support service, that is, having the primary aim of the provision of family support. Around a third did not regard their service to be mainly in the provision of family support but delivered aspects of family support.
- Around a third (8) of services provided family support across all localities (east, west, central) in Falkirk. Most services (11) delivered family support in one of locality areas.
- Most of the services responded that they provide family support from school premises. Only one service delivered family support from a nursery. Services were also delivered in families own home and, to a lesser extent, in community facilities.
- Most services worked with families of children of any age mainly between primary age and lower secondary school age.

- Around of a third of services had no priority for referral. A quarter of services mainly dealt in referrals for reasons of mental health.
- Almost all (19) services operated only on weekdays; of these, there were as many operating over the school year as there were operating across a full year including school holidays.
- Around a third of services (8) operated during the school day. Slightly fewer (6) operated during office hours 9am - 5pm. The same number (6) operated in the evenings.
- There was a wide range of service capacity across services ranging from 20-100+.
- Most services (18) are operating at maximum capacity with some having a waiting list of referrals or having to signpost to other services.
- Additional training was requested by the majority of respondents.

Informed by the findings of the survey, aims were revised to focus on the creation of a framework for the provision of family support in Falkirk that would include council services, NHS and third sector providers.

April 2022 - February 2023

In April 2022 a Family Support Strategic Reference Group was formed with membership from Falkirk Council services, NHS Forth Valley and local third sector organisations. The agreed outcomes were for the group to;

- Understand current thinking and drivers for improvement in family support provision on a local and national level
- develop a shared vision for family support in Falkirk, to be adopted by all services.
- map existing provision to localities and identify gaps.
- identify existing early and effective intervention provision.
- create a framework to prioritise referrals based on risk and need.

The Reference Group met four times during this period with attendance and engagement being high on all occasions, particularly amongst third sector partners. Feedback from participants was positive, indicating that third sector participants felt heard and there was a strong commitment to on-going collegiate working. This work led to the following outcomes.

- Understanding current thinking and drivers for improvement in family support provision on a local and national level
- Input from Strategic Leadership Group provided information regarding connectivity of this group to the key priorities of the leadership group and emphasised Family Support as a local priority.
- Information connecting this workstream to national development of Whole Family Wellbeing Fund, principles and criteria was shared.
- Input from The Child Poverty Action Group was provided.
- Use of Self-evaluation tool promoted with practice examples provided and discussed.

Developing a shared vision for family support in Falkirk which would be adopted by all services.

- facilitated discussion over several sessions to agree the following vision.

- Family support is available for families that need it, at the right time, for as long as it is helpful in fulfilling children's rights to be raised in their own family.

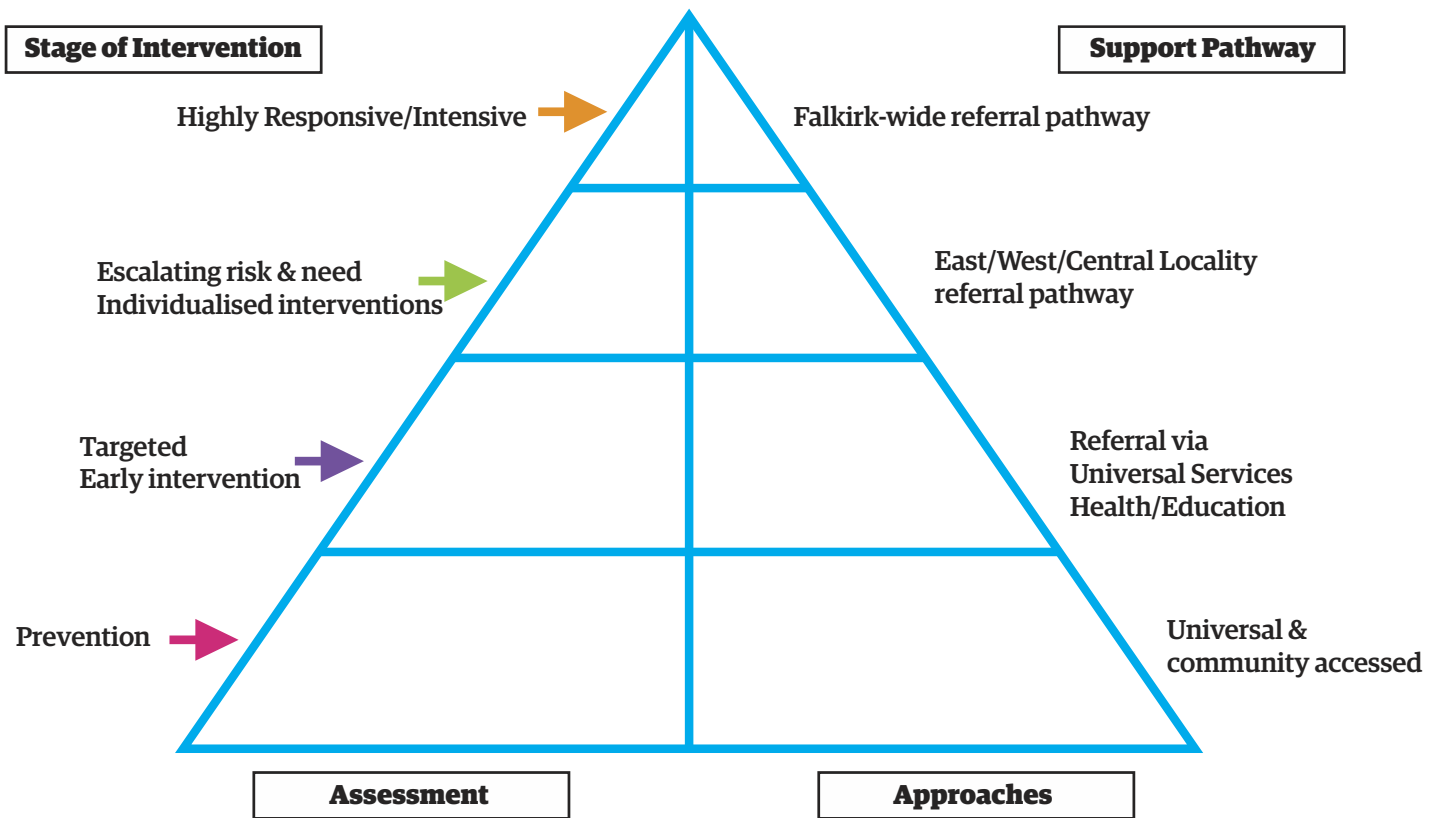
Specific change ideas were identified as follows.

- Creating a map and directory of children's services family support services and referral criteria
- Developing a shared referral pathway and paperwork
- Carrying out an overview of PEF relating to family support
- Creating a dashboard of family support needs, referral and allocation data.
- Developing shared language to support self-evaluation and improvement planning.

Mapping of existing provision to localities and identify gaps

- the Family Support Reference group undertook data gathering via questionnaires and individual face to face discussions. This exercise explored referral criteria and types of service provision, focusing on priority groups and geographical whereabouts of those receiving support.
- identify existing early and effective intervention provision.
- Analysis of the data gathered was shared and discussed with the group and the following themes highlighted.
- Inconsistency and varying referral methods/pathways across services.
- Allocations on first come first serve as opposed to needs lead priority.
- Lack of consistency of support available across all localities.
- Measuring Outcome Measures varies from service to service.
- Feedback from clients/service users - how do we collect this.
- create a framework to prioritise referrals based on risk and need.

The illustration below details the family support structure which was developed to by the group to be adopted by family support providers to support prioritisation of referrals;



February 2023 - Present

In February 2023, the Strategic Leadership Group confirmed a new reporting and governance structure, combining the 'Promise and Corporate Parenting' subgroup and the 'Family Support' subgroup under a 'Promise Implementation' workstream, to be Chaired by the Partnership Service Manager (WFWF).

The investment made via the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund in the Promise implementation team was recognised as an opportunity to support the Partnership drive forward sustainable change. The Promise Implementation Team, working alongside an Interagency Training Coordinator and comprising a Lead Officer, Promise Coordinator, Programme Manager, and Participation Lead was recruited and in place by mid-April 2023

Next Steps

- Since April 2023, The Promise implementation group have developed an application form for partners and community groups to apply for funding for tests of change meeting the criteria and principles of the whole family wellbeing fund. The Family support structure model developed by the working group, is an integral part of the application process.
- A funding panel, including service user representatives has been recruited and the application window is currently open and £300k has been set aside for the first tranche of funding.
- The Promise Implementation team is supporting applicants to work collaboratively and make connections across services/communities. The team will also serve as a screening panel when all applications are received, prior to decision-making by the partnership funding panel.
- All funded tests of change will be supported, and progress and barriers identified and addressed on a regular basis. Learning from the tests of change will be used to identify future opportunities to empower communities and ensure best use of public money.
- The findings from participation work commissioned by the Child Protection Committee and undertaken alongside a group of parents with care experience between 2020 and 2022 is underpinning the work on future service delivery.



Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC).

Purpose

To oversee the implementation of the policy and principles of GIRFEC to improve outcomes for children and young people in Falkirk with a focus on each of the following.

Aim

- To develop shared processes to ensure that partner agencies consistently embed GIRFEC culture, systems and practice.
- To oversee the Implementation and progress of the GIRFEC Action Plan (see Driver Diagram)
- To develop, deliver and report on Learning & Development across the partnership and promote a multi-agency approach to shared learning opportunities.
- To promote the development of the Lead Professional and Named Person
- To report to the C&YPSLG on progress of the Action Plan
- To support and create opportunities for engagement and active participation from children and young people across the partnership.

Progress and Successes

The Lead Professional Integrated Assessment and Child's Plan continues to be further embedded into practice for all new referrals to social work services through the Initial Response Team and Locality Teams. The paperwork is also being piloted for children and young people in a Primary School and High School setting for those who are identified as requiring additional support.

Following the Scottish Government GIRFEC Refresh in September 2022, we circulated two 7-minute briefings to all staff and delivered key messages to Training to Education staff during In Service Days in November 2022. This was followed up by in person multi agency training for front line staff across the partnership. We have since developed a rolling programme of locality-based training to promote and strengthen relationship-based practice.

Along with Educational Psychology we have delivered training Solution Orientated Team Around the Child meetings on a multi-agency basis during 2022 and 2023 bringing this to the locality teams in person and online.

This was delivered in the context of the GIRFEC Refresh to promote early and effective intervention and to encourage and upskill those working alongside children and families, chairing TAC meetings to ensure that their views and wishes are central to planning.

Along with the Child Protection Lead Officer, we delivered GIRFEC and Child Protection training to Housing colleagues.

We have participated in four workshops with our partners to align the GIRFEC refresh policy with the new National Child Protection Guidance across the Forth Valley and this is an ongoing focus of work.

As a working group we invited the leads from Pan Lothian Chronologies to present their work and findings along with their training and guidance to the GIRFEC group. We have also attended the Pan Lothian workshops to inform practice and technical developments. Alongside this a short life working group was set up to review and strengthen the use of Chronologies which is embedded within the Integrated Lead Professional Assessment and Child's Plan.

Forth Valley Practitioner Pages continue to be updated to share learning, guidance and up to date information.

In January 2022, internal audit activity provided feedback and evidence of good partnership working; seeking and recording the views of the child; responding to risk and unmet need.

In March 2022 Falkirk hosted a visit of 25 Swedish Delegates comprising of senior social work managers, education, health, and agency leaders who are interested in adopting the “Scottish Model” of GIRFEC. This one-day event provided us with an opportunity to demonstrate the good practice examples that are currently taking place and to offer an insight into the challenges of delivering early help and intervention in the current climate, post pandemic.

Delegates were able to visit Early Years, Primary School provision and Voluntary sector with members of the Team Around the Child present to provide an overview and insight into early intervention and to hear first-hand about the experience of translating policy into practice.

The initial verbal feedback from the visit highlighted the following:

- The importance of relationship-based practice which was viewed as a real strength within Falkirk and is key to keeping children safe.
- The importance of sharing information in an appropriate, proportionate, and timely manner.
- That GIRFEC implementation requires strong leadership to promote a culture of change and challenge existing systems and processes.
- That whilst Falkirk does not have all the answers, they valued our openness and honesty about our journey through implementing GRIFEC policy and practice.
- The key role that the third sector plays in being responsive and flexible in meeting the local demands.

Next Steps

- Establish and promote a common understanding of wellbeing across the Children’s Services Planning Partnership and promote the GIRFEC principles and refreshed materials.
- Ensure that the GIRFEC principles are firmly embedded in practice so that children in Falkirk grow up to be loved, safe and respected.
- We will ensure that our policies, procedures, and guidance are updated to reflect the GIRFEC refresh.

As part of our commitment to quality assurance and improvement work we were tasked by our Child Protection Committee to undertake some research around our child protection procedures to help to inform us of children and families experiences of child protection key processes.

Child Protection Committee Family Learning Research Project Jan 21-Mar 22

BACKGROUND

The Child Protection Committee were seeking insight into the needs and experiences of families in Falkirk who have worked with CP services and to ascertain their experiences and views on how the system could be improved upon,

In view of the subject matter, and the time factor care was taken to only include families already known to CLD, where trusting relationships were in place.

This work would involve encouraging and including the families to co-design aspects of the child protection system within the Falkirk Council area.

METHOD

- Meet with identified existing families who would be in a good place to participate. (15 families)
- One to One session offering sustainable holistic family support.
- Digital group discussions. WhatsApp
- Develop a Focus group.
- Qualitative data gathering.
- There were significant barriers to participation, due to the lockdown and Covid. 19 related issues.

Feedback from Families.

"I had never felt so powerless, and I was their mum".

"I wouldn't know who to ask for help, outside family and friends."

"I just wanted to be part of the discussion and not part of their problem".

"I felt that I couldn't protect my son once the system took over".

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What can we learn from children and families directly about the usefulness of our child protection information including whether any local or national communication messages are having an impact? (What does it need

for Child Protection Committee to become a better communicator?)

What are children and families looking for when they're at the point of needing or having early co-ordinated support from across services?

GROUP

The Focus group was made up of 3 parents and 1 grandparent and developed from the one-to-one sessions offered to all the families identified. They shared discussions with their children and communicated with one another via WhatsApp. The group wrote about their individual experiences with the CP process to share their stories with the committee.

Issues faced:

Drug/alcohol misuse . Mental health. Brain injury. Violence. Domestic abuse. Kinship care. Police involvement. Incarceration. Suicide. Violence against a child. Child custody issues.

"It was too complicated; I didn't know what things like TAC meant"?

FINDINGS Question 1

- Parents and carers were not aware of previous CP campaigns.
- Parents did not feel confident that they could find information easily.
- Families felt they were abstract to the process and not included.
- Families need shared spaces for discussion across services, where parents are involved.

"The schoolteacher helped me, and she didn't judge me".

FINDINGS Question 2

Families seek:

- A consistency of approach across services (A person, not a team)
- To tell their story once.
- To know where to go in a crisis.
- Time to build trusting relationships with service staff.

- A safe space to meet other parents/families.
- To be listened to.
- To not feel judged.

OUTCOMES FOR PARTICIPATING PARENTS/CARERS

Parents/carers are more confident communicators.

Parents/carers feel more in control of their lives.

Parents have a raised awareness through an increased understanding of the various services available.

Parents feel a reduction in stigma.

"I wouldn't hesitate to ask for help now, but I would make sure they listen to me properly".

"I wish I had known years ago that social work could have helped me like this".

Practical Solution

The group developed a questionnaire for families seeking support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A continuation of the development of this focus group, to include more families and create further opportunities for real stories to emerge.
2. A creation of a dedicated space to bring families together to share information across services. One channel to tell their stories once. (A Family HUB)
3. An opportunity for parents, carers, and young people to co-design services.
4. An effort to join up services through collaborative discussions.
5. A simplified, jargon and acronym free source of information that is accessible to all.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Purpose

To Improve the Mental Health and Wellbeing of our Children and Young People.

Aim

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Subgroup aims to reduce the likelihood of children and young people experiencing poor mental health and wellbeing and increase capacity of the workforce to support those experiencing poor mental health and wellbeing. Three key actions were identified to support improvements in the mental health and wellbeing of our children, young people, and families:

- Develop universal services delivery to support positive mental health and wellbeing.
- Develop the use of children and young people's voices and contributions to design and shape services.
- Support adults to support children and young people: staff development and work with parents.

Progress and Successes

Develop universal services delivery to support positive mental health and wellbeing.

In order to support staff to increase their knowledge and understanding of mental health and wellbeing online resources have been made available to the whole children, young people and family workforce. A shared website space for all partners has been further developed taking a joint approach to online support and social media messaging. Targeted adverts were used on Instagram and Facebook to try and extend the reach of our communications, particularly those in the 18-26-year-old age group.

Develop the use of children and young people's voices and contributions to design and shape services.

Six new services launched in 2022 were evaluated and renewed for 2023/24 following positive feedback from young people, families, and partner organisations. A second round of engagement activities with children and young people to identify needs, is planned for later this year following initial feedback captured to inform future service design work.

Work is ongoing to provide developmentally appropriate information and activities to help children and young people express their views. Positive links have been made by the working group with NHS Speech and Language, Adult Services, and Community, Learning & Development to learn from colleagues about best practice and jointly plan for improvement.

Support adults to support children and young people: staff development and work with parents.

Decider skills (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy skills) training has been delivered across the partnership workforce and over the next few months will be extended further to include more school-based staff, partner organisations and parents/carers.

Seasons for Growth refresher courses that focus on community delivery to support bereavement and loss for children and young people continue to be offered. These are available for those whose training has elapsed. We now have trained staff who can deliver across our 3rd partners and school clusters. This allows us to increase the community reach of the programme.

Strategic commissioning of Tier 2 and Tier 3 services

Digital services: Kooth, Togetherall and Shout services were all renewed for March 2023 to allow young people to access support in a more flexible way. Registrations continue to rise, and we now have over 1000 young people accessing a digital service. Provision is being monitored each month and user feedback sought. These services have created a 24-hour provision for mental health, as an alternative to attendance at A&E.

Next Steps

- Alongside our partners we will continue to develop our services to ensure that our children and young people have access to the right support at the right time.
- We will promote the services available and ensure good communication across the partnership.
- Use our data to develop or change our services as required, to ensure they continue to meet the needs of children and families.
- Extend opportunities for feedback from our children, young people, and families to help us improve service design and delivery.
- Review the universal provision in schools through the Personal and Social Education programme.
- Continue to work closely with colleagues from health, education, social work, and the 3rd sector.



Mental Health and Wellbeing Case Study

Staff Development

Falkirk's Children's Services Planning Partnership has been actively taking forward this action in 2022-2023 with a clear focus on how partners support improvements in the mental health and wellbeing of our children, young people and families. Positive progress has been made as detailed below:

- Creation of a sharing practice event on data for all partners across Falkirk. Presentations and key data were shared to help inform planning within and across partners. The second of these sessions is scheduled for September 2023. A similar event focused on poverty and accessibility considerations for services is also planned.
- Our newly formed communication subgroup has co-ordinated the approach, across partner agencies, for key mental health focus days and events. Further engagement activities will be organised by the group in the coming months.
- Our workforce development subgroup has embarked on the task of pulling together the existing professional learning opportunities around mental health and wellbeing and assigned them to the categories: informed, skilled, enhanced and specialist.
- Recent data has been used to plan for improvement work that will focus on the theme of 'families' whilst specifically thinking about mental health and gender and improving the sleep and screentime balance that young people in Falkirk have.



Learning and Development

Purpose

The Sub-group is primarily responsible for developing and implementing Falkirk's Children & Young People's Leadership Group and Falkirk Child Protection Committee's workforce Learning and Development STRATEGY and FRAMEWORK which is focused upon multi-agency provision. This takes account of identifying learning needs; responding to gaps; developing, delivering, evaluating, and reviewing multi-agency learning and development activities.

The work of the Group will ensure the multi-agency workforce are resourced and supported to understand their duties and responsibilities in relation to the GIRFEC approach, Child Protection, and wider Public Protection. Also, that their increased skills will enable them to respond confidently and competently to the needs of children and families across Falkirk.

Aim

- Learning and Development Strategy and Framework under development with focused work on building capacity for the delivery of local multi-agency learning and development opportunities.
- Identify funding source to build staff capacity to deliver multi-agency training within our organisations.
- Seeking to engage frontline practitioners and managers in the development and delivery of learning and development opportunities to ensure authentic voices and relationship-based practice experience is captured.

- Recruiting an Intern to support the development of a central HUB for multi-agency learning and development resources aligned to our existing Practitioners Pages.
- Looking to take lessons learned from single agency Communities of Practice and extend access to a multi-agency audience. For example, peer and group supervision and relationship-based practice.
- Commitment to embed National Trauma Training Programme materials into all new training, guidance, and resources.
- Grow a pool of multi-agency training, learning and development facilitators.
- Contribute to the development of a programme of GIRFEC Core Component training that includes integrated assessment, risk enablement and management and a commitment to improve approaches to joint working and enabling effective meetings.
- Continue to implement Safe and Together approach to address impact of domestic abuse - review implementation framework and coordinate and deliver funded training for practitioners and managers.
- Respond to local Learning Review workforce development recommendations in relation to addressing the impact of substance use on children and families and improving workforce understanding of legal processes and engaging with Children's Reporter.

Progress Made and Successes

- Learning and Development Strategy finalised and Learning and Development Framework developed.
- Multi-agency capacity built within Learning and Development group.
- Two inter-agency training posts agreed. Inter-agency Training Coordinator funding secured from Whole Family Wellbeing Fund for three years. Interagency Training Officer post funded for two years via collaborative investment from Police, Education, Social Work (Children & Families), Housing, Health & Social Care Partnership and NHS.
- Interagency Training Co-ordinator recruited and commenced in post in February 2023.
- Advanced Practitioner posts developed within Social Work Service which will support the development of peer support and supervision across the multi-agency workforce.
- Trauma training programme resources embedded into all new and revised training, guidance, and resources.
- Secured places on Introduction to training skills accredited course to build confidence and competence of multi-agency operational practitioners recruited to facilitate and support specific learning and development activities.
- GIRFEC online learning module updated.
- Led on and contributed to a programme of GIRFEC core component training, learning and development activities - GIRFEC Refreshed guidance, Solution Oriented Approaches, Integrated assessment, risk enablement and management.
- Continued to roll out core Safe and Together training for practitioners, Supervisors training for Supervisors and Managers, overview briefings for all and increase capacity for training delivery via access to Training for Trainers.
- Supported the Safe and Together Community of Practice meeting regularly to share practice and build workforce confidence and competence in applying the approach.

- One year Corra funded post of Training Officer-Keeping The Promise ended in February 2023. The work of the post allowed multi-agency staff to be more informed of the foundations of The Promise, of the Corporate Parenting Duties, and the UNCRC Incorporation Bill.

Learning and development opportunities - Practitioners

In the last two years, we have continued to prioritise embedding the Safe & Together model of practice. Over 100 members of the Community Planning partnership workforce and children's panel members attended briefing sessions, and 73 practitioners and managers attended a one day Overview session. Those attending gain a clear understanding of:

- the principles of the model and the framework underpinning competency-building in relation to child protection and domestic abuse, and,
- the practice changes needed to create a domestic abuse informed service for children and their families.

149 practitioners representing services across the Community Planning Partnership have attended four day CORE Safe and Together training.

This training empowers practitioners to:

- make significant changes in their practice.
- influence other workers' practice.
- contribute to systems change, including policies and procedures.

Evaluation feedback from those who have attended has been consistently very positive. This evidences that training has enabled practitioners to reflect on and improve their practice.

The evaluation extract below demonstrates how practice change can be immediate. In this case holding the perpetrator of the domestic abuse accountable for his parenting choices and impact on the child. This example of practice change reflects what will support a change in abusive behaviour and create a safer environment for the child.

"I thoroughly enjoyed the training and at the end of the 4th day I made a phone call to a perpetrator, I was able to use Safe and Together language in my call regarding his parenting and felt more confident".

Safe and Together training also develops practitioners' practice in risk assessment and case planning using both a domestic abuse and a trauma informed lens. This, in turn supports improved practice in work with all children and families.

Following their four day training all practitioners are expected to join a mentor's group. This enables them to share practice learning and further develop their knowledge and skills to improve outcomes for children and their families.

Learning and development opportunities - Supervisors

To support and embed domestic abuse informed practice, supervisors have been offered two day Safe & Together Supervisor training. Post training Supervisors are invited to attend communities of practice sessions. These will support them to:

- develop their knowledge to support workers' practice change.
- reflect on their own practice, and,
- contribute to whole system change to enable services to become more domestic abuse competent.

Safe & Together training offers a common language that all professionals recognise and understand, leading to:

- a shared understanding of the lived experience of the survivor and the child
- enhanced collaborative partnership working and child centred care planning.

Impact of training on children and families

It was important to learn what changes in practice post training had impact on the families' accessing services. The Serenity Women's Wellbeing group was established and developed for and with women who have survived domestic abuse. Group members have been keen to share examples from their experience of positive changes in engagement with services where workers were trained in the Safe & Together approach.

"They are helping me heal from my Trauma".

"I feel safe and respected".

"They helped me see strengths I never knew I had".

"The biggest thing is I was supported. I wasn't made to feel like a victim. I was told how I was a survivor, that it wasn't my fault".

Those reflections are shared in training and support the change we want in relation to practice and how information is recorded in case records and reports.

Next Steps

- Training needs analysis to be undertaken to ascertain the learning needs of our multi-agency workforce in relation to addressing Falkirk's key priorities of Mental Health, Domestic Abuse and Substance Abuse.
- Plan how to address the findings of training needs analysis, including how can we support staff development themes identified out with the key priorities.
- Share and communicate the Learning & Development Strategy and Framework with multi-agency staff from across the partnership to further promote a learning culture.
- Develop a communication strategy that will inform and inspire the workforce to be part of an ongoing development of a learning culture.
- Annual Learning & Development Programme to reflect and better connect to Falkirk's Integrated Children's Services Plan.
- Establish core components of:
 - o Communication
 - o Evaluation
 - o Learning & Development within each of the Children & Young People's Strategic Leadership Group's Subgroups.



Challenges

Throughout the delivery of our plan during 2022-23, we have encountered a range of challenges which reflect the current socio-economic and post pandemic climate. We recognise these are not unique to Falkirk and whilst they have had a significant impact, we have continued to make progress despite this.

- Challenges relating to recruitment and retention of staff continue to impact on staff capacity to undertake key activities and on their ability to sustain and build trusting relationships which underpin implementation of The Promise.
- The shortage of experienced staff across children's services impacts staff confidence in decision making and risk assessment, adding to challenges in promoting risk tolerant and strength-based approaches.
- The local impact of the national shortage of foster carers continues to impact efforts to place children who require to be looked after away from home in family settings and alongside their brothers and sisters.
- Increasingly tight budget pressures have led to successfully evaluated pilot services which are crucial in providing the scaffolding to support Promise Implementation failing to receive mainstream and long-term funding, further exacerbating staff retention difficulties.
- Our multi-agency workforce has struggled to access the full range of learning and development opportunities available due to competing operational demands most often due to covering absences and vacancies impacted by aftermath of Covid-19 and the current recruitment and retention crisis.
- The multi-agency workforce has struggled to prioritise and sustain a commitment to contributing to the design, development and delivery of learning and development activities due to competing demands. • The development of a central HUB for multi-agency learning and development resources has been hampered by restrictions associated with our current limited web-based system from across the multi-agency partnership.
- Plan implement and evaluate a series of multi-agency seminars focused on substance misuse and mental health- to provide opportunities to increase knowledge and challenge thinking and improve joint working based on good joint learning experiences
- Encountered difficulties bringing together local operational managers and practitioners to commit time to this work and when piloting difficulties encountered with workforce being released to attend.
- Communication about learning opportunities reaching workforce.

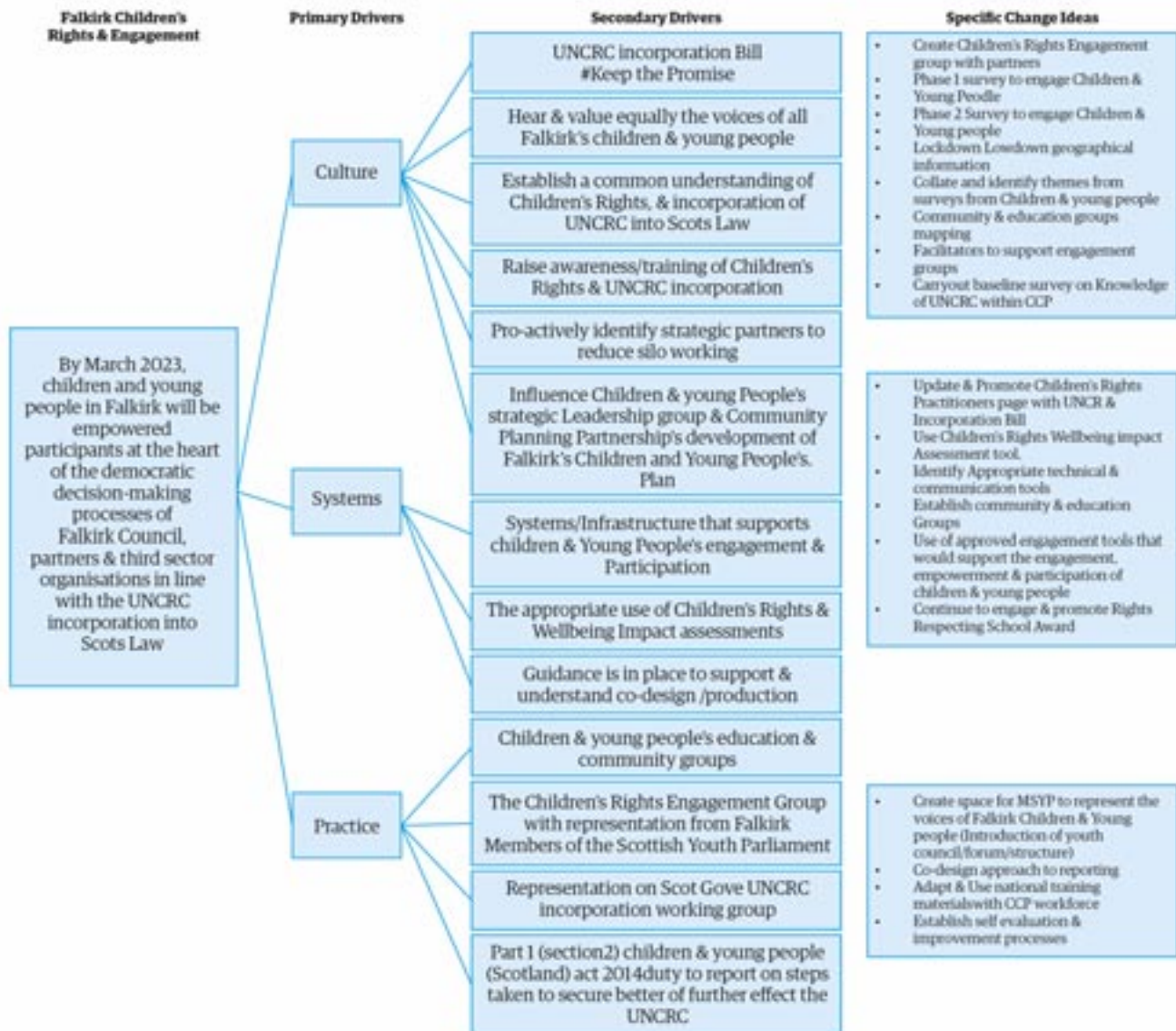
Conclusion

This report has highlighted the breadth of work that has taken place throughout the reporting period 2022/2023 with the aim of keeping our most vulnerable children, young people, and their families safe and ensure that the delivery of our services is prioritised to meet those most in need.

The work that has been delivered and progress achieved has laid the foundations for progression as we look forward to the Integrated Children's Services Plan for 2023 -2026. The plan has been developed and informed by a refreshed Joint Strategic Needs assessment which will set out our aims and objectives against a competing landscape of National Policy Drivers including GIRFEC, UNCRC, The Promise and Whole Family Wellbeing.

We are collectively focused on promoting and fulfilling our commitment to working alongside families through improved collaboration and purposeful engagement to evolve our practices and enhance the delivery of our services and the way in which they are received.

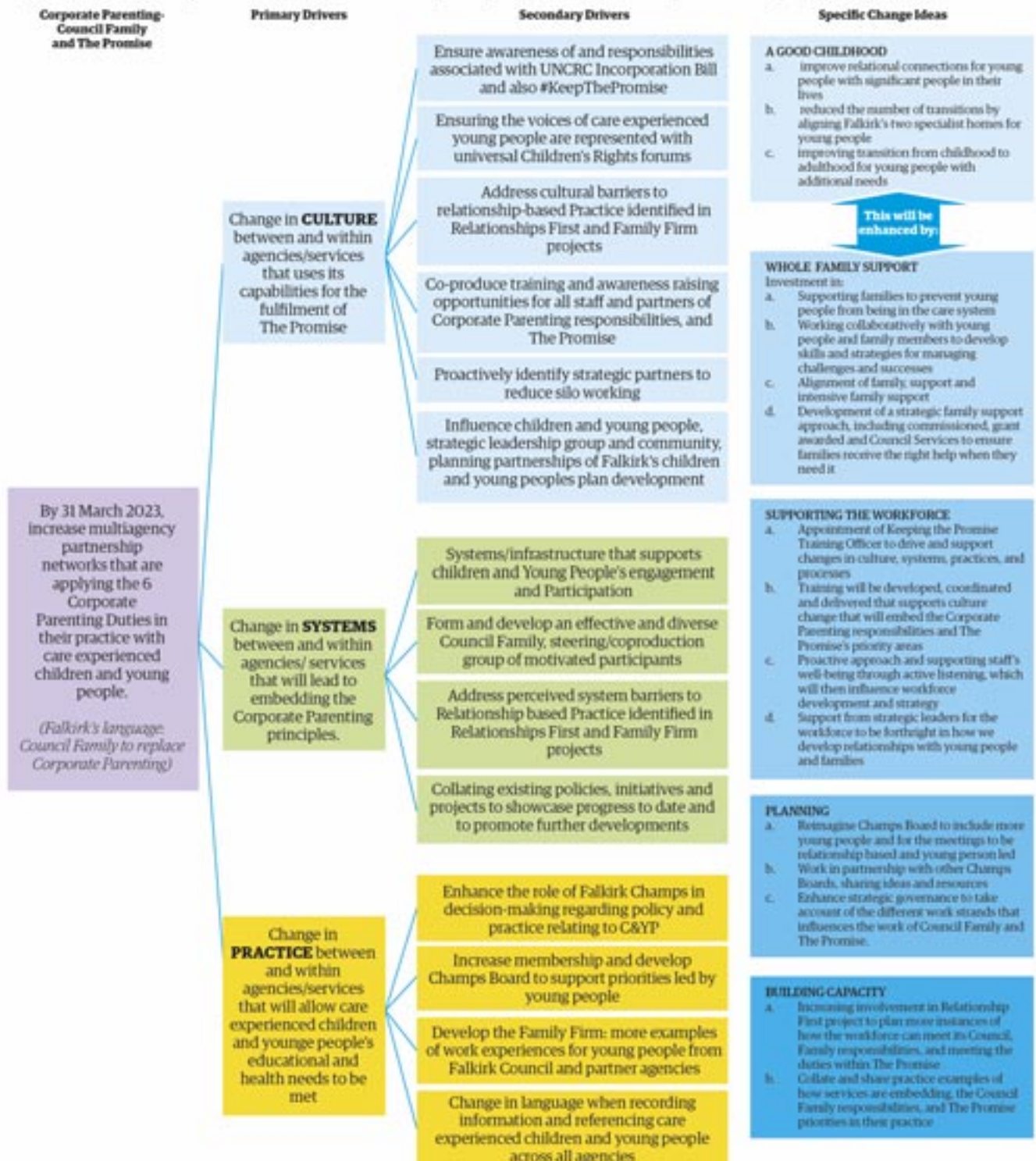
Appendix 1 - Children's Rights and Engagement Driver Diagram



Appendix 2 - Corporate Parenting Driver Diagram

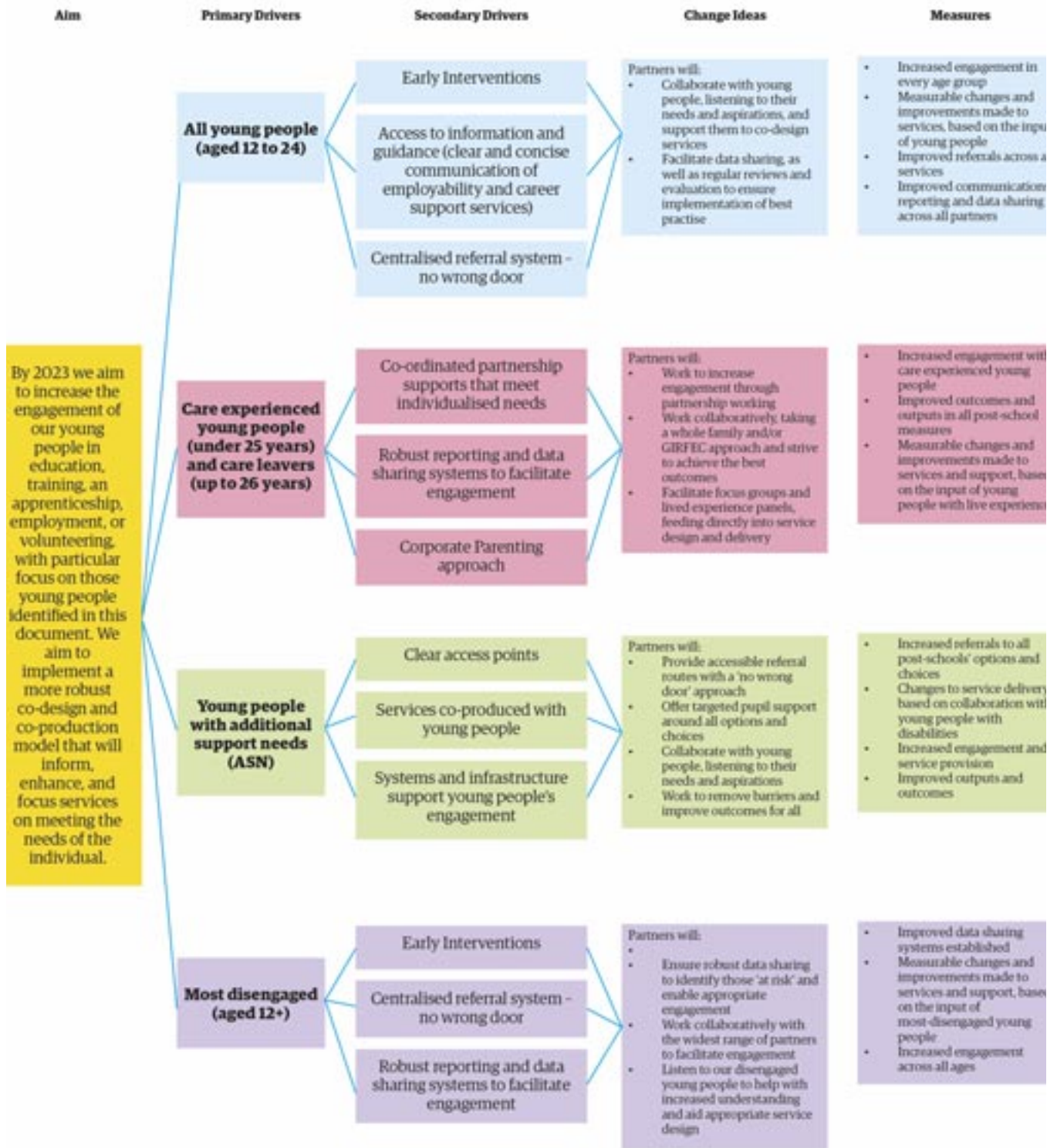
What are we trying to address:

Corporate Parents have a duty to collaborate with each other in safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of looked after young people and care leavers.

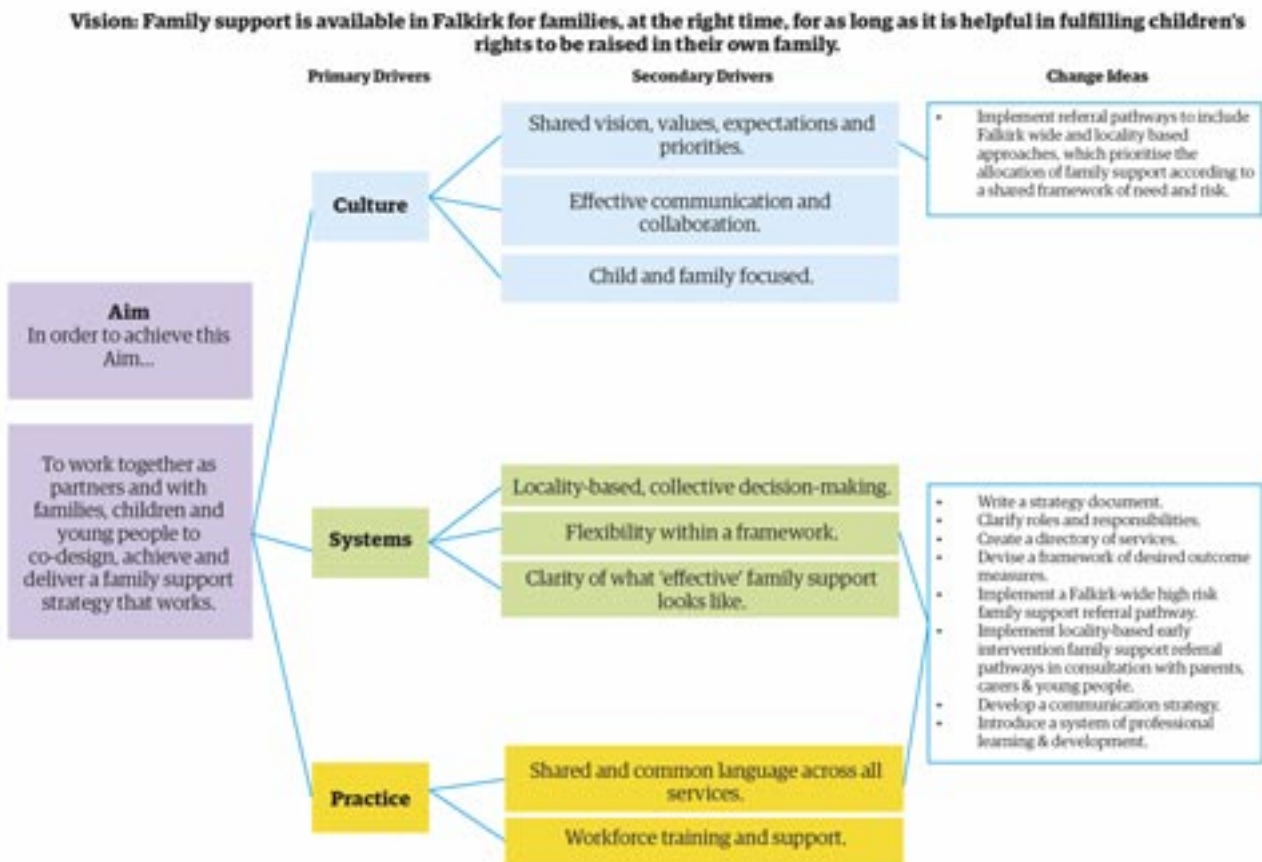


Appendix 3 - Employability Driver Diagram

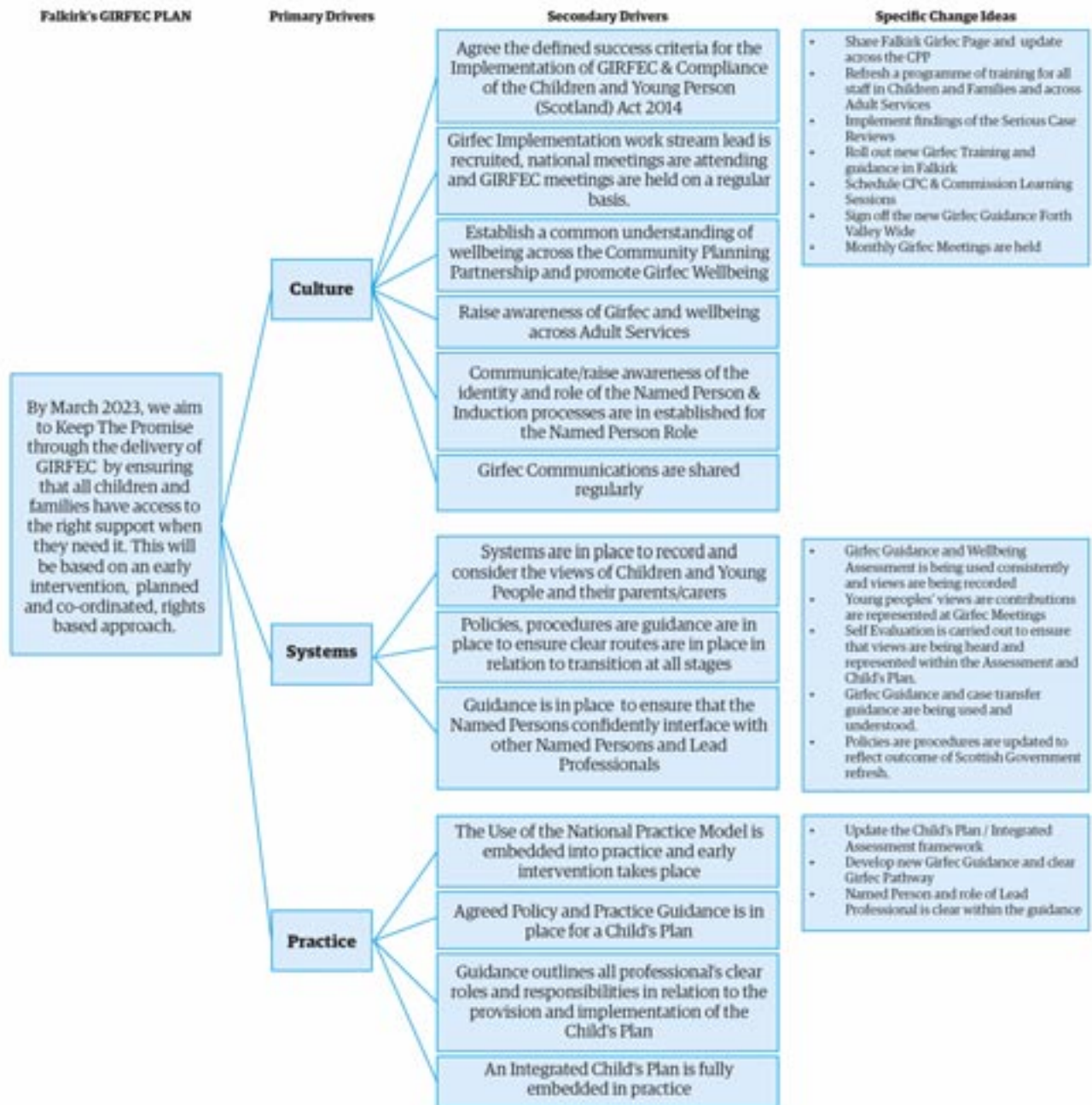
RAIKUK ICSF Employability Driver Diagram August 2021



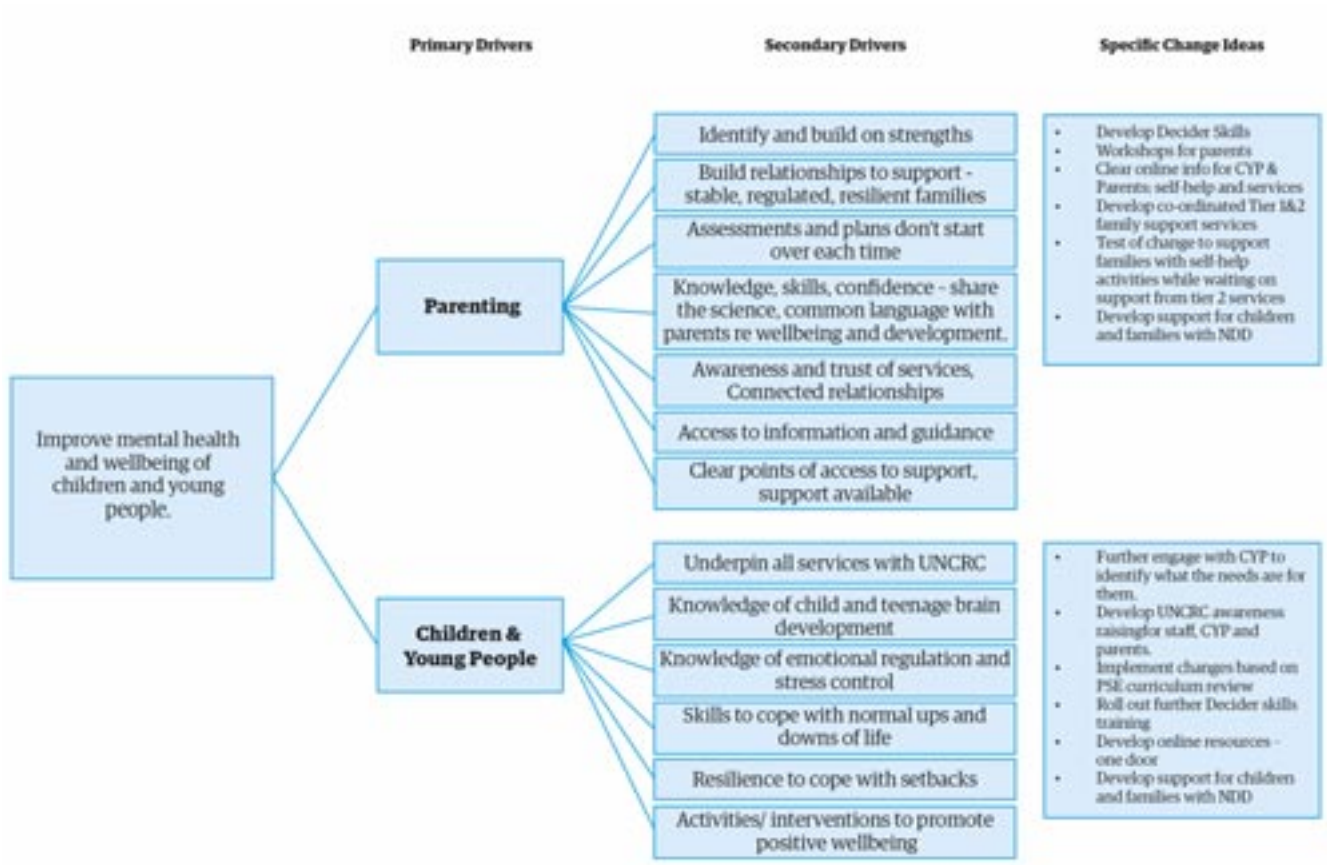
Appendix 4 - Family Support Services

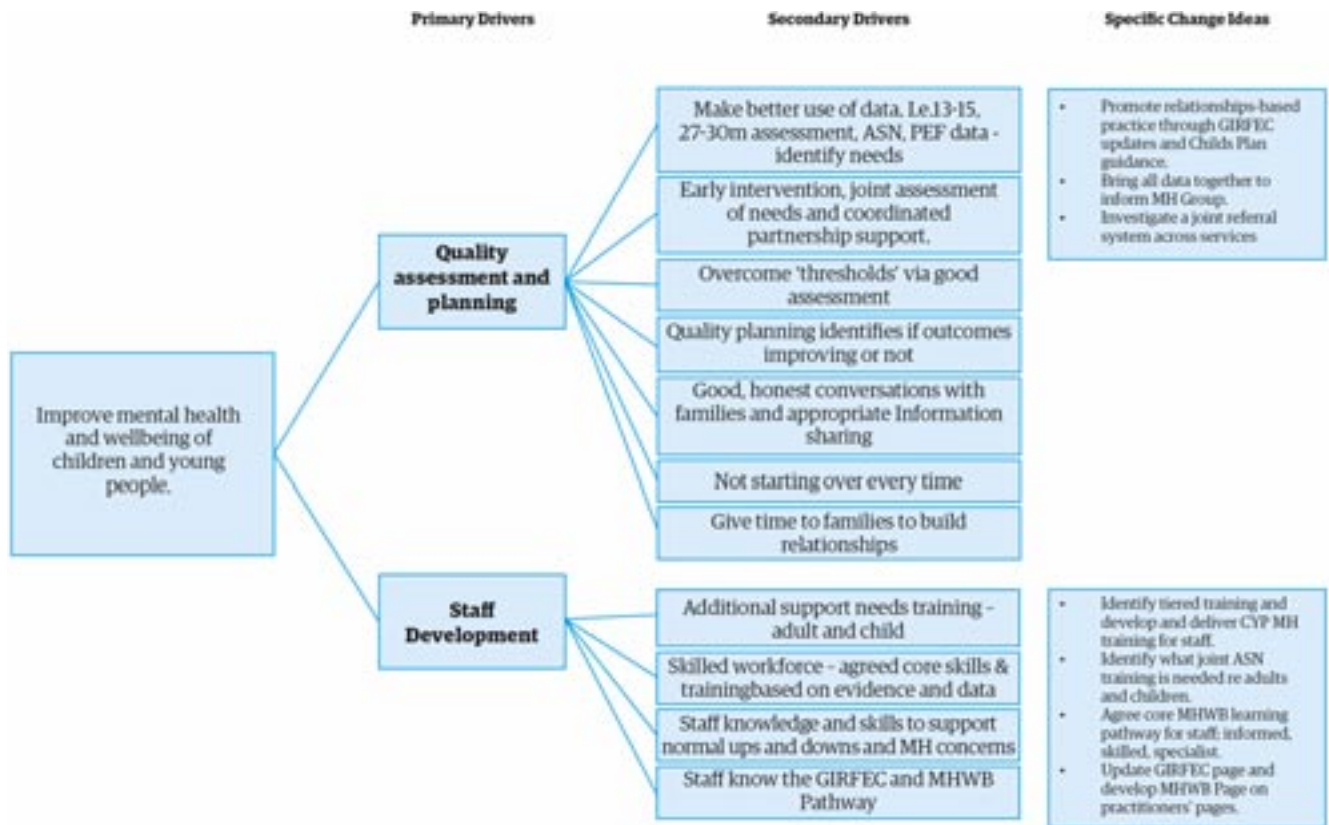


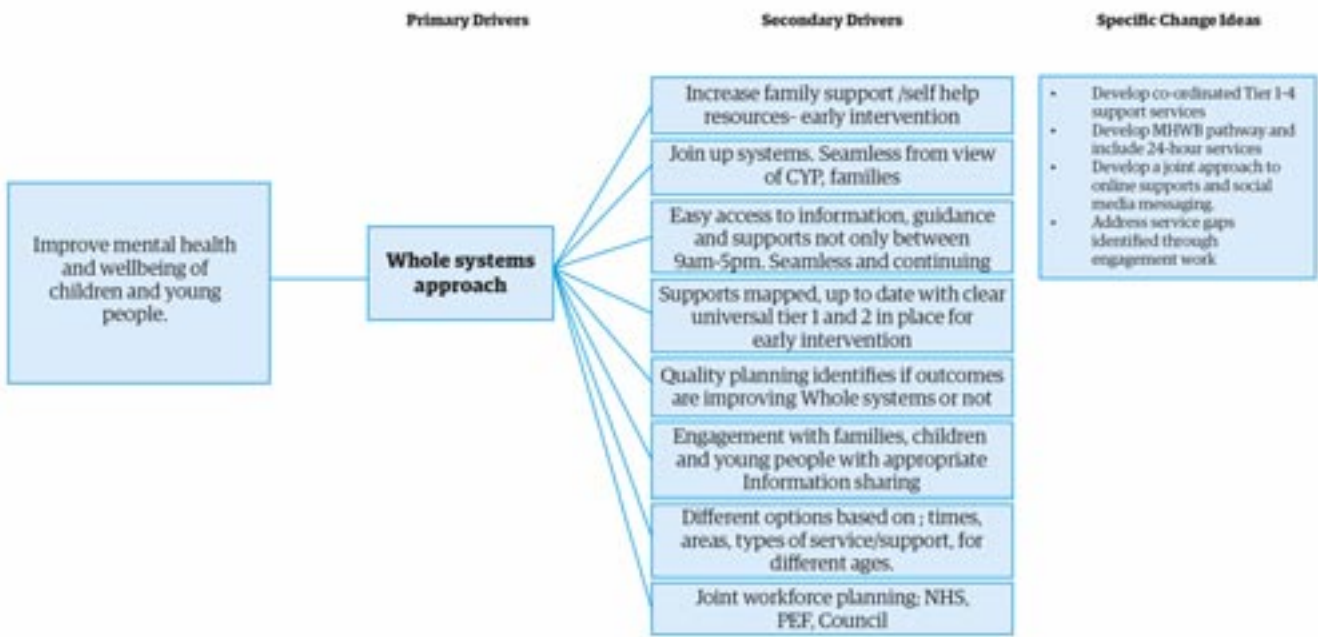
Appendix 5 - GIRFEC Driver Diagram

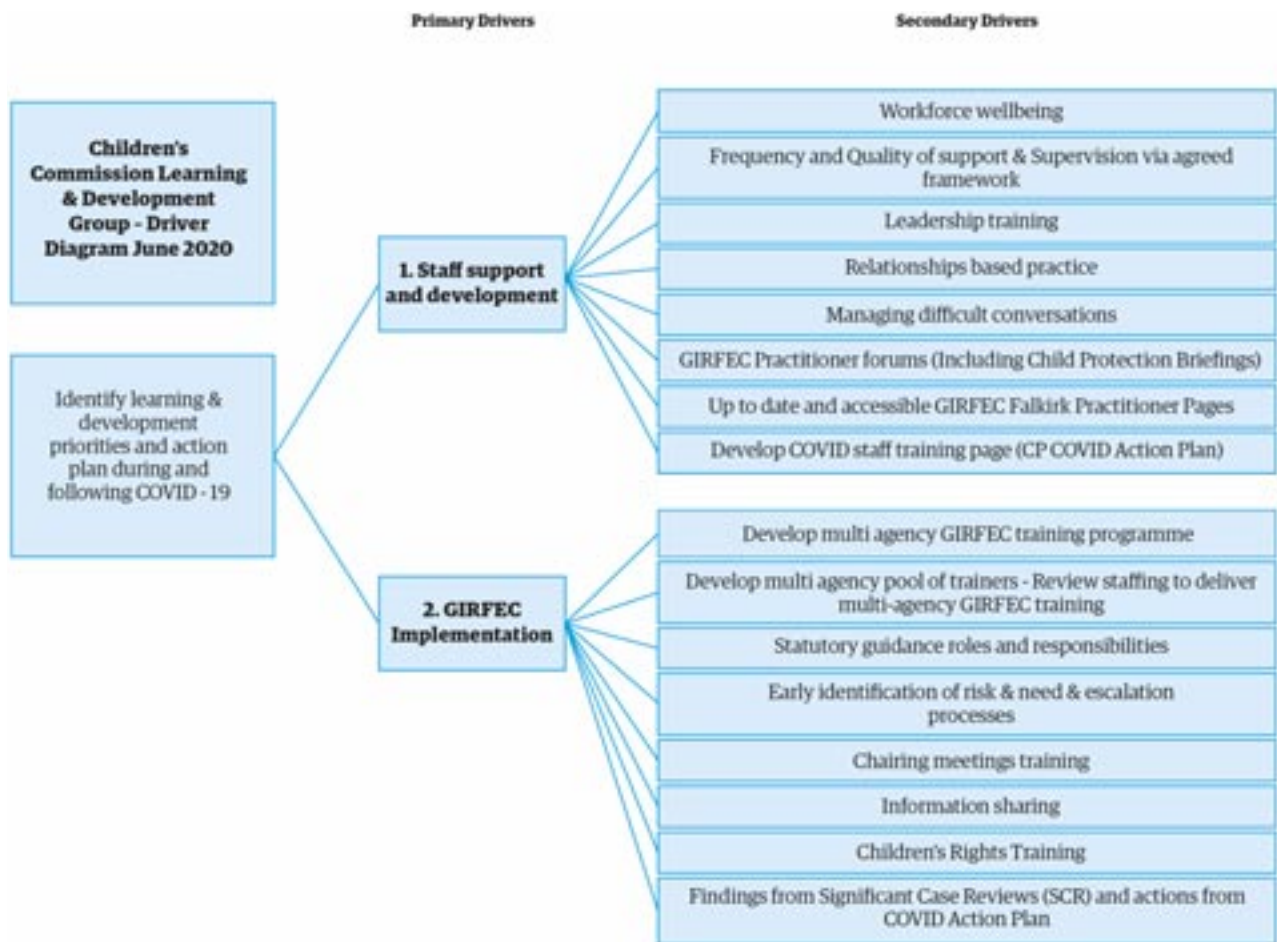


Appendix 6 - Mental Health and Wellbeing Driver Diagram

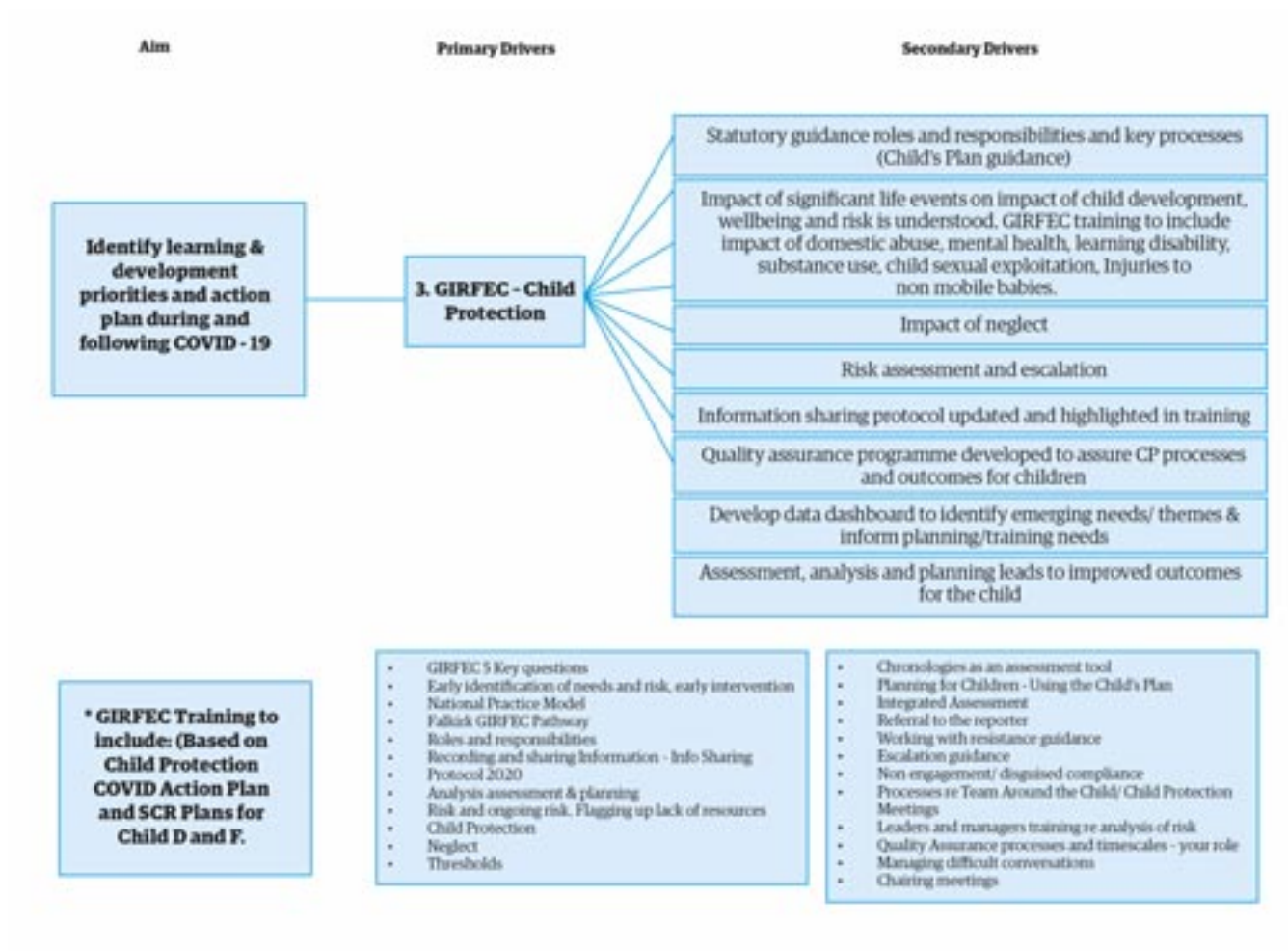


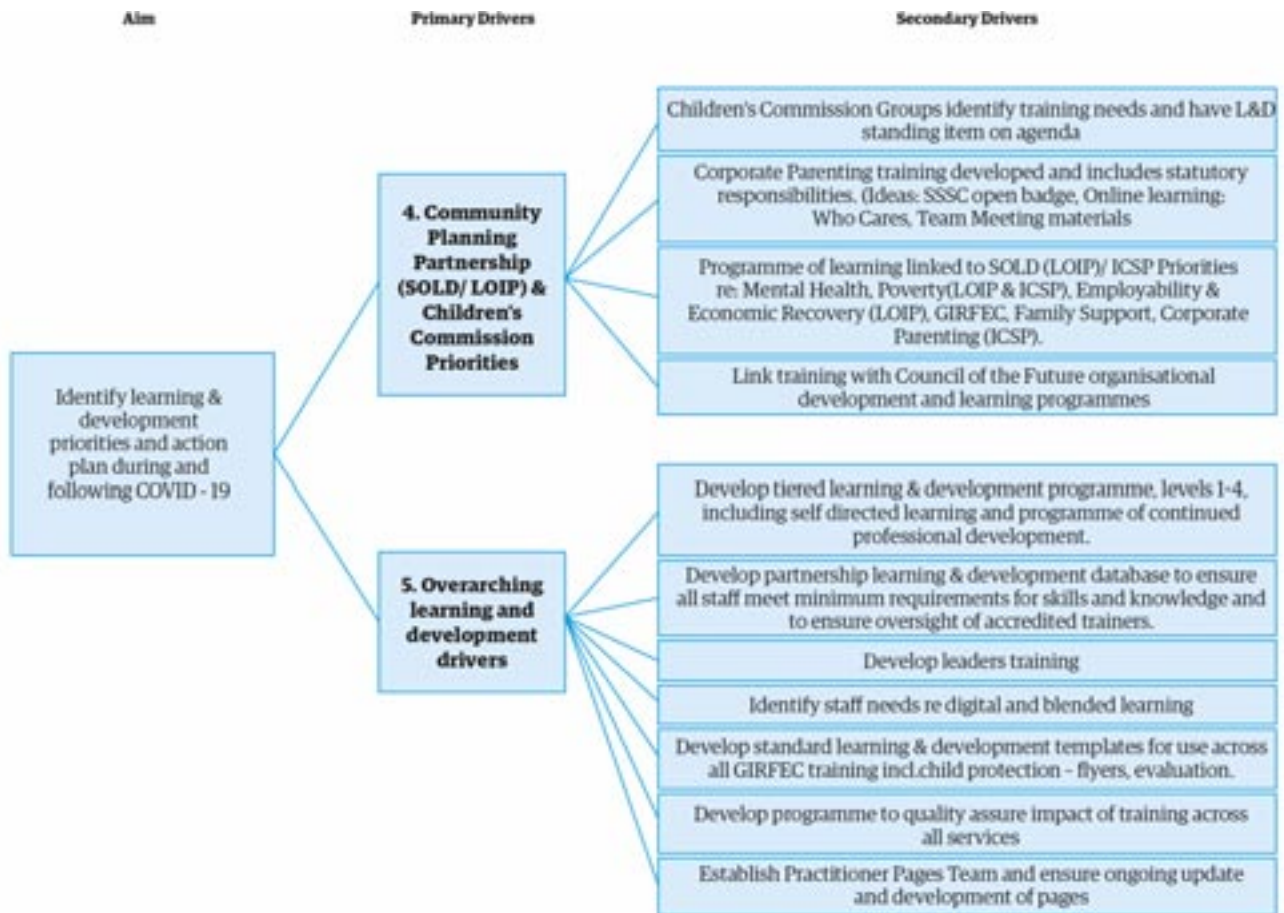






Appendix 7 - Workforce Learning & Development Driver Diagram











Falkirk Council

