



Midlothian Children and Young People's Services Plan 2023 - 2026

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'a great green place to grow'



Foreword

It is with immense pride and great enthusiasm that I present the Midlothian Children's Services Plan for 2023-2026. This comprehensive and forward-thinking plan is the result of dedicated collaboration amongst stakeholders, service providers and the wider community. As we embark on this new chapter, we recognise the importance of nurturing our most valuable resource: the children and young people who will become the future leaders and responsible citizens of our society.

The world today is changing at an unprecedented pace, with new challenges and opportunities emerging every day. We must equip our children with the resilience and adaptability needed to thrive in this ever-evolving landscape. This plan is a testament to our commitment to create an environment where every child and young person in Midlothian feels supported and empowered to achieve their full potential.

We aim to provide equitable access to high-quality education, healthcare and social services, ensuring that no child or young person is left behind, regardless of their background, ability, or circumstance. Collaboration is the key to delivering impactful and coordinated support. We will continue to forge partnerships between service providers, local authorities and community members, to harness their collective wisdom and resources for the benefit of our children and young people.

As we look to the future, we recognise the importance of engaging with children, families, and the wider community to shape the direction of our services. Their invaluable insights and perspectives will inform our decision-making and guide us on our path to creating a brighter tomorrow for all children and young people in Midlothian.

The journey ahead will not be without challenges, but we are confident that through our commitment and determination we will achieve our shared vision of an inclusive and vibrant community, where every child and young person is given the chance to succeed.

Together we will make the Midlothian Children's Services Plan for 2023-2026 a reality. The future of our community is in our hands, and with your support, we will create a lasting legacy of opportunity and hope for generations to come.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joan Tranent', is written over a faint, light blue grid background.

Joan Tranent

Chair of the Midlothian GIRFEC Partnership

Our Community Planning Partnership

Community planning strives to improve people's lives by using all available resources, as outlined by the *Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015*. Key statutory and Third Sector organisations across Midlothian join together in the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) to plan services with communities that will deliver better outcomes for people.

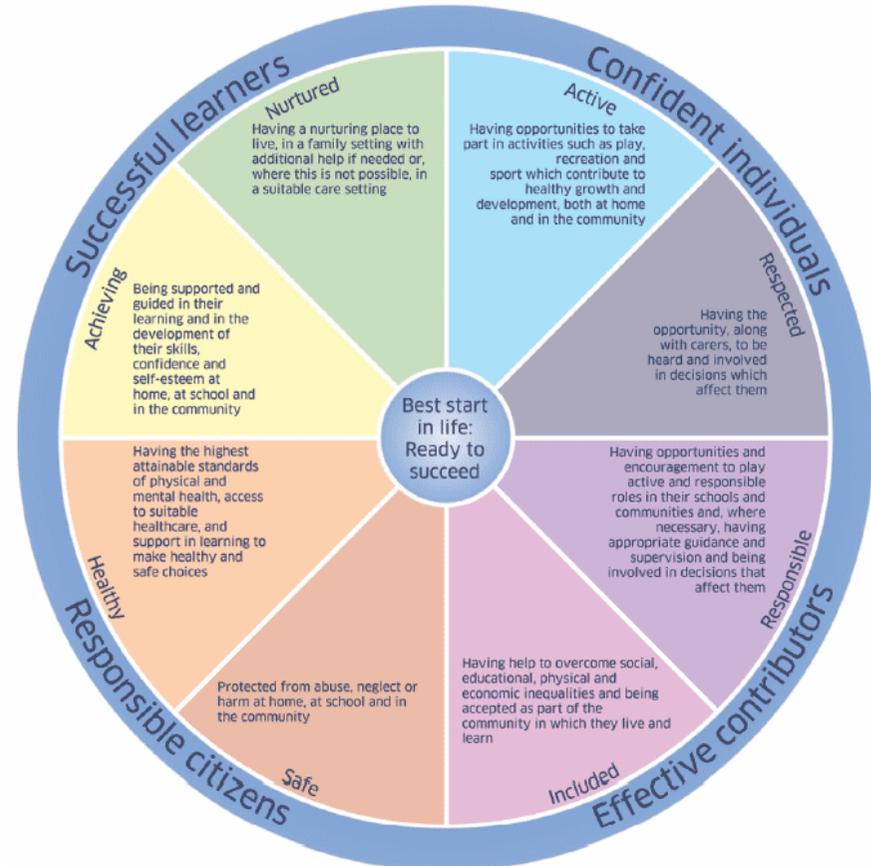
This Plan was developed by the GIRFEC Board (Getting it Right for Every Child), who form part of the Community Planning Partnership and include a wide range of organisations who provide services to children and young people across Midlothian.

Our Vision

Our vision is for children and young people in Midlothian to have the best possible start in life and live safe, healthy, active, happy, and independent lives.

The national Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) Wellbeing Framework forms the foundation of our plan. We

have developed a set of priorities that will enable us to achieve wellbeing outcomes outlined in the diagram below. Our new success criteria will help us to monitor our progress and the impact we are making to the lives of children, young people and their families.



Getting it right for every child - wellbeing framework

Our Principles

This Plan is built around a set of core principles that guide everything we do together. These principles guide the objectives we set to ensure we are getting value from the Partnership and the most benefit for our children and young people.

Our five core principles are:

1. We will work together across our partnership

We will ensure that all objectives involve working together in partnership, making best use of our collective skills and knowledge and the influence that combined service provision can have to address complex social issues.

2. We will prioritise early intervention and prevention

Our priority is to address problems before they become crises, allowing our resources to be used more effectively. When need is identified, we will react promptly and endeavour to provide the right services at the right time, with the knowledge that early intervention and support leads to better outcomes.

Through a range of universal and specialist services, we will ensure that every child and young person has access to opportunities that will allow them to explore and fulfil their potential.

3. We will respect the rights of children and young people

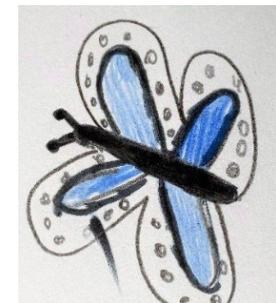
We will ensure children and young people have their rights protected and their voices heard. Children, young people and their families are best placed to determine what they need to live healthy and happy lives. We will ensure that they are involved in co-designing solutions that support their needs.

4. We will reduce inequalities

We will work to ensure fair and equitable access to health and wellbeing services and support for children, young people and families. We will work in partnership to plan and deliver services in proportion to need within local communities.

5. We use local data to inform our actions

Taking a data-driven approach will enable us to make informed decisions that focus on addressing the areas of greatest need within in our communities. We will measure the impact of our work to ensure we are meeting our objectives and adapt our approach where necessary.



Involving children, young people and families

This plan has been informed by the views, needs and experiences of children, young people and families in Midlothian. Opportunities exist for children and young people to have their voices heard and to inform service and community planning.

Children and young people's voices in education

We regularly hold focus groups with pupils across Midlothian schools to consult with children and young people on local and national issues.

On a national level, the view and opinions we gathered from children and young people on the Scottish Government's 'The National Discussion' allowed us to share how they feel about their education and what their suggestions and priorities were for the future of education in Scotland.

On a local level, we are currently carrying out a statutory consultation with children and young people, on a proposal to build a new school within our local authority. As this may result in changes to our catchment areas and provide the opportunity for learners to attend a new school in their area, their input is essential.



Youth Community Planning Hackathon

In October 2022, our first Youth Community Planning Hackathon took place at the Dalkeith Campus which provided a platform for Midlothian's children and young people to voice their views. 67 young people from across Midlothian attended the event where they discussed a wide range of themes. They told us:

- ❖ Focus on well being
- ❖ Increase the voice and influence of children and young people
- ❖ Provide information on support, activities and places for young people
- ❖ Deliver more activities and spaces for children and young people.

Midlothian Youth Platform (MYP)

MYP is an independent and youth-led organisation involving young people aged 12 -21. MYP encourages youth participation and provides young people in Midlothian a platform to share their views with policy makers and to influence decision making processes. ([Midlothian Youth Platform \(MYP\) | Midlothian Council](#)).



Midlothian Champions Board

Midlothian Champions Board is a forum for care-experienced young people. They consult widely with care experienced young people and meet regularly with senior officers to highlight issues and to inform children's services planning and service delivery. In response to consultation with the Champions Board, Midlothian Leisure Services have introduced a leisure card for care-experienced young people, which offers free or substantially reduced fees for a range of sporting and leisure activities. Midlothian Champions Board have co-designed and decorated the Hearing Centre to create a less clinical and more young-person friendly environment. They are also currently developing a "family firm" approach that offers employment opportunities to care experienced young people.

Midlothian Early Action Partnership

The National Lottery-funded *Midlothian Early Action Partnership* (MEAP) undertook a [systems mapping](#) of mental health services and supports available in Midlothian. 49 children and young people participated in this research. MEAP then funded a one-year, youth-led 'test of change'. This involves co-developing a 'youth wellbeing space' for young people. A place where young people can feel safe, have fun and make new friends. This space is called *One Youth*.

National policy landscape

There is a range of national strategies and plans that focus on improving the lives of children, young people and their families across Scotland. Many of these plans have common goals to improve the health, wellbeing and development of children and young people.

“We want all children and young people to live in an equal society which enables them to flourish, to be treated with kindness, dignity and respect, and to have their rights upheld at all times.”

Getting it right for every child



Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) is Scotland's commitment to provide all children, young people and their families with the *right support* at the *right time*. GIRFEC provides a consistent framework and shared language for promoting, supporting, and safeguarding the wellbeing of children and young people. It provides a focus on changing culture, systems and practice for the benefit of all.

Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 aims to improve the lives of children and young people in Scotland, by providing a range of measures to promote their welfare, safety and rights. It includes provisions on early years and early intervention, children's services planning and the role of the lead professional in supporting children, young people and families.

Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022-26 aims to reduce childhood poverty in Scotland and sets out a range of actions that will be taken to meet this aim. The delivery plan focuses efforts on addressing the causes of child poverty and supporting families at greatest risk of poverty through collaborative action.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Every child and young person under the age of 18 has rights, no matter who they are, where they live or what they believe in. Fundamental to those rights is the notion that children and young people are entitled to expect appropriate care, protection, and consideration from adults.

The UNCRC is based on four key principles:

1. All rights belong to all children without discrimination or exception
2. The best interests of the child should be the first consideration for actions that affect them
3. All children have the right to life, survival and development
4. All children have the right to participate.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, Part 1 (section 2) highlights the duties on public authorities in relation to the UNCRC. Public authorities (including all local authorities and health boards) are required to publish a report on the steps they have taken every three years, to ensure they are meeting their responsibility with regard to the UNCRC requirements. The UNCRC provides our GIRFEC Partnership with a platform to help us ensure that children and young people have their rights protected and their voices heard.



UNCRC ARTICLES

The Convention Rights also complement the *Getting It right for every child* (GIRFEC) wellbeing indicators, which are *Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, and Included*.

The Promise

In February 2020, Scotland made a promise to care experienced children and young people:

“You will grow up loved, safe and respected. And by 2030, that promise must be kept.”



The Promise sets out a 10-year transformational programme, concluding in 2030. The five underpinning foundations of *The Promise* are:

1. **Voice** – listening to children and young people and ensuring they are meaningfully involved in decisions that affect them
2. **Family** – nurturing love within families and keeping families together where possible
3. **Care** – belonging to a loving home and being able to live with siblings
4. **People** – developing relationships and supporting adults involved to be compassionate in their care and decision-making
5. **Scaffolding** – providing a supportive framework of help for children and families when needed.

The Scottish Attainment Challenge is an initiative that aims to achieve equity in education, with a particular focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap. It includes focused and targeted improvement activity in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, and supports initiatives to ensure that all of Scotland's children and young people have the opportunity to reach their full potential.



The Youth Employment Strategy aims to increase employment opportunities for young people in Scotland, by providing support and training to help them enter the labour market. It includes a range of measures to improve education and training, as well as support for employers to recruit and train young people.

Poverty action

Our efforts are focused on helping the Scottish Government achieve their goal of eradicating child poverty. Our primary objective throughout this Plan is to decrease the number of families in Midlothian living in poverty.

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 outlines interim goals for Scotland to attain by 2023/24 to reach the ambitious 2030 targets. In 2021/22, an estimated 22.7% of Midlothian's children were living in families affected by poverty, around 4590 children¹. The Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing cost of living crisis continue to impact families and substantial work is necessary to protect Midlothian's children from the consequences of poverty.

The issue of child poverty in Midlothian is extensive and intricate, involving numerous factors. We plan to thoroughly examine this landscape, along with its outcomes and activities, to ensure clear accountability and well-coordinated efforts across Midlothian. We have re-evaluated our planning and governance structures to better address child poverty's root causes through local actions. The Improvement Service has assisted us in conducting a self-assessment, and we will

continue collaborating with them to refine our child poverty strategy and respond to the cost of living crisis.

The Child Poverty Working Group is tasked with creating the annual [Local Child Poverty Action Report](#), which outlines our actions to combat child poverty and documents our progress.

Throughout this Plan's duration, we will prioritise maximising family income and financial resilience, and reducing the most significant impacts of poverty for low income families. We will ensure that families have equitable access to welfare and debt advice and enhanced pathways to support.

A Midlothian Poverty Profile will be developed to track our progress, using key poverty and risk indicators to ensure we use relevant local data to inform our actions.



¹ End Child Poverty, Local child poverty indicators 2021-22, estimates of rates, after housing costs, <https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/child-poverty/>

Place-making for children and young people

The health and wellbeing of children and young people is influenced by their surroundings, including where they live, play, learn and relax, and the infrastructure surrounding these locations.

The GIRFEC Partnership supports children's rights to grow up in healthy environments and access a variety of health-promoting places and spaces. We will develop a partnership approach to improving spaces, to ensure that Midlothian is a place where children and young people enjoy growing up (this is sometimes referred to as *spatial planning*). This priority action links with the Local Development Plan, which sets out how we develop and use land, and how we protect and conserve our natural assets and amenities. It also supports the Midlothian Youth Strategy, which is in development.

Commissioning

We will develop a framework for joint commissioning of services. This will better support our Partnership to identify local needs, resources and priorities to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. Structured working with stakeholders (including children, young people and families/carers) will enable us to design services around children, young people and families.



Information sharing

We will strengthen information sharing between partners, to create a more co-ordinated approach to providing the most appropriate and effective services for children, young people and families in Midlothian, leading to better outcomes for all.

For example, when all relevant professionals involved in a child's care have access to the same information, they can make better-informed decisions about the best course of action for that child. This can help to ensure that any support is tailored to the child's specific needs and can improve outcomes in areas such as education, health and social development. Improved information sharing can also help to identify patterns and trends in the needs of children and families across Midlothian, enabling us to improve early and preventative action.

What the data tells us

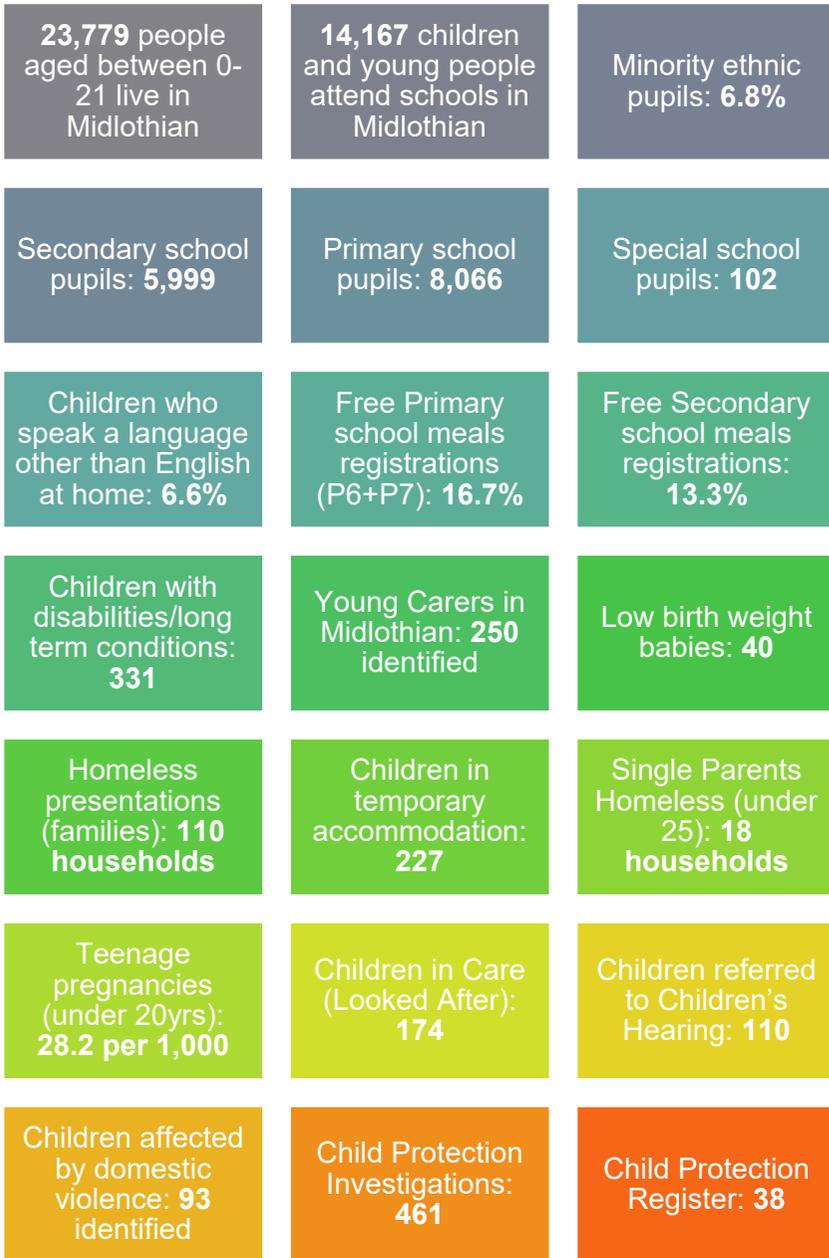
Midlothian has a relatively young population, with around 26% of residents aged between 0-21 years of age. This has increased over recent years and the trend is expected to continue.

Our data is telling us that Midlothian is doing well in relation to a range of key outcomes. It is worth noting that average figures for the whole population mask significant discrepancies between population groups, with poorer outcomes seen for those living in areas of higher socio-economic deprivation. For example, in the general Midlothian community, there has been a decrease from 21.3% (2012-15) to 12.6% (2019-22) of women who smoke when pregnant. However, of women living in the most deprived areas of Midlothian, 30% are recorded as smoking in pregnancy. Smoking in pregnancy can lead to several health and developmental issues for babies and children.

Physical and mental health

In general, Midlothian children and young people are as healthy as their counterparts in other areas of Scotland.

Since 2012, the percentage of children with healthy weight has decreased from 77.5% to 70.3% in 2020/21. This highlights a trend of more young people being overweight,



which increases their risk for type 2 diabetes. Currently we are piloting a Whole Systems Approach to Type II Diabetes Prevention in the local areas of Mayfield and Easthouses.

Our data on mental health support shows a fragmented geographical service landscape, indicating possible inequities in distribution and access to provision. Discrepancies are also found in service provision for different age groups. For example, there are a variety of services available for young adults aged 18 and over, with comparatively fewer early interventions for younger teenagers. The *Community Supports Framework* funding has enabled partners to address some of these gaps in support.

When children and young people do not receive timely support for their mental health needs, this can lead to spikes of demand for high need support occurs. We will respond to these challenges by developing a *Single Point of Access* within Midlothian that will enable local children and young people to more quickly and easily access low, moderate and acute levels of support from mental health and wellbeing services, according to their need. The aim is for each child or young person to receive the right care at the right time and in the right way. In addition, children and young people will receive the appropriate needs-based support whilst they are assessed for neurodevelopmental concerns.

[Scotland's Wellbeing: The Impact of COVID-19](#), outlines key findings on the harmful impacts the pandemic had on children

and young people's education and health. The social and language development of young children were particularly impacted, as early learning could not be replicated in remote learning in the same way that older children's education was.

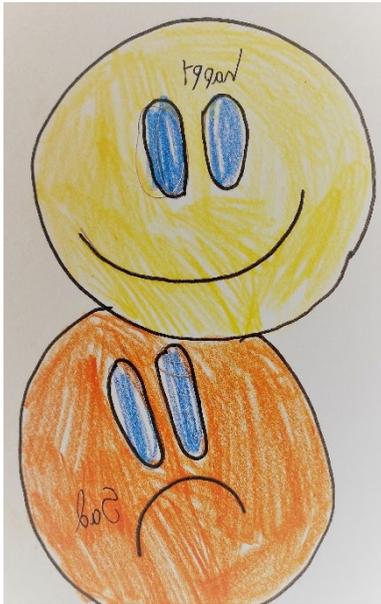
Partnership working has been critical to providing different supports to meet the changing needs of children and families during and beyond the pandemic. The cost of living crisis has further exacerbated the impact of the pandemic on children and families. Continuing to address these needs is the focus of this 2023-2026 Integrated Children's Services Plan. This includes applying a partnership approach to test targeted support during early years to reduce inequalities and providing holistic whole-family wellbeing support.



Children and young people in need

In 2020/21, an estimated 20% of Midlothian's children and young people lived in low-income households.

The percentage of children and young people aged 0-25 years who live in the most access-deprived areas has increased from 18% (2011) to 27.7% (2020).² This means more children and young people in Midlothian have to travel further to access services, which can put them at a disadvantage.



In response to what the data tells us, we will prioritise supporting children and young people to safely and easily make use of facilities and activities across Midlothian. We will provide young people with access to more positive physical environments.

All professionals will be appropriately trained and equipped to deliver services in a trauma-informed way, so that

more children and young people feel safe.

Education

According to the Scottish Government's National Improvement Framework, Midlothian's primary schools have seen an improvement in reading, writing, and numeracy outcomes in recent years (Scottish Government, 2021). However, there are still areas for improvement, with secondary school attainment rates in Midlothian falling slightly below the national average (Midlothian Council, 2019).

In 2022, 40% of Midlothian's students required additional support, which is an increase of 13% since 2018. As part of this Plan, we will work hard to improve the transition for children and young people with Additional Support Needs into services, so that it is done in a planned, safe and seamless way.

The actions identified in this plan are designed to respond to what the data is telling us. With a robust commissioning process, we will work together more effectively to ensure that services are in place that provide children, young people and families with the support they need.

² Source: Public Health Scotland ScotPHO Inequalities Profiles Tool.

Our 12 shared priority themes, outcomes and actions

Priority Theme	Outcome	Action
Children's and Young People's Rights	1. The rights of children and young people in Midlothian are respected in everything we do	Ensure UNCRC principles are incorporated in all partnership programmes
	2. Families are supported to stay together at home	Deliver the actions outlined in The Promise and the Midlothian Corporate Parenting plans
	3. Children and young people have improved access to a variety of safe and health-promoting places and spaces in Midlothian	Develop a partnership approach to Spatial Planning that ensures Midlothian is a place where children enjoy growing up
Children's and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing	4. Midlothian's children and young people have timely access to appropriate emotional, mental health, and wellbeing support	Develop a single point of access to efficiently allocate mental health and wellbeing supports
	5. Children and young people receive the appropriate needs-based support whilst they are assessed for neurodevelopmental concerns	Implement a neurodevelopmental pathway in line with the Scottish Government service specification, linking with the single point of access
	6. All professionals are appropriately trained and equipped to deliver services in a trauma-informed way	Implement Trauma Informed Practice throughout the partnership workforce
Whole Family Wellbeing	7. Families receive holistic support to help to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people and families	Implement our whole family wellbeing approach and make best use of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund
	8. Young people transition into services in a planned, safe, and seamless manner	Develop a Transitions Framework to support local services and processes
	9. Families are supported in a way that demonstrably improves outcomes for mothers and babies	Apply a partnership approach to test targeted support during pregnancy and early years to reduce inequalities
	10. Lower numbers of children and young people live in relative poverty	Implement and deliver on the actions set out in the Local Child Poverty Action Plan
Information Sharing and Commissioning	11. Joint commissioning is in place, to better support our Partnership to identify local needs, resources and priorities to improve outcomes for children, young people and families	Develop robust joint commissioning processes and oversight
	12. Strengthened GIRFEC practice ensures information is shared proactively to aid prevention and early intervention	Strengthen information sharing between partners to effectively support prevention and early intervention measures

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