

**ANGUS INTEGRATED CHILDREN'S SERVICES
'THE ANGUS PROMISE' PROGRESS REPORT
2021– 2024**

**Getting It Right for Care Experienced Children, Young People, and
their Families**



The Promise

Scotland's Ambition for our children and young people

***"We grow up loved, safe, and respected so
that we realise our full potential."***

#Angus Promise

Your Voice

We will listen to you. We will create opportunities and environments for you to talk to us and recognise you as an individual.

Your Family and Relationships

We will support you to stay with your family, if it is safe, as it is the best place for you to live. Where you can't stay with your family, we promise to support you to keep relationships with people who are important to you.

Your Rights and Opportunities to Learn

We will understand and respect you and your care experiences and the impact that these may have on your learning. We will ensure you get what you need to thrive in education by identifying and breaking down any barriers to your learning and being included in school and in the community.

Your Mental and Emotional Health and Wellbeing

We will ensure you have access to a range of different services, so you feel supported to manage your trauma and loss. We will recognise the importance of one key relationship to support you with your wellbeing.

Your Right to Move on to a Bright Future

We will support you, when you are ready, to move on from care. We will behave like good parents by supporting you to be independent whilst also being there for you when you need us.

Keeping our Promise to you!

To keep these promises to you, we need to work together. We will ensure our policies, procedures and importantly our actions are joined up so the Angus 'scaffolding' (the people and services) supports your needs.

Where this does not happen well enough or fast enough, we will challenge each other and work together to improve and learn from our mistakes. We will bring everything we do back to what difference does it make for you. We will support the workforce to understand the importance of caring and respecting you making sure we do not make you feel different from your peers by our language or actions.

INTRODUCTION

Having been a member and now interim Chair of Angus Integrated Children's Services Group, I am proud of the strong voice our children and young people continue to have in Angus. The work of our advocacy partners, The Promise Team and 'The Hangout', our Promise Ambassadors, Promise groups in schools, school nurses, social workers, teachers, police officers and our valued colleagues in third sector agencies has ensured the experiences, views and wishes of young people drive what we do, and is clear throughout this report. I have been privileged to see the shift in focus towards children's rights being right at the heart of what we do but I am all too aware that despite our best efforts to improve children's experience of love, care, security, and safety, too many children experience disrupted care, relationships, and loss. We continue to work both locally and as national partners to influence ongoing investment and development of supports and services for children and families and keep a focus on early help and keeping families together.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing Chair Mr Mark Armstrong who has ably led our integrated partnership for over 5 years and made sure the Promise firmly underpins our ambitions as a local children's services partnership.

The work in this report is largely led through our 'Leading the Promise' group, a vibrant and well attended group with wide local and regional representation from a range of partners and I thank members of this group for their creative vision, focus on connecting directly with young people and undertaking local developments to improve supports and services for children and young people. There is a lot to be proud of and a lot still to do.

As we bring this period to a close, the next national [Promise Plan 2024-2030](#) is about to launch and I look forward to seeing the Angus contribution to leading the way in support for care experienced children and young people,



Elaine Cruickshank
Child Health Commissioner for Tayside and Interim Chairperson, Angus Integrated Children's Services Group

BACKGROUND

In January 2021, a large-scale virtual event took place to consult on the priorities for the 2021-2024 Angus Corporate Parenting Promise Plan. Within this event young people supported by Who Cares? Scotland shared some of their personal experiences of being care experienced, where they felt some of the gaps in service were, and their thoughts on what they felt should be the priorities in Angus. The young people also joined participation groups with the corporate parents to highlight what they felt needed to be improved to ensure the care, experienced by young people, was the best it could be. This information alongside the findings of the Independent Care [Review](#) and wider feedback from young people, professionals, parents, carers and analysis of data regarding outcomes for care experienced young people, shaped the priorities and areas for development that informed the strategic needs assessments used to create the [2021-24 Angus Promise Plan](#).

At the beginning of 2023, the Angus Promise Team, a virtual team of Promise leads from across social work and advocacy services, started a mapping project in partnership with Promise Scotland to assess local progress towards meeting the [Plan 21-24](#) Calls to Action. This work included multi-agency input from social work, housing, health, education, police and third sector to determine where we need to focus our efforts to ensure we keep our Promise to the children of Angus.

Leading the Promise in Angus

The Corporate Parenting Board is an advisory body whose main task is to monitor and ensure the delivery of improved services to our care experienced children and young people across a range of agencies. The Corporate Parenting Board became part of Angus Integrated Children's Services Group (AICSG) in June 2022. The AICSG considers the health, accommodation, education, and employment needs of care experienced children and young people. Members receive reports and information to assess the quality of the care given to our care experience population and identify any shortfalls which require action and/or investment to support improvements for children and young people.

The Leading the Promise Group reports directly to the AICSG (Appendix 1) and works together to share information and support changes that will improve the lives of our care experienced children and young people in Angus.

There are a range of members from across Angus including Education and Lifelong Learning, Social Work, NHS Tayside, Active Schools, Angus Alive and Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, and organisations representing the voice of young people, Who Cares? Scotland and Angus Independent Advocacy who both play a key role.

Review of Angus Promise Plan 2021-2024

Angus Promise Plan 2021-2024, based on the findings of the Care Review and our commitment to uphold the rights of children, was designed to support us as corporate

parents to make changes that would ensure we keep our promise to all our care experienced children and young people. Over the course of our plan and led by what is important to Angus young people, we have taken a particular focus on two key areas: voice and relationships. This report presents an overview of the progress made in Angus and identifies where we still have work to do.

YOUR VOICE - We will listen to you by using the standards you have set us. We will create opportunities and environments that encourage you to engage with us and recognise you as an individual; we will work hard to provide different opportunities for you in all matters that affect you.

To ensure that the voices of children, young people and families are heard, and they are able to influence decisions that impact them, funding has been increased for Independent Advocacy services throughout Angus. As part of the expansion of advocacy services, an additional £60,000 annual investment in advocacy for children, young people and families has allowed us to work in partnership with Angus Independent Advocacy (AIA) to provide Family Advocacy as well as recruiting an additional young person advocate for children. We have also continued to commission individual advocacy and group advocacy from Who Cares? Scotland. Young people's views gathered from this work have fed into the improvement work across all services involved in supporting care experienced children. The expansion of advocacy services will ensure we continue to promote the rights of care experienced children and young people to express a view and have that view given due weight upholding United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, Article 12).

Increased access to independent advocacy has been evident in social work assessments, reports, and attendance at care planning meetings where children's views have been supported by the use of independent advocacy. During 2022-23, 57 children and young people received a regular support service from AIA with the average age being 10yrs old. The areas children requested advocacy support with were wide ranging and included family time, current placement and future planning, mental health support, education issues, and transitions. Over the last year we have seen younger children from 12 months old being supported through non-instructed advocacy by both Who Cares? and AIA.

Engagement opportunities for young people to influence change and be involved in decision making has been supported by two care experienced Participation Assistant posts, renamed as Promise Ambassadors, and hosted by Who Cares? Scotland. They have supported young people in our residential houses to participate in new staff recruitment and have delivered training and awareness sessions to social work and education staff as well as being involved in the development of an [Angus Promise video](#) to support raising awareness across the wider workforce.

Training has also been provided to staff and organisations that fall within the remit and responsibilities of being corporate parents. This training has been embedded into our online learning system in Angus Council. The training explains and helps promote understanding of our duties and responsibilities as corporate parents. The Promise Ambassadors have attended sessions with social work staff, head teachers, Angus

wide leadership events as well as groups in the community such as the Rotary Club. During these sessions they provide context and engagement about their lived experience and how the role of a corporate parent is so important and the difference, individually and collectively, that corporate parents can have on the experiences of and opportunities for our care experienced young people. The training has been well evaluated and participants value the opportunity to engage directly with Ambassadors who have lived experience.

In partnership with young people, the Promise Team and Promise Ambassadors we have established a very successful children and young people group, 'The Hangout', for care experienced children aged 5 and above. Since it opened in 2022, numbers of attendees have grown with 36 children registered and between 18 and 25 regularly attending monthly sessions.

Young people also have the opportunity to get involved with project work and provide their views. Examples in 2023 include a focus group of young people who worked with Mairi Damer, a Communications and Media Consultant for Child Protection Committees Scotland, contributing to the design, language, and content of the new Child Protection Committee Scotland "Keeping Safe" campaign. Our young people came up with the creative social media idea of using Tik Tok adverts as a way of reaching large numbers of young people. Another group of children visited furniture and soft furnishing departments with workers to provide their views on redecoration of spaces in social work buildings used by children and families.

Children 'looked after' continue to have individual planning meetings reviewed in accordance with the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 by independent Quality and Review Officers who offer case objectivity to the multi-agency child's planning meeting. Following on from covid restrictions, Review Officers are offering choice on how meetings are held by rolling out digital, direct, and blended meeting options for children and families to support their engagement.

Work has been ongoing to improve how the minutes of meetings are recorded ensuring they are meaningful, but importantly accessible, for children and families to read. A pilot started in July 2022 sending My Plan accessible letters (Appendix 2) directly to primary age children explaining what happened at their meeting and detailing who was there, who is available to help them and what support they will be given. As a result of positive feedback from young people and social workers on the My Plan approach, individualised letters are now being sent to all children and young people. For children under school age, letters are also written and kept on the child's record to support their understanding at a later date.

We remain committed to improving the experience of families involved in our child protection processes. We extended the rollout and have now embedded PREpare, a social work led, strengths-based model that improves child and parental engagement in the child protection planning and decision-making process. The voice of children, including very young children, is central to the PREpare approach, seeing risk and strength from the perspective of the child. A [short film](#) was made locally providing information for families and professionals on the PREpare model.

Since March 2023 PREpare has been offered to all families referred to Initial Child Protection Planning Meetings (CPPM) with a 50% uptake. Feedback from families and professionals has evidenced that PREpare is having a very positive impact upon the Initial Child Protection Planning Meeting in a wide variety of ways. The CPPM had a much more positive emotional atmosphere, parents were less stressed and less oppositional, they felt less intimidated and less judged. Parents appeared fully prepared to hear difficult information and were empowered to ask questions about the process and felt comfortable to say if they did not understand something or wanted information clarified. When other professionals had the summary sheet from the PREpare meeting, they better understood the parents' position and children's views, they had context and were able to read about parents' views, wishes and commitments to change.

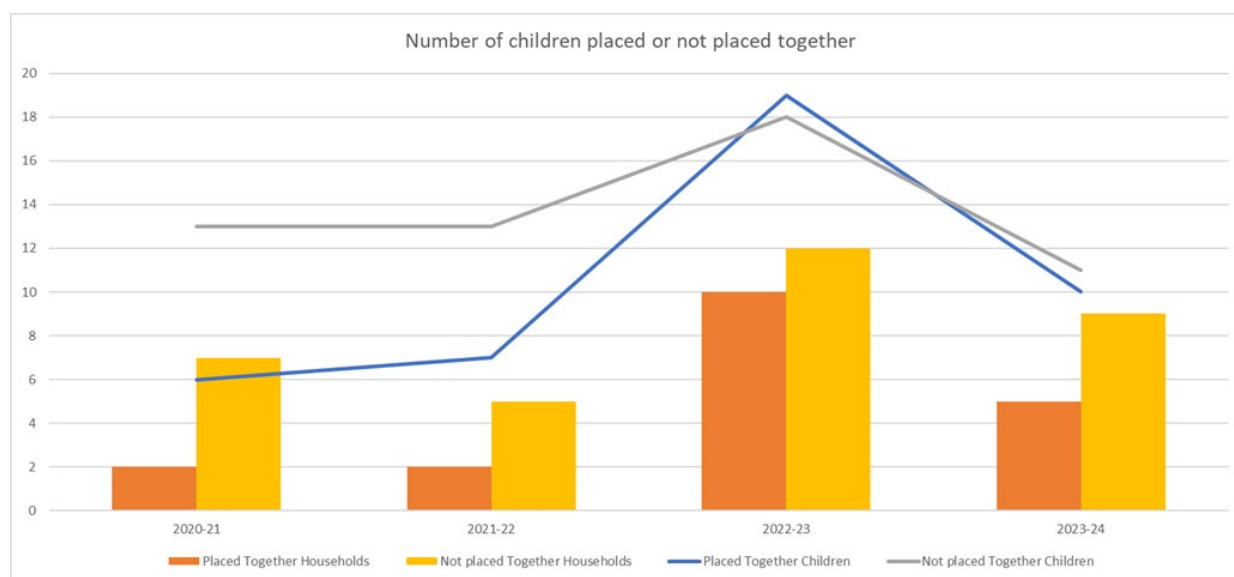
YOUR FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIPS - We will support you to stay with your family as we recognise that, if it is safe, your family is the best place for you to live. Where you cannot remain with your family, we promise to support you to keep and develop relationships with the people who are important to you.

The Glen Clova project, based within the Justice Service extends the provision of gender specific trauma informed support to those women in need, enabling families to access universal services, including pregnant women, those who may be on the periphery of offending or who have completed statutory orders and may benefit from ongoing support to reduce the likelihood of re-offending and improve personal wellbeing. The Glen Clova Project's 4-year pilot concluded in 2022 with an independent evaluation finding that women who engaged in the project did so on average for 12 months and benefited from the approach to address issues of poverty, substance use, mental health, and parenting. In February 2023, Angus Council agreed permanent core funding for the Glen Clova Project in recognition of the positive outcomes delivered. We are exploring the potential to develop the model further as part of our Whole Family Wellbeing programme.

Work has taken place supporting the very important relationships between brothers and sisters including development of training materials, guidance documents on assessments, and improving the quality of our spaces for brothers and sisters and other family members to spend family time together. As part of this work, we are developing data measures including analysis of where children were living in the same household prior to becoming accommodated compared to where they were placed on admission to identify numbers of family groups that have been separated. Family household compositions can be complex and difficult to extract from our client index system, but we have undertaken work on a clear but wide definition of 'family group' to enable this to be reported.

The graph below shows the number of children from a household (family group) who were living together prior to becoming accommodated and compares to where they were accommodated on admission to identify if children remained together (figure 1).

Figure 1 – Family Group Placements



One example of the service responding more flexibly included giving a carer permission to look after more children than initially approved to keep a family group together, allowing them to maintain and continue developing their bond. The social worker in this case also highlighted the immense benefits for the children, for the parents of only having to form relationships with one set of carers, and operational benefits of only having to facilitate and coordinate care with one set of carers.

Where living with their family is not possible, we focus on supporting children to stay together with their brothers and sisters where safe to do so. Where this is not possible or in the best interests of the child, it is important that we nurture and support those lifelong relationships. Identifying relationships that are important to the child and ensuring arrangements are in place to support and maintain these relationships when a child becomes looked after is recorded at the initial reception into accommodation meeting (held with 72 hours) and monitored through the subsequent child planning meetings.

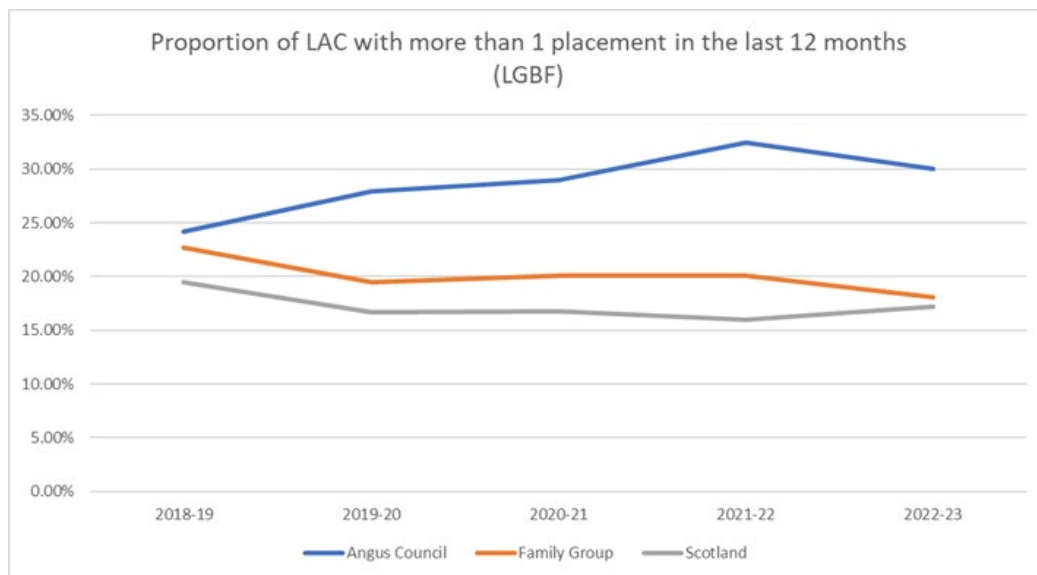
To support stability in placements, reducing the number of moves and short breaks (respite) placements for children, the support carers scheme has been extended. Fifteen of our approved foster carers have members of their extended family providing short breaks for the children they care for. Those family members have been assessed and approved at the Fostering and Adoption Panel.

Within the Fostering Service, carers are paid an enhanced rate to support them to take those children in their care on holiday, minimising the number of short breaks placements experienced by children. A change in Angus policy ended short breaks placements for our youngest children, supporting attachment and nurturing of young babies coming into care.

In 2022-23, the proportion of children experiencing more than one placement decreased by 2.5% but remains higher than the national or our family group average. Tayside-wide work has been undertaken to explore the reasons behind this variation

in performance and compare processes with other local authorities. Early investigations indicate that our use of initial short-term placements is contributing to the higher-than-average figures in Angus. This practice occurs in Angus for a number of reasons, primarily due to the type of local care we have available in an emergency (short breaks care) and taking time to ensure all family options are explored and the child's needs are fully understood before matching to a temporary placement either from our local resources or with an external agency.

Figure 2 Proportion of LAC with more than 1 placement in the last 12 months (LGBF)



Reducing placement moves for care experienced children has also been supported by increasing support services for children engaged with social work services including Enhance, Aberlour Sustain and the provision of a clinical psychologist supporting children to remain at home or preventing placement breakdown. Enhance provides the third tier of staged intensive support available in Angus with commissioned services through Aberlour, Sustain providing stage 2 and Hillcrest Futures offering early support at stage 1. These services collectively offer a staged approach and work closely to ensure the families in greatest need of support have access to the right level of support to meet their needs.

On 31 March 2024, the Carers Service was supporting 144 children and young people living with kinship carers including those looked after, subject to residence orders and those living with extended family before social work involvement, this is an increase on 129 in 2023. Of the 144 children, 62 were looked after in kinship care. Carers Support Team provides support to kinship carers minimising the risk of children experiencing breakdown in placements and placement moves, alongside minimising the financial impact on the service of children moving into higher cost placements.

The Strathmore Short Breaks Centre is now permanently open on a fulltime basis with recurring financial support provided via the Carers Support Fund. This development makes it possible to provide much needed breaks for more children living with complex needs, and their families. An external inspection of Strathmore Short Breaks

Centre in 2023 rated the service as excellent recognising our considered and person-centred approach to supporting young people.

During 2022-23, children's social work services had three unannounced inspections evaluating how well we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing. Two of our children's residential provisions achieved the highest grade possible (Grade 6 excellent). Carseburn Road was inspected in May 2022 and as noted above Strathmore Centre in January 2023. Logan Cottage, a care home for children and young people, inspected in January 2023 was evaluated as adequate. A second unannounced inspection in March 2024 evaluated the service as Grade 4 good with one area for improvement around continuing to embed trauma informed approaches. We are committed to ensuring that all our residential provision for children and young people is of the highest standard.

Providing local placements for children has continued to be extremely challenging. On 31 March 2024, the proportion of 'looked after children' being supported either at home or with family or friends remained the same as 2023 at 38 percent. The low numbers of children being supported at home or with relatives continues to put pressure on alternative placements with the service struggling to meet demand. Due to a local and national shortage of fostering placements, more children and young people are being placed in residential care, or external placements despite recruitment efforts locally. It is critical we increase the number of quality placements locally if we are to support our children and young people to remain in their local communities when it is safe and right for them. This will support children to maintain their relationships with people who are important to them.

Early, flexible support for children at risk of becoming looked after or at risk of placement breakdown has been a key priority over the life of the promise plan and the extension of the 2-year-old early learning and childcare provision which allows all looked after 2-year-olds to access a nursey placement continues to be a valuable support for many families.

In 2022, a discretionary fund via the Welfare Rights Service was established to help families to maximise their income and provide financial help and support. The fund is available to pregnant women, families with children and young adults up to 26 years old in need. As many families continue to experience financial hardship due to the ongoing cost of living crisis, this fund is being continued into 2024-25.

In order to provide families and young people with easy access to information and signposting to early support an [Angus website](#) is under development and will go live in the summer of 2024 with ongoing work to develop the offer and ensure the information is what children, young people and families want.

YOUR RIGHT AND OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN - *We will understand and respect you and your care experiences and the impact that these may have on your learning. We will ensure you get what you need to thrive in education by identifying and breaking down the barriers to your learning and inclusion.*

As part of Angus Education Plan 2022-27, the Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate have been monitoring school attendance and exclusion data for care experienced learners. The annual performance report includes specific reference to the Directorate's duties regarding the Promise. More detailed information about rates of attendance is available [here](#). Further information about the achievements of our care experienced school leaver is available [here](#).

Education staff are supporting care experienced young people to actively participate in all subjects and extra-curricular activities in schools. Active Schools take a targeted approach to identifying and reaching out to engage with young people and are strong partners on Leading the Promise work both in schools and at the young people's social group for care experienced young people, The Hangout.

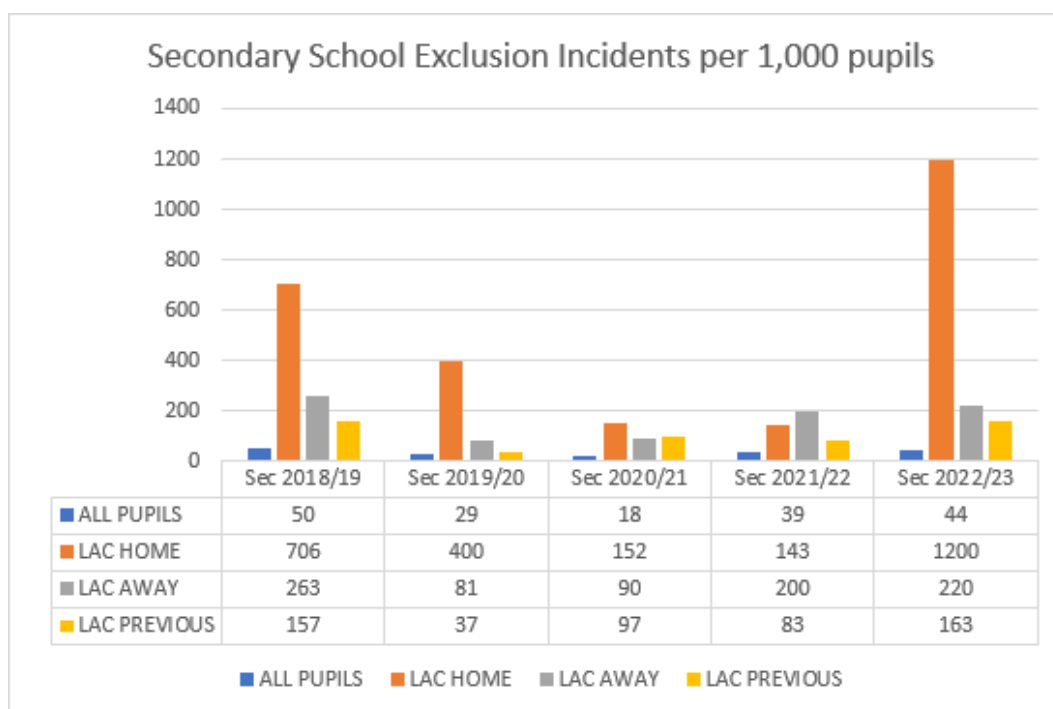
As part of the work by education, care experienced learners are prioritised during Progress in Learning meetings with Head Teachers and a review of timetables of all care experienced children and young people has been undertaken with additional meetings to discuss support, progress, and next steps.

The United Nations on the Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has been a focus across all schools in Angus with one school achieving Gold in the Rights Respecting Schools Awards accreditation, another 13 schools have achieved Silver and 40 schools have achieved the Bronze award. 5 more schools are on target to achieve their Bronze award by the end of the school year meaning all schools in Angus will be accredited as Rights Respecting schools. All schools will have demonstrated they have an understanding of UNCRC and have developed their approaches to engaging, listening, and acting on the views of children and young people. The impact of this is that children and young people are more likely to be engaged in their learning if they feel their rights are prominent in the learning environment.

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) has been included in the ASN service plan. Draft guidance which highlights school attendance data for learners that are looked after has been developed, and consultation on the draft has taken place with young people, school staff and partner services. Training linked to the guidance has been piloted with staff in two secondary schools with all participants reporting increased knowledge, understanding and confidence in relation to supporting EBSA. The guidance will be available to all school staff from June 2024, with information sharing and staff development sessions scheduled for the 2024-25 academic session.

The exclusion rate per 1,000 for secondary age children looked after at home is higher than for all other groups of care experienced young people. The very high rate in 2022-23 is due to the calculation for this measure and refers to 18 exclusion incidents experienced by four individuals. Guidance regarding the prevention and management of exclusions requires all head teachers to contact a Service Leader prior to any care experienced young person being excluded. As can be seen below, the exclusion rate for care experienced young people is higher than for 'all pupils' (figure 3).

Figure 3 Secondary Exclusion Rates



During 2022-23, 14 care experienced young people were supported into further education, with 10 enrolled in Dundee & Angus College placements. Two young people secured a modern apprenticeship with a further two young people attending university, one now in their second year. The number of young people who were in further education at the start of the academic year 2023-24 was 29. One young person was undertaking a modern apprenticeship, 6 were on a university course and 22 had started Dundee & Angus Collage placements. The number of care experienced young people moving on to further education has increased however there remain a range of barriers that continue to face young people to sustain a positive destination and 7 of the 29 young people have not remained in their further education placement either due to a decline in their physical or mental wellbeing, feelings of social isolation, placement or family breakdown or the young person gained employment or moved out with the area.

YOUR MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING - *We will ensure you have access to a range of different services, so you feel supported to deal with any trauma and loss. We will recognise the importance of one key relationship to support you with your wellbeing.*

Supporting the workforce has involved a number of activities including continuing to embed trauma-informed practice and relationship-based practice, building on and sustaining trusting relationships between staff and young people. In 2019, children's service moved to locality-based teams to minimise the number of changes in workers and teams that families experience enabling families to build important, trusting relationships with a lead professional.

Over the last two years, the secure base parenting model has been promoted, supporting carers and workers to better understand children's needs and feel supported to meet them.

The Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate (ELL) have provided Trauma Skilled Practice training which is included in the Angus Education Plan for all ELL staff to have completed modules 1 and 2 of the NES (NHS Education for Scotland) online training by June 2024. Almost all staff completed a post training evaluation survey reporting they found the modules useful. Follow up training, adapted from Education Scotland's Keeping Trauma in Mind resource was piloted by the Education Psychology Service in three schools in November 2023. This training was also well received with most staff reporting they would apply the knowledge and skills learned at the training to their practice. From August 2024 links to the NES modules will be accessible to all staff on Always Learning, Online refresher training will also be provided as part of ongoing professional learning for staff.

Changing the culture and use of language and embedding destigmatising language has been a priority in all aspects of improvement work in Children, Families and Justice service (CFJ) and across Angus Council and partnerships.

We have made moves towards supporting our workforce to reframe their language and promote a change in culture to ensure that we are trauma informed and inclusive. We have an active cohort of Safe and Together trained practitioners who promote a strength-based approach to working with survivors and children who have experienced domestic abuse. We promote a culture which is free from a "failure to protect" discourse and thereby support a shift to a parenting approach with families. An active language working group has been established which has multi-agency representation and has produced guidance for the workforce around use of language.

Children, Families and Justice Directorate introduced a Quality Improvement team to promote the retention of qualified, experienced social workers. This capacity supports the development of professional practice, whole service improvements, including delivery of The Promise and increases resilience in the service. The small team have been successful in securing funding of over £300,000 from the Promise Partnership (Corra Foundation) to improve practice and develop the workforce in relation to key areas of practice.

The introduction of a Quality and Improvement team has ensured oversight of all development and improvement work across social work services for children. The service works in partnership with social work teams to promote, guide and advise groups in respect of improvement. This includes ensuring that consideration is given to UNCRC, shifting paradigms, and embedding destigmatising language.

As part of the improvement work the CFJ Information Governance team offer supported access for all Subject Access Requests (SAR) made by care experienced individuals. We recognised that for some care experienced children and young people and adults reading large volumes of case files can be re-traumatising, so support is offered to work through a timeline detailing a summary of significant events to answer questions or identify what period of their journey they require more detail.

Supporting children and young people's mental health is a high priority for Scottish Government and local authorities. In 2021, funding was made available to local authorities to enable support to be provided to meet children's and young people's mental health and wellbeing needs arising as a result of the pandemic, providing early support for children and young people experiencing wellbeing issues, and their families. Angus, along with all other local authorities, have received an annual funding award to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

For 2022-23, Angus received circa £326K which was used to purchase 'Togetherall', a school counselling service alongside a number of mental health and wellbeing supports based in the community including:

Peer Mentoring (Mental health and wellbeing peer support) young person's service provided by Penumbra (South Angus) and Hillcrest Futures (North Angus) who offer a peer mentoring service to young people in secondary education (11-16 years). Peer support can be social, emotional, or practical support.

Aberlour Primary Support Service provides a Primary Years Wellbeing Service which offers 1-1 sessions and group wellbeing support to children in Angus aged 5-12 years (primary school age) and their parents/carers. The focus is on children experiencing anxiety, low mood, behavioural and social difficulties.

Cedar (Children Experiencing Domestic Abuse Recovery) in Scotland is an innovative multi-agency initiative for children and young people who have social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties as a consequence of their experience of domestic abuse. Cedar provides a therapeutic group work programme for children and young people in recovery from domestic abuse, alongside a concurrent group work programme for mothers. The service is providing access to advice, support, and opportunities to safely leave relationships for young people and woman experiencing abuse.

Clinical Psychology and counselling service provides advice and support for social workers and carers working directly with care experienced young people as well as providing direct input for foster carers, kinship carers and residential staff to better equip them to respond to and support children with complex emotional needs, impacted by their early life trauma.

New Solutions provides a direct service to children and young people identified by social work as requiring support to recover from early life trauma.

Sport for All, Angus Alive membership is providing free leisure access for care experienced children and young people with a focus on those at home and care experienced young adults. The initiative is targeted at breaking down the barriers for care experienced young people, supporting engagement in education, and accessing local community activities. Feedback from young adults engaged with our after-care service Horizon have confirmed the benefits to their mental health and wellbeing as well as supporting socialisation, which has been particularly important for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people.

Young person who uses the gym regularly *"I want to get fit for my football and swimming club and most of my friends go most weeks, so we go together"*

Young person who uses the pool with her friend said *"I like swimming and it's exercise. I get to meet my friend and I can go anytime I want"*

18-year-old who uses the gym regularly *"It boosts my mood and is great for my mental health, I meet other young people there and it's a good part of my social life as I don't know very many people in the area"*

The impact of the services targeted at providing early intervention to support mental health and wellbeing of children and young people is reported to Scottish Government with regular updates provided to AICSG.

YOUR RIGHT TO MOVE ON TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE - We will support you, when you are ready, to move on from care. We will behave like good parents by supporting you to be independent whilst also being there for you when you need us.

The Council is required to provide services that support children leaving care and to eligible care experienced young people. In Angus, these services are delivered through the Horizon service, alongside youth justice services and the planning and provision of support for unaccompanied children.

The number of young people accessing continuing care placements has continued to fluctuate. In the first year 2018-19, eleven young people remained in continuing care placement increasing to nineteen young people in 2020-21, the take up decreased to seventeen young people in 2021-22. By March 2023 twelve young people exercised their eligibility for Continuing Care. In March 2024, a total of eleven young people were in continuing care placements 6 young people were in continuing care placements with their foster carers with a further 3 young people remaining in our children's homes and 2 in external placements. We continue to encourage young people to 'stay put' where they decide this is the right choice for them. Currently we have another 3 young people advising they wish to remain in continuing care placements over the next few months.

Extending placements is generally very positive for individual young people supporting them through a period of transition into independence, an approach which is in-line with the Promise and our Corporate Parenting responsibilities. However, the Continuing Care eligibility has not been fully funded and therefore does impact on both financial resources and the availability of placements for children entering care, a resource already under significant pressure as noted above.

Many care leavers face independence alone and feel isolated and lack a 'safety net' of family and friends. Housing and the Horizon team have worked in partnership to develop a joint housing protocol to support their corporate parenting responsibilities by jointly addressing the diverse accommodation and support needs of care leavers and other young people engaged with the Horizon team. The main objectives of the protocol are:

- To prevent care leavers experiencing homelessness at the point of leaving care or later

- To jointly assess and meet the diverse housing and support needs of the young people
- To ensure the young people can access rapid support tailored to their specific needs and circumstances, including those at high risk of tenancy breakdown
- To support partnership working and shared responsibility between corporate parents to help ensure young people are prepared and supported through the transition into adulthood and beyond, once they have move into their own accommodation

A multi-agency panel was established to coordinate accommodation options, support, and interventions for care leavers. The panel provides the forum for professionals to share information, highlight vulnerabilities, monitor changes in circumstances and respond to crisis situations. The panel meets quarterly but an emergency panel can be called and convened within 48 hours when required.

The joint housing protocol recognises that living independently does not always work out for some individuals, services need to be more responsive to individual need with a return to care being an option where appropriate.

Since the protocol was implemented, data has been reviewed and showed that from 2019, there has been a significant reduction of 62% in the number of care experienced young people (looked after more than 5 years ago) applying as homeless.

Since the UK Government mandated the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children in December 2021, Angus Council have received 25 young people all aged 16 or 17yrs. A combination of supported lodgings placements and independent flats have been used to meet their needs on a case-by case basis. The next 12 months are likely to be increasingly challenging as it is likely we will see younger children being referred under the NTS. This will require the sourcing of foster or residential placements which noted earlier are already under significant pressure. An increase in the frequency and number of referrals is anticipated.

Other Data / Measures

On 31 July 2023, the number of children 'looked after' was 238, an increase from the 220 reported the previous year. As shown in the chart below, the Angus rate of children looked after per 1.000 population fell below the national average for the first time (figure 4).

Figure 4 Looked After Data

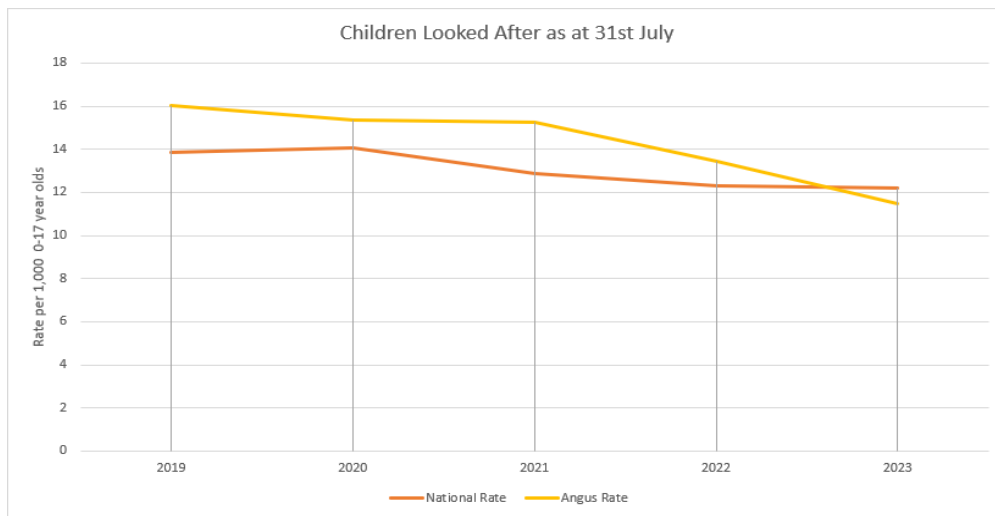
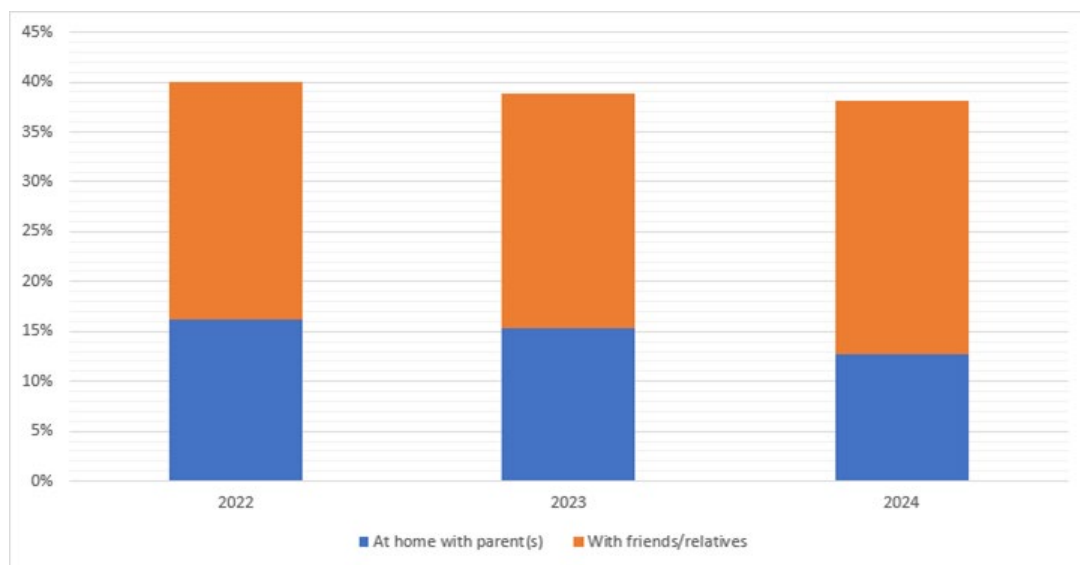


Figure 5 Breakdown Types of care – Looked After Children Placement Locations



On 31 March 2024, the proportion of 'looked after children' being supported either at home or with family or friends was 37.5% a slight drop from 38% in 2023, continuing the reduction from 43% in 2022.

The proportion of children Looked After who had 3 or more placements during 2023-24 decreased slightly to 5.5%. Our statutory return data for 2022-23, showed 15 children (just over 6% of our looked after children) had three or more placements during the reporting year. Positively this is a continued decrease on the previous 2-year trend but remains above the Scottish average of 4%. Shifting the balance of care for children and young people is a key priority as detailed in the Children, Families and Justice Improvement Plan.

Looking Forward to Angus Promise Plan 2024-2027

As noted in the report, the shortage of foster cares and local placements continues to be difficult and has resulted in some children being cared for out with Angus. A key priority is the completion of the first stage of our extension to the residential programme by opening a new residential house in 2024. This will offer an opportunity for an additional four children to remain in Angus or be returned to Angus from external placements, if appropriate for them. Extending our local provision will offer more choices for matching children and young people to a home within their communities, where it is safe to do so.

This will support children to maintain their relationships with people who are important to them and contribute to a reduction in placement breakdowns for children and the associated poorer outcomes for children with multiple moves in care. Reducing the number of placement changes experienced by our children and young people will remain a priority in our 2024-27 Promise Plan.

The completion of the Kinship Review in 2023 has allowed us to develop the Carers Service to better reflect the needs of kinship carers and support the children in their care. Our priority remains to support families to care for their children within their extended families where that is safe and right for them.

Whole Family Wellbeing funding has been provided to support the enhancement of family wellbeing services. Social work services have been involved alongside partners in shaping the plans for the development of the Angus Whole Family Wellbeing Programme to improve the availability of community-based supports and services for families to access when they need support.

Specific human rights for children are set out in the 54 articles in the UNCRC. Children's voices can often go unheard, or more easily dismissed, UNCRC recognises that children are human beings with fundamental rights that are now written into international law. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) has been working on a new approach to handling complaints that involve children, to ensure that the complaints procedure meets children's rights under the UNCRC. The SPSO have co-designed with children seven [Child Friendly Complaints Handling Principles](#). The SPSO is currently making amendments to the draft procedure, following publication, the SPSO will expect all organisations under their jurisdiction to have due regard for the principles in the way they handle complaints involving children. Work is underway to ensure that Angus Council has a system in place which is child friendly, accessible to anyone under 18 years of age enabling them to raise a complaint in the same way as adults do respecting Article 12, Right to be heard.

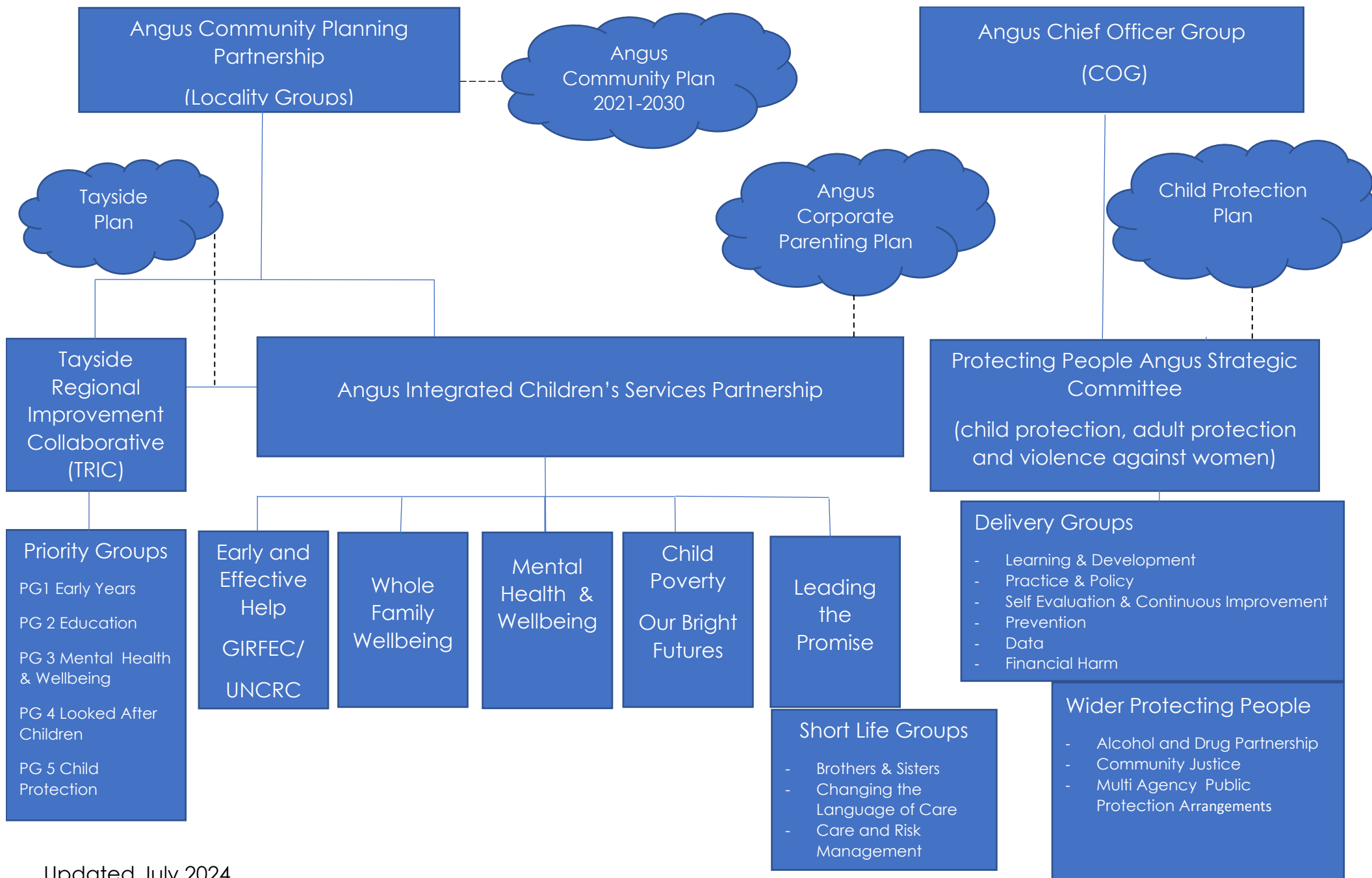
There are a number of other projects that require to be progressed by the Promise team and partners including completing the development of a Promise Pack tailored to the individual needs of children and young people entering care and participation in SCRA's local groups being set up to support the Better Hearings agenda.

Conclusion

There have been some real highlights over the last three years where the progress made to develop services for children and families has been recognised. In November 2022, the Virtual Promise Team and Review Officers attended the Scottish Social Services Award Ceremony in Glasgow. The Promise team and PREpare were both shortlisted to the final three in the category of Excellence in Children's Services. Whilst the teams lost out to amazing competition, we were immensely proud that both Angus entries reached the final three.

In June 2022, more than 65 care experienced young people in Angus came with their families, carers, friends, and workers to have fun and take part in a variety of activities at the Angus Promise Fun Day at Monikie Park. A packed schedule continued throughout the day with a BBQ provided for lunch. The event was made possible by the hard work of the Promise Team and all the partners and local businesses who helped make the day a success.

We need to continue to work together to embed the improvements highlighted in this report, but it is critical we strive to ensure the aspirations identified in the Independent Care Review are met and the awaited update plan from the National Promise Team are reflected in Angus's 2024-2027 Plan to keep the promise to our care experienced children and young people through to adulthood.





Date

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

NAME

ADDRESS

(delete if not required)

Dear Name

Thank you for coming to your meeting today/ We are sorry that you did not come to your meeting today.

It was also good to have List of attendees at your meeting and we heard from them too. Unfortunately, List of attendees were unable to be with us today.

At your meet today we talked about Choose an item.

It was great to hear that summary of positives from the meeting.

We are sorry to hear that summary of concerns/issues from the meeting.

At the meeting we heard that you were Child's views.

At the meeting we promised that we would help you and your mummy/daddy/family with list actions in child centred manner

E.g. Mrs Smith is going to spend time with you every day to help you with a friend at taking turns - Your social worker Jemma will come and visit you every 2 weeks to make sure you are ok and to hear what you have to say about where you live

We would like you to list actions in child centred manner

*E.g Go to your safe place in class and not to run out of class if you are feeling sad
- Go to school every day - Attend your meetings with the doctor for your eyes*

I hope this letter tells you all you need to know about your meeting but if not please just give me a phone on add mobile number.

We look forward to seeing you at your next meeting on Date of next meeting

From Lindsay/Teresa/Siobhan/Karen