

REPORT TO: Education & Children’s Services Committee
MEETING DATE: 19 November 2024
BY: Executive Director – Education & Children’s Services
SUBJECT: Children’s Services Business Plan

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1. PURPOSE

1.1 To provide an update to Committee about the Children’s Services Business Plan 2023-2026, which sets out the key priorities for the service. The Plan was reviewed and refreshed in September 2024 to ensure it aligns to the new Council priorities.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. The Committee is asked to:
- i. Note the overall positive progress made by Children’s Services and key success to date.
 - ii. Note the newly aligned Children’s Services Business Plan 2023-2026 (Appendix 1).

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Children’s Services provide statutory children’s social work interventions for children, young people, and their families in East Lothian.
- 3.2 The new Children’s Services Business Plan sets out the vision, aims and operating principles for the service. It is aligned with the shared ambition of East Lothian’s Children’s Strategic Partnership in ‘Making sure East Lothian’s babies, children and young people are happy, healthy and heard’.
- 3.3 The Children’s Services Plan is also closely aligned with the Education Service plan. The joint Education and Children’s Services Directorate continues to develop integrated services that seek to get it right for all our children, living and learning in East Lothian. Together, we are committed to the Belonging to East Lothian approach as we work collaboratively to improve the experiences we provide for children, young people and their families.

KEY SUCCESSES

3.4 There have been significant developments within the service to meet the Promise, realise the vision of Belonging to East Lothian and support our strategic priority to increase capacity within the resources that are available internally:

- Council approved an increase to our fostering fee which will increase the number of local people who become registered foster carers. To date, there has been four new registered carers and three in the assessment process as a direct result of the fee increase. We are aiming to recruit an additional eight care placements per financial year.
- We have created a new service for family support and outreach that is available over seven days. This is designed to support families in crisis at the times where they experience the most pressure. This is preventing some children and young people from becoming accommodated and directly reducing the rate of looked after children in East Lothian. There is scope to invest further in this model to increase their capacity to avoid children becoming accommodated in a crisis situation.
- We have commissioned an intensive outreach service which is targeted to work with young people who are at risk of accommodation or secure care due to their offending or risk-taking behaviour. This is reducing the number of young people that are meeting secure care criteria and supporting us to manage risk in local communities.
- Close collaboration with housing colleagues has led to the creation of three new supported housing resources for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people (UASYP). This is providing accommodation for seven young people. A project to create two additional three-bed properties for UASYP is underway, but this will not be available until 2025 due to the development required.
- A new Parent Partner scheme has been launched by the Adoption and Kinship Care service which will seek to recruit a new group of supportive professionals who can be alongside adoptive families who are experiencing difficulties and at risk of family breakdown.
- Redesign of Olivebank to create targeted support for babies from pre-birth to two-year-olds who are at risk of accommodation. This is specifically designed to reduce the number of babies entering the care system to avoid the lifelong emotional impact of accommodation and the significant associated financial costs.
- The creation of an in-house Family Group Decision Making service created a saving of £100k. This will also allow us to have tighter control of this targeted resource to ensure those at greatest risk of family breakdown receive swift support to create family plans to avoid this.

KEY OUTCOMES

3.5 Despite the significant increase in demand for services and complexity, our Signs of Safety practice approach to working alongside families and our commitment to meeting the Promise has resulted in a reduction of children requiring accommodation.

- There has been a 17% reduction in children and young people who are looked after and accommodated since 2022/23, and we have reduced the number of children in external residential care by nine.
- We have supported planned moves for six UASYP out of care placements into more appropriate supported accommodation.
- The Joint Inspection for Children and Young People at Risk of Harm in East Lothian concluded that there are major strengths in our partnership approach to protecting

children. Inspectors found that children and young people were safer due to the responses by agencies in East Lothian and we can take firm assurance that our multi-agency approaches are effective.

- There is a significant change in practice and culture within Children's Services. Driven by the redesign and restructure of the service, our Signs of Safety practice approach and the Promise, we are confident that social work practitioners are increasingly focused on building family networks and using safety plans to allow families to remain together safely. While we cannot eradicate the need for accommodation when children are at very high risk of harm, there is a tangible change in attitudes and practice that is resulting in ongoing reductions on children coming into care.
- The introduction of the Child's Planning Meetings – Locality Groups across East Lothian is a significant step forward in the multi-agency approaches to meet need at an earlier point to prevent children and young people from requiring social work involvement. We will continue to monitor the impact to social work referral rates from each locality.
- The development of Families Together East Lothian is increasing the availability of community-based family support, which is designed to prevent family problems from escalating and becoming harmful to children and young people. The impact to referrals to social work continues to be reviewed.

ONGOING PRESSURES AND RISKS

- 3.6 It continues to be a challenging climate for Children's Services with a number of factors leading to increased demand for support and protection for children, young people and families. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, frontline services have experienced increasing levels of complexity in the situations requiring support and intervention. There has been an increase in complex behaviour, unmanaged neurodiversity, violence and risk. This is due to a wide range of factors that are impacting people's ability to cope with day-to-day life, such as the cost of living, difficulty accessing mental health support, and the impact of social media and risk-taking culture.
- 3.7 There continues to be a small cohort of children and young people's whose needs cannot be met within East Lothian due to local resource challenges. This has resulted in some children and young people requiring an external fostering or residential placement. This is expensive and there is clear evidence that external placements do not always result in positive outcomes for the majority of children. Especially as they become separated from their family, networks, and communities.

Additionally, the National Transfer Scheme, mandated by the Home Office, continues to place additional pressure upon Children's Services and it is a challenge to provide the resources at the level of frequency required. We will continue to monitor and report on the impact of this.

BUSINESS PLAN

- 3.8 Children's Services monitors the progress of the business plan through weekly management meetings, monthly management business meetings and quarterly Performance and Care Governance meetings. We use data and feedback from across the service to highlight areas of progress or concern and to direct our audit and scrutiny work for the year.

- 3.9 The vision to continue the progress to date, improve outcomes for children and young people as well as improve the financial position of Children's Services underpins all actions within the business plan.
- 3.10 The priorities identified for Children's Services have been aligned to the Council's three short term priorities:
- Ensure the financial sustainability of the Council through the delivery of approved savings and transforming the way we deliver services.
 - Target resources on statutory services and focus on the highest risks and those most in need.
 - Deliver key infrastructure, economic development and environmentally sustainable projects within available council resources and maximising external funding.
- 3.11 The plan covers five priority outcomes with agreed actions, measure of impact, timescale, lead, its connection to the Council's priorities and its implications and relationship to other services/strands of work. The priorities for 2023 – 2026 are:
1. **We will ensure our practice and our service prevents the need for children and young people to leave their family where this is safely possible.**
We must ensure services are well placed to provide the right support at the right time so that families can be supported to stay together when children are loved and safe. This includes our targeted approach to Family Group Decision Making, intensive outreach, family support and our signs of safety practice approach.
 2. **We will build capacity in our internal care resources.**
Understanding our data and the demand for services is driving our actions to develop our capacity in internal resources. We are striving to improve the resources available in a range of areas including housing, foster care, host families and our residential provision.
 3. **We will bring children and young people back to East Lothian from external placements.**
During 2023/2024, eight young people returned to East Lothian and the business plan seeks to build on this by ensuring we are using progressive practice techniques and effective tracking to bring young people back at a time that meets their needs.
 4. **We will embed the systematic approach to self-evaluation, performance management and quality assurance**
These actions are sharpening our focus on consistent quality improvement and ensuring the right governance mechanisms are in place to oversee the work of the service and to target improvements. It also focuses on how we improve our approach to participation and seeking the views of those with lived experience to support service development.
 5. **We will have a sufficient, confident, skilled, supported workforce.**
We recognise that effective social work practice is reliant upon a sufficient, skilled and supported workforce and we are committed to prioritizing workforce development and wellbeing.
- 3.12 We are confident that the plan includes the right actions to meet the Promise, support the Belonging to East Lothian approach, and to ensure that children and young people

have the best chance to remain safely within their families and communities when this is possible.

- 3.13 Children's Services will continue to monitor the plan to ensure actions are progressing at pace with any issues identified and addressed promptly. The plan will be brought back to Education and Children's Services Committee for review in 12 months.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Children's Services business plan will impact the direction of policy as we seek to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

5. INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATION

- 6.1 Financial – none
- 6.2 Personnel – none
- 6.3 Other – none

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None.

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DATE	1 November 2024

Children's Services Business Plan

2023-2026

Section 1

Introduction

Welcome to the Children's Services Business Plan 2023-26. Our plan sets out our vision, aims, and operating principles for Children's Services.

Our vision is aligned with the shared ambition of the East Lothian's Children's Strategic Partnership in '**Making sure East Lothian's babies, children and young people are Happy, Healthy and Heard**'.

Children's Services is placed within the Education and Children's Services Directorate. This is a well-established partnership, delivering an integrated service that seeks to get it right for all our children living, learning and belonging in East Lothian.

The aims of Children's services are:

- To deliver high quality social work services for children, young people and their families.
- To deliver our statutory responsibilities to protect children and young people from harm.
- To provide statutory social work services at the right time for children, young people and families at risk to overcome difficulties and achieve safe and loving relationships.

Children's Services Outcomes:

Children's Services are committed to keeping the Promise and we recognise our collective responsibility to intervene early and effectively to provide the most meaningful help and support to enable children and young people to thrive within resilient and loving families. Engaging with and hearing the voice of children and young people will guide this work and is placed at the centre of service delivery.

Children's Services are working to achieve the following **outcomes** for children and families in East Lothian.

1. Children and young people feel safe within their families, schools, and communities.
2. Parents involved with Children Services will be supported to parent safely and to create nurturing environments.
3. Children and young people are supported to recover from harm.
4. Children and young people can stay within their families when they are safe and loved.
5. Parents, carers and families are supported to be more resilient, building on their internal strengths and support networks.
6. Along with partners, we will reduce referrals and repeat referrals to social work.
7. We will reduce the number of referrals to social work which progress to statutory social work interventions.
8. We will reduce the number of children in external residential placements.
9. Along with partners, we will support care experienced young people to successfully transition into adulthood and reach a positive destination.
10. Children and young people are given the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Operating Principles

Children's Services has agreed these operating principles that underpin the work we do.

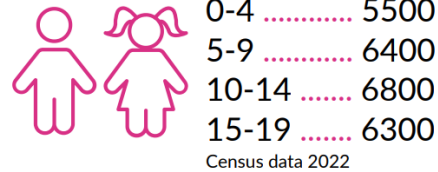
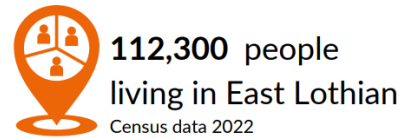
- We will listen to what families need and provide support at the earliest possible stage to prevent risks increasing.
- We will embed the principles of The Promise.
- We will listen to and include the voice of the child in all our work with them.
- We will be ambitious for the children, young people and families we support.
- We will promote relationship-based practice in all areas of the service.
- We will use Signs of Safety as our practice framework with training available for all frontline workers.

- We will embed the principles of Safe and Together in all domestic abuse related situations.
- We will ensure we keep high quality case records that are sensitive to all audiences and jargon free.
- We will seek permanence for children and young people, regardless of the destination.
- We will promote meaningful connection and the rights of brothers and sisters in all areas of our practice.
- We will treat people with respect, being open and honest while showing kindness and maintaining integrity.
- We will use a family first approach and continue to use family group decision making to build on the strengths and support available to the child.
- We will continually listen, learn, and improve our service in collaboration with those with lived experience of the service including our Champion's Board and our partners in redesign.
- We will work with partners, internal and external, to deliver effective preventative and proactive interventions.
- We will respect the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and ensure that children's rights are upheld in the support we deliver.
- We will promote the safety and wellbeing of our workforce at all times, supporting staff through effective and regular supervision.
- We will prioritise the learning needs of our workforce, providing opportunities for development.
- We will create an open and safe environment where we routinely use the learning from reviews and feedback to inform practice.

Section 2

Profile of Children and Young people in East Lothian

East Lothian has a rapidly growing population and is one of only a few Scottish local authorities with an increasing child population (a forecasted increase of 17.1% by 2028-29 for P1 to S6 pupils based on the 2020 census roll). This is likely to be the second highest increase in Scotland.



IN SCHOOL.....



There are **8450** primary school and **6667** secondary school pupils
Pupil Census 2023



737 pupils are from an ethnic minority background
Pupil Census 2023



450 children identified as young carers
Young carer registrations, ELC



2379 3-5 year olds and **70** eligible 2 year olds are accessing early learning & childcare
Pupil Census 2023



36.2% of pupils have Additional Support Needs
Pupil Census 2023



3,027 children took part in Active Schools programme
Aug-Dec 2023



2048 children are entitled to Free School Meals
Pupil Census 2023



767 pupils were assessed or declared as having a disability
Pupil Census 2023

IN OUR COMMUNITIES



21% of children are living in poverty after housing costs
End Child Poverty, Child Poverty in your area, 2014/15-2021/22



150 children are living in temporary accommodation
Scottish Government statistics, 2023



24 children are on the child protection register
(MOSAIC, 31.12.2023)

17 children are affected by parental alcohol and drug use on the child protection register
(MOSAIC, 31.12.2023)

15 children are affected by domestic abuse on the child protection register
(MOSAIC, 31.12.2023)

74% of cases referred to MARAC include children associated with the victim or perpetrator
(EMPPC Annual Report 2022-23)

EXPERIENCING CARE

(MOSAIC, 31.12.2023)

47 children & young people are **looked after at home**

66 children & young people are in **foster care**

29 children & young people are living with **friends or relatives**

29 children & young people are in **residential care**



23 young people are **in continuing care**

67 young people are **receiving aftercare support**



17 unaccompanied asylum seeking young people are currently living in East Lothian

Children's Services Structure Chart



East Lothian Council Priorities

The Council Plan aims to support the achievement of the Council vision of: **‘An even more prosperous, safe and sustainable East Lothian with a dynamic and thriving economy that enables our people and communities to flourish.’** It is based around three overarching objectives – Recovery and Renewal; Reduce Poverty and Inequality; and, Respond to the Climate Emergency; and four thematic objectives – Grow our Economy; Grow our People; Grow our Communities; and. Grow our Capacity. The East Lothian Council Plan outlines the Council’s priorities for the medium term - 2022-27. Given the financial and other challenges it faces the Council reviewed the Council Plan in spring 2024. The Council has set three new three interlinked, complementary priorities which are aligned to the Council Plan’s overarching and long-term thematic objectives:

- 1. Ensure the financial sustainability of the Council through the delivery of approved savings and transforming the way we deliver services.***
- 2. Target resources on statutory services and focus on the highest risks and those most in need.***
- 3. Deliver key infrastructure, economic development and environmentally sustainable projects within available council resources and maximising external funding.***

Children’s Services Priorities

The nature of social work can lead to complex and competing priorities. While the service is completely committed to effective budget management, there can be high risk situations that require interventions that fall out with the allocated budget. All decision making is overseen by the Head of Children’s Services and the Head of Education (if costs are to be shared). Due to the significance of the budget pressures, decision making is also supported by the Executive Director for Education and Children’s Services.

The priorities identified for Children’s Services have been aligned to the Council’s three short term priorities. The action plan covers the priority outcome, agreed actions, measure of impact, timescale, lead, its connection to the Council’s priorities and its implications and relationship to other services/strands of work.

- 1. We will ensure our practice and our service prevents the need for children and young people to leave their family where this is safely possible.**
- 2. We will build capacity in our internal care resources.**
- 3. We will bring children and young people back to East Lothian from external placements.**
- 4. We will embed the systematic approach to self-evaluation, performance management and quality assurance.**
- 5. We will have a sufficient, confident, skilled, supported workforce.**

Children’s Services Plan 2023-2026

Priority 1					
We will ensure our practice and our service prevents the need for children and young people to leave their family where this is safely possible.					
	How we will achieve this	Outcome / Measure of Success	Timeframe & review	Connection to council plan/implications for other services	Lead
1.1	<p>We will continue to use FGDM with families at the earliest opportunity to create plans that keep children safe and loved at home.</p> <p>We will embed Signs of safety networking principles to ensure this becomes standard practice across all areas of our work with children and families.</p>	<p>Number of FGDM family plans (establish a baseline measure 2024-2025)</p> <p>SoS audit of impact of how networking principles have been applied to practice.</p>	<p>Reviewed quarterly through the Performance and Care Governance Group</p> <p>Six monthly SoS dashboard audit. Reviewed through the performance and Care Governance Group.</p>	<p>Council priority 2 FGDM and Signs of Safety networking aim to support families most in need and prevent the need for crisis intervention.</p>	<p>Nicola Clark (Service Manager)</p>
1.2	<p>We will continue to develop Kincare services (assessment and support) to ensure that as many children as possible remain within their family.</p>	<p>Numbers in formal kinship care.</p>	<p>Reviewed quarterly through the Performance and Care Governance Group</p>	<p>Council Priority 1 Children remaining within family-based care through our investment in kincare support.</p>	<p>John Mackie (Service Manager)</p>

1.3	We will continue to develop the intensive outreach service and provide support to children, young people, and their families to build resilience within their home and community. This time-limited support will complement the existing safety plan.	Numbers of young people supported by the intensive family support team and reported outcomes.	The service will be reviewed by March 2025.	Council Priority 2 Young people are supported to remain living within family care.	Nicola Clark (Service Manager)
1.4	Develop the role of the family support team in its offer of time limited and outcome-focused family support to families involved with the Support and Intervention service.	Number of family support interventions. % of 1:1 support plans where a family member reports an improved outcome.	Reviewed by March 2025. Outcome measures are reviewed quarterly through the Performance and Care Governance Group	Council priority 3 The family support service aims to support families to build resilience and care safely for their children.	Nicola Clark, (Service Manager)
1.5	We will continue to implement the model of intake and assessment to ensure that families receive the right support at the right time. Progress has been impacted by recruitment challenges.	Numbers of referrals and rereferrals to Children's Services will show a sustainable reduction.	Reviewed quarterly through the Performance and Care Governance Group	Council priority 2 Children and families can access high quality initial assessment and support and are signposted to universal supports and services where appropriate.	David Fenwick (Service Manager)

		Priority 2 We will build capacity in our internal care resources			
2.1	We will design and implement a multi-agency young person's pathway that will cover their support and housing needs. This pathway will inform an accommodation and support strategy for care leavers.	Numbers of young people in B&B accommodation	Dec 2024 Reviewed quarterly through the Performance and Care Governance Group	Council priority 2 Care leavers who are most in need are supported to make a successful transition into adulthood.	Jen Fraser (General Service Manager)
2.2	We will consider how the Lothian Villa estate is used to support the needs of young people including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people (UASC). We will ensure this support is appropriate for the age and stage of development of each child and young person.	Number of UASC young people in suitable accommodation that is meeting their needs.	Reviewed quarterly through the Performance and Care Governance Group	Council priority 2 Partnership working with housing in developing new housing support options for UASC young people in East Lothian	Jen Fraser (General Service Manager)
2.3	We will develop and implement a fostering recruitment development plan to address the current recruitment crisis. This plan will be aligned with our commitment to keep the Promise.	Numbers of East Lothian foster carers. Number of foster care household deregistration's	Reviewed quarterly through the Performance and Care Governance Group	Council priority 2 Children can access family care within East Lothian and our need for external foster care and residential care is reduced.	John Mackie (Service Manager) Nicola Clark (Service Manager)
2.4	We will launch a new appeal for 'host families' to increase our pool of people available to accommodate unaccompanied children and older young people.	Numbers of host families recruited.	Reviewed quarterly through the Performance and	Council priority 2 UASC young people are supported to	John Mackie (Service Manager)

			Care Governance Group	access family care within East Lothian.	
2.6	We will develop our practice approach to keeping brothers and sisters together and maintain relationships with family and friends.	<p>Number of siblings child had immediately prior to placement start date</p> <p>Number of siblings child was living with on placement start date.</p>	Reviewed quarterly through the Performance and Care Governance Group	Council priority 2 Family care is prioritised for all children most in need.	John Mackie (Service Manager) Nicola Clark (Service Manager)
	We will develop our approach to evidence-based commissioning and our commitment to have a one council commissioning to services for children and families.	Report on improved outcomes for children and families supported by the third sector through section 10 funding.	Reviewed six monthly through the Performance and Care Governance Group	Council priority 2 Children who are most at risk are supported to remain within family care.	Jen Fraser (Group Service Manager)
2.7	We will review and develop the application of self-directed support across all service areas with Children's Services and undertake a needs assessment to improve self-directed support options for children with a disability.		Reviewed six monthly through the Performance and Care Governance Group	Council Priority 2 Our resource allocation systems are meeting the	Children's Services Senior Management Team

				needs of those most in need.	
Priority 3					
We will support children and young people to remain in East Lothian as part of 'Belonging to East Lothian'					
3.1	We will review our decision-making processes for allocating resources that are required internally and externally to support children who are most in need.	Numbers of children and young people that are looked after is reducing.	Reviewed six monthly by CSMG	Council Priority 2 Our resource allocation systems are meeting the needs of those most in need.	Jen Fraser (General Manager)
3.2	We will ensure that all that plans for children within external care are future focused and promote connections to their family and community.	Feedback from children through the bright spots survey for young people that are looked after.	Reviewed quarterly through the Performance and Care Governance Group	Council Priority 2 Reduction of spend on external residential resources.	Children's Services Senior Management Team
3.3	We will continue to track the placements of all children and young people in external residential care and work to return all children and young people from external residential care when this is appropriate. We will use learning to inform improvement activity within children's services as well as gaps in our existing resources.	Numbers of young people in external residential care is reducing.	Reviewed quarterly through the Performance and Care Governance Group	Council Priority 2 Reduction of spend on external residential resources.	Children's Services Senior Management Team
3.4	We will ensure young people and our workforce are aware of the rights of young people to continuing care and monitor and review the impact of continuing care has on resources.	Numbers of young people in continuing care.	Reviewed quarterly through the Performance and Care Governance Group	Council Priority 2 Resources are being used correctly to support young people to move on from care.	John Mackie (Service Manager)

		Priority 4 We will embed a systematic approach to self-evaluation, performance management and quality assurance			
4.1	All Children's Services service areas will have a business plan linked to the priorities listed in the Children's Services business plan. We will ensure teams use their business plan and relevant performance measures to inform their work.	Number of active business plans developed by Children's Services teams	Reviewed quarterly through the Performance and Care Governance Group	Council priority 2 Our service areas are supporting those most in need and protecting children at risk of harm	Jen Fraser (Group Service Manager)
4.2	The participation of people with lived experience of care will be clearly demonstrated in our individual, operational and strategic service planning arrangements.	Numbers of children and young people accessing independent advocacy Numbers of care experienced young people completing annual survey. Case studies and reports from the East Lothian Champions Board.	Reviewed quarterly through the Performance and Care Governance Group	Council priority 2 The voices of children and young people who are most in need are heard and inform individual and operational and strategic service planning.	Jen Fraser (Group Service Manager)

4.3	We will embed the LUNDY model of participation across our participation work and ensure we can demonstrate the difference that lived experience / service user participation has achieved.	Case study examples of participation practice using the LUNDY model.	Reviewed quarterly through the Performance and Care Governance Group. UNCRC annual reporting.	Council priority 2 The voices of children and young people who are most in need are heard and inform individual and operational and strategic service planning.	Jen Fraser (Group Service Manager)
4.4	We will work to a quality assurance and improvement framework that evidences how well we are evaluating and continuously improving our service.	Quality Assurance Framework including performance measures	Reviewed quarterly through the Performance and Care Governance Group.	Council Priority 2 Children's Services self-evaluation and improvement activity is used to help us understand how well we are meeting our statutory duties and supporting children most in need.	Jen Fraser (General Manager)
4.5	We will undertake self-evaluation and improvement activity within key service areas including residential, fostering and adoption, continuing care. We will also implement improvement plans informed by scrutiny activity.	Quality Assurance Framework including performance measures	Reviewed quarterly through the Performance and Care Governance Group.	Council Priority 2 Children's Services performance framework is used to help us understand how	Jen Fraser (General Manager)

				well we are meeting our statutory duties and supporting children most in need.	
Priority 5 We will have a sufficient, confident, skilled, supported workforce					
5.1	We will train all Children’s Services staff in Signs of safety and ensure that this is fully implemented and embedded across the service. Signs of Safety practice model is contributing to our efforts to keep children with their families.	<p>Numbers of children’s services staff that have completed the five day Signs of Safety training.</p> <p>Findings from SOS case file audit and SoS dashboard audit.</p>	Reviewed six monthly through the Performance and Care Governance Group.	Council Priority 2 Children who are most at risk are supported to remain within family care.	Jen Fraser (Group Service Manager)
5.2	<p>We will ensure that Children’s Services operates in a trauma-informed manner and our workforce reach the required level of knowledge and expertise.</p> <p>We will prioritise the wellbeing of our workforce and ensure trauma informed approach will inform all workforce planning activity including recruitment and retention activity.</p>	Numbers of Children’s Services staff that have undertaken training to a trauma skilled level.	Reviewed quarterly through the Performance and Care Governance Group.	Council Priority 2 Linked to the delivery of our trauma informed approach across the council.	Lindsey Byrne (Head of Service)

		Feedback data from the Children's services employee engagement survey.			
5.3	We will review our policies and procedures to ensure they are up to date and align with the principles of The Promise, UNCRC and the 'Belonging to East Lothian' agenda.	Audit of policies and procedures.	Reviewed annually though the Performance and Care Governance Group.	Council Priority 2 This action is linked to the work of the UNCRC partnership plan and the Corporate Parenting plan.	Lindsey Byrne (Head of Service)
5.4	We will work to ensure the 2024-2030 Promise plan is aligned with the Children's Service Business plan and key partnership plans including the children and young people service plan and the corporate parenting plan.	Bright spots survey feedback Promise performance relevant for Children's Services is aligned with the Children's Services performance framework.	Reviewed quarterly though the Performance and Care Governance Group.	Council Priority 2 This action is linked to the Children and Young People Service Plan 2023-2026 and the Corporate Parenting Plan 2024-2026	Children's Services Senior Management Team
5.5	We will support our workforce to access the knowledge and skills they need to reduce the impact of child poverty through income maximization and access to financial inclusion support.	The number and rate of children living	Reviewed quarterly though the Performance and	Council Priority 2 Children and families access	Jen Fraser (Group Service Manager)

		in relative poverty. The number and rate of children living in persistent poverty	Care Governance Group.	financial inclusion support. Linked with the new poverty plan 2024	
5.6	We will support our workforce to understand children’s rights and ensure we apply a rights-based approach to our work with children and families.	Quality assurance activity. Feedback from children through Brights Spots survey.	Reviewed quarterly through the Performance and Care Governance Group.	Council Priority 2 This action is directly linked to the work of the UNCRC partnership plan and the Corporate Parenting plan.	Jen Fraser (Group Service Manager)
5.7	We will ensure our senior management team has oversight over of staff vacancies and its implications for workforce planning and delivery. We will ensure that absence management procedures are being adhered to.	Number of WTE children’s social worker vacancy rate	Reviewed quarterly through the Performance and Care Governance Group.	Council Priority 2 We have a sufficient workforce that can support children and families most in need.	Children’s Services Senior Management Team

How will we communicate our plan?

We will communicate our Children’s Services Business Plan through engagement with all Children’s Services staff through briefings, Teams Channels, team meetings, leadership team meetings, employee supervision and PRD’s. Key service areas will also be supported to review their own business plans and ensure it is reflective of Children’s Services Priorities and the East Lothian Councils three immediate priorities.

How will we monitor and review progress with implementation?

Children's Service's will consistently monitor and review progress on its business plan to ensure that it meets its goals and improving outcomes for children and their families in East Lothian. The plan is considered at a monthly business meeting with the management team.

Children's Services is committed to Keeping the Promise and continuously improving practice within our service. Children's Services has set clear, measurable actions within its business plan. Progress will be measured through quarterly reporting by the Performance and Care Governance Group. Children's Services quality assurance framework will continuously be updated to include the performance measures within our business plan. This forum enables Children's Services to monitor progress and better understand opportunities and challenges in achieving our action plan. Communication and engagement with stakeholders, including children, families, and our workforce will provide us with valuable feedback that can inform our implementation and monitoring activity. Annual progress will be reported on through a performance summary report and the annual Chief Social Work Officer report.

