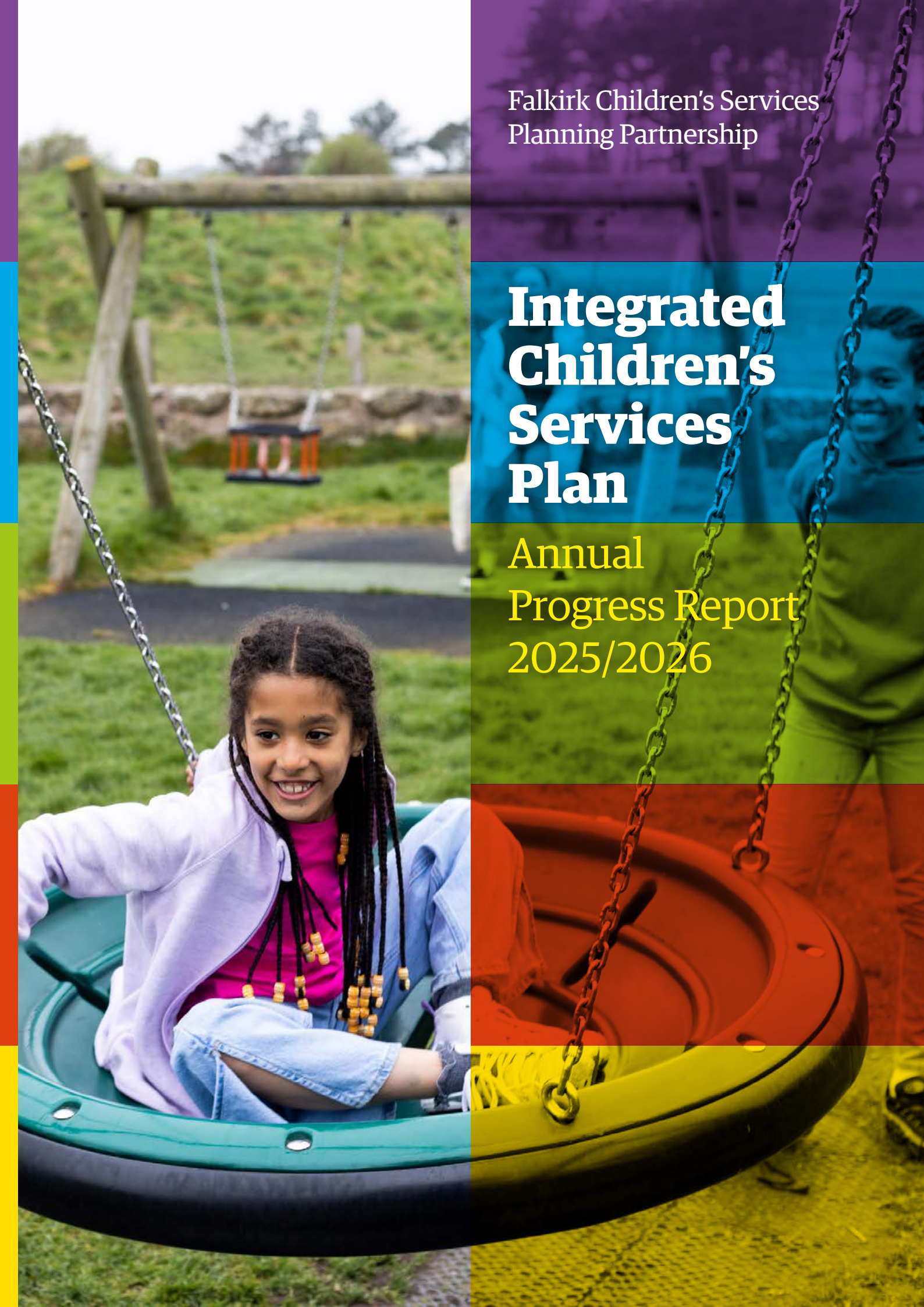




Falkirk Children's Services
Planning Partnership

Integrated Children's Services Plan

**Annual
Progress Report
2025/2026**

Foreword

Welcome to the 2025/26 Annual Progress Report for Falkirk's Integrated Children's Services Plan 2023-2026.

This report marks the third and final annual update of our current Plan and provides an overview of the progress made by Falkirk's Children's Services Planning Partnership during 2025/26. It reflects the collective efforts of partners across the public, third and community sectors, working alongside infants, children, young people and families to improve outcomes and experiences across Falkirk.

Guided by Getting it Right for Every Child, The Promise, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and a strong commitment to whole family support, our partnership has continued to focus on early intervention, relationship based practice and collaboration. This year, we have strengthened how children's voices and lived experience influence decision-making, service design and improvement activity across the partnership.

Across these priorities, we are seeing clear evidence of change, including stronger participatory approaches, improved multiagency working, increased workforce confidence, and more responsive, trauma informed support for children and families.

As we conclude this Plan period, this report also provides a vital foundation for the development of our next Integrated Children's Services Plan. The learning, evidence, and lived experience captured here will shape our future priorities, ensuring that we continue to deliver the right support, at the right time, in the right way.

We would like to thank children, young people, families and colleagues across the partnership for their continued commitment. Together, we remain focused on ensuring that every child in Falkirk grows up safe, loved, respected and able to reach their full potential.



Councillor Cecil Meiklejohn

Leader of Falkirk Council and Chair of Falkirk Community Planning Board

Introduction

Falkirk's Children and Young People's Strategic Leadership Group brings together partners from across the public, third and community sectors who share collective responsibility for improving outcomes for children, young people and their families across Falkirk.

Working together to achieve the aims of our Integrated Children's Services Plan, the partnership takes a collaborative and outcomes-focused approach to planning, delivery and improvement. This approach is underpinned by a strong commitment to children's rights, early intervention, whole-family support and shared accountability, ensuring that services work together to respond effectively to local need.

This is the third annual progress report for the 2023-2026 Integrated Children's Services Plan. It provides a reflective overview of progress made during 2025/26, drawing on self-evaluation, data, workforce insight and lived experience to highlight what has changed in practice, where impact is being seen, and where further improvement is required.

The report is structured around the partnership's five workstreams driven forward through dedicated multi-agency subgroups:

The Promise and Whole Family Wellbeing

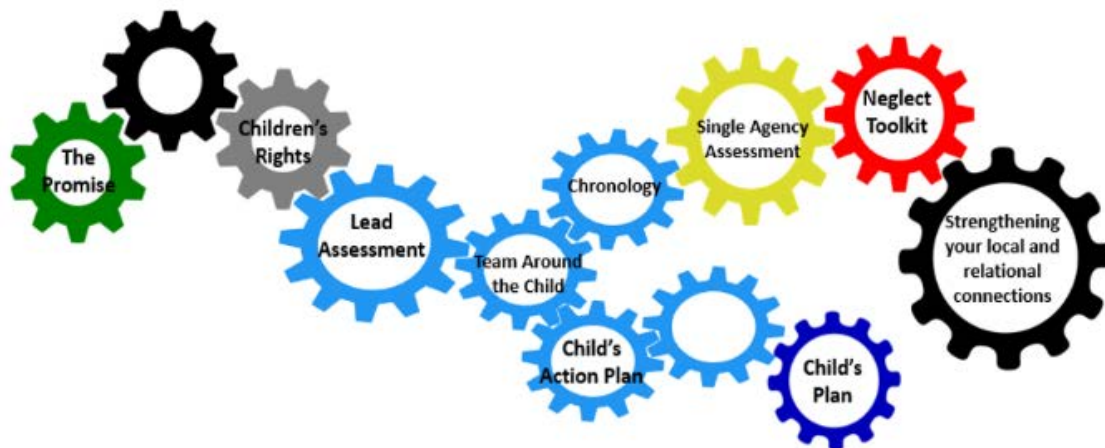
Getting it Right for Every Child

Mental Health & Wellbeing

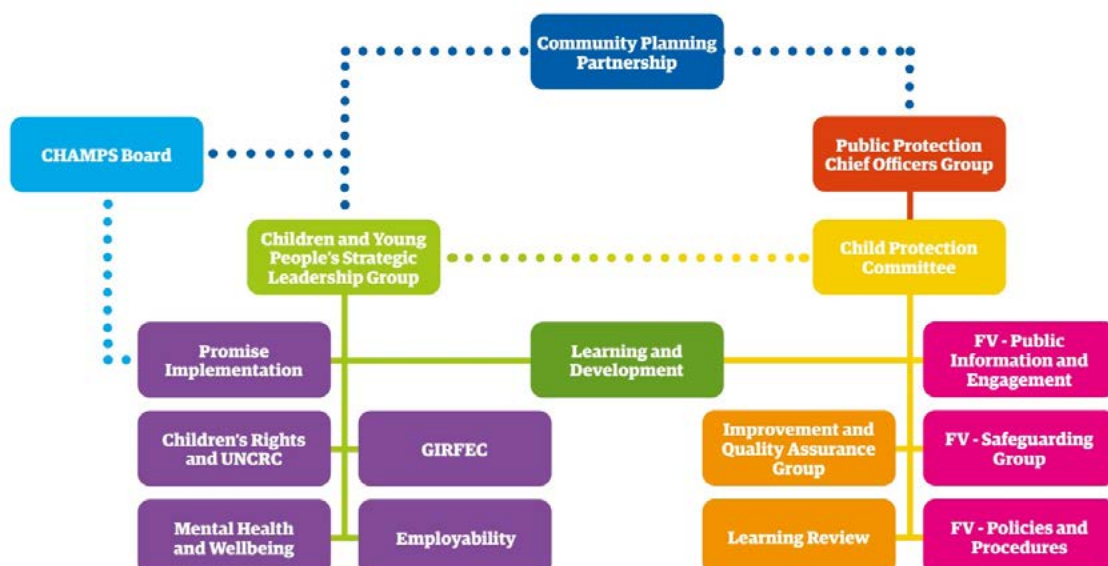
Employability

Workforce Learning & Development

How does GIRFEC align with other aspects of how we support children and families?



Our improvement activity is aligned with GIRFEC and the wider policy landscape, including the UNCRC, ensuring a consistent, rights-based approach that places children and young people at the centre and promotes their wellbeing. The governance arrangements that support this work, including strategic oversight, delivery and accountability, are illustrated in the structure chart below.



Our Priorities

This report demonstrates the impact of partnership activity on outcomes for children, young people, and families across Falkirk. Evidence shows improved outcomes through early intervention, trauma-informed practice and coordinated support, particularly for those affected by domestic abuse, substance and alcohol use, mental health challenges and child poverty through;

- Earlier identification and intervention reducing crisis
- Improved wellbeing, safety and stability for families
- Stronger multi-agency coordination and access to support

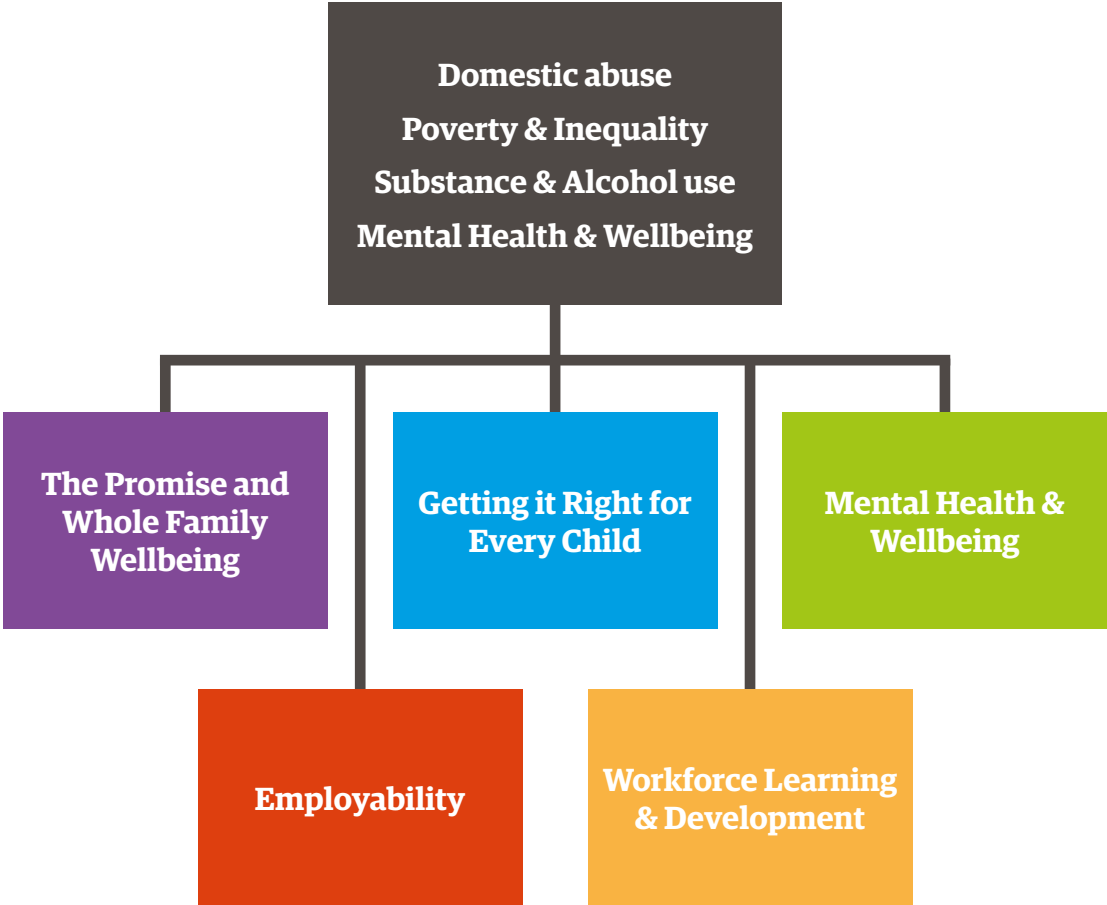
The JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) and data from the Care Inspectorate Framework Quality Indicator 1.1 indicate the following priorities for Falkirk:

- Domestic abuse
- Poverty & Inequality
- Substance & Alcohol use
- Mental Health & Wellbeing

The priorities are being addressed through five workstreams:

- The Promise and Whole Family Wellbeing
- Getting it Right for Every Child
- Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Workforce Learning & Development
- Employability

Our Key Priorities Delivered Through our Workstreams.



The Promise and Whole Family Wellbeing

The Promise and Whole Family Wellbeing Subgroup makes a significant contribution across all four partnership priorities. Activity to address child poverty includes flexible financial support and community-based provision that reduces hardship. A strong focus on mental health and wellbeing is evident through trauma-informed support. The subgroup contributes to domestic abuse priorities through alignment with Equally Safe and supports families affected by substance and alcohol use through whole-family approaches.

Services and tests of change supported through Whole Family Wellbeing have improved family stability, reduced escalation and supported recovery through relationship-based and flexible responses to poverty, trauma and adversity.

Impact & Outcomes

- **126 families supported with 100% responded to within 5 days, improving stability**
- **£17,000 direct financial support reduced hardship and crisis**
- **Breathing Space reduced need for accommodation and de-escalated crisis**
- **Lived experience participation strengthened services and reduced isolation**
- 126 families have been supported in Grangemouth by Homestart and One Parent Families Scotland, through a range of activities including counselling, messy play, family events and peer groups. All referrals have been responded to within 5 days of being received, so families access support when they need it.
- Over £17,000 has been transferred directly to families working with the Initial Response Team and the Throughcare and Aftercare Team, empowering families and workers to build trusting relationships and be solutioned focused. There is evidence suggesting this has avoided formal Social Work intervention or escalation to statutory measures.
- The Breathing Space resource is being well-received nationally, with the Scottish Government and Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ) looking for updates on its progress, and colleagues from across Scotland interested in replicating the model for their local authority. Use of Breathing Space by both Social Work and Police increased throughout

2025, and there is evidence that it has successfully de-escalated crisis and prevented young people from being accommodated.

- The Champs continue to expand their reach, strengthen the voice of those with experience of care, and reduce isolation. They now run groups in every secondary school in Falkirk and in Forth Valley College, facilitate 11 families coming together monthly, and have established a new Amigos group with 10 members.
- Developing our approach to tackling gender-based violence through Equally Safe's Early Intervention school-based work with young people.
- The development of survivor-led pathways through Equally Safe support services, with multiple survivors moving into advocacy, volunteering, peer support and paid support roles.
- Increasing the capacity for Falkirk & District Association for Mental Health (FDAMH) to provide counselling for an additional 200 young people. This is aimed at young people not engaged in school, or for whom school is not a suitable or comfortable place to access counselling, and their families.

Get To Focus lived experience group reached several milestones in 2025: they became a registered charity, purchased a town-centre space, refurbished it in collaboration with the Champs, established partnerships with Equally Safe and Community Learning and Development (CLD), and launched the space. Thanks to the tireless efforts of Get To Focus, Falkirk families now have a space owned, designed by and open for communities with lived experience of care systems.

In 2025, Get To Focus continued to work alongside services across Falkirk. Their key accomplishments include:

- Collaborated with Children and Families' Social Work on a Social Work Charter.
- Designed a session as part of a Promise Partnership event that was delivered to over 100 multiagency staff.
- Linked with Falkirk's Initial Response Team to develop peer support pathways for families reaching Social Work.
- Met with Falkirk's Trauma Informed Development Officer to develop community-based trauma training.
- Sense checked a public information film about non accidental injury to babies, for "Bairns Hoose", which led to a re-shoot of the film and an upgrade to a national campaign for release.
- Hosted various key partnership events including three Whole Family Wellbeing Funding Learning and Networking events, two WFWF panels, a Promise Partnership Closer to Communities event, and a week-long gallery for the 16 Days of Activism.

Falkirk Family and Friends (Corporate Parenting Group).

Key accomplishments include:

- Our definition of 'care experience' was recommended nationally by Social Work Scotland.
- We established a Family Firm in Falkirk which provides relationship-based, individual work taster experiences for care experienced young people. Young people are being hosted in work experience settings in Falkirk Council, the Health and Social Care Partnership and the local third sector.
- The Firm reached capacity almost immediately and has received very positive feedback from participants and the workforce alike.
- Partners have been training their workforce on their Corporate Parenting Duties. Out of a total of 16 partners, eight of our Corporate Parents have over 50% of their staff completed the Corporate Parenting training. Of this number, four Corporate Parents have had 100% of their staff complete the training.

Focus on children's rights

Children's rights to education, good health and health services, and recovery from trauma are foundational to our Falkirk Family and Friends Plan and are mirrored in our six priority areas. We are promoting these rights by developing a Family Firm; working to improve access to Health services; and aiming to eliminate exclusions, improve attainment, and capture the extent and efficacy of part-time timetables for care experienced pupils.

This year the Promise Implementation Team have continued to focus on putting the voice of children and young people at the centre of our work. In practice, that looks like:

- Having young people with care experience at the centre of our Whole Family Wellbeing Funding panel.
- Falkirk Champs continue to have a standing place on the agenda of each Falkirk Family and Friends meeting to provide updates, challenge and to make requests of the group.
- Funding the Champs to work with Care Experienced Ambassadors in schools, the College and supported accommodation to amplify the voice of, and connection between, young people with care experience Falkirk.

Whole Family Wellbeing Funding supports children's UNCRC right to grow up safely within their families, wherever this is in their best interests. This includes:

- Breathing Space, which offers a comfortable space designed for and by young people and aims to prevent escalation of crisis within families and the justice system.

- Family Directed Support is piloting an approach of true partnership working between Social Work and families. The Initial Response Team and the Throughcare and Aftercare Team have been awarded extra resources to flexibly respond to what families are telling them they need to keep themselves and their children safe and healthy. This is designed to reduce or avoid the need for formal intervention.
- Establishing community-led, accessible places families can go to if they need support, such as Sealock Infinity Centre in Grangemouth and 100 Manor Street in the town centre.

Breathing Space provided a compassionate, childcentred alternative to custody, ensuring the young person's safety, dignity and wellbeing were at the heart of the response. Its rights respecting approach has been recognised nationally, with Breathing Space featured in this year's State of Children's Rights report by Together Scotland, highlighting its contribution to realising children's rights in practice.

Case Study

Breathing Space

Late one night, a young person was brought to Breathing Space by Police following a difficult and upsetting incident at home. At that point, it was not safe for the young person to return home, and there was no family member available who could support them.

Breathing Space offered the young person a safe, calm and supportive environment where they were able to rest, feel protected and begin to recover from what had happened. Being in a quiet, welcoming space helped the young person feel more settled and reduced the likelihood of the situation escalating further.

While the young person was being supported at Breathing Space, Social Work staff worked with the family to understand what had happened, listened to their views, and supported steps towards repairing relationships and easing tensions. This allowed time for thoughtful, welfare-focused decisionmaking that prioritised the young person's needs and best interests.

Following this period of support, the young person was able to return home feeling calmer and better supported. This reduced immediate risks and helped to promote a safer and more stable situation for the young person and their family.



Family Firm

The Family Firm, established in June 2025, was developed to address a clear gap in employability support for care experienced young people aged 16+ in Falkirk who were no longer engaged in education, training, employment or statutory services. Many of these young people had been disengaged from purposeful activity for over two years, were experiencing compounding challenges including poor mental health, substance use, caring responsibilities and poverty, and were largely “off the radar” of traditional service provision.

Funded through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund following advocacy from the Promise Implementation Team, the Family Firm was intentionally designed as a non mainstream, trauma responsive employability offer. At its core is intensive one to one, relationship based support, delivered by an experienced Family Firm Coordinator skilled in trauma informed and relational practice. The approach prioritises working at the young person’s pace, widening their window of tolerance, and building confidence through realworld workplace exposure rather than classroombased provision.

Corporate Parenting has been critical to success. Strong leadership backing from the Promise Implementation Team, Chief Social Work Officer and Chief Executive enabled momentum and visibility, while committed colleagues across Council services created supported work environments aligned with the ethos of the Firm. This enabled placements that were flexible, nurturing and responsive to each young person’s needs and aspirations.

Impact to date has been significant. The Family Firm has supported young people into fulltime employment within the Council, while others have progressed through multiple work tasters and placements, helping them identify strengths, build workplace skills and develop realistic future aspirations. Young people report improved confidence, concentration, emotional regulation and belief in their ability to sustain employment.

There has also been wider community and system impact. The Family Firm has provided additional capacity across primary school nurture classes, care homes, dementia wards, Council buildings and local charities, delivering practical benefits at no cost while giving staff opportunities to apply traumainformed practice in meaningful ways. This has strengthened the culture of Corporate Parenting and reinforced GIRFEC values across the workforce.

Overall, the Family Firm is a strong example of GIRFEC and The Promise in action, delivering the right help, at the right time, in the right way, for young people whose needs were not being met by existing systems.

The Promise & Whole Family Wellbeing Subgroup and our Priorities

The Promise and Whole Family Wellbeing subgroup makes a significant contribution across all four partnership priorities, with a strong emphasis on poverty & inequality and mental health & wellbeing. Through the delivery of Family Directed Support, peer support, and community based interventions, the subgroups support families facing socioeconomic disadvantage while addressing underlying trauma and emotional wellbeing. The approach also contributes to domestic abuse priorities via alignment with Equally Safe and Safe & Together principles, and supports families impacted by substance & alcohol use by offering nonstigmatising, wholefamily responses aimed at preventing escalation and reducing the need for statutory intervention.

Our priorities for next year include:

- Supporting the Strategic Leadership Group with their Early Intervention test of change.
- Stirling University is currently conducting an independent evaluation of Falkirk's approach to Whole Family Wellbeing Funding, with the final report due in June. We will use this to share learning and make recommendations to the Children's Services Planning Partnership about how to continue participatory decision-making.
- Continuing to support Get to Focus as they become an operational hub for family support, peer support and training.
- Falkirk Family and Friends will continue to hold the Partnership accountable for progressing our collective plan priorities.

Getting it Right for Every Child

The GIRFEC Subgroup supports the priorities of domestic abuse, substance and alcohol use, mental health and wellbeing, and child poverty through early intervention and coordinated planning. This ensures holistic and proportionate support for families experiencing multiple adversities. health and wellbeing, and child poverty through early intervention and coordinated planning. This ensures holistic and proportionate support for families experiencing multiple adversities.

Overview

During 2025/26, Falkirk's GIRFEC Subgroup continued to strengthen a collaborative, participatory and childcentred system across the Children's Planning Partnership.

This work aligns with GIRFEC, The Promise, and Scotland's incorporation of the UNCRC, particularly Articles 3, 6, 12, 13, 17 and 24. Our focus has been on strengthening participation, improving planning processes, and enhancing practitioner confidence to deliver a more consistent, transparent and rightsbased system.

Impact & Outcomes

- **Earlier intervention and reduced escalation**
93% of speech and language concerns resolved without formal referral, demonstrating a shift towards proportionate early help.
- **Improved child and family engagement**
Children and families report greater understanding of planning processes, leading to improved participation and more effective plans.
- **Stronger multi-agency coordination**
Clearer roles, guidance (TAC), and improved processes have resulted in:
 - More consistent planning
 - Better coordinated support
 - Stronger shared accountability across services
- **Increased workforce confidence and capability**
High confidence in safeguarding and decision-making supports:
 - Earlier identification of risk
 - Stronger protective responses
- **Enhanced participation and children's rights in practice**
Increased involvement of children and young people in decisions has improved how support reflects their needs and experiences.

Strengthening MultiAgency Practice: Forth Valley Team Around the Child (TAC) Guidance

A major achievement this year was the completion of the refreshed Forth Valley Team Around the Child (TAC) Guidance, providing clearer expectations around roles, responsibilities and coordinated planning. This supports earlier, proportionate intervention and strengthens shared accountability across services.



To ensure accessibility and uphold UNCRC Articles 12 and 17, a suite of coproduced TAC leaflets was developed with children, young people, parents and carers. Versions were created for younger children, older young people and parents/carers, with Arabic and Pashto translations to promote inclusion. The document highlights that this work ensures children and families can better understand how professionals work together to support them. This is available to the workforce on the practitioner pages and has been promoted widely within the partnership. Feedback is that children and young people “really like the layout and the cartoon strip element of the younger person leaflet. They like that it is only one page and space for writing down thoughts.” Early feedback captured via a small-scale pilot of the new Child’s Plan shows improved practitioner confidence and increased family engagement.

Participation & Engagement Strategy - A Rights Based Framework

This reporting year has seen the development of The Falkirk Participation and Engagement Strategy, coproduced with young people who shaped the content, tone and visual identity. As noted in the document, “young people designed the cover artwork and wrote the foreword, ensuring the document reflects their voice, priorities and lived experience.”



This strategy strengthens our commitment to meaningful participation (UNCRC Articles 12 & 13) and provides a clear framework for embedding children’s voices across all partnership activity. New recording mechanisms have been introduced to evidence the impact of participation and ensure accountability.

Partnership Workforce Engagement, GIRFEC and UNCRC

As part of the Children's Services Planning Partnership's commitment to delivering on Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and progressing the incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), a partnership-wide workforce survey was undertaken during 2025/26. This formed a key component of the partnership's ongoing self-evaluation and improvement activity.

The survey was designed to strengthen understanding of how effectively services are working together to uphold children's wellbeing, safety, participation and rights, and to ensure that responsibility for improving outcomes is understood and owned collectively across all partners. By gathering workforce insight, the partnership sought assurance that its systems, processes and practice align with children's rights to protection, support, participation and the best possible outcomes, as set out in the UNCRC and embedded through GIRFEC.

The 2026 Partnership Workforce Survey provides an important opportunity to reflect on how effectively the partnership is realising children's rights in practice. The findings highlight a confident, committed workforce with strong safeguarding foundations, while also identifying areas where the impact of rights-based, outcomes-focused practice is not consistently visible to practitioners.

Key Strengths

The survey demonstrates high levels of confidence in safeguarding and risk assessment. The vast majority of staff report confidence in recognising abuse, assessing risk and understanding expected standards of practice. This provides strong assurance that the partnership is meeting its core protective duties under Article 19 of the UNCRC and the GIRFEC principle of keeping children safe from harm.

Staff also report a strong sense of professional identity and pride. Most respondents believe their role makes a positive difference to children's lives and that they receive appropriate supervision. This reflects a motivated workforce committed to acting in the best interests of the child (Article 3 UNCRC) and delivering relationship-based, child-centred practice.

There is clear evidence of positive multi-agency intent, with staff highlighting collaboration, access to targeted supports and the use of early intervention approaches. Education staff are recognised as holding stable and meaningful relationships with children and young people, reinforcing their vital role within GIRFEC in understanding and responding to children's day-to-day wellbeing.



Areas of Identified Improvement

Responses from across the partnership, identify a need to enhance the shared understanding of multi agency roles and responsibilities in practice. This will continue to be embedded within our single and multi-agency training, learning and development work.

The survey identifies a clear need to strengthen the visibility and impact of rights-based practice, particularly in relation to participation, advocacy, information sharing and demonstrating tangible improvements in children's outcomes. The implementation of the new Participation and Engagement Strategy is expected to enhance meaningful participation and advocacy, improving the visibility and impact of children's rightsbased practice across the partnership.

Addressing these areas will support the partnership to move from confidence in processes to confidence in impact, ensuring that children's rights are not only protected, but consistently experienced in practice.

The survey provides rich information and workforce views which will inform next steps within the Integrated Children's Services Plan. Future priorities will focus on reinforcing shared accountability under GIRFEC, strengthening children's rights-based practice, improving participation and advocacy pathways, and supporting role-appropriate learning and development across the workforce. By addressing system barriers and building on existing strengths, the partnership will continue to ensure that all services are aligned, informed and equipped to improve outcomes, experiences and life chances for children and young people in Falkirk.

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) Forth Valley Regional Learning Event

The Forth Valley GIRFEC group played a central role in shaping and delivering the Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) Forth Valley Regional Learning Event, held on 19 February 2026. Designed to mark 20 years of GIRFEC, the event brought together practitioners, leaders, and partners from across the region to reflect on progress, share best practice, and strengthen multi agency collaboration. Sessions explored the evolving national landscape, local developments, and practical approaches to embedding GIRFEC principles, particularly around early intervention, children's rights, and coordinated support planning. Contributions from health, education, social work, third sector partners, and young people themselves highlighted both the achievements and ongoing challenges in ensuring every child grows up loved, safe, and respected. As one participant reflected, "GIRFEC is well embedded across Forth Valley, with strong relationships between services and a shared focus on putting the child at the centre of everything we do." Feedback also identified areas for further development, with another contributor noting that "we need to move further towards early intervention and make it easier for families to access the right support at the right time." The Forth Valley group's leadership and partnership were instrumental in creating a meaningful learning space that will inform future improvement across services.



Digital Improvements to Support GIRFEC Implementation

To enhance accessibility and workforce confidence, a new GIRFEC webpage was created, and the Falkirk Practitioner Pages were updated. These provide streamlined access to guidance, templates and local procedures. Improved digital access supports consistent application of GIRFEC principles and strengthens practitioners' understanding of their responsibilities in upholding children's rights.



Child Centred Recording

The foundational work undertaken by Falkirk's Child Centred Case Recording Working Group continues to influence the content of Child Centred Recording multiagency learning and development sessions.

Formed in September 2023, the Group's overarching aim clearly stated: "We want you to feel seen, heard and loved in all that we write about you. We will write in a way that makes sense to you, that is kind and is honest. We will write in a way that will help you to understand why we were involved with you and your family."

While this aim is the main driver for Children and Families Social Work services, this has now been extended to multi-agency partners for them to consider how their recording practice can be more trauma informed, while also being clearly child centred.

Promoting these key messages in 2025/26 to social workers, early years staff, teachers and family support staff has enhanced staff's skills, knowledge and confidence, improving their engagement and practice with children, young people and their families. Following the training, staff were challenged with how they would make changes to their practice.

Their comments included:

I feel a bit more confident knowing what child centred recording is and how important it is for that child.

I will take these changes to my team to promote writing from a child and young person perspective in case notes.

I aim to capture more positive stories about a child's life to ensure their achievements and personality is there.

I will think about how I am writing pastoral notes on the school information system in a child centred way

I will now write GIRFEC Forms in a more Child Centred way and encourage colleagues to do the same

I will be more mindful when writing and try to implement small changes in my case notes and reports

The theme of Child Centred Recording will feature in other learning and development sessions e.g. Child Protection Key Processes; Trauma Informed Practice; The Promise and Corporate Parenting.

This approach is already being applied in practice across services, including social workers writing case notes and plans directly to children to help them understand decisions and their own experiences, education staff adapting pastoral and wellbeing recording to reflect the child's voice and strengths, and multi-agency partners using more accessible, compassionate language in GIRFEC assessments and reports. Early examples also show a stronger focus on capturing positive experiences and achievements, ensuring children's records reflect their full story, not just concerns, and supporting greater ownership and understanding for children and young people

NHS Forth Valley Children's Speech and Language Therapy and Falkirk Council Children's Social Work Partnership.

Over the past year, Falkirk's integrated Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) and Children's Social Work model have continued to strengthen the support available to care experienced children and the adults around them. Co-locating SLTs directly within fostering, kinship, residential and locality teams has enabled earlier identification of communication needs, more responsive intervention, and a more consistent, childcentred approach to gathering children and young people's views.

'The course was very interesting and informative. This will help with all children within my care. This will help the children be more relaxed and comfortable at my house.' **Kinship Carer, attending Intensive Interactions course.**

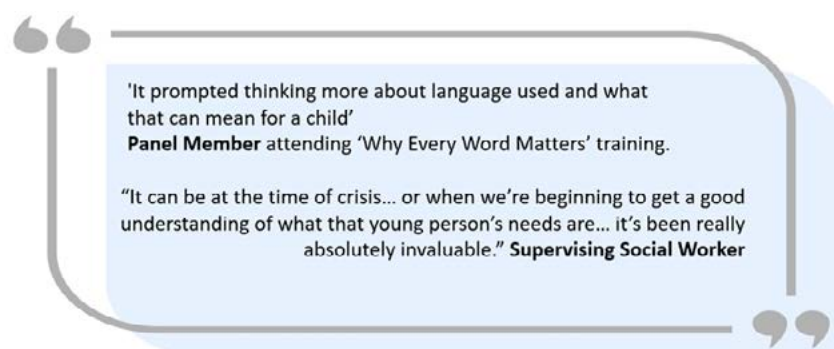
She (SLT) is C's voice and that makes him feel so much happier. At the last TAC meeting she was able to go and say 'this is C's view.'" **Kinship Carer**

Between July 2025 and March 2026, the service delivered 15 workforce development sessions, reaching 80 practitioners, with 100% reporting satisfaction or high satisfaction. These sessions have increased practitioner confidence in recognising communication needs, adapting their practice, and creating environments where children feel heard and understood. As one kinship social worker reflected, "That really opened up my thinking—things I hadn't even considered being linked to speech and language."



The model's preventative impact is increasingly evident. 54 early help conversations were held during the reporting period, with 93% resolved without the need for a formal referral. This demonstrates a significant shift towards proportionate, relationshipbased support that prevents escalation

and reduces pressure on specialist services. Practitioners consistently highlight the value of rapid access to SLT advice, with one supervising social worker noting, “The response is almost immediate... that quick response can save a young person’s home. Children and young people are experiencing tangible benefits.



The use of Talking Mats, visual supports and communication friendly approaches has enabled children and young people to participate more meaningfully in decisions about their lives. One young person, after understanding more about their communication profile, said, “So you mean it’s not my fault that sometimes I do that?”, a powerful reminder of how communicationinformed practice can build selfesteem and reduce shame.

Carers have also reported improved understanding and reduced stress in the home. Those completing the Intensive Interactions course showed a 75% increase in their confidence scores (from 3 to 5.25 out of 6), with many describing the impact as transformative. As one advanced practitioner in kinship care put it, the approach has been “life changing” for both carers and children.

The model continues to attract national interest, with Care Inspectors recognising Falkirk’s approach as unique in Scotland and highlighting its positive influence on placement stability, communication and emotional regulation. Falkirk’s work has also contributed to national learning through NES webinars and The Promise Partnership networks.

Overall, the integrated SLT-Social Work model is delivering clear and measurable benefits for children, families and the workforce. It is strengthening children’s voices, improving the capability of the adults who support them, and embedding communication rich, trauma informed practice across the system. This work represents meaningful progress towards the ambitions of GIRFEC, UNCRC and The Promise, ensuring that Falkirk’s children are safe, heard and included.

Embedding The Promise & Supporting Emotional Wellbeing

The GIRFEC Subgroup contributed to the planning and delivery of the Falkirk Promise Partnership Event, reinforcing trauma informed, relationship based practice and providing space for reflection, shared learning and connection across services.

Feedback from participants has been positive. They reported increased confidence in talking about mental health, a better understanding of how stress and trauma affect emotional responses, and practical strategies they could apply in both professional practice and everyday life. Practitioners highlighted the value of having dedicated time and space to reflect on their own wellbeing, alongside developing tools to more effectively support children and young people's emotional needs.

We also secured funding for the Best of You programme, delivered by Mark Brown in Breathing Space, which focuses on emotional wellbeing, selfregulation and resilience for both young people and practitioners. This work aligns with our strategic priority to improve emotional wellbeing outcomes and supports UNCRC Article 24 (the right to the highest attainable standard of health).



Getting It Right for Every Child Subgroup and our Priorities

The GIRFEC subgroup plays a key role in supporting the partnership's priorities of mental health & wellbeing, domestic abuse, substance & alcohol use, and poverty & inequality through its focus on early intervention, rightsbased practice and effective multi-agency collaboration. By strengthening Child's Planning, improving practitioner confidence, and embedding participation and children's rights within practice, GIRFEC supports earlier identification of unmet need and risk and promotes coordinated responses to infants, children and young people's lived experiences. The subgroup's work also supports families affected by poverty and inequality by improving holistic assessment and ensuring that support is proportionate, strengths-based and responsive to need

Our priorities for next year include:

Based on current learning and emerging priorities, the GIRFEC Subgroup will focus on:

- **Implementing the Participation and Engagement Strategy across all services**, strengthening consistent, meaningful participation and advocacy pathways for children and young people.
- **Increasing the influence of children and young people at decisionmaking levels**, ensuring their views more clearly shape planning, priorities and service improvement.
- **Auditing Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings** to improve consistency, clarity of roles and the quality of multiagency planning and decisionmaking.
- **Supporting locality planning to embed GIRFEC at community level**, strengthening earlier intervention and improving joinedup working across universal and targeted services.
- **Expanding and refining the Child's Plan Test of Change**, including rollout to looked after babies, infants, children and young people, to support proportionate, childcentred planning.
- **Embedding the redesigned GIRFEC Pathway**, improving practitioner confidence and accessibility through clearer guidance and digital tools.
- **Strengthening outcome visibility**, including gathering and sharing stories of impact to better demonstrate how GIRFEC planning improves children's wellbeing and life chances.
- **Hosting GIRFEC Learning Cafés to celebrate 20 years of GIRFEC**, sharing learning, reinforcing shared accountability and supporting continuous improvement across the partnership

Mental Health & Wellbeing

The subgroup leads on mental health and wellbeing for our children and young people while recognizing the links to domestic abuse, substance and alcohol use, and child poverty through trauma-informed and equitable access to services.

Impact & Outcomes

- **Improved access to support**

Development of the Single Point of Access will enable clearer, faster pathways for children, young people and families

- **Earlier intervention reducing pressure on specialist services**

Increased focus on early help and group interventions is contributing to:

Reduced escalation to CAMHS

More proportionate responses to need

- **Improved emotional wellbeing outcomes (with ongoing need)**

Wellbeing data (WEMWBS scores 45-47) remains below the UK average (51), highlighting:

- Continued need for targeted intervention

- Importance of prevention and resilience-building

- **Improved workforce capability in mental health support**

Training and multi-agency events have increased confidence in:

Recognising anxiety and emotional distress

Responding appropriately and earlier

- **Improved engagement with education**

Children with attendance below 50% reduced by 24% since 2022/23, indicating improved engagement linked to wellbeing support

Summary of key accomplishments for 2025/26

Progress with Single Point of Access

Our major project from 2025 and onwards is our work to create a single route into accessing services for children and young people, their families and the workforce who support them. We have moved on from our 'discover/define' phase to 'develop' and 'deliver' using the Scottish Approach to Service Design. The mental health subgroup is acting as the governance team for this project and making decisions and populating our solutions workshops with members of their teams. The Service Designer (Falkirk Innovation Team) has almost completed the process mapping, and this is expected to be passed on to the Digital Development Officer to begin the system build within the next couple of months.

We have had good support from services in committing themselves to being a part of this new system and continuing to engage with more third-sector groups who are still to join us. Data governance is a strong consideration as we work towards this new approach to partnership.

Development of a multi-agency approach to group work

As part of the Single Point of Access, one of the solutions identified for reducing waiting times, while maintaining high quality and evidence-based service delivery, is to make a stronger commitment to the use of group-based interventions. We already have multiple professionals across Falkirk trained in interventions (e.g. Let's Introduce Anxiety Management (LIAM) & The Decider) that were designed to be delivered with groups. Data has recently been collected that shows these interventions are currently delivered mostly 1:1. Careful planning will be undertaken in considering who should be offered group-based intervention or individual support. We are working in partnership with the NHS Forth Valley Psychological Skills for Early Intervention (PSEI) team in thinking about workforce modelling and ensuring the required coaching is in place to meet this aim.

Multi-agency Events for Anxiety

In June 2025 and February 2026 one day events were held around the theme 'Making Anxiety Manageable'. Keynotes and workshops were delivered by a range of services including Educational Psychology, Community Mental Health and Wellbeing (C&YP), CAMHS, Health Improvement, Trauma Informed Development Officer, Aberlour, Barnardo's and Falkirk District's Association for Mental Health (FDAMH). Further details are included in the case study below.

Anxiety continues to be the highest presenting need across mental health services and a prominent need for adults and young people accessing all types of services. This was reflected in the diversity of professionals who signed up for the event. Between the two events we have run, we had 100 people attending. This is still a very small proportion of the workforce who require a knowledge of anxiety to respond or signpost to those they

are in contact with who are experiencing anxiety. There are barriers to finding a cost-effective and suitable venue to run an event of this nature. We recognise there is a multi-agency task to build other methods for understanding and responses to anxiety.

Embedding Children's Rights/UNCRC

The Single Point of Access project (outlined above) aims to make it easier for young people to access the support they need for themselves. It is important under Article 12 of the UNCRC when considering changes to the referral processes for children and young people's mental health and wellbeing support, that we seek views on young people's experience of current access to services and their preferences for systems moving forward. In addition to earlier questionnaires and focus groups, we have planned activity for 2026 which will look at co-designing elements of the new system with young people.

Planning must be thorough in our Single Point of Access system to ensure Article 16, protection of privacy, is factored in. Data impact assessments and data sharing agreements will help us to collect the data needed to inform allocations and will only be shared with the relevant agency offering support. By improving families' access to services, we are making it easier for parents to deliver article 18 in respect to getting their children and young people the support they require to thrive.

In designing the new request form, we have included opportunities for young people to tell us about how they would like to receive the support they receive to strengthen article 13 (freedom of expression) and article 12 (respect for the views of the child).

Case Study

Making Anxiety Manageable Conference

Following positive feedback from the participants of the 'Falkirk Mental Health Event' in June 2025, the event was arranged to rerun in February 2026 with all the original workshops but opened across services. The initial session in 2025 was attended by predominantly education staff, however the February 2026 event included a wide range of different partner organisations as attendees as well as presenters. At the June event the day ended with a two-hour marketplace where a wide range of partners had stalls to highlight their services and resources they use. It allowed opportunities for participants and presenters to network and learn more about provision around the Falkirk area for families.

The day included a mixture of speakers and workshops to provide examples of theory and practice from the mental health agencies who support children and young people in Falkirk. This includes using CBT Approaches, Solution-focused approaches to Anxiety, Anxiety Toolkit, Digital Supports, Case examples, Trauma and Anxiety.

Reflections from the day

What key message/s or practice will you take from today going forward?

"How important days like this are for sharing learning and knowledge. The opportunity to step back and reflect on practice"

"Anxiety is a normal emotion for everyone. Also, to make sure you do thorough assessments before jumping in with an intervention."

Supporting Data

1. Outcome Measure: Health and Wellbeing Census self-reporting by young people

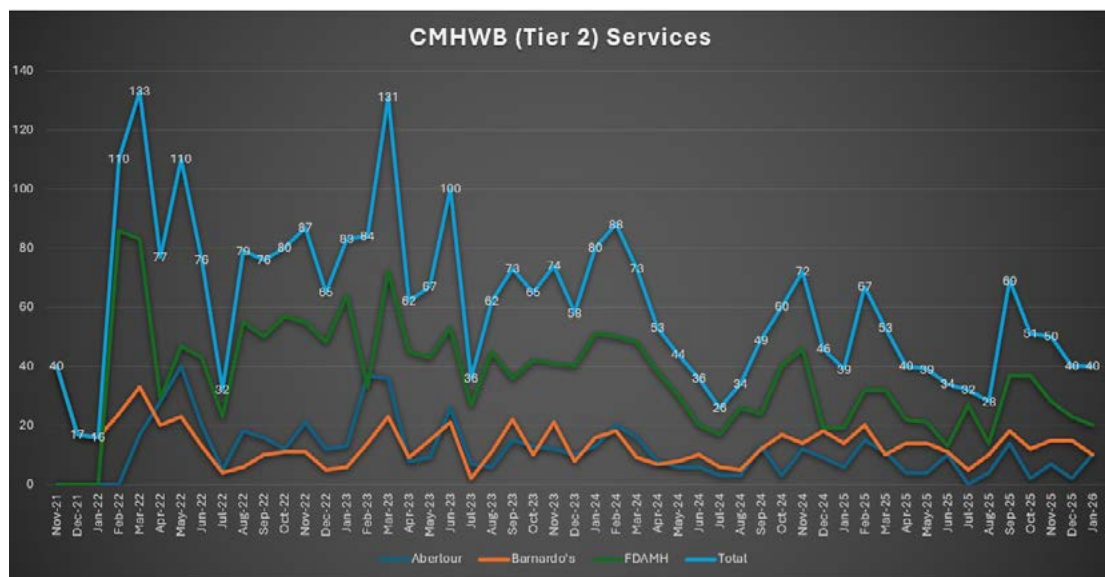
Baseline data for our outcome measure was gathered in the 2022 Health and Wellbeing national census, the next data uplift for this was postponed by Scottish Government for the 2024-25 session.

The Warwick Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) have been designed to be self-completed. The 14-item scale WEMWBS is very simple to score. The total score is obtained by summing the score for each of the 14 items. The scoring range for each item is from 1 - 5 and the total score is from 14-70. Using WEMWBS the top 15% of scores range from 60-70 and the bottom 15% 14-42. WEMWBS has a mean score of 51.0 in general population samples in the UK.

Year Group	Average WEMWBS Score	Average Female WEMWBS Score	Average Male WEMWBS Score
S2	46.94	43.99	49.98
S3	45.63	42.56	48.72
S4	45.99	43.98	48.11
S5	45.25	42.56	47.84
S6	45.68	43.15	48.95

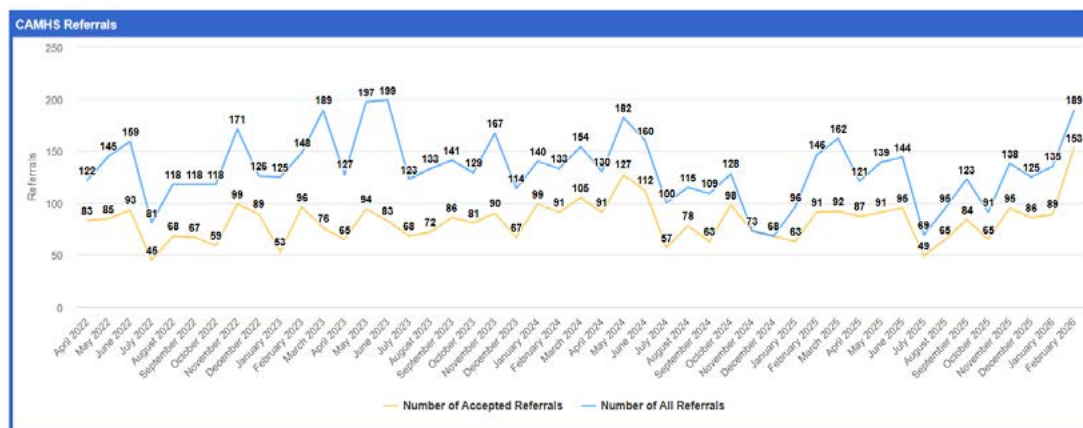
WEMWBS= Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale

2. Process Measures: Tier 2 Community Mental Health Wellbeing Service Referrals and CAMHS



As with other services, the number of requests for support drop around school holiday time, this likely reflects the fact that education continues to be the most common service to request support for children and young people.

Process Measures: CAMHS Referrals Graph

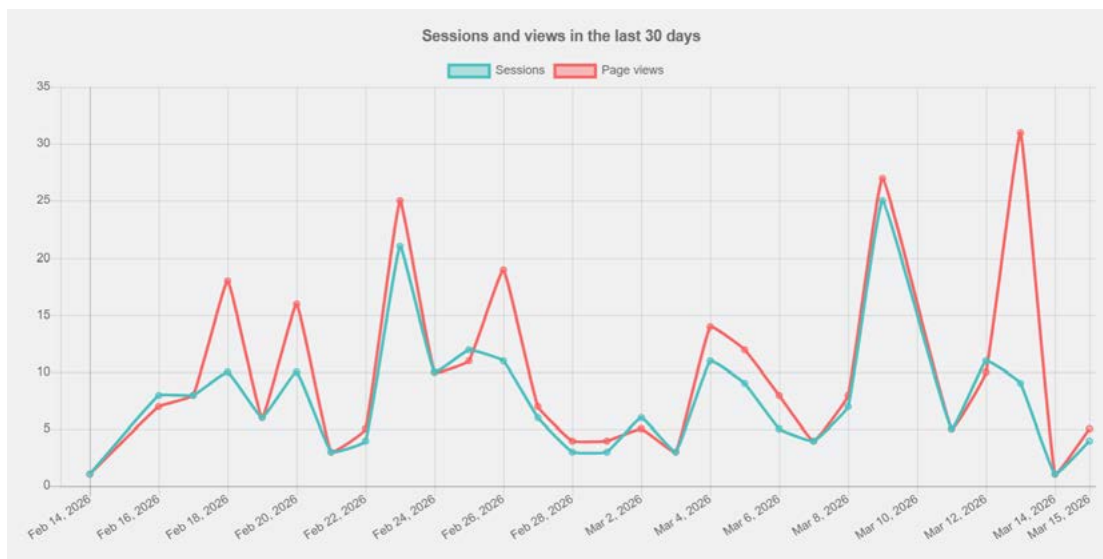


Process Measure: CAMHS Wait List Times



CAMHS continue to meet the RTT(Referral to Treatment) target of 95% of CYP seen within 18 weeks of referral. An extended pause in recruitment, due to financial pressures, will likely impact RTT from Q1 2026/27 onwards. Regular monitoring of waiting times will continue along with service demand and service review.

Process Measures: Self Help Support (website support for self-help resources)



We monitor access to self-help support through our CMWHB site. We often see spikes in accessing following targeted work through professional learning or social media campaigns. In total the site has had 4250 sessions with 6962 page views.

1. Balance Measures: Attendance

(Number of pupils with under 50% attendance)

Year Group	22/23 attendance < 50% (no. of young people)	23/24 attendance < 50% (no. of young people)	24/25 attendance < 50% (no. of young people)	25/26 attendance < 50% (no. of young people) as of 16/3/26
P1	6	6	9	13
P2	4	4	9	15
P3	8	9	7	13
P4	10	11	11	10
P5	18	16	16	14
P6	17	20	21	22
P7	33	36	28	19
S1	23	27	30	18
S2	68	64	58	40
S3	111	93	57	51
S4	96	56	53	39
S5	51	43	51	66
S6	30	26	46	39
Total	475	411	396	359

There has been positive progress in school attendance over the past 4 academic sessions, attendance below 50%, decreasing by approximately 24% since 2022/23. The most significant improvements are evident within the secondary middle and senior phases (particularly S3 and S4) This table will be updated again at the end of the academic year in June.

The data indicates positive progress in early intervention, access to support and school engagement, with reduced escalation to specialist services and improved attendance. CAMHS waiting times remain within target; however, demand for support continues to be high, particularly for anxiety-related needs. Wellbeing scores remain below the national average, highlighting the ongoing need for preventative and early intervention approaches to improve emotional wellbeing outcomes

Mental Health & Wellbeing Subgroup and our Priorities

The Mental Health and Wellbeing subgroup is central to delivery of the partnership's mental health & wellbeing priority, with a strong focus on prevention, early intervention and accessible support. The subgroup's work also supports domestic abuse priorities by ensuring trauma informed responses for children and families affected by adversity and contributes to improving outcomes for those impacted by substance & alcohol use through joinedup, relational approaches to care. In addressing the wider determinants of wellbeing, the subgroup recognises the impact of poverty & inequality on mental health and works to reduce barriers to access, promote equity, and strengthen communitybased and wholefamily supports.

Our priorities for next year include:

- Implementation phase of Single Point of Access
- Explore befriending opportunities
- Expanding the role of lived/living experience in our work
- Development of our approach to 'resilience building' for children and young people
- Embedding use of the 'enabling conversations' toolkit across services
- Further development of a whole systems approach to anxiety

Workforce Learning & Development

The Workforce subgroup supports improving responses to domestic abuse, substance and alcohol use, mental health needs and child poverty through training and development of a skilled workforce through a trauma informed lens.

Impact & Outcomes

- **Increased workforce reach and capacity**

1,314 staff participated in multi-agency learning, a 37% increase from previous year, strengthening system-wide capability

- **Improved quality and consistency of practice**

Training in trauma-informed practice, domestic abuse and child protection has supported:

- More consistent, rights-based responses
- Improved quality of interaction with children and families

- **Earlier identification and response to risk**

Increased workforce knowledge is contributing to:

- Earlier recognition of need
- More effective support planning

- **Stronger multi-agency collaboration**

Joint learning opportunities have improved:

- Understanding of roles across services
- Confidence in working together

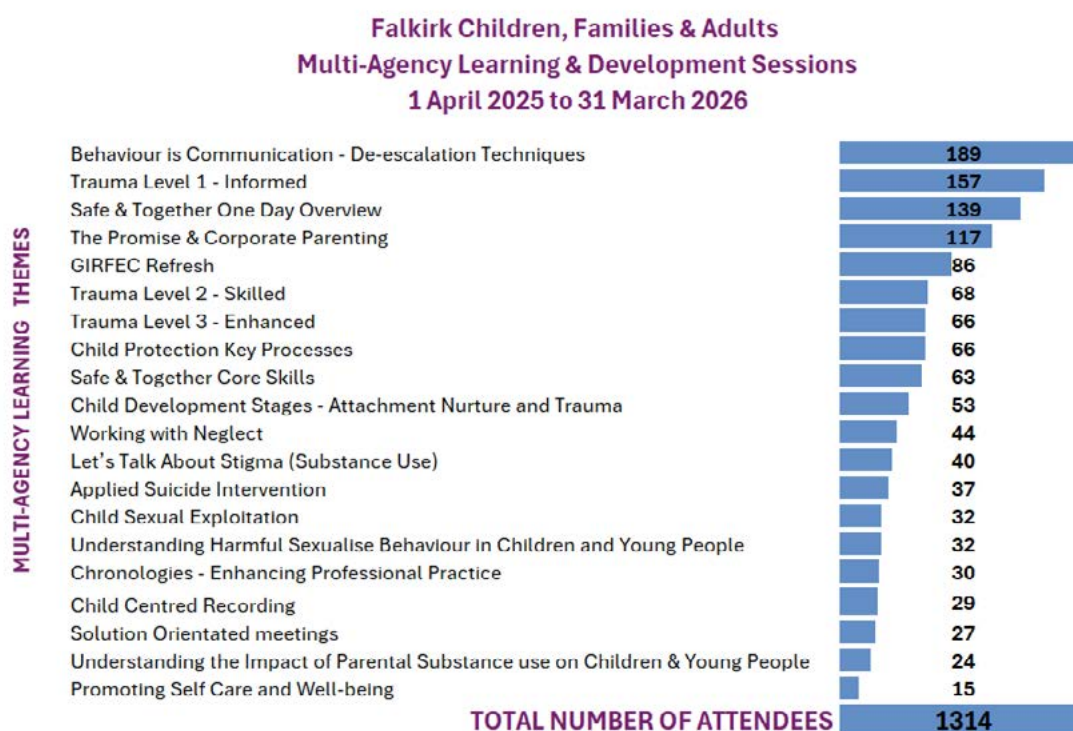
Falkirk's Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group's Learning and Development Strategy and Framework was updated in June 2025 to include:-

- UNCRC (Scotland) ACT 2024 committing the incorporation of Children's Rights into law in Scotland. Our learning and development activities continue to highlight how staff groups should be embedding a Children's Rights respecting approach within their work with children, young people and their families.
- CHILDREN'S RIGHTS SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE FRAMEWORK for the public authority workforce in Scotland. The Framework supports individuals and organisations to adopt a children's human rights approach, which aims to improve and consolidate the workforce's understanding of

children's rights and increase their confidence to implement the UNCRC in their everyday work.

- **DRUGS AND ALCOHOL WORKFORCE: KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FRAMEWORK.** The Framework describes the practice-specific knowledge and skills required by those whose primary role is to support people affected by substance use. These are focused on embedding care, compassion, and empathy in service delivery.
- **LEARNING and DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS:** To support the development of staff skills, knowledge and competence, we have continued to plan learning sessions that have reflected learning needs highlighted in Falkirk's Multi Agency Training Needs Analysis (TNA), which took place in May 2024. We also plan sessions to take account of the learning recommendations that are highlighted within Learning Reviews.
- **ATTENDANCE DATA -** The Multi Agency Workforce Development Team collate data on the training that they co-ordinate and/or deliver. This following table contains information on the numbers of staff who attended Multi Agency Learning Sessions in 2025/26.

The total attendees of 1314 is an increase of 357 from last year's total of 957.



A contributing factor to the increase in the range of training was having an additional temporary Interagency Training Officer in post for part of the year contributed to the increase in the range of training available.

“Multi-agency learning is so helpful to bring different viewpoints and experiences together”

Head Teacher, Primary School

Embedding Children's Rights/UNCRC

Many learning and development activities align based on cross over themes. These provide opportunities to reinforce learning and embed practice development. At the core of each learning activity is the rights of children and young people. In delivering learning sessions, facilitators make clear reference to the UNCRC (Scotland) Act 2024 and challenge the workforce to consider how they can consider this in the context of their job role, as we are made aware that there

Facilitators learn from practitioners sharing practice experience across services in relation to how children's rights and their voices are considered. They will then share these examples within other learning sessions to further enhance staff knowledge and skills.



Case Study

Feedback Examples from multi-agency staff who have attended learning sessions:

Behaviour is Communication : De-escalation techniques

I will learn how to plan and use short key messages that will help keep a focus on what I am trying to achieve. Multi-Skilled Adviser - Housing & Communities Services

It was helpful to be in a group of other professionals and hear how they deal with situations differently. Teacher, Primary School

Safe & Together - Domestic Abuse Informed Model

I am more confident in using Safe and Together language in paperwork. I feel more able to make analysis; be constructive in my practice; be able to support staff to understand and not be judgmental towards families' situation. Principal Early Years Officer

My only regret is not doing this sooner as there are a lot of conversations, reports and events I feel I would do differently. Now having completed this training I know my practice will change and I feel more confident that I can use tools and language learned to support children and families.

Head Teacher, Primary School

Trauma Informed - Enhanced Practice

I have more knowledge and skills in talking to the kids about brain development to help them to understand where their responses come from - Community Education Worker, Secondary High School

I feel more able to spend more time connecting with someone to help support them regulate their feelings and behaviours before even trying to reason with them. This will encourage their resilience. Mental Health Officer, Social Work Adult Services

Child Protection Key Processes

I will record more of child's views and record case notes from an improved child friendly manner while considering what information needs to be shared with other services.

Social Work Assistant, Children & Families Social Work

Have more open informal conversations with partner agencies to gain opinions that will help identify support available Detective Constable, Public and Child Protection Unit

Workforce Learning & Development Subgroup and our Priorities

The Workforce Learning and Development subgroup underpins delivery against all partnership priorities by building a skilled, confident and trauma informed workforce. Training and development activity directly supports improved responses to domestic abuse (including Safe & Together), enhances understanding of substance & alcohol use, and strengthens practitioner ability to recognise and respond to mental health & wellbeing needs. By embedding trauma-informed and rights-based approaches across services, subgroup members help to drive more equitable practice, mitigating the impact of poverty and inequality on children and families through earlier, more responsive and effective support.

Our priorities for next year include:

Investment In Learning and Development Posts

- Initially funded from February 2023 for 3 years, the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund investment in the Interagency Training Co-Ordinator post has been extended to March 2027.
- It is anticipated that the range of training will reduce in 2026 given the investment for the Interagency Training Officer post ended in February 2026.
- The challenge is to ensure that there will be continued multi-agency investment in learning and development posts to maintain and increase capacity in coordinating and facilitating multi-agency learning and development activities.
- Use workforce survey feedback to target learning and development, focusing on role-specific and practice-based approaches.

Meeting Learning Outcomes:

- The Multi Agency Learning and Development Group will continue to work together to ensure our workforce has the appropriate skills, knowledge and confidence to support our communities, and that they are competent in improving outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- This will include updating the group's Action Plan and Driver Diagram which stated "By March 2026 we will effectively implement the multi-agency learning and development strategy that supports our workforce to be confident and competent in their practice." The group will assess how learning and development activities have achieved the planned specific change ideas agreed in 2024.
- The group will continue reviewing what multi-agency learning and development activities are needed to achieve our collective ambition that Falkirk's children and young people will grow up feeling loved, safe, and respected, being able to realise their full potential.

Employability

The Employability subgroup addresses child poverty while also improving mental health and supporting those children and young people who are most vulnerable into positive destinations locally.

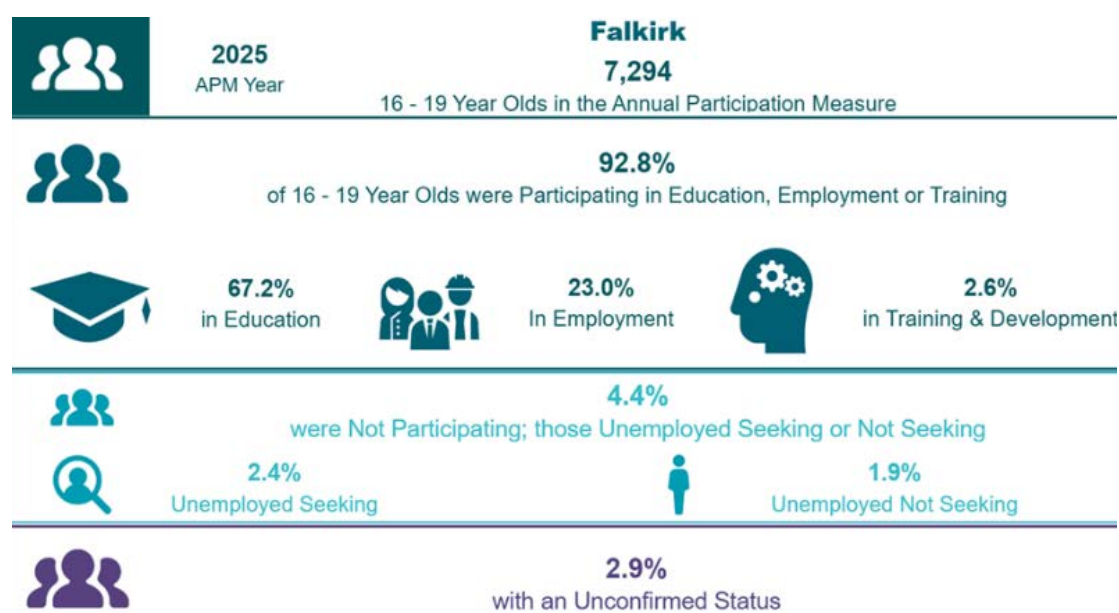
Impact & Outcomes

- **Reduced risk of youth poverty and improved life chances**
97.5% of school leavers entered positive destinations, exceeding national performance and improving long-term outcomes
- **Successful re-engagement of vulnerable young people**
Targeted programmes are supporting young people facing multiple barriers (mental health, poverty, care experience) to:
 - Re-engage in education, training and employment
 - Build confidence and resilience
- **Sustained positive outcomes**
Programmes such as Fit for Work (95%+ success) and Healthcare Academy (100% progression) demonstrate strong progression into employment
- **Increased qualifications and skills**
207 young people achieved qualifications, improving employability and future earning potential
- **Improved inclusive and flexible pathways**
“No wrong door” approach has reduced barriers to access, enabling:
 - More personalised support
 - Better alignment with young people’s needs

Supporting Young People into Positive and Sustained Destinations

During 2025/26, Falkirk continued to demonstrate strong performance in supporting young people to progress successfully beyond school. 97.5% of school leavers moved into a positive destination, exceeding the national average and representing a year on year improvement. This success reflects sustained, effective partnership working across education, employability services and the third sector, supporting young people to prepare for and progress into learning, training or employment.

In a challenging economic climate, partnership working has been increasingly important in responding to young people with complex needs, including those experiencing poor mental health, disability, care experience or disengagement from education. Across Falkirk, employability partners operate a “no wrong door” approach, ensuring young people can access flexible, personcentred support at the right time.



Employability Provision; Scale, Diversity and Impact

Falkirk Council Employment and Training Unit (ETU) delivered a broad and inclusive employability offer for young people aged 16-24 (up to 26 for care experienced young people), supporting 313 young people during 2025/26. Provision ranged from early intervention and key working in schools through to paid work experience, Modern Apprenticeships and progression into employment, further education and higher education.

Many young people supported by ETU faced additional barriers:

- 165 reported a longterm health condition
- 90 reported a learning disability, learning difficulty or autism spectrum condition
- 63 reported a longterm mental health condition
- 17 were care experienced

Across the year, ETU supported:

- 130 young people into employment (including Modern Apprenticeships)
- 19 into further or higher education
- 207 young people to achieve at least one certificated qualification.

To respond to changing needs, ETU introduced and expanded several targeted programmes:

- Fit for Work, delivered in partnership with FC Sports & Leisure, Link Living and Galaxy Sports, combining employability skills development with physical activity to build confidence, resilience and positive routines. Of 20 participants, 19 progressed to a positive destination.
- The Conservations Volunteers General Employability, delivered through five eightweek programmes, supporting young people to develop teamwork, confidence and practical employability skills through outdoor and environmental activity.
- John Muir Way Green Skills, a 10month paid work experience programme delivered with TCV, providing accredited training including Lantra strimmer and brush cutting qualifications, and targeting young people facing barriers to employment.
- Healthcare Academy, piloted in partnership with NHS Forth Valley, delivering an 18week programme with 100% progression into jobs and Modern Apprenticeships within the NHS and wider care sector.



[Healthcare Academy graduates pictured]

Skills Development Scotland and Apprenticeships

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) continued to play a central role in Falkirk's employability system. During 2025/26, Modern Apprenticeships remained a key pathway, with 1,419 apprentices in training, an 81.4% achievement rate, and over half of starts aged 16-24. Between April and September 2025 alone, 450 Modern Apprenticeship starts were supported locally.

Career Information, Advice and Guidance were delivered at scale across all secondary schools and postschool cohorts. From June to September 2025, SDS delivered 2,654 engagements supporting 2,202 school pupils through a mix of group and one to one interventions. Digital engagement remained strong, with most pupils registered on My World of Work.

Employability pathways were further strengthened through partnership with employers, including apprenticeship opportunities created through community benefits in procurement.



[Modern Apprentices at Balfour Beatty (via community benefits in procurement)]

Third Sector Partnerships; Relational and Targeted Support

Third sector partners provided essential, trauma informed employability support for young people requiring more intensive or flexible approaches.

Link Living delivered a range of wellbeing and employability programmes for young people aged 11-25:

- Steps to Resilience, supporting young people disengaged from learning or at risk of nonattendance, with 100% reporting improved confidence and 80% reporting improved mental health.
- Moving on Up, a transition programme for 16 -19yearolds, with 27 young people completing and 98% progressing to a positive destination.

- Employability Award (SCQF Level 4), with 11 young people achieving a qualification and nine progressing to a positive destination.
- Sporting Chance, focusing on wellbeing and confidence through physical activity.
- Creative Connections, supporting young people facing significant barriers such as social anxiety or long periods out of education.

Across 2025/26, Link Living delivered 15 courses and supported almost 111 young people.



[Participants at TCV (General Employability) in photo]

Go! Youth Trust (GYT) delivered a broad range of youth worked employability support:

- Thrive, supporting young people aged 16-25 through mentoring, group work and accredited learning, with 121 young people supported and over 45 qualifications achieved.
- NXT, an early intervention programme delivered across six secondary schools, supporting young people aged 14-16 at risk of disengagement, with 88% achieving an SCQF Level 4 award.
- New Scots Pathway Programme, supporting integration, confidence and employability for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds through inclusive, relationshipbased youth work.
- Cyrenians, through the Keys to Potential programme, provided intensive one to one support for young people experiencing significant disengagement from education, acting as a bridge back into learning and helping to establish realistic postschool pathways.



[Participants at GYT Team provision]

Department for Work and Pensions

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) delivered tailored financial, wellbeing and employment support through Universal Credit, Jobcentre Plus and specialist youth and healthrelated offers. Care leavers were recognised as a priority group, receiving enhanced trauma informed support, dedicated Jobcentre contacts, flexible claimant commitments and access to the Flexible Support Fund. DWP also adopted a healthfirst approach for young people with physical or mental health conditions or disabilities, adapting support to remove barriers to employment and progression.

Embedding Children's Rights and UNCRC

Employability activity during 2025/26 strongly reflected Falkirk's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Across services, practice upheld:

- Article 3 by prioritising young people's wellbeing and readiness to engage.
- Article 12 through listening to young people's views and shaping support around their preferences.
- Articles 28 and 29 by removing barriers to education and focusing on confidence, skills and future readiness.

Partners including Skills Development Scotland, ETU, Link Living, Go! Youth Trust and Cyrenians embedded rights based practice through codesign, safeguarding, inclusive delivery and alignment with GIRFEC, Corporate Parenting duties and The Promise.

Case Study

PersonCentred Employability Support

A young person who had experienced prolonged disengagement from school and learning was supported through targeted, relationshipbased employability intervention. By building trust and providing flexible learning opportunities outwith the school environment, barriers linked to anxiety and confidence were reduced. Collaborative working with education partners enabled the young person to reengage with learning, complete qualifications and establish a realistic pathway towards a positive postschool destination. This example highlights the importance of personalised, relational support in improving longterm outcomes.

Employability Subgroup and our Priorities

The Employability subgroup makes a direct contribution to addressing poverty & inequality by supporting parents, carers and young people to access training, education and employment opportunities that improve household income and longterm financial stability. This work also contributes to mental health & wellbeing, recognising the strong link between economic security, confidence and emotional resilience. By working with families experiencing multiple and compounding pressures, the subgroup supports those affected by domestic abuse and substance & alcohol use, helping to reduce barriers to employability and promote recovery, stability and independence through a traumainformed, wholefamily approach.

Our priorities for next year include:

Looking ahead, the Employability Partnership will focus on:

- Embedding and scaling successful pilot programmes, including those supporting ASN transitions
- Strengthening early identification of young people at risk of postschool disengagement
- Improving sustainability of positive destinations through enhanced tracking and followup
- Deepening partnership working through a no wrong door approach
- Continuing to centre children's rights, lived experience and relational practice in employability support

This work will support Falkirk's ambition to improve not only initial destinations, but longerterm participation and life chances for all young people.

Summary and Next Steps

This Annual Progress Report for 2025/26 marks the final year of Falkirk's Integrated Children's Services Plan 2023-2026. It demonstrates the continued commitment of partners across the public, third and community sectors to work collaboratively to improve outcomes for children, young people and families.

Across all activity, the Partnership is responding to the impact of domestic abuse, substance and alcohol use, mental health and wellbeing, and child poverty in a holistic and preventative way.

Across the five key workstreams, The Promise and Whole Family Wellbeing, Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), Mental Health & Wellbeing, Workforce Learning & Development and Employability, there is clear evidence of strengthened partnership working, increased workforce confidence, and a growing impact of early intervention and relationship-based practice.

Key achievements highlighted within this report include:

- Strengthening the voice and participation of children, young people and families in shaping services and decisions
- Delivering innovative, community-based and trauma-informed supports that prevent escalation and improve family wellbeing
- Enhancing multi-agency working through clearer guidance, shared tools and improved access to information
- Increasing workforce skills and confidence through expanded multi-agency learning and development opportunities
- Supporting more young people into positive destinations through flexible, inclusive and partnership-led employability pathways
- Progressing key developments such as the Single Point of Access for mental health and wellbeing support

As a partnership, we are committed to building upon the learning, evidence and lived experience captured throughout this reporting period, to inform the development of our next Integrated Children's Services Plan for 2026-2029. This provides an important opportunity to build on our progress, strengthen our approach to early intervention and prevention, and further embed children's rights across all services.

We look forward to sharing our new Plan 2026-2029, which will continue to reflect our shared ambition that all children and young people in Falkirk grow up safe, loved, respected and able to achieve their full potential.



FALKIRK COUNCIL

