# Children's Services

Service Improvement Plan 2025 – 28





### Welcome to our Service Improvement Plan

I am delighted to introduce the 2025-2028 Service Improvement Plan (SIP) for Children's Services.

The plan sets out our vision for the three years ahead, and how we as a team will help ensure the organisation delivers on the strategic outcomes set out in the Council Plan.

Councils everywhere are facing a very challenging financial context over the years ahead, while the cost-of-living crisis and poverty-related inequalities will continue to affect our communities.

So that makes it even more important we have a clear sense of direction on how to focus our resources to deliver on what's most important – helping deliver the best start to life for Renfrewshire's children and young people.

This plan will help us do that. I have been impressed by the commitment and great work already being delivered by colleagues across the service, and the plan sets out where we can continue and build on that over the next three years.

Our areas of focus will include putting children and young people at the heart of our services, tackling the impact of poverty, protecting the most vulnerable, raising attainment for all, and creating the best possible environment for our children and young people to thrive.

That will mean a team effort across the service, the wider council and our partners. I look forward to working with all of you to do that.

Janie O'Neill Director of Children's Services

### **Our Children's Services**

#### **Primary**



Primary education in **50** schools, **23** of which have an early learning and childcare (ELC) class.

#### **ASN**



Commitment to children and young people with additional support needs through our **2** ASN schools, mainstream and flexible learning resources.

#### ELC



Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) is provided across **15** centres.



#### Secondary

Secondary education in **11** schools.



#### Children's Houses

4 residential children's houses and supported accommodation for young people leaving care.



#### Children and Families Social Work

Front-line social work services in our local area, including delivering The Promise

#### Justice Social Work Services



Providing services to for children, young people, and adults with convictions through a range of fieldwork and specialist teams.



### Central Education Team

Literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, data literacy and research.



### Fostering and Adoption

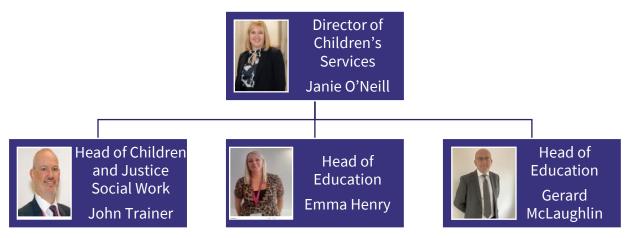
Providing kinship care to children and young people, with a dedicated team to support Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

### Children's Services - about us

Children's Services are responsible for the delivery of early learning and childcare, primary and secondary education, social work services to children and families, and justice social work services.

Children's Services provides universal services such as education, and targeted and specialist services for specific identified needs.

Our specialist provision includes child protection services, providing education to children and young people with additional support needs, mental health and addictions services for children and young people, and management and rehabilitation services for people who have committed offences.



The Director of Children's Services is the Council's Chief Education Officer and is supported by three Heads of Service: two Heads of Education and the Head of Children and Justice Social Work.

The Head of Children and Justice Social Work is also the Chief Social Work Officer for the Council and the Health and Social Care Partnership.

### **Our Resources and Risks**

#### **BUDGET**

The Children's Services revenue budget for 2025/26 is approximately £267m, equating to almost half of the Council's General Services budget.

As part of the capital budget, over £76m will be invested in 2025/26 in Schools and Early Years establishments, with £151m to be invested over the period 2025/26 to 2029/30.

#### **RISK MANAGEMENT**

The Council's risk management arrangements are well established with all strategic, corporate and service risks being reported to the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board. Children's Services risks are detailed below:

#### Strategic risks

- Learning Estate Strategy very high
- Pandemic threat high

#### Corporate Risks

- Financial Sustainability very high
- Cyber Security very high

#### Service Risks

- Temporary funding streams ending high
- Violence and Aggression high
- Pupil Attendance and Exclusions high
- Additional Support for Learning high
- 21 hours non-class contact time high



### **Workforce Innovation and Wellbeing**

The Council launched its people strategy "Our People, Our Future" in 2021, which was updated in 2023 with the following 3 priorities:





**Workforce Planning** 



**Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion** 

The strategy covers the period 2021-2026 and work will begin this year to develop a new strategy.

In early 2025, Audit Scotland published the results of their Scotland-wide thematic Best Value review on workforce innovation. The report on Renfrewshire Council had many examples of good practice and presented us with three areas for improvement, which our People and OD will progress in partnership with other Council services.

**Children's Services** will ensure these priorities are reflected in both our strategic and day-to-day operations. High-level actions are embedded in our Service Improvement Plan, with a particular emphasis on supporting our teams following service re-designs. These redesigns have been – and will continue to be – collaborative and people-centred, reflecting our values with regular workshops and catch ups.

We will also actively take forward findings from the Employee Survey to address workload issues and the mental and physical wellbeing of our workforce. Our high-level actions will align with the Cultural Assurance Model and other scrutiny exercises.

### **Data Strategy**

The Council's Digital Strategy includes Smart Data Workstream tasked with improving the management and exploitation of data in a consistent way across our services, leading to the improvement of the Council's capabilities around data. As part of the Smart Data Workstream an organisation-wide data governance group has been created which includes data specialist representatives from all services. Service data strategies have been developed since 2024 to address gaps and improve the management and exploitation of business-critical data. In 2025/26, the service will:

Through evidence-based data driven decision making we will improve outcomes for children, families and communities.

- Increase cross-sector working to create consistent data approaches and share best practice.
- Expand data literacy training offer across Children's Services.
- Increase awareness of data analysis across all teams within Children's Services.

#### **Barriers**

- Service re-designs have impacted resources available for analysis & reporting.
- Limitations within management information systems.
- Actions identified from analysis may not be achievable in financial climate.

Data Network Group to identify key areas for improvement relating to consistent approaches & roles/ responsibilities

Improved data processes to reduce duplication and manual error

Wider rollout of data literacy programme to all teams

Increased sharing of analysis across teams

### Renfrewshire Council's Service Improvement Context

Reflecting our values

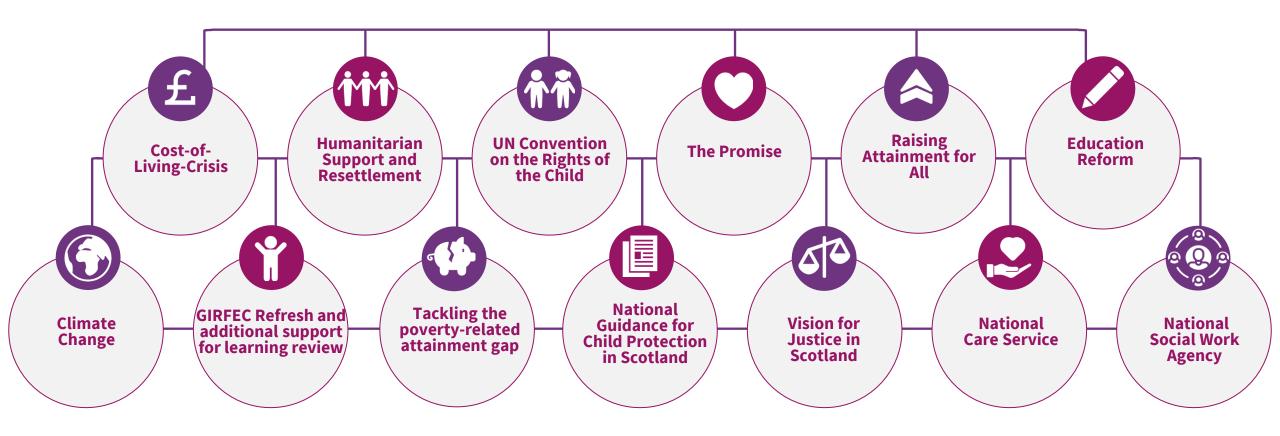
Delivering financially sustainable services

Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion

Delivering Best Value

Aligning to our Council Plan and the Community Plan

### **National Policy Context**



### **Local Policy Context**



#### **Our Values**

Our Values describe our promise to our communities, staff, and partners. They guide how we deliver services and make decisions.



#### **Council and Community Plans**

Our Council Plan and Community Plan set the strategic framework for our organisation and describe what we want to achieve for Renfrewshire



#### **Fairer Renfrewshire Programme**

Brings together existing programmes of work focused on achieving fairness and equity, and tackling the inequalities that exist across Renfrewshire's communities.



#### **Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion**

Every area of work within the Council has a role to play in promoting equality and diversity. The Equality Act 2010 protects people from unfair treatment and asks public bodies to show how they make a positive difference to equality groups.



#### **Best Value**

Aims to ensure good governance; manage resources effectively; focus on improvement; and, most important of all, deliver the best possible outcomes for local people.



#### **Community Mental Health & Wellbeing**

Every area of work within the Council has a role to play in promoting equality and diversity. The Equality Act 2010 protects people from unfair treatment and asks public bodies to show how they make a positive difference to equality groups.



#### **Gaelic Language Plan**

Renfrewshire Council is committed to providing Gaelic education opportunities for our residents and those who wish to undertake this in future through our Gaelic Language Plan 2024 – 2029.



#### **Learning Estate Strategy**

Our most ambitious and high-value investment programme to achieve our long-term strategy to "create the best possible learning estate to allow children and young people to thrive".

### **Key Priorities**

Reduce child poverty in Renfrewshire and improving outcomes for children and families currently living in poverty Place children and young people's human rights at the heart of the planning and delivery of services that affect them

Protect the most vulnerable members of our communities, including children and young people who are at risk

Create the best possible learning estate to allow children and young people to thrive

Support and nurture our children, families and communities

Raise attainment and enhance learning and teaching in an inclusive environment

Contribute to the Reshaping Renfrewshire -Transformation and Change Programme Responding to the findings from the employee surveys and self-assessment in partnership with our people

### **Our Focus 2025/26**

- Continue to progress Renfrewshire's response to **Keeping The Promise**
- Continue to enhance our approach to the **whole family wellbeing** model, promoting early and preventative intervention
- In accordance with UNCRC, ensure that **voices of children and young people** are heard and included, and their human rights are respected
- Ensure that robust **child protection** responses are in place and implement the recommendations from the children at risk of harm inspection
- Focus on securing **permanency arrangements** for children where this is the best outcome
- Support children, young people and their families to prepare for the **transition to adult services** and greater independence
- Ensure **compulsory supervision** is only utilised in the children's hearing system where it is in the children's interests and reflects national policy
- Implement the Equally Safe Strategy
- Review and develop the **unpaid work scheme** to improve outcomes for individuals and communities
- Review and evaluate the redesign of children and justice social work and develop a new operating model for Children's Services

### **Our Focus 2025/26**

- Work collaboratively with our key partners to ensure our children and young people enjoy good physical and mental health
- Play a critical part in our **local response to poverty**, sharing data and insight to direct resources to areas of greatest impact
- Closing the **poverty related attainment gap** and improving attainment of our lowest 20% learners through effective use of data, targeted approaches, the implementation of a learning and teaching strategy and through strengthened assessment, tracking and monitoring
- Ensure robust action plans are in place to develop and align with the work of the **Curricular Improvement Cycle**
- Through robust **self evaluation** with key stakeholders, we will refresh our resource and supports offered to maximise impact further
- Continue to strengthen our approach to planning and future proofing our learning estate
- Continue to work with establishment leaders to support our children and young people with ASN
- Continue to develop strategies to **improve attendance and reduce exclusions** three targeted secondary schools are currently working on a National pilot with Education Scotland on the, Improving Attendance Quality Improvement Programme. A pilot project targeting two secondaries will be implemented in collaboration with Police Scotland and the recruitment of a Youth Engagement Development Officer.
- Continue to support vulnerable young people to achieve and sustain positive pathways after leaving school
- Effective delivery of our **key workforce priorities** to support the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff and address the priorities identified within the staff survey

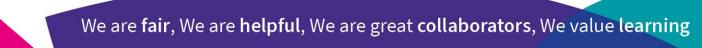
# **Delivering the Council Plan**

Children's Services Action Plan and Performance Indicators



### **Delivering the Council Plan - Place**

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?
Progress development work in relation to the priority schools identified in the Learning Estate Management Plan –  a) Paisley Grammar School Community Campus b) Thorn Primary School  c) Extension and Adaptations to Park Mains High School  d) A New Dargavel Primary School	Pupils and staff enjoy a modern, fit for purpose, learning estate which supports learning and achievement.	Head of Education (Strategy & Improvement)  Learning Estate Strategy and Delivery Manager	<ul> <li>a) 31 August 2026</li> <li>b) Ongoing</li> <li>c) 31 August 2027</li> <li>d) 31 August 2027</li> </ul>
Undertake an evaluation of the roll out of full Wi-Fi across the school estate	Ensure that we have good connections which supports flexible learning and allows that is aligned to current technology trends.	Digital Learning and Link Manager	31 March 2026
A digital strategy will be developed, implemented and evaluated for children, young people and families which will focus on Transformation, Capacity Building and Innovation	In line with the corporate digital strategy, our children, young people and families will have a successful digital experience that supports learning and is seamless, integrated, consistent and personalised.	Digital Learning and Link Manager	31 March 2027
Ensure that evidence-based data driven decision making improves outcomes for children, families and communities.	Increase in cross-sector working to create consistent data approaches and share best practice. Enhanced data literacy across Children's Services. Increased awareness of data analysis across all teams within Children's Services.	Head of Education (Strategy & Improvement)	31 March 2026



### **Delivering the Council Plan - Place**

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?	
Implement the priority actions from the National Strategy for Community Justice with our Community Justice partners	Enhance intervention at the earliest opportunity by ensuring greater consistency, confidence in and awareness of services which support the use of direct measures and diversion from prosecution.	Community Justice Lead Officer	31 March 2027	
	Enhance community integration and support by increasing and promoting greater use of voluntary throughcare and third sector services.			
Continue to implement 'Equally Safe at School' policy	A whole school approach to preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls, with staff and students working together with a shared understanding and commitment to equality and safety for all.	Education Manager (Quality Improvement and Health & Wellbeing)	31 March 2027	
Implement Renfrewshire's Equally Safe Strategy	Preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls.	Children's Services Manager (Front-Door Services)	31 March 2028	

## **Delivering the Council Plan – Economy**

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?
Contribute to the Council's Workforce Plan and Strategic Recruitment and Talent Management Plan to enable us to meet workforce demands particularly in relation to Teaching and Social Work	Creating a high performing and sustainable workforce capable of meeting the Council's future challenges.	Education Manager (Leadership & Professional Development)  Strategic Manager (Children and Justice Social Work)	31 March 2027
Working in partnership with Skills Development Scotland, West College Scotland, Invest in Renfrewshire and Developing the Young Workforce West, we will ensure planned robust approaches to supporting our most vulnerable learners into positive, sustained destinations	This will provide a coordinated approach to ensuring that all young people, particularly the most vulnerable, are given the best opportunities and supports to move into positive future pathways.	Education Manager (Developing the Young Workforce)	31 March 2028



What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?	
	All staff will be aware of the Renfrewshire Vision for learning, teaching and assessment and features of highly effective practice and will begin to use them in their practice.			
Implementation of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy that clearly articulates the vision for planning and	All practitioners are provided with the opportunity to learn from and share highly effective practice.	Education Manager	31 March 2027	
delivering high quality learning, teaching and assessment	All staff will be empowered and supported to strengthen their practice through collaboration and professional learning.	(Assessment & Moderation)		
	Learners' experiences will improve as the vision for highly effective practice is realised in each establishment.			
	Close the educational attainment gap for our care experienced children and young people.			
Raise attainment and skills for learning, life, and work to enhance opportunities and choices for all our children and young people	Ensuring equality through targeted improvement activity in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing	Heads of Education	31 March 2027	
	Improve attendance and monitor exclusions and provide help to parents and carers to support their children and young people to meet their educational needs.			

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?
The Promise Strategic Oversight Board and workstreams will progress and ensure Renfrewshire 'Keeps the Promise' and delivers improved outcomes for individuals who are care experienced, wherever possible keeping children within their families (CF)	Continue to progress Renfrewshire's response to Keeping The Promise	The Promise Manager	31 March 2027 (CP) 31 March 2028 (SIP) (overall programme until 2030)
We will embed the whole family wellbeing service and request for assistance process to ensure that families get the right support at the right time, based on need	The request for assistance process will enable families to reach in for support themselves and is a one door approach for professionals to seek stage 1 support for families which will include access to our funded third sector partners. This will result in improved family wellbeing outcomes, reduced number of crisis and social work interventions and improved access to early intervention and prevention services.	Education Manager (Whole Family Wellbeing)	31 March 2028
Work collaboratively with our key partners to ensure our children and young people enjoy good physical and mental health	re our children and young people enjoy		31 March 2028

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?
Focus on securing permanency arrangements for children where this is the best outcome	Ensure that children who cannot safely remain in the care of their birth parents have a permanence decision six months after becoming accommodated and have a permanence plan agreed within 12 months of becoming accommodated.	Social Work Strategic Manager (Depute Chief Social Work Officer)	30 June 2026
Implement the recommendations from the children at risk of harm inspection	Ensure that robust child protection responses are in place and implement the recommendations from the children at risk of harm inspection.	Head of Children and Justice Social Work (Chief Social Work Officer)	31 March 2026
Provide support and intervention at the right level and the right time to allow children and families to move out of the system quickly when challenges are addressed and resolved	Ensure compulsory supervision is only utilised where it is in the child's best interests, and it is not in place for longer than necessary.	Children's & Justice Services Manager (Assurance & Change)	30 June 2026
Review the impact of the social work redesign	Clarity about the impact of the service re-design upon delivery of key objectives leading to improvement and adaptation where required.	Social Work Strategic Manager (Depute Chief Social Work Officer)	30 November 2026

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?
Ensure robust action plans are in place to develop and align with the work of the Curricular Improvement Cycle	This systematic review of the Scottish curriculum will ensure it remains up to date and relevant for all children and young people.	Head of Education (Attainment, Inclusion & Wellbeing) Education Manager (Assessment & Moderation)	31 March 2028
Continue to work with establishment leaders to support our children and young people with Additional Support Needs	Ensure that resource is allocated effectively and equitably in line with the staged intervention framework, supporting Renfrewshire's children and young people to access an appropriate education.	Head of Education (Attainment, Inclusion & Wellbeing) Education Manager (ASN & Inclusion)	31 March 2028
Managing and Reporting Violence and Aggression Incidents in Establishments Policy will continue to be embedded, ensuring that local processes are followed to track and monitor incidents resulting in appropriate interventions and supports being actioned	Continue to support establishments to embed new policy and signpost to the related training opportunities to support this both universally and targeted.	Head of Education (Attainment, Inclusion & Wellbeing) Education Manager (ASN & Inclusion)	31 March 2028

#### Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators – Financial Year	Last Updated	Value	Target
Proportion of children being looked after in the community	Q4 2024/25	91.6%	89.9%
Percentage of accommodated Looked After Children placed with families	Q4 2024/25	90.5%	83%
Percentage of care leavers participating in employment, training or education	Q4 2024/25	58%	55%
Percentage of care leavers who have had a period of homelessness in the last 6 months	Q4 2024/25	3%	0%
The percentage of NEW clients subject to a new supervision order seen by a supervising officer within 1 week	Q4 2024/25	79%	85%
% of NEW unpaid work orders/requirement complete by the required date	Q4 2024/25	97%	75%
Percentage of NEW unpaid work clients seen within 1 working day of the order	Q4 2024/25	63%	70%
Percentage of NEW unpaid work clients receiving an induction within 5 working days of the order	Q4 2024/25	69%	75%
Percentage of NEW unpaid work clients beginning work placement within 7 working days of the order	Q4 2024/25	70%	65%

#### Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator – Academic Year	Last Updated	Value	Target
% of Leavers attaining literacy SCQF Level 4	2023/24	94.0%	98%
% of Leavers attaining numeracy SCQF Level 4	2023/24	93.0%	94%
% of Leavers attaining literacy SCQF Level 5	2023/24	83.0%	88%
% of Leavers attaining numeracy SCQF Level 5	2023/24	76.0%	77%
Average total tariff score of all school leavers in Renfrewshire	2023/24	941	959
Average total tariff score of leavers living in SIMD 30% most deprived areas	2023/24	681	770
Percentage gap in average total tariff score of school leavers resident in SIMD 30% most deprived and those from the 70% least SIMD deprived Renfrewshire areas.	2023/24	38%	28%
Average Total Tariff Score of Looked After Children (school leavers)	2023/24	283	330
Gap between the Average Total Tariff Score of Looked After Children (school leavers) and that of the total Renfrewshire leavers cohort	2023/24	62%	63%
No of foundation apprenticeships accessed by Renfrewshire school pupils	2023/24	21	50
Percentage of pupils satisfied with establishments Education Scotland Survey	2024/25	90%	100%

#### Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator – Academic Year	Last Updated	Value	Target
Percentage Point Gap in % Pupils Achieving Expected Level for their stage in Literacy between pupils living in 30% Most Deprived areas and those living in 70% Least Deprived Areas (SIMD)	2023/24	14	10
Percentage Point Gap in % Pupils Achieving Expected Level for their stage in Numeracy between pupils living in 30% Most Deprived areas and those living in 70% Least Deprived Areas (SIMD)	2023/24	11	9
Percentage Point Gap in % Pupils Achieving Expected Level for their stage in Literacy between pupils entitled to Free School Meals and pupils not entitled	2023/24	18	15
Percentage Point Gap in % Pupils Achieving Expected Level for their stage in Numeracy between pupils entitled to Free School Meals and pupils not entitled	2023/24	14	14
% of School leavers in a positive destination	2023/24	97.1%	98%
% of children attending school (Primary)	2023/24	93.1%	95.5%
% of children attending school (Secondary)	2023/24	86.8%	91%
% of young people choosing to stay onto S5 (as % of S4 roll at September previous year)	2024/25	91.4%	92%
% of young people choosing to stay onto S6 (as % of S4 roll at September two years before)	2024/25	62.8%	71%

# **Delivering the Council Plan – Green**

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?
Continue to work with other council services to deliver improvements to the school estate which offer a high degree of environmental sustainability and energy efficiency	Following the Council's declaration of a climate emergency in June 2019, the delivery of this action will make a critical contribution towards Renfrewshire being carbon neutral by 2030.	Head of Education (Strategy & Improvement)  Learning Estate Strategy and Delivery Manager	31 March 2026

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?
Engage and participate in Trauma Informed and Responsive Renfrewshire programme	We understand what trauma is, and how it affects people, so we will now work differently: Learning and working together to co-create fair and helpful collaborations to support healing and recovery with people affected by trauma.  Progress towards, and achievement of, improvement outcomes for people, systems and services as detailed of five strategic themes and outcomes in Trauma Informed and Responsive Renfrewshire programme	All Heads of Service	31 March 2026
Actively promote health and wellbeing support for staff	Our staff feel supported and are aware of the health and wellbeing support available to them.	All Heads of Service	31 March 2027

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?
Place the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the heart of service planning and delivery (UNCRC)	Promote awareness of children's rights, not just amongst children and young people but also adults.	Strategic Manager (Children and Justice Social Work)	31 March 2027
		Head of Education (Inclusion and Quality Improvement)	
Through engagement and participation, we will ensure the collective views, needs and aspirations of children, young people and families are met	We take steps to ensure seldom heard voices are heard e.g., care experienced children and young people and those children involved in child protection.	Head of Education (Inclusion and Quality Improvement)	
		Child Protection Adviser	31 March 2027
	The participation and influence of care experienced children, young people and their families is recorded and evidenced.	Children's Services Manager (Children & Families Teams)	
In partnership with the HSCP, closely collaborate with young people and their families to ensure a smooth transition to adult services	Empower young people with disabilities and their families to make informed choices.	Children's Services Manager (Renfrewshire-Wide Services)	31 March 2027

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?
Take forward findings from Employee Survey and develop actions across the following three priority areas	Addressing mental and physical well being Addressing workload issues Receiving praise and recognition	Service Improvement Manager	31 March 2028
Play a key role in the Reshaping Renfrewshire – Transformation Programme and associated workstreams	Transformative learning estate strategy and provide regular updates to CMT and Education and Children's Services Policy Board	All Heads of Service	31 March 2028
Undertake the duty under the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 to promote and support, as appropriate, the potential for Gaelic medium and Gaelic learner education to Renfrewshire Council residents	Children and young people will have access to high quality GME provision at all levels, where required.	Head of Education (Strategy & Improvement)  Education Manager (Assessment & Moderation)	Early years – 31 August 2026 Primary expansion – 31 August 2027 Secondary – 31 August 2029
Engage with the Data Advisory Group to ensure data activities align with the Data Strategy Framework, cross-service data sharing opportunities are identified, and data improvement activities are carried out in a consistent manner across the organisation.	Ensure data is used collaboratively across services for Council strategic outcomes. Ensure consistency of approach to data improvement activities. Ensure good practice is shared.	Head of Education (Strategy & Improvement)	31 March 2026



#### Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators – Financial Year	Last Updated	Value	Target
% of Stage 1 complaints responded to within timescales agreed with customers	Q4 2024/25	100%	95%
% of Stage 2 complaints responded to within timescales agreed with customers	Q4 2024/25	97%	95%
% of FOI requests completed within timescale by Children's Services	Q4 2024/25	80%	100%
Completion rate of corporate induction within 30 days of starting employment with the Council	NEW		100%
Completion rates of mandatory training courses	NEW		100%
Completion rates of Personal Development Plans	NEW		100%

#### Performance Indicators

# **Management Information**

Performance Indicators – Financial Year	Last Updated	Value
Percentage of children registered in this period who have previously been on the Child Protection Register	Q4 2024/25	3.2%
Number of children on the Child Protection Register at quarter end date	Q4 2024/25	63

# Children's Services

Service Improvement Plan 2025 – 28

