
North Ayrshire Children's Rights Report

2020-23



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Introduction

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a core international human rights instrument which was ratified by the UK Government in 1991.

The UNCRC sets out a holistic framework for the rights of all children. The different articles are interdependent – civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights all have equal status and are indivisible. Governments are expected to do all they can to implement the UNCRC – to make sure all law, policy and decisions which impact on children from birth to 18 years of age, comply with their human rights.

The general measures of the Convention include measures which give legal effect to the UNCRC, as well as 'non-legal measures' – for example, awareness raising, training, budgeting – or other processes that can be used to progress implementation of the Convention.

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



Introduction (continued)

The UNCRC is based on four key principles:

1

The best interests of the child should be the first consideration for actions that affect him or her.

2

All children have the right to life, survival and development.

3

All children have the right to participate.

4

All rights belong to all children without discrimination or exception.



“This approach reflects the Convention’s holistic perspective of children’s rights: that they are indivisible and interrelated, and that equal importance should be attached to each and every right recognized therein”.

As a child-centred organisation, the UNCRC provides the Council with a platform to help us determine if we are improving and promoting the wellbeing of children.

The Convention Rights can also compliment the Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) wellbeing indicators, which are Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included (SHANNARI).

Aspects of The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill was successfully challenged in the Supreme Court in 2021. The Scottish Government under the new First Minister remains committed to reintroducing the Bill, albeit with certain amendments as a result of the judgement. The fundamental goal of the Bill – to incorporate the UNCRC directly into Scots Law – will be unchanged. As such, whilst the specific timescale is not yet clear, work rightly continues to prepare for incorporation. As a local authority we already owe a range of statutory obligations to children and young people, some of which are substantively similar to the terms of the UNCRC. However, currently, Convention rights are not directly enforceable against public bodies in Scotland. We continue to monitor the legal position but as at Spring 2023, a timescale for reintroduction of the Bill has not been confirmed.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has grouped the provisions of the Convention in Clusters: “This approach reflects the Convention’s holistic perspective of children’s rights: that they are indivisible and interrelated, and that equal importance should be attached to each and every right recognized therein”. The report has therefore followed this approach by grouping the information into the designated Clusters.

Cluster:

1

General Measures of implementation
– Do we have the structures and
resources to implement the UNCRC?



1. General Measures of implementation

Implementing UNCRC

We have employed a Policy Officer who will drive the implementation of UNCRC throughout North Ayrshire Council.

We have established a young people's UNCRC group, which is led by North Ayrshire's Young People's Champion.

We are working with our learning and development team and the Improvement Service team to identify and implement the best way to develop training materials and guidance on UNCRC. Identifying the target groups and their specific needs will allow us to know the level of training needs required.

An Education Service UNCRC Policy and Operating Procedure was drafted in late 2022 and is in the process of being finalised ahead of sharing with education establishments to support further embedding of children rights within education settings. In addition, a realising children's rights policy insert has been drafted that is being considered as a proposal that will enable alignment between future Education Service policy and UNCRC requirements.

We have developed a communications plan, the remit of which is focused on raising awareness.

Children's Right Impact Assessment

The Council utilises an integrated impact assessment tool, that includes equality and diversity, the Fairer Scotland Duty and Children's Rights.

The Children's rights element of the assessment is a key tool within the

assessment and is used for translating the United Nations Article 3 (giving priority to children's best interests) into practice in a concrete and structured manner. This helps to ensure that all decisions made and affecting children must have the "best interests of the child" as the starting point.

The purpose of carrying out an Equality and Children's Rights Impact Assessment (ECRIA) is to ensure that when developing policies, planning services, implementing strategies or taking financial decisions we are not adversely affecting or discriminating against different groups within the community. The assessment process is also about ensuring we have taken every opportunity to improve the lives of the people impacted by our services through promoting equality and considering the needs in detail of our younger people. It is a tool to help inform us to make sure our policies, and the way we carry out our functions, do what they are intended to do for everyone. This also ensures that the services provided fulfil the requirements of equalities legislation and the UNCRC.

ECRIA are completed for both budget and non-budget related assessments throughout the year. Work is ongoing to continue to ensure all services are aware of their responsibilities to assess activities that impact on people. During the latter part of 2022, a new online Equality and Children's Rights Impact Assessment training module was developed and promoted to managers, 32 of which have completed this to the end of March 2023.

1. General Measures of implementation (continued)

A review of the Equality and Children's Rights Impact Assessment process has been initiated. This will cover several aspects of the integrated tool, including the Children's Rights element, which will be expanded and supported by awareness sessions on the UNCRC. These will build upon the information contained in the current ECRIA guidance document.

Complaints

The Child friendly complaints process is currently being reviewed. The purpose of this is to incorporate the rights within the UNCRC into Scottish law by providing a route of legal challenge if someone believes a public body has not met their rights under the UNCRC. The salient points of the UNCRC as it pertains to the complaints process are:

- 1 Applies to a child aged under 18
- 2 Designed to protect children from discrimination
- 3 Best of interests of children to be considered when making decisions
- 4 Children's views to be sought
- 5 Children, if requested to be given advocacy
- 6 Where appropriate, have family views sought and given appropriate weight

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) will provide guidance which will apply when:

- 1 Anyone under 18 raises a concern directly (may or may not meet the definition of a complaint)
- 2 Someone else raises a concern on behalf of under 18's
- 3 Someone raises a concern that impacts on an under 18

Discussions were being held at a national level to determine whether the pilot is to be confined to a single department, for example within an Education Service within a Local Authority or should be piloted wider to identify the possible impact on other departments such as Customer Services. Further developments are expected to be made in later 2023.



Cluster:

2

General Principles of the UNCRC –
Do we take decisions in the best
interests of children in order to
maximise their development and enable
them to have their say?



2. General Principles of the UNCRC

Rights Respecting Schools

Almost 90% of Additional Support Needs and young carers have their voice heard, helping to realise Article 12 of the UNCRC.

All schools promote children's rights. The Rights Respecting Schools programme (RRS) has been promoted and introduced into almost all of our schools. The Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) recognises achievement in putting the UNCRC at the heart of a school's planning, policies, practice and ethos. Children's rights underpin the Getting it Right for Every Child approach.

RRS teaches about children's rights, but also models rights and respect in all relationships, whether they are between teachers or other adults, and pupils, between adults or between pupils. RRS underpins our Integrated Children's Service Plan, Promoting Positive Relationships and anti-bullying policies. The UNCRC provides a clear link for pupils from rights-respecting schools, to understanding their rights and children's rights being realised everywhere. Children and young people in rights-respecting schools develop a stronger sense of the need to act for global justice. Over 90% of our schools are participating in the RRS status with nineteen schools reaching gold or Ambassador Status and twenty-five schools achieving Silver.

Our anti-bullying policy entitled "Bullying – It's Never Acceptable" is now established. Enhanced and more accurate reporting and recording of prejudiced based bullying has been in place for a year. Our partnership with "Respect Me", Scotland's anti-bullying service for schools continues and this provides a source for professional learning in this area of health and wellbeing.

Recording of bullying incidents has led to improved responses by professionals and better outcomes for our young people due to the support we provide. Requests for assistance indicate that this work requires to continue particularly regarding online bullying behaviour. Anti-bullying work remains a focus for our Child Protection Working party. There are regular updates to training which provides links to online supports for parents, employees and our young people.

19 Gold award schools fully Rights Respecting with a Children's Rights ambassador status.

25 Silver award schools who are fully rights aware.

13 Bronze award schools who are Children's Rights committed.

“This is a process of improvement, it’s not an end point. Our school vision is about the whole child, rights help promote that. These things aren’t just done to get a tick in a box.” – St Matthews Headteacher

St Matthews Academy

St Matthews Academy is a secondary school built within Saltcoats in 2007 with a pupil roll of 1,225. Of these, 20.2% meet a measure of deprivation, whilst 33.3% receive support for additional needs. The school has recently undergone an accreditation visit on how children’s rights are embedded within the school. The outcome showed it was clear that children’s rights are part of the fabric of the school and underpin every facet of school life and has therefore met the standards for UNICEF UK’s Rights Respecting Schools Award at Gold.

The strengths of the school are as follows:

- Pupils demonstrate a clear and ‘real’ knowledge of rights, confident in explaining how these related to their own experiences in school and the wider world.
- A commitment to a child rights-based approach, which is driving policy and practice, alongside the school’s values and Catholic ethos.
- Learning and support which is responsive to the needs of the pupils.



2. General Principles of the UNCRC (continued)

- A focus on equality and inclusion which strives to welcome everyone and ensure they have what they need to succeed.
- The engagement of pupils in shaping their school and in acting for a better world.
- Mainstreaming rights and participation in education (outward) through professional learning with and for external partners, ensuring all staff working within education or those who work with education promote UNCRC, views of children and young people are gathered to inform policy, services and practice and the use of child's rights and wellbeing impact assessments.
- Securing continuous improvement in implementation of rights-based approaches.

"Dignity is at the heart of it. It's what we are about. It's a Catholic school not a school for Catholics."

St Matthews Teacher

UNCRC recognises, respects and promotes children's rights. These include rights to be treated fairly, to be heard and to be as healthy as possible. Scottish Government's vision is a Scotland where policy, law and decision-making take account of children's rights and where all children have a voice and are empowered to be human rights defenders. This policy plays a critical role in guiding schools and Early Years Centre to help children understand and experience their rights.

Education Scotland (ES) published the Children's rights and participation strategy 2020-2022 prioritising children's rights around three key strategic objectives:

- Embedding rights and participation in corporate systems and processes (inward) through professional learning for all staff, referring to UNCRC in PRD's and ensuring that all planning refers to and reflects the UNCRC.

How Good Is Our School (HGIOS) highlights that learner participation in self-evaluation a school improvement planning is fundamental to ensuring children's rights within the school context. Article 12 of UNCRC states that children have the right to have their opinions considered when adults are making decisions about things that affect them.



2. General Principles of the UNCRC (continued)

During Covid-19 the Joint Cabinet continued to grow and develop through an online model to ensure that young people's views were taken into account, and this brought young people from across all of our secondary establishments to a space where they can speak truth to power, discuss key issues, ask questions and engage in topics that they want to discuss. These events give young people the space to give their views but also follow up on key actions through the 'you said, we did' model creating the feedback on how their voice shapes policies, strategies and key changes on things that affect them.

Key topics over the last few years have included:

- Cost of Living
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Education Reform
- Climate Change
- Engagement with key services such as NHS, Police and Fire and Rescue
- Employability
- Issues based (alcohol and drugs education)

As this model evolves it is open to more young people to contribute through online engagement for wider school communities to compliment the live meeting.

Joint Youth Forum

The Joint Youth Forum takes place quarterly and provides the opportunity for all our individual youth voice groups to come together to share good practice, work on North Ayrshire wide projects and gives us the opportunity to facilitate training and share information. The Year of Young People provided us with the opportunity to look at key themes that young people felt passionate about. These included:

- Young People Voice and Rights
- Poverty and Inequality
- Health and Wellbeing
- And the later addition of Climate Change

The Community Learning and Development Strategic Plan outlines the key priorities under youth work including:

- Young people's voice and rights
- Climate Change
- Digital Connections
- Attainment and Achievement
- Positive destinations for 16-19 year olds
- Health and Wellbeing
- Poverty and Inequalities

These key priorities shape the work of the Connected Communities team and provide reporting mechanisms for any work that is carried out with young people in both schools and communities.

The Scottish Youth Parliament members continue to be fully supported in being the democratically elected voice of young people in North Ayrshire.

Youth Participation

Central to Youth Participation is the work that happens across our localities youth voice structures including six locality-based youth forums. These young people consult and engage with their peers, create events, activities, and opportunities, and create a link between learner and community voice. This is only strengthened through youth voice groups for groups representing some of our protected characteristics including:

- LGBT Provision
- New Scots
- Care Experienced
- Young Carers
- ASN

There has been concentrated work around our peer led model including the creation of community-based groups Climate Change Ambassadors, Mental Health Ambassadors and our Modern Apprenticeship programme.

Scottish Youth Parliament

The Scottish Youth Parliament members continue to be fully supported in being the democratically elected voice of young people in North Ayrshire. Our four young people make up some of the 150 young people that represent the voices of young people within the national organisations. This terms MSYP's have been involved in the national policy of 'A Right to Food'. November of this year will see our next set of MSYP's elected in for a 2-year term, with elections taking place across our secondary schools and communities.

The Connected Communities team has established an Equalities Network of young people who identify as LGBTQI+ or allies of those that identify as such.

The programme has also included the completion of the LGBT Youth Scotland Silver Charter Mark that was achieved in March 2023. The Charter has created a minimum standard that we expect to see when working and engaging with our LGBT communities with group work, projects, events, localised support, and opportunities for young people to share their views and affect change.

We are committed to ensuring our young people have the opportunity to decide on how local money is spent on projects that benefit them.

The Participatory Budget (PB) process includes young people from the outset, from steering group participation, shortlisting applications and (age 8+) voting on projects they want to see succeed. The locality-based model for young people includes the 4 themes of:

- Poverty and Inequality
- Young Peoples Voice and Rights
- Health and Wellbeing
- Climate Change

The community PB also allows for young people to vote on projects from age 8+. Allowing for young people to participate in these processes creates active citizens that are involved in local decision making and democracy.

Cluster:

3

Civil Rights and Freedoms – Do we promote the freedom of association and expression, protect privacy, ensure appropriate access to information and protect from inhumane treatment?



3. Civil Rights and Freedoms

Youth Council

As the Youth Council develops and embeds learner participation from primary schools, the Youth Council brings together Primary Seven pupils from across North Ayrshire to participate in interactive activities that complement the Joint Cabinet themes. Using interactive workshops, pupils can contribute to key policies and strategies. Previously, the Youth Council focused on secondary schools. Now, by opening the participation models to primary sevens they are becoming active members within their communities and create pathways to share their views and opinions in preparation for secondary school.

Data protection

All personal information is held and processed by North Ayrshire Council in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

Under Data Protection legislation, individuals have the right to request access to information about them that the Council holds.

Individuals also have the right to:

- object to processing of personal data that is likely to cause, or is causing, damage or distress.
- prevent processing for the purpose of direct marketing.
- object to decisions being taken by automated means.
- in certain circumstances, have inaccurate personal data rectified, blocked, erased or destroyed.
- in certain circumstances, transfer their data to another organisation (data portability).

Our data sharing and handling and privacy statements are published in all school handbooks and on our website.

We publish a range of information, reports and documents in various formats and produce child friendly versions and summaries where appropriate. Many of our services use social media to actively engage with our children and young people.



Cluster:

4

Violence Against Children
- to what extent do we uphold?



4. Violence Against Children

Multi-agency Risk Assessment

Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) commenced in North Ayrshire in August 2022 and are held monthly. During this period, 120 cases have been discussed with approximately 150-170 children part of those case discussions. Children's Services are well represented on the MARAC, ensuring the voice of the child is reflected in the process and in existing safeguarding processes such as Teams Around the Child and Child Protection.

Mentors in Violence Prevention

All Secondary Establishments in North Ayrshire are involved with the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Scotland Programme. It is a peer education programme which can be used to deliver many of the key Experiences and Outcomes in Curriculum for Excellence, contributing to a culture of safety where learning can flourish. It gives young people the chance to explore and challenge the attitudes, beliefs and cultural norms that underpin gender-based violence and support the development of healthy relationships.

Using a bystander approach, MVP can engage all young people in discussions about abuse and violence, not as a potential perpetrator or victim, but as an empowered bystander with the skills and understanding to challenge negative behaviour and support victims.

Exploring violence through a gendered lens, young people are aware of biases that exist within society and develop

leadership skills in order for them to employ 'active bystander' theory. Young people explore the scope of violence and are motivated in challenging victim blaming.

The programme addresses a range of behaviours including physical violence, name-calling, sexting, coercive and controlling behaviour and harassment. Individuals are not looked on as potential victims or perpetrators but as empowered onlookers with the ability to support and challenge their peers whilst keeping themselves safe.

As part of the programme, 50 members of education staff and wider partners were trained in June 2022. Following this over 200 senior mentors were trained and delivered learning to S1 and S2 pupils across secondary establishments, reaching over 1,000 young people. The feedback has been positive from both the senior mentors and young people receiving the learning.

Governance for the programme is provided by the North Ayrshire Violence Against Women Partnership (VAWP) who are updated quarterly on MVP progress. As the programme grows in 2023, Lockhart Campus staff and pupils will be provided with training and support to take part.

Cluster:

5

Family Environment and Alternative Care – to what extent do we support families and maintain the family unit if this is in the child's best interests?



5. Family Environment and Alternative Care

Cost of the School Day

A focus for North Ayrshire Council and the Communities and Education Directorate is Child Poverty, Cost of Living and Cost of the School Day. The team have created opportunities for young people to share their experiences of Cost of the School Day, with an in-person conference of 260 pupils participating in a series of interactive workshops. From events such as these, data is collated and has helped shape the strategic Cost of the School Day Action Plan and activities, events and support around this for the child/young person and their families.

Placing human rights and the needs of every child and young person at the centre of education

Our fifth priority in our 2022-23 North Ayrshire Council Education Service Improvement Plan, placing human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of education, links to our commitment to promoting learner participation for children and young people across all educational settings. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 strengthens learner participation and children's rights and places duties on local authorities within the framework of children's lives and experiences.

This policy is designed to complement North Ayrshire Council's Youth Participation Strategy and Citizenship Strategy 2021-25 [Youth Participation Strategy \(north-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk). The young people contributing to the Youth Participation strategy said

"we hope that young people will be included in every discussion and decision-making process on issues that affect us. It is important that we are included, as we will be the ones living with the effects of these decisions." The young people involved in the strategy want to be at the heart of decision making and seeing promises made to them being followed through.

This policy is also designed to complement HGIOS. The HGIOS resource supports schools to engage children and young people in self-evaluation and school improvement in ways that enhance learning. This resource provides a guide for staff and partners working with children and young people and will support self-evaluation of the establishment's approaches to self-evaluation. It is designed to evaluate what is working well and consider what would support increased learner participation. The HGIOS resource provides a self-evaluation (SE) framework for use by children and young people. The SE framework within the resource can be used for children and young people to gather their own evidence and contribute to whole school self-evaluation and it is designed to ensure learner participation is far more than pupil councils or committees.

The Promise

The Promise is a large-scale, complex, 10-year change programme with multiple objectives across multiple partners. For North Ayrshire to realise the asks of The Promise, all of our partners need to be clear on respective roles and responsibilities as a foundation

5. Family Environment and Alternative Care (continued)

for future development. Building this foundation alongside our key partners and strengthening the scaffolding around the change programme has been the major focus for North Ayrshire in the last three years.

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted our ability to progress our ambitions as originally planned. There were reduced opportunities to work alongside children and young people. Despite this, we have included them when it was safe to do so, and our partners have remained strongly committed to progressing The Promise and have sought out creative and innovative ways to overcome some of the challenges presented by the pandemic.

Education has developed an improving outcomes strategy (and action plan) for care experienced learners, with the objective of improving the attendance, engagement and achievement of care experienced learners.

Key Themes for the Promise for Education in North Ayrshire are:

- Building positive relationships and wellbeing through our promoting positive relationships workstream.
- Recognising and Realising Children's Rights.
- Leadership and Learner Participation.
- Parental engagement and involvement & family learning and support.



We have now carried out over 100 awareness raising session that has helped individuals, teams, managers and policy forums to better understand The Promise.

We have employed an additional home tutor to provide one to one tuition for care experienced children and young people and there is targeted support for young people that are not attending/have poor attendance:

- One to one tuition involving the tutor/teacher giving intensive individual support. It may happen outside of normal lessons as additional teaching, for example, as part of extending school time or as a replacement for other lessons.
- Homework support involving the teacher/tutor supporting tasks given to pupils by their teachers to be completed outside of usual lessons and/or 'flipped learning' models, where learners are supported to prepare for classroom discussion and application tasks. This could take place in school outside normal school hours, and/or in the children's houses.

We have developed a pilot project where tutoring is provided by in school staff for care experienced learners.

We have employed a Quality Improvement Officer to support care experienced children and young people. The role encompasses the following:

- To have lead responsibility for meeting the local authority's statutory duties relating to the education needs, provision and outcomes for care experienced children and young people.

- To review and improve current practice to ensure the best possible outcomes for children and young people who are care experienced.
- To support schools and partner services to close the poverty related attainment gap and raise the educational attainment and achievement of care experienced children and young people.

Care experienced young people have had a crucial part in interviews for new Health and Social Care staff where that role could potentially impact on the lives of the care experienced community.

We have now carried out over 100 awareness raising sessions that have helped individuals, teams, managers and policy forums to better understand The Promise. We also have a bi-monthly staff newsletter.

We have increased the number of children and young people involved in strategic and operational groups.



5. Family Environment and Alternative Care (continued)

Dartington Research was commissioned to speak to practitioners in Health and Social Care and Education regarding our current strengths and next steps in achieving the Promise.

Our 'Family Placement Team' has changed the name of their team to 'Families for Children: North Ayrshire' to reflect the work they do and to change the culture of 'placing' children to be more family focused.

We have asked all teams and departments to appoint a Promise Champion to be the central point of contact for all consultations, views and to disseminate developments to their teams. A 'Promise Champions' SharePoint site has been established and has 25 Champions as members.

Our Champions Board have started to work with developers to create a 'North Ayrshire Care Experienced App', to help inform their community of supports, opportunities and information.

The Promise Conference

On the 4th of November 2022 North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership held a 'Promise' Conference with over 130 delegates from across a range of Community Planning Partners, Government officials, Carers and Care Experienced Young People. Of the 130 delegates 23 were carers or care experienced young people. The conference was facilitated by two care experienced young people who chaired throughout the day.

The format followed a pattern of various speakers followed by table discussions and a panel session. Speakers included the two young hosts, the Minister for Children and Young People, the CEO of the Promise Scotland, CEO of Children 1st, and our Democracy and Participation Officer.

Care Experienced young people met with North Ayrshire's Corporate Parenting Team and were supported in coming up with questions for the panel on the day. There were seventeen questions formulated and five asked on the day.

The panel consisted of the Chief Executive of North Ayrshire Council, the Deputy Leader of North Ayrshire Council, the Chief Social Work Officer, the Executive director of Education and Communities and a Senior Manager from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

The target audience for this conference was senior leaders and care experienced young people with the aim of them coming together to discuss selected themes to:

1. increase everyone's understanding of each other's roles and experiences,
2. listen and act on the voice of young people, and
3. commit to change.

The themes selected for the conference were: 1. Relationships, 2. Voice and the UNCRC, and 3. whole family support. Seven questions were posed to delegates throughout the day as well as a question-and-answer session.

The voices of the Care Experienced community were heard, and a Conference report has been written with recommendations.

Our integrated Universal Early Years' team ensures families with children under 5 years have access to the right help at the right time and in the right place.

The launch of the Hasta Barista project was launched at The Promise Conference, where guests were able to sample some of the delicious drinks produced by young people involved with the Rosemount Project, Throughcare/Aftercare services, the Programme Approach Team and the Child and Adolescent Specialist Substance Team (CASST).

Hasta Barista is based at Meadowcroft in Irvine and allows young people aged from 14 to 26 to achieve an industry recognised certificate in barista skills that will enable them to seek employment in hospitality settings, or even branch out and set up their own successful businesses in the future.

Universal Early Years

Our integrated Universal Early Years' team ensures families with children under 5 years of age have access to the right help at the right time and in the right place. The team consisting of health visitors, family nurses, early years social workers, perinatal mental health nurses, support workers and family nurturers, offer early help and support where a family needs this, focusing on the rights of a child to access health and social care services that meets their individual needs.



Cluster:

6

Basic Health and Welfare – to what extent do we promote health and welfare and consider the need of children who are disabled?



6. Basic Health and Welfare

School Meals

All school meals comply with Nutritional Requirements for Food and Drink in schools (Scotland) Regulations 2020. This ensures the nutritional requirements for meals are met including limited salt, fat, red meat and sugar, and that the minimum amount of fruit and vegetables is offered to every pupil.

School menus are analysed to ensure all nutritional requirements are balanced over the daily menu.

The service promotes the uptake of school meals across the various groups – Universal Free School Meals (UFSMs), free school meals (FSMs) and those who

pay for their meal, to encourage access to nutritious meals.

No child or young person will go without a school meal in North Ayrshire. If a child or young person pays for a meal but has no credit in their account, they will still get access to a meal (2 courses plus a drink).

Discretion is built into any situation regarding no funds for a school meal payment so that no embarrassment is caused and no one else is aware of the funding situation.

Our electronic cashless catering system provides anonymity for those entitled to free school meals therefore providing a dignified food provision regardless of



6. Basic Health and Welfare (continued)

financial status or entitlement. There is no requirement for separate processing or tickets etc.

School meal debt in primary schools is not actively pursued. Children still access a meal, however there is no escalation of debt.

In secondary schools if debt occurs, contact will be made with the family to ensure the correct supports are put in place for the family and the young person will always have access to a meal.

We consult annually with children and young people regarding the menu content and encourage mid-year feedback. We have small group chats and menu sampling across a range of schools to ensure the feedback from the children and young people is incorporated into any new menus, as well as annual pupil wide surveys.

Our Cost of the School Day initiatives recently included a Winter Warmer Breakfast which offered a free hot or cold breakfast across our secondary schools. This also provided free snacks at morning break for those who could not access the free breakfast.

We cater for specific needs of children and young people in our special school, providing food they enjoy, in the texture they would like and even their preferred layout on a plate which will ensure they enjoy their lunch experience.

We cater for circa 360 pupils with special diet requests. We have a referral process to ensure the specific needs of the child are captured and menus are designed

to meet their needs and ensure they are still offered healthy, nutritious, and tasty alternatives to the main menu. We also try where possible to align alternatives to the main menu so that the pupils do not feel they are being treated any differently.

We manage the holiday meals programme to ensure every child entitled to a free school meal during term time, has access to food during the school holidays.

This takes the form of a direct cash payment for the equivalent of the cost of a school meal. This allows parents/carers to continue to provide food for the children and young people during this time.

School meals offer value for money. We have not increased the price of a school meal for 4 years and we have one of the lowest charges across the 32 local authorities in Scotland. Our meal deal includes 2 courses plus a drink.

All of our food is freshly prepared every day, we use local suppliers where we can and we support suppliers who follow sustainable farming practices, free range eggs and fish from sustainable sources.

We have a 3 weekly menu cycle for school meals which is full of favourites rated by the pupils with multiple hot meal options as well as soup, fruit, bread, sandwiches, wraps etc. Our menu options are wide ranging and offer a good choice for pupils.

6. Basic Health and Welfare (continued)



Period Poverty

Through our free period product provision, every pupil who menstruates, will have access to free products in their school. Products are also available in libraries, halls and centres and can be located via a free app – Pick Up My Period.

We regularly provide bulk products to pupils in secondary schools ahead of longer school holiday periods to ensure there is continued access. The products are given to every pupil to ensure no one feels targeted or stigmatised.

Pupils were consulted on the free period products provision in schools as well as community settings to ensure the model met their needs.

School nurses and Health visitors

Together with our partners across Ayrshire, we have been developing improved ways to offer and undertake a health assessment with a school-aged child who has become looked after, either at home or away from home. In North Ayrshire, School Nurses have taken on the responsibility of these assessments and are fully appraised of all children and young people on their caseload who are entitled to an assessment and subsequent reviews. As part of this, we are also reviewing our process for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children and Young People so that any assessment of health accurately reflects and supports the needs of this particularly vulnerable

Article 27 states: "Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and social needs and support their development. Governments must help families who cannot afford to provide this."

group of children and young people and ensures they have access to health services they require.

All under 5s in North Ayrshire have access to a health visitor or family nurse and we continue to fully implement the Scottish Government's Universal Health Visiting pathway for all families.

Since 2018, we have tripled our School Nurse workforce with nearly all school clusters having access to 2 school nurses. This has allowed us to concentrate on delivery of the refreshed school nursing pathway, ensuring that children and young people who require support from the school nurse are able to do so in a non-stigmatising, person-centred manner.

School Welfare Officers

We have invested in a Welfare Rights Officer who works with our secondary establishments, providing support to Pastoral teams enhancing their knowledge of welfare rights and who takes referrals directly from both education staff and families. Delivered Welfare Rights services in seven Secondary schools with one Welfare Rights Officer. The financial gains were c. £467,000. School Clothing Exchange

Many schools and youth groups in North Ayrshire are making provision for clothing exchanges for young people and families.

For example, the school Donation Station at St John Ogilvie Primary School, in Bourtreehill was set up when it became clear that parents could benefit from an additional help.

A School Early Years Practitioner started the project in response to feedback from parents and carers with just one rail of clothes and now has five rails of clothing as well as food on offer.

Anne said:

"Starting the Station was in response to finding out that parents have been struggling in recent months due to the Cost-of-Living Crisis. The rising costs of food, clothes and life in general is what sparked the project.

I thought it would be great idea to start a Donation Station. It started off as one rail and some food and I have parents coming in and using it all the time now.

Through social media, we managed to get some more donations and we set up about four or five rails. We have clothes for children, teenagers and adults as well as shoes, some bags and nappies.

It's really worthwhile and it is getting used frequently."

The Donation Station, which also saves waste going to landfill by recycling, is a great example of this.

Cluster:

7

Education, Leisure and Culture –
To what extent do we provide
education services which are non-
discriminatory?



7. Education, Leisure and Culture

The overriding aim is to improve the educational outcomes for all learners, particularly the most disadvantaged learners.

North Ayrshire recognises that Curriculum for Excellence as an inclusive curriculum from 8 to 18 wherever learning is taking place. The education of all our young people takes cognisance of Equalities legislation to ensure there is no barrier to learning for anyone in relation to race, gender, age, disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation

The additional support legislation in Scotland promotes inclusion and forms the basis of our approach to meeting needs. We provide additional support for learning when any child or young person experiences a need for assistance. We follow statutory guidance accompanying the Additional Support for Learning Act realising there is a range of factors that may give rise to a child's additional support needs. These include the learning environment that the child encounters, social and emotional factors, health and disability and the child's family circumstances. We have a wide variety of supports available to help Children and Young People maximise the benefits of a full education.

We respond to need in such a way that barriers to participation, learning and achievement are removed, inclusion and equality are promoted and a high quality education for all is developed and sustained.

The Education service is part of North Ayrshire Council's Communities and Education Directorate, which works towards developing a society where everyone has the same life chances to grow, prosper and have fulfilling and healthy lives. The education service has a central role in removing barriers and supporting delivery of the priority outcome to ensure North Ayrshire's children and young people have the best start in life.

A key priority of the North Ayrshire Council Plan is ensuring children and young people have the best start in life and that we have active and strong communities. This drives our place-based approach in education and informs how we provide safe, welcoming, nurturing, and inspiring environments. We believe our learning environments promote achievement, wellbeing and enhance life chances for all learners.

7. Education, Leisure and Culture (continued)

We want North Ayrshire's children and young people to understand, feel part of and contribute to their community as this supports them to be the best they can be. We help this to happen through a locality-based approach to service delivery. Our priorities are:

- 1** **Improvement in attainment**, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
- 2** **Closing the attainment gap** between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people.
- 3** **Improvement in skills** and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people.
- 4** **Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing.**
- 5** **Placing human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of education.**

All educational establishments have created their own improvement plans, aligned to the broad priorities outlined above, and tailored to the individual contexts and needs of learners in each school community.

7. Education, Leisure and Culture (continued)

St Anthony's Primary School

A successful school garden project in Saltcoats is helping children learn how food gets from the ground to their fork.

Youngsters in all classes at St Anthony's Primary School are involved in growing healthy, nutritious food that is then used by the kitchen team to make meals.

Awareness is being raised among North Ayrshire Council staff that everyone has an ongoing responsibility to protect the rights of our children.

The Council follows and respects The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to ensure that all children's rights are respected and that they are free to learn, play and develop.

Children are learning about these rights in school and Article 24 of the Convention highlights that governments must provide nutritious food, and St Anthony's is embracing the from-garden-to-plate approach to good nutrition.

All pupils are involved in the garden, where they grow vegetables including corn, potatoes and purple carrots. Unfinished water from the dining hall is also recycled and used in the garden, while grass clippings go into the compost.

Some of the potatoes grown are donated to the local food bank, and the carrots and cabbage are used to make coleslaw in the kitchen.

Depute headteacher

Michelle Kerr said:

"At St Anthony's Primary, children's rights are at the heart of all we do. All staff are our children's duty bearers, and this is definitely a role which our catering staff have embraced. A huge focus for our school is outdoor learning and this has developed into a kitchen garden. Each class has been involved in growing produce, which our award-winning kitchen team have incorporated into their menus."

Junior Rangers

Junior Rangers working in the great outdoors across North Ayrshire are seeing the fruits of their labour improving their lives in many different ways.

Young people, aged up to 18, are thriving thanks to the Scottish Countryside Rangers Association programme, which is delivered by North Ayrshire Council's Countryside Rangers to give the group knowledge about their local natural and cultural heritage, the chance to learn new skills and an opportunity to make friends.

Awareness is currently being raised among North Ayrshire Council staff to ensure that everyone has an ongoing responsibility to protect the rights of our children.

7. Education, Leisure and Culture (continued)

The Council follows and respects The UNCRC to ensure that all children's rights are respected and that they are free to learn, play and develop.

Article 31 of the Convention states that each child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

The Junior Rangers initiative is a great example of this and Helen McDowall, from the North Ayrshire Ranger Service, said:

"The young people really just enjoy being outdoors. It is great for general health benefits, their mental health and wellbeing is improved and it keeps them active, which is good for their physical wellbeing. It gets them away from phone and tablet screens and there is a social aspect to it – they have become good friends. They are in a safe space with like-minded people. Some really like doing the practical sessions and others like doing activities like the wildlife surveys. They like it when they can see a result... when they do a job and put something back into the community."

The Hive

The Hive at Ayrshire College provides several pre-curriculum courses for young people aged 15-25 who have barriers to their learning. The 24/7, Pez and Pez plus courses are designed to give students who have social/behavioural issues or who require educational support an opportunity to experience college life in a supportive environment. The focus is on personal development and readiness for next steps. We have had contact with over 60 students in The Hive and have offered employability support in the form of group work, individual meetings, and work experience.

Each Monday and Thursday evening, we run a football group attended by 15-20 girls (Monday) and 10-15 girls (Thursday) who are from the New Scot community. The attendees attend schools or college across the authority but meet up for activities 2/3 times a week. Most of our participants have faced significant personal challenges after being displaced from their country of origin. They have overcome many barriers in their young lives and continue to show great resilience and determination. The football group has been a brilliant space for the young people to learn about themselves and each other, grow confidence and develop transferable skills that they will be able to apply in further education or employment.

7. Education, Leisure and Culture (continued)

For our 2022 Easter programme our aim was to provide young people with 'hands on' work experiences in a safe, supportive environment. After consultation and planning we presented three programmes which young people could sign up for: which catering, media production and nails & makeup. We planned our delivery to encompass elements of employability such as interview skills and CV building alongside masterclasses from industry professionals. Our recruitment for the programme focused on young people who were "at risk" of not reaching a positive destination post school, or who had additional challenges/barriers to employment. Young people with care experience, who have ASD, suffer from poor mental health, and have English as a second language were all represented on the course. Our aim was to implement the fundamentals of life in the workplace. We placed focus on timekeeping, attendance, participation, and fun.

Learning and Development

Within the West of Scotland Learning and Development forum, an e-module course was developed for all practitioners within Children's Services on Communicating with Children. This e-module supports practitioners in giving children a voice, facilitating conversations with children and young people, and encouraging expression of views and feelings.

North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee (CPC) are in the process of finalising how this module is shared, monitored, and evaluated. In addition, the Barnardos Hear 4 U Advocacy service

continues to operate within North Ayrshire for children and young people subject to Child Protection measures and who are care experienced. This is offering children and young people independent advocacy to ensure their voices are listened to and are taken into account when plans and decisions are being made. In addition, efforts have been made to ensure that children and families have access to increased technology such as tablets and sim cards to support engagement in Child Protection processes.

The CPC Learning and Development Co-ordinator has worked with the Place directorate within North Ayrshire (including workers in transport and waste resources) to ensure that Child Protection e-module training is included within their Professional Development programme. There has also been linkage with KA Leisure to ensure that staff within the organisation have access to Child Protection training. The CPC to Child Protection Committee and Adult Support Protection Co-ordinators also delivered virtual Protecting People training to North Ayrshire Council contracted taxi drivers and escort staff.

Cluster:

8

Special Protection Measures – To what extent do we protect those in need of protection?



8. Special Protection Measures

Child Protection Committee

The Child Protection Committee continues to be an active member of North Ayrshire Violence Against Women Partnership and supported the 16 Days of Action campaign by contributing to the development of a public video.

North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee adheres to National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021)* and Protecting Children & Young People: Child Protection Committees and Chief Officer's responsibilities (2019).

By actively involving children and their families in child protection processes, and by practitioners adopting a more child centred approach, we ensure that support is individualised to meet their needs.

We will continue to review and analyse the involvement of children through the Management Information Group, Evaluation and Improvement Group and Public Information and Engagement

Group, using this information and feedback to further improve service user involvement and as appropriate, their roles in decision making.

We will continue to develop and deliver practice development child protection sessions to key stakeholder groups in the community. We will pilot and evaluate a Child Protection awareness resource with taxi drivers. We will also identify and target new priority assets within the community to raise child protection awareness, and specifically increase knowledge and understanding of Child Sexual Abuse to support children to talk openly about their experiences.

North Ayrshire will deliver on North Ayrshire's Child Sexual Abuse Strategy 2020, co-ordinated initially by a Short Life Implementation Group. This strategy will develop professional practice in relation to Child Sexual Abuse and Child Sexual Exploitation, further expand the Stop to Listen initiative from 2017 and have input from young people and survivors of child sexual abuse. The Child Protection Committee will oversee the longer-term implementation of this strategy in terms of Prevention, Protection, Support and Recovery.



8. Special Protection Measures (continued)



Protecting Children

We will continue to analyse the data in relation to the increasing numbers of children who are on the Child Protection Register and also young people subject to vulnerable young person measures. The Management Information sub-group will risk assess and work collectively to devise, recommend and monitor strategies as appropriate, ensuring that vulnerable young people are continuing to be protected from harm.

In respect of protecting children and vulnerable young people, an extra familial dataset was developed for analysis within the CPC Management Information Sub-group. This has meant that there is further analysis and scrutiny of cases where there

are concerns in respect of children at risk of significant harm but where the concerns have been considered 'extra familial' – i.e., the children are not considered to be at risk from their primary caregiver.

Child Sexual Abuse Strategy

We launched a localised 3 year Child Sexual Abuse strategy in 2021. The vision is as follows: There is an increased awareness, understanding and acceptability of talking about and facing the reality of child sexual abuse – in our homes, our communities, our workplaces, and our institutions. Children and young people are safe from sexual abuse and sexual harm and well supported if they have previously experienced sexual abuse.

8. Special Protection Measures (continued)

Missing Persons

Multi-agency Localised Missing Person Guidance was developed in collaboration with North Ayrshire Adult Support and Protection Committee. This guidance has been developed into a localised context based on the National Missing Person's Framework, with a specific focused shift on moving away from 'return interviews' which are traditionally largely led by the police to 'return discussions'. This provides children and young people with a choice in who delivers the return discussion and a holistic approach with the aim of supporting children and young people and preventing further missing episodes. The launch of this guidance has been significantly delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, however the official launch is scheduled to take place in September 2021. In addition, both North Ayrshire

Child Protection Committee and North Ayrshire Adult Support and Protection Committee have been successful in their application for light touch support from the National organisation 'Missing People'. Support has been provided in terms of the localised guidance and providing access to e-modules on the delivery of return discussions for practitioners in North Ayrshire.

The joint Adult and Child Protection National Missing Person's Group will continue to support the implementation of the National Missing Persons Framework for Scotland, co-ordinate learning and development opportunities for multi-agency staff, enabling them to make better use of opportunities to discuss missing episodes with children and young people with the intention of providing necessary supports and reducing the risk of further missing episodes.

Money Matters

The CPC Learning and Development Co-ordinator has been working in collaboration with the Money Matters Team within North Ayrshire. The Money Matters team provides advice to residents within North Ayrshire on welfare rights, assistance, or representation in relation to benefits. A training workshop has been developed specifically for children and families' social workers on this service and how families can be referred.

Money Matters workshops will continue to be facilitated for children and families' social workers and the impact of this will be measured via the CPC business plan.



Significant effort has been made to ensure that Child Protection messages are reaching the general public within North Ayrshire.

Suicide Prevention

An annual suicide action plan was developed in 2020 and 2021, actions are continuing to be progressed at the time of writing this report but key pieces of work completed in 2020/2021 include the development of a multi-agency presentation to increase practitioners awareness of the Young People's Suicide Taskforce and its purpose, the review and update of the suicide crisis response plan and the development of a new Service Access pathway which means that young people are offered holistic supports when they make suicide attempts.

The Young People's Suicide Taskforce continues to meet on a monthly basis.

A multi-agency Vulnerable Young Persons group is established to protect and reduce the risk of young people from harming themselves or others and within the community.

Communication

Significant effort has been made to ensure that Child Protection messages are reaching the general public within North Ayrshire. This has included the distribution of leaflets and resources to community pharmacies, sexual health clinics, youth clubs and libraries, Covid-19 vaccination centres and via food parcels. An e-module on child protection awareness for members of the public was also developed and promoted via social media channels.



8. Special Protection Measures *(continued)*

This protocol acknowledges the current social media channels via Youth Services and the Health and Social Care Partnership and seeks to maximise Child Protection communications with the pre-existing followers that already regularly access these platforms.

Implementation Plan

Everyone in North Ayrshire knows they have a role to play in keeping children and young people safe and understands and is prepared to take appropriate action to support and/or protect a child or young person. A multi-agency implementation plan has been developed on the principals of Prevention, Protection and Support & Recovery and this will be monitored via the Child Protection Committee.

