



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

Cabinet

A Special Meeting of the **Cabinet** of North Ayrshire Council will be held in the **Council Chambers, Ground Floor, Cunninghame House, Irvine, KA12 8EE** on **Tuesday, 13 June 2023 at 14:30** to consider the undernoted business.

Meeting Arrangements - Hybrid Meetings

This meeting will be held on a predominantly physical basis but with provision, by prior notification, for remote attendance by Elected Members in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003. Where possible, the meeting will be live-streamed and available to view at <https://north-ayrshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>.

1 Declarations of Interest

Members are requested to give notice of any declarations of interest in respect of items of business on the Agenda.

GENERAL BUSINESS FOR DECISION

Reports by the Chief Executive

2 Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000

Submit a report by the Head of Service (Democratic Services) providing an update on the Council's use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000 (copy enclosed).

3 Discretionary Housing Payment Policy

Submit a report by the Head of Service (Finance) seeking approval of the revised Discretionary Housing Payment policy (copy enclosed).

4 Council Tax for second and empty homes, and non-domestic rates threshold: consultation

Submit a report by the Head of Service (Finance) on the proposed response from North Ayrshire Council to the Scottish Government consultation on Council Tax for second and empty homes, and non-domestic rates thresholds (copy enclosed).

Reports by the Director (Health and Social Care Partnership)

5 North Ayrshire Children's Services Plan 2023-26

Submit a report by the Director (Health and Social Care Partnership) presenting the North Ayrshire Children's Services Plan 2023-26 (copy enclosed).

6 Corporate Parenting Plan and The Promise 3 Years On

Submit a report by the Director (Health and Social Care Partnership) providing an update on the ongoing work within North Ayrshire to develop the Corporate Parenting Plan and to deliver "The Promise" to our Children and Young People (copy enclosed).

7 Reports by the Executive Director (Communities and Education)

Child Poverty Strategy 2023-26; Progress report 2022-23 and Action Plan 2023-24

Submit report by the Executive Director (Communities and Education) seeking approval for (a) The North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy covering the period 2023-26, (b) The North Ayrshire Child Poverty Report 2022-23, (c) The North Ayrshire Child Poverty Action Plan 2023-24, and (d) The submission of the report to the Scottish Government and the publication on the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership website (copy enclosed).

8 Children's Rights Report 2020/23

Submit a report by the Executive Director (Communities and Education) seeking approval for The North Ayrshire Children's Rights Report 2020/23 (copy enclosed).

Reports by the Executive Director (Place)

9 Dundonald Crescent, Auchengate

Submit a report by the Executive Director (Place) on the outcome of the Member/Officer working group on Dundonald Crescent, Auchengate (copy enclosed).

10 i3 - Sale of Land at Strategic Investment Campus

Submit a report by the Executive Director (Place) seeking approval for a minor increase to the size of an area of land at i3 in Irvine that Cabinet had previously approved to be sold, subject to conditions (copy enclosed).

- 11 Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028**
Submit a report by the Executive Director (Place) seeking approval of the proposed Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028 and associated action plan (copy enclosed).
- 12 North Ayrshire Visitor Management Plan**
Submit a report by the Executive Director (Place) proposing an update to the Visitor Management Plan, to support ongoing actions to manage domestic tourism in North Ayrshire during 2023 (copy enclosed).
- 13 Housing Services Customer Participation Strategy 2023-2028**
Submit a report by the Executive Director (Place) providing details of the draft Customer Participation Strategy 2023-2028 (copy enclosed).
- 14 Urgent Items**
Any other items which the Chair considers to be urgent.

Webcasting

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Cabinet Sederunt

Marie Burns (Chair)
Shaun Macaulay (Vice-Chair)
Tony Gurney
Alan Hill
Margaret Johnson
Christina Larsen

Chair:

Apologies:

Attending:

NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

13 June 2023

Cabinet

Title: Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000

Purpose: To provide an update to Cabinet on the Council's use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000

Recommendation: That Cabinet notes the measures in place to secure compliance with RIPSA and the use the Council has made of the Act.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 In the course of carrying out its regulatory duties, the Council may require to carry out surveillance. The Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000 (RIPSA) sets up a framework under which surveillance can be authorised and the evidence obtained used in subsequent court actions without challenge under Human Rights legislation. If the legislation is not complied with, it could lead to the Council breaching an individual's right to privacy or for any information gathered being inadmissible as evidence in court.
- 1.2 The present report is intended to update Cabinet on any use made of the Act since the previous update and also advises of proposed changes in the Council's Authorising Officers following staff changes.

2. Background

- 2.1 The European Convention on Human Rights provides for a right to privacy. This cannot be interfered with by public authorities, except for certain defined purposes where the action is lawful, necessary and proportionate in order to:
- protect national security;
 - protect public safety;
 - protect the economy;
 - protect health or morals;

- prevent disorder or crime, or
- protect the rights and freedoms of other people.

2.2 As surveillance of persons without their knowledge (covert surveillance) would be an interference with a person's right to privacy, RIPSA creates a framework, which if followed, allows for surveillance by public authorities. Key issues to be addressed in considering surveillance are whether it is:-

- Necessary (whether there is any other way to achieve the same aim without covert surveillance, e.g., can you stop the problem by letting people know they are being watched (overt surveillance) etc.)
- Proportionate (whether the proposed surveillance is excessive having regard to its objective); and
- Collateral intrusion (whether the surveillance would record details of other individuals, thus breaching their right to privacy).

2.3 Only two types of surveillance are available to the Council – directed surveillance (observing people without their knowledge) and covert human intelligence sources (asking a third party to establish or maintain a relationship to obtain information in secret).

2.4 The Council is audited on its RIPSA procedures by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) every three years. The last such inspection took place in June 2020. The inspector's report, issued 2nd July 2020, commended the key personnel involved with administration of the Council's compliance regime and noted both a strong governance process in place and a positive and mature approach to the delivery of training and development for staff. It is likely that a further inspection will take place in Summer 2023.

2.5 The core aspects of governance which ensures the Council's compliance with RIPSA are:-

- A Senior Responsible Officer, the Head of Democratic Services, has responsibility for the Central Register which records all cases of covert surveillance;
- Authorising Officers consider and approve applications for covert surveillance;
- Council procedures are set out in two Protocols on Directed Surveillance and Covert Human Intelligence Sources, last reviewed and updated April 2023;
- The Council's CCTV policy and procedures;
- Training – this has moved from an annual face to face session to an e-learning course, to enhance the reach of the training to relevant staff. Over and above the e-learning course, teams are welcome to seek out briefings on RIPSA and surveillance procedures to ensure that staff have a broad overview of the terms of the Act.
- A refresher briefing is delivered periodically to the Council's Extended Leadership Team on the requirements of RIPSA, to ensure

that senior staff are aware of the provisions of the Act and that any key employees receive the necessary training. The Chief Executive and Directors are all asked to sign an undertaking in this regard.

- 2.6 The Authorising Officers are presently Paul Doak Head of Service (Finance and Transformation) NAHSCP, Scott MacKenzie Senior Manager Protective Services and the Chief Executive. In terms of the Scheme of Delegation to Officers reviewed and approved by Council in May 2023, the Chief Executive is appointed as Authorising Officer for all types of RIPSA authorisations, including the authorisation of a person under age 18 to act as a covert human intelligence source. The Chief Executive is also authorised to appoint other Officers to act as Authorising Officers for all such functions except the authorisation of a person under age 18 to act as a covert human intelligence source. To take account of changes in staff and to ensure there are sufficient Authorising Officers, the Chief Executive has appointed Laura Miller Senior Manager (Audit, Fraud, Safety and Insurance) as an Authorising Officer and training has been provided. A further training session for Authorising Officers will take place by end June 2023.
- 2.7 Since the Act came into force in 2000, the Council's use of surveillance has gradually reduced. A number of reasons are responsible for this reduction. These include:-
- Covert surveillance is a resource intensive activity;
 - Preference for less intrusive means of investigating cases, such as legally appropriate data sharing;
 - Overt action to disrupt unlawful activity is considered more effective (by making it known that a person or area is under surveillance);
 - The transfer of most benefit fraud investigations to the DWP greatly reduced the type of investigation for which covert surveillance was appropriate;
 - Within Trading Standards, rather than focussing on enforcement action, a more effective use of resources is to educate retailers to self-police rather than to pursue surveillance.
- 2.8 Since the last Cabinet report in September 2019, one authorisation has been sought and granted relating to test purchasing of age-restricted tobacco, e-cigarettes and e-liquid products.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 That Cabinet notes the measures in place to secure compliance with RIPSA and notes the use made of the Act.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Human Resources

4.2 There are no Human Resources implications arising from this report.

Legal

4.3 There are no Legal implications arising from this report. This report outlines the measures in place to ensure that the Council complies with its legal obligations.

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 There are no Equality implications arising from this report. There are likewise no socio-economic implications arising from this report.

Environmental and Sustainability

4.5 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

Key Priorities

4.6 Compliance with the regime to authorise surveillance set out in RIPSA ensures that any investigations carried out by the Council are lawful which contributes to the Council's priorities of developing Aspiring Communities in North Ayrshire where residents are safe.

Community Wealth Building

4.7 There are no Community Wealth Building benefits arising from this report.

Aileen Craig
Head of Democratic Services

For further information please contact **Raymond Lynch, Senior Manager (Legal Services)** by email to **raymondlynch@north-ayrshire.gov.uk**

NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

13 June 2023

Cabinet

Title:	Discretionary Housing Payment Policy
Purpose:	To seek approval of the revised Discretionary Housing Payment policy.
Recommendation:	That Cabinet approves the revised policy for the administration of Discretionary Housing Payments as detailed in Appendix 1.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The current policy for the administration of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) was adopted by North Ayrshire Council on 23 October 2012 with the key aims of preventing hardship and protecting families and vulnerable people by sustaining tenancies and preventing homelessness.
- 1.2 Following a number of changes to the operation of the scheme with particular regards to Scottish Government support for fuller mitigation of the Benefit Cap and the Bedroom Tax, the policy has been reviewed and updated to include specific information in relation to these additional provisions.

2. Background

- 2.1 Under the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001, local authorities administer the Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) scheme to make payments to claimants suffering financial hardship who need help in meeting housing costs and the current policy for the administration of DHP was adopted by North Ayrshire Council on 23 October 2012 with the key aims of preventing hardship and protecting families and vulnerable people by sustaining tenancies and preventing homelessness.
- 2.2 The Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced a range of reforms including Universal Credit, a benefit cap and a reduction in housing benefit for under-occupation in social housing, known as the Bedroom Tax. Following this, from April 2014, the Scottish Government made the decision to offset the impact of the bedroom tax for all those receiving Housing Benefit and the scope of the DHP scheme was extended to provide full mitigation for those subject to a housing benefit reduction arising from this.

- 2.3 During the past three years North Ayrshire Council has provided over £8.747m of financial support to local residents through DHP payments:

DHP Payments	2020/21 £m	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	Total £m
Under Occupancy (Bedroom Tax)	2.745	2.649	2.688	8.082
Benefit Cap	0.058	0.050	0.044	0.152
Other DHP Payments	0.135	0.179	0.199	0.513
Total	2.938	2.878	2.931	8.747

- 2.4 Under the child poverty action plan, Best Start, Bright Futures, the Scottish Government has made a commitment to mitigate the impact of the benefit cap as fully as possible within devolved powers and, during December 2022, the Scottish Government issued revised guidance to all local authorities indicating that additional funding would be provided to support fuller benefit cap mitigation beginning from the 1 January 2023.
- 2.5 As part of the 2023/24 local government finance settlement, Scottish Government support for DHP within North Ayrshire has been confirmed at £3.193m, including £2.771m to mitigate the Bedroom Tax and £0.166m to support mitigation of the Benefits Cap.
- 2.6 In order to fully align North Ayrshire Council's DHP policy with the changes in relation to the Bedroom Tax and the Benefits Cap, the current policy has been reviewed and the draft revised policy is detailed in Appendix 1.
- 2.7 North Ayrshire Council's Benefits Team have reviewed their DHP procedures in relation to Benefits Cap cases and issued communications to partner organisations to raise awareness of the changes.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 It is proposed that Cabinet approves the revised policy for the administration of Discretionary Housing Payments as detailed in Appendix 1.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

- 4.1 The financial implications are detailed in paragraphs 2.3 to 2.5 with full financial support provided by the Scottish Government. Any subsequent variation to funding levels will be considered as part of the development of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Human Resources

4.2 None.

Legal

4.3 None.

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 The provision of financial support through Discretionary Housing Payments protects families and supports the Child Poverty Action Plan.

Climate Change and Carbon

4.5 None.

Key Priorities

- 4.6 This policy supports the key priorities of :
- Children and young people experience the best start in life;
 - Residents and communities are safe;
 - Residents and communities enjoy good life-long health and well-being; and
 - The Council maximises resources and provides value for money.

Community Wealth Building

4.7 None.

5. Consultation

5.1 No consultation has been required in the preparation of this report

Mark Boyd
Head of Service (Finance)

For further information please contact **David Forbes, Senior Manager (Strategic Business Partner)**, on **01294 324551** or **DavidForbes@north-ayrshire.gov.uk**.

Background Papers

None

North Ayrshire Council Discretionary Housing Payment Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 Section 2(1) of the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001 provides the Council with the discretion to make payments by way of financial assistance (“discretionary housing payments”) to persons who:

- (a) are entitled to housing benefit; and
- (b) appear to the Council to require some further financial assistance (in addition to the benefit or benefits to which they are entitled) in order to meet housing costs.

Subject to paragraph (3) and regulations 4 and 5, the Council has a discretion:

- (a) as to whether or not to make discretionary housing payments in a particular case; and
- (b) as to the amount of the payments and the period for, or in respect of which, they are made.

1.2 From April 2013, DHPs were extended to people receiving Universal Credit (UC) providing they have a rental liability and are eligible for support towards housing costs. In essence, this means a person claiming UC who would have been eligible for Housing Benefit (HB), remains eligible for DHP.

2. Funding and Eligibility

2.1 From 1st April 2017, the Department for Work and Pensions no longer provides DHP funding. As a result, all funding for the DHP scheme is the responsibility of the Scottish Government and the Council.

2.2 A customer must be in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit (Housing Element) to be considered for, and receive, a DHP.

3. Policy Aims and Objectives

3.1 To distribute equitably the DHP funding to benefit claimants that meet the qualifying criteria, and to promote the following objectives:

- ❖ Prevention of homelessness;
- ❖ Sustain tenancies and safeguard residents in their homes;
- ❖ Assist households move into more affordable accommodation;
- ❖ Alleviate poverty;
- ❖ Prevent hardship;
- ❖ Support vulnerable young people in the transition to adult life;

- ❖ Encourage residents to seek and sustain employment;
- ❖ Help those who are trying to help themselves;
- ❖ Keep families together;
- ❖ Support the vulnerable in the local community;
- ❖ Help claimants through personal crises and difficult events.

3.2 In particular the Council wishes to support the following groups of people to remain in their current property, or local area:

- ❖ Families with children at a critical point in their education;
- ❖ Young people leaving the Council's care;
- ❖ People who would suffer a significant reduction in their quality of life if they had to leave the local area;
- ❖ People who have been previously homeless;
- ❖ People subject to domestic violence;
- ❖ People temporarily absent from their home;
- ❖ People with a disability or in need of care;
- ❖ Foster carers & kinship carers;
- ❖ People moving into work or undertaking employment related training;
- ❖ People moving into affordable accommodation;
- ❖ Large families with no suitable alternative accommodation.

3.3 To ensure as far as possible all customers are made aware of the availability of discretionary housing payments.

3.4 To ensure that all agencies supporting customers are made aware of the funding available and how it can be utilised to support their client group.

4. Exempt from DHP

4.1 DHP will not be paid to a claimant under the following circumstances:

- ❖ Where a tenancy was not affordable when taken on;
- ❖ When benefit fraud has been committed;
- ❖ Where a benefit in payment is subject to a reduction direction, sanction or suspension;
- ❖ Services charges which are ineligible for Housing Benefit;
- ❖ Where rent charges have increased due to outstanding levels of rent arrears.

5. Additional Scottish Government Provision

Benefit Cap

5.1 The Scottish Government has committed to mitigating the benefit cap as fully as possible within devolved powers. Anyone who is eligible and applies for a DHP to

replace the amount of benefit removed by the cap, will receive a Discretionary Housing Payment up to the maximum amount allowed by regulations.

- 5.2 This mitigating DHP will be awarded at the lower of either their capped amount or their housing costs as permitted by regulations.
- 5.3 There may be cases where a household has had their benefit payments capped by an amount that is more than their housing costs. These households will be helped as far as is possible.
- 5.4 The Council will provide support to capped claimants in exempting themselves from the cap.

Bedroom Tax

- 5.5 The Scottish Government continues to be committed to fully mitigating the bedroom tax. Anyone affected who applies to a DHP to cover their shortfall, will receive one.
- 5.6 The Council will provide support to those affected by the bedroom tax who wish to downsize and identify anyone who may be eligible for an additional room (for example, foster carers / children with a disability which prevents them from sharing) through the appropriate DWP routes.

6. Level and Period of Award

- 6.1 An application must be made in writing or by telephone to receive a DHP.
- 6.2 The level and period of award will be based on the individual circumstances of the applicant.
- 6.3 In the case of a shortfall the amount of DHP will not exceed the weekly eligible rent of the applicant.
- 6.4 In the case of lump sum payments no period will apply but due regard will be given to the DHP funding available.
- 6.5 Payment may be made to the applicant, agent, appointee, and landlord or directly into the rent account as required.
- 6.6 Payment of a DHP will stop if an applicant fails to disclose a material fact or obtained the funds under false pretences or the payment was made in error.
- 6.7 The level and period of award will be reviewed if there is a change in the circumstances of the applicant.

7. Recovery of Overpaid DHP

- 7.1 The Council will recover all overpaid Discretionary Housing Payment.

8. The Right of Review

- 8.1 There is no statutory right of appeal against a DHP. The applicant (or their appointee or agent) who disagrees with a DHP decision may request the Benefits Service for a review of that decision.
- 8.2 A request for a review must be made in writing to the Benefits Service within 20 days of the written decision about the DHP being issued to the benefit claimant.
- 8.3 An officer from the Benefits Service who was not involved in the original decision will consider the request for a review.
- 8.4 The reviewing officer will notify the customer of their decision, which will be final and there will be no further right of review by the Council.
- 8.5 Dissatisfied customers may request a judicial review.

9. Policy Review

- 9.1 The Council's DHP policy will be reviewed annually, and the Cabinet will be asked to approve any material changes.

NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

13 June 2023

Cabinet

Title: Council Tax for second and empty homes, and non-domestic rates thresholds: consultation

Purpose: The report outlines the proposed response from North Ayrshire Council to the Scottish Government consultation on Council Tax for second and empty homes, and non-domestic rates thresholds

Recommendation: Cabinet is asked to approve the proposed response to the consultation for submission by 11 July 2023

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Scottish Government launched a consultation on Council Tax for second and empty homes, and non-domestic rates thresholds, on the 17 April 2023 and responses are sought by 11 July 2023.
- 1.2 The proposal is whether to provide additional powers to councils allowing them discretion to:
 - charge up to 100% premium (double the full rate) on council tax for second homes;
 - charge more than 100% premium on council tax for second homes and long-term empty homes
- 1.3 The proposed response to the consultation is included in Appendix 1 of the report. It is recognised that North Ayrshire does experience particular challenges for affordable housing availability within the island community of Arran. The proposed response therefore supports the general policy of local authorities having the powers to apply a premium on Council tax for second home ownership and similarly, to have the powers to increase further any Council tax premium on long term empty properties. The extent to which, however, would very much depend on further evidenced based modelling of consequences and any unintended consequences around home ownership models, to be applied to the local circumstances of North Ayrshire. This approach also applies to any consideration around changing thresholds in respect of holiday lets.

2. Background

- 2.1 This public consultation seeks views on giving local authorities the power to increase council tax on second homes and empty homes, as well as considering whether the

current non-domestic rates thresholds for self-catering accommodation remain appropriate. There is the potential for greater fiscal empowerment for councils in the area of council tax, with the aim of creating the right incentives to increase the availability of housing.

2.2 The proposal is whether to provide additional powers to councils allowing them discretion to:

- charge up to 100% premium (double the full rate) on council tax for second homes;
- charge more than 100% premium on council tax for second homes and long-term empty homes

2.3 Taxation is one measure that can support local areas to reach the right balance for their local circumstances, to influence ownership patterns and the detrimental impact they can have on the availability of homes to meet local needs. Enabling councils to apply a premium on council tax on second homes could potentially generate additional revenue that could be used to benefit the local community and contribute to affordable housing schemes. It is also recognised however, that such a move could shift ownership patterns more towards holiday letting models and as such, liability shifting from council tax to non-domestic rates.

2.4 Cabinet is asked to consider the broad policy aims included within the Consultation and to what extent this could or should be adopted within a North Ayrshire context. In particular, to what extent local taxation should be used as an instrument to influence change and how the overall impacts for the area are balanced e.g. more affordable housing availability, net impact on the local economy, impact on tourism, and impact on current second home owners or owners of long term empty properties and holiday letting accommodation.

2.5 Availability and affordability of housing is a major issue for the Island community of Arran. Local authority powers to charge a premium for second homes could potentially influence a behavioural change to deliver more housing availability for local people. To set a local context, almost 40% of second homes in North Ayrshire are located in Arran, with a further 30% located in Cumbrae. This could also potentially have a net positive economic benefit due to the greater levels of occupancy within those communities and provide additional finance for local authorities to help continue to fund affordable housing programmes, albeit this may only be short-term. From a North Ayrshire Council perspective, it is important that the local authority has the power to charge a premium on Council tax for second home ownership and potentially a further premium on top of the 100% levy applied to long-term empty properties, however, the extent to which would be based on local circumstances and an evidenced based understanding of the impacts across all stakeholder groups. In particular, there would be a requirement to model various scenarios across potential behavioural patterns and outcomes and taking cognisance of housing availability types linked to affordable housing need.

2.6 It is also recognised that care should be taken when considering any changes to thresholds associated with holiday letting accommodation. North Ayrshire benefits from some very popular tourist destinations. It is important therefore to ensure

appropriate levels of tourist accommodation provision remains in place to support this important sector. Similar to second home ownership, the recommended position reflected in the Consultation response is for the local authority to have the power to change thresholds associated with determining holiday letting accommodation, however the extent of any potential change would have to be supported by appropriate modelling and evidence gathering to ensure the impacts are fully understood.

- 2.7 The proposed response to the consultation is included in Appendix 1 of the report. Not all questions within the consultation lend themselves to an appropriate local authority response as they are more citizen driven and as such they have been recorded as not applicable.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 Cabinet is asked to approve the proposed response to the consultation included in appendix 1 of the report for submission to the Scottish Government by 11 July 2023

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

- 4.1 None. However, it is recognised that any future powers for the local authority that leads to changes to the level of council tax premiums, could generate additional levels of council tax income for the local authority and potentially provide additional funding to support the Affordable Housing programme.

Human Resources

- 4.2 None identified at this stage. There is a risk however if the local authority is granted more powers to apply council tax premiums and amend thresholds for holiday letting accommodation, this could have resource implications for the council. This will become clearer if the powers are granted.

Legal

- 4.3 The current legislative framework around second homes, long-term empty properties and thresholds for holiday letting accommodation will require to be updated by the Scottish Government should the additional powers be granted to local authorities.

Equality/Socio-economic

- 4.4 Should additional powers be granted to local authorities there will be a requirement to undertake an equality impact assessment as well as key stakeholder consultation in order to fully understand the impacts associated with any change.

Climate Change and Carbon

- 4.5 None.

Key Priorities

- 4.6 This report cuts across all 3 key priorities of the Council i.e. Aspiring Communities, Inspiring Place and A Council for the Future and across a range of priority outcomes and is aligned to the local housing strategy and Islands plan.

Community Wealth Building

- 4.7 Supports the Community Wealth Building Strategy across the pillars of finance, land and property and inclusive ownership.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Engagement across Council Directorates, senior officers and a Member's Policy Advisory panel delivered on 2 June 2023.

Mark Boyd
Head of Service (Finance)

For further information please contact **Mark Boyd, Head of Finance**, on **01294 324560**.

Background Papers

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Respondent Information Form

Please Note this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy:

<https://www.gov.scot/privacy/>

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- ☐ Individual
- ☒ Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

North Ayrshire Council

Phone number

01294 324560

Address

Cunninghame House, Irvine.

Postcode

KA12 8EE

Email Address

markboyd@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- ☐ Publish response with name
- ☐ Publish response only (without name)
- ☐ Do not publish response

Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

Questionnaire

Question 1

Do you think the current definition of a second home should continue to apply?:

More information:

For council tax purposes, the current definition of a second home is, 'a dwelling which is no one's sole or main residence and that is lived in for at least 25 days during the 12 month period of the council tax charge'.

Answer:

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

Please give reasons for your answer.

A second home is a dwelling which is no one's sole or main residence but which is furnished and lived in for at least 25 days during the chargeable 12 month period.

The current definition seems appropriate and proportionate to determine a second home.

Question 2

Do you think the discount eligibility for job related dwellings and purpose built holiday accommodation is appropriate?:

More information:

Eligible job related dwellings and purpose built holiday accommodation are entitled to a council tax discount of 50%.

Purpose built holiday accommodation is defined as a dwelling that is used for holiday purposes and has a licence or planning permission limiting its use for human habitation throughout the whole year. An example might be chalets or other types of holiday accommodation that are either unsuitable to be occupied all year round (their construction may mean they are only suitable to be lived in during the warmer months) or are not allowed to be lived in all year due to planning, licensing or other restrictions.

Job-related dwellings are defined as homes owned by someone who has to live elsewhere for most or all of the time as part of their job, or the home the person occupies to undertake their job if the person has another home that is their main residence.

Answer:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☒ Don't know

Please give reasons for your answer.

When considering the policy intent for more permanent affordable housing, any change to the current discount for purpose built holiday accommodation would not necessarily help address this core issue as the property would not be suitable for permanent residence, so no driver for change here.

In respect of job related dwellings, if this helps secure key workers / staffing for vital services that contribute to the services in the area and support the local economy then this could be deemed appropriate, however, local authorities could benefit from more discretion in applying a discount depending on whether the property is owned or rented by the occupant and the extent to which it is occupied throughout the year.

Question 3

Do you think councils should be able to charge a council tax premium on top of regular council tax rates for second homes?

More information:

A premium is charging more than the full rate of council tax.

Answer:

- ☒ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

Please give reasons for your answer.

Availability and affordability of Housing is a major issue for the Island community of Arran within North Ayrshire. Local authority powers to charge a premium for second homes could help influence a behavioural change that leads to more housing availability for local people. This could also have a net positive economic benefit due to the greater levels of all year occupancy within the communities and provide additional finance for local authorities to help further fund affordable housing programmes, albeit this may only be short-term. From a local authority perspective, it is important that the local authority has the powers to charge a premium, however, the extent to which would be based on local circumstances and an evidenced based understanding of the impacts across a variety of stakeholder groups.

Question 4

If you have answered yes to question 3, what do you think the maximum premium councils could charge should be?

More information:

50% premium is the same as one and a half times the normal rate of council tax.

100% premium is double the normal rate of council tax

150% premium is two and a half times the normal rate of council tax

200% premium is three times the normal rate of council tax
250% premium is three and a half times the normal rate of council tax
300% premium is four times the normal rate of council tax

Answer:

- ☐ 50%
- ☐ 100%
- ☐ 150%
- ☐ 200%
- ☐ 250%
- ☐ 300%
- ☒ Other (specify)

Please give reasons for your answer.

A 100% premium on Council tax would initially bring charges for second homes into alignment with the current levy on long term empty properties, however, consideration should be given to providing local authorities with discretionary powers to set a level of premium based on their particular local circumstances and needs e.g. to influence an outcome of achieving greater availability of permanent housing. This would have to be supported by an evidence base, including modelling and impact assessments across a range of stakeholder groups.

Question 5

What factors should be taken into account by councils when deciding whether to introduce a premium on council tax for second homes?

More information:

A non-exhaustive list of potential factors is set out below:

- numbers and percentages of second homes in the local area
- distribution of second homes and other housing throughout the council area and an assessment of their impact on residential accommodation values in particular areas
- potential impact on local economies and the tourism industry
- patterns of demand for, and availability of, affordable homes
- potential impact on local public services and the local community
- other existing measures or policies that are aimed at increasing housing supply and the availability of affordable housing

Councils may also decide not to use the powers or to disapply a premium for a specific period of time.

A non-exhaustive list of examples of where a council might consider doing this include:

- where there are reasons why the home could not be lived in as a permanent residence
- where there are reasons why a home could not be sold or let
- where the owner's use of their accommodation is restricted by circumstances not covered by an exception from the premium
- where charging a premium might cause hardship

Answer:

Please list the factors and provide reasons for your answer:

The main factors to be taken into account would include:

- Potential impact on availability of affordable housing, especially in tourist hot spot areas, through influencing the change in ownership / occupation patterns
- Potential impact on public services
- Potential impact on tourism destinations and balancing the need for adequate tourist accommodation with accommodation for seasonal workers and accommodation for residents
- Financial impact on second homeowners as a consequence of any premium applied
- Potential impact on local authority revenue e.g. could create further council tax and support investment in affordable housing programmes, however, also recognising the need to model the revenue flow based on changes in ownership patterns e.g. greater model shift away from council tax to non-domestic rates through holiday lets qualification and potential NDR reliefs.

Question 6

If you do, or were to, own a second home please tell us what you would do if the applicable rate of council tax were to increase, and the 'thresholds' to be classed as self-catering holiday accommodation for non-domestic rates purposes stayed the same?

More information:

The current threshold for defining premises as self-catering holiday accommodation liable for non-domestic rates is it must be available to let for 140 days or more and actually let for 70 days or more in the same financial year.

A private residential tenancy is when a registered landlord lets accommodation to an individual/s and it will be their sole or main residence. All tenancies created on or after 1 December 2017 are open-ended, which means a landlord will no longer be able to ask a tenant to leave simply because the fixed term has ended.

Answer:

Not applicable for a local authority response.

- ☐ The home is (or would be) already used as self-catering accommodation and liable for non-domestic rates
- ☐ The home is (or would be) already used as a private residential tenancy and the tenant is liable for council tax
- ☐ I would continue to use it purely for personal use and pay the higher rate of council tax
- ☐ I would continue with split use between self-catering accommodation (below the non-domestic rates threshold) and personal use, and pay council tax
- ☐ My second home already has/would have split use between self-catering accommodation (below the non-domestic rates threshold) and personal use. Rather than pay the higher rate of council tax, I would increase the number of days the accommodation is available to let and actually let in order to meet the non-domestic rates thresholds
- ☐ My second home is purely for personal use. However, in order to stop paying council tax, I would make it available as self-catering accommodation for 140 days or more and actually let it for 70 days or more in order to be liable for non-domestic rates
- ☐ I use my second home purely for personal use but I would change its use to a private residential tenancy
- ☐ I use my second home as self-catering accommodation (below the non-domestic rates threshold) but I would change its use to a private residential tenancy
- ☐ I will seek reclassification as an empty home and pay council tax
- ☐ I will sell the second home

Question 7

Do you think councils should be able to charge a higher premium than the current 100% (double the full rate) of council tax on homes empty for longer than 12 months?

More information:

Councils currently have the discretion to charge up to 100% premium on council tax on homes empty for longer than 12 months.

Answer:

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

Providing local authorities with the powers to charge higher premiums is supported. Again, this would be based on particular local circumstances and require to be supported by evidence. This could potentially provide further financial incentives to current owners to bring such properties into use with potential benefits including greater availability of housing supply, positive economic impact to local area through higher levels of occupancy and the potential for further revenue generation to local authorities to support affordable housing investment. However, it is recognised that each case surrounding empty properties can be different and there would also have to be an assessment of any additional financial impact on the owners.

Please give reasons for your answer.

Question 8

If you have answered yes to question 7, what do you think the maximum premium councils could charge should be?

More information:

This question is asking what the maximum premium should be for homes that have been empty for longer than 12 months.

The current maximum is 100% premium, which is double the normal rate of council tax.

Answer:

- ☐ 150%
- ☐ 200%
- ☐ 250%
- ☐ 300%
- ☒ Other (specify)

Please give reasons for your answer.

There is a recognition that the individual circumstances around long term empty properties can vary significantly and the potential additional financial burden that this may cause over and above current levels. Would therefore support local authorities having the powers to apply an increase. This would have to be supported by robust modelling of potential outcomes before any decision around the level of premium is considered. Potential impacts could include impacts on housing availability of supply and financial recovery rates of any increased premium understood.

Question 9

Do you think there should be a stepped approach to charging higher rates of council tax on long-term empty homes?

More information:

By 'stepped approach' we mean only giving councils powers to charge higher rates of council tax the longer the home is empty. For example, 100% premium at 12 months, 200% premium at 2 years, 300% premium at 5 years.

100% premium is the same as double the normal amount of council tax.

200% premium is the same as three times the normal amount of council tax

300% premium is the same as four times the normal amount of council tax.

Answer:

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

Please give reasons for your answer.

For the reasons outlined in the response to question 8. Subject to the outcome of robust modelling and impact assessments, a staged approach to any increase would be supported. This would allow careful monitoring of impacts.

Question 10

Are there any exceptions that are not already taken into account, that should be, when charging a premium of council tax on homes empty for longer than 12 months?

More information:

Current discretionary powers for councils to change council tax liability for empty homes

Status of empty home	Up to 6 months	6-12 months	12 months +	2 years +
No work underway and not for sale or let	Owner may apply for an unoccupied and unfurnished exemption	Discount can be varied between 50 and 10%	Discount can be varied between 50 and 10% or discount can be removed or premium of up to 100% can be applied	Discount can be varied between 50 and 10% or discount can be removed or premium of up to 100% can be applied
If undergoing repair work to make them habitable	50% discount cannot be changed	Owner may apply for a major repairs or structural alterations exemption. Discount can be varied between 50 and 10%.	Discount can be varied between 50 and 10% or discount can be removed or premium of up to 100% can be applied.	Discount can be varied between 50 and 10% or discount can be removed or premium of up to 100% can be applied.

If being actively marketed for sale or let	50% discount cannot be changed	50% discount cannot be changed	50% discount cannot be changed	a premium of up to 100% can be charged
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The current list of exemptions to council tax are:

Exemption	Period of Exemption
Dwellings last occupied by charitable bodies	Up to 6 months
Dwellings last occupied by persons living or detained elsewhere	Unlimited
Deceased owners	Unlimited up to grant of confirmation 6 months after grant of confirmation
Dwellings empty under statute	Unlimited
Dwellings awaiting demolition	Unlimited
Dwellings for occupation by ministers	Unlimited
Dwellings occupied by students, etc.	Unlimited
Repossessed dwellings	Unlimited
Agricultural dwellings	Unlimited
Dwellings for old or disabled persons	Unlimited
Halls of residence	Unlimited
Barracks, etc.	Unlimited
Dwellings occupied by young people	Unlimited
Difficult to let dwellings	Unlimited
Garages and storage premises	Unlimited
Dwellings of persons made bankrupt	Unlimited
Visiting forces	Unlimited
Dwellings occupied by severely mentally impaired persons	Unlimited
Prisons	Unlimited
Prescribed housing support services accommodation	Unlimited

Answer:

Please tell us about exemptions that you feel should apply and give reasons for your answer. Do not include exemptions that are already provided for.

The current policy on exemptions available beyond the initial 12 month period seem reasonable and appropriate, therefore there are no obvious exceptions. The current exemptions include:

- left empty by deceased occupier
- left empty by occupier to provide personal care to another person
- unoccupied charity building
- unoccupied church manse
- repossessed property
- subject to Closing or Demolition order
- empty as occupier is in prison, or
- property under responsibility of a bankrupt's trustee

Question 11

What factors should be taken into account by councils when deciding whether to introduce a premium on council tax for homes empty for longer than 12 months?

More information:

A non-exhaustive list of potential factors might be:

- numbers, percentages and distribution of long-term empty homes throughout a local area
- potential impact on local economies and the community
- patterns of demand for, and availability of, affordable homes
- potential impact on local public services
- impact on neighbours and local residents

Councils may also decide not to use the powers or to disapply a premium for a specific period of time. A non-exhaustive list of examples of where a council might do this include:

- where there are reasons why a home could not be sold or let
- where an offer has been accepted on a home but the sale has not yet been completed and the exception period has run out
- if the home has been empty for longer than 12 months but has been recently purchased by a new owner that is actively taking steps to bring the home back into use
- if an owner has submitted a timely planning application or is undergoing a planning appeal that is under consideration by the council or Scottish Government. This means they cannot undertake work to bring the home back into use until that process is concluded
- where charging a premium might cause hardship or act as a disincentive to bringing the home back into use e.g. where extensive repairs are actively being carried out

Answer:

Please list factors and give reasons for your answer.

The main factors to be taken into account include:

- Potential impact on availability of housing to meet local housing need
- Potential impact on level of net economic benefit to the local area
- Financial impact on empty homeowners
- Additional revenue to local authorities to create further investment in affordable housing and general revenue flow forecasts for local government funding to support local services

Question 12

If you do, or were to, own a home that has been empty for longer than 12 months, please tell us what you would do if your council decided to increase the maximum council tax charge above 100% premium?

More information:

Council tax premium:

- 100% premium is the same as double the normal rate of council tax. This is the current maximum councils can decide to charge. This question asks what you would do if councils are given powers to charge more than this e.g. up to 300% premium/ four times the normal rate and the council where your empty home is located decided to apply an increase.
- You may find it helpful to view what we mean by some of the options given e.g. short-term lets and private residential tenancies.

Short-term lets:

- In this consultation, short-term lets is a term used to refer to the whole or part of accommodation provided to one or more guests on a commercial basis that does not become the main residence of the guest/s. Self-catering accommodation is a type of short-term let and may be liable for council tax or non-domestic rates depending on the number of days they are available to let and actually let in the financial year.
- Self-catering accommodation must be available for let for 140 days or more and actually let for 70 days or more in the financial year, to be exempt from council tax and liable for non-domestic rates

Private residential tenancies:

- A [private residential tenancy](#) is when a registered landlord lets accommodation to an individual/s and it will be their sole or main residence. All tenancies created on or after 1 December 2017 are open-ended, which means a landlord will no longer be able to ask a tenant to leave simply because the fixed term has ended.

Answer:

- ☐ Leave the home empty and pay the higher council tax
- ☐ Sell the empty home
- ☐ Use the home as a private residential tenancy
- ☐ Use the home as a short-Term Let

☒ Other (specify)

Please give reasons for your answer.

Not applicable for Local Authority response.

Question 13

Do you think that the letting thresholds for self-catering accommodation for non-domestic rates should be changed?

More information:

The owners, tenants or occupiers of self-catering accommodation (who may be businesses, the public or the third sectors) may be liable for either council tax or non-domestic rates. This includes owners of second homes who use them for self-catering accommodation.

The current threshold for defining premises as self-catering holiday accommodation liable for non-domestic rates is it must be available to let for 140 days or more and actually let for 70 days or more in the same financial year.

Answer:

☒ Yes

☐ No

☐ Don't know

Please give reasons for your answer.

Support the local authority having the powers to change the thresholds based on local needs. North Ayrshire benefits from some very popular tourist destination areas and as such we must ensure there is adequate provision of tourist accommodation. Any increase to these thresholds could impact on this availability if this resulted in the property instead being assessed as a second home if occupied for a minimum of 25 days per annum. In this regard, through the potential impact of a Council tax premium being applied, whilst this could lead to a benefit in the level of housing supply, it could be to the detriment of the level of supply of tourist accommodation. It is recognised that further modelling would require to be undertaken to better understand the potential impacts, with the general aim being to deliver a balanced portfolio of accommodation needs.

Question 14

If you have answered yes to question 13, what do you think the threshold for the number of days self-catering accommodation must actually be let for should be?

More information:

The current threshold is self-catering accommodation must actually be let for 70 days in the financial year.

Answer:

- ☐ 50 days
- ☐ 100 days
- ☐ 140 days
- ☐ 180 days
- ☒ Other (specify)

Please give reasons for your answer.

Any consideration around changing self-catering thresholds will require further modelling to understand potential impacts on the level of tourist accommodation and for this to be set within the context of local housing need and potential changes across second home ownership levels and consequential local economic impacts that could flow from this.

Question 15

If you have answered yes to question 13, what do you think the threshold for the number of days self-catering accommodation must be available to let should be?

More information:

The current threshold is self-catering accommodation must available to let for 140 days in the financial year.

Answer:

- ☐ 120 days
- ☐ 160 days
- ☐ 200 days
- ☐ 250 days
- ☒ Other (specify)

Please give reasons for your answer.

Any consideration around changing self-catering thresholds will require further modelling to understand potential impacts on the level of tourist accommodation set against local housing need and shifts across ownership models.

Question 16

Do you think councils should have discretion to change the self-catering accommodation 'days actually let' threshold, for their local area?

Answer:

- ☒ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

Please give reasons for your answer.

Councils having such discretionary powers is supported. This would allow appropriate levels to be set following modelling and impact assessments undertaken across the local area. With the growth in tourist accommodation models like AirBnB it is important to ensure the appropriate licensing is in place and impacts fully understood. It is also recognised however that this would likely have resource implications which would have to be addressed as part of any devolved discretionary powers.

Question 17

If you answered yes to question 16 do you think that councils should have discretion to:

Answer:

- ☐ Increase the number of days actually let only
☐ Decrease the number of days actually let only
☐ Increase or decrease the number of days actually let

Please specify if you think councils should have discretion to do something else

Please give reasons for your answer

Full flexibility across all areas is supported to best address local circumstances in North Ayrshire. It is also recognised however that this would likely have resource implications which would have to be addressed as part of any devolved powers.

Question 18

Do you have any other comments on the non-domestic rates system in respect of self-catering accommodation?

Answer:

Please provide your views

No further comment.

Question 19

If you do, or were to, own a second home please tell us what you would do in the event that the applicable rate of council tax and non-domestic rate thresholds both increased?

More information:

The current threshold for defining premises as self-catering holiday accommodation liable for [non-domestic rates](#) is it must be available to let for 140 days or more and actually let for 70 days or more in the same financial year.

A [private residential tenancy](#) is when a registered landlord lets accommodation to an individual/s and it will be their sole or main residence. All tenancies created on or after 1 December 2017 are open-ended, which means a landlord will no longer be able to ask a tenant to leave simply because the fixed term has ended.

Answer:

- ☐ The home is already used as a private residential tenancy
- ☐ I would continue to use it purely for personal use and pay the higher rate of council tax
- ☐ I would continue with split use between self-catering accommodation (below the thresholds to be liable for non-domestic rates) and personal use, and pay council tax
- ☐ My second home already has/would have split use between self-catering accommodation (below the non-domestic rates threshold) and personal use.

Rather than pay the higher rate of council tax, I would increase the number of days the accommodation is available to let and actually let in order to meet the non-domestic rates thresholds

- ☐ My second home already has/would have split use between self-catering accommodation (above the non-domestic rates threshold) and personal use. Rather than revert to paying council tax, I would increase the number of days the accommodation is available to let and actually let in order to meet the higher non-domestic rates thresholds
- ☐ My second home is purely for personal use. However, in order to stop paying council tax, I would make it available as self-catering accommodation and let it for the number of days I needed to in order to be liable for non-domestic rates
- ☐ I use my second home purely for personal use but I would change its use to a private residential tenancy
- ☐ I use my second home as self-catering accommodation (below the non-domestic rates threshold) but I would change its use to a private residential tenancy
- ☐ I would seek reclassification as an empty home and pay council tax
- ☐ I would sell the second home
- ☒ Other (specify)

Please give reasons for your answer.

Not applicable for Local Authority response.

Question 20

If you do, or were to, own a second home please tell us what you would do in the event that:

- a) council tax powers remained as they are for second homes (i.e. no provision for councils to charge a premium), but
- b) the 'thresholds' to be classed as self-catering holiday accommodation for Non-domestic rates purposes increased?

More information:

The current threshold for defining premises as self-catering holiday accommodation liable for [non-domestic rates](#) is it must be available to let for 140 days or more and actually let for 70 days or more in the same financial year.

A [private residential tenancy](#) is when a registered landlord lets accommodation to an individual/s and it will be their sole or main residence. All tenancies created on or after 1 December 2017 are open-ended, which means a landlord will no longer be able to ask a tenant to leave simply because the fixed term has ended.

Answer:

- ☐ The home is already used as a private residential tenancy
- ☐ I would continue to use it purely for personal use and pay council tax
- ☐ I would continue with split use between self-catering accommodation (below the thresholds to be liable for non-domestic rates) and personal use, and pay council tax
- ☐ My second home already has/would have split use between self-catering accommodation (above the non-domestic rates threshold) and personal use. I would increase the number of days the accommodation is available to let and actually let in order to meet the higher non-domestic rates thresholds
- ☐ I use my second home as self-catering accommodation (above the current non-domestic rates threshold). If I was not able to meet the new thresholds, I would change its use to a private residential tenancy
- ☐ I would seek reclassification as an empty home and pay council tax
- ☐ I would sell the second home
- ☒ Other (specify)

Please give reasons for your answer:

Not applicable for Local Authority response.

Question 21

Please tell us how you think changes to council tax and/or non-domestic rates thresholds for self-catering accommodation might affect businesses in your area.

Answer:

Please provide your views

It is recognised that changes to council tax charges through the application of a premium could influence changes in housing ownership models across the area and potentially help address the housing need in particular problem areas, through more permanent housing availability. Increased levels of housing supply could also potentially influence the levels of housing cost inflation. It is recognised however, that when considering affordable housing needs, this may not be matched by the required type of property supply to meet this need e.g. larger instances of detached properties, so further modelling of impacts would be required to better understand potential outcomes of any changes that the Council may wish to apply. From a local business perspective, any increased level of all year-round housing occupancy could potentially have a net positive economic impact in the local area and this could potentially benefit businesses in the local area. Again, further modelling and assessments of occupants and visitors would be required to consider the level of economic benefit attributable to various groups e.g. day trippers, overnight stays, permanent residents, seasonal visitors etc. Similarly, any consideration to changing thresholds for self-catering accommodation would require further modelling and assessment of impacts.

Question 22

Please tell us how you think changes to the maximum council tax rate for second and/or empty homes and non-domestic rates thresholds might affect your local area or Scotland as a whole (social, economic, environment, community, cultural, enterprise).

More information:

We have prepared a partial Business Regulatory Impact Assessment and undertaken screenings to initially consider other impacts. We would welcome your views and comments to help us expand on these assessments.

Answer:

Please provide your views

It is recognised that changes to council tax charges through the application of a premium could influence changes in housing ownership models across the area and potentially influence the housing need in particular problem areas, through more permanent housing availability. Increased levels of housing supply could also potentially influence the levels of housing cost inflation in problem local areas. It is recognised however, that when considering affordable housing needs, this may not be matched by the required type of property supply to meet this need e.g. larger instances of detached properties, so further modelling of impacts would be required to better understand potential outcomes of any changes that the Council may wish to apply. Any increased level of housing occupancy could have an overall positive net economic impact for the local area, helping communities grow and flourish all year round as well as potentially benefitting local businesses. However, it is recognised that further modelling and assessments of occupants and visitors would be required to consider the level of economic benefit attributable to various groups e.g. day trippers, overnight stays, permanent residents, seasonal visitors etc. It is also important to ensure that sufficient tourist accommodation provision remains so as to ensure this benefit to the area is maintained, especially at seasonal times.

Question 23

Please tell us how you think the changes identified might affect island communities.

The challenges can be particularly acute in our Island communities. It is recognised that changes to council tax charges through the application of a premium could result in changes to ownership models across the islands. This could potentially help address the housing need in Arran especially through more permanent housing availability and supply and this could also influence housing cost inflation. It is recognised however, that when considering affordable housing needs, this may not be matched by the required type of property supply to meet this need e.g. larger instances of detached properties, so further modelling of impacts would be required to better understand potential outcomes of any changes that the Council may wish to apply. The area of affordable housing need is a significant issue for Arran and in response to this North Ayrshire Council has established the Arran Housing Task Force which brings together a wide range of partners to address the issues which face island residents and businesses. The taskforce aims to assess the demand for affordable housing on Arran and identify issues that may be limiting economic sustainability and growth.

Any increased level of housing occupancy could also have an overall positive net economic impact for the local area, helping maintain public services, with staff able to afford to live in the area to support public and other key services. Island communities could potentially grow and flourish all year round, rather than at particular seasonal times, as well as benefitting businesses. However, it is also recognised that further modelling and assessments of occupants and visitors would be required to consider the overall level of economic benefit attributable to various groups e.g. day trippers, overnight stays, permanent residents, seasonal visitors etc. It is also important to ensure that sufficient tourist accommodation provision remains to ensure this benefit to the islands is also maintained.

More information:

We have prepared a partial Island Communities Impact Assessment and undertaken screenings to initially consider other impacts. We would welcome your views and comments to help us expand on these assessments.

Answer:

Please provide your views

Question 24

Do you think there are any equality, human rights, or wellbeing impacts in relation to the changes set out in the consultation?

Answer:

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

Please give reasons for your answer.

Those stakeholders negatively impacted are primarily second homeowners and owners of long term empty properties as this could result in an additional financial burden. It is also recognised that there would be a requirement for an equality impact assessment as part of a wider local consultation to be undertaken prior to any change in policy being considered or implemented.

Question 25

Is there anything else you would like to tell us in relation to this consultation?

Answer:

Please provide any further comments on the proposals set out in this consultation in the box below.

The main points have been covered, no further comments.

About you

Please tell us which of the following categories best describe you (select all that apply):

- Owner of a Second Home
- Owner of a Long-term Empty Home
- Short-Term Let/Self-Catering accommodation operator
- Council or Assessor
- Organisation e.g. third sector or industry body

- Member of the Public
- Other, please specify

Chief Officer at North Ayrshire Council.

Please tick whichever council areas apply to you (or select all of Scotland)?:

- Aberdeen City
- Aberdeenshire Council
- All of Scotland
- Angus Council
- Argyll and Bute Council
- City of Edinburgh Council
- Clackmannanshire Council
- Dumfries and Galloway
- Dundee City Council
- East Ayrshire Council
- East Dunbartonshire Council
- East Lothian Council
- East Renfrewshire Council
- Falkirk Council
- Fife Council
- Glasgow City Council
- Highland Council
- Inverclyde Council
- Midlothian Council
- Moray Council
- Na h-Eileanan Siar Council
- North Ayrshire Council
- North Lanarkshire Council
- Orkney Council
- Perth and Kinross Council
- Renfrewshire Council
- Scottish Borders Council
- Shetland Council
- South Ayrshire Council
- South Lanarkshire Council
- Stirling Council
- West Dunbartonshire Council
- West Lothian Council

North Ayrshire Council.

NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

13 June 2023

Cabinet

Title:	North Ayrshire Children's Services Plan 2023-26
Purpose:	To present the North Ayrshire Children's Services Plan 2023-26
Recommendation:	That Cabinet endorses the North Ayrshire Children's Services Plan 2023-26 and agrees to submit to the Scottish Government

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Every local authority and its relevant Health Board are required to jointly prepare a Children's Services Plan for the area of the local authority for each three year period, whilst the overall responsibility rests with the Council and Health Board it is expected that we will work collaboratively with other members of the Community Planning Partnership (CPP), as well as with children, young people and their families at various stages of the development and review of the Plan.
- 1.2 This report presents the North Ayrshire Children's Services Plan 2023-26 (Appendix 1), the Plan builds on the progress made since the previous Children's Services Plan 2020-23, in addition the plan reports on progress during 2022-23 against the previous plan.
- 1.3 The Children's Services Plan should be read in conjunction with the Children's Poverty Strategy and Action Plan and Children's Rights Report which form part of our suite of children's services planning documents.

2. Background

- 2.1 Part 3 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 seeks to improve outcomes for all children and young people in Scotland by ensuring that local planning and delivery of services is integrated, focused on securing quality and value through preventative approaches, and dedicated to safeguarding, supporting and promoting child wellbeing. It aims to ensure that any action to meet need is taken at the earliest appropriate time and that, where appropriate, this is taken to prevent need arising. The aims are about creating and maintaining a local environment which facilitates Getting it Right for Every Child Practice (GIRFEC) for individual children and young people.
- 2.2 Section 8(1) of the Act requires every local authority and its relevant health board to jointly prepare a Children's Services Plan for the area of the local authority, in respect of each three-year period.

- 2.3 The publication of the new plan brings the 2020-2023 Children's Service Plan to a close. A recent progress report was published for the period 2021-22 and previously presented to Cabinet, progress for 2022-23 is incorporated into the new plan and formally concludes the previous plan.
- 2.4 The 2023-26 plan builds on the work of the previous plan. The plan maintains its previous vision that in North Ayrshire, 'For all our children and young people to have the best start in life and for North Ayrshire to be the best place in Scotland to grow up'.
- 2.5 To achieve this vision, the plan has identified five priorities to progress:
1. The rights of children and young people are promoted and protected.
 2. Acting early to improve what happens next.
 3. Making Things Fairer
 4. Promoting good mental health and wellbeing
 5. Inspiring children and young people to be active
- 2.6 In supporting these priorities, a suite of actions has been identified that will be delivered by CPP partners, progress will be monitored through the Children's Services Strategic Partnership (CSSP) with work undertaken across partners to establish a set of outcomes indicators to measure progress.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 That Cabinet endorses the North Ayrshire Children's Services Plan 2023-26 as attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 That Cabinet agrees that the North Ayrshire Children's Services can be submitted to the Scottish Government and published on the Community Planning Partnership website.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

- 4.1 None. All commitments are aligned with existing resources, the report contains information specifically on how the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund will support delivery of the Plan.

Human Resources

- 4.2 None. All commitments are aligned with Council and Partners agreed resources.

Legal

- 4.3 Section 8(1) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 requires every local authority and health board to jointly prepare a Children's Services Plan for the area of the local authority, in respect of each three-year period.

Equality/Socio-economic

- 4.4 The Children's Services Plan assists us to meet our Socio-Economic Duty set out in the Fairer Scotland Duty and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The Plan aims to reduce inequalities and make things fairer and better.

Climate Change and Carbon

- 4.5 None

Key Priorities

- 4.6 The Children's Services Plan and Children's Rights Report links directly to the key priorities contained the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan, the Council Plan 2019-2024 and the HCSP Strategic Commissioning Plan 2022-30.

Community Wealth Building

- 4.7 None

5. Consultation

- 5.1 To inform the plan a period of engagement was carried out with local children and young people. During the 2022-23 service year, engagement activity was undertaken across a number of North Ayrshire Schools (Primary and Secondary), and across a number of local youth forums. In total, engagement took place with 195 children and young people.
- 5.2 Methods adopted included the use of the Jamboard engagement tool with school pupils, and focus groups, conversation cafes and surveys to engage with youth forums and modern apprentices. Young people were asked their views on the proposed priorities and asked to suggest what work could be undertaken to ensure the priorities were actioned. In addition to the CSP focused engagement, learning was also taken from other children and young people engagement groups, such as the North Ayrshire Champions Board.
- 5.3 CSSP partners have been fully engaged on the priorities and contributed to the actions described in the Plan.

Caroline Cameron
Director, (Health and Social Care Partnership)

For further information please contact **Scott Bryan, Interim Programme Manager, Strategic Planning (HSCP)**, on **01294 317747**.

Background Papers

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North Ayrshire Children's Services Plan 2023-26

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Foreword

Welcome to our Children's Services Plan 2023-26. Collectively across Community Planning Partners we want North Ayrshire to be the best place in Scotland to grow up, our 2023-26 plan builds on earlier plans and continues our focus on promoting children and young people's wellbeing, underpinned by Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC). Our Children's Services Plan is part of a suite of plans which outline how we are actively supporting the wellbeing and wellness of our children and young people. These include our Child Poverty Action Plan, Children's Rights Report, Corporate Parenting Plan, The Promise implementation, and our Child Protection Plans, all of which are at the centre of everything we do to support and nurture children and young people. Our Children's Services Strategic Partnership (CSSP) leads on the development of these plans and consists of representatives from across our Community Planning Partners.

We have a duty under the **Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014** to produce a Children's Services Plan every three years to demonstrate how we will improve the lives of our children and young people. Focussing on how services will work together to best safeguard, support and promote the wellbeing of all children in the area, have a local workforce that is trauma informed, ensuring that action is taken to meet needs at the earliest appropriate time, that we have an integrated approach and make the best use of our collective resources. Central to plans is ensuring children and young people's voices are heard and their rights are respected. We engaged with our children and young people to confirm our five priorities for the next three years and ensure they should be the key areas of focus. Our priorities are:



More information on how we identified these priorities, including how they align with GIRFEC, can be found in appendix 2.

These priorities directly link to our CPP [Community Plan](#) (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan) vision of North Ayrshire – Fair For All. It also directly aligns with the Scottish Government Outcome for Children: We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential, as well as the National Performance Framework. Of course, underpinning our approach is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The last few years have been some of the most challenging for everyone, the impact of the Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic on our children, families and services was significant and continues to affect all our lives. The economic outlook remains uncertain and the cost of living situation has further impacted on the wellbeing of our residents in North Ayrshire – which is covered in great detail in our

Child Poverty Action Plan 2023-26. As we continue to adapt to our very changed environment, we are seeking opportunities to work differently and more effectively, and we will require to be agile and adaptable to addressing the challenges which our communities and services face.

During the pandemic our Children's Services were inspected in relation to those children who were at risk of harm. The inspectors concluded - *'Leaders in North Ayrshire were driving forward a coherent, shared vision, 'North Ayrshire – a Better Life'. This was underpinned by the following key priorities: a working North Ayrshire, a thriving North Ayrshire – children and young people, a healthier North Ayrshire and a safer North Ayrshire. This provided the strategic direction for improving the lives of people in local communities and protecting children and young people. Partners had an acute understanding of the persistent inequalities that existed in the area and had a purposeful focus on improving outcomes for children living in poverty.'*

We recognise the strong partnership foundation in North Ayrshire provides a strong commitment to continue to collectively focus on improving outcomes for our children, young people and their families. We will continue to strive to ensure we place them at the very heart of delivery of services so we can get the right support at the right time. There is no doubt that supporting our children and young people and their families will be one of the most valuable long-term investments we can make, through focussing on early intervention and preventative approaches we have the opportunity to make a real difference to life outcomes.

The plan provides a framework for partners to shape and improve how we work together to ensure services are planned and delivered in a way which best meets the needs of children and families, our focus being securing a joined-up approach, between local partners, to service planning and delivery, with collaboration at every level and across all service providers. We thank all those who contributed to the plan and their ongoing commitment to achieving the best possible outcomes for children and young people in North Ayrshire.

Caroline Cameron – Director North Ayrshire HSCP
(Chair of North Ayrshire Children's Services Strategic Partnership)

Craig Hatton

CEX North Ayrshire Council

Claire Burden

CEX NHS AA

National Performance Framework

The National Performance Framework (NPF) sets out the government's vision for Scotland and its overarching approaches, which apply across all the GIRFEC wellbeing indicators and outcomes for children, young people, and their families. These are summarised as SHANARRI (Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, and Included).

The 11 national outcomes are interlinked, and actions taken to drive progress in each area are crucial to improving the lives of children and young people and into adulthood. Focusing on national wellbeing outcomes will help us understand what we need to do to make North Ayrshire the best place to grow up and contribute to the achievement of this vision. The improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing is one of the key priorities in the framework, recognising the need to improve outcomes and support the wellbeing of our children and young people by offering the right help at the right time from the right people.



Policy Context and Strategic Themes

Improving outcomes and life chances for children and young people is a key priority for the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership and all its partner organisations. It is also a key priority at the national level too. This section will help provide some of the context around the policy direction to help improve the lives of young people.

National Policies

The Promise

An independent review into the children's care system in Scotland resulted in a publication called the 'Promise' that focused on changes that should be made to Scotland's care system to ensure that more families were looking after their own children and when this was not possible their alternative living arrangements met their needs including family contact if appropriate.

Although the Promise implementation is aimed to address the needs of all our Care Experienced children and young people, the fundamentals outlined in the Promise are relevant to all our work across prevention, early intervention, and targeted specialist services. In all that we do we will take account of these in our approach to planning and service delivery. These are:

- What matters to Children and Families?
- Listening
- Poverty
- Children's Rights
- Language.

We are fully committed to the promise made to Scotland's infants, children, young people, adults and families. Our specific activities around the Promise and our Corporate Parenting Duties are highlighted in our Corporate Parenting Plan (2023-2026) and our Promise 3 Years On Report where the needs of our Care Experienced community are at the forefront of our planning and delivery around the five priorities of the National Promise plan, namely, **Care, Family, Voice, People and Scaffolding**.

Children's Rights and Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)

In North Ayrshire we are progressing Getting it Right for every Child (GIRFEC), a national approach in Scotland to improving outcomes and supporting the wellbeing of children and young people by identifying the right help at the right time from the right people. It supports working in partnership with services that can help.

The main aim of *Getting it right for every child* is to make sure that when children and/or their families have additional needs everyone gets the right help when they need it.

Getting it right for every child is a fundamental way of working that builds on research and practice to help practitioners focus on what makes a positive difference for children and young people and act to deliver these improvements. *Getting it right for every child* thread through all existing policy, practice, strategy and legislation affecting children, young people and families.

To meet the diversity of needs of all children and young people, early intervention and prevention are at the centre of our planning and delivery of children's services. We look to strengthen families and communities to support their own children, supplemented by universal services, and providing additional support when needed.

GIRFEC puts children's rights at the heart of the services that support them – such as early years services, schools, and the NHS – ensuring that everyone works together to improve child or young people's outcomes.

[The United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child \(UNCRC\)](#) has 54 articles. Many of them relate to children's basic rights regarding protection, health and education. Some are about the key principles which drive this plan, especially:

The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children (article 3)

- Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously (article 12)
- Every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law (article 13)
- We will make sure that every child in North Ayrshire learns about their rights, and what they can do if they feel that any of their rights are not being recognised or respected.

Children's Services Plan 2020 - 2023

Our previous Children's Services Plan was published in 2020.



Many of the aspirations and priorities established in that plan remain relevant, so have carried over into this new plan. Tackling the challenges in North Ayrshire require short, medium and longer term approaches, so each plan builds on progress.

The priorities identified in the 2020-2023 plan were:

- Young people's rights and views are respected and listened to.
- Acting early to improve what happens next.
- Making things fairer and better.
- Supporting Mental Health.
- Helping children and young people to be active and healthy.

Each priority was supported by a suite of actions that would be delivered by our partner organisations. A summary of progress against those actions can be found in [appendix 1](#).

North Ayrshire

North Ayrshire has many strengths and assets including; welcoming people, a strong sense of community, many local libraries, community centres, fantastic parks and shops all set against the backdrop of the stunning, picturesque landscapes, coast and beaches.

However, the area also has a number of challenges. The population of North Ayrshire is shifting, over the years the area is seeing a decrease in the number of people who live here. Within that decreasing population, we are seeing a shift towards higher number of older people offset by a decreasing working age and children's population. These changes will have a significant effect on the priority focus of public sector organisations, with more resources being required to support the growing older population.

In addition, North Ayrshire also has high levels of poverty and deprivation. In the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, of the 186 data-zones (very small areas with about 800 people living in them) across North Ayrshire, almost 40% are amongst the most deprived in Scotland. As of 2021, North Ayrshire has 26,246 people aged between 0 to 18 years. Of those, over 45% live in those most

deprived areas. As a result, it is likely that these young people are likely to face additional barriers and challenges in achieving positive outcomes.

In addition, information published by the charity EndPovertyNow in June 2023, suggests that 29% of local young people in North Ayrshire are living in poverty. This more than 1 in 4 young people. This is the second highest rate of child poverty in Scotland, second only to Glasgow City.

Covid-19 Recovery

Following the major impact and restrictions imposed on us all by the Covid-19 Pandemic, the return to community life and normal social interactions is welcomed by all. As we return to school and work it may be easy think that the worst of the pandemic is now behind us. However, the long-term impact of the pandemic is not yet well understood. In addition to the possibility of long-term effects on physical health, the mental and social impact legacy of the pandemic is still unclear.

Research from Public Health Scotland ([How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected children and young people in Scotland?](#)) highlights that a substantial proportion of children, parents and carers perceive the pandemic to have had a negative impact on child and family health and wellbeing. Around 3 in 10 children have experienced difficulties with their emotions, behaviours and mental health, with the majority of parents reporting the pandemic to have had a negative impact on their own physical and mental health.

Going forward, we must be mindful of these impacts and our services work together to support children, young people and families who have been adversely affected by the Pandemic.

Cost of Living

Following COVID-19, it now appears that post pandemic recovery is underway. Employment levels across the country are exceeding those recorded in 2019, with lower levels of unemployment and economic inactivity. However, many families in North Ayrshire and across the country still face many economic challenges. Due in part to rising inflation, and increases in cost of food and day to day products, the cost of living crisis is placing additional pressures on individuals and families. Despite higher levels of employment across Scotland, wages are not increasing in line with the levels of inflation.

This situation is effectively squeezing the resources of people both in and out of work. This is placing greater pressure and stress on local families, and likely having adverse impacts on children and young people.

Rural and Island Communities

Many areas in North Ayrshire are considered rural, with poorer access to services when compared to the larger rural areas. This is also true for our island communities living on Arran and on Cumbrae. While these areas have higher populations of older people, the challenges of rural life also impact on children and younger people.

Research from the University of Edinburgh has found that children and young people living in rural communities are more likely to suffer from feelings of loneliness and isolation. An article on the report can be found here: [Young adults loneliest in rural Scotland during Covid | The University of Edinburgh](#).

In terms of general health of young people, on Arran there is a lower uptake of the 6 in 1 Immunisation and the 24 month MMR Immunisation compared to North Ayrshire as a whole. In

addition, the percentage of primary one children with no dental cavities, and being of a healthy weight has decreased in recent years.

Information supporting our strategic needs assessment

To help improve outcomes for young people in North Ayrshire, it is important that we understand the local environment and the challenges that local children face. To do this, we collect valuable information that helps us better understand what life is like for a young person living in North Ayrshire.

This information contributes towards our strategic needs assessment, helping us identify the key areas for action.

Population

National Records of Scotland publish estimates of the population of each Local Authority area, by age. These publications show that the number of children and young people in North Ayrshire have been continually declining over several years. Between 2001 and 2021, the North Ayrshire population of people under 18 has dropped by 20%, from over 30,000 in 2001, to under 25,000 in 2021.

Similarly, the pupil census shows that the number of school pupils in North Ayrshire also declined over the last twenty years; having decreased by 17%, from 21,374 in 2002 to 17,691 in 2022.

School pupil attainment

In North Ayrshire we continue to make progress in raising attainment for school pupils.

- The performance of North Ayrshire leavers in attaining SCQF level 5 or above in literacy remained broadly consistent with the previous year at 84% in 2021/22. This remains above the national level (82% in 2021/22).
- For numeracy, the North Ayrshire rate increased from 69% in 2018/19 to 72% in 2021/22 which is in line with Scotland-wide figures.
- 96% of school leavers in 2021/22 progressed to a positive destination which is in line with the national rate.
- For Care Experienced children, there has also been improvement in attainment and destinations. In literacy 51% of North Ayrshire care experienced school leavers attained level 5 or above in 2021/22 (increased from 40% in 2020/21, above the Scotland figure of 45%)
- A notable increase in numeracy for Care Experienced children from 25% in 2018/19 to 33% in 2021/22 (above national figure of 30%)
- 95% of Care Experienced school leavers in North Ayrshire progressed to a positive destination in 2021/22 - an increase from 83% in 2018/19 and above Scotland-wide figure of 94%.

Looked After Children

Under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, 'looked after children' are defined as those in the care of their local authority, which is sometimes referred to as a 'corporate parent', the public bodies which constitute the CPP are all corporate parents. Children can become looked after for many reasons, including:

- Facing abuse or neglect at home.
- Having a disability that requires special care.
- Being an unaccompanied minor seeking asylum, or who having been illegally trafficked into the UK.
- Having been involved in the youth justice system.

In North Ayrshire the number children and young people looked after has decreased in recent years, following a national trend. At the latest national snapshot taken for the Children Looked After Survey North Ayrshire had **447** Looked After Children and Young People, which is the lowest the authority has seen for several years.

However, at **18 per 1000** of the local 0 to 18 population, North Ayrshire still has one of the highest rates of children and young people looked after in Scotland, ranking 4th highest in Scotland. The national rate for children looked after is 12.3 per 1000.

Over the last couple of years there have been notable decreases specifically in children and young people being looked after at home, with friends/relatives, and with foster carers. However, the number of formerly Looked After young people requesting to stay in their placement under Continuing Care is increasing. In April 2023, there were 58 young people in these placements, which as a rate of the population (2.3) is the highest in the country.

Children and Young People with Disabilities

A key focus for all partners in the CSSP is to support local children and young people to achieve positive outcomes as they move into adulthood, whether it be into employment or further education.

This is also true for children with learning or physical disabilities or additional support needs. School leavers are provided transition support as the move from children's and young people support services to adult support services.

Transition pathways are complex and often involve multiple organisations supporting and planning for individuals. These transition processes have faced challenges over the past few years. In particular being able to support people at an early enough stage to identify what their future, post school destination will be.

During 2023, a project team with representation from many partner agencies will work to identify how we will improve the experience of Children and Young People with disabilities and their families through the life-course.

Child Protection

Across Scotland, the number of Children on the Child Protection Register has decreased from over 2,500 in July 2020 to around 1,900 in March 2023, a decrease of around 25%. This decrease has also been experienced locally, with **93** children recorded on the Child Protection Register in July of 2023, the lowest figure since 2017.

Expressed as a rate per 1,000 of children and young people aged under 16, North Ayrshire's 2022 rate of **4.2** was the highest in the country (despite decreasing from 5.3 in 2021 which also ranked highest), comparing unfavourably to the national rate of 2.2. However, in recent months, numbers on the register have continued to decrease and the rate in April 2023 was **2.7**, comparing more favourably with the national average.

Young People's Health

In the last year, we have seen the highest rates of breastfeeding across the last 5 years in the following performance measures:

- % Overall breastfed at Health Visiting first visit **40.5%** vs 36.3% in 20/21
- % Of babies exclusively breastfed at 6-to-8-week visit **22%** vs 20.9% in 20/21
- % Overall breastfed at 6-to-8-week visit **31.1%** vs 27.9% in 20/21

There has also been the lowest reduction in five years of breastfeeding drop off rates between birth and first visit (4.8% reduction since 20/21) and between first visit and 6-to-8-week visit (reduction of 1.1% since 20/21). There is also evidence of sustained improvement in the percentage of babies exclusively breastfed at first visit with figures for 21/22 being 25.6% (25.7% in 20/21 was the highest rate in 4 years).

Immunisation uptake at 24 months remains high (97.2% in 2022 for 6-in-1 and 94.9% for MMR), although like the national picture has decreased slightly over the past few years.

2022 also saw improvements in child's dental health – 73% of primary 1 children had no obvious decay (highest figure reported from Public Health Scotland since it started reporting this in 2013). This mirrors the national picture which also saw an increase in 2022 to 75%.

Healthy birth weight for children decreased to 81% in 2022 (82.4% last year) while the figure for all Scotland decreased marginally to 84.1%. For primary 1 children the most recent data published in 2021 shows a decrease across the country – 70% in Scotland and 65% in North Ayrshire with a healthy weight.

Young People's Mental Health

Poor mental health is a growing concern across all our communities. This is also true for children and young people, where we have seen a growing demand for children's mental health services over the past few years. Information provided by CAMHS demonstrates year on year increases in referrals to the service. In March 2023, North Ayrshire CAMHS received 166 referrals for young people. This was a significant increase on the 77 referrals recorded for previous March.

There is also a high correlation between levels of deprivation and referrals to the service, with higher proportions of young people being referred to CAMHS coming from areas considered those amongst the most deprived in Scotland.

What was also highlighted, of all 1042 referrals between April 2022 and March 2023, **42.54%** were for a Neuro-developmental assessment. Children with neuro-developmental concerns are often referred to CAMHS but do not always meet the mental health criteria described in the CAMHS national service specification criteria. Additional services are required for those with neurodiversity to fully meet the National Neurodevelopmental Specification for Children and Young People. [Children and young people - national neurodevelopmental specification: principles and standards of care - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-neurodevelopmental-specification/principles-and-standards-of-care/pages/1-1-introduction-and-overview.aspx)

Speech and Language Therapy

Recent Public Health Scotland publications have underlined the importance of early childhood language development for children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, educational outcomes, and employment opportunities later on in life. Public health Scotland further highlighted the impact of the implementation of public health measures – necessary to prevent and control the spread of COVID-19 – on the speech, language and communication of infants, children, and young people across Scotland (Public Health Scotland, 2023). Beyond the impact of the pandemic, the 'Equity for All' document (Scottish Government, 2022) outlined that in Ayrshire we have the highest predicted speech, language, and communication need in Scotland, across the 0-18 population. Addressing this need locally has proven challenging in the context of local workforce capacity and national SLT recruitment issues. This has led to significant waiting times for speech and language therapy input for children and young people in North Ayrshire with the service having to close to new, non-high-risk, referrals for a period of time in 2022/23. This pause in acceptance of new routine referrals was to enable the SLT service to prioritise the ability to safely manage high risk requests for

assistance, to implement service and process improvements, and to progress recruitment to vacant posts. With the SLT service now re-opened to routine referrals, more than 160 children and young people are now waiting for an average of 18 months for specialist intervention.

Meeting the speech, language, and communication needs of our children and young people takes a whole system approach. Partners are actively encouraged to continue to use the universal and targeted resources already available to support speech, language, and communication development in North Ayrshire. Ongoing advice and support are available to young people, their families, and other partners through a local help line and drop-in sessions led by experienced speech and language therapists.

Vision and Key Priorities

We have identified key priorities to address over the lifetime of this plan. These priorities will help us to achieve our vision, which is:

For all our children and young people to have the best start in life and for North Ayrshire to be the best place in Scotland to grow up

To identify and agree on our priorities for this plan, we collated information from a number of different sources and service areas. Yet, the most important factor in agreeing priorities is the feedback we have received through our ongoing engagement with children, young people and their families. These voices are central to our activity and to this plan, as well as our wider activity. We engage with children, young people and families in a variety of ways on an ongoing basis.

We involve young people through their participation in several engagement and decision-making groups. This includes our Champions Board for Care Experienced Young People, our Youth Cabinets, Community groups, pupil councils and we work in partnership to advocate and support children and young people with specific needs. This includes those with care experience, young carers, additional support needs and those subject to child protection measures.

We have a robust Youth Participation Strategy which was jointly developed with young people and seeks to be inclusive of all children and young people no matter where they live or what their situation may be. Our young people are also encouraged to apply for funds through our Participatory Budgeting Framework and through our Locality Planning Forums.

Close collaboration exists between the Statutory and Third Sectors and through our Third Sector Providers forum both sectors are brought together on a regular basis. The Third Sector have also had the opportunity to specifically comment and contribute to the priorities and actions in this plan.

Since 2021 we have also organised and facilitated conferences and events, such as our 'Cost of the School Day' and 'The North Ayrshire Annual Promise' conferences where the voices of young people addressed the selected priorities in this plan.

There was overwhelming agreement with all priorities. These priorities are:

1. The rights of children and young people are promoted and protected.

In progressing this priority, we will:

- Implement the North Ayrshire UNCRC plan actions, ensuring the rights of all children and young people are protected.
- Ensure the voices of children and young people are heard and influence the work of the Community Planning Partnership.
- Provide opportunities for children and young people to develop their citizenship skills, including active democratic participation opportunities.
- Equality and Children's Rights Impact Assessment (ECRIA) will be carried out on all new policies that affect the lives of our children and young people
- Through the engagement workstream of the care experienced task force, work proactively with Children and Young People

- Co-create with children and young people new, systematic mechanisms for maximising learner participation and voice and create a new Learner Participation Policy
- Ongoing consultation with children and their families on service design and delivery.
- Ensure that Children's engagement forums focus on rights, helping children and families understand UNCRC and what this means.
- Work with local partners / members to identify opportunities for children and young people to become involved locally.
- Through our Advocacy Strategy prioritise community-based advocacy to children and young people ensuring they are aware of their rights and are appropriately represented.
- Implement learning and improvements identified through the HSCP SDS Learning Review Board for the Children with a Disabilities Team.
- Include young carers in the planning and shaping of their services.
- Develop a young people users forum for KA Leisure and ensure their views and opinions are considered when developing programmes and initiatives.

2. Acting early to improve what happens next.

In progressing this priority, we will:

- Work with our partners to keep all children and young people safe, with the robust implementation of the new National Guidance for Child Protection.
- Support families with children aged 0-5 through our integrated universal early years' service.
- Increase access to early learning and childcare.
- Work together with parents or carers to provide support to their children.
- Improve outcomes for care-experienced young people.
- We continue to develop and implement the Childsmile programme, focussing on early referral and preventive advice for all families.
- We will continue to deliver Jumpstart, a family centred healthy lifestyle programme for children aged 2-17, who are above a healthy weight.
- Expand our peer support service to all breastfeeding mothers as part of our integrated infant feeding service working alongside the Breastfeeding Network
- Continue working with whole families, whole systems and whole communities to provide early intervention support to all of North Ayrshires Children.
- Providing training / guidance to families, schools, partners and communities that enhances the understanding of early intervention & provides skills needed for families to feel confident and equipped to manage family life.
- We will implement the Signs of Safety approach to social work practice.
- Improve planning for transitions of care to ensure children and young people are able to thrive moving into adulthood.
- Invest in premises infrastructure to support children and young people experiencing distress in appropriate environments.
- Work across partners to develop robust pathways of support for infants, children and young people and their families seeking support for speech, language and communication development support.
- Improve access to Speech and Language therapy for children and young people who require specialist support.

- Develop a trauma informed workforce by rolling out trauma aware and trauma skilled resources.
- Develop an evaluation framework to maximise resources to support children and young people, to enable system partners to invest and sustain early intervention approaches.
- Reach and identify all young carers earlier in their caring role and promote increased uptake of Young People's Carer Support Plans.
- Expand and develop the Health & Wellbeing Service to accommodate children and young people, with a focus on partnership working within the Mind and Be Active programme to establish an early intervention approach that provides supported physical activity opportunities for children and young people who are experiencing poor mental health.

3. Making things fairer.

In progressing this priority, we will:

- Implement the North Ayrshire Child Poverty Action Plan
- Improve attainment and achievement for all.
- Close the poverty related attainment gap.
- Implement the recommendations from the Independent Care Review (Scotland), The Promise.
- Implement the recommendations from the Additional Support for Learning Review (Scotland)
- Build strong collaborative partnerships in local areas to ensure we deliver high-quality services for all of our children, young people, and families.
- Create a new 3 year raising attainment strategy.
- Maximise opportunities to work with Third Sector providers to provide early intervention and prevention supports, with a particular focus on primary prevention approaches.
- Providing a robust 'peer' support model that upskills parents and carers, providing training and volunteering opportunities and enhances employability skills as well as building self-esteem and confidence.
- Take an asset-based approach to communities / children and families and build upon the skills and strengths that exist.
- Establish a Financial Inclusion Partnership in North Ayrshire to better support access to support for families.
- Develop peer support models.
- We will strive for parity of access to support and services for our Island Communities including for Children and Young People.
- Provide multiple points of access for young carers into carer support services.

4. Promoting good mental health and wellbeing.

In progressing this priority, we will:

- Develop our nurturing approach across all Children's Services
- Work with children, young people, families, and communities to improve mental health and wellbeing through physical activity and social participation.
- Continue to have appropriate pathways in place for supporting mental wellbeing.
- Work together with children, young people, and their families to help build resilience.

- Improve services for children with neuro-developmental conditions, implementing a whole system approach with partners across Health, Education, Social Services and the Third Sector. (Implementation of the National CAMHS and Neurodevelopmental Specifications)
- Public Health will implement a life course approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing, focusing on the first thousand and one days, infancy and Children and Young People.
- Support services that are nature based to encourage connection with nature and the outdoors.
- Build on services that encourage parenting skills and interactions with between family members.
- Build on the National CAMHS Specification through the 3 established pathways (core, unscheduled care, neuro), ensuring young people are on the correct pathway at a much earlier stage.
- Continue to provide ‘worry workshops’ e.g. identifying key issues raised as worries by North Ayrshire children and using this to develop targeted workshops on these issues.
- Establish a CPP led Health and Wellbeing Alliance to bring key partners together to co-ordinate approach to targeting support to improve individual, family and community health and wellbeing.
- Be responsive and pro-active in responding to and learning from Young Person’s Suicide through our Young People’s Suicide Taskforce.
- Deliver the new National Secure Adolescent Inpatient Secure Unit (Foxgrove) for children across Scotland, which will also benefit young people in North Ayrshire.
- Explore opportunities to ensure young people are not admitted to non-specialist environments including options to develop and in-house CAMHS inpatient provision.
- Building on the success of the Kilwinning Wellness Model, the Revised Wellness Model working group will now seek to roll out the approach across all North Ayrshire localities.
- Enable young carers to have a quality of life outside caring and ensure support when moving through key life stages.

5. Inspiring children and young people to be active.

In progressing this priority, we will:

- Create innovative physical activity and sports opportunities with communities and partners.
- Adopt a whole systems approach to diet and healthy weight.
- Design opportunities into the whole system to enable children, young people, and their families to access supported physical activity opportunities and have a healthy lifestyle.
- Ensure all our early years indoor and outdoor learning environments and activities enable children to be physically active.
- Promote access to leisure services for children and young people to encourage participation in physical activities.
- Promote the introduction of the INSPIRE programme to improve opportunities for alternative activities, including arts, drama and music.
- Create and protect safe space for children to play and enjoy being outdoors.
- Support parents to understand the importance of movement and enjoyment for children and young people.
- Work with local small business/ fitness team to provide access to activity and nutrition information.
- Creation of new and local growing spaces to support communities to grow foods, to upskills families, enhance family time and connection.

- Ensure all primary, secondary and ASN schools are provided with quality extra-curricular opportunities in sport and physical activity that are open to all.
- Ensure all young people have the opportunity to compete and perform regardless of what level they are at.
- Create and support a school to community club pathway for sport across North Ayrshire.
- Ensure an effective leadership pathway is developed for P6 through to S6 and beyond to develop transferable skills.
- Ensure we remove any barriers to participation for care experienced young people to take part in sport and physical activity.
- Expand and develop the Health & Wellbeing Service to accommodate children and young people, with a focus on partnership working within the Mind and Be Active programme to establish an early intervention approach that provides supported physical activity opportunities for children and young people who are experiencing poor mental health.

We will work across CPP partners to establish a set of outcome indicators to measure progress on each of the priorities and actions.

Further rationale behind the decision to focus on these priorities can be found in [appendix 2](#).

Children's Services Strategic Partnership

Improving the life chances and opportunities for all children in North Ayrshire cannot be achieved by any one organisation or service. In fact, it requires support and dedication from many partners across the public and third sector.

This is what the Children's Services Strategic Partnership (CSSP) is, a collaboration of local organisations that work together to achieve our vision for local children and young people.

The members of CSSP are:

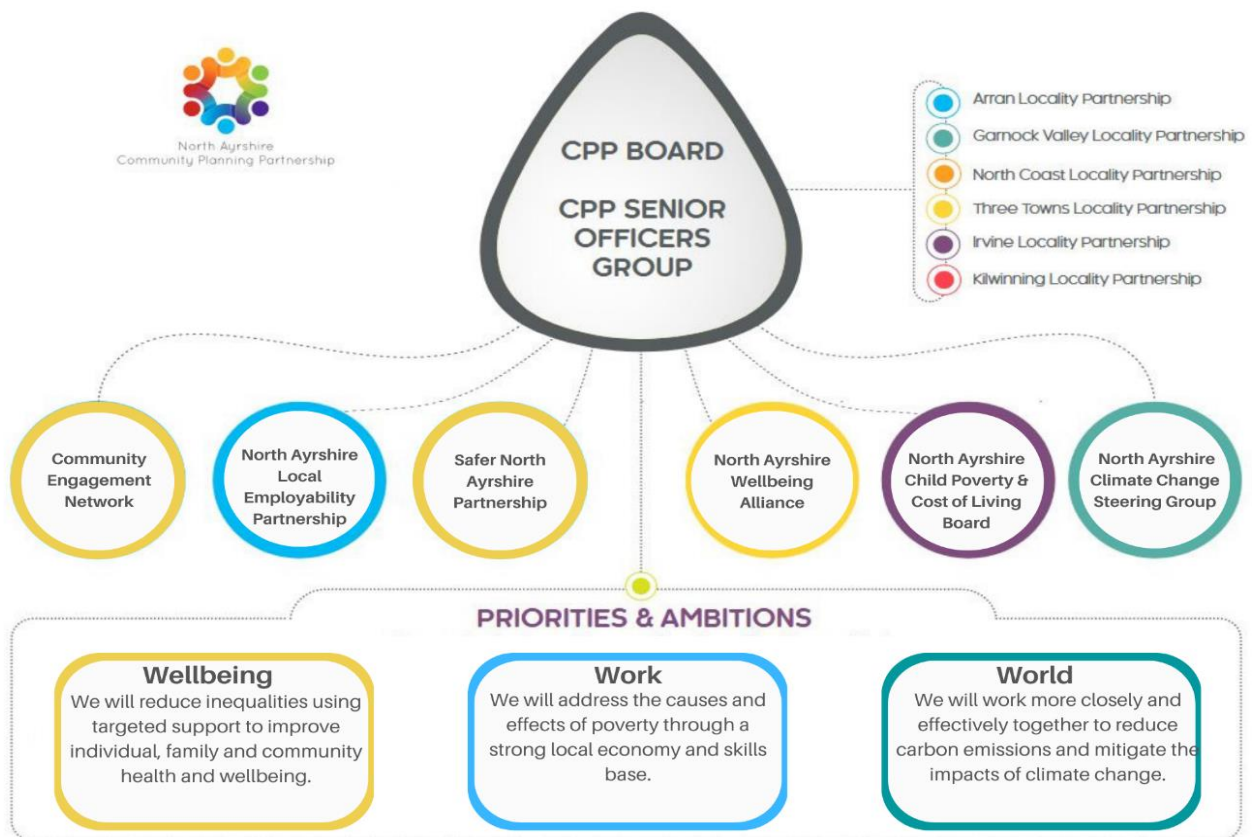
- North Ayrshire Council
- NHS Ayrshire and Arran
- North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership
- North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee
- Police Scotland
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- Scottish Children's Reporter's Administration (SCRA)
- Children's Panel Area Support Team
- Ayrshire College
- The Care Inspectorate
- Voluntary Sector

More information on the CSSP Partners and their vision in relation to improving services for children can be found in the on page 10.

Relationship with North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership

The CSSP is part of the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership (CPP), primarily sitting under the 'Wellbeing' strategic priority of the North Ayrshire Partnership Plan alongside the work of the Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board and Wellbeing Alliance. This CPP has overall responsibility for this Children's Services Plan and will ensure partners work together effectively to help achieve our vision and improve outcomes for children and young people across North Ayrshire.

In addition, the CSSP is supported by a suite of multi-agency sub-groups. These groups ensure collaborative working across our key themes, enhancing our planning arrangements to the benefit of local young people.



(Please see [appendix 3](#) for textual description of Community Planning Structure image)

Local Policy

This section highlights some of the key policies considered in the development of this plan.

Community Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan)

The North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership (CPP) produces the [Community Plan](#) (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan), that sets out a strategic vision and direction for improving the lives of the people living in North Ayrshire. Published in April 2022, the plan covers the eight-year period up to 2030.

The CPP has identified three key areas for focus through the Partnership Plan:

- **WELLBEING** – providing a focus on the health and wellbeing of local people, with an aim of reducing local health inequalities through targeted support to improve individual, family and community health and wellbeing. This area will aim to:
 - Address health inequalities
 - Promote children and young people’s wellbeing, and
 - Enable community wellbeing
- **WORK** – focussing on the local economy and improving the local skills base to help address the root causes of poverty and deprivation. This area will aim to:
 - Better support our young people to develop the skills they need to play a strong role in our local economy
 - Increase local employment
 - Develop volunteering
- **WORLD** – focussing on efforts to address climate change, reduce carbon emissions and improve the local natural environment.
 - Work together to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change
 - Increase active travel, and
 - Increase carbon literacy within our organisations and communities

With a key focus on health and wellbeing and on addressing social, economic and health inequalities, the LOIP 2022-30 has the focus of improving the lives of local families and young people at its core.

Going forward CPP partners will continue to collaborate to identify and deliver on joint actions to achieve our shared goals.

Child Poverty Action Plan

The Child Poverty Action Plan is produced by North Ayrshire Council and NHS Ayrshire and Arran under the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. The development of the Child Poverty Action Plan 2023-26 coincides with the development of this Children’s Services Plan 2023-26 and the Children’s Rights Report, with a joined-up approach taken to their development and delivery.

In North Ayrshire 24.7% of children are living in poverty after housing costs (2020/21, though this figure is caveated due to issues with data collection during the pandemic). Addressing child poverty, is one of the key focus areas of North Ayrshire Council, particularly with the current cost-of-living crisis. The Child Poverty Action Plan sets out the key ambitions and priorities for the CPP partners to help reduce the levels of poverty experienced by children and young people locally and improve the wellbeing of our children and their families. In June 2022, North Ayrshire Council established the

[Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board Chaired by the Leader of North Ayrshire Council](#). The Board ensures a joined-up approach across our Community Planning Partners to addressing child poverty and the wider impacts of the cost of living.

Further details on the Child Poverty Action Plan can be found on the North Ayrshire Council Website.

Children's Rights Report

North Ayrshire Council is a child centred Council, focussed on the wellbeing and life chances of our children and young people. In doing so, the Council champions the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ensuring that all children in North Ayrshire have their fundamental Rights met, protected and advocated for. The Council has a duty under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 to produce a Children's Rights Report every three years which details the activities undertaken to secure and promote children's rights in North Ayrshire.

The current report is being developed in parallel with the Children's Services Plan and Child Poverty Action Plan, as recognising the rights of our children and young people is central to improving their lives. Examples of what has been achieved so far include:

- The appointment of a policy officer to drive forward the UNCRC within the Council and ensure it is recognised throughout our operations.
- Embedding Children's Rights into the Equality Impact Assessment Framework.
- Participating in the Rights Respecting School Programme, with ten schools now achieving this status.
- Developing our [Youth Participation and Citizenship Strategy 2021-25](#) alongside our young people called 'Step Up, Speak Out'. This shows how we are supporting [youth forums and youth participation](#) including our Joint Cabinet where our North Ayrshire Youth Council Executive Committee (our young people aged between 12 and 25 years) meet with the Cabinet of North Ayrshire Council to have their voices heard.
- Providing a strong focus on child protection and support services.

North Ayrshire Council Plan

The Council Plan 2019-24 aim is 'A North Ayrshire that is Fair For All' and has equality at its heart. The mission 'Working together to improve wellbeing, prosperity and equity in North Ayrshire' aligns directly with the priorities within the Children's Services Plan while emphasising the importance of partnership working. The three priorities 'Aspiring Communities', 'Inspiring Place' and 'A Council For The Future' ensure our children and young people experience the best start in life.

Following the Local Government Elections in 2022, a new Council Plan is in development and is expected to be published during the summer of 2023. It is anticipated the new plan will have the wellbeing of our residents, equity and advocacy of rights at its core, so will continue to be in line with the suite of children's plans.

North Ayrshire Education Service Improvement Plan

Almost all children and young people in North Ayrshire will be supported by Education Services throughout their school lives. Our Education Service is ambitious for our local young people. The services aim is to improve educational outcomes for all learners and to the most disadvantage learners in our schools.

In its most recent service improvement plan (2022-23), the service has identified five key priorities to deliver to improve the educational attainment of pupils:

1. Improvement in attainment, particularly 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

Each of these priorities are supported by operational themes and supporting actions.

North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Commissioning Plan 2022-30

North Ayrshire Health and Social Care partnership (HSCP) provides locality-based health and social care services for people throughout their life. As an integrated partnership, the majority of HSCP services are delivered by North Ayrshire Council and NHS Ayrshire and Arran under the governance of the North Ayrshire Integration Joint Board.

North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) published its latest strategic commissioning plan, 'Caring Together (2022-2030)' in April 2022. The plan maintains the same vision for local people that has been in place since the HSCP was first launched in April 2015, that is:

All people who live in North Ayrshire are able to have a safe, healthy and active life

The plan sets out the key priorities for the HSCP to help improve and maintain the health and wellbeing of local people, recognising the impact social and economic inequalities has on long-term health outcome. As a key provider of statutory health and social care services for children and young people, they are prominently featured in the strategic plan.

To help improve the opportunity for positive outcomes for children, young people and their families, the HSCP identified a number of key ambitions to achieve by 2030. These ambitions are aligned to the partnership's strategic priorities. The full suite of ambitions can be found on the HSCP Strategic Plan Caring Together, a sample of those include:

- All families in North Ayrshire provide nurturing and loving support to their children and have fast and effective support to continue doing so when it is needed.
- Fewer of our young people are cared for in a placement outside of North Ayrshire. Through greater local support and resource, more young people who require to be looked after can remain in their own community.
- Adults and young people who provide care and support to family members, or other people in their community, are offered a carers assessment and have access to a range of meaningful support options, including respite provision, affording them a short break from their caring activities, and supporting them to continue in their caring role.
- Children, young people and families who experience, or are at risk of, poor physical and mental health, substance use, or involvement in the justice system are fully supported as soon as possible.
- By delivering 'The Promise', our care system prioritises working closely with families to ensure their experience is as supportive and positive as it can be. The experience and journey of young people in care is greatly improved and informed through meaningful conversations with family and professionals.

HSCP Workforce Plan

In Children, Families and Justice Services, we will seek to build our workforce and processes to ensure delivery of the Promise. This will include further developments in:

- Early help and intervention approaches
- Whole Family Wellbeing
- Co-located, multi-disciplinary team working
- Supporting local families address poverty
- Child protection procedures (Signs of Safety and Safer and Together)
- Trauma informed practice

The HSCP are implementing the Signs of Safety strength and safety organised approach to social work case work that analyses detailed information for a balanced risk assessment. It will provide a practice framework that revolves around balanced risk assessment, risk management and effective safety and care planning.

Signs of Safety integrates professional knowledge with knowledge from families and their wider networks to rigorously explore harm and complicating factors alongside existing strengths and safety.

Partnership working with families to reduce risks and increase safety by building upon the family's strengths, resources and networks to change the everyday lived experience of the child so that we are confident the child is safe. As a consequence of working in a risk sensible approach with families more children will be supported to remain within their family network.



Preparation for implementation commenced in April 2022, with a 2 year intense implementation period concluding in October 2024, fully embedding the approach in every day social work practice for future years.

Resourcing the Plan

To ensure we can work towards achieving our vision and priorities, the CSSP and its partners will require to allocate appropriate financial and service resources.

Financial Resources

In 2021/22, we spent more than £218 million in Education, Child Health and Social Care, on services to improve the lives and outcomes of children and young people living in North Ayrshire. This includes almost £140 million on Primary and Secondary education, over £22 million on pre-primary education, over £13 million on special education, over £5 million on community learning and over £38 million on Children and Families Social Work services. (Source: [Supporting documents - Scottish Local Government Finance Statistics 2021-22 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-documents-2021-22/pages/10.aspx)

Whole Family Wellbeing Fund

The Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (WFWF) is a Scottish Government programme that provides investment to Local Authorities across Scotland to support the development of holistic, whole family support services. The programme has the ambition that by 2030, at least 5% of community-based health and social care service budgets should be focused on preventative, whole family measures.

For the 2023/24 service year, an allocation of £959,000 has been confirmed.

Local community groups and third and independent sector organisations can apply for funding to deliver support services to families in North Ayrshire. To improve this application process, a scrutiny panel is being established that will provide robust oversight of the distribution of the funds locally.

To date the funding has supported the many approaches including:

- Scaling up our Family Centred Wellbeing Service
- Providing therapeutic counselling support for care experienced and vulnerable young people
- Scaling up support to families in the early years
- Recruiting a Dad's Support Worker to support local Dads as they care for their children
- Investing in whole system supports for children and young people with neuro-developmental conditions

Support Services and Committees

Throughcare and Aftercare Services

The Throughcare and Aftercare teams support young people transitioning from being accommodated by the Local Authority away from home onto living independently within the community or Supported Care. The team offer wide ranging supports in line with the identified needs of the Young Person. This may include support to access college or work, build and promote healthy relationships with friends and family, support access to additional funding such as Benefits and Care Leavers payments; promote engagement with services such as Legal, Housing and Health and finally provide advice, guidance and emotional support to the young person in times of worry or problems. The team pride themselves in being both creative and flexible within their approach so as Young People can achieve their journey to successful independent living.

Named Person Service Evaluation Workstream

Part 4 of the Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, which was revoked in September 2019, required local authorities and the relevant health board, to put in place arrangements for the provision of a 'Named Person' for each young person from birth to 8. The legislation indicated each Named Person would act as a single point of contact for each child with responsibility for providing advice, information and support where required.

While it is no longer a statutory requirement to provide a Named Person for each young person, GIRFEC policy continues to describe the benefits of a service supporting Named Persons, Lead Professionals and wider integrated, multi-agency working, in order to meet the needs of all children, young people and their families through early intervention and preventative action. North Ayrshire's Named Person Service adopts an approach that complements North Ayrshire's Child Protection processes and procedures to safeguard vulnerable children by supporting families through early intervention and preventative non statutory measures.

A review of the Named Person Service function was concluded in 2022, and included the views of stakeholders from across health, social care and education. Stakeholder feedback was very positive with the majority of NPS users rating the efficiency, effectiveness, speed and reliability of the service as excellent. Specifically, the Named Person Service for children under the age of 5, and their families, is highly regarded by a range of staff working within early years. The usage data and the processes which involve the NPS, show the integral role the service plays in the early intervention and preventative approach advocated by North Ayrshire.

Community Mental Health & Wellbeing Framework Workstream

The Children and Young People's Community Mental Health Supports and Services Framework was published in February 2021, the framework provides a set of principles for community- based services to support children and young people's mental health, wellbeing, and distress. Additional funding was provided to local authorities to implement the framework and is used to strengthen existing integrated working between Services and partners to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing and enhancing existing supports as well as identifying the need for additional or new supports.

New supports in North Ayrshire include the Family Centred Wellbeing Support Service, Welfare Rights Officer in our Secondary Establishments, and the appointment of 2 MHWB Project Delivery Officers within our Connected Communities Team. We have continued to collaborate with Third Sector Partners to deliver mental wellbeing support. Communication of supports and services available is a priority and details can be found.

During 2022 more than 4,000 children and young people across North Ayrshire accessed services to either promote positive mental wellbeing or to receive targeted support.

Our Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework Workstream will provide formalised governance arrangements for the coordination of our Community Mental Health Framework allocation and to build upon existing practice to embed early intervention and preventative supports as well as promote positive mental health and wellbeing.

Child Protection Committee

The North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee (NACPC) is a locally based inter-agency strategic partnership which leads on child protection policy and practice. The Committee has an Independent Chair and is comprised of senior staff from across key services in North Ayrshire, including both statutory services and the third sector. The North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee adheres to Protecting Children & Young People: Child Protection Committees and Chief Officer's responsibilities. As such the NACPC has a range of day to day business activities to ensure we fulfil our responsibilities. Current priorities include implementation of the updated National Child Protection Guidance (2021), implementation of North Ayrshire's Child Sexual Abuse Strategy and taking forward priority outcomes identified by the CPC within the 2022 – 2025 CPC Business Plan.

Corporate Parenting Steering Group

The Corporate Parenting Steering Group provides strategic leadership for the Corporate Parenting Partnership. This Group receives reports from the Promise Operational Group (PrOG) on the implementation of the Promise and is responsible for overseeing the six Corporate Parenting duties, ensuring close collaboration between Corporate Parents. The Group also ensures that our Corporate Parenting Plan (2023-2026) meets the needs of all our Care Experienced Community, and that all actions are evaluated and reported on.

The Group is chaired by an Elected Member (Deputy Leader of North Ayrshire Council) and is comprised of Senior Managers from across the Community Planning Partnership including local Corporate Parents.

Scottish Attainment Challenge

North Ayrshire Council benefits from Attainment Scotland Funding to reduce the poverty related attainment gap between pupils living in North Ayrshire's most and least deprived areas. Locally, North Ayrshire benefits from Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), Strategic Equity Funding, and Care Experienced Children and Young People funding. To support effective use of funding the Education Service has recently reconfigured programme governance through a new Attainment Scotland Fund Improvement Forum, which acts as a mechanism to encourage collaboration and integrated use of funding to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people. A number of workstreams have been established to review professional learning and leadership development; redesign family learning supports; further integrate whole school nurturing approaches; and promote collaborative use of PEF to maximise impact at school level.

Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board

North Ayrshire Council established a new Tackling Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board in June 2022, which is chaired by the Leader of the Council and supported by NHS Ayrshire and Arran, the North Ayrshire HSCP, the Third Sector Interface and Community Planning Partners. The Board is developing the North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy 2023-26 to maximise learning and guidance from the Scottish Government's National Plan – 'Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026'. With the escalation in cost-of-living concerns this Board now also oversees the Council's response to the current cost-of-living crisis and provides a strategic approach to the themes in relation to child poverty and cost-of-living, which are agreed by the Board and explored in conjunction with Community Planning, third sector partners and residents through a series of innovative mini-enquiries. This demonstrates one of the Board's key strategic priorities, which is to ensure greater

involvement of residents, including children and young people, in service design. As outlined in the Board's of terms of reference, this groups priorities are:

- To provide leadership in the development and delivery of the Tackling Child Poverty Strategy for North Ayrshire.
- To oversee the implementation of the Child Poverty Action Plan to tackle the inequalities affecting the outcomes for children and families, with a clear focus on early intervention and prevention and a whole system approach.
- To monitor the Child Poverty Action Plan, including a performance framework linked to the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan and the Council Plan, on progress in delivering improved outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- To advise on and agree an annual report for Cabinet approval and submission to Scottish Government
- To consult with children, young people and families on the priorities and actions within the plan so that they influence the design and delivery of policies and services.
- To promote effective partnership and whole system working and information sharing between services and organisations.

[Self-Directed Support Learning Review](#)

The Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 was implemented on April 1st, 2014. Self-Directed Support (SDS) is the national approach to social care delivery in Scotland ensuring people have the fundamentals of participation and involvement, collaboration, dignity, control over their support needs and informed choice when making decisions on the support they need to live their life.

During the 2022-23 service year, North Ayrshire HSCP undertook a learning review of the implementation of SDS locally. The review was established to help services, teams and partners share information, engage, challenge operations, and provide collective learning points on key issues relating to the current practice of SDS. It was also to ensure there was local capacity and ability to deliver on the National SDS Standards and relevant legislative frameworks for the provision of assessment and social care support.

The review identified several areas of recommendation, this included improvements around:

- Continuing the Social Work Conversation
- Developing Ethical Care Frameworks
- Clear information, early help and support
- Progressing a community social work model, and
- Improving Transition planning

Evaluating this plan

This Plan provides details of our activities and how this will contribute to the achievement of our priorities and better outcomes for children. Our framework will include a range of performance measures to help us track our progress. All of our Children's Services Strategic Partners are committed to contributing to our success. A smart action plan, aligning service area actions to this plan's key priorities will also be developed. This action plan will form the basis for the on-going performance and review framework.

Our performance will be driven and monitored by the Children's Services Strategic Partnership. An annual performance report on our progress of this Plan will be published by the Partnership and reported through the Community Planning Partnership governance structures, as well as being submitted to the Scottish Government to meet our legal requirements.

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Progress against the previous plan

Priority 1: Young people's rights and views are respected and listened to.

ACTION FOR 2022-23 FROM LAST CSP PLAN	UPDATE
<p>CPP partners, notably Police Scotland and Scottish Fire and Rescue, will continue to build relationships with the Champions Board, Education and other partners and further support activity in relation to care experienced young people to ensure that they are active contributors in Corporate Parenting</p>	<p>CWU officers in North Ayrshire have linked in with the Champions Board and intend on making this a regular scheduled meeting as we are keen to seek further partnership working. CWU are regular attendees at Children's Homes which has had a clear and positive impact on the number of young person's being reported missing. Future engagement will take place at community open days in collaboration with Donna Anderson, the first of which will take place on 02/06/23 in line with the Joint Cabinet action.</p>
<p>We will introduce new models of provision for free period products across schools and communities</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Pupils were consulted on the free period products provision in schools as well as community settings to ensure the model met their needs.</p>
<p>We will review our approach to nurture across our educational establishments.</p>	<p>30 primary schools and 8 secondary schools are benefiting from targeted Nurture support in the 2022-23 academic year. Nurture support is specifically focused on enabling pupil readiness to learn with data indicating this has a strong impact on delivering better outcomes for learners. The data analysis continues to illustrate the importance of nurture in supporting the health and wellbeing of identified pupils. Almost all schools have elected to continue with the NAC approach to nurture for 2023/24. We have piloted a few variant models and are liaising with establishments moving forward. We have undertaken full quality assurance visits and analysis. We have</p>

	<p>trained 56 nurture practitioners in the Lets Introduce Anxiety Management (LIAM) intervention and most have started the intervention with young people. In addition to targeted Nurture, schools without a dedicated Nurture teacher and classroom assistant benefit through the Whole School Nurture framework that has been further developed in the current academic year.</p>
<p>We will raise the awareness of children's rights (UNCRC) across all our partners.</p>	<p>We have employed a Policy Officer who will drive the implementation of UNCRC throughout North Ayrshire</p> <p>We have established a young people's UNCRC group, which is led by North Ayrshire's Young People's Champion.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>We have developed a communications plan, the remit of which is focussed on raising awareness.</p>
<p>Police Scotland are building on the excellent work already carried out by Campus Officers in school by identifying other ways that they can provide mentor support and enhance life skills for school leavers. This will be extended to include young people who have already left school or further education.</p>	<p>Our PSYV coordinator carried out numerous inputs to schools in North Ayrshire with a view to recruiting new volunteers whilst providing positive role modelling and support for youths in addition to that of Campus Officers. North Ayrshire PSYV group currently has 16 youth volunteers and will begin their annual recruitment campaign in partnership with Campus Officers after the summer break with a view to having a further 8 join. The optimum age for recruits is between 13-15 to allow them the best opportunity to complete their induction and deploy to as many events as possible, however candidates are welcome up to and including 17 years.</p>

	The Ayrshire Division Senior Leadership Team have had an initial meeting with MCR Pathways to learn more about mentoring opportunities.
Police Scotland will work with partners over the coming three years to conduct focussed activity with individuals and support them into employment or other positive destinations. They have identified an Inspector to lead on this work and engagement has already begun with partners.	<p>Community Wellbeing Unit (CWU) officers in North Ayrshire work closely with the Eglinton Growers, referring those in the community who have an interest in gardening to them, particularly those who are looking for connection and who may have underlying poor mental health. School leavers are also referred to assist with enhancing their CV and building social skills.</p> <p>Regular referrals are made to CEIS in Bank Street who assist with CV writing, first aid courses and interview preparation. Further engagement is planned for the Kilwinning Campus of the Ayrshire College with a view to opening up opportunities for those in the community who may not have considered further education.</p> <p>CPP partners, notably Police Scotland and Scottish Fire and Rescue, will continue to build relationships with the Champions Board, Education and other partners and further support activity in relation to care experienced young people to ensure that they are active contributors in Corporate Parenting.</p>

Priority 2: Acting early to improve what happens next.

ACTION FOR 2022-23 FROM LAST CSP PLAN	UPDATE
Refresh and strengthen the focus of the school-college partnership and provide enhanced opportunities for achievement, e.g. through the Regional Improvement Collaborative, in the senior phase	<p>Ayrshire College has continued to work with Secondary Schools to develop skills mapping from Senior Phase courses to College Pathways. This has been shared with young people and parents to enhance and inform career choices.</p> <p>Through the school / college partnership forum, a series of engagement opportunities were planned for completion during April-June. For example, all schools have been offered campus tours for groups of S1 & S2 pupils and also Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) 'Vocational Bursts' for various college courses.</p>
Design tailored programmes with partners to provide enhanced support for specific groups of	Working with the Local Employability Partnership, identification and tracking of vulnerable leavers has increased. Schools are

<p>school leavers, including those with identified needs</p>	<p>increasingly using the school management information system (SEEMIS) 16plus tab which helps to inform Skill Development Scotland (SDS) Data Hub. This data is used by SDS and other partners for early intervention and support in advance of anticipated school leaving date.</p> <p>The Employability Team has an identified Ambition Agreement worker to offer individualised support. This feeds into a programmes, partners and referrals process which offers various pathways for vulnerable leavers and supported by partner agencies. For example, Barnardos are employed for targeted and outreach work with young people, including care experienced, facing significant challenges in accessing a positive destination.</p>
<p>Improve the quality and accessibility to services for children and young people who themselves (or whose parent/care givers) are at risk of the harmful effects of alcohol or drug use, by establishing a specialist support team in partnership with the Alcohol and Drug Partnership.</p>	<p>Child & Adolescent Specialist Substance Team (CASST) is a joint funded venture by North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership and the Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP). The service aims to support children and young people aged 5-20 years old who are impacted by substance use. That could be from either the young person's own or a carer's substance use. The aim is to reduce harm/risk, meet needs, improve outcomes. In a bid to contribute to the reversing current trends of chaotic and fatal drugs and alcohol use. Interventions take place across an array of care plans including statutory, court ordered, child protection, kinship, looked after, vulnerable young person, and intensive support services. The service aims to support vulnerable children, young people, and families; many of whom face complex and multiple challenges as result of substance use. This is done by providing evidence-based and tailored interventions to address need. The team provide support and interventions in areas including substance use, parenting through substance use, promoting/improving mental health/wellbeing, diversion strategies/activities, holistic therapies, community links, accessing peer recovery, groups, local assets/resources. In addition to providing support to access. training/employment/education. While promoting pro-social skills and lifestyle choices. More recently the team have been working with</p>

	young female adolescents who are caught up in sexual exploitation and drug use.
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Priority 3: Making things fairer and better.

ACTION FOR 2022-23 FROM LAST CSP PLAN	UPDATE
Develop a three-year Raising Attainment Strategy to improve outcomes for all learners and reduce inequity of outcomes, including a focus on accelerating progress in early primary and early learning centres following the implementation of 1,140 hours of funded childcare for all 3–5-year-olds.	Work continues across the education service to gather views from across early years, primary and secondary schools to inform the raising attainment strategy. Engagement with identified key partners will inform the longer-term strategic development and implementation of a Raising Attainment Strategy in the 2023-24 academic year.
Reprioritise our targeted interventions to reduce the poverty-related attainment gap in North Ayrshire, maximising the coherence and impact of our work.	Following announcement of a significant reduction in local authority Scottish Attainment Challenge funding by £1.1m each year until 2025-26, work has been undertaken to streamline approaches utilised within North Ayrshire to reduce the poverty related attainment gap. This has included a review of the Professional Learning Academy and commencement of work to target Nurture and data literacy support for practitioners in education establishments.
Continue to work collaboratively in partnership across the local authority, South West Education Improvement Collaborative (SWEIC) and national networks to support sharing of highly effective practice that reduces the poverty related attainment gap.	The education service to work collaboratively with a range of partners at a local, regional and national level to reduce the poverty related attainment gap. This year this has included showcasing the work of Nurture at a national conference, leading a range of SWEIC offered leadership programmes, and sharing good practice through a range of professional networks.
Work closely across North Ayrshire services and third sector partners to reduce the cost of the school day and mitigate the impact of child poverty.	The COSD action plan was launched at a COSD conference in June 2021, with educational establishments, families and partners, including CPP and third sector partners and local businesses. A further COSD Conference aimed at children and young people took place on the 30th of May 2022. This year's conference included representation from staff and children across almost all Primary, Secondary and ASN schools, including children from as young as P4 through to S6. The children and young people participated in a full day of activities, led by Education staff and the Youth Services team. Elected Members and Community Planning Partners joined the pupils and staff to allow the

	<p>continued co-design and co-development of a renewed action plan to mitigate the impact of child poverty in North Ayrshire</p> <p>The learner voice of the 174 children attending the conference has been used to inform North Ayrshire schools on the Council's approach to reducing the Cost of the School Day (COSD) action plan 22-23 and support school staff to take on board the voice of children and young people as to how the COSD plan will be implemented throughout North Ayrshire schools. The conference's collaborative approach to putting the learner voice front and centre to decision making and planning. This supports North Ayrshire schools' approach to placing children at the centre of decision-making.</p>
<p>The Ayrshire Community Trust (TACT) will develop a strand of mentoring within the Positive Steps with Partners Project employability project. The project will have volunteer mentors who will support new referrals, supporting them to attend volunteer interviews and placements helping mentees to overcome worries and fears and helping to increase confidence in individual abilities and be more included in their communities.</p>	<p>TACT employ two sessional Project Mentors to work alongside the Positive Steps Team. We have one Project Mentor delivering our Cooking on a Budget Programme, working with 15 individuals. This support comprises of support with budgeting and nutritional advice, as well as teaching basic cooking skills. Positive Steps are keen to continue to develop this role and are looking to implement Mindfulness Sessions in the near future. Our other Project Mentor offers support and advice for our participants at Eglinton Community Garden. They have been supporting 16 different individuals with a range of advice and support around planting their own fruit and vegetables at Eglinton Garden and also at home. The Project Mentor has been a great support for all participants, easy to approach and offers a huge amount of support for all people with their own personal issues.</p>

Priority 4: Supporting Mental Health.

ACTION FOR 2022-23 FROM LAST CSP PLAN	UPDATE
<p>Review the impact of school counselling services and external counselling/ community wellbeing supports and refresh provision, strengthening the relationship between school counselling and other available supports.</p>	<p>Over the past year we have undertaken a number of activities to review both our external and internal counselling supports as well as trying to align these further with wider community wellbeing supports. This has included a short survey to all schools, Education Psychologists, counselling staff and a range of children and young people. We have explored the data we have on the use of our counselling services over the last few years and also aligned this with the data we have on requests for</p>

	<p>assistance for wider wellbeing supports. This review has already resulted in a few actions being taken forward including: an update of our school counselling guidance; the streamlining of the evaluations we currently gather for school counselling and an update of the post counselling questionnaire we use. Our next steps include: an update of our service delivery in line with the feedback from stakeholders; the completion of our school counselling guidance and an exploration of how our school counselling funding can be utilised to support wider awareness of mental health and wellbeing supports which may require the reprioritisation of the funding currently used to support primary counselling.</p>
<p>Assist education establishments to implement the national mental health and wellbeing Whole School Approach, including curricular, professional learning, and parental supports</p>	<p>An audit of establishment improvement plans and analysis of the Health and Wellbeing Survey took place. In addition, work is underway to support establishments who have highlighted the whole school approach to support mental health as a priority. One Primary school cluster (10 schools) have been supported to utilise the Whole School Approach MHWB self-evaluation tool against the eight principles. A whole staff session around the approach was delivered to 82 participants with positive feedback. Staff highlighted the principles they found particularly useful to improve practice. Professional Learning was identified as a key priority and we have developed a professional learning programme to meet the needs of all education staff. Staff have been encouraged to engage with the Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Professional Learning resource developed by the Scottish Government Mental Health in Schools working group. This academic year, an additional 118 members of staff across the authority have completed the training with senior leaders supported to develop an action plan and evaluation will take place during term 4 of the 2022-23 academic year.</p>
<p>Promote staff mental health and wellbeing in a range of ways, including through the development of a programme of supported reflective practice sessions.</p>	<p>Reflective SW Supervision 4 weekly</p> <p>Whole Family Wellbeing Funding has provided vicarious trauma counselling sessions to a small number of staff within children's services. This will be expanded in 2023/24 to include increased availability of sessions as well as</p>

	<p>training for children' services' staff on vicarious trauma.</p> <p>PRI sessions via CPC</p> <p>Staff wellbeing funds for Health and wellbeing activities as a team e.g. yoga sessions.</p> <p>An Education Senior Leaders collaborative day took place in September 2022, attended by representatives from all establishments. Presentations were delivered on the psychological theories underpinning staff wellbeing and staff contributed their thoughts on concerns and proposed support. We listened to staff and identified key themes, these included concerns around working practices that impact on wellbeing and that staff valued being listened to. We were able to share current measures in place to support staff, for example the Head Teacher's Reference group which listens to and responds to education staff views on working practices. We signposted staff to e-learning modules we have developed around staff wellbeing and shared the spotlight on our research around what works to support Staff Wellbeing. It was clear from this event, that staff welcome and find peer support valuable and we have continued the conversation around wellbeing with a number of establishments. As we move into next session we plan to build on this work and develop a model/framework of support which focusses on validation, identifying strengths and empowerment, we aim to ensure this model is co-created with staff.</p>
Review approaches to promoting positive relationships and whole school nurture and continue to adapt our approaches based on an analysis of need.	<p>Feedback has been gathered from Head Teachers, children and young people, educational psychologists, and wider education staff to help determine where the main strengths and needs lie with regard to the whole school nurturing approach. This feedback is being used to make improvements in the education service's Promoting Positive Relationships (PPR) approach. In addition, the education service has continued to develop, implement, and evaluate its 'Building on Positive Relationships' approach, which is a more targeted approach to whole school PPR.</p>

	<p>Support has now been provided to education practitioners, including area inclusion workers, in primary and secondary schools. Two parents' groups have also been run and evaluated using this approach with positive results. A service improvement group has been used this year to progress whole school nurture work and a collaborative session with this group was run in early May 2023 to evaluate progress to date and develop future plans.</p>
<p>We will continue to prioritise mental health and wellbeing in schools and communities.</p>	<p>We have supported education establishments to further develop their Health and Wellbeing curriculum and have shared evidence based curricular resources.</p> <p>We have continued to focus on the importance of respectful relationships and have now fully implemented the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme across all our Secondary Schools, an MVP staff network meets regularly and shares good practice; senior pupils have led PSE lessons to S1 and S2, evaluations are positive with younger pupils responding well to the input.</p> <p>The See Me See Change programme goes from strength to strength, with over 200 pupils trained by See Me in September 2022, to develop their understanding of mental health, stigma and discrimination and were supported to create an action plan to implement learning in their own schools. Examples of their progress includes, delivering learning to junior pupils, becoming mental health champions and ambassadors, holding bake sales, creating posters to raise awareness and influence change. To ensure ongoing sustainability 23 members of staff have been trained as See Me trainers and a further 200 senior pupils will be trained in June 2023.</p> <p>Our MHWB Project Delivery Officers (PDO) funded through the Children and Young People's Community Mental Health Supports and Services Grant Funding (CYP CMHWP) have continued to build on their successful community-based work. This year has seen them develop a strong partnership with Ayrshire College, as we work to reach 16–24-year-olds. They have delivered the Your Resilience programme to 60 college students with 37 completing the full course.</p>

	<p>In partnership with the Family Learning Team, they have developed a programme which promotes positive mental health and wellbeing aimed at primary aged children and their families "Take Time Families". This was piloted in 2 of our Primary Schools and in partnership with locality officers from the Community Learning and Development Team has since been rolled out to libraries.</p> <p>The Bee-You Ambassadors have been supported by the MHWB PDOs, to deliver Resilience Programmes both in the community and in a number of Primary Schools where pupils have had the opportunity to train as Mini Mental Health Ambassadors, they are encouraged to role model positive wellbeing.</p> <p>During the summer months, the MHWB PDOs assisted and supported the summer food programme, delivering a Wellbeing that visited centres and halls across North Ayrshire.</p> <p>The aim of the Wellbeing Roadshow was to deliver interventions and activities that promote wellbeing methods, tips and strategies that could be used when the young people most needed it. Building resilience in these young people and giving them the skills to better their own mental health and wellbeing. In total the PDOs have engaged with over 2000 children and young people with almost all reporting they had improved MHWB.</p> <p>Engaging with at-risk groups remains a priority and the team have continued to deliver wellbeing sessions and run groups with New Scots, Care Experienced, LGBTQI. This reporting period they have also developed sessions to support Young Carers.</p> <p>Through the CYP CMHWP grant funded projects we have engaged with and supported an increasing number of children, young people, and families. We have continued to collaborate with multi-agency partners, third sector organisations and children, young people, and families to co-construct supports and services.</p> <p>Communication remains a priority and our Community MHWP Supports blog (NA community WB supports and services (glowscotland.org.uk)) has had 8506 webpage views with our bespoke MHWP education staff blog having 14725.</p>
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Priority 5: Helping children and young people to be active and healthy.

ACTION FOR 2022-23 FROM LAST CSP PLAN	UPDATE
<p>Recruit additional dental health support workers to support vulnerable families across NHS Ayrshire and Arran focusing on minority ethnic and our most deprived communities</p>	<p>Following additional funding from the Scottish Government, NHS Ayrshire and Arran was able to recruit three WTE additional DSW workers to support children across the Health Board area. There had been natural turnover in the team leading to additional vacancies and therefore 8 individuals were offered posts. All have either completed or are in the process of completing their NES accredited training and will be working across the Health Board to support families as part of the Childsmile programme.</p>
<p>As the cost-of-living increases, we are working to ensure that the whole family can be active for one affordable price. Our family membership will launch later in the year and provide a tailored package of opportunities which suits each individual family's circumstances</p>	<p>"We've been working with further partners to remove/reduce financial barriers to participation. The introduction of our Inspire children's membership has been a product which provides a range of sport, arts/drama and social opportunities as well as facilities. This offers best value for and the easiest way to access more.</p> <p>We continue to support the school meals programmes during the summer break with free activity provision.</p> <p>We are proud to report that our Inspire membership numbers have continued to grow, reaching 334 members in total. Not only have we attracted more members, we have also developed strong relationships with partners who will be referring young people for memberships. These include Justice Services, Phoenix Futures and the Childhood Obesity and Health Weight Group.</p> <p>Our North Ayrshire Community Sport Hub officers are finalising plans for a clothing and equipment recycling programme. It will focus on redistributing them throughout North Ayrshire in order to reduce participation-related obstacles. The programme will be promoted amongst partners and clubs will be encouraged to get their members involved in the scheme.</p>

	Donors will be able to use bins at KA Leisure venues to drop off their clothing and equipment.
We are working closely with Active Schools to develop a community programme on Arran. The recruitment of key delivery staff will allow us to ensure that residents have opportunities to stay active.	<p>We have secured a full-time person for the post of Active Schools Co-ordinator who is from the Island. Their key focus has been to provide more and higher quality opportunities to take part in sport and physical activity before school, during lunchtime and after school, and to develop effective pathways between schools and sports clubs in the local community. The post holder has established a comprehensive extra-curricular programme of activities across all primary and secondary schools. The opportunities are led by North Ayrshire Sports Academy pupils, Clubs, school staff and volunteers. The Secondary school has on average 21 different opportunities each school term on offer. The primary schools depending on size have been 2-5 opportunities weekly on offer to them.</p> <p>Over and above, the island's Multi Sports Club that runs weekly at Arran High school for P6's and P7's bolsters around 50-60 participants weekly. This club is supported by Stagecoach to allow any young person who would like to attend can and doesn't have transport as a barrier.</p>

Appendix 2a – Agreeing Our Priorities

1. The rights of children and young people are promoted and protected

We Asked: How can we better ensure that children and young people's rights and views are respected and considered in North Ayrshire?

"Don't just listen actually do" Going forward with the new plan our children and young people thought time should be given to reviewing if their voices resulted in tangible actions 'What is done that proves young people were listened to'.

Children and Young people voiced they want to be listened to on an individual and collective basis and gave good examples. The young people we heard from preferred that they were part of small groups where more outcomes could be achieved and they themselves needed a forum where they can ask challenging questions to prompt change.

We will take the learning from our pilot activity around 'One Good Adult' and apply across all our services.

Moving forward they said, 'Look into having a committee of pupils from all the secondary academies across North Ayrshire which would allow pupils to give an input into the plan', and indeed the review of the plan.

We are reviewing our participation and engagement strategy to ensure voices are heard and acted upon if appropriate.

Awareness raising activities designed by children and young people that help in understanding rights and can be communicated to all children, young people and their families could be progressed.

It was stated by Third Sector colleagues that an annual survey of all children, young people and their families could be sent to address changing priorities and throughout the lifetime of the plan.

2. Acting early to improve what happens next.

We asked: How can we act sooner to improve the lives of our children, young people and their families in North Ayrshire?

Our children and young people tended to focus on their education setting when considering this priority with a greater focus on life skills and wellbeing through the Personal and Social education curriculum.

We will continue to review our Personal and Social Education curriculum, ensuring that a broad range of subjects are addressed.

They indicated that one of the keys for schools is to identify issues early and have the structures in place to respond with either personally structured pathways and/or clear support structures to address common themes, e.g school attendance, sexual health, exclusions.

Early intervention – 'everyone in the community should be offered this when it's needed not just when in crisis.'

Third sector colleagues mentioned that many families with children who have additional support needs struggle during the school breaks as the same level of support isn't always available when schools are open.

Stigma – Asking for help can often be stigmatizing and a message to say, ‘we all struggle at times and that it’s ok to seek help!’ needs to be communicated to all parents, children, carers, young people etc.

3. Making things fairer.

We asked: **How can we make things fairer for our children and young people in North Ayrshire?**

Young people were acutely aware of the impact of poverty and the cost-of-living crisis and expressed their wish for a greater choice over what to spend their money during the school day.

A reduction in the price of school trips, school uniforms, free school bags, meals, sports equipment and clothing were all called for as well as more access to food and toiletries, and swimming lessons.

We are embedding knowledge and understanding of Child Poverty in the curriculum and focusing on learning about managing money and budgeting, help available for families and the cost-of-living crisis and its impact

There was also a call for family learning activities to be available out with school hours so the whole family could benefit and would allow support to be given to the people who may need it.

We will review how family support is delivered out with school hours.

The importance of taking a ‘Youth work’ approach to education, with a greater focus on those who need the most support including those with additional support needs.

We will explore youth work approaches within mainstream and additional support needs establishments.

‘Thinking of aspirations, how to build them for parents to filter down to C&YP. Can’t just work in schools to close the poverty gap – got to reach outside the school gates.’

Third sector colleagues mentioned the positive relationship they have with partners that is built on trust. To take community asset-based approaches forward commissioning will need be flexible enough to cater for collaborative workstreams.

4. Promoting good mental health and wellbeing.

We asked: **How can we further improve the mental health and wellbeing of our children and young people in North Ayrshire?**

This priority gained the most discussion and interest amongst our children, young people and third sector comments and covered a wide range of areas pertaining to mental health and wellbeing.

There was an overwhelming call for sports to be central to activity around this area for all those who wish to participate. Calls for more time outdoors, more sports clubs, access to better equipment and more funding for sport were all mentioned.

There was also a call for more ‘clubs’ in schools and in the community to meet the needs of those who had a particular interest in either a particular area or just spending time with their peers.

We will review our Open Space Strategy, Physical activity strategy and our Active Communities strategy to ensure sports and other outdoor activities are meeting the needs of our children, young people, and their families.

There was also no shortage of discussion on how emotional and mental health support could be delivered, including enhancing peer support, quicker access to school counsellors, shorter CAHMS waiting times and more awareness raising and advice in times of need.

We will continue to explore ways to support mental and emotional health within our schools and communities.

5. Inspiring children and young people to be active.

We asked: How can we better inspire children and young people to be active?

Some of this discussion replaced other views expressed especially surrounding mental health and wellbeing. Sports, leisure, accessibility to resources and activities were all mentioned.

There was an acknowledgement that activities were accessible and beneficial, 'Continue to offer opportunities through groups like active schools who offer young people to become positive role models for young children'. There was also a call though to expand the range of opportunities, 'Expand on opportunities outside of Active Schools to allow those from a non-sporting background to get involved in other activities.'

We will explore, with Active schools, KA Leisure and Connected Communities, the scope for providing additional activities, not just for individuals but for family groups.

We were told that this should include fun days, concerts, dedicated areas for different skill and confidence levels, gender separated activities if appropriate and most of all free.

Volunteering was also mentioned as a way to engage with our children and young people, and we should be actively promoting these opportunities in our schools and communities.

Appendix 2b – Aligning our priorities to GIRFEC

Using the principles of GIRFEC and wellbeing approach was identified that identified eight indicators of wellbeing that should be considered when working with children, young people and their families. These eight SHANARRI indicators are:

SAFE – HEALTHY – ACHIEVEING – NURTURED – ACTIVE – RESPECTED – RESPONSIBLE – INCLUDED

How they align to our Children's Services Plan Priorities are as follows.

CSP Priority	SHANARRI Indicator
The rights of children and young people are promoted and protected	Respected Nurtured
Acting early to improve what happens next	Safe Nurtured Included
Making things fairer	Healthy Respected Included
Promoting good mental health and wellbeing	Healthy Nurtured Safe Responsible
Inspiring children and young people to be active	Active Included Responsible

Appendix 3 – CPP Structure Description

Provides a description of the CPP Structure image publish on page 9:

Image shows the following structures:

1. Community Planning Board as the primary overarching body (with direct links to Community Justice Ayrshire).
2. Feeding into the Community Planning Board is the CPP Senior Officers Group.
3. Feeding into the CPP Senior Officers Group is the following boards:
 - Children’s Services Strategic Partnership
 - Safer North Ayrshire Partnership
 - Economic Development and Regeneration Board
 - Community Engagement Network
 - Health and Social Care Partnership
4. Feeding into each of those structures are the six CPP Locality Partnership.

NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

13th June 2023

Cabinet

Title: Corporate Parenting Plan and The Promise 3 Years On

Purpose: To update Cabinet on the ongoing work within North Ayrshire to develop the Corporate Parenting Plan and to deliver “The Promise” to our Children and Young People.

Recommendation:

1. Note the progress in North Ayrshire to lay the foundations in Phase 1 of The Promise delivery plan which will then enable us to deliver on the ambitions 10 year change plan to 2030.
2. Note North Ayrshire’s The Promise: Three Years on Progress Report (2020-2023), our achievements to date and next steps.
3. Note North Ayrshire’s first Promise Conference report and key actions to be progressed.
4. Note the Corporate Parenting Plan 2023-26 co-designed by Care Experienced Young People

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 North Ayrshire has welcomed the findings of the Independent Care review and subsequent publication of the “The Promise” and the call to action that lies within. We are committed to improving outcomes for children, young people and families in our North Ayrshire communities and recognise that, whilst progress has been made in the first three years, there are many areas we will continue to develop and improve over the next 7 years of this 10 year ambitious change plan.
- 1.2 Substantial work has been undertaken to lay the foundations to deliver on The Promise. The Promise: Three Years On Summary Report (2020-2023), included as Appendix 1, provides an update on the progress that has been made both locally and nationally and the areas of focus between now and March 2024 and beyond. The calls for action in The Promise are significant and involve whole system and culture change with an agreed timeframe of no later than 2030.
- 1.3 The progress report sets out how the foundations have been laid in North Ayrshire for the delivery of The Promise including governance and oversight arrangements,

engagement activities across services with young people and the workforce, capacity and resources to support engagement and practice change.

1.4 Key achievements and progress in North Ayrshire are measured against the five priority areas of:

- A Good Childhood
- Whole Family Support
- Supporting the Workforce
- Planning
- Building Capacity

1.5 The funding available to realise the full ambitions of The Promise is unclear at this stage. To date funding has been allocated via the Children's Services Planning Partnership through the Whole Family Wellbeing Funding (WFWF). North Ayrshire's allocation is £959k, which is multi-year funding for the lifetime of the parliament. Whilst this funding is welcome, there remains a risk that the scale and pace of change locally could be constrained by resources being made available to deliver, for example, the transfer of resources to early intervention services and approaches rather than crisis intervention.

1.6 Every three years the Scottish Government requires a report on our activities surrounding Corporate Parenting and based on our Corporate Parenting Plan. Our Corporate Parenting Plan (2023-2026) has been co-designed by Care Experienced Young People and addresses their priorities and commitments we have made to them. All the priorities and actions lead to the fulfilment of the Promise.

2. Background

2.1 The Scottish Government announced in 2016 that an independent, root and branch review of Scotland's care system would be undertaken, following extensive lobbying from care experienced people and advocacy organisations. Commencing in 2017, the review examined the underpinning legislation, practices, culture and ethos of the care system. The Care Review concluded at the end of March 2020 with the publication of "The Promise".

2.2 The National Independent Care Review heard that Scotland needed to change how it cares for children, young people and their families and concluded that the care system required a radical overhaul. "[The Promise](#)" was subsequently developed; consisting of 80 changes to support the whole system redesign required and narrating a vision for Scotland. Built on five foundations of Voice, Family, Care, People and Scaffolding, it made a promise that all children in Scotland will grow up loved, safe and respected. The calls for action in The Promise are significant and involve whole system change with an agreed timeframe of no later than by 2030.

2.3 The Promise is a large-scale, complex, 10-year change programme with multiple objectives and interlinked activities across multiple partners. As we know, building for the future takes time. To maximise impact and ensure sustainability of approach, a firm foundation needed to be built to give assurance of governance and accountability; to allow all partners to be clear of their own, and collective, roles and responsibilities which will enable a solid platform to build all future developments.

2.4 The timeline below provides a high-level illustration of the implementation of the plan by 2030 and the expectations at each phase of delivery:

Years Two to Four: Bedding Down (April 2021 to March 2024)

- Early intervention and prevention will become standard with obsolescence of crisis services commenced.
- The necessary legislative reform will be underway to make sure The Rules are enabling.
- A practice and culture change programme will be embedded.

Years Five to Seven: Consolidation (April 2024–March 2027)

- A midpoint review of The Plan will be carried out to ensure pace and performance is on track.
- The Promise will be being realised and the impact felt by children and families.

Years Eight to Ten: Continuous improvement (April 2027–March 2030)

- All targets will be achieved.
- The majority of crisis services will have become obsolete.
- The Promise will be delivered across Voice, Family, Care, People and Scaffolding.
- The independent oversight body will cease to exist, giving way to a new standard of care.

2.5 The National Promise Team has published a [National Plan for 2021-2024](#) and the Promise '[Change One Programme](#)' highlighting the expectations around what should be accomplished by 2024 which is illustrated below:



- 2.6 Building this foundation and the subsequent scaffolding around the change programme has been the major focus for North Ayrshire in the last three years. It must be recognised that the first 16 months of implementing Phase 1 of The Promise actions coincided with the global Covid pandemic, therefore opportunities to progress change during this time were limited. That being said, North Ayrshire had a good foundation on which to build given our multi-agency commitment to Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) over a number of years. To make sure we 'get it right' for North Ayrshire's care experienced community, we need to be clear of the linkages between different parts of the system, the intended and unintended impact of introducing new ways of working, and making sure the child, young person and their families are central to this.
- 2.7 The Promise sets out a clear commitment for all corporate parents to have an enhanced understanding of the experiences of those who have spent time in care and to drive forward the findings and recommendations. Moreover, delivery of The Promise sits alongside the commitment to incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), North Ayrshire's Child Poverty Strategy, the Children Services Plan and work in relation to children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. Delivery and progress with all these plans require multi-agency working across a number of partners and there are further reports presented to the Council which contribute to the delivery of the Council's commitment to The Promise, for example the annual report presented to Cabinet in relation to Educational Attainment for care experienced children and the Child Poverty Action Plan.
- 2.8 Every three years the Scottish Government requires a report on our activities surrounding Corporate Parenting and based on our Corporate Parenting Plan. The Scottish Government does not receive the Corporate Parenting Plan and it is used to guide our work locally.

Our Corporate Parenting Plan (2023-2026), included as Appendix 2, has been co-designed by Care Experienced Young People and addresses their priorities and commitments we have made to them. All the priorities and actions lead to the fulfilment of the Promise. The actions associated with the plan are highlighted in The Promise Three Year On report under Voice, Family, Care, People and Scaffolding.

3. Proposals

The Promise: Three Years on Report Impact and Highlights

- 3.1 The Promise – Three Years On Summary Report 2020-23, included as Appendix 1, provides Cabinet with an update on specific pieces of work completed and planned to further take forward the Promise as set out by the 5 priority areas. Services are proud of the work taken forward, despite the challenges faced, in the last three years. Key highlights include:
- There has been a 15% decrease in the number of Looked After and Accommodated children and young people in North Ayrshire across all care settings.
 - Health and Social Care are implementing the Signs of Safety approach, taking a rights-based approach to fully align with the principles and shift in culture and practice required to deliver on the ambitions of The Promise. 'Signs of Safety' being

a relationship-based model working within the context of child welfare and protection. The approach develops a shared and explicit understanding between professionals and families of where the risk from harm lies, in what set of circumstances it may arise and how these risks will be mitigated through effective safety planning.

- There has been a significant increase in the number of young people requesting Continuing Care and we have a significant increase in the number of care experienced young people in college, university and training/employment and sustaining these places.
- We have extended our Family Wellbeing Service to compliment the work already in place from the Rosemount Project. This has had a positive impact on the numbers of children and young people being received into care.
- A number of sporting support, engagement and mentoring events have removed any barriers to care experienced young people accessing sport and physical activity.
- We have employed a 'Dad's Worker' to improve the visibility and voice of dads in our early year's service.
- A Welfare Rights Officer has been appointed to work with families to deliver welfare rights services and signpost to other support services in 7 of North Ayrshire Council's Secondary Schools, more than £468k has been secured for families in the past year.
- Education have employed a Home Tutor to provide one to one tuition for care experienced young people.
- A care experienced housing officer is in place to be a single point of contact for Care Experienced Young People, improving the housing service and minimising their need to repeat their story to multiple people.
- Planning is well underway for our first care experienced Joint Cabinet in June.
- Health and Social Care have developed and implemented their 'Keeping Sisters and Brothers Together' policy (a key focus of the Promise). 73% of Sibling Groups are together in the same living environment.
- There has been a 10.7% increase in young people in kinship care placements which firmly aligns with our 'family first' approach.
- A Communications Plan continues to ensure key messages and progress related to The Promise are shared across wide-ranging partners. Over 150 workshops and presentations have already been delivered by the Corporate Parenting Team to over 100 strategic and practice groups within the Community Planning Partnership, Promise Champions, third sector partners and individual agencies.

3.2 Chapter 5 in the Promise Report outlines proposed actions for 2023-2026, highlighting those which we specifically want to achieve during 2023 and those which are for future years. The actions and outcomes are set against the National Call to Action and the Voices of our Young People and have also been informed by the feedback from the Annual Promise Conference.

Annual Promise Conference

3.3 In November 2022 we held our first Annual Promise Conference with Care Experienced Young People, Senior Leaders from across the Community Planning Partnership, Government officials including the Minister for Children and Young People and the

CEO's of the Promise Scotland and Children's First. This was the first conference of this kind in Scotland and the voices of the Care Experienced community were heard and actions from the conference will support the development of our future plans.

- 3.4 Of the 130 delegates 23 were carers and care experienced young people. The conference focused on relationships, voice and the UNCRC, and family support. The full report from the Conference, which can be accessed in the Promise 3 Years On report, captures the views of our Care Experienced young people, in addition there were over 300 comments from Senior Leaders that on the whole chimed with the views of our Young People.
- 3.5 The feedback from the conference highlighted important suggestions from our delegates, including:
- Relationships – Sustainable relationships are critical to wellbeing, and this should be encouraged by providing time, safe spaces, and workers with the attributes they highlighted. Relationships should be sustained even if a worker moves and through transitions, whether at school, living arrangements, or to adult services.
 - Voice and the UNCRC – Children, Young People and families' voices are important in their individual journeys and collectively to effect change. The delegates called for young people's forums and groups to plan and comment on new policy and practice changes. They want more awareness around the UNCRC and to tackle stigma for the care experienced community.
 - Family Support – Delivered at an earlier stage and is community based so that relationships can be strengthened. Services should do be more open to sharing resources and responsibilities, with collaboration at an earlier stage.
- 3.6 In May 2023 we had our first Practitioners Promise Conference with front line staff from across the Community Planning Partnership.

Governance

- 3.7 Our Corporate Parenting Steering Group and Promise Operational Group (PrOG) continue to ensure consistency and involvement across partners at a strategic and operational level. These forums include all key strategic partners, frontline staff and care experienced individuals and have met regularly throughout the last three years. The Corporate Parenting Steering Group meets once every three months and is attended by Senior Managers.
- 3.8 The PrOG meets every six weeks and is attended by front line managers, front line staff and six care experienced young people; one of whom co-chairs the meetings. It has four sub-groups and we continue to progress work around:
- Language and Communications
 - Alternative Care
 - Trauma Informed Practice, and
 - Data and Discovery Mapping

Each of these sub-groups have agreed their own priorities.

- 3.9 To ensure we listen and engage our workforce, a Promise Champion's Group has been established. They are linked together by our SharePoint site and through a number of face to face activities. Each Team and service area has been asked to nominate a Champion from their team to join this support and consultation network. At present we have 25 Promise Champions across wide-ranging partners.

Summary

- 3.10 There has been positive progress made in relation delivering Phase 1 of The Promise over the past three years. The foundations have been laid for progressing the change required to 2030 which will radically redesign the whole care system. Our data, both qualitative and quantitative, shows we are making a positive impact and we will continue to drive changes in line with what our needs are at a local level and the 10 year change plan. Local activity has focused on putting strong foundations in place regarding our partnership approaches, hosting the first of our annual conferences and securing multi-agency and multi-disciplinary commitment to key actions and outcomes. A number of service and practice developments are underway and links have been made with other major projects and programmes which are related to care experienced children and young people both locally and nationally.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

- 4.1 The report details specific funding received to date. Further financial implications are likely and expected as services undergo various stages of re-design to meet our commitment to The Promise. Financial implications will be identified at the earliest stage in planning and development processes as our work towards achieving The Promise actions are progressed. There is a significant risk of realising the full ambitions of The Promise if the system is not sufficiently resourced or funded to respond and change.

Human Resources

- 4.2 There will be an impact on staff as we reframe how some of our services support care experienced children and young people, for example changes required to professional practice. The specifics of this will be clarified as more detailed plans emerge.

Legal

- 4.3 Unknown at this time however it is likely that legislation will follow as The Promise contains the commitment to legislative reform.

Equality/Socio-economic

- 4.4 The vision of The Promise seeks to address the inequality of outcome experienced by our children and young people who have been or are in the care system. If the ambitions of The Promise are realised, not only will there be improved outcomes but also a reduction, and ideally, an elimination of the inequity that exists between care experienced children and young people and children and young people with no experience of care.

Environmental and Sustainability

4.5 None.

Key Priorities

4.6 Implementation of The Promise aligns to the following priorities:

- North Ayrshire's vision that Children and young people experience the best start in life.
- North Ayrshire's residents and communities enjoy good life-long health and wellbeing ensuring our communities are inclusive for all.
- Community Planning Partnership strategic vision of: Working together to improve well-being, prosperity and equity in North Ayrshire, through Aspiring Communities and Inspiring Place.
- Implementation of The Promise is a key ambition of the HSCP Tackling Inequalities Strategic Commissioning Plan 2022-2030: Caring Together.
- The Promise features heavily as part of North Ayrshire's work to tackle poverty.
- The Promise is a key aspect of the work of NHS Ayrshire and Arran's Corporate Parenting Steering Group, Corporate Parenting Taskforce, Infant Children and Young People's Board and Poverty Taskforce.

Community Wealth Building

4.7 None.

5. Consultation

5.1 As evidenced within this paper and throughout North Ayrshire's The Promise - Three Years On report, ensuring the voices of care experienced children, young people and their families is integral to the delivery of The Promise in North Ayrshire. We have described many examples of where young people have been at the heart of decision making, including through the governance arrangements locally, and also in service developments such as recruitment processes. This will continue and be an integral part of delivery of North Ayrshire's commitment to The Promise. The delivery of The Promise does not sit in isolation and also cannot be delivered by North Ayrshire Council alone, delivery and progress with plans requires multi-agency working across a number of partners, who have been involved in taking forward the work and progress to date.

Caroline Cameron
Director HSCP

For further information please contact **Elizabeth Stewart, Interim Head of Service, Children, Families and Justice**, on **01294 317727**.

Background Papers

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Appendices

1. North Ayrshire's The Promise Three Years on Report (2020-2023)
2. Corporate Parenting Plan 2023-2026

North Ayrshire

The Promise – Three Years On

Summary Report on Progress 2020-2023



CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Three years ago, the National Independent Care Review heard that Scotland needed to change how it cares for children, young people, and their families, and concluded that the care system required a radical overhaul:

“The Promise” was subsequently developed consisting of 80 changes to support a whole system redesign. Since then, the National Promise Team have published a National Plan for 2021-2024 and the Promise ‘Change One Programme’, highlighting their expectations around what should be accomplished by 2024.

North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership (NA CPP) has welcomed The Promise. We are committed to improving outcomes for children, young people and families in our North Ayrshire communities and recognise that, whilst progress has been made in the first three years, there are many areas we will continue to develop, evolve, and improve in the years to come.

Underpinning all our work are the five foundations on which The Promise must be built:

Voice – Family – Care – People – Scaffolding

As well as considering progress around scaffolding and governance, we will describe some of the work that has been taken forward locally.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

Prior to and upon the publication of The Promise North Ayrshire has made considerable progress in improving outcomes for care experienced children and young people and their families. We are confident that:

The Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) principles and values are embedded in all that we do; our workforce recognises our children and young people are the most important people in our communities.

Partnership working is embedded in our operational and strategic efforts through our Corporate Parenting Steering Group. This is not just across the Corporate Partnership but also in partnership with young people and our care experienced networks.

Our dedicated Corporate Parenting Team was established to support the participation of young people but has widened its remit to the implementation of The Promise, taking forward policy developments and to ensure collaboration between Corporate Parents.

We have strong partnership working across all public services, including Community Planning Partners and third sector (highlighted as a strength in our recent Children's Services Inspection).

Our partnership strengths have resulted in –

- **A focus on prevention and early intervention programmes.**
- **Co-locating the workforce from different disciplines to reduce silo working.**
- **Listening and responding to parents at a pace that is right for them.**

This has contributed to a reduced use of external living arrangements, and we have developed policies that provide better housing and financial support to care experienced young adults in North Ayrshire.

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 our partners need to be clear on respective roles and responsibilities as a foundation 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 had 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.

It is also important to highlight The Promise does not sit in isolation: it sits alongside North Ayrshire's commitment to the incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC); our Children's Services Plan; core elements of our 2017-2020 Corporate Parenting Plan and our planned Corporate Parenting Plan 2023-2026; (Appendix 1), North Ayrshire's Child Poverty Strategy and Action Plan; and work in relation to children and young people's mental health and wellbeing

Corporate Parenting Plan 2023 -2026

Every three years the Scottish Government requires a report on our activities surrounding Corporate Parenting and based on our Corporate Parenting Plan. The Scottish Government does not receive the Corporate Parenting Plan and it is used to guide our work locally.

Our Corporate Parenting Plan (2023-2026) has been co-designed by Care Experienced Young People and addresses their priorities and commitments we have made to them. All the priorities and actions lead to the fulfilment of the Promise. The actions associated with the plan are highlighted in this report under Voice, Family, Care, People and Scaffolding and are documented on a separate document that will be used for monitoring actions.

CHAPTER 3: SCAFFOLDING AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The support that young people and families need to ensure they prosper and thrive is identified by The Promise as Scaffolding and is one of The Promise's Foundation Principles. We have accomplished the following:

- Engaged with children and young people and involved them in discussions.
- Employed a full time Participation and Engagement Lead
- Employed a full time Corporate Parenting Youth Worker
- Appointed a Part time Temporary Participation Assistant
- Agreed the Governance arrangements to ensure partnership approach and accountability internally and with our partners.
- Developed a Promise Operational Group (PrOG) and sub-groups to drive priorities.

A Steering Group and Promise Operational Group (PrOG) have been established to ensure consistency and involvement across the Partnership at a strategic and operational level.

The Promise Operational Group is attended by operational staff. There are four PrOG sub-groups. These are:

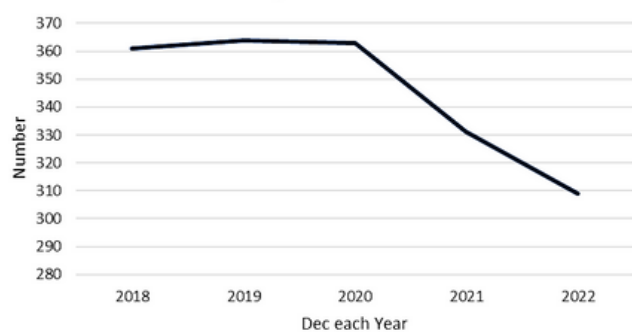
1. Communication and Language
2. Alternatives to Care
3. Trauma Informed
4. Data and Discovery Mapping

Promise Operational Sub-Group Priorities for 2023

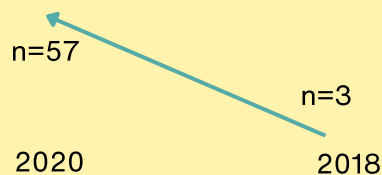
Language and Communication	Alternative Care	Trauma Informed	Data and Discovery Mapping
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Multi-agency, cross partnership Social Media Platform. 2. 'A Talk about Language Day' which will be linked to our Champion Board's 'Anti-Discrimination and Stigma Policy' for Corporate Parents and the associated campaign. 3. Have a greater representation of care experienced young people on the Youth Council and Executive Groups. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop interactive materials to reduce the anxiety of a child or young person when they are first looked after. 2. Develop a Quality Assurance Framework around the Family Finding activity when a child or young person needs to be looked after away from home. 3. Work with Barnardo's and MCR Pathways to investigate a sustainable mentoring model for those in alternative care. 4. Align more services to prevention and early intervention to prevent children and young people coming into the care system. 5. Look into wrap-around support for families who need it. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore the benefits of rolling out a training programme for 'Dyadic Developmental Practice.' 2. Conduct research across the Partnership to ascertain level of knowledge, understanding and training. 3. Roll out of trauma aware and trauma skilled resources, training and consider language and environments. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mapping early intervention services and recommending actions. 2. Data Mapping across multi-partnerships.

Trends and Impact

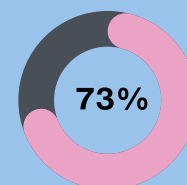
Away from Home



In the last 4 years there has been a significant increase in numbers of young people requesting continuing care.



As of January 2023, 53 of the 73 sibling groups were together at their latest place of residence.

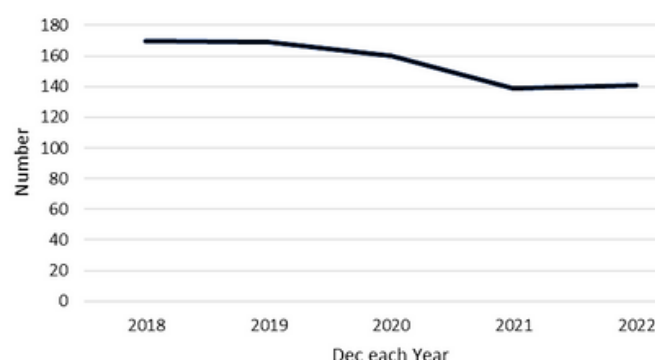


14% (n= 52) reduction in CYP looked after away from home



In the last three years there has been a **10.7%** increase in young people in kinship care placements.

At Home

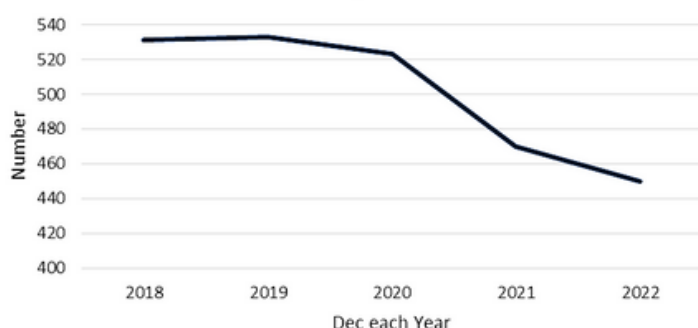


17% (n = 29) reduction in CYP looked after at home

Lowest number of Looked After in 4 years with a positive trend.

15% reduction in Children Looked After over 4 years across all care settings.

Number of Looked After Children and Young People



15% (n = 81) reduction in total numbers of looked after CYP

Family Wellbeing Service:

From November 2021 to the end of June 2022, the FCWS took 69 requests, with 54 of these (78%) being made from the beginning of January 2022.

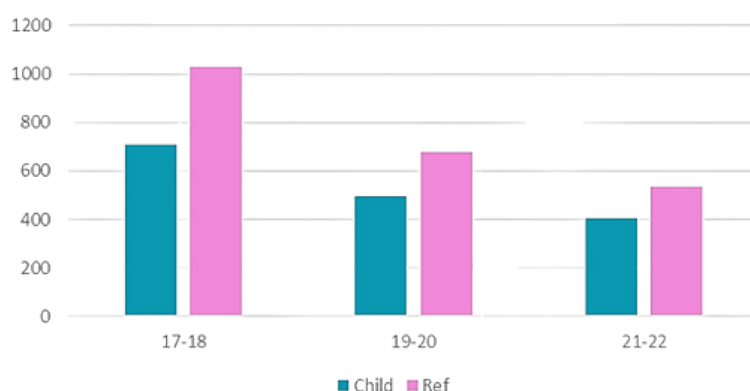
The service currently operates in the Irvine and Three Towns localities, as part of a test for change.

Our new, purpose-built respite facilities for children, young people and adults in North Ayrshire with additional support needs were officially opened in October 2022.

Over the last three years there has been a significant reduction in the number of children being referred to the Children's Reporter. The number of referrals includes where a child has been referred more than once.

Although further analysis is required our early intervention strategy is thought to be having a positive impact.

North Ayrshire Children's Hearing Referrals



CHAPTER 4: ACHIEVEMENTS

Whilst not an exhaustive list some specific examples of achievements and actions to date across delivery partners as part of the bedding down phase are highlighted below:

- Education services continue to focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap and raising the educational attainment and achievement of care experienced children and young people, including through nurture.
- Education have employed an additional Home Tutor to provide one to one tuition for care experienced children and young people.
- The Corporate Parenting Team have provided summer activities and wellbeing days for care experienced children, young people, parents and carers .
- Provision of employability support for care experienced people through group work sessions and one to one support with resilience, interview skills and employability skills.
- All teams and departments have appointed a Promise Champion to be the central point of contact for all consultations, views and to disseminate information and developments to their teams. A 'Promise Champions' network has been established and has 25 Champions as members.
- Offering mental health and wellbeing support for care experienced young people through Mental Health Project workers, this has included full mapping of mental health services and group work/ one to one sessions.
- A Welfare Rights Officer has been appointed to work with families to deliver welfare rights services and signpost to other support services in 7 of North Ayrshire Council's Secondary Schools, more than £468k has been secured for families in the past year with £506k since the project commenced
- The Signs of Safety model and Safe and Together models are currently being implemented across Health and Social Care and wider partners. Both models take a rights-based approach and fully align with the principles and shift in culture and practice required to deliver on the ambitions of The Promise. 'Signs of Safety' being a relationship-based model working within the context of child welfare and protection. The approach develops a shared and explicit understanding between professionals and families of where the risk from harm lies, in what set of circumstances it may arise and how these risks will be mitigated through effective safety planning.
- A care experienced housing officer is in place to be a single point of contact for Care Experienced Young People, improving the housing service and minimising their need to repeat their story to multiple people.
- The Active Schools Team work closely with key school staff to target care experienced young people to access all sport and physical activity opportunities, both in the school environment and their local communities.
- Care experienced young people are embedded within the Youth Participation and Citizenship Strategy with the inclusion of young people from the Champions Board as part of our Executive Youth Council, Joint Youth Forum Meetings and other voice and rights structures.
- Our Champions Board* have produced an Anti-Discrimination and Stigma Policy for Corporate Parents.
- The Family Centred Wellbeing Service was introduced in October 2021 and is a collaborative partnership between the Health and Social Care Partnership and Education. The service is predicated on early intervention approaches.

**Our Champions Board are a group of care experienced young people who come together weekly to affect change in the 'care system'.*

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

"Being involved in the PrOG has allowed me to feel listened to for the first time by people who make changes that affect my life."

Young Person in one of our Groups

- Bi-monthly staff briefings have been circulated to staff across the Partnership, updating on progress and new developments.
- 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 also have a bi-monthly staff newsletter.
- We held a 'Cost of the School Day' conference to look at mitigating the impact the cost of the school day has on families and individuals' finances.
- Care experienced young people have had a crucial part in interviews for new Health and Social Care staff where that role could potentially impact of the lives of the care experienced community.

"It's welcoming to be involved in shaping the future workforce and services while enhancing my own interview skills."

Young Person involved in interviews

- Our Champions Board have drafted a Glossary of preferred terms to be used when describing the 'Care System' to be used in paperwork, meetings, and written material.

"The Champions Board has helped me in a way no other group could. It has made me realise that being care experienced isn't a bad thing that I should be ashamed of. Being part of the board has helped me recover who I am again, and the members have supported me through thick and thin. It's given me opportunities I didn't think I would ever get."

Champions Board member

- 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 Hasta Barista project was launched at the Promise Conference. 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.
- The voices of the Care Experienced community were heard at our Annual Promise Conference. A Conference report (Appendix 2), has been written with recommendations.

The annual Promise Conference focused on relationships, voice and the UNCRC, and family support. The report from the Conference captures the views of our Care Experienced young people, however there were over 300 comments from Senior Leaders that on the whole chimed with the views of our Young People. The feedback from the conference highlighted important suggestions from our delegates: and summarised here-

- Relationships – Sustainable relationships are critical to wellbeing, and this should be encouraged by providing time, safe spaces, and workers with the attributes they highlighted. Relationships should be sustained even if a worker moves and through transitions, whether at school, living arrangements, or to adult services.
- Voice and the UNCRC – Children, Young People and families' voices are important in their individual journeys and collectively to effect change. The delegates called for young people's forums and groups to plan and comment on new policy and practice changes. They want more awareness around the UNCRC and to tackle stigma for the care experienced community.
- Family Support – Delivered at an earlier stage and is community based so that relationships can be strengthened. Services should do be more open to sharing resources and responsibilities, collaborating at an earlier stage.

Actions 2023-2026 –We have set a number of outcomes we specifically want to achieve in 2023. (These are indicated beside each action below). All other actions will be initiated in 2023 and will have a target set for coming years. These are set against the National calls for action and our own young people's voices.

Voice:

Children must be listened to and meaningfully and appropriately involved in decision-making about their care, with all those involved actively listening and responding to what children want and need.

National Call to Action

- All care experienced children and their families will have access to independent advocacy at all stages of their experience of care.
- Advocacy provision will follow the principles set out in the promise.
- Care experienced children and young people will be able to easily access child centred legal advice and representation.
- There will be well communicated and understood guidance in place that upholds children's rights and reflects equal protection legislation

Local Actions

- Engagement activities and the outcomes of these are included in plans and are reported and evaluated.
- The planning and delivery of the priorities and actions are being taking forward and the co-design of services and supports is in place.
- We gather views and experiences as part of the process to redesign services and supports for care experienced children and young people.
- The tools and resources are developed, applied, and reported on. This includes: • Having your say • Care experienced app. **(2023)**
- The 'Each and Every' child toolkit is used to reframe the care experienced journey.
- We will publish and implement our Anti-Discrimination and Stigma Policy. **(2023)**
- We will increase the number of children, young people, and their families through participation activities.
- Advocacy is available to all children and young people who need it.
- We will ensure Children's Rights are promoted

Our Young People said:

- Review of UNCRC training delivered to a range of partners. i.e the workforce, Care experienced children and young people, carers, and members of the public.
- Explore the concept of having 'Rights Champions' within teams, departments, services etc
- Review 'Children's Rights' training and awareness raising within schools and the use of PSE lessons.
- Explore the idea of Care Experience being a protected characteristic
- Replace the 'Having your say' form.
- We need spaces to be developed and enabled to bring together many voices, either at school, groups, or forums.
- Develop communications to help people to know how to connect with and hear young people activities around separate consultations
- Explore the possibility of streamlining communications, engagements, and consultations

- Explore the idea of having Young People's committees to engage with services. (These forums could be used for services to share their draft policies, give feedback, and take questions to professionals.
- Develop tools that indicate that children and young people have been involved in the co-design of strategies, policy, or practice changes.
- Explore having young people having a role in recruitment and appraisal.

Family:

Where children are safe in their families and feel loved they must stay there – families must be given support to nurture their children and young people to help them overcome any difficulties.

National Call to Action:

- Decisions about transitions for young care experienced people who move onto independent living or need to return to a caring environment, will be made based on individual need.
- Each young care experienced adult will experience their transition as consistent, caring, integrated and focussed on their needs, not on 'age of services' criteria.
- The 10 principles of intensive family support will be embedded into the practice (planning, commissioning, and delivery) of all organisations that support children and their families, directly or indirectly.
- There will be a consistent, national approach to ensure there are places in every community for parents of young children to meet other local parents, to stay and play with children, get support and advice.
- Scotland's family support services will feel and be experienced as integrated to those who use them.
- All families will have direct and clear access to family therapies and specific support across a range of issues, so that accessing support is seen as something that a range of families may need throughout life.
- Scotland will have a national, strategic planning process in place that ensures that children who are cared for away from their family of origin 'belong to a loving home'. The planning process will reflect the needs of Scotland's children and young people whilst operating with the expectation that more children will remain with their families

Local Actions

- Further develop the refreshed GIRFEC early identification processes through multi-agency teams working across local areas.
 - Develop clear options for early intervention family support, based on Family Support Principles and including parenting approaches.
 - Develop an understanding of the association of poverty and neglect and the impact on families.
 - Information surrounding identifiable concerns are securely and appropriately shared between agencies to prevent escalation of concerns.
 - Continued roll out The Family Centred Wellbeing Service.
 - Continued implementation of Signs of Safety and Safe and Together models across the Health and Social Care Partnership and wider partners.
- (2023)**

Our Young People said:

- Review supports that are provided out of normal office hours

Care:

Where living with their family is not possible, children must stay with their brothers and sisters where safe to do so and belong to a loving home, staying there for as long as needed.

National Call to Action

- There will be no barriers to 'contact' and children will be supported to have time with people they care about.
- Scotland will stop the practice of separating brothers and sisters, unless for reasons of safety
- Relationships between brothers and sisters will be cherished and protected across decision making and through the culture and values of the people who care for them.
- Housing pathways for care experienced young people will include a range of affordable options that are specifically tailored to their needs and preferences. Youth homelessness will be eradicated.

Our Young People said:

- Explore decision making in residential houses and the call to let young people to work together on boundaries.

Local Actions

- Ongoing training for all carers focussing on nurture and trauma. **(2023)**
- Targeted support to families when children and young people have been removed from their family with the objective of those children and young people returning to their care.
- North Ayrshire care experienced housing protocol covers all care sectors in line with legislative looked after definitions. **(2023)**
- All eligible young people are offered continuing care, and this is provided in line with current legislation. **(2023)**
- We will increase the number of children and young people coming back to North Ayrshire from external placements (where appropriate). **(2023)**
- The Alternate Care Group will progress their agreed actions These are :-
Develop interactive materials to reduce the anxiety of a child or young person when they are first looked after, Work with Barnardo's and MCR Pathways to investigate a sustainable mentoring model for those in alternative care, Align more services to prevention and early intervention to prevent children and young people coming into the care system, and Develop a Quality Assurance Framework around the Family Finding activity when a child or young person needs to be looked after away from home. **(2023)**

People:

Care for must be actively supported to develop relationships with people in the workforce and wider community, supporting all areas of care through listening and compassionate decision making.

National Call to Action

- The disproportionate criminalisation of care experienced children and young people will end.
- 16- and 17-year-olds will no longer be placed in Young Offenders Institutes for sentence or on remand
- There will be sufficient community-based alternatives so that detention is a last resort
- Children who do need to have their liberty restricted will be cared for in small, secure, trauma-informed environments that uphold their rights.
- All care experienced children, wherever they live, will be protected from violence, and experience the safeguard of equal protection legislation.
- There will be a national values-based recruitment and workforce development framework in place and adhered to by all organisations and professions involved in supporting children and their families.
- There will be no blanket policies or guidance that prevent the maintenance of relationships between young people and those who care for them. Settings of care will be able to facilitate the protection of relationships that are important to children and young people
- A new framework of support will be in place to ensure people involved in the care of care experienced children and young people feel valued, encouraged and have supportive relationships for reflection with high quality supervision and environmental conditions
- Organisations with responsibilities towards children and families will be confident about when, where, why and how to share information with partners. Information sharing will not be a barrier to supporting children and families.

Local Actions

- We will increase the number of young adults with care experience who are connected with a significant adult to support them into a positive destination. **(2023)**
- Implement developing the Young Workforce projects for vulnerable young people, care experienced young people and those in the justice system. **(2023)**
- Promote the importance of maintaining stable, supportive relationships whilst ensuring safety of every person involved. **(2023)**
- Our workforce is supported and trained to support the changing needs of children, young people and their families.
- Our first of our Annual Promise Conferences was held in November 2022. We will organise another one in 2023 along with one mini conference aimed at front-line staff. **(2023)**
- Corporate Parenting induction e-learning module for all staff to be launched in 2023.
- Promote the importance of maintaining stable, supportive relationships whilst ensuring safety of every person involved.

Young People said:

- Explore ways that children and young people can maintain a relationship with a previous trusted adult.
- Review procedures/policy relating to relationships between workers and care experienced children and young people
- Identify 'safe spaces' for children and young people to meet as peers or with others they have a relationship with
- Explore the idea of children and young people choosing their good adult.
- Review of meetings, formal and informal to ensure the child or young persons 'trusted adults' as consistently represented.
- Develop a 'shadowing' or 'getting to know you' activities for all staff at all levels so they can get to know their young people
- Corporate Parenting duties to be included in all partners induction training.

Scaffolding:

Children, families and the workforce must be supported by a system that is there when it is needed. The scaffolding of help, support and accountability must be ready and responsive when it is required.

National Call to Action

- Every child that is 'in care' in Scotland will have access to intensive support that ensures their educational and health needs are fully met.
- Local Authorities and Health Boards will take active responsibility towards care experienced children and young people, whatever their setting of care, so they have what they need to thrive.
- Care experienced children and young people will receive all they need to thrive at school. There will be no barriers to their engagement with education and schools will know and cherish their care experienced pupils.
- Care experienced young people will be actively participating in all subjects and extra-curricular activities in schools.
- Schools will support and ensure care experienced young people go on to genuinely positive destinations, such as further education or employment.
- There will be well communicated and understood guidance in place that upholds children's rights and reflects equal protection legislation.
- The workforce will feel supported to respond to behaviour in a trauma informed way that reflects a deep understanding of the children in their care.

Local Actions

- Progress and roll out the refresh of GIRFEC Planning Pathways and continue delivery of staff briefings and guidance. **(2023)**
- Develop our practice to better integrate performance and measurement into planning and review of our workstreams.
- Support the workforce to better understand their Corporate Parenting Duties and apply them in their day-to-day activities.
- Children and young people with care experience have all they need to thrive at school and beyond.
- Increasing the numbers of looked after children and young people given opportunities to pursue sports, cultural and leisure activities
- Increasing the number of looked after children remaining in their existing care placements beyond the age of 16 and 18. **(2023)**
- Reducing the number of care experienced young people who experience homelessness. **(2023)**
- Increasing training and employment opportunities for looked after young people and care-experienced young people.
- Improving timely access to assessment and effective health interventions for care experienced young people.
- Continue to target actions to close the poverty-related attainment gap and raise educational attainment and achievement of care experienced children and young people.
- Continue to develop the Promise Operational Groups workstreams.
- We will review and improve current practice in relation to promoting and managing attendance and preventing and managing school exclusions **(2023)**
- We will work towards improving skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations.
- Language is one of the fundamentals of The Promise and all partners will be asked to review their paperwork, processes and use alternative language **(2023)**
- Roll out of trauma aware and trauma skilled resources and training.

Our Young People said:

- Trauma aware training delivered to all levels of staff.

APPENDIX 1: CORPORATE PARENTS

1. The Scottish Ministers
2. 32 Local Authorities
3. The National Convener of Children's Hearings Scotland
4. Children's Hearings Scotland
5. The Principal Reporter
6. The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration
7. A Health Board
8. A board constituted under section 2(1)(b) of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978
9. Healthcare Improvement Scotland
10. The Scottish Qualifications Authority
11. Skills Development Scotland Co. Ltd (registered number SC 202659)
12. Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland
13. The Scottish Social Services Council
14. The Scottish Sports Council
15. The Chief Constable of the Police Service of Scotland
16. The Scottish Police Authority
17. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
18. The Scottish Legal Aid Board
19. The Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland
20. The Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland
21. The Scottish Housing Regulator
22. Bòrd na Gàidhlig
23. Creative Scotland
24. A body which is a "post-16 education body" for the purposes of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2014
25. Independent Living Fund Scotland
26. Care Inspectorate

Corporate Parent Duties – Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

- Be alert to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of children and young people to whom corporate parenting applies.
- Assess the needs of those children and young people for the services and support they provide.
- Promote the interests of those children and young people.
- Provide those children and young people with opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing.
- Take such action as it considers appropriate to help those children and young people to (i) access the opportunities it provides, and (ii) make use of services, and access support, which it provides.
- Take such action as it considers appropriate for the purposes of improving the way in which it exercises its functions in relation to the children and young people to whom corporate parenting applies.

NORTH AYRSHIRE'S

**Corporate
Parenting Plan**

2023 - 2026



NORTH AYRSHIRE
CHILDREN'S SERVICES
STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Introduction

In North Ayrshire, we all believe that ensuring effective support, care, and protection for infants, children and young people who are looked after, is one of the most important responsibilities for agencies, staff, carers and the Care experienced community.

Infants, Children and Young People who are looked after may need extra support, love, time, and positive relationships to help them reach their potential.

We all need to do everything we can to ensure that those that are Care Experienced are safe, nurtured and supported, and that we all work together so that life experiences are positive, and improves life chances.

Over the last few years the term 'Care Experienced' has become prominent in the language to collectively describe those who are or have ever been Looked After. The Care Experienced Attainment Fund National Guidance says this: –

The term 'care experience' is now a widely used term within the sector to describe any person who has experience of being in care, regardless of the placement length, type or age.



Care may have been provided in one of many different settings, such as in residential care, foster care, kinship care or through being looked after at home with a supervision requirement.

"**Corporate parent**" is another term and is used to describe a collection of public bodies that have a duty to work together to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of looked after infants, children, young people and care leavers.

However, it is all our responsibility to work with and alongside families, children, young people and the services that support them.

We all must approach this parenting role with as much passion and commitment as any family would and ensure that all looked after infants, children and young people are given the best start in life and maintain this throughout their lives .

At the end of this plan there is a graphic that lets you know who are our Corporate Parents.

This plan outlines our collective priorities and has been co-produced by the North Ayrshire Champion's Board. Our action plan (separate document) is based on the 'Promise', and local priorities'.

All organisations and services within North Ayrshire with corporate parenting responsibilities and the care experienced community are essential contributors to ensuring that care experienced infants, children and young people's outcomes are as good as those for any other children.

Delivering positive outcomes for care experienced children and young people is a key priority for the Community Planning Partnership and its partners. We must now make sure that these priorities are put into practice and that the commitment to those who are Care Experienced is delivered through the implementation of this plan and tangible actions

North Ayrshire has committed to #KeepThePromise which provides a benchmark for corporate parents, carers, practitioners, managers, care experienced community, and decision makers in fulfilling the goal to meet the collective and individual needs of all of our Care Experienced infants, children and young people.



In 2017 an Independent Care Review was carried out over a three year period focusing on the Children's Care System in Scotland. The Review not only listened to Care Experienced young people but had them at the centre of their research and enquires. The Review produced a number recommendations on what needs to change in the care system and challenges Corporate Parents to work alongside children, young people and their families to make these changes happen. This plan will incorporate some of these recommendations, so that all care experienced children and young people can have the best start in life and continued success into adulthood. They have developed five foundation principles. These are:-



VOICE



FAMILY



CARE



PEOPLE



SCAFFOLDING

For further explanation on these Five Promise Foundations please see :- Foundations of the promise – The Promise

North Ayrshire



Number of Looked after children and young people

Date	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of CYP Looked After	531	533	523	470	450
At Home	170	169	160	139	141
Away from Home	361	364	363	331	309

In the last 5 years,

17% (n = 29) reduction in CYP looked after at home
 14% (n= 52) reduction in CYP looked after away from home
 15% (n = 81) reduction in total numbers of looked after CYP

Of the 81 CYP no longer under looked after :

57% (n=46) are living with parents
 17% (n=14) are living with friends /relatives
 4% (n=11) remain in continuing care
 4% (n=3) have moved into their own tenancy
 3% (n=2) have moved into supported accommodation and
 5% (n=4) other

10.7% increase in young people in kinship care placements

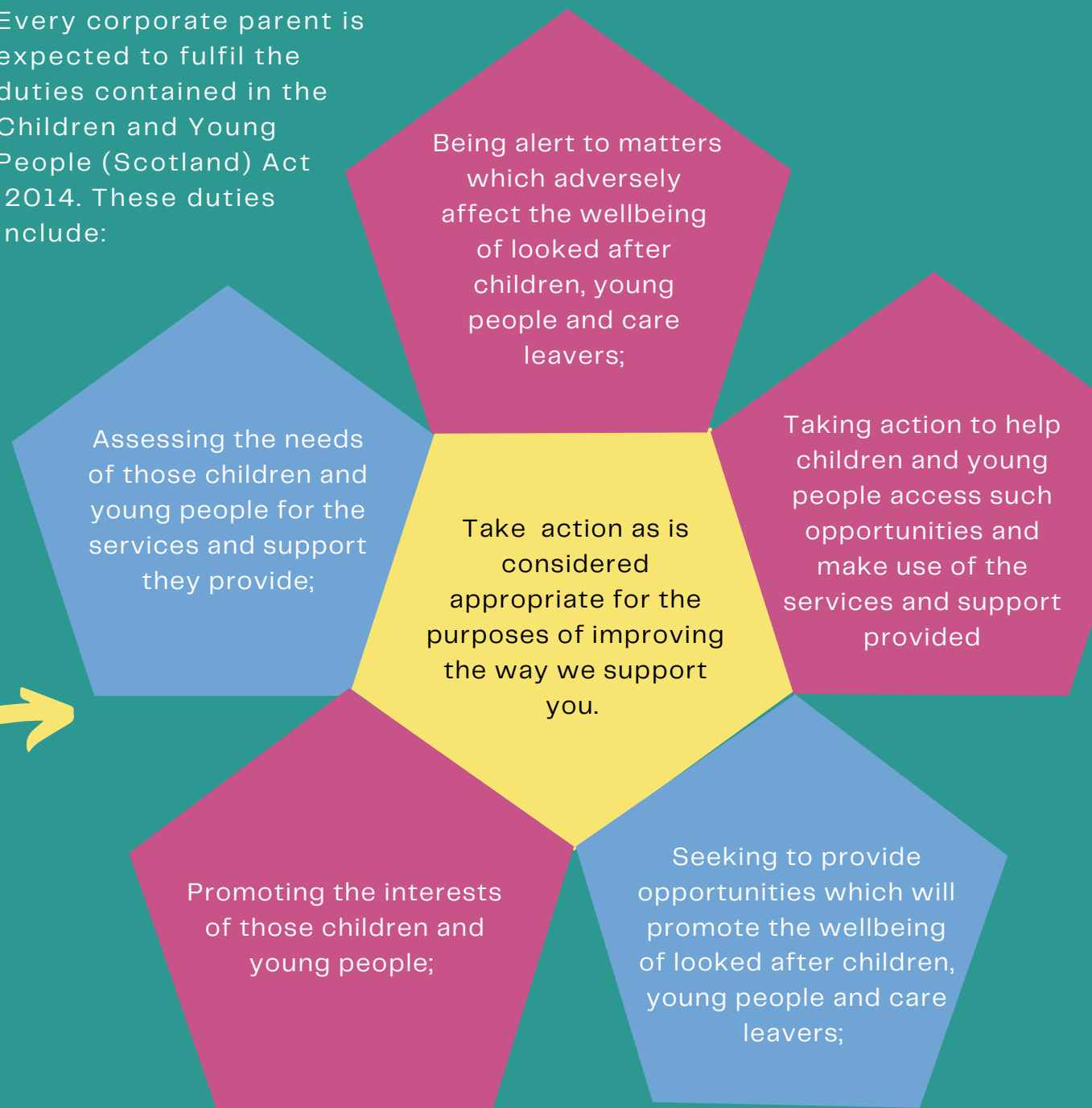
Significant increase in numbers of young people requesting continuing care (n=3 to n= 57) in 4 years



Every corporate parent is expected to fulfil the duties contained in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. These duties include:

Core elements of this Plan

- The rights and views of Looked After Children and Young People will be considered when designing services and interventions
- Partnership working and close collaboration between Corporate Parents.
- Measurable promises made to Looked After children and young people
- Actions to progress the six duties within the 2014 Act.



Vision, Values and High level priorities

Our collective plan focusses on key areas which have been identified by children and young people as being important to them.

Embedded within these priorities is a commitment to supporting looked after infants, children, young people and care leavers to develop and maintain meaningful relationships with those who are important to them.

Together we have set out our priorities for the period April 2023 to March 2026 and identified the actions we will undertake to achieve these and the measures we will use to make sure they have made a difference to infants, children and young people's lives.

Throughout all we do we will ensure that rights are protected and the 4 guiding principles of the the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) are the basis for all that we do. These are that Children and Young People:-

- shouldn't be discriminated against (Article 2)
- should have their best interests accounted for as a primary consideration (Article 3)
- have the right to survive and develop (Article 6)
- have the right to have their views heard and taken seriously (Article 12)

High level priorities

Prevention and early help

Focusing on those who need the most support

Commitment to reducing child poverty

Further embedding Getting it Right for Every Child

Listening/voice/use of technology

Consider our children in care who still live at home with their families

Education and Work

Health & Leisure activities

Training (Trauma aware and informed) & raising awareness

Events/activists led by Children and Young People

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Use of intelligence and data to inform practice

Support for care leavers



The Care Experienced community and Corporate Parents make a promise to all Care experienced children, young people and their families. This Promise is that endeavours will be made to involve you in the decisions that affect your life. This will be carried out by giving you the opportunity to:-

- join our 'Champions Board'
- be involved in interviews for staff members
- be involved in operational groups looking at changing practice. e.g The Promise Operational Group (PrOG etc)
- be involved in planning and supporting events
- be involved in groups at school and in the community that are for Care Experienced children, young people and their families.
- have your say on your plan.
- be involved in the redesign of processes, paperwork and what language you want to be used about you.
- join focus groups looking at a particular topic.
- help design our social media communications

Our Corporate Parenting Team and other Corporate Parents will endeavour to reach out to you check if you want to be involved in any of the above. Contact us on corporateparenting@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

Our generic promises to you as your Corporate Parents



- ✓ **Involve you in all decisions made about you and in designing new ways of working.**
- ✓ **Take account of your rights when working with you and/or supporting you.**
- ✓ **Support you to have positive family time and with friends.**
- ✓ **Create forums where we can better understand your issues, life experiences and the impact this has had on the care experienced community.**
- ✓ **Provide opportunities for you to come and talk to us, have taster days, shadow workers etc**
- ✓ **Do everything we can to help you achieve your potential within education, employment and having the life skills to lead an independent life**
- ✓ **Identify and promote care leavers needs and achievements by celebrating their achievements.**
- ✓ **Support and provide you with opportunities for you to seek employment, further education or training**
- ✓ **Create stronger links with the North Youth Citizenship and Participation Strategy ensuring your voices are included through structures like the executive Youth Council. MSYPs and Joint Youth Forums**
- ✓ **Allocate spaces identified for care experienced young people to access mental health and wellbeing peer support training, accreditation and form part of the mental health ambassador programme.**

How?

We have already set up an 'Corporate Parenting Steering Group', and a 'Promise Operational Group' (PrOG). Children and Young peoples voices are represented on both these Groups. There are also a number of other ways Care Experienced people can get involved.

This Steering Group and PrOG have been set up to identify the Corporate Parenting Duties and 'Promise' priorities and actions. This will result in developing new ways of working and how we monitor what we said we would all do.

The most important factor is that we all work together, children, young people, parents and carers, and all Corporate Parents

Action Plan

We will have an action plan that sets out what we say we are going to do, when it has to be done by, who is going to do it and how we will know the action has made a difference.



What now?

The Corporate Parenting Steering Group and the PrOG are all meeting regularly and setting out plans to take forward the promises above.

We have a particular focus on the following right now and are progressing all of these



Language and Stigma -

Our Champions Board have written an Anti Discriminatory and stigma policy for all Corporate Parents. We hope to launch a campaign this year.



The PrOG has a Communication and Language sub Group who this year Will develop.

- A New North Ayrshire Will Keep The Promise' Social Media Channel
- Form a Care Experienced Youth Exec Group, and
- Hold a 'Let's Talk About Language Day'



All interviews for posts within the H&SCP that have an impact on Care Experienced people will have Care Experience Young People involved in the interview.

Corporate Parents



NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

13 June 2023

Cabinet

Title: **Child Poverty Strategy 2023-26; Progress report 2022-23 and Action Plan 2023-24.**

Purpose: To seek approval for:

- a) The North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy covering the period 2023-26;
- b) The North Ayrshire Child Poverty Report 2022-23
- c) The North Ayrshire Child Poverty Action Plan 2023-24;
- d) The submission of the report to the Scottish Government and the publication on the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership website.

Recommendation: That Cabinet:

- a) Approves the North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy covering the period 2023-26;
- b) Approves the North Ayrshire Child Poverty Report 2022-23 and Action Plan 2023-24; and
- c) Agrees that the report can be submitted to the Scottish Government and published on the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership website.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the draft North Ayrshire Local Child Poverty Strategy 2023-26, Report 2022-23 and Action Plan 2023-24 which has been attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The report and action plan are statutory requirements by Scottish Government and are the responsibility of local authorities and NHS Boards. The North Ayrshire action plan has been developed using a collaborative approach with internal and external partners. The report summarises the existing and planned activity intended to reduce child poverty in North Ayrshire.
- 1.3 The report also reports on the establishment and activity of a board to lead the development and implementation of a Child Poverty and Cost of Living strategy to reflect the Scottish Government delivery plan.

2. Background

2.1 The current Government Spending Review Consultation is to inform how Scottish Government will prioritise its resources for the next three years (2022 – 2025).

2.2 The three priorities are:

- to support progress toward meeting child poverty targets;
- to address climate change and
- to secure a stronger; fairer, greener economy.

2.3 Best Start, Bright Futures: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026

The Scottish Government's second Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan covering 2022-2026 was presented to Parliament on Thursday 24th March 2022. It is projected to deliver the lowest levels of child poverty in Scotland in the last 30 years. This means that by 2023-24, the year of the Scottish Government interim targets, using current projections, it is anticipated that around 17% of children will live in relative poverty, with more than 60,000 fewer children living in poverty since the Act was passed in 2017.

2.4 North Ayrshire

According to figures released by [End Child Poverty in Scotland](#) in July 2022 **there are 5,394 or 24.7% of children in North Ayrshire living in poverty**. However, these figures were sourced from the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) and came with a caveat that data collection was impacted due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and that statistics should not be compared with previous years. Therefore, the true figure is likely to be greater. North Ayrshire currently has the second highest levels of child poverty in Scotland.

2.5 Key themes and areas of action within the Scottish Government delivery plan

2.5.1 Scotland's Offer to Families: Working together to deliver differently. Scottish Government is committed to working together to ensure that systems work for the people who need them most, trialling and evaluating new approaches, adapting ways of working, and investing in rigorous monitoring to understand how changes are impacting on priority families.

2.5.2 This includes the following themes:

- Pathfinders
- Social Innovation Partnership
- Providing the opportunities and integrated support parents need to enter, sustain and progress in work
- Maximising the support available for families to live dignified lives and meet their basic needs
- Supporting the next generation to thrive.

2.6 Local Child Poverty Action Plan

2.6.1 Local authorities and NHS boards are required to publish their annual joint local Child Poverty Reports and Action Plans in June of each year. This provides a retrospective review of progress against previous actions and sets priorities for the forthcoming year. This report contains, for Cabinet approval, its proposed three year strategy (2023-26), its annual report for 2022-23 and an action plan covering the period 2023-24.

2.6.2 The Child Poverty Action Plan and Report ([Appendix 1](#)) was developed using a collaborative approach with internal and external partners and summarises the existing and planned activity intended to reduce child poverty in North Ayrshire. The National Co-ordinator for Child Poverty Action Reports from the Improvement Service has supported this work and has published, with CPAG, our Cost of the School Day work as national good practice.

North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy 2023-26

2.7.1 The proposed areas of focus are:

Our Objectives 2023-2026	LOIP Priority
<i>We will provide local leadership in tackling child poverty</i>	<i>Wellbeing</i>
<i>We will have greater involvement of residents, including children and young people, in service design and delivery</i>	<i>Wellbeing</i>
<i>We will ensure our services are human and kind</i>	<i>Wellbeing</i>
<i>We will commit to taking a No Wrong Door approach with partners</i>	<i>Wellbeing</i>
<i>We will advocate for our residents in accessing resources and funding to tackle child poverty</i>	<i>Wellbeing</i>
<i>Within the Community Planning Partnership, we will continue to take a system wide approach to child poverty within our Wellbeing priority and use our resources strategically to focus on better outcomes</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>
<i>Across the Council, NHSAAA, our Community Planning Partners and our third and voluntary sector partners in our communities, we will ensure our workforce planning enshrines a No Wrong Door approach to access to services and that poverty impact assessments are embedded in our policy and practice</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>
<i>We will examine how economic development, transport, skills and childcare provision can combine to break down barriers to employment with parents as a priority group, ensure local economic practices (Community Wealth Building) support tackling child poverty, and implement key actions.</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>
<i>We will understand and address where possible the cost-of-living challenges that our families face</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>
<i>We will use data to inform place-based approaches to interventions and targeted use of resources</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>
<i>Wellness, family support, parental employability</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>
<i>We will improve access to affordable childcare</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>
<i>We will encourage greater job quality through Fair Work</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>

<i>We will ensure accessibility to employment and services through support for priority families</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>
<i>We will maximise the uptake of benefits and support financial inclusion</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>
<i>We will drive further progress in removing financial barriers to education (COSD)</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>
<i>We will improve whole family wellbeing outcomes, supported by the Scottish Government Whole Family Wellbeing Fund</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>
<i>We will better link adult and children's services to improve outcomes for families living in poverty</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>
<i>We will improve the use of data and performance measures in relation to what the local issues are and what actions need to be taken around child poverty</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>

2.7.2 Key areas of activity over the past year include:

- **Establishment of our Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board**, to develop and challenge the Council and partners to tackle the current challenges, chaired by the Leader of the Council and supported by NHSAAA, the North Ayrshire HSCP, the Third Sector Interface and Community Planning partners;
- The introduction of a strengthened participatory approach through a **series of mini enquiries**;
- **A refreshed focus on local data, supported by the Improvement Service**;
- Ongoing **automation and streamlining of access to benefits**;
- Innovative **employability initiatives** with partners, including health visitors and the third sector, supported by the Parental Employability Fund;
- Our ongoing **cost of the school day** work, identified as national good practice and developed with our young people;
- Collaborative, effective approaches to continuing to address the **poverty related attainment gap, including through the Regional Collaborative**;
- A refreshed **Housing Allocation Policy** through the lens of child poverty
- Maximising **access to transport for under-22 year olds**;
- Innovative ways of tackling the rising **cost of home energy** for residents through our Energy Smart initiative, funded by the Council's investment fund.

2.7.3 Key actions for the forthcoming year include:

- Further maximising parental employment opportunities through a **Parental Employment Coordinator**;
- Implementing the recent review of **financial inclusion services**;
- Continuing to **support families where disability is a factor** through the Equal Programme;
- **Further aligning schools' PEF resources** to interventions we have shown to be effective in reducing the impact of poverty on learning;
- **Reviewing Early Years and Out of School Care provision** through a mini-enquiry, co-production approach;
- Maximising the opportunities provided by the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund, for example in relation to **supporting dads and male caregivers** and **extending the Family Centred Wellbeing Service**;

- Work with the Third Sector and community partners to scope our current provision for whole family support and identify where our gaps are, to create a **fund for partner activity** through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.
- Improving support for **young mums**;
- Further supporting activity in relation to **care experienced** young people through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund;
- Further extension of **mental health and wellbeing** in schools and communities.
- Extending our action plan in relation to the national **cost of pregnancy**;
- Extending financial inclusion and advice opportunities in the NHS, for example further developing **Maternity Services Income Maximisation** joint service;
- Progressing **support for New Scots** young people and families;
- Providing additional support to vulnerable families and children impacted by **fuel poverty, including on our islands**;
- Explore, in partnership with the Improvement Service and Glasgow City Council, opportunities to undertake a **data sharing pilot** with Social Security Scotland on use of Scottish Child Payment data to help identify need; and
- Progress a **Pathfinder** project with the Improvement Service to explore ways of obtaining consent to process data for the benefit of our residents, to intervene early to identify unmet need.

3. Proposals

3.1 It is proposed that Cabinet:

- a) Approves the North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy covering the period 2023-26;
- b) Approves the North Ayrshire Child Poverty Report 2022-23 and Action Plan 2023-24; and
- c) Agrees that the report can be submitted to the Scottish Government and published on the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership website.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

4.1 There are no financial implications for North Ayrshire Council contained within the current report.

Human Resources

4.2 There are no HR implications for North Ayrshire Council contained within the current report.

Legal

4.3 The Council has a statutory duty to publish its Child Poverty Report and Action Plan each year, preferably by June.

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 Tackling child poverty sits at the heart of our equalities and socio-economic duty and there are wide ranging implications related to our approach.

Climate Change and Carbon

- 4.5 Key areas of the report such as transport, connectivity and warm and affordable homes have direct positive links to climate change and carbon.

Key Priorities

- 4.6 The proposals relate to the Council Plan in its entirety.

Community Wealth Building

- 4.7 The Scottish Government commits within its plan to developing a Community Wealth Building Strategy with all local authorities.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The Council and NHSAAA consult with a wide range of partners to deliver the local Child Poverty Report and Action Plan, including young people, CPP partners and national agencies. The strengthening of this approach through mini enquiries leading to co-production has been a notable feature of this year's report.

Audrey Sutton
Executive Director (Communities & Education)

For further information please contact **Dr Audrey Sutton, Executive Director (Communities & Education)**, on **(01294) 324415**.

Background Papers

Appendix 1: Draft Child Poverty Strategy 2023-26; Report 2022-23 & Action Plan 2023-24

NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY 2023-26

CHILD POVERTY PROGRESS REPORT 2022-23

AND CHILD POVERTY ACTION PLAN 2023-24

Contents

1. Foreword
2. Links to generic background document (local plans and policies – used for all children’s strategies)
3. Background and local context
4. Child Poverty: Our Priorities
5. North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy (2023-26) – delivering on long term objectives
 - North Ayrshire:
 - Leadership of Tackling Child Poverty
 - Co-design and co-production: a participatory approach
6. Our Tackling Child Poverty Strategy 2023-26
7. Priority Families: progress report and action plan: Summary of actions and progress: 2022-23 and new actions for 2023-24
8. Child Poverty progress report and action plan: Summary of actions and progress: 2022-23 and new actions for 2023-24
 - Section 1 – Maximising Income from Employment
 - Section 2 – Maximising Income from Benefits
 - Section 3 – Reducing household costs and mitigating the effects of poverty.

1. Foreword

Addressing child poverty, in the context of the current cost-of-living crisis, is one of the key priorities of North Ayrshire Council.

Targeted investment in social security to reduce child poverty through increasing the value of the Scottish Child Payment and extending eligibility is already contributing towards reducing relative child poverty, however, one in four children in North Ayrshire is still experiencing the impact of lack of resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions which are the norm in 21st century Scotland.

As Leader of North Ayrshire Council, I chair North Ayrshire Council's Child Poverty and Cost-of-Living Board, which includes NHSAAA and North Ayrshire HSCP, and which is supported by a three-year £1.4m Child Poverty and Cost-of-Living fund allocated by the Council in the 2023-24 budget. This enables North Ayrshire to continue to make local interventions to support children and families.

Participation by our residents, and listening to people with experience of poverty, underpins our approach to co-producing mitigating actions. Mini enquiries - thematic and place-based – are used to inform our action plans and enable us to share learning and responsibility for improvement with partners from across the Community Planning Partnership and public services, the third and community sectors and Scottish Government.

We have made a significant impact on the lives of our families through our joint work to date and we are committed to intensifying our efforts over the next phase of our work through our ambitious Child Poverty strategy for 2023-26.

Leader of the Council

'Our ambition is to make North Ayrshire 'fair for all', a great place where people can live, work and visit, and young people can grow up without inequity. However, with one in four of our children living in poverty, we have significant work to do. Poverty has negative impacts on children's health, social, emotional and cognitive development and educational outcomes. We know that poverty puts an additional strain on families, which can lead to further challenges.

The Council and its partners at local level can have significant influence through their range of services and resources, and we are determined to target those resources available to us to reduce the impacts of poverty on our children and families.

The dedication of our workforce and of our communities can combine to change outcomes for our residents and we are determined to continue to work together to make a difference.'

Chief Executive, North Ayrshire Council.

NHSAAA CEO Foreword to follow

2. Generic background document (local plans and policies – used for all children’s strategies)

3. Background and local context

Although recent data indicates that rates of child poverty in Scotland appeared to be stabilising, the effects of the recent cost of living crisis have exacerbated the structural challenges which exist in many of our communities in North Ayrshire, the most challenging symptom of which is the second highest level of child poverty in Scotland.

According to figures released by [End Child Poverty in Scotland](#) in July 2022 **there are 5,394 or 24.7% of children in North Ayrshire living in poverty**. However, these figures were sourced from the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) and came with a caveat that data collection was impacted due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and that statistics should not be compared with previous years. Therefore, the true figure is likely to be greater! **North Ayrshire currently has the second highest levels of child poverty in Scotland.**

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation report ‘UK Poverty 2023’ found that: “We are in the midst of a profound cost of living crisis with huge implications for society. Many of us are having to make difficult choices on what spending we prioritise, but some of us face increasingly bleak choices.”

They found that in October/November 2022:

- Around six in ten low-income families are not able to afford an unexpected expense
- Over half are in arrears
- Around a quarter use credit to pay essential bills
- Over seven in ten families are going without essentials
- Around four in ten families with children are spending less on food for their children.

They also forecast that whilst inflation is expected to fall during 2023, prices are expected to continue to rise along with rents and mortgage payments, and wages are not expected to keep up. Scottish Government figures from 2019-20 showed that more than one in four of Scotland's children are living in poverty. The Resolution Foundation forecasts that the rate of child poverty in Scotland will be 29% by 2023-24 and Scottish Government projections indicate that, without significant change in national policy, the figure could reach 38% by 2030-31.

The Scottish Government's 2022 publication 'The Cost-of-Living Crisis in Scotland: An Analytical Report' found that low-income households with little or no savings are most impacted and also made reference to the higher costs of living for people in rural and island households for some goods and services, including off-gas-grid fuel and transport. While the most vulnerable members of our communities are continuing to access advice services in the largest numbers, there is evidence nationally, echoed by local advice services, that there are more people seeking help now who were traditionally less likely to access advice services e.g. homeowners and professional people. Many people who sit just above the benefits entitlement threshold are facing financial difficulties. Increasing numbers of people who are in a debt solution (payment plan/debt arrangement scheme etc) are finding that they can no longer afford their contributions and more clients are presenting with complex debt.

North Ayrshire

For the most recent time period available, North Ayrshire had:

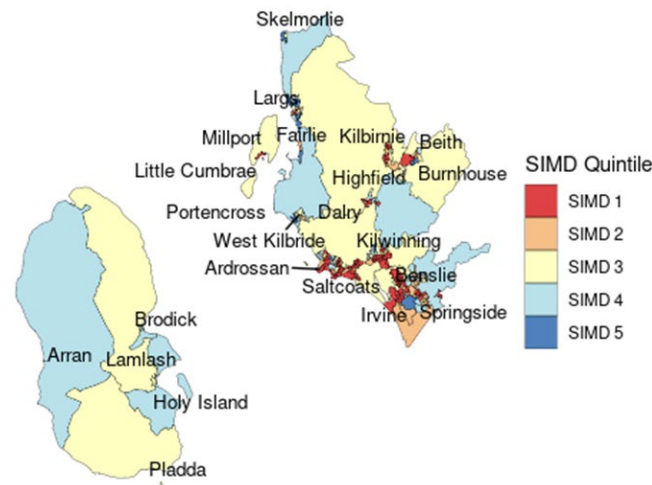
1. A total population of **134,220** people, where **47.5%** were male, and **23.3%** were aged over 65.
2. **9.7%** of people lived in the least deprived SIMD quintile, and **40.9%** lived in the most deprived quintile.

Table 1: Percentage of the North Ayrshire population living in the 2016 and 2020 SIMD Datazone Quintiles in 2016 and 2021 respectively.

Quintile	Percent of 2016 Population (SIMD 2016 Ranking)	Percent of 2021 Population (SIMD 2020 Ranking)	Difference
SIMD 1	40.9%	40.9%	0.0%
SIMD 2	20.0%	18.5%	-1.4%
SIMD 3	14.1%	15.8%	1.7%
SIMD 4	15.9%	15.0%	-0.9%
SIMD 5	9.2%	9.7%	0.5%

Source: Scottish Government, Public Health Scotland, National Records Scotland

Map of Data Zones within North Ayrshire coloured by SIMD quintiles:



Source: Scottish Government, Public Health Scotland

The population in North Ayrshire is estimated to decrease by 1.7% from 2021 to 2026. Although the overall population is projected to decrease, the older population of North Ayrshire is expected to increase, while the population aged under 65 is expected to decrease.

The dependency ratio is the number of people aged 0-15 and 65+ as a percentage of those aged 16-65. For North Ayrshire, the figure was 65.6% for the most recent year. For North Ayrshire, the projected figure for 2031 is 77.2%.

Income from employment

North Ayrshire is particularly vulnerable to economic crisis, with the 7th lowest employment rate, (which has improved from the 2nd lowest in Scotland (73.6%) compared to a Scottish average of 74.4%). This most recent data release reflects the period January – December 2022 and shows a 8.7% increase from the previous data release.

The North Ayrshire rate for claimants as a proportion of the working age population (aged 16-64) is 4.6%. This compares to regional figures of 4.3% for East Ayrshire and 3.7% for South Ayrshire and a Scottish average of 3.3%. This dataset is for March 2023 and shows the rate has remained the same compared to other areas where figures have increased.

In comparison to other local authority areas North Ayrshire has significantly higher levels of youth unemployment at 6.4% (youth claimant count), the 2nd highest rate in Scotland and is significantly higher than the Scotland average rate of 4.1%. Addressing youth employment remains a priority given its impacts on future life chances.

Mental Health

the Mental Health Foundation reports that more than one in nine (13%) adults in Scotland are feeling hopeless, four in ten (40%) feeling anxious and one-third (33%) feeling stressed, when thinking about their financial situation in the past month. The Mental Health Foundation is warning of a significant rise in mental health problems without adequate support.

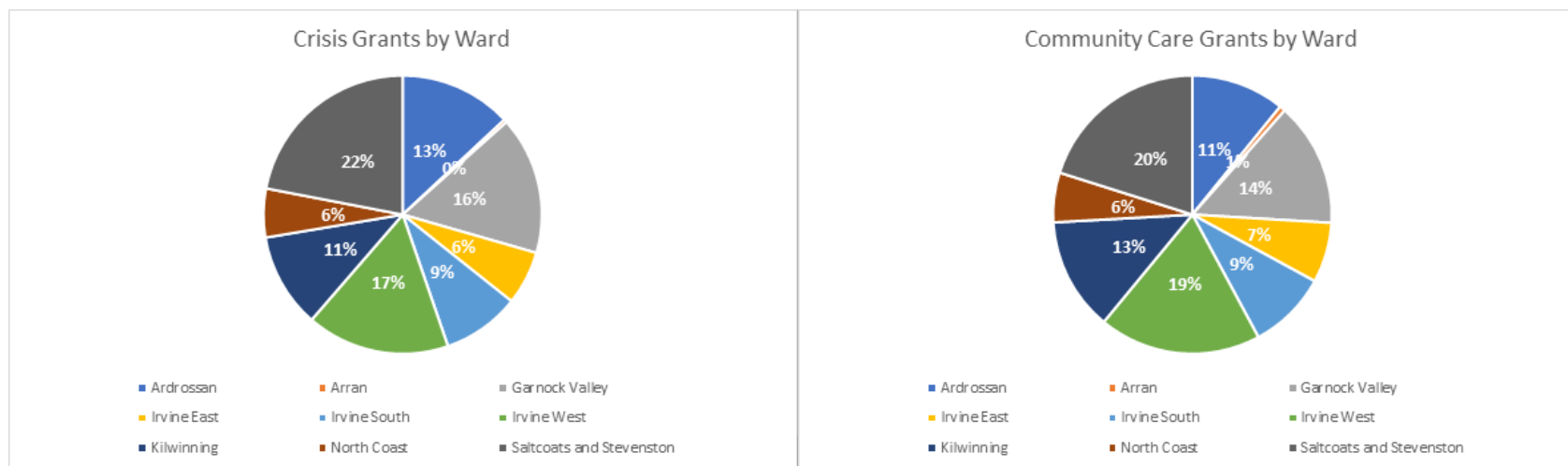
In 2020/21, 22% of people in North Ayrshire were prescribed medication for anxiety, depression, or psychosis in North Ayrshire HSCP. This is a 35.3% increase from the rate 10 years prior in 2010/11.

Many adults in Scotland are concerned about not being able to maintain their standard of living (75%), heat their home (70%) or pay general monthly household bills (65%). Significantly, more than half (52%) of adults in Scotland were at least a little worried about being able to afford food over the next few months, rising to 69% of those aged 18 to 34.

Costs of living

It is estimated that around 62% of Scottish households are now living in fuel poverty (paying more than 10% of their income on energy). This figure rises to 80% for low-income households. Another significant change is that almost half of all 'non-income' poor are now also likely to be fuel poor, up from 9.5% in 2019-20.

How does this manifest itself in North Ayrshire in 2023?



Recently, the Council has agreed funding packages to support our communities during the current cost-of-living crisis. These included:

1. A £1.4m Child Poverty and Cost of Living Fund
2. More than £2 million for an Energy Support Scheme which offers advice and support to help people lower their energy bills, as well as practical help to install energy-saving features in homes. This support will be directed to those who need it most and more details on this initiative will be announced in the coming weeks.
3. Two additional payments of £100 per child to increase the two separate Scottish Government Child Bridging Payments of £130 for families of children who are eligible for a free school meal, due to be distributed in October and December. The £100 payments will also be extended to low-income families with children of pre-school age, with approximately 3,300 families across North Ayrshire due to receive payment.
4. £500,000 to build on our existing Community Food Network to ensure basic food provision is available to anyone who requires the support, recognising the growing membership and anticipated increase in demand due to the impact of the rise in the energy cap.

The package also included a Public Transport Travel Scheme to support travel to work, a community transport initiative, support for the delivery of the Council's Modern Apprenticeship Programme, new Skills for Life Work placements and Employer Recruitment Incentives.

Other recent interventions include:

1. Support for our Community Food Larders and specific Community Centres in relation to ‘**warm spaces/banks**’, with co-located advice services, encouraging our communities to use already available, halls, centres, community cafes and libraries better, ensuring they feel comfortable in order to stay longer.
2. A business review of our Community Larders and testing of **bulk buying scheme to reduce the costs** of food purchase.
3. A partnership with the **local credit union** to provide low-cost loans to higher risk groups.
4. Community Planning ‘**Community Books**’ which will focus on supporting the most vulnerable to find warm places, low-cost meals and so on.

The Scottish Government Local Child Poverty Dashboard showed, between 2018 and 2019, a significant drop in the number of people in North Ayrshire who felt they were managing well financially, having gone down from 62% to 49%, whilst across Scotland numbers remained fairly static. In addition, since 2017, the statistics show an increasing number of adults with no savings, against a slight reduction across Scotland.

In North Ayrshire we are fully committed to becoming a fairer and more equal society. The Council shapes its strategies and focuses its work on tackling inequalities and creating a society where no one lives in poverty, where the economy is inclusive and where everyone has the same life chances to live fulfilling and healthy lives. Our Community Planning Partners e.g., NHS A&A, Police and Fire Services, Third Sector Interface, etc. are committed to this ambition.

4. Child Poverty: Our Priorities

Community Planning and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

We recognise that high levels of inequality, particularly poverty, exist in North Ayrshire. In our Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) 2022-30, we continue our focus on child poverty.

North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership Plan

The North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership recently refreshed the North Ayrshire Partnership Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan). The Partnership Plan has an overarching focus on reducing inequalities through partnership working and has three key priorities, these are:

- **Wellbeing:** Reduce inequalities by targeted support to improve individual, family and community health and wellbeing by addressing inequalities and enabling community wellbeing.

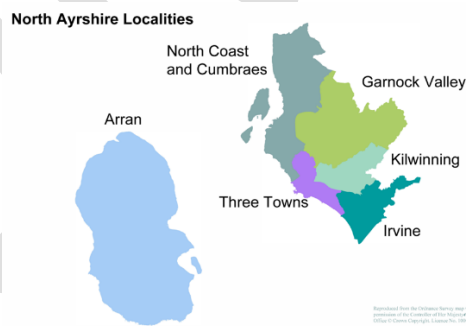
- **Work:** Address the causes and effects of poverty through a strong local economy and skills base by increasing employment, developing volunteering and providing better support for young people to develop the skills they need to play a strong role in our local economy.
- **World:** Work more closely and effectively together to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change by working together to by increasing active travel and carbon literacy with our organisations and communities.

There are several targeted outcomes within the Partnership Plan that focus on reducing inequalities and improving the wellbeing of children, young people and families through partnership working. These include a focus on financial supports, employability and health and wellbeing.

Our cross-cutting themes influence our approach to these priorities:

1. Building stronger communities – empowering communities to increase control over their lives, being supported to do things for themselves and having their voices heard in the planning and delivery of services.
2. Prevention – being proactive to avoid negative outcomes and early intervention in existing issues to mitigate their future impact. These do not operate in isolation. We draw from a range of partner plans to support these priorities. Our six Locality Partnerships alongside our Connected Communities Service are fundamental to ensuring that plans are built on lived experience.

Our Locality Partnerships are the means by which we fulfill duties under the Community Empowerment Act to have locality arrangements. There are six Locality Partnerships in North Ayrshire which cover the whole local authority, based on targeted responses to inequalities supported by the social capital of our wider communities.



In the **North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership Survey on Local Outcomes Improvement Plan Report**, 3rd February 2022, the overall priorities relating to supporting children and to the local economy were most likely to appear in respondents' top three priorities (this being the case in 57% and 51% of cases respectively). The supporting children priority received the highest share of respondents' selections for the top overall priority (35%). The priorities relating to reducing poverty and to supporting communities then sit slightly below this, with 36% and 35% respectively placing these in their top three priorities.

What did North Ayrshire residents say?

We asked local people to rank 9 statements. While all are important for North Ayrshire we wanted to know which areas we can do better on, and where we can make the biggest impact as a local partnership.

1

Supporting children to grow up loved, safe and respected so that they can reach their full potential

2

Creating a local economy where people can access good jobs with fair pay and conditions

3

Reducing poverty

Understanding the needs, circumstances and aspirations of people living in North Ayrshire

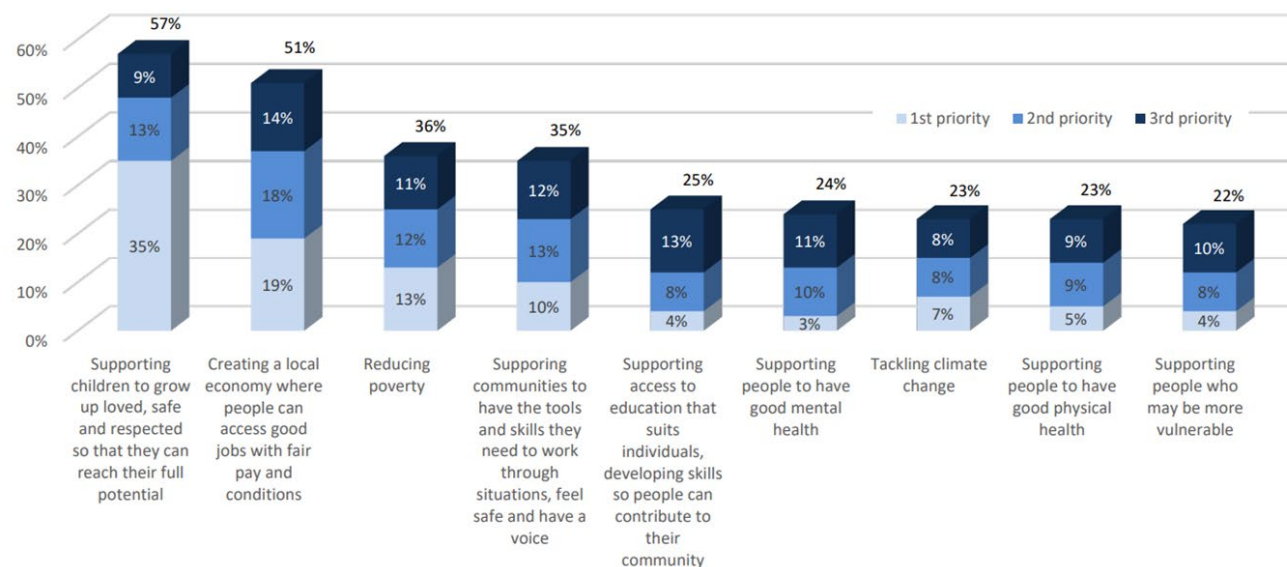
In developing this plan we were influenced both by the feedback from local people on what they think the key issues are as well as a range of statistics and analysis. This included a [Strategic Needs Assessment](#) written by Public Health Scotland which is available on our website.



Our People's Panel survey resulted in the following prioritisation which has informed our 2023-26 child poverty strategy:

Figure 2.1: Overall Priorities

Base: 645



Definition of Poverty

A family is considered as in poverty if, **after housing costs**, they are living on:

- **Less than £333 a week** or £17,400 a year for a single person with children aged between five and 14 years
- **Less than £450 a week** or £23,400 a year for a couple with children aged between five and 14 years.

Experiencing child poverty can undermine the health, wellbeing and educational attainment of children.

Child poverty is caused by a range of factors (or themes) which work together and result in inadequate household resources. Factors which contribute to insufficient income include:

- **Inadequate income from employment**
- **Inadequate income from social security benefits and**
- **Living costs.**

North Ayrshire is one of the most deprived areas in Scotland, with deprivation levels significantly higher than the national average, and has the second highest level of child poverty - after housing costs - of any area in Scotland. Child poverty statistics for 2019-20, released by Loughborough University, based on DWP and HMRC data, shows that an estimated 6200 children aged 0 to 16 years were living in poverty in North Ayrshire.

According to Children in low-income families: local area statistics, financial year ending 2022 Updated 23 March 2023, North Ayrshire absolute poverty has risen from 5,300 in 2017 to 5,951 in 2022. We use the local data to identify how we target our resources at sub-local authority level, for example our Wellness model, our Family Centred Wellbeing service and commissioned family support services from third sector partners.

5. North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy (2023-26) – delivering on long term objectives

In a recent publication, the Improvement Service (IS) said:

“Local commitment is increasingly vital at a time when – though rates of child poverty appear to be stabilising across Scotland – ongoing rises to the cost of living continue to push more and more families towards deep poverty, instability and crisis. “

The IS produced 4 key messages, with a number of key components, which include a focus on outcomes, the use of a wide range of policy levers, leadership and partnership at a local level, strategic use of resources, better use of data, the importance of a dignified approach through cash payments, local entitlements and universal approaches to income maximisation.

Our approach to developing our strategy takes into consideration:

- a focus on shared outcomes across partners
- the data available to us to inform our priorities
- the views of our residents.

North Ayrshire: Leadership of Tackling Child Poverty

At its meeting on 7 June 2022, Cabinet agreed to the creation of a **new Tackling Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board chaired by the Leader of the Council** and supported by NHS Ayrshire and Arran, the North Ayrshire HSCP, the Third Sector Interface and Community Planning Partners.

The Board is developing the **North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy 2023-26** to maximise learning and guidance from the Scottish Government's National Plan '[Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026](#)'. The Board has already demonstrated that one of its key strategic priorities is to ensure greater involvement of residents, including children and young people, in service design.

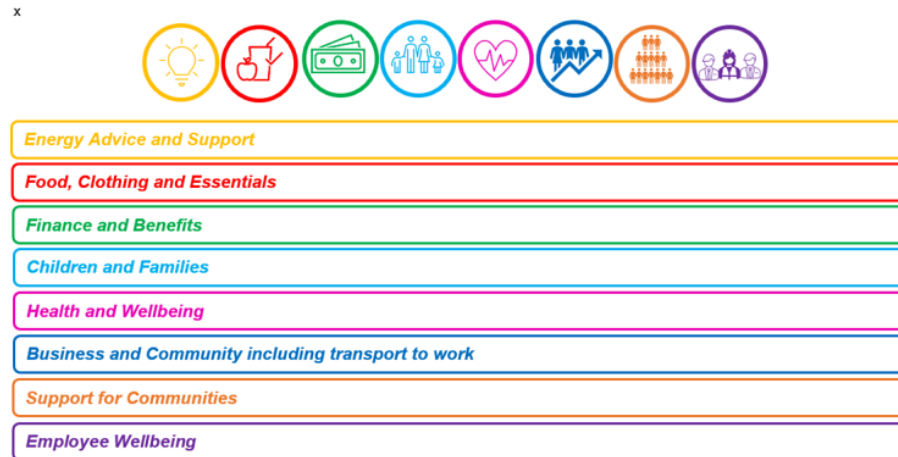
With the escalation in cost-of-living concerns this board now also oversees the Council's response to the current cost-of-living crisis. The board is chaired by the Council Leader. The strategic approach to the themes in relation to child poverty and cost-of-living are agreed by the Board and explored in conjunction with Community Planning, third sector partners and residents through a series of innovative mini enquiries.

North Ayrshire Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board: Terms of Reference

- *To provide leadership in the development and delivery of the Tackling Child Poverty Strategy for North Ayrshire*
- *To oversee the implementation of the Child Poverty Action Plan to tackle the inequalities affecting the outcomes for children and families, with a clear focus on early intervention and prevention and a whole system approach*
- *To monitor the Child Poverty Action Plan, including a performance framework linked to the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan and the Council Plan, on progress in delivering improved outcomes for children, young people and their families*
- *To advise on and agree an annual report for Cabinet approval and submission to Scottish Government*
- *To consult with children, young people and families on the priorities and actions within the plan so that they influence the design and delivery of policies and services.*
- *To promote effective partnership and whole system working and information sharing between services and organisations.*

We've listened to partners and residents and focused on how we improve the whole system through a "No Wrong Door" approach – how public services and partners can all be responsible for ensuring that we make the right support available.

The Cost-of-Living themes are as follows:



We need to continue to work more closely with communities – and as a result we’ve also created our Community Planning Partnership Wellbeing Alliance – where a North Ayrshire wide approach to early intervention and prevention activities are led by KA Leisure and partners. This enables people to have access to support and opportunities to improve their health as close to home as possible.

Co-design and co-production: a participatory approach

Our Locality Partnerships have all agreed local priorities. This work is led by local people supported by the Council and Community Planning partners. A £5.6m Community Investment Fund supports a range of initiatives which are focused on reducing inequalities. The links between the locality priorities and those in the LOIP are outlined below, alongside of an infographic that shows the work that takes place across our localities outside of each Partnership meeting to progress the locally agreed priorities:



Strategic Theme Mapping: LOIP, Child Poverty and Locality Priorities

North Ayrshire Partnership Plan (LOIP) Themes	Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy Themes	Child Poverty & Cost of Living Themes	Locality Priorities
Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural Environment Affordable Warmth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing household costs and mitigating the effects of poverty Maximising Income from Benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing our mental health and wellbeing (Irvine) Alleviating poverty (Irvine) Increasing civic pride and community engagement (Three Towns) Improving community wellbeing (Three Towns, Kilwinning) Improving access to financial services (North Coast) Increasing social inclusion (North Coast) Improving mental wellbeing (North Coast)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alleviating poverty and promoting equality of access to opportunities (Kilwinning) • Community (Arran, Islands Plan)
Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Green Economy • Transport & Travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising Income from Employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting skills and work opportunities (Irvine, North Coast, Kilwinning) • Promoting the local economy and tourism (Three Towns) • Work & Local Community (Garnock Valley) • Economy (Arran, Islands Plan)
World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Operations • Carbon Absorption • Climate Change Adaptation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Championing green health and the natural environment (Irvine) • Regenerating community facilities (Three Towns) • Moving Around (public transport, traffic & parking) (Garnock Valley) • Facilities & Amenities (Garnock Valley) • Improving our local environment (Kilwinning) • Environment (Arran, Islands Plan)

Mini-Enquiries

Our key commitment is to ensure that residents' needs and views inform our approach to child poverty and cost of living interventions has been strengthened by the introduction of a range of innovative mini enquiries, which have become a key part of our Participation Strategy. Under the leadership of the Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board, to date we have explored the following themes, agreed partnership action plans and are progressing the associated actions, which form part of the ongoing child poverty strategy:

- No Wrong Door
- Employability
- Food
- Childcare

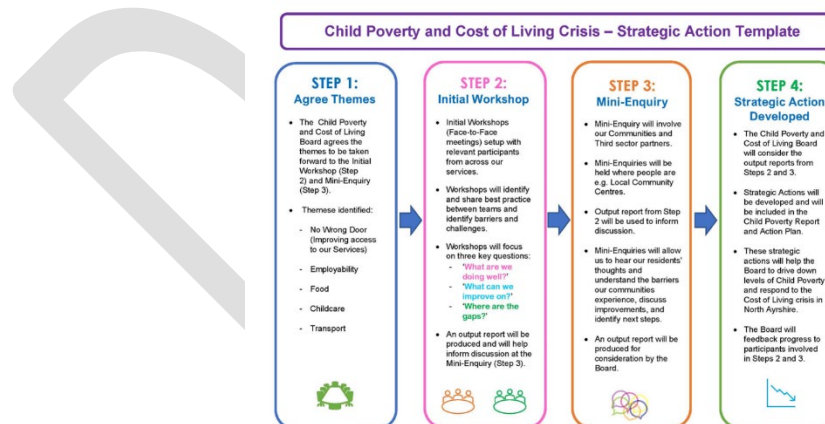
Place-based approaches

Two place-based mini-enquiries have been concluded on Arran and Cumbrae to align with the Scottish Government Island Cost Crisis Emergency Fund. Further locality mini-enquiries are planned for August 2023.

This local focus on child poverty reinforces the data and priorities which have emerged from the thematic discussions and utilises the social capital in our communities to help address the significant inequalities that exist in our communities in North Ayrshire.

Themes	Timescale	Actions	Evidence of success	Owner(s)	Partners	Progress against action
Develop a Cumbrae Food Local Plan	6-8 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Cumbrae Food Local Plan Identify local food producers and businesses Identify local food businesses Identify local food businesses Identify local food businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Food Plan Local Food Plan Local Food Plan Local Food Plan 	CLC Cumbrae/Island Council and Cumbrae	Community Partners: Cumbrae Island Community Centre	
Support mental health and wellbeing	6-8 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support mental health and wellbeing Support mental health and wellbeing Support mental health and wellbeing Support mental health and wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support mental health and wellbeing Support mental health and wellbeing Support mental health and wellbeing Support mental health and wellbeing 	CLC Cumbrae/Island Council and Cumbrae	Community Partners: Cumbrae Island Community Centre	
Employability support	6-8 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employability support Employability support Employability support Employability support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employability support Employability support Employability support Employability support 	CLC Cumbrae/Island Council and Cumbrae	Community Partners: Cumbrae Island Community Centre	
Energy advice and support	6-8 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy advice and support Energy advice and support Energy advice and support Energy advice and support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy advice and support Energy advice and support Energy advice and support Energy advice and support 	CLC Cumbrae/Island Council and Cumbrae	Community Partners: Cumbrae Island Community Centre	

A consistent approach to identifying expected outcomes and actions from our mini enquiries is ensured by the following approach:



Joint Cabinet

In North Ayrshire we have a very well-developed Youth Participation approach which ensure young people's voices are heard and that they influence our work. This includes a recent Cost of the School Day conference and our regular Joint Cabinets, where the Council's Cabinet has joint sessions with young people from every secondary school and our ASN campus. The action plans produced from Joint Cabinet inform our work.

The outputs from the above engagement (and more) with our partners and communities have informed the three-year Child Poverty strategy and annual report.

6. Our Tackling Child Poverty Strategy 2023-26

By 2026 we will have improved the outcomes for children and families living in poverty through the following:

<i>Our Objectives 2023-2026</i>	<i>LOIP Priority</i>	<i>Action Ref 2023-24 – to be completed in final version</i>
<i>We will provide local leadership in tackling child poverty</i>	<i>Wellbeing</i>	
<i>We will have greater involvement of residents, including children and young people, in service design and delivery</i>	<i>Wellbeing</i>	
<i>We will ensure our services are human and kind</i>	<i>Wellbeing</i>	
<i>We will commit to taking a No Wrong Door approach with partners</i>	<i>Wellbeing</i>	
<i>We will advocate for our residents in accessing resources and funding to tackle child poverty</i>	<i>Wellbeing</i>	
<i>Within the Community Planning Partnership, we will continue to take a system wide approach to child poverty within our Wellbeing priority and use our resources strategically to focus on better outcomes</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>	

<i>Across the Council, NHSAAA, our Community Planning Partners and our third and voluntary sector partners in our communities, we will ensure our workforce planning enshrines a No Wrong Door approach to access to services and that poverty impact assessments are embedded in our policy and practice</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>	
<i>We will examine how economic development, transport, skills and childcare provision can combine to break down barriers to employment with parents as a priority group, ensure local economic practices (Community Wealth Building) support tackling child poverty, and implement key actions.</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>	
<i>We will understand and address where possible the cost-of-living challenges that our families face</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>	
<i>We will use data to inform place-based approaches to interventions and targeted use of resources Wellness, family support, parental employability</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>	
<i>We will improve access to affordable childcare</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>	
<i>We will encourage greater job quality through Fair Work</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>	
<i>We will ensure accessibility to employment and services through support for priority families</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>	
<i>We will maximise the uptake of benefits and support financial inclusion</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>	
<i>We will drive further progress in removing financial barriers to education (COSD)</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>	
<i>We will improve whole family wellbeing outcomes, supported by the Scottish Government Whole Family Wellbeing Fund</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>	
<i>We will better link adult and children's services to improve outcomes for families living in poverty</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>	
<i>We will Improve the use of data and performance measures in relation to what the local issues are and what actions need to be taken around child poverty</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>	

7. Priority Families

The Scottish Government identified six groups (or priority families) most at risk of poverty in Scotland. These are:

1. Single parent households
2. Households where an adult and/or a child is disabled
3. Households with three or more children (large households)
4. Minority ethnic households
5. Households with a child under one year old
6. Households where the mother is under 25 years of age.

Examples of current support for priority groups in North Ayrshire

- A **Parental Employment Manager** has been appointed to ensure the greatest possible impact of our work through the **Parental Employability Support Fund** and other initiatives. Our Employability Support Services continues to target parents, young people and people with disabilities and work in partnership with other services to identify and target possible clients.
- We currently fund **We Work for Families** as our specialist employability support for parents who have had referrals exclusively from Health Visitors, and we are extending these referral pathways to support parents accessing 1,140 childcare hours.
- **Family Nurse Partnership** (FNP) is an intensive home-visiting programme for first time young mums and their families. Support is offered from the point of booking into midwifery services and then until the child is 2 years old, where the care of the family will be transferred to the local health visiting team. FNP provides a very client-focused approach to the family and works alongside the mum and baby to support areas like parenting, bonding-attachment, feeding, child development and self-confidence. There are currently 75 active clients with just under 90% of them living in the lowest three SIMD quintile.
- Housing identifies priority families, including a high percentage of lone parent families who are at risk of becoming homeless, are homeless or are in temporary accommodation, to allow consideration of child poverty in its **Housing allocation policy**.
- **Our Family Centred Wellbeing Service** is being scaled up to two further localities through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.
- In our **Intensive and Therapeutic Counselling Support for Care Experienced and Vulnerable Young People**, the criteria have been widened so that any child/young person who requires intensive therapeutic counselling can access this through our partner provider.

- **Support in the Early Years:** Expansion of the service attached to Health Visiting teams, which will support early intervention and prevention work for children under school and work with the whole family where appropriate, is being funded through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.
- **Early Learning and Childcare Provision:** We offer up to 30 hours free childcare per week to all children aged 3-5 and eligible two-year-olds.
- The **Equal Supported Employment** programme helps people with disabilities or long-term health conditions in North Ayrshire get back into work. The focus on getting people involved in something they enjoy, so they learn other skills like communications skills while having fun. Equal currently has 124 active clients, has helped 26 clients into work so far this year and has referred 70 onto additional services.
- **Strategic Equity Funding** is utilised in North Ayrshire to fund a range of supports including family learning opportunities and targeted nurture to improve pupil readiness to learn in 28 schools. Significant work is underway to embed nurturing principles on a whole school level across all educational establishments.
- **Targeted summer childcare and food programmes** for families includes employability support.
- Connected Communities runs **young mums' groups** to provide support, peer support networks, employability support, benefits maximisation advice and childcare opportunities.
- In 2021-22, North Ayrshire Council, as a corporate parent and a Disability Leader, recruited 24% (compared to the national average of 13.3%) young people with a disability and 6% (compared to the national average of 2%) who were care experienced to their **Modern Apprentice Programme**.
- Arran CVS facilitates the North Ayrshire share of the £15 million **Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund 2022/23** supported by a multi partner steering group. The Fund prioritises a range of 'at risk' groups such as people facing socio-economic disadvantage, black and ethnic minority communities, people with a long-term health condition or disability, older people and LGBTI communities. In its second year, the fund has had a particular focus on responding to the cost-of-living crisis and an increased emphasis on those facing socio-economic disadvantage, with this focus to be continued in year 3.
- A partnership with the **local credit union** provides low-cost loans to higher risk groups.
- We work closely with our Syrian and Ukraine task force, Ayrshire College and community partners to support our **New Scots**. This includes support from Council services, HSCP and capacity building and youth services opportunities.

Examples of planned support for priority groups 2023-24

- **We will continue to capture voices and experience** of children and young people and their families and priority groups who are experiencing poverty and build in learning to policy and policy change.
- We will review, develop, promote and improve North Ayrshire **advice services** to ensure they are person-centred, responsive, and meet the needs of all our residents, particularly the more vulnerable groups.

- We will promote the Financial Inclusion Referral Pathways within NHSAA where staff refer families to appropriate FIS and incorporate this into routine practice, including role of Better Health Hub in referral to FIS.
- We will further develop **Maternity Services Income Maximisation** joint service.
- We will continue to build upon the provisions put in place through the **Whole Family Wellbeing Fund** to support families to access financial inclusion and benefit maximisation supports.
- We will scale up the **Family Centred Wellbeing Service** through the Whole Family Wellbeing fund.
- We will provide further support to enable families to take up their entitlement to Best Start Grant (BSG) and Best Start Food Scheme.
- We will introduce a **Community Charge Nurse for Care Experienced Young People** based in Throughcare/Aftercare Team (Whole Family Wellbeing Fund).
- We will introduce a **Dads' Support Worker** to develop and deliver specific programmes for dads, including practical parenting workshops; working in partnership with *Dads Rock* and learning from the established programmes and approaches they have developed (Whole Family Wellbeing Fund).
- We will continue to work towards developing sustainable models of **school aged childcare** for North Ayrshire families.
- We will continue to develop our community-based support for **young mums**.
- We will develop our **Neighbourhood Networks** to include a Transition Network and a network for young people to strengthen prevention and early intervention for people with learning disabilities funded by the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.
- We will work with Third Sector and community partners to scope our current provision for whole family support and identify where our gaps are, to create a **fund for partner activity**.
- We will review our **housing allocation policy** to continue to ensure child poverty is a key consideration in decision making.
- We will explore, in partnership with the Improvement Service and Glasgow City Council, opportunities to undertake a **data sharing pilot** with Social Security Scotland on use of Scottish Child Payment data to help identify need.
- We will progress a **Pathfinder** project with the Improvement Service to explore ways of obtaining consent to process data for the benefit of our residents, to intervene early to identify unmet need.
- We will work with local partners to identify appropriate **data and health intelligence** to inform monitoring of progress against income-based child poverty targets.

Case Study

Ruth was registered in 2022 with We Work for Families, lives in a low-income household with her partner and their two young children. She had been diagnosed with postnatal depression and had been prescribed medication. After a few weeks of engaging, we discussed options and agreed to be referred to Working for a Healthy Economy for counselling, which she advised has helped her immensely.

Ruth also said that while she loves being a mum that she felt as though she needed to be 'her' too, earning her own money and interacting with adults. We discussed options and she considered her qualifications and experience as a nail technician and that she would love to go back to the beauty industry but felt she was limited in what she could offer and that her skills may be outdated. Due to the nature of the beauty industry, Ruth said she thought she would need to gain more relevant qualifications.

We helped Ruth to source an accredited course in Russian Lashes, which we funded. This course was completed online as she did not feel confident enough to attend a class at the time. WWFF supplied a Chromebook to allow her to access this course online. She was over the moon when she passed and sent photos of the work that she had done to gain the qualification. She identified another course, Laminated Brows, she used her ITA Account to pay the first £200 and WWFF funded the excess. Ruth now felt that with these new qualifications, her experience, and the confidence she had gained in completing the courses that she was ready to start work. She found a salon that she felt comfortable in and committed to being there all day one day a week offering beauty treatments. For her to be able to go to work she needed childcare for her baby, we helped her to find suitable childcare and funded the initial four sessions until she was able to pay for it herself.

Ruth's business has grown significantly, and she has found herself in constant demand, building up a large client base. She decided that with her son now in preschool she can work extra days and have her own premises which is more financially viable as she can come and go as she needs. As she has been working, clients have asked for different treatments, and she wasted no time in gaining the qualifications needed to provide these services. WWFF funded an acrylic nail extension and nail art course. She has recently been nominated for a national beauty award and was absolutely blown away when she won the Bronze Certificate. Ruth has grown so much in confidence since joining the project and continues to do so. More recently WWFF part-funded a new beauty bed as this is a vital piece of equipment but also expensive. She continues to work hard and is expanding her knowledge in the beauty business continually updating her skills and investing in more courses and has shown she is a very dedicated and hard-working individual who has achieved so much, an inspiration - and all this happened following her accessing the targeted childcare offered by North Ayrshire Council in summer 2022.

8. Child Poverty progress report and action plan: Summary of actions and progress: 2022-23 and new actions for 2023-24

Section 1 – Maximising Income from Employment 2022-23: Why is this a priority for North Ayrshire?

LOIP outcomes: Work and World.

- *50.4% of children were in working households in North Ayrshire in October 2022 in comparison with Scottish average of 60.9% (ONS, 2022)*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11.7% of employees (18+) were earning less than the Living Wage (2021) compared to the Scottish average of 14.4% (Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, (www.gov.scot)) • Underemployment (of 16+ population (%)) (2020) showed North Ayrshire levels at 10.7% compared to a Scottish average of 8.1% (Scottish Government) • The Employment Rate (January 2022 to December 2022) showed that North Ayrshire sits at 73.6% against the Scottish average of 74.4% (ONS?) 		
Action: What we committed to doing	Progress: what we've done	Ongoing 2023-24 or complete
Progress the regional Fair Employment workstream action plan	<p>We score fair work first (including living wage) in all relevant contracts.</p> <p>We carry out annual review of living wage status of all applicable contracts and prepare action plan, to encourage suppliers to work towards if required.</p> <p>We refer all suppliers who are not living wage accredited or do not pay living wage to all suitable staff to the Fair Work Ayrshire Team to enable them to encourage payment/accreditation status.</p> <p>We are continuing to encourage Third Sector organisations to pay the Real Living Wage.</p> <p>We have offered Cost of Living payments to staff (90% locally based staff).</p>	Ongoing in 2023-24
Support school leavers and their families to secure positive and sustained destinations, for example through the Youth Guarantee	<p>Working with the Local Employability Partnership, identification and tracking of vulnerable leavers has improved. Schools are increasingly using the school management information system (SEEMIS) 16plus tab which helps to inform Skills Development Scotland (SDS) Data Hub. This data is used by SDS and other partners for early intervention and support in advance of anticipated school leaving date.</p> <p>An Ambition Agreement worker offers individualised support and various pathways for vulnerable leavers and supported by partner agencies. For example, Barnardos are employed for targeted and outreach work with young people, including care experienced, facing significant challenges in accessing a positive destination.</p> <p>As a result of ongoing work, in February 2023 for North Ayrshire nearly 96% of all school leavers achieved an initial positive destination, the highest figure ever recorded for North Ayrshire.</p> <p>In the last academic year, 229 young people were mentored by the MCR programme across six North Ayrshire secondary schools to enable identified pupils to achieve to their full potential and obtain a positive post-school destination.</p>	Ongoing in 2023-24
Support the delivery of the Council's Modern Apprentice Programme, including young people	Over the 3-year period, 151 new MAs were recruited, achieving the target set. The MA programme supports the Council's future workforce planning programme, successfully recruiting local people to gain work experience and a qualification.	Ongoing in 2023-24

with a disability and who are care experienced.	<p>In 2021-22, North Ayrshire Council, as a corporate parent and a Disability Leader, recruited 24% (compared to the national average of 13.3%) young people with a disability and 6% (compared to the national average of 2%) who were care experienced to their MA Programme.</p> <p>Public Health are exploring filling vacancies using the employability advisor's knowledge and resource including recruitment of a modern apprentice.</p>	
Support access to employment in families where disability is a factor	<p>The Equal: Supported Employment programme helps people with disabilities or long-term health conditions in North Ayrshire get back into work. The focus on getting people involved in something they enjoy, so they learn other skills like communications skills while having fun. Equal currently has 124 active clients, has helped 26 clients into work so far this year and has referred 70 onto additional services.</p>	Ongoing in 2023-24
Support parents to progress to or improve employment	<p>A Parental Employment Manager has been appointed to ensure the greatest possible impact of our work through the Parental Employability Support Fund and other initiatives.</p> <p>Our Skills for Life model has been extended to include paid work experience within the Third Sector and has supported over 120 unemployed people to secure employment.</p> <p>The We Work for Families (WWFF) partnership offers person-centred employability support to parents/ carers who are unemployed or on low income and supports individuals to overcome barriers to training, education and employment and works alongside the individual for the duration of their employability journey. Since April 22, 78 parents/ carers have been referred to WWFF. Since 2017, over 800 parents/ carers have been referred for employability support.</p> <p>We currently fund We Work for Families as our specialist employability support for parents who have had referrals exclusively from Health Visitors. We are extending these pathways to support parents accessing 1,140 childcare hours.</p> <p>We are working with Employability and Ayrshire College to offer apprenticeships to existing staff and are currently progressing Hospitality qualification and we have around 12 people interested in this training opportunity.</p> <p>We have a care at home pilot offering more flexible hours of employment.</p> <p>We continue to offer families support for income maximisation and use and awareness of food larders and promoting the use of Third sector supports.</p> <p>We continue to promote Employee Supported Volunteering for all organisations for staff teams to support local groups and charities.</p> <p>We have responsive and flexible childcare solutions for parents engaging in training during the Easter School holidays.</p>	Ongoing in 2023-24

	Public Transport Scheme – 99 parents received a travel pass to access 3 months free public transport which supported enhanced engagement with employability services as well as increased wellbeing and family leisure time.	
Targeted summer childcare and food programmes for families to include employability support	The Information and Culture Service were able to offer childcare support to parents who were undertaking an employability pilot project organised by North Ayrshire Council's Employability Team, Ayrshire College and We Work For Families. Through this project, parents engaged in training then were interviewed for a 6-month work placement with partner, anchor organisations. All employers involved were aware that a 10am until 2pm work pattern would be favoured to avoid the challenges that childcare can bring. SEE CASE STUDY	Ongoing in 2023-24
Create new Skills for Life work placements	Our Skills for Life model delivered with North Ayrshire Council has been extended this year to include paid work experience within the Third Sector. This has supported over 120 unemployed people in the last year to secure employment. A pilot programme - Step into Business - uses the Skills for Life Model and 11 parents are now in paid work experience within our CPP Partners and anchor organisations - NHS, SFRS, TACT, Ayrshire College and the parents are working towards achieving a SVQ Level II in Business Administration - certifying competence in the workplace. We are keen to extend this to growth sectors such as engineering, which would unlock potential for higher paid employment.	Ongoing in 2023-24
Develop mentoring within the Positive Steps with Partners Project employability project	Employability is working closely with TACT (TSI) to deliver a Positive Pathways programme specifically for parents to access volunteering to develop work experience - using the Steps Programme to build confidence. TACT (one half of the TSI) employ two sessional Project Mentors to work alongside the Positive Steps Team. They have one Project Mentor delivering our Cooking on a Budget Programme, working with 15 individuals. This support comprises of support with budgeting and nutritional advice, as well as teaching basic cooking skills. Positive Steps are keen to continue to develop this role and are looking to implement Mindfulness Sessions in the near future.	Ongoing in 2023-24
We will progress Employer Recruitment Incentives (ERIs)	In 2022-23, 54 people were progressed into employment utilising an Employer Recruitment Incentive to secure employment.	Ongoing in 2023-24
Establish our Digital Growth Fund for Businesses	53 Businesses were supported through specialist digital consultancy and grant provision. The fund has now been completely delivered and closed off. Those receiving support will continue to be supported by a local adviser to continue their digital plan.	
Complete the roll out of our literacy and employability programmes.	CLD employability programmes now have an established partnership with SDS and have workers for both schools and communities. Programmes in secondaries support the most vulnerable and disengaged young people into a positive destination. Opportunities include an Easter Skills Roadshow, ESOL Employability	Ongoing in 2023-24

	<p>Introductory sessions, 1:1 or group sessions on CV building/job searches/personal statement, online employability, and college application support. The Mobile Youth Centre supported this programme through roadshows in schools and communities, with drop-in sessions and employability awards such as Playback ICE. 1433 adults have engaged in CBAL including social media training, bike maintenance employability, Gaelic for beginners, Community Council training, ESOL buddies and locality CBAL programmes. Funding was allocated via CBAL to 27 projects.</p>	
Develop partner support for care experienced young people	<p>SFRS offer the following supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community garden projects and social events • Halloween, Christmas and Easter events involving games and gifts for young people • Soap making sessions at Ardrossan Fire Station with LUSH. • SFRS mentoring project • Care experienced young people attended YVS at Kilwinning and another care experienced young person has been offered a position within the unit. • Fire Safety Support and Education is being undertaken with various young people within ENSA. <p>Aligned with The Promise, the Police Scotland Community Wellbeing Unit (CWU) in North Ayrshire has been engaging with staff and residents from several children's residential houses across North Ayrshire. The team has built a good rapport with the young people with several attending at Irvine Police Office where they were cooked an officers' breakfast. There has been a marked reduction in the number of young people being reported missing and potentially coming to harm since the adoption of the CWU in North Ayrshire in June 2022. Work is ongoing to hold joint events with Connected Communities and KA Leisure aimed at forging positive relationships with young people in the community from all settings including those in care whilst addressing concerns they may have.</p>	Ongoing in 2023-24
Develop partner support for people in recovery through mentoring, volunteering and work placements	<p>Mentoring, Volunteering & Work Placements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers and various groups within communities attend the community fire station gardens to carry out work and socialise with others at events such as weekly gardening groups and coffee and chat groups set up for local tenants and residents, some of whom are in recovery or have mental health issues. Two volunteers are due to start with Community Action Team (CAT) in June 2023 from the Positive Steps group within North Ayrshire. The volunteers will assist with CAT duties. • Volunteers from Positive Steps are painting a unit within Kilwinning Fire Station that will be utilised as a Safe Space area for our communities. 	Ongoing in 2023-24

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SFRS Rapid Relief Team – pan Ayrshire - will provide food boxes, sanitary products etc to vulnerable families, supported by volunteers. • Various FireSkills courses are being held within ENSA. • Work is ongoing to establish pathways for police to refer individuals to statutory partners and the third sector. 	
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Maximising Income from Employment: What else are we doing?

- **Procurement (North Ayrshire Council)**
 - Employment community benefit clauses are included in all procurement exercises over £500K. Suppliers are asked to employ local people (employment duration, based on the value of the contract awarded). These jobs are mandatory, and delivery is monitored by our Community Benefits Officer.
 - Payment of the real living wage is encouraged in all procurement exercises. If suppliers do not pay all staff real living wage, we ask what their plans are to work towards it.

Case Study – We Work for Families
<p>Jane, a lone parent, registered with We Work for Families in November 2021, after making a self-referral from one of our outreach days. Jane lives in a SIMD area in a single adult household, has a long-term physical condition, is long-term unemployed, a primary carer of three children in a private let, has children under 18 and is the primary carer of child with a disability.</p> <p>Since leaving school Jane has only worked for two months in a work placement in 2007. She left to have her eldest son and has been his registered carer since due to his disabilities. She has good communication skills and no problems with her literacy. She had internet and the use of her smart phone but did not have access to a device to complete online training so We Work for Families were able to provide a chrome book through Connecting Scotland.</p> <p><i>“Having the chrome book made it easier to complete online training. I was excited that I could do this from my home and didn’t need to go anywhere to do it. I am so pleased that I have some qualifications that can be put on my CV”.</i></p> <p>At time of registration Jane was keen to work towards gaining employment after her youngest son went to school (August 2022). We Work for Families has supported her by having calls and keeping in touch through WhatsApp, and this has increased her confidence as she worked through the employability toolkit in preparation for August 2022.</p> <p><i>“At first I didn’t really know too much about the programme but when Tracey explained it to me, I thought this is something that could help me”</i></p> <p>Jane has since completed numerous on-line modules in Care using her chrome book and has gained accredited qualifications, which have been added to the CV that We Work for Families help to create. We Work for Families discussed with Jane that childcare would be required if she were to gain employment outside of school hours. Jane said she would be happy to look into using a childminder to care for the children but ideally wanted to work during school hours.</p>

Jane was put forward for North Ayrshire Council's pilot scheme with Care at Home. She attended weekly workshops to improve her confidence, employability skills, interview skills and techniques and has gained more qualifications. She secured an interview and has now been offered one of the positions. This will allow Jane to work during school hours therefore she will not require childcare which was one of her initial barriers and has now reached her 6-month milestone and has just been offered a permanent contract with North Ayrshire Council's Care at Home Team.

"I will be able to have some independence back and be better off financially. I will have extra money which will allow me to treat the boys."

We Work for Families have been able to provide money for travel, tickets and lunch via the Easter Funding and Summer funding that we secured, for Jane to take her 3 sons on a day out on 2 separate occasions.

"The weans loved it, they all had fun and loved the fact that they were able to run around and enjoy themselves. On the last day out, my youngest son experienced the cinema for the first time, something that I wouldn't have been able to afford myself."

Maximising Income from Employment: Areas of Focus 2023-24

What progress have we made?

- *% of young adults aged 16-19 participating in education, training or employment has risen from 90.1% (2021) to 90.8% in 2022.*
- *in 2023 nearly 96% of all school leavers achieved an initial positive destination, the highest figure ever recorded for North Ayrshire.*
- *The number of Modern Apprentices recruited by North Ayrshire Council, who are care experienced or disabled has risen from 6 in 2021-22 to 42 in 2022-23.*
- *% of all school leavers achieving one or more awards at SCQF level 5 has dropped from 89.6% in 2021 to 88.6% in 2022*
- *% of care experienced school leavers achieving one or more awards at SCQF level 5 has risen from 62.4% in 2021 to 67.7% in 2022*
- *Number of three-to-five-year-olds registered to access 1140 hours of free early learning and childcare in North Ayrshire has risen from 1893 in 2021 to 1936 in 2022.*
- *% Working age population in work has risen from 71.2% to 73.6% between September 2022 and Dec 2022.*

What will change?	Our actions	How will we know?
North Ayrshire residents will benefit from more jobs and training in the local area.	We will amend the community benefits policy for procured contractors to ensure more local people are trained and employed through Council funded contracts.	There will be an increase in local people trained and employed through contracts awarded by the Council.
North Ayrshire residents will have their incomes increased.	We will continue to encourage payment of real living wage across North Ayrshire Council's partners, including in the Third Sector.	There will be an increase in the number of local people receiving the real living wage.

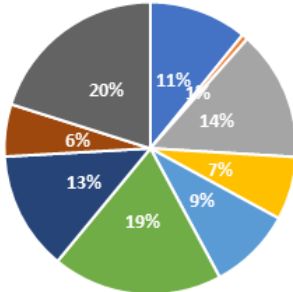
North Ayrshire parents will have their household incomes maximised through employment opportunities.	We will increase opportunities for parents to secure employment through the Employability Service and identified partners.	There will be an increase in the number of parents engaging with North Ayrshire Council's Employability Service as part of established parenting programmes.
North Ayrshire residents will have increased access to a range of employment opportunities across Local Employability Partnership organisations.	We will continue to work collaboratively as part of the Local Employability Partnership to proactively identified opportunities to reduce barriers to employment across partnership organisations.	There will be an increase in the number of local residents accessing employment opportunities, including Modern Apprenticeships, across Local Employability Partnership organisations.
North Ayrshire residents will have access to a wider range of employment opportunities through Community Planning Partnership organisations.	We will continue to work in partnership with Public Health to explore opportunities to fill vacancies through innovative approaches which utilise employability advisor knowledge and resources.	There will be an increase in the number of local Public Health vacancies that are filled through innovative employability pathways, including the Modern Apprentices.
North Ayrshire residents will know where to access employment support from North Ayrshire Council and partner organisations.	We will explore approaches to raising awareness of local employment support for parents and carers through use of peer navigators and peer to peer influencing.	There will be an increase in the number of parents registering interest in local employability support in North Ayrshire.
North Ayrshire residents participating in employability and skills courses in North Ayrshire will have access to meaningful work placements.	We will continue to create meaningful placements for individuals on employability and skills courses in North Ayrshire.	There will be an increase in the number of employability and skill course participants reporting they were able to access a meaningful placement.
North Ayrshire residents will have access to a wider range of Modern Apprenticeship opportunities.	We will implement changes to our Modern Apprenticeship programme following a review which included an assessment of available budget; new apprenticeship products; workforce development needs; labour market conditions; other employability offers for young people; and feedback from modern apprentices and services.	There will be an expansion to the number of Modern Apprenticeship programmes with a diverse range of apprenticeship opportunities, including graduate and foundation apprenticeships, with ringfenced places for young people with a disability and or care experience, to join the Council's workforce.
North Ayrshire residents will have access to a greater range of opportunities through public sector supplier funded community benefits.	We will work in partnership with NHS Ayrshire and Arran to improve local child-related community benefits that are delivered via the Community Benefits Gateway in partnership with	There will be an increase in the number and uptake of children related community benefits available in North Ayrshire via the NHS Community Benefit Gateway.

	Third Sector organisations, schools and community organisations.	
North Ayrshire residents will have easier access to a greater range of employment opportunities within public sector organisations in North Ayrshire.	We will ensure the Council, CPP and partner websites promote specialist public sector recruitment websites (including MyJobScotland and the NHS Recruitment Portal) and we will ensure role profiles accurately reflect the role and job environment with minimal terminology and appropriate minimum criteria.	There will be an increase in the number of local residents accessing employment opportunities through public sector organisations in North Ayrshire.
North Ayrshire residents will have access to a greater range of employment opportunities in North Ayrshire.	We will develop opportunities for job shadowing, work experience and volunteering and promote these through channels such as job application websites, TSI for parents	There will be an increase in the number of local residents engaging in TSI employment opportunities.
North Ayrshire residents will have access to a greater range of mentoring opportunities.	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service will implement a mentoring programme for kinship carers during summer 2023.	There will be an increase in the number of kinship carers being supported by CPP partner organisations.

Section 2 – Maximising Income from Benefits 2022-23 Why is this a priority for North Ayrshire?

LOIP outcomes: Work and World.

- *28.6% of North Ayrshire children live in relative low-income families (2022) compared to a Scottish average of 20.8% (Local Child Poverty Dashboard (www.gov.scot))*
- *The North Ayrshire rate for claimants as a proportion of the working age population (aged 16-64) is 4.6%. This compares to a Scottish average of 3.3%.*
- *The Unemployment Rate (January 2022 to December 2022) for North Ayrshire was 3.6% against a Scottish average of 3.4% (ONS).*
- *The number of households in rent arrears / council tax debt rose from 5461 (40%) in 2022 to 5793 (43%) in 2023.*

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Healthy Weight: The 2020/21 percentage of Primary 1 children with a healthy weight in North Ayrshire was 65%, decreasing by 9.9 percentage points from 2019/20. The figure for Scotland was 70%.																						
Action: What we committed to doing	Progress	Ongoing 2023-24 or complete																				
Top up the child bridging payments for 2022 school holidays	The scheduled summer Child Bridging Payment of £130 was increased to £230 (additional £100 payment by North Ayrshire Council) and eligibility for the £100 payment was extended to low-income families of children of pre-school age. Feedback indicates that the timing and value of the payments has made a real difference to families, especially as school holidays and colder weather impact on household bills. The recent increase in the Scottish Child Payment has been implemented and therefore the purpose of the bridging payment has ended.	Ongoing in 2023-24																				
Improve access to services via “Accessing our Council” and by engaging with our residents	<p>We are investigating opportunities to do a proof of concept using RPA (Robotic Process Automation) with the aim being able to use this technology to automate benefits such as Free School Meals, School Clothing Grants, Education Maintenance Allowance and Community Care Grants to enable these to be processed and administered as quickly as possible.</p> <p>We understand the importance of place-based needs and approaches in relation to joining up our services and those of our partners in local settings, including community hubs, by using local data, for example:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Community Care Grants by Ward</p>  <table><thead><tr><th>Ward</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Ardrossan</td><td>6%</td></tr><tr><td>Arran</td><td>20%</td></tr><tr><td>Garnock Valley</td><td>1%</td></tr><tr><td>Irvine East</td><td>11%</td></tr><tr><td>Irvine South</td><td>14%</td></tr><tr><td>Irvine West</td><td>19%</td></tr><tr><td>Kilwinning</td><td>13%</td></tr><tr><td>North Coast</td><td>7%</td></tr><tr><td>Saltcoats and Stevenston</td><td>9%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Ward	Percentage	Ardrossan	6%	Arran	20%	Garnock Valley	1%	Irvine East	11%	Irvine South	14%	Irvine West	19%	Kilwinning	13%	North Coast	7%	Saltcoats and Stevenston	9%	Ongoing in 2023-24
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	<p>Our support team is spending an increased amount of time supporting families to make online application for benefits or support. This included ELC placements, access to Best Start grants and following up with issues relating to the Department of Works and Pension or Social Security Scotland.</p> <p>Automation has been achieved for Council Tax Reduction (CTR) which allows information regarding income received from DWP to be automatically input to the Council Tax system and calculate the CTR award.</p> <p>Improvements have been completed to streamline the Council's top 15 online services, improving online customer journeys.</p> <p>The launch of the new customer online account My NAC uses the national My Account to authenticate customers and will offer a simple secure way to access a range of Scottish public services online. The new account will allow customers to see the status and history of all their cases and they will also be able to access their existing Council Tax and Housing Rent Online accounts.</p>	
Review North Ayrshire Council and HSCP financial inclusion services	<p>North Ayrshire Council has agreed a which Financial Inclusion Strategy that reflects the impact of the current economic situation on our services and details our immediate response to meeting the needs of people in our communities during 2023-24. The interim plan for 2023-24 will focus on the main local authority and HSCP-funded welfare rights and debt advice service. Over the next year, a full consultation process will be undertaken with the public and key stakeholders, along with a detailed mapping and analysis of local financial inclusion services provision. Through this process, the strategy will be reviewed and refreshed for 2024-28, and a longer-term, cross-sector delivery plan put in place encompassing wider financial inclusion services.</p> <p>We revised our Financial Inclusion pathway in June 2022 considering the cost-of-living crisis. The revised pathway now considers benefits advice; debt advice; energy advice; and employability. Health Visitors are now asked to consider financial inclusion/ poverty in the same way as Gender Based Violence and take an approach of "routine enquiry" with all families. Many families we are supporting have no experience of navigating the benefits system or in claiming for support. Since April 2022, 160 families have been referred directly for support and a significant more signposted to agencies linked to benefits, debt, and energy bills.</p>	Ongoing in 2023-24
Identify areas of improvement and create an action plan from the Cost of Pregnancy report	NHSAAA have established Cost of Pregnancy implementation group, created an action plan and started work on some actions.	Ongoing in 2023-24
Establish child/ family poverty as a priority area	In June 2022, Universal Early Years Services reviewed and refreshed the Financial Inclusion Pathway which was introduced in 2019. The Pathway has now been extended to include support for debt advice and employability, as well as continuing to provide pathways for benefits and energy advice. The revised Pathway was launched through a	Ongoing in 2023-24

within child health assessments.	<p>Protected Learning Session for all North Ayrshire health visiting and school nursing staff. During 2022/23, 154 referrals were made to a range of services detailed below:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Aspect</th><th>Service</th><th>No. of referrals (% of total)</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Employability</td><td>We Work For Families</td><td>93 (60.4%)</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>SALUS</td><td>4 (2.6%)</td></tr> <tr> <td>Benefits Advice</td><td>Money Matters</td><td>42 (27.2%)</td></tr> <tr> <td>Debt Advice</td><td>CHAP</td><td>4 (2.6%)</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>Better Off North Ayrshire</td><td>1 (0.7%)</td></tr> <tr> <td>Energy Advice</td><td>Home Energy Scotland</td><td>1 (0.7%)</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>CHA Lemon Aid</td><td>9 (5.8%)</td></tr> <tr> <td>Total</td><td></td><td>154</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Some services also offer direct support to families so a number of families will also have been signposted to services directly.</p>	Aspect	Service	No. of referrals (% of total)	Employability	We Work For Families	93 (60.4%)		SALUS	4 (2.6%)	Benefits Advice	Money Matters	42 (27.2%)	Debt Advice	CHAP	4 (2.6%)		Better Off North Ayrshire	1 (0.7%)	Energy Advice	Home Energy Scotland	1 (0.7%)		CHA Lemon Aid	9 (5.8%)	Total		154	
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Monitor and improve the uptake of the Young Patients Fund	The Young Patients Family Fund (YPFF) is provided by the Scottish Government to support families visiting children up to 18 years old who are receiving inpatient care. With a view to increase uptake a process mapping exercise was undertaken and a range of promotional materials produced. Work will continue to promote and evaluate this fund.	Ongoing in 2023-24																											
Prioritise income maximisation and the transfers of claimants from PIP to Scottish Adult Disability Payment and Legacy Benefits onto Universal Credit	<p>The merger of the Money Matters and the Welfare Reform and Advice Team has now begun and options are being explored to develop and improve existing services.</p> <p>In the short term, the priority is to maximise capacity to meet the increasing demand for welfare rights advice services and a number of options are currently being explored, including the development of referral pathways across the sectors to manage demand.</p> <p>The Money Matters Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> generated over £18.4m in financial gains for our residents in receipt of Welfare Benefits. received 5823 enquiries /referrals in 22/23 compared to 4958 in 21/22. delivered Welfare Rights services in seven Secondary schools with one Welfare Rights Officer. The financial gains were £468,550.42. 	Ongoing in 2023-24																											

	<p>Delivering Welfare Rights service in partnership with nine GP Surgeries in North Ayrshire, the first practices went live in June 2022 with two Income Advisers working in the 9 surgeries one day per week. There were 429 referrals from GP staff up to March 2023 resulting in financial gains £945,273.54.</p> <p>We have invested in a Welfare Rights Officer who works with our 9 secondary establishments, providing support to Pastoral teams enhancing their knowledge of welfare rights and takes referrals directly from both education staff and families.</p> <p>The focus and the level of resource allocated to this work is informed by local intelligence such as that shown below:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">School Clothing Grants by Ward</p> <table><tr><td>Ardrossan</td><td>Arran</td><td>Garnock Valley</td></tr><tr><td>Irvine East</td><td>Irvine South</td><td>Irvine West</td></tr><tr><td>Kilwinning</td><td>North Coast</td><td>Saltcoats and Stevenston</td></tr></table>	Ardrossan	Arran	Garnock Valley	Irvine East	Irvine South	Irvine West	Kilwinning	North Coast	Saltcoats and Stevenston	
Ardrossan	Arran	Garnock Valley									
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Kilwinning	North Coast	Saltcoats and Stevenston									
Continue awareness raising sessions and poverty impact assessments training for staff on available supports and updates in relation	<p>Health Inequalities Impact Assessments (HIIA) are a tool to assess the impact on people of applying a proposed, new or revised policy or practice. A HIIA goes beyond the public sector's legal duty of the Equality Act 2010 by assessing also assessing health inequalities, human rights and socioeconomic circumstances.</p> <p>Since 2021 we have worked with Public Health to complete HIIs on a number of plans and policies including North Ayrshire's Local Outcomes Improvement Plan, and our Local Police and Fire plans to support our partners to include assessment around potential differential impacts based on income, employment, social and cultural status in their strategic planning.</p>	Ongoing in 2023-24									

to relevant benefits		
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Maximising Income from Benefits: What else are we doing?

- **Income maximisation and improving access to information and advice about benefits**
 - We are holding further sessions with senior managers to encourage poverty impact assessment approaches in our work.
 - We are encouraging use of EDIA which includes questions relating to the Fairer Scotland Duty.

Case Study: Money Matters

Our Welfare Rights Officer assisted a family with three children, two of whom were disabled. They were in receipt of tax credits, income from one parent who worked, carers allowance and Scottish Child Payment. We were able to carry out a benefit check and assisted them with income maximisation as well as a grant for energy debt they had:

- We assisted to make a Universal Credit claim which was awarded at £866.04 per month after earned income deduction (tax credits were only £50 per week)
- An award of Council Tax Reduction for 22/23 £387.31, CTR for this year of £498.16.
- Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) for 1 bedroom at £48.58 per month
- A £1700 grant was awarded for energy.

The tenant had also got into rent arrears as her partner was off sick from work for a few months and can't believe the difference it has made to them by getting a benefit check and is surprised she gets all this as her husband was back to work at time of the benefit check.

Overall achievement: Increase of £714.62 per month and one-off amount of £2,585.47 in total

There is also ongoing income maximisation pending for Child Disability Payment for one child and UC work capability assessment with expected award of **£1,205.56 per month bringing total monthly increase to £1,920.18.**

Maximising Income from Benefits: Areas of Focus 2023-24

What progress have we made?

- Over £18.4m financial gains have been delivered to residents in receipt of Welfare Benefits through the Money Matters team.
- The number of enquiries received by Money Matters has increased to 5823 which 17% greater than in 21/22.
- Financial gains of £468k have been delivered via Welfare Rights services in seven North Ayrshire Secondary Schools.
- Between June 2022 and March 2023, 429 referrals for welfare rights services were made through partnership working in 9 North Ayrshire GP surgeries. This resulted in financial gains of £945k being delivered to North Ayrshire residents.
- In 2022, 306 Three Towns residents were referred, or self-referred, to the Better Off pilot advice service. There were a further 67 'drop-ins' who accessed immediate welfare rights help and support. 75% of those referred had a disability or long-term health condition, and 23% were from child poverty priority groups. A total of 449 services were accessed by those referred, including 48 individuals who were referred on for health and wellbeing needs and 15 to employability services.
- Dental Caries: The percentage of primary 1 children with no obvious dental caries has steadily increased across North Ayrshire where in 2021/22, 73% of Primary 1 children are free from any obvious dental caries. The figure for Scotland was 75%.

What will change?	Our actions?	How will we know?
We will reduce levels of child poverty through income maximisation, increasing the number of adults who are managing well financially and increasing the number of adults with savings	<p>We will implement our new Financial Inclusion Strategy and develop a professional, in-house advice service which will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission independent debt advice services • Work collaboratively across third and public sector advice agencies • Adopt a 'named/key worker' approach across advice agencies • Improve referral pathways to advice services and build on our holistic approach to support for those who need to access multiple services • Develop systems and processes to standardise data recording and reporting and enable services to fully evidence outcomes for clients and achievements of service 	<p>There will be an increase in local access points to advice services in our communities through building on our outreach model.</p> <p>There will be an increase levels of engagement with advice services.</p> <p>There will be a reduction in repeat presentations to advice services.</p> <p>There will be a reduction in levels of poverty, and in particular child poverty, for the most vulnerable people and families in our communities.</p>

North Ayrshire residents will have additional opportunities to engage with financial services to access their full entitlement to financial support.	We will develop, promote and embed a Financial Inclusion Referral Pathways within NHS Ayrshire & Arran to ensure access to appropriate support for staff and patients.	There will be an increase in referral rates to Financial Inclusion Services through direct electronic referral.
North Ayrshire's families will have enhanced support to maximise their income through benefits.	We will continue to build upon the provisions put in place through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund to support families to access financial inclusion and benefit maximisation supports.	There will be an increase in the number of families supported through the Family Wellbeing Fund to maximise their income from benefits.
North Ayrshire families will benefit from the best start in life throughout early childhood.	We will continue to support eligible families to take up their entitlement to the Best Start Grant and Best Start Food Scheme.	This will be scoped out further to find suitable alternative measures to uptake data, which is held by Social Security Scotland but not made available locally.

<p>North Ayrshire residents will have seamless access to Council services to apply for benefits and entitlements.</p>	<p>We will integrate our MyAccount and ContactUs with our CRM to create a “golden record” for our residents.</p> <p>We will continue to implement the “Accessing our Council” transformation programme to improve access to council services, including Customer Services and Financial Inclusion Services.</p> <p>We will set up a proof of concept using Robot Process Automation to automate benefits such as Free School Meals, School Clothing Grants, Education Maintenance Allowance and Community Care Grants to enable these to be processed and administered as quickly as possible.</p> <p>The current NAC website will be rebuilt in consultation with services and customers and will be live by Spring 2024.</p> <p>Opportunities to re-design our current face to face model for accessing Council services will be investigated, incorporating the use of corporate technology to ensure a streamlined customer journey.</p>	<p>There will be an increase in the number of benefit recipients benefiting from automated benefit payments.</p>
<p>North Ayrshire benefit applicants will benefit from a seamless application process that ensures their full benefit entitlement is progressed based on available data.</p>	<p>We will continue to work in partnership with the Improvement Service as part of a pilot project to explore how the Council can use data to maximise customers entitlements, verify eligibility and reduce the unmet need gap through Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) data.</p>	<p>This will be scoped out further as this work progresses in partnership with the Improvement Service, DWP and North Ayrshire Council’s Information Governance team.</p>
<p>North Ayrshire tenants, and prospective tenants, will benefit from a housing allocation policy</p>	<p>We will review our housing allocation policy to ensure child poverty is a key consideration in decision making.</p>	<p>This will be scoped out further as part of the policy review to ensure a tangible measure of progress in this area.</p>

which mitigates the potential impact of housing on child poverty.		
North Ayrshire families benefiting from NHS Ayrshire and Arran services will have enhanced access to holistic wellbeing prescriptions.	We will introduce the wellbeing prescription pad to Child Health Weight programme and Better Health Hubs	The usage and number of referrals from the holistic wellbeing prescription pad from families participating in programmes, patients, staff and visitors.
North Ayrshire families will have reduced financial burdens associated with visiting a child receiving inpatient care.	We will ensure effective use of the Young Patient's Family Fund to support families visiting children up to 18 years old who are receiving inpatient care.	There will be strong evidence of impact associated with the spend and use of the Young Patient's Family Fund.
North Ayrshire residents will have access to nutritional benefits which can enable them to lead healthy active lives.	We will roll out the universal Scottish vitamins scheme.	There will be an increase in the distribution of vitamins via pharmacy and care partners.
North Ayrshire residents will have improved oral hygiene and dental health.	We will continue to distribute oral hygiene resources Distribution of oral hygiene resources with access to direct support for dental care costs for those who need it most.	There will be an increase in the number of oral hygiene products delivered to services through increased provision and availability.

Section 3 – Reducing household costs and mitigating the effects of poverty: 2022-23. Why is this a priority for North Ayrshire?

LOIP outcomes: Work and World.

- 49% of North Ayrshire households were managing well financially (2019) before the cost-of-living crisis compared to a Scottish average of 56%
- The number of households in rent arrears / council tax debt in North Ayrshire rose from 5461 (40%) to 5793 (43%) between 2022 and 2023
- Since 2017, the statistics show an increasing number of adults with no savings, against a slight reduction across Scotland
- Since the last quarter of 2012, the Council has referred 1472 people to the food bank.
- In 2022/23, the North Ayrshire Food bank issued 55.21 tons of food to 5558 persons (4144 adults and 1414 children).
- For the period January to March 2023, 6918 North Ayrshire Fairer Food larder appointments were made, with at least 1386 of these directly supporting households with families.
- Age of first-time mothers – 19 and under (% of all first-time mothers) (2016/17-2018/19) (Statistics.gov.uk): North Ayrshire: 12.4%; Scotland 6.65
- In 2017-2019 aggregated calendar years, North Ayrshire had a higher percentage of teenage pregnancies (36%) compared with Scotland (29%).
- Number of children aged between 0-15 on the child protection register: the most recent rate for North Ayrshire was 6.1 per 1,000 population aged 0-15. This is higher than the rate for Scotland, which was 2.9 per 1,000 population aged 0-15.
- Number of looked after children: the most recent rate for North Ayrshire was 22.7 per 1,000 population aged 0-17. This is higher than the rate for Scotland, which was 14.0 per 1,000 population aged 0-17.
- In the latest time period available from 2019/20-2020/21 (3-year aggregate), the percentage of babies exclusively breastfed at 6-8 weeks in North Ayrshire was 20%. In 2019/20 – 2021/22, North Ayrshire had a lower rate of babies exclusively breastfed at 6-8 weeks than the rest of Scotland (20 compared to 32 percent).

Action: What we committed to doing	Progress	Ongoing 2023-24 or complete
Deliver additional support to vulnerable families and children impacted by fuel poverty	c. £2.2m has been secured for the Energy Smart Scheme over the past year. The key objective is to support residents of North Ayrshire through the cost-of-living crisis by reducing fuel poverty and increasing affordable warmth, whilst reducing carbon emissions and providing local employment opportunities as part of the programme. There are three elements of the Council's Energy Smart programme:	Ongoing in 2023-24

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The launch of a partnership with the Energy Agency to signpost households to free and impartial advice through the Home Energy Scotland helpline. The partnership was launched on 19 September 2022 and 1,991 North Ayrshire households have received energy advice since that date to help lower their bills. • The creation of a £450,000 fund to offer one-off emergency support payments towards energy bills for low-income families. To date, the Council has supported over 1,300 households facing pressure from rising utility bills through the Emergency Smart Emergency Support scheme. • The creation of a £1.726 million fund to carry out home improvements to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy bills. The initial phase of support launched in January 2023, targeting low-income households who may be eligible for top-up loft insulation. The second phase of support is in the process of being procured and will offer a wider range of energy efficiency measures and is anticipated to launch in June 2023. In addition, we have also provided 900 LED bulbs to the 14 food larders to help reduce energy consumption in homes. • A further £254,000 was allocated by the Council in the budget of March 2023. 	
Complete the roll out of free school meals for Primary 6 and Primary 7	c. £3.9m of Scottish Government funding has been provided to support the continued roll out of Universal Free School Meals (UFSMs). This funding is the revenue funding to cover costs for Primary 4 & Primary 5 children in the financial year 2022/23. Uptake of school meals has increased for primary 4 & primary 5 children following the UFSM provision roll out however, overall uptake for UFSMs is lower than anticipated. This is the general trend across other authorities. The Scottish Government have provided revenue funding of £570,000 in 2023/24 to start the roll out of free school meals to all P6 and P7 pupils whose families are in receipt of the Scottish Child Payment. Using the Council's Cost of the School Day funding, last year we purchased reusable water bottles for every pupil across the school estate this year we introduced the Winter Warmer breakfast from December 2022 until March 2023. This provided a hot and cold breakfast options at every secondary school, free of charge. In total over 66,000 breakfasts were served across all nine secondary schools. In addition, we also offered a free snack item at morning break for those who are unable to attend school for the breakfast for those traveling to school by transport who were unable to access this provision.	Ongoing in 2023-24
Provide holiday meals for families who need it	<p>The Scottish Government also provides funding to enable a continued provision of food-based support during the school holiday periods to those children with an assessed eligibility for free school meals. With support from the Scottish Government, we were able to provide over £700,000 of holiday school meals. In North Ayrshire there are almost 5,000 eligible children entitled to this. Over 20,000 holiday meals were provided during the Summer and Easter holiday period providing a range of activities for families to engage with while accessing a free healthy meal.</p> <p>We have now switched to cash payments during the holiday periods for families entitled to Free School Meals. This has been proposed as a more dignified approach to allow families to use vouchers at shops of their choice.</p>	Ongoing in 2023-24

Introduce new models of provision for free period products across schools and communities.	<p>Educational Facilities Provision</p> <p>North Ayrshire Council is proud to be the first local authority in the UK to launch the free provision of period products in schools. We continue to develop and improve this model based on feedback from both our initial and future consultations with school pupils and education leads.</p> <p>Products are available in both primary and secondary school settings in a convenient, dignified and discreet way. Ongoing support will be made available to all children and young people to ensure they have the knowledge and confidence of their entitlement to access a range of products whenever they need them.</p> <p>Community-based Provision</p> <p>Period products are available free of charge from all Fairer Food Community Larders in North Ayrshire and can be picked up by existing or new members as part of weekly shopping experiences. Our larder sites are strategically placed across our authority and offer dignified access to a range of products.</p> <p>Citizens can also access a range of products from all council buildings including libraries, halls and centres. Additional targeted approaches are also in place providing key staff such as Community Link workers with period products which can be provided to clients as a quick and direct intervention to combat period poverty. A range of platforms have been used to promote our period product provision which includes signage on a range of Council vehicles and an app.</p>	Ongoing in 2023-24
Review Out of School Care provision	£100,000 was allocated from Covid Recovery funds to develop OOSC planning and networks. A mini enquiry was held in May 2023 to further inform developments and feedback from this is helping to inform future developments over 2023-24.	Ongoing in 2023-24
Focus on vulnerable families who are tenants	We have been working with North Ayrshire tenants to promote maximising income from benefits through our frontline staff. We have been communicating via our social media channels and tenant chat on the range of supports available to reduce household costs.	Ongoing in 2023-24
Prioritise the retention of the Education Professional Learning Academy	Review of the Professional Learning Academy has been completed and a revised structure is in the process of being implemented. A new delivery model has been developed which assures the continuation and expansion of the quality work of the PLA into the future. This will continue to have a direct impact on learner outcomes and will support us in our work to reduce the poverty related attainment gap.	Ongoing in 2023-24
Review our approach to nurture across our educational establishments	Review of Nurture has been postponed until session 2023-24 because of external factors restricting changes in teacher numbers. Nurture will continue in its current format for session 2023-24, at which time a review will be undertaken to combine and extend the impact of this work across all schools, using a revised delivery model. In parallel, significant work is underway to embed nurturing principles on a whole school level across all educational establishments.	Ongoing in 2023-24

Review the relationship between family learning work and other supports for families	The Family Learning Team continues to operate with a blend of targeted and universal supports available for families. Discussions on the future shape of this type of support will commence across services in 2023-24.	Ongoing in 2023-24
Prioritise mental health and wellbeing in schools and communities	<p>Within our communities, our MHWB Project Delivery Officers report that the number of children and young people with improved mental health and wellbeing outcomes through involvement with CLD activities is 2086. Key highlights include the development of a 'Your Resilience' programme with Ayrshire College to reach 16–24-year-olds for 60 college students with 37 completing the full course.</p> <p>CLD and the Family Learning Team have developed a programme aimed at primary aged children and their families: "Take Time Families" which has since been rolled out to libraries.</p> <p>A peer mentoring programme (Bee You Ambassadors – 33 members) is ongoing with young people trained in Mental Health First Aid, leading MHWB activities in the community.</p> <p>Engaging with at-risk groups remains a priority and the team have continued to deliver wellbeing sessions and run groups with New Scots, Care Experienced, Young Carers and LGBTQI.</p> <p>Third sector partners Aberlour support children and young people in a range of ways and settings. Aberlour family support has worked with over 100 families in the Kilwinning and Auchenharvie areas providing practical support and support with wellbeing, working alongside families to empower them to lead their own wellbeing, including use of Covid Recovery funding to provide vouchers and childcare for families.</p> <p>Barnardo's support many of our establishments delivering bespoke wellbeing programmes with enhance engagement with education.</p> <p>Children 1st continue to provide whole family support in some areas, with financial advice a core element to their offer.</p> <p>Within our Education Service we have developed a Coping with Anxiety Resource – Be Amasin' (Anxiety Management and Supports in North-Ayrshire), this sits within our one stop shop for community supports, which has had 8244 users. In addition, 93 members of staff have been trained to deliver LIAM (Let's Introduce Anxiety Management), an evidence-based programme. Early indications are this has been successful in supporting young people to address the barriers to engaging fully with education.</p> <p>Suicide Prevention staff upskilling sessions provide staff with the confidence to manage situations where suicide risk is a concern. This school session 112 additional staff have attended suicide prevention training.</p>	Ongoing in 2023-24

<p>Continue to facilitate the North Ayrshire share of the £15 million Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund 2022/23 supported by a multi partner steering group.</p>	<p>The Fund prioritises a range of ‘at risk’ groups such as people facing socio-economic disadvantage, black and ethnic minority communities, people with a long-term health condition or disability, older people and LGBTI communities. In its second year, the fund has had a particular focus on responding to the cost-of-living crisis and an increased emphasis on those facing socio-economic disadvantage, with this focus to be continued in year 3. As the Year 1 fund was to cover a 12-to-18-month period the first impact report will not be available until September 2023.</p> <p>50% of the projects funded in year 2 were continuations from year 1 and 50% were new projects. In year 2, 8 of the 55 projects funded have a specific focus on financial inclusion, with 5 being new projects and 3 continuations from Year 1. Many of the other projects funded have a more indirect impact on financial inclusion as part of their wider project outcomes.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Year 2 - Funded Projects - Localities covered</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Year 2 - Funded Projects - Localities covered</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Locality</th> <th>Count</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Garnock Valley</td> <td>15</td> <td>14%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cumbrae</td> <td>9</td> <td>8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Three Towns</td> <td>17</td> <td>16%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>North Coast</td> <td>9</td> <td>8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Kilwinning</td> <td>16</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Irvine</td> <td>13</td> <td>12%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>North Ayrshire-wide</td> <td>25</td> <td>23%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Arran</td> <td>5</td> <td>4%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Locality	Count	Percentage	Garnock Valley	15	14%	Cumbrae	9	8%	Three Towns	17	16%	North Coast	9	8%	Kilwinning	16	15%	Irvine	13	12%	North Ayrshire-wide	25	23%	Arran	5	4%	<p>Ongoing in 2023-24</p>
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<p>Mainstream self-sustaining leadership development model in Education</p>	<p>This work is well-underway and has been incorporated into the revised professional learning delivery model in the education service. Improved leadership capacity and greater distributed leadership is intended to positively affect outcomes for learners, including the more effective targeting of work to reduce the poverty-related attainment gap.</p>	<p>Ongoing in 2023-24</p>																											
<p>Align schools’ PEF resources to interventions we have shown to be effective</p>	<p>Revised PEF guidance has been produced and circulated across all schools within the service. The template for gathering PEF impact summary reports has been updated and issued to all schools for completion as part of their annual standards and quality reporting requirements.</p> <p>In addition, to help close the Poverty Attainment Gap, we employ 26 Equity and Excellence Leads to support early years children.</p>	<p>Ongoing in 2023-24</p>																											

in reducing the impact of poverty on learning	We work with the Employability Team to support families with childcare over holiday periods, and this has allowed the parents to access work placements. Strategic Equity Funding is utilised in North Ayrshire to fund a range of supports including professional learning for education practitioners; family learning opportunities; targeted nurture to improve pupil readiness to learn in 28 schools, a range of mental health and wellbeing initiatives; and leadership development across establishment leadership teams.	
Reduce the cost of the school day	Over the last two financial years, North Ayrshire Council has committed £1million of COSD funding. This funding has been primarily used to address COSD barriers to learning through provision of food (£150k), IT (£250k) and school clothing and equipment (£100k). This work has been informed by a COSD conference which took place in May 2022 and brought together over 170 young people from across North Ayrshire to consider where this funding should be used to address need. £150,000 was invested this year in provision of a Winter Warmer breakfast across all 9 secondary schools, with over 66,000 free breakfasts being served. Funding has been made available to purchase school uniform, equipment or activities that ensure that all learners are able to fully participate in learning opportunities within their establishments. At the Council budget of 1/3/23, this fund was replaced by the Early Intervention Fund – Child Poverty and Cost of Living – a one off investment over 3 years. The allocation of this fund will take into account existing commitments and will be directed by the Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board).	Ongoing in 2023-24
Complete our Digital Learning review to ensure access to devices	The commitment to provision of 1000 devices (and home connectivity to the internet) per year (to Primary 5 and S2 children) continues. Schools know their pupils well and are confident in targeting additional resource appropriately to families who need this most. In parallel, there is a pilot of “bring your own device” in one campus allowing external devices to connect safely to the school network.	Ongoing in 2023-24
The Eglinton Garden project will extend its approach to include a stronger family focus.	A Positive Steps Project Mentor offers support and advice for participants at Eglinton Community Garden. They have been supporting 16 different individuals with a range of advice and support around planting their own fruit and vegetables at Eglinton Garden and also at home. The Project Mentor has been a great support for all participants, easy to approach and offers a huge amount of support for all people with their own personal issues.	Ongoing in 2023-24

Cost of Living: What else are we doing?

North Ayrshire Food System

- 14 food larders have now been developed in and a peer support network is in place.

North Ayrshire Community Book(s)

- We have introduced an online 'Inform' Booklet which highlights and showcases a range of support for children, families and local people

Scottish Government Islands CoL Emergency fund:

- Support has been provided for schools, energy grants, financial advice and community support.

Case Study – Cost-of-Living Directory

The Community Planning Partnership website has been developed as a useful resource for community members to access key information and resources relating to the work of the Partnership, Locality Planning and community news, which was vital during Covid 19 pandemic. Building on the work developed during this time, including locality specific 'Community Books' that included information and contacts for community members in crisis, a Cost-of-Living section has been added to the CPP website including easy to access information and support. Work is underway to build on this web resource by developing a full, community led North Ayrshire directory. This will use open data through ALISS (A Local Information System for Scotland) to provide an up-to-date interactive directory of services, groups and contacts that can be updated locally by the community and used by those in crisis or looking for local support. The resource will be hosted on the Community Planning website, as well as being made available through the North Ayrshire Libraries app which will be re-launched as the 'North Ayrshire Communities' app.

CASE STUDY: Transport for Young People Digital Access: Under-22s travel

We have collaborated with Ayrshire College and created a specific application form for those residents in North Ayrshire who attend any Ayrshire College Campus which includes the college verifying details to speed up the process and improve the time taken for the card to be received. This has all proven to be very successful and increased the uptake from 4,051 in May 2022 to 18,887 by the end of March 2023. At the last time of checking, North Ayrshire was sitting at 3rd in Scotland in terms of uptake figures. We made changes to the application for the under 22 free bus travel, creating a simplified digital consent form, allowing applications details to be verified via school records, eliminating the need for supporting evidence. We held regular drop-in sessions across North Ayrshire at various venues including libraries, community centres and local colleges. These proved to be great benefit to the local community with families who were struggling with the online process gaining the support required. We attended Youth Events across North Ayrshire during the summer holidays to encourage uptake. Promotional material was created for advertisement of the free travel as well as easier access to the scheme. These provided a QR code to scan to order a replacement card. There has been an increase in uptake on the cards, up to 18,887 in March 2023 from 4,051 in May 2022.

Case Study: Addressing Barriers to Sports Participation for Children from Refugee Backgrounds

Child poverty is a significant issue in many parts of the world, and children from refugee backgrounds are particularly vulnerable to its effects. These children often face multiple barriers to accessing sports opportunities due to financial constraints and cultural sensitivities, which can have negative impacts on their health and wellbeing. Here we explore how the New Scots team worked with Active Schools coordinators to address these barriers and provide a solution that meets the cultural needs of young people from refugee backgrounds.

Challenge: Young people from refugee backgrounds face numerous barriers to participating in sports due to financial constraints and cultural sensitivities. This is particularly true for young Muslim women who face unique cultural challenges in participating in mainstream sports. Many of these young people are living in households with low income and do not have access to sports opportunities, which can negatively impact their health and wellbeing.

Action: The New Scots team worked closely with Active Schools coordinators to identify young New Scots who would be interested in an overnight residential trip. They then identified the barriers to participation and worked with the young people to remove them, which included cost and cultural sensitivities around mixed sports and sleeping arrangements. The New Scots team fed this information back to Active Schools to ensure that the residential trip would meet the cultural needs of the young people.

Child Poverty Element: The children from refugee backgrounds live in households with low income and often cannot afford sports opportunities. The barriers to sports participation due to financial constraints and cultural sensitivities can exacerbate the negative impacts of poverty on their health and wellbeing.

Results: Approximately 35 young New Scots from refugee backgrounds were able to participate in the residential trip, which they had not had the opportunity to do before. The trip was especially beneficial for young Muslim women, who were able to participate in sports in a culturally sensitive environment. The residential trip also provided an opportunity for socialization, which can be challenging for these young people. This initiative has led to a positive relationship between Active Schools and the young people, with more sports opportunities being offered to them.

Positive Outcome: The collaboration between the New Scots team and Active Schools coordinators has successfully addressed the barriers that prevent children from refugee backgrounds from participating in sports. Through this initiative, approximately 35 young New Scots were able to participate in an overnight residential trip that they had not previously had the opportunity to do. This trip provided a culturally sensitive environment for the young people to participate in sports and socialize with others.

The initiative has also helped Active Schools to offer more sports opportunities for these young people, based on their feedback on which sports they would like to participate in. This collaborative effort has created a positive relationship between Active Schools and the young people, providing them with the chance to improve their health and wellbeing and reach their full potential.

Conclusion: The New Scots team's efforts to engage with young New Scots from refugee backgrounds, identify their needs and barriers, and work with Active Schools to provide a solution that meets their cultural needs are commendable. This initiative has opened new doors of opportunities for young

people, which will have long-lasting positive impacts on their health, wellbeing, and overall quality of life. Addressing barriers to sports participation is an important step towards creating a more inclusive and healthy society, especially for children with refugee experiences.

Case Study

Families in an Irvine neighbourhood who need support when it comes to clothing and food could find what they need at a school Donation Station. This was set up at St John Ogilvie Primary School, in Bourtreehill, when it became clear that parents could benefit from a little additional help.

School Early Years Practitioner Anne started the project, in response to feedback from mums and dads, 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 it very quickly gathered arms and legs. I have parents coming in and using it all the time.

"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, really, really worthwhile and it is getting used frequently."

Awareness is currently being raised among North Ayrshire Council staff to ensure that everyone knows about their 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.

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."

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

Anne added: "The reason we set it up is because of the Cost-of-Living Crisis. People are struggling. When we were talking to parents, they said they were struggling with the costs of winter jackets, the different seasons and how quickly children go through clothes. It's also really good for the environment because we're recycling."

The school is always looking for donations, which will be greatly appreciated, and will take items including children's clothes, adults' clothes, shoes, nappies and food.

Case Study: Cost of Living

Work continues to minimise the cost-of-living crisis' impact on learners across education establishments in North Ayrshire.

Loudoun-Montgomery Primary School in Irvine, which is in one of North Ayrshire's highest areas of deprivation, has taken positive steps to remove financial barriers linked to the school day while maximising learning opportunities. The school has considered several areas where the cost of the school day can be addressed such as healthy eating, uniforms, extra-curricular activities, trips, home learning and event days. Some specific actions include recycling and reusing uniforms; promoting unbranded uniforms; providing family and curriculum cooking experiences; providing a healthy breakfast club and morning snack; enabling family learning experiences at home through providing activities and craft materials; and removing or significantly reducing the cost of school trips and charity event days for all families. Loudoun-Montgomery's Head Teacher Paul Bleakley believes: "our child centred focus on reducing the cost of the school day enhances our ability to broaden our learners' experiences, deliver a wider curriculum and extend learning beyond the school day. Our focus on ensuring that pupils look and feel their best and the provision of a healthy breakfast, snack and lunch all play a significant part in setting up our children to embrace the learning ahead of them each day."

St Winning's Primary School in Kilwinning, where almost half of all pupils are registered for a Footwear and Clothing Grant and 75% of pupils live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) highest deciles 1 & 2, provides another example of positive action taken to reduce the cost of the school day. This includes pupil led championing of the importance of addressing the cost of the school day through attending North Ayrshire's COSD conference and pupil leadership groups. All pupils are members of Pupil Leadership Groups with these groups meeting monthly to discuss ideas and take forward initiatives within the school, including COSD.

Similar to Loudoun-Montgomery, COSD funding has been used to purchase school uniform and provide a new school jumper for every pupil this year. This follows partnership working with the Parent Council to provide greater flexibility within the school's uniform policy to lower costs for families. This work sits alongside an established Uniform Swap Shop that is available all year round for families to access, with provision of winter jackets, hats, and scarves.

A review of school and extra-curricular activities has resulted in the removal of several financial barriers for families. This has included making the Christmas Fayre free to access; heavily subsidising or fully funding school trips for families most in need; and the removal of dress up days as this was shown to have resulted in a decline in pupil attendance that could be attributed to creating an unnecessary financial burden for parents and carers. The school continues to link learning to events such as World Book Day but without costumes.

Case study: New Scots

New Scots, refugees and asylum seekers, often face difficulties accessing financial and employment support services due to language barriers. Phone support services, in particular, pose challenges to those whose first language is not English.

Action:

To address these challenges, the Community Learning and Development (CLD) New Scots team collaborated with two new Scots-led community groups in North Ayrshire: the Spike Wheat Scots and Ukrainian Community. The team engaged with New Scots and service organizations to identify possible solutions for communication and support.

Using an asset-based approach, the CLD team identified members of the community who spoke Arabic. These members worked with the CLD team to support calling through systems and leverage the language skills of people in the community.

Results:

The CLD New Scots team facilitated two weekly drop-in sessions, one for Ukrainian guests from the Cranberry Moss Community Centre and the other for Arabic-speaking resettled families from the Whitehurst Park Community Centre. A rota of groups, services, and organizations attended, including DWP, Social Security Scotland, CHAP, North Ayrshire housing services, and HSCP partners. Bilingual sessional staff and volunteers provided support to families, addressing language and cultural barriers.

Recurring issues faced by New Scots were identified, such as over-reliance on certain support workers despite being in Scotland for over five years. As a result, the CLD team engaged with third-sector organizations to support people in the community, such as CHAP and Social Security Scotland.

Additionally, Lemonaid attended and supported people with energy vouchers, which helped address the cost-of-living crisis.

Members of New Scots (both Syrian and Afghan) regularly attended the sessions at the Spike Wheat Hub to get support from CLD staff working with community bilingual volunteers with a range of support needs, such as contacting the Home Office. Similarly, members from the Ukrainian hub were supported. One Ukrainian woman contacted the team for support with energy debt; they were able to signpost her to the hub on the day that Lemonaid were there, who supported her with vouchers and advocated on her behalf to the energy company.

Positive outcome:

The collaboration between the New Scots team, the New Scots community groups, and relevant partners successfully addressed barriers preventing New Scots from engaging with financial, housing, and health support services/organizations. The drop-ins provided a language and culturally sensitive environment for participants to find the support they need.

Feedback from New Scots:

Overall, this initiative has been a significant success, representing a positive step towards creating a more inclusive society. The New Scots team's efforts in engaging with New Scots, identifying their needs and barriers, and working with relevant partners to provide a solution that meets their cultural and language needs are commendable. One Ukrainian woman said that she has enjoyed the hub because when they ask for help or more information via

CLD staff, those organizations that can support are soon at the hubs to help the community. A Syrian member said that it was good for people to attend the hub because they can benefit from socializing with others, get the support they need, and help with translation.

Case Study: Family Learning

The Education Service's Family Learning Team offer several programmes and initiatives to help address child poverty across North Ayrshire, as well as working in partnership and signposting families to CHAP and Money Matters through financial drops-ins. This ensures families have access to up to date and accurate financial information. So far in the 2022 -23 academic year, 83 families have taken part in our Family Cooking programmes across both primary and secondary schools. All recipes consider the increased cost of food so use a variety of fresh, frozen and tinned ingredients. All the food prepared by families can be taken away and enjoyed. In addition, the team also offers Family Fun Clubs in selected schools, which provide families will lots of activities that don't have a cost attached to them and can be easily replicated at home. This academic year 80 families have taken part in Family Fun Clubs.

The Family Learning Team also works in partnerships with certain schools and community centres to provide families with school uniforms and School Prom outfits with 8 senior phase pupils having taken away their perfect Prom outfit and 20 families accessing the uniform shop for the Three Towns. The Prom initiative will continue to run until Proms take place, as well as Uniform Pop-Ups taking place over the summer holidays to support families to prepare for the following academic year.

"The cooking sessions were good fun. Learned tricks and hacks. All on a budget and with one pan. Brilliant. Felt welcomed and no judgement to any families. Was a great experience." Parent, Greenwood Academy.

Cost of Living: Areas of Focus 2023-24

Progress:

- *% Uptake of Universal FSM has risen from 60.4% in 2021-22 to 78.6% in 2022-23*
- *17% more vulnerable two-year old children have been identified as eligible for early learning and childcare (2022-23) than before Covid (2019-20).*
- *With support from the Scottish Government, we were able to provide over £700,000 of holiday school meals to children with an assessed eligibility for free school meals. In North Ayrshire there are almost 5,000 eligible children entitled to this and over 20,000 holiday meals were provided during the Summer and Easter holiday period alongside a range of activities for families to engage with while accessing a free healthy meal.*

- *Launch of the Council's Energy Smart programme which has support over 1,900 North Ayrshire households through energy advice provided by partnership working with Home Energy Scotland; provision of £450,000 of one-off emergency support payments towards energy bills for low-income families; and creation of a £1.726 million fund to carry out home improvements to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy bills in North Ayrshire households.*

What will change?	Our actions?	How will we know?
North Ayrshire's children and young people will have an amplified voice in informing local services across the local authority.	We will progress with capturing voices and experience of children and young people and their families, with a specific focus on priority groups who are experiencing poverty, to build inform policy change across the Community Planning Partnership.	There will be evidence of effective use of gathered views to inform policy and actions across Community Planning Partnership organisations.
North Ayrshire residents will benefit from local services that recognise and respond appropriately to child poverty and the cost-of-living crisis' impact on our communities.	We will ensure child poverty and the cost-of-living crisis remains an active focus of key governance groups including North Ayrshire Council, NHS Cabinet, the Community Planning Partnership, the Integrated Joint Board and NHS Boards.	A range of Community Planning Partnership organisations will be able to evidence an enhanced focus on child poverty and the cost-of-living crisis through established governance mechanisms.
North Ayrshire residents will benefit from local services that recognise and respond appropriately to child poverty and the cost-of-living crisis' impact on our communities.	<p>We will develop a Cost-of-Living portal on the Council and CPP websites and partners will share information on the support currently available with each other and our communities.</p> <p>We will improve our communication methods, better utilising channels such as those used by schools to reach families and extended families</p>	<p>An increased number of residents will have access to relevant and timely information.</p> <p>A greater degree of targeted support will be evidenced by an increased uptake of benefits.</p>
North Ayrshire residents will benefit from consistent and accessible support	<p>We will provide consistent training for frontline employees and volunteers on advising residents on accessing basic cost of living information.</p> <p>We will coordinate support, so our residents are not overwhelmed. This includes exploring a single point of contact for our most vulnerable</p>	An increased number of residents will have access to relevant and timely support.

	residents, helping them navigate and access support from across providers.	
We will have a better evidence base for our knowledge of relevant services and supports, and of the gaps in provision	<p>We will complete a checklist to support local planning from</p> <p>Population health impacts of the rising cost of living in Scotland - A rapid health impact assessment - Population health impacts of the rising cost of living in Scotland - A rapid health impact assessment - Publications - Public Health Scotland</p> <p>Appendix: Mitigating the impacts of the rising cost of living (publichealthscotland.scot) 06 December 2022 (Latest release)</p> <p>We will work with local partners to identify appropriate data and health intelligence to inform monitoring of progress against income-based child poverty targets.</p>	Resources will be targeted more effectively. A robust, appropriate and meaningful local database will be developed.
Resources to address child poverty will be maximised.	We will identify and map funding streams relevant to child poverty delivery plan and ensure we are accessing all available funds	Additional external funding will be achieved.
Wellbeing will be improved for children and families.	We will establish a North Ayrshire Health and Wellbeing Alliance to deliver the Wellbeing priority of the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan	<p>Health and wellbeing outcomes will be improved.</p> <p>More people will engage in relevant activities</p> <p>Improved outcomes will be reported.</p>
Asset-based approaches to improving mental health will be encouraged.	Following the announcement of the additional £15 million to support a third year of funding for	More people will report improved mental health.

	the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing projects, the Third Sector Interface North Ayrshire are fully committed to ongoing collaboration with partners and those with lived experience to ensure that funds are disbursed to optimise the best possible outcomes for our communities, effectively targeting the strong links between poor mental health and poverty.	
More of our strategies will encompass awareness of child poverty,	We will further promote the use of HISA	Uptake rates of the on-line HISA tool will increase and strategies will reflect our responsibilities in relation to child poverty.
North Ayrshire residents will have enhanced access to services and groups in their locality.	<p>We will launch a new Communities app and online platform to host North Ayrshire's community book directory.</p> <p>Scottish Fire and Rescue Service will be equipping Community Fire Stations with crisis Boxes, welfare and comfort packs. Island Community Fire Stations will get triple supplies for logistical reasons. The crisis box can feed a family of 4 with basic food and nutrition for a week and provided by firefighters any time of day or night in response to an incident. They will also include period products to support period poverty. They hope to get oral health items such as children's toothbrushes and special toothpaste included in the near future. Home energy advice cards will also be included in the boxes.</p>	There will be an increase in the number of views of North Ayrshire's community book directory.
Island communities will have improved and bespoke services and advice.	We will provide tailored cost-of-living support for our island communities.	Grants and benefits uptake on our islands will improve.

North Ayrshire residents will have improved access to financial support.	We will continue to embed a refreshed financial inclusion pathway to provide a single point of contact and no wrong door approach. We will review, develop, promote and improve North Ayrshire advice services to ensure they are person-centred, responsive, and meet the needs of all our residents, particularly the more vulnerable groups.	There will be an increase in the number of residents provided with support through financial inclusion services
North Ayrshire residents will have more energy efficient homes with household energy costs minimised where possible,	We will continue to install energy efficient measures in people's homes in North Ayrshire.	There will be an increase in the number of energy efficient measures installed by the Council in North Ayrshire homes.
North Ayrshire families will have reduced household costs through the provision of universal free school meals.	We will prepare for the full roll out of universal free school meals from P1 to P7 pupils in 2026 across all primary schools.	There will be an increase in the number of North Ayrshire primary aged pupils accessing free school meals.
North Ayrshire families in receipt of Scottish Childhood Payments will have reduced household costs through provision of free school meals.	We will explore opportunities to fast-track free school meal provision for families in receipt of the Scottish Childhood Payments.	There will be an increase in the number of North Ayrshire primary aged pupils accessing free school meals.
North Ayrshire residents will benefit from a local authority that has fully embedded a community wealth building approach.	We will continue to raise awareness and further embed our community wealth building approach in North Ayrshire.	More local people will be in employment More contracts will be awarded to local companies
North Ayrshire families will face fewer barriers to education because of the cost of the school day.	We will continue to focus on reducing the cost of the school day across our education establishments.	There will be a wide range of effective initiatives put in place across education establishments and NHSAAA to reduce the cost of the school day.
North Ayrshire residents will have greater access to food with dignity opportunities.	We will enhance awareness of opportunities to access food with dignity in North Ayrshire localities.	There will be greater numbers of North Ayrshire residents accessing food with dignity opportunities across North Ayrshire.
North Ayrshire children and young people will have more affordable access to physical activity and sport.	KA Leisure's Inspire membership numbers have reached 334 members. Partners such as Justice Services, Phoenix Futures and the Childhood Obesity and Health Weight Group will refer young people for memberships.	Universal and targeted opportunities will be increased to allow more young people to benefit from the opportunity to take part in physical activity.

	<p>KA Leisure North Ayrshire Community Sport Hub officers are finalising plans for a clothing and equipment recycling programme. It will focus on redistributing throughout North Ayrshire to reduce participation-related obstacles. The programme will be promoted amongst partners and clubs will be encouraged to get their members involved in the scheme. Donors will be able to use bins at KA Leisure venues to drop off their clothing and equipment.</p> <p>KA will hold pop-up shops and drop-in nights across the region in our Community Sport Hubs.</p>	
North Ayrshire residents impacted by poverty will have an enhanced range of opportunities to learn about living healthy lives and reducing energy consumption.	We will continue to work with a range of community planning partnership organisations including NHS Dietetic Health Improvement Team to provide opportunities to upskill community ladders on cooking, food waste, and cooking energy usage.	There will be an increase in the number of community ladders undertaking 'cheap and nutritious' (can) toolkit training.
North Ayrshire residents in receipt Scottish Child Payments will receive an integrated approach to maximised benefit entitlement.	We will explore in partnership with the Improvement Service and Glasgow City Council opportunities to undertake a data sharing pilot with Social Security Scotland on use of Scottish Child Payment data to help identify need.	There will be an increase in the number of North Ayrshire residents in receipt of Scottish Child Payments accessing other benefit entitlements.
North Ayrshire families and learners will have an enhanced range of opportunities to access available benefits, discounts and free entitlements.	We will conduct a range of drop-in sessions across North Ayrshire to promote available benefits, discounts and free entitlements for eligible children and young people.	The number of families registering for free bus travel, Education Maintenance Allowance, Free School Meals, School Clothing Grants and the Scottish Child Payment
North Ayrshire residents will have seamless access to Council services to access benefit entitlements.	We will continue to implement the "Accessing our Council" transformation programme to improve access to council services, including Customer Services and Financial Inclusion Services.	There will be an increase in the number of North Ayrshire residents who report improved access to the Council.

North Ayrshire parents and carers of eligible 2-year-olds will have reduced barriers to accessing childcare.	We will establish a new local performance indicator to capture the number of eligible 2 years olds living in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 1&2 accessing their full entitlement of 1140 hours of free ELC in North Ayrshire.	This measure will be established.
North Ayrshire parents and carers will have an enhanced range of affordable childcare options for school aged children.	We will continue to work towards developing sustainable models of school aged childcare for North Ayrshire families.	There will be an increase in the number of parents and carers accessing school aged childcare.
Families across North Ayrshire will be supported to experience better outcomes through holistic family support.	We will scale up the Family Centred Wellbeing Service through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.	Additional families in North Ayrshire will be supported to improve outcomes for adults and children.
Families with pre-school age children will receive support to prevent and support issues in relation to parental mental health and domestic abuse.	We will provide support in early years for both early intervention and prevention recognising the increasing level of need in respect of parental mental health and domestic abuse.	There will be an increase in the number of families with pre-school age children who will receive support to prevent and support issues in relation to parental mental health and domestic abuse.
Outcomes for families will improve through more targeted support for dads and male caregivers.	We will engage in a formal partnership and recruitment process to provide practical parenting skills support to dads and other male caregivers.	More dads and male caregivers will benefit from specific programmes for dads, including practical parenting workshops.
Children and families will have more effective access to appropriate digital technology and skills relevant to their learning requirements.	A digital learning strategy for NAC education settings will be launched in session 2023-24	More children and families will have access to learning-related ICT.
We will ensure a range of opportunities are available to our children and families in accessible community settings.	We will continue to deliver a range of free events and activities in the local community through our Connected Communities team and partners.	There will be maximum uptake for local events in libraries and community centres
We will use all the levers possible to advocate for better outcomes for children and families living in poverty.	We will lobby, advocate and seek to influence wider change across all systems, including focus on National Public Health Priority 5 and in line with our Council Plan priorities.	Awareness-raising and engagement in partnership will be improved.

May 2023

NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

13 June 2023

Cabinet

Title: Children's Rights Report 2020/23

Purpose: To seek approval for:

a) The North Ayrshire Children's Rights Report 2020/23

Recommendation: That Cabinet:

a) Approves the North Ayrshire Children's Rights Report 2020/23.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Our Council champions the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ensuring that all children in North Ayrshire have their rights met, protected and advocated for. We have a duty under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 to produce a Children's Rights Report every three years detailing the activities undertaken to secure and promote children's rights in North Ayrshire. Our Children's Rights Report 2020-23 is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 Our North Ayrshire Children's Rights Report 2020-23 is part of a suite of three child focussed plans which outline how we are actively supporting the wellbeing and wellness of our children and young people. These include our Children's Services Plan 2023-26 and Child Poverty Action Plan 2023-26, as recognising and advocating for the rights of our children and young people is fundamental to improving both their and their families' lives. As a result, a joined-up approach has been taken to their development and delivery across partners.
- 1.3 Our Children's Services Plan is led by the Children's Services Strategic Partnership (CSSP) with representatives from our Community Planning Partners. We have a duty under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 to produce a Children's Services Plan every three years to demonstrate how we will improve the lives of our children and young people. Central to this is ensuring their voices are heard and their rights respected.
- 1.4 Our Child Poverty Action Plan is produced by North Ayrshire Council and NHS Ayrshire and Arran in line with the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. Most recent data available states 24.7% of children in North Ayrshire are living in poverty after housing costs (as at 2020/21, though this figure is caveated by the Scottish Government due to issues with data collection during the pandemic). Ensuring our children and young people are aware of their rights and have them respected and supported has a direct impact on levels of poverty.

2. Background

- 2.1 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a core international human rights instrument which was ratified by the UK Government in 1991.
- 2.2 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 comply with their human rights.
- 2.3 The convention consists of 54 articles which are themed into clusters. This helps demonstrate how each and every right is interconnected, with equal importance attached to each. The eight clusters are:
 1. General Measures of implementation
 2. General Principles of the UNCRC
 3. Civil Rights and Freedoms
 4. Violence Against Children
 5. Family Environment and Alternative Care
 6. Basic Health and Welfare
 7. Education, Leisure and culture
 8. Special Protection Measures
- 2.4 This report has been structured around each cluster to illustrate what we have achieved during the reporting period.
- 2.5 Highlights include:
 - Almost 90% of Additional Support Needs and young carers have their voice heard, helping to realise Article 12 of the United Nations Charter on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
 - Our anti-bullying policy entitled “Bullying - It’s Never Acceptable” is now established.
 - We have developed a pilot project where tutoring is provided by in school staff for care experienced learners.
 - No child or young person will go without a school meal in North Ayrshire.
 - Our electronic cashless catering system provides anonymity for those entitled to free school meals.
 - We manage the holiday meals programme to ensure every child entitled to a free school meal during term time.
 - We have invested in a Welfare Rights Officer who works with our secondary establishments.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 It is proposed that Cabinet:
 - a) Approves the North Ayrshire Children’s Rights Report 2020/23.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

- 4.1 There are no financial implications for North Ayrshire Council contained within the current report.

Human Resources

- 4.2 There are no HR implications for North Ayrshire Council contained within the current report.

Legal

- 4.3 We have a duty under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 to produce a Children's Rights Report every three years detailing the activities undertaken to secure and promote children's rights in North Ayrshire.

Equality/Socio-economic

- 4.4 Recognising and advocating the rights of our children and young people directly contributes to ensuring equality and equity of opportunity in North Ayrshire.

Climate Change and Carbon

- 4.5 There are no Climate Change and Carbon implications.

Key Priorities

- 4.6 This report directly supports our Council's aim of creating 'a North Ayrshire that is Fair for All' and our mission of 'Working together to improve wellbeing, prosperity and equity in North Ayrshire'. It demonstrates how we are meeting all three of our priorities 'Aspiring Communities', 'Inspiring Place' and 'A Council for the Future' in ensuring children's rights are embedded throughout our services.

Community Wealth Building

- 4.7 There are no Community Wealth Building implications for North Ayrshire Council contained within the current report.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Consultation on children's rights from our Children's Services Report (produced in parallel) was considered during the development of this report, alongside contributions from services across our Council. A Young Person's Edit of the report will take place in August to ensure it is fully accessible for our young people.

Audrey Sutton
Executive Director (Communities & Education)

For further information please contact **Dr Audrey Sutton, Executive Director , (Communities & Education)**, on **01294 324415**.

Background Papers

Appendix 1: Draft Children's Rights Report 2020/23

North Ayrshire Council 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 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.

The UNCRC is based on four key principles –

- The best interests of the child should be the first consideration for actions that affect him or her.
- All children have the right to life, survival and development.
- All children have the right to participate.
- All rights belong to all children without discrimination or exception.

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 United Nations 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 therefor 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?

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 focussed 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 Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and specifically 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 on-going 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.

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 being:

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

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 18s
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?

Rights Respecting Schools

Almost 90% of Additional Support Needs and young carers have their voice heard, helping to realise Article 12 of the United Nations Charter on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

All schools promote children's rights. The Rights Respecting Schools programme (RRS) has been promoted and introduced into almost all our schools. The Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) recognises achievement in putting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (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.

Rights Respecting Schools

- **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.

St Matthews Academy

St Matthews Academy is a secondary school built within Saltcoats in 2007 with a pupil roll of 1,225. Of these 20.24% 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.
- 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.

“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

“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

UNRC 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 EYC 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 PRDs and ensuring that all planning refers to and reflects the UNCRC.
- 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

HGIOURS highlights that learner participation in self-evaluation and 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.

During COVID 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 this 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.

Youth Participation

Central to the 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 term MSYP's have been involved in the national policy of 'A Right to Food' November of this year will see our next set of MSYPs 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 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?

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 focussed 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 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?

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.

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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?

Cost of the School Day

A focus for North Ayrshire Council and the Communities and Education Directorate include 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 Schools Day, with an in-person conference with 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 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/youth-participation-strategy). 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 How good is OUR school. (HGIOURS) The HGIOURS 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 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 HGIOURS 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 our partners need to be clear on respective roles and responsibilities as a foundation 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 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 of the lives of the care experienced community. 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 also have a bi-monthly staff newsletter.

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

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 Ayrshires 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 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.

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 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.

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CLUSTER 6. Basic Health and Welfare - to what extent do we promote health and welfare and consider the need of children who are disabled?

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 is 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 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.

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 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 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 a 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.”

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.”

The Donation Station, which also saves waste gong 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?

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

North Ayrshire recognises that Curriculum for Excellence as an inclusive curriculum from 3 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 support. 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 a CYP 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.

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:

- Priority 1: Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
- Priority 2: Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people.
- Priority 3: Improvement in skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people.
- Priority 4: Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing.
- Priority 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.

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.

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.

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 (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.

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 for the programme recruitment 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 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 and ASP Co-ordinators also delivered virtual Protecting People training to NAC contracted taxi drivers and escort staff.

CLUSTER 8. Special Protection Measures- To what extent do we protect those in need of protection?

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.

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.

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 which 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.

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 place 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 VYP 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 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. A new banner was developed displaying Child Protection contact numbers for display outside all education establishments within North Ayrshire. In addition, the CPC have supported National CPC Scotland campaigns such as the 'For Kids' Sake' initiative via social media platforms. The CPC website has been updated with an acknowledgement that there is an increasing trend in terms of accessing information via social media platforms and a social media protocol has been developed. This protocol acknowledges the current social media channels via Youth Services and the Health and Social Care Partnership and seeks to maximise CP 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.

NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

13 June 2023

Cabinet

Title:	Dundonald Crescent, Auchengate.
Purpose:	To advise Cabinet on the outcome of the Member/Officer working group on Dundonald Crescent, Auchengate.
Recommendation:	Cabinet is asked to: (1) note the findings of the Member/Officer working Group; (2) note the maintenance responsibility for the road and associated infrastructure lies with the owners; and (3) agree that the Council does not undertake the required upgrade works at Dundonald Crescent, Auchengate to bring the private road and associated infrastructure up to an adoptable standard.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 At its meeting of 2 November 2022, the Full Council agreed to the creation of a Member/Officer working group to look into the current and historic issues in the Dundonald Camp/Auchengate area and to report back to Cabinet acknowledging these issues and attempt to find positive solutions.
- 1.2 A cross party working group was formed and a meeting held on 18 January 2023 to discuss the historic issues within this residential estate.

2. Background

- 2.1 Dundonald Camp, known as Dundonald Crescent, Auchengate, was formerly an Army Barracks until it was vacated and sold by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) around 2005.
- 2.2 Prior to vacating the site the MoD contacted the Council to enquire about the roads within the estate being adopted and taken over for future maintenance by the Council. Officers engaged with the MoD and prepared a schedule of works required and costings associated with upgrading the road to an adoptable standard and taken over by the Council. As the MoD were required to fund the works, this was not taken forward and maintenance responsibility was transferred to the property owners.
- 2.3 A further request to have the road upgraded and taken over by the Council was received by TLC Property Management on behalf of the residents in 2018. Again, officers engaged with TLC Property Management and prepared a schedule of works

and costings for upgrading the road to an adoptable standard. However again, this was not taken forward.

- 2.4 A motion was passed by full Council on 2 November 2022 as follows, “Council agreed to the creation of a Member /Officer working group to look into the current and historic issues in the Dundonald Camp/Auchengate area and to take a paper to Cabinet acknowledging these issues and attempt to find a positive solution.”
- 2.5 In view of the motion, Officers have again reviewed the works required and updated the cost estimate for upgrading and adopting the estate roads, including footways, street lighting and drainage.
- 2.6 There is high uncertainty in the extent of drainage works required within the estate and records show that the drainage system goes under properties making it unmaintainable in the event of deterioration. An allowance has therefore had to be made for renewal of the drainage system within the estate, the cost of this alone is in excess of £300k. There has also been a significant increase in the cost of construction materials in recent years. This has resulted in the latest estimate for upgrading Dundonald Crescent to an adoptable standard being around £700k for construction costs. This along with design and site supervision costs, an allowance for contingencies and VAT has resulted in estimated costs of over £1million.
- 2.7 Officers set up a working group of cross-party elected members and met on 18 January 2023 to consider this. At the meeting members were advised of the anticipated costs in upgrading Dundonald Crescent to an adoptable standard. Furthermore, the Working Group were advised that the Council has over 300 listings of private residential streets in North Ayrshire which based on the rates used within Dundonald Crescent could cost around £90 million to upgrade. Over the years there have been a number of requests from residents within private streets to bring their estate roads up to an adoptable standard and maintain them. The position has historically been that the costs of doing so must be met by the owners of the road. To upgrade Dundonald Crescent at public expense would create a precedent and would likely lead to further requests.
- 2.8 Members enquired what the Council obligations would be from a public health perspective if the drainage infrastructure and water supply failed and whether the Council would be legally required to rehouse the residents of the estate in the event of a failure. From a homeless perspective it would be expected that these households would have their temporary housing arrangements resolved via their own house insurance as they are predominantly owner occupiers. For those tenants who are private tenants the responsibility lies with their landlord who should find alternative accommodation on their behalf. The Council would only be responsible for temporary accommodation if these arrangements failed as the expectation is that the owner occupier or private landlord would pick up the costs.
- 2.9 There was agreement from all members present that the upgrading of Dundonald Crescent by the Council was not affordable and if it was undertaken here, it would likely result in similar requests for other private roads to be upgraded at Council expense. It was therefore acknowledged that this matter could not be taken any further.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 It is proposed that Cabinet: (1) notes the findings of the Member/Officer working Group; (2) notes the maintenance responsibility for the road and associated infrastructure lies with the owners; and (3) agrees that the Council does not undertake the required upgrade works at Dundonald Crescent, Auchengate to bring the private road and associated infrastructure up to an adoptable standard.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

- 4.1 There are no financial implications from this report should the recommendation be agreed that no works are undertaken by the Council. If works are undertaken the financial cost will be in the region of £1m. Furthermore, this would open up the potential for similar requests from other private roads for Council adoption which could cost in the region of £90m to upgrade.

Human Resources

- 4.2 None.

Legal

- 4.3 The duties and powers of roads authorities are set out in the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984.

Equality/Socio-economic

- 4.4 None.

Climate Change and Carbon

- 4.5 There are no implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

Key Priorities

- 4.6 The recommendation to not carry out the required works to upgrade the private road and associated infrastructure supports the Council Plan 2019 to 2024 by maximising resources and providing Best Value.

Community Wealth Building

- 4.7 There are no community wealth building implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Cross-party members were engaged in the working group that deliberated on the outcome of this matter.

RUSSELL McCUTCHEON
Executive Director (Place)

For further information please contact **Thomas Reaney, Head of Service (Neighbourhood Services)**, on **01294 34570**.

Background Papers

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NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

13 June 2023

Cabinet

Title: **i3 – Sale of Land at Strategic Investment Campus**

Purpose: To seek approval for a minor increase to the size of an area of land at i3 in Irvine that Cabinet has previously approved to be sold, subject to appropriate conditions.

Recommendation:

That Cabinet:

- a) approves the increase from 2 acres to 2.498 acres of the area of land to be sold to System Five Off Site Ltd at the Strategic Investment Campus at i3 Irvine; and
- b) grants authority to the Executive Director of Place to negotiate the terms of the sale, including a price proportionate to the revised area of land.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Cabinet of 1 November 2022 approved the proposal for the sale of 2 acres of land to System Five Off Site Ltd at the Strategic Investment Campus at i3 Irvine and noted that appropriate related conditions to the sale and deed of conditions would be prepared and that the final sale price would be negotiated in conjunction with the Council's Estates and Legal Teams.
- 1.2 Further approval is now sought for a minor increase in the area of land required, in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation and Standing Orders. Cabinet approval was originally required to authorise the sale because this specific site has not been individually marketed.

2. Background

- 2.1 System Five Off Site Limited are a company established by local company RDK Construction Ltd who require land for the development of a new factory unit for the construction of modular accommodation. The company has explored sites in North Ayrshire to expand their activities and is now going through the process of purchasing an area of land at i3's Strategic Investment Campus (SIC) site (see Appendices 1 & 2), following November Cabinet approval. They have estimated that 11 jobs would be created initially.

- 2.2 The Council's Estates, Legal, and Growth & Investment teams are currently working through the detail of the sale and it has been identified that the purchaser requires an area of land slightly larger than the area previously approved which was 2 acres. The area of land required is 2.498 acres. The market value was determined by external valuers to be fairly quoted as £10,000 per acre and stated in the previous report as £20,000 based on 2 acres. The adjustment to the area of land being purchased will require the sale price to be negotiated proportionately.
- 2.3 In addition, following on from the previous Cabinet report, consideration has been given to any legal implications regarding the determination of the rights and obligations of any owners within the development of the larger SIC site which has yet to be completed and is the subject of a masterplan and strategic framework proposals. As the site is considered to be independent from the wider site, it is not anticipated that a deed of conditions will require to be put in place prior to the sale.
- 2.4 The slight increase to area of the land to be sold will have no impact on any surrounding developments or proposals and its development will help to start opening up the SIC site. The design and appearance of the planned facility and its operations will be subject to the planning process and any related conditions.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 It is proposed that Cabinet:

That Cabinet:

- a) approves the increase from 2 acres to 2.498 acres, of the area of land to be sold to System Five Off Site Ltd at the Strategic Investment Campus at i3 Irvine; and
- b) grants authority to the Executive Director of Place to negotiate the terms of the sale, including a price proportionate to the revised area of land

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

- 4.1 The Council's Estates Team previously advised that a sale at the market value of approximately £20,000 was appropriate, based on £10,000 per acre. In this respect the market value is likely to be proportionately higher for the slightly larger area of land.

Human Resources

- 4.2 None.

Legal

- 4.3 The sale of the land would be subject to appropriate legal conditions (including Standard Security Clawback provisions) and the purchaser would be responsible for securing statutory consents and service connections. As the site is considered to be independent from the wider site, it is not anticipated that the rights and obligations of

all owners within the completed development of the larger site require to be determined prior to the sale.

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 None.

Climate Change and Carbon

4.5 The sale would support the expansion of a local business that is seeking to manufacture sustainable construction products.

Key Priorities

4.6 The proposal will contribute to the early development of the Strategic Investment Campus and will not impact detrimentally on the attractiveness of the site for future development and investment proposals.

Community Wealth Building

4.7 The proposal supports community wealth building through use of land and property and supporting local business and employment.

5. Consultation

5.1 Consultation regarding this sale of land, has taken place with the Council's Estates, Legal, Sustainability, Planning and Business Development Teams.

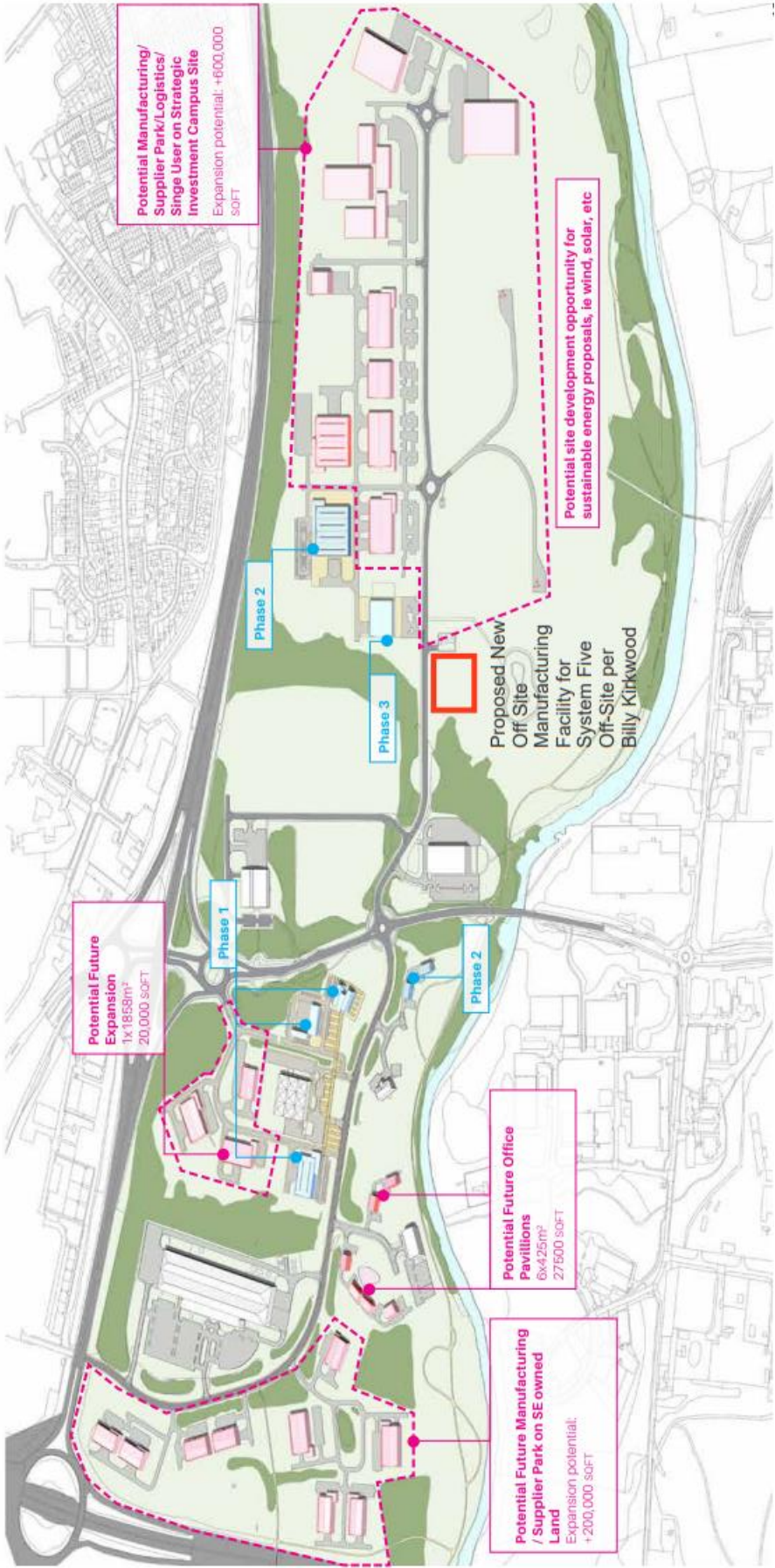
RUSSELL McCUTCHEON
Executive Director (Place)

For further information please contact **Marnie Ritchie, Interim Senior Manager, Growth & Investment**, on **07342 713 349**.

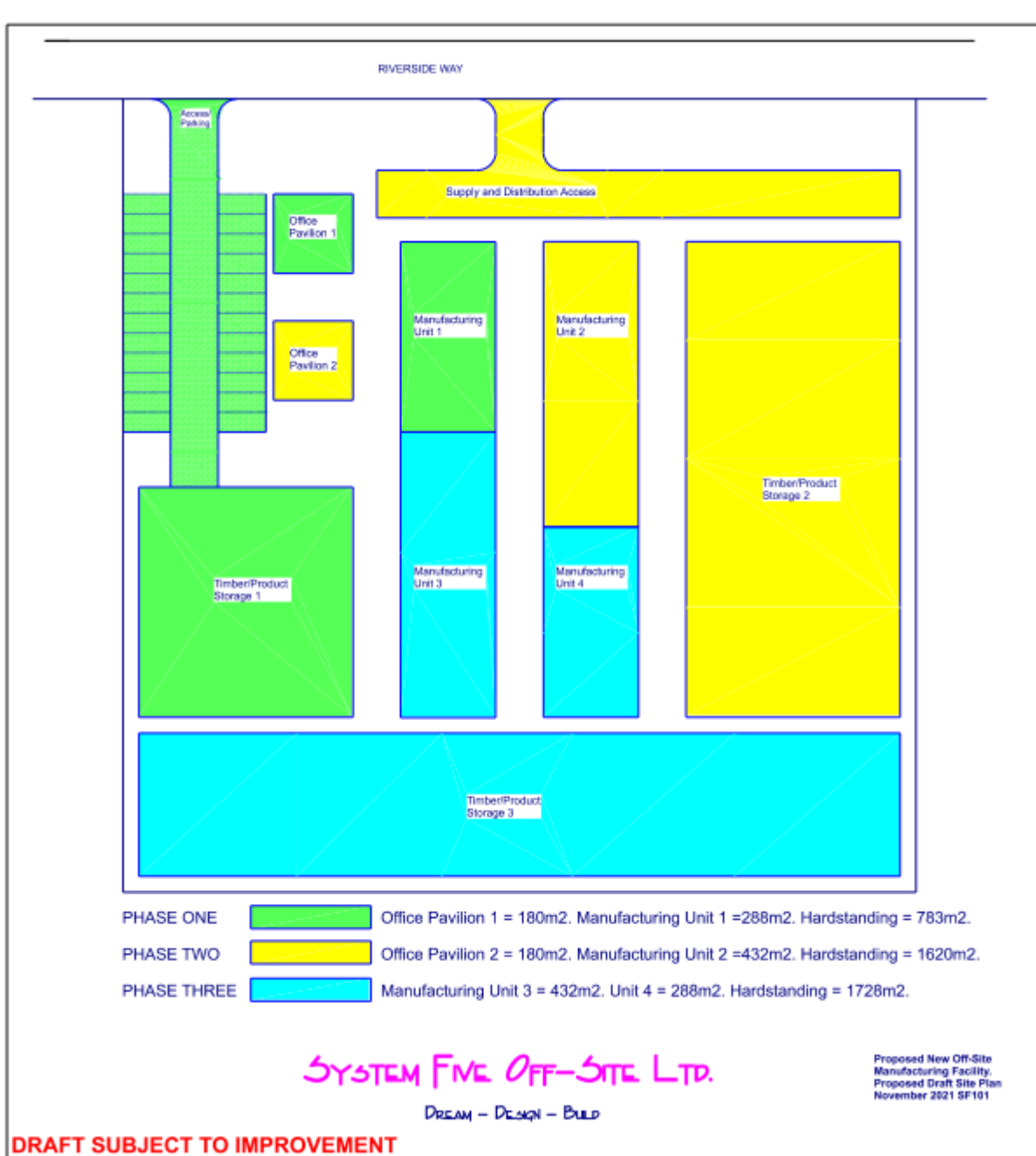
Background Papers

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APPENDIX 1: Proposed site location



APPENDIX 2: Proposed Site Layout Plan



Cabinet

Title:	Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028
Purpose:	To seek Cabinet approval of the proposed Local Housing Strategy 2023 - 2028 and associated action plan.
Recommendation:	That Cabinet approves the Local Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028 at Appendix 1, and associated action plan at Appendix 2 for publication and submission to the Scottish Government.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory duty on local authorities to produce a Local Housing Strategy, that sets out its strategy, priorities, and plans for the delivery of housing and related services.
- 1.2 The draft North Ayrshire Local Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028 sets out the strategic priorities for tackling housing issues in the area over the next five years.
- 1.3 The Local Housing Strategy enables the Council to monitor progress against national and local priorities and targets. It is a statutory requirement for Local Housing Strategies to be kept under review; the Scottish Government expects all local authorities to review and report on progress annually.
- 1.4 The strategic ambition is for people to live in the right homes, in great places, with access to any support services they need. Four overarching outcomes have been established which have been agreed with local people and align to the four key strategies in the Scottish Government's 'Housing to 2040' strategy:
 - More homes at the heart of great places
 - Affordability and choice
 - Affordable warmth and zero emissions
 - Improving the quality of our homes
- 1.5 The Council has taken a collaborative approach to the preparation of the Local Housing Strategy, with a range of stakeholders consulted on the draft document, including but not limited to: the Scottish Government; North Ayrshire tenants and residents; North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership; Public Health Scotland; Homes for Scotland; North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership; North Ayrshire Registered Social Landlords; and a range of Council services. The final draft consultation took place between 12 December 2022 and 11 February 2023, with the draft strategy being updated thereafter, where appropriate.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 sets out local authorities' duties to prepare a Local Housing Strategy which details the Council's strategy, priorities, and plans for the delivery of housing and related services. The 2001 Act states that the Local Housing Strategy must be:
- supported by an assessment of housing provision including the need and demand for housing and related services
 - submitted to Scottish Ministers
 - kept under review by the Council
- 2.2 The Scottish Government expects all local authorities to review and report on progress annually.
- 2.3 The strategic priorities and actions for tackling housing issues in North Ayrshire over the next five years are set out within the draft North Ayrshire Local Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028 detailed in appendix 1 and in the associated action plan detailed in appendix 2.
- 2.4 The Local Housing Strategy aims to support the housing needs and aspirations of all people regardless of background, financial position, or current situation. It will do so by engaging with and supporting people from seldom heard and minority groups.
- 2.5 The programmes set out within 'Housing to 2040' are seen as crucial to Scotland's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, recognising the links between good housing, vibrant communities and health and wellbeing outcomes.
- 2.6 The new Local Housing Strategy will build upon the progress made to date through previous strategies. Some of the key achievements to date are summarised in the new draft Local Housing Strategy, including:
- Over 800 new social rented homes have been built (by the Council and our partners)
 - The Council housing rent structure has been revised, in consultation with tenants
 - A Local Lettings Initiative has been introduced on Arran
 - The North Ayrshire Empty Homes Loan Fund was established in partnership with the Scottish Government
 - A 'multi-agency' task force to address complex private sector property condition issues was established
 - Our public space CCTV service provision has been reviewed and enhanced
 - A new Safer North Ayrshire Strategy has been developed and implemented
 - All children affected by homelessness are linked with primary health care, temporary accommodation which supports study, and access to their wider social network
 - A 'Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan', has been prepared and implemented, including a 'Housing First' programme
 - As at May 2023, 642 displaced people from Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine have been resettled and provided with support to enable them to successfully integrate within our communities
 - New specialist supported accommodation has been developed with the Health and Social Care Partnership.
- 2.7 The Local Housing Strategy sets a strategic ambition for housing in North Ayrshire “we

want all our people to live in the right homes, in great places, with access to any support services they need". To achieve this ambition, four overarching outcomes have been agreed with local people. The outcomes align to the four key strategies in the Scottish Government's 'Housing to 2040' strategy. Some of the key actions have been detailed below.

Outcome 1: More homes at the heart of great places – *Our places support thriving and inclusive communities*

- 2.8 The Local Housing Strategy aims to support the Council's [Community Wealth Building](#) approach and [Regeneration Delivery Plan](#) to make our area more successful for everyone, improving our places, establishing thriving town centres, supporting health and well-being, and providing more opportunities for a better quality of life. Housing can make a strong contribution to regeneration by contributing to positive health outcomes and supporting a sense of community. An example of this is the redevelopment of the former King's Arms hotel in Irvine. The Council took ownership of the dilapidated building and will commence works on site towards the end of 2023 to convert the property to provide six amenity flats in Irvine town centre.
- 2.9 A £10m commitment has been made to invest in Council housing estates between 2019 and 2029 to address issues such as low demand stock, poor external appearance, insufficient parking, antisocial behaviour, and lack of green space. This approach complements the Council's ambitious housing development programme via the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP). An example of this is the demolition of low demand flatted blocks at four sites in the Garnock Valley, two of which are being replaced by new build housing as part of the SHIP.
- 2.10 The Local Housing Strategy sets out minimum housing supply targets for new build housing in the area. The targets were informed by the Housing Need and Demand Assessment 2020. A target of 1,625 new units of social housing, and 1,300 new units of private sector housing, have been identified for the five-year period. The Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) 2023 – 2028 will support the ambitions set out within the Local Housing Strategy by delivering new energy efficient homes throughout the area. The SHIP 2023-2028 was approved at Cabinet on 1 November 2022. Over the lifetime of the Local Housing Strategy, it is anticipated the following developments will be completed by the Council: Court Street, Largs; Afton Court, Stevenston; King's Arms, Irvine; Nelson Street, Largs; Laburnum Avenue, Beith; Newhouse Drive, Kilbirnie; former Garnock Academy, Kilbirnie; former James McFarlane school, Ardrossan; former James Reid school, Saltcoats; former Stanecastle school, Irvine; Corsehillhead, Kilwinning; Bourtrees Hill Village, Irvine; Fullarton Street, Irvine; Ayrshire Central hospital site, Irvine; and Montgomerie Park, Irvine.
- 2.11 The Local Housing Strategy also supports the introduction of 20-minute neighbourhoods. This focuses on living well locally, giving people the ability to meet most of their daily needs nearby, to reduce the reliance on cars and promote walking, wheeling, and cycling routes. The aim is to create more resilient towns and villages and support a better quality of life for residents. A number of projects noted above support the 20-minute neighbourhoods, namely: Court Street, Largs; Afton Court, Stevenston; King's Arms, Irvine; Nelson Street, Largs; former Garnock Academy site, Kilbirnie; former James McFarlane school, Ardrossan; Bourtrees Hill Village, Irvine; and Fullarton Street, Irvine.

Outcome 2: Affordability and choice – *Our people have affordable homes in the places they choose to live*

- 2.12 Private housing (owned by individuals or private landlords) forms 73% of all homes in

the area, with the remaining 27% being owned and rented by North Ayrshire Council and local Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). The cost of buying or renting a home in North Ayrshire is much lower than the national average.

- 2.13 There are approximately 1,500 second homes in the area, most of which are located on the islands. On Arran, one in four privately owned homes are second homes; on Cumbrae this rises to 43%. This reduces the number of homes available for local people and impacts house prices and private rent charges. The Scottish Government has committed to introducing legislation which will allow local authorities to cap the number of second homes in an area. The Arran Housing Task Force has been established, aimed at finding long-term solutions to Arran's housing challenges. The Task Force involves a wide range of partners to address the issues which face island residents and businesses.
- 2.14 The Council will continue to support private landlords and homeowners to meet the highest tenancy and condition standards possible through the Scheme of Assistance by:
- encouraging landlords and homeowners to address disrepair and recognise that they have primary responsibility for property maintenance; and
 - helping older people and people with accessibility needs, who are living in the private sector, to carry out adaptations which enable them to live in their homes for as long as they choose to.
- 2.15 The Strategic Housing Investment Plan is reviewed annually to establish affordable housing investment priorities which seek to address the key priorities established within the Local Housing Strategy. There were 3,327 applicants on the North Ayrshire Housing Register with an assessed housing need as at 31 March 2023. Of these applicants:
- 81 required adapted homes following an Occupational Therapist assessment
 - 111 required larger homes (to accommodate six or more people)
 - 178 requested wheelchair accessible homes
 - 227 were assessed as homeless
 - 353 requested sheltered housing
 - 910 requested amenity homes
- 2.16 The numbers above are not mutually exclusive, for example, applicants can select both amenity and sheltered housing.
- 2.17 There is no limit to the number of letting areas that housing applicants can select and demand by locality is therefore assessed proportionately to reduce double counting. It is important to note that each housing allocation can impact upon demand in other areas. For example, if an applicant housed in the Three Towns also had Arran as an area of preference, this would reduce demand for housing in Arran. Demand for social housing by locality is noted in table 1 below:

Table 1: Proportionate demand by locality for North Ayrshire Housing Register applicants

Locality	Proportionate demand	% of proportionate demand
Arran	113	3%
Garnock Valley	305	9%
Irvine	1,316	40%
Kilwinning	461	14%
Largs & Cumbrae	363	11%

Three Towns	769	23%
North Ayrshire	3,327	100%

- 2.18 The Council's most pressured housing localities are Irvine, Kilwinning and Largs. Further analysis is required to determine housing pressures within the Arran and Cumbrae localities as the proportionate analysis is not effective in determining pressure within smaller localities. This work is underway for Arran through the Arran Housing Task Force. Demand for housing in Cumbrae is assessed annually as part of the review of housing demand by locality undertaken in the preparation of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan.
- 2.19 The Local Housing Strategy sets out the Council's continued commitment to support the UK Government's efforts to resettle refugees who have been displaced from their home countries. The Council has helped to resettle 642 displaced people from Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine as at May 2023. The Council responded to the humanitarian crisis resulting from the conflict in Ukraine by pledging a significant number of Council properties to provide accommodation for people fleeing the conflict. An example of this is the refurbishment of Glebe Place in Saltcoats, which was previously earmarked for demolition as part of the Estate Based Regeneration Programme. The project was fully funded by the Scottish Government and has reprovisioned 30 one-bedroom homes for those displaced by the war in Ukraine.
- 2.20 As reported to Cabinet on 21 March 2023, the Council has experienced increased demand for temporary and permanent housing as a result of homelessness. The pressure on accommodation almost resulted in a breach of our statutory duties during the last quarter of 2022/23. This means that going forward, there is limited scope to provide further social rented housing outwith the pledges already made across the various humanitarian programmes. Council officers will continue to work with the Scottish Government, COSLA and other local authorities to identify options to increase the supply of short, medium, and longer-term accommodation for the use of Ukrainian displaced households.
- 2.21 The Local Housing Strategy reaffirms our commitment to ensuring our Gypsy / Traveller site continues to meet the needs of our Gypsy / Traveller community. Work is currently underway to explore options to identify the most appropriate upgrades and changes to be carried out at the Redburn site.

Homelessness

- 2.22 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory duty on local authorities to carry out an assessment of homelessness and to prepare and submit to Ministers, a strategy (as part of the Local Housing Strategy) for the prevention and alleviation of homelessness.
- 2.23 Levels of homelessness in North Ayrshire increased by 14% during 2021/22, with 1,141 households approaching the Council for homeless assistance. This compares to 1,098 presentations in 2019/20 and 1,004 presentations in 2020/21. The increase in 2021/22 is mainly as a result of customers delaying their approach to the Council for assistance at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020/21.
- 2.24 The main reason for homelessness in North Ayrshire is people being asked to leave the family home, which accounted for 23% of applicants, followed by relationship breakdowns (21%) and domestic violence (13%).
- 2.25 The Local Housing Strategy sets out the Council's commitment working with partners to reduce domestic violence and achieve the Violence Against Women National

Standards accreditation.

- 2.26 The Local Housing Strategy makes a commitment to ensuring that people leaving institutions including the armed forces, a health care setting or prison are not homeless at the point of discharge.
- 2.27 The strategy supports the 'Housing / Throughcare' protocol which details our integrated service response so that no young person becomes homeless on leaving care and that care leavers are provided with appropriate levels of support to achieve independence.
- 2.28 The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019-24 sets out how the Council and our partners will work together to implement a housing-led approach to meeting the needs of homeless households. Where it is not possible to prevent homelessness, the priority is to secure a settled housing option for every homeless household as quickly as possible.
- 2.29 Over the lifetime of the Local Housing Strategy, the Council will focus on the prevention of homelessness, working with partner agencies to consider risk and respond with early intervention to minimise the risk of homelessness.

Private Sector and Empty Homes

- 2.30 The private rented sector accounts for 12% of North Ayrshire's total housing stock, ranging from 10% to 14% across the localities. The private rented sector is a vital part of the housing supply. As well as being the preferred option for some, it also provides a housing option for people who cannot afford to buy, but who would have little chance of securing a social rented home.
- 2.31 More information on the condition of privately-owned and rented properties in North Ayrshire is required to focus efforts in improving property condition across the sector. The Scottish Government's 'Housing to 2040' Strategy commits to the development of a rented sector strategy, with universal standards across social and privately rented housing. We await further guidance on this strategy to determine the relevant data required when developing a baseline for North Ayrshire.
- 2.32 Over the lifetime of the Local Housing Strategy, the Private Sector Housing Team will work with owners of 'long-term' empty homes (empty for more than one year), to bring these properties back in to use. Currently there are approximately 500 properties in North Ayrshire which are classed as 'long-term' empty. It is these properties that resources will target initially. Bringing these properties back in to use can help with regeneration and economic development ambitions.

Outcome 3: Affordable warmth and zero emissions – *Our homes are energy efficient and release less emissions*

- 2.33 The Local Housing Strategy will continue to support the North Ayrshire Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy, which aims to eradicate fuel poverty and achieve net-zero carbon status by 2030.
- 2.34 Fuel poverty tends to affect the most vulnerable people in our communities and evidence demonstrates that it is linked to poor health outcomes. The current cost of living crisis has placed a further burden on household income, with increasing food, transport, and energy costs. The Council aims to support residents by reducing fuel poverty and increasing affordable warmth.

- 2.35 Most social rented homes in North Ayrshire have now met the Energy Efficiency

Standard for Social Housing (or 'EESSH') and a plan to deliver 'EESSH2 by 2032' is being prepared. Through our Financial Inclusion Strategy, we have referral pathways in place from advice services to specialist fuel poverty / energy advice services to ensure that people get help with, for example, debts to utility providers. Interventions include support to access discretionary grants to write off energy debts, or to set up repayment plans. They also provide advice and support in resolving disputes with suppliers and with the replacement of prepayment meters with credit meters.

- 2.36 The Council recognises that decarbonisation presents an additional challenge for low-income households and will only take forward actions where they have no negative impact on the rate of fuel poverty. Emissions can be reduced from homes by improving thermal efficiency and reviewing heating system options. Firstly, the amount of electricity that is needed to heat the home can be reduced by insulating roof spaces and walls, and secondly, the cost of electricity can be cheaper by fitting solar photovoltaic panels on properties and allowing tenants to benefit from this free source of electricity. Works have commenced to address this by installing solar photovoltaic panels and external wall insulation to homes as part of the Council's roofing and rendering capital investment programme, either by way of a new installation or retrofitting.
- 2.37 The Scottish Government have also set out an agenda for modernising house building, particularly through offsite construction - an important tool in achieving good quality homes that meet net zero targets. Over the lifetime of this Local Housing Strategy, the Council will deliver the following projects using offsite construction methods; Afton Court, Stevenston, Laburnum Avenue, Beith; and Newhouse Drive in Kilbirnie.

Outcome 4: Improving the Quality of our Homes – *Our homes are in good condition and people can access any support services they need*

- 2.38 The Council will continue to provide advice and information to the owners of private sector housing to prevent properties from falling into disrepair. The Council, and our partners, will support tenants and owners in the private sector to adapt their properties to allow them to live independently.
- 2.39 The Scottish Government aims to introduce a the 'New Housing Standard' between 2025 and 2030 which means that all homes (private and social) will have a duty to meet the same minimum condition standard. There will be no margins of tolerance, no exemptions and no 'acceptable levels' of sub-standard homes. Throughout the lifetime of this Local Housing Strategy the 'pre-tenancy support service' for landlords, which provides property inspections and tenancy agreement advice, will continue to be provided by the Private Sector Housing team. This helps act as a preventative approach to future property condition issues.
- 2.40 The 'Housing Asset Management Plan' supports the Local Housing Strategy by detailing how the Council will manage all housing assets. It describes how we will invest in our stock, including any retrofitting that may be required to ensure continued compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and the latest Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing. The plan also sets out how we will identify any assets which are coming to the end of their life.
- 2.41 The Local Housing Strategy supports the Housing Contribution Statement shared ambition with the Health and Social Care Partnership that everyone in North Ayrshire can have healthy and thriving lives. Work will continue with the Partnership, participating in their strategic groups and providing a strategic framework that supports the provision of safe and comfortable homes which allow people to flourish and maintain a healthy life in good places and support regeneration. On an operational level

collaborative working will continue to support households with more complex needs, whether that be identifying bespoke housing or support solutions or prioritising repairs for vulnerable households.

- 2.42 Over the lifetime of the Local Housing Strategy we will continue to ensure the new housing being delivered offers enough flexibility to tenants, so that they will be able to remain living at home, independently, for as long as they wish, regardless of their stage in life. This means homes being delivered which are either built to be accessible to everyone, or which can be retrofitted with adaptations where needed. The Scottish Government has committed to a new 'Scottish Accessible Homes Standard' which will be part of national building standards by 2025/26. The accessible standard will see accessibility designed and built into all new homes, increasing the housing choices for people with disabilities and reducing the need for expensive retrofitting as people age or their needs change.
- 2.43 In 2021, an 'assisted living exemplar' housing model was piloted at the Flatt Road development in Largs which promoted independent living through assistive technology. The model recognised that while an individual's care must be tailored to their specific needs, there are technologies which can offer benefits to most people who need extra support. Our pilot explored super-fast broadband and a range of smart technologies. These included smart heating, lighting, and door entry. The added benefit was that residents were also able to video call their family on the device. A particularly useful option during the COVID-19 pandemic, and a real step forward in minimising social isolation.

3. Proposals

3.1 It is proposed that Cabinet:

- (i) approves the North Ayrshire Local Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028 (appendix 1);
- (ii) approves the North Ayrshire Local Housing Strategy Action Plan (appendix 2); and
- (iii) notes that the Local Housing Strategy will be reviewed and reported upon annually.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty Financial

- 4.1 The known financial implications arising from activities included within the Local Housing Strategy are accounted for within existing capital and revenue budgets. Business cases will be developed to support any new initiatives, as required.

Human Resources

4.2 None.

Legal

- 4.3 The Local Housing Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 which sets out local authorities' duties to prepare a Local Housing Strategy detailing the Council's strategy, priorities, and plans for the delivery of housing and related services.

Equality/Socio-economic

- 4.4 The Local Housing Strategy has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment. The assessment found that the strategy would have a positive impact upon older people,

children, younger people, people with disabilities and households in fuel poverty. The assessment found no negative or discriminatory effects on any of the equality groups.

Climate Change and Carbon

- 4.5 The Local Housing Strategy will continue to support the North Ayrshire Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy which aims to eradicate fuel poverty and achieve net-zero carbon status by 2030.

Key Priorities

- 4.6 The Local Housing Strategy supports the Council Plan priority to provide affordable, modern and well-designed homes that meet residents' needs. There is evidence that children and young people can benefit from improved cognitive development and a reduction in behavioural issues through living in a more attractive, warmer, and better ventilated environment. The strategy also supports the Council Plan priority that children and young people experience the best start in life. The strategy also aims to support our island communities and their economies.

Community Wealth Building

- 4.7 A number of the initiatives detailed within the Local Housing Strategy will result in North Ayrshire Community Benefits, for example the training and employment opportunities presented through the delivery of; the Council's house building programme, the wider Strategic Housing Investment Plan, Sheltered Housing re-provisioning programme and through the Estate Based Regeneration Programme.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The Council has taken a collaborative approach to the preparation of the Local Housing Strategy, with a range of stakeholders consulted on the draft document, including but not limited to; the Scottish Government, North Ayrshire tenants and residents, North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership, Public Health Scotland, Homes for Scotland, North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership, North Ayrshire Registered Social Landlords, and a range of Council services. The final draft consultation took place between 12 December 2022 and 11 February 2023 with the draft document being updated thereafter, where appropriate.

RUSSELL McCUTCHEON
Executive Director (Place)

For further information please contact **Yvonne Baulk, Head of Housing & Public Protection**, on **01294 324542**.

Background Papers

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North Ayrshire Council

Draft Local Housing Strategy 2023 - 2028



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Welcome

We want all our people to live in the right homes, in great places, with access to any support services they need.

To achieve this ambition, we (the Council) have agreed four overarching outcomes with local people. Each of the chapters in this document is based on one of those outcomes, the delivery of which is supported by an action plan. While most actions are designed to apply to the area as a whole – some locations face unique challenges. In those cases, we have identified area-specific actions. This is particularly true for our island communities.

Throughout this document, we have used plain English and avoided ‘jargon’. We have included links to supporting documents and where terms may be unfamiliar to the reader, definitions are provided by placing the cursor over the word in question.

When developing this strategy, we complied with guidance and legislation. We have also made sure we have linked into the wider strategic landscape - in particular, the four key strategies detailed within the [Housing to 2040 Scottish Government national strategy](#). This ensures the strategy is robust, fit for purpose and supports and promotes fairness and equality to everyone in our area.

Our places support thriving and inclusive communities

Our homes are in good condition and people can access any support services they need

Our people have affordable homes in the place they choose to live

Our homes are energy efficient and release less emissions

Statutory Duties

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory duty on local authorities to produce a Local Housing Strategy which sets out the strategy, priorities and plans for the delivery of housing and related services. A range of other legislation informs housing service delivery and the key legislative links to the Local Housing Strategy are noted below.

Table 1: Legislative links to the Local Housing Strategy

Legislation
Antisocial Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004
Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017

Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019
Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005
Equality Act 2010
Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act 2019
Housing (Scotland) Act 2006
Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (as amended)
Planning (Scotland) Act 2019
Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014

The Local Housing Strategy Action Plan can be found at appendix 1 to this document and sets out the key actions which will be taken forward during the lifetime of this strategy. These activities will be further supported by the housing actions already set out within the other strategic documents detailed in Table 2 below.

There is also a range of strategic plans and policies which inform the Local Housing Strategy and which will help deliver key strands of the action plan (please note these lists are not intended to be exhaustive).

Table 2: Other Strategic Influences (N.B: This list is not intended to be exhaustive)

National Policy
Ayrshire Flood Risk Management Plan
Creating Places
Designing Streets
Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH)
Getting it Right for Every Child
Green Infrastructure: Design and Placemaking
Housing to 2040
National Planning Framework
Place Principle
Planning Advice Note 77: Designing Safer Places
Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)
Local Policy
Ayrshire Local Flood Risk Management Plan
Community Learning and Development Plan (north-ayrshire.gov.uk)
Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy 2016-25
Empowering Inclusion Independent Advocacy Strategic Plan 2019-2021
Local Development Plan
North Ayrshire Children's Services Plan
North Ayrshire Community Wealth Building
North Ayrshire Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Strategies
North Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership Organisation Development Strategy 2018-2021
North Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan "Caring Together"

North Ayrshire Local Outcomes Improvement Plan
Open Space Strategy
Reshaping Care for Older People in Ayrshire and Arran
Safer North Ayrshire Strategy

Housing to 2040

This Local Housing Strategy mirrors the format of the national housing strategy [Housing to 2040](#), described as the “first ever long-term national housing strategy” which sets out a national vision for what housing “should look like and how it will be provided to the people of Scotland”. Recognising the links between good housing, vibrant communities, and health and wellbeing outcomes, the programmes set out in Housing to 2040 are seen as crucial to Scotland’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. There are four main ‘parts’ in the national strategy, each with its own overarching priority outcome, which we have adopted, to ensure the best housing outcomes for our people. North Ayrshire Council Plan 2019-2024. The [Council Plan](#) sets out the policy direction for our local area, against two main objectives 1) ‘Aspiring Communities’ – “active and strong communities where children and young people experience the best start in life ... [which] have a growing ... economy, ... people enjoy good life-long health and well-being, ... [and] are safe”, and 2) ‘Inspiring Place’ - effective infrastructure, digital connectivity; affordable modern and well-designed homes that meet resident’s needs; vibrant welcoming and attractive places; and a sustainable environment.

Locality Plans

Locality planning is one of the ways local communities can work with public and third sector organisations to improve peoples’ lives and neighbourhoods. This approach focusses on ‘reducing inequalities’ and ‘enabling communities to participate in neighbourhood decisions.’

The Council has adopted and applied the place principles to service delivery ensuring that we work collaboratively with our partners and local people to maximise investment and economic growth. Each of the Council’s six localities has a plan that sets out the specific priorities for that area.

Strategic Commissioning Plan

Our Health and Social Care Partner works to ensure that people living, working within and visiting North Ayrshire have access to the support and services they require when needed. How the partnership works together to deliver high quality, safe and sustainable care, is set out within their [Strategic Commissioning Plan](#) for North Ayrshire.

Housing has the potential to address health inequalities, Public Health Scotland’s ‘[Healthy Housing for Scotland](#)’ paper recognises that ‘adequate housing which is safe, accessible, available, appropriate and high quality is key to us achieving the highest attainable standard of health’.

Collaboration

It is those who live or work in North Ayrshire that are best placed to help us identify local challenges and solutions. Our strategy has been developed in collaboration with our communities, our community planning partners, and the organisations involved in supplying housing and housing support services.

Our community involvement is founded on the 'National Standards of Community Engagement.' The standards have been woven into our consultation process and have ensured our engagement approach of 'Opportunity and Influence' has been realised.

Influence is the power our people have, to shape and inform policy through their comments, views, and feedback. Opportunity has been maximised by providing a range of ways in which our stakeholders can engage with us. Below is a summary of the consultation methods used to inform the development of this strategy.

Table 3: How we Consulted During the Development of this Strategy

METHOD	HNDA	IMPACT ASSESSMENT	LHS
Discussion Groups	-	✓	✓
Focus Groups	-	✓	✓
Interviews	-	✓	✓
Professional Review	✓	✓	✓
Social Media	✓	✓	✓
Survey	-	✓	✓
Strategic Partnership Groups	✓	✓	✓
Targeted Stakeholders	✓	✓	✓
Tenant Participation (RTOs)	✓	✓	✓
Website	✓	✓	✓
Webinar/Workshops	✓	✓	✓

Meaningful and inclusive engagement will continue to be the foundation of everything we do during the lifetime of this strategy. This means ongoing tenant participation, resident collaboration in development and regeneration programmes, as well as opportunities for tenant led budgeting and business planning. The Council's tenant led Housing Business Plan Group review the annual Housing Revenue Account 30-year business plan review.

The Council is already engaging with seldom heard groups, for example, supporting tenants' and residents' groups to embrace all New Scots, helping to integrate them into local communities and offering opportunities for involvement. The Council also established a Tenants Group at our Redburn Grove travellers' site to provide tenants the opportunity to have their say on the current and future site needs and ensure they have a voice in the community. The new Tenant Participation Strategy will set out how the Council will build on the work to date to remove barriers to involvement for seldom heard groups.

The Council's [Community Learning and Development Plan](#) identifies key themes and makes a commitment that North Ayrshire communities will have access to the Community Learning and Development support they need. All provision aims to be free at the point of access for all learners.

Trauma informed practice can prevent further harm, remove barriers, support recovery, improve life choices and address inequalities. The community planning partners, including all Housing staff, have undertaken a suite of training in relation to adverse childhood experience and trauma informed practice.

Impact

We have undertaken a range of impact assessments relevant to the development of this strategy to ensure that fairness and equality were part of our policy planning throughout. These assessments have been drawn together into a single document for ease of reference. 'Assessing Strategic Impact: Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028'. Below is a summary of impact assessments undertaken:

- **Child Rights and Wellbeing:** The policy direction in our strategy will have an indirect impact on the lives of our children but will nonetheless, have a positive impact on their lives and wellbeing, either by improving living conditions, providing mechanisms to alleviate poverty, or providing child friendly estates.
- **Equality:** The strategy has been assessed as having no negative or discriminatory aspects and many positive impacts on the equality groups.
- **Health Inequalities:** This strategy has been assessed as promoting positive health outcomes for local people.
- **Human Rights:** The Local Housing Strategy is the 'parent' strategy for, and will direct the provision of, housing related plans and policies in the area for the period 2023-2028. We have assessed our policy direction against human rights considerations and are confident this document continues to protect these rights for the people of North Ayrshire.
- **Islands:** Our islands impact assessment has helped 'island-proof' our strategy and ensure that policies meet the needs of our island communities. Whilst policy interventions in our strategy are intended to be rolled out across the whole of North Ayrshire, in some instances, island specific interventions have been identified to address island specific challenges.
- **Strategic Environmental Assessment Pre-Screening Notification:** Submitted to the Scottish Government, noting that we had concluded our strategy is not likely to have any significant environmental effects (which are not already subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment elsewhere), and for this reason will not require a full strategic environmental assessment to be carried out. No further action requested by the SEA Gateway.

Evidence

This strategy is based on our [Housing Need & Demand Assessment 2020](#) which has been designated as 'robust and credible' by the Scottish Government. Where figures are

provided in this document, unless stated otherwise, they have been taken from the Housing Need & Demand Assessment. We have also carried out additional research as part of our collaboration approach, and corroborated feedback has been woven into this document.

Resources

We have developed our strategy mindful of the finite resources which are available to us. It is for this reason that value for money, economies of scale and pooling resources across partners underpin our goals. Our strategy supports our 'Community Wealth Building' approach to economic recovery in the area.

Progress

This is not our first local housing strategy, and we cannot move forward without considering and building on the progress we have already made. We have strived to continually improve our performance, learned lessons from the range of work and projects we have undertaken, and shared good practice along the way. The previous North Ayrshire Local Housing Strategy (2018-2022) set out a series of commitments against five outcomes. We have summarised our achievements against these priority areas of Supply, Condition, Place, Homelessness, and Support.



Supply: The supply of housing meets the needs and aspirations of local people

- ✓ Increased the supply of land available for housing through the allocation of additional sites within our Local Development Plans
- ✓ Over 800 new social rented homes were built across our area (by the Council and our partners)
- ✓ Purchased 39 second-hand homes for use as social housing
- ✓ Purchased 21 empty homes and brought them back into use
- ✓ Reviewed our affordable housing policies and removed the requirement for developer contributions
- ✓ Reviewed, revised, and relaunched the North Ayrshire Allocation Policy
- ✓ Revised our Council housing rent structure, in consultation with our tenants
- ✓ Introduced a Local Lettings Initiative on Arran
- ✓ Provided the North Ayrshire Empty Homes Loan Fund in partnership with the Scottish Government
- ✓ Addressed the stock mismatch on Cumbrae by increasing all housing types, but focusing on the provision of 20 new amenity homes

Condition: People live in good quality homes that they can afford to heat

- ✓ Reviewed and refreshed our Scheme of Assistance
- ✓ Established a 'multi-agency' task force who work together to address complex property condition issues in the private sector
- ✓ Introduced a new 'Missing Shares' approach to help owners in tenement blocks carry out essential common repairs
- ✓ Launched our 'Pre-Tenancy Support Service' to provide specialised advice and inspection services to private sector landlords and increase awareness about the required minimum standard of properties
- ✓ All but one of our new housing developments met the Scottish Government's Greener Standard. The remaining 'pilot project' used off-site construction and achieved Bronze Active Status for Sustainable Buildings and Silver Status for Carbon Dioxide Emissions
- ✓ Built two 'sustainable demonstrator' homes, which showcased renewable energy systems, smart lighting, and home security controls, upgraded insulation, triple glazing, and various water conservation measures
- ✓ Engaged with young people, communities, and local businesses to tackle climate change
- ✓ Provide energy efficiency advice and utilise the Local Energy Advice Forum (LEAF) to provide holistic services to residents
- ✓ Secured funding to offer energy efficiency measures to 'fuel poor' and 'extremely fuel poor' households (e.g., external wall, loft and cavity wall insulation and solar PV technology)

- ✓ Explored and delivered our first district heating systems (in Stevenston, Dalry and Largs)
- ✓ Retrofitted solar PV panels on 500 properties

Place: Our homes are located in strong, stable, and safe communities

- ✓ Launched our 10-year, £10 million Estate Based Regeneration Programme
- ✓ Considered the Place Standard as part of all new Council housing projects and encouraged our partners to use Designing Streets guidance for all sites
- ✓ Built new town centre homes in Stevenston, Saltcoats, Dalry, Irvine, Largs and Kilbirnie
- ✓ Sought to ensure that Secure by Design accreditation is obtained for all new Council housing projects and encouraged our partners to do the same
- ✓ Reviewed and enhanced our public space CCTV service provision
- ✓ Developed and implemented a new Safer North Ayrshire Strategy

Homelessness: Homeless services focus on early intervention, prevention, and sustainable housing solutions

- ✓ Embedded housing options into our homeless processes
- ✓ Refreshed our housing support approach significantly increasing tenancy sustainment as a result
- ✓ Successfully closed two units of hostel provision and replaced it with a range of furnished accommodation across North Ayrshire

- ✓ Provided support to every homeless household
- ✓ Linked all children affected by homelessness with primary health care, and ensured their temporary accommodation supports study and access to their wider social network
- ✓ Developed a prison discharge protocol to minimise the risk of homelessness and repeat offending
- ✓ Prepared and implemented a 'Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan', which includes a 'Housing First' programme
- ✓ Established a specialist team to respond to the needs of homeless people with addictions and mental health issues
- ✓ Together with Health Improvement Scotland, maximised opportunities to prevent homelessness within health systems
- ✓ Started to develop pathways into employment for homeless people

Support: People receive the support they need to live independently at home, for as long as possible

- ✓ Exceeded our target by building 170 new sheltered housing unit flats to date
- ✓ Refurbished 142 sheltered housing unit flats
- ✓ Exceeded our target and provided 48% of new builds that are suitable for older people
- ✓ Included amenity housing in all our new build sites
- ✓ Introduced community hubs in sheltered housing across the area
- ✓ Included dementia friendly designs in all our new build specialist housing
- ✓ All new homes are designed as 'homes for life' and easily adapted if the occupants need change

- ✓ Built a 'demonstrator flat' to showcase how assistive technology can enable independent living
- ✓ As at March 2023 we have helped resettle 642 displaced people from conflict areas in Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine and provided them with the support they need to successfully integrate within our communities
- ✓ Worked with the HSCP (Health and Social Care Partnership) to maximise the benefits of new specialist supported accommodation and developed a new supported accommodation housing model
- ✓ Exceeded our target and provided 15% of new builds that are suitable for wheelchair users
- ✓ Included new specialist housing in existing housing estates
- ✓ Developed a joint improvement group with the Health and Social Care Partnership, which focuses on improving service delivery of equipment and adaptations

More homes at the heart of great places

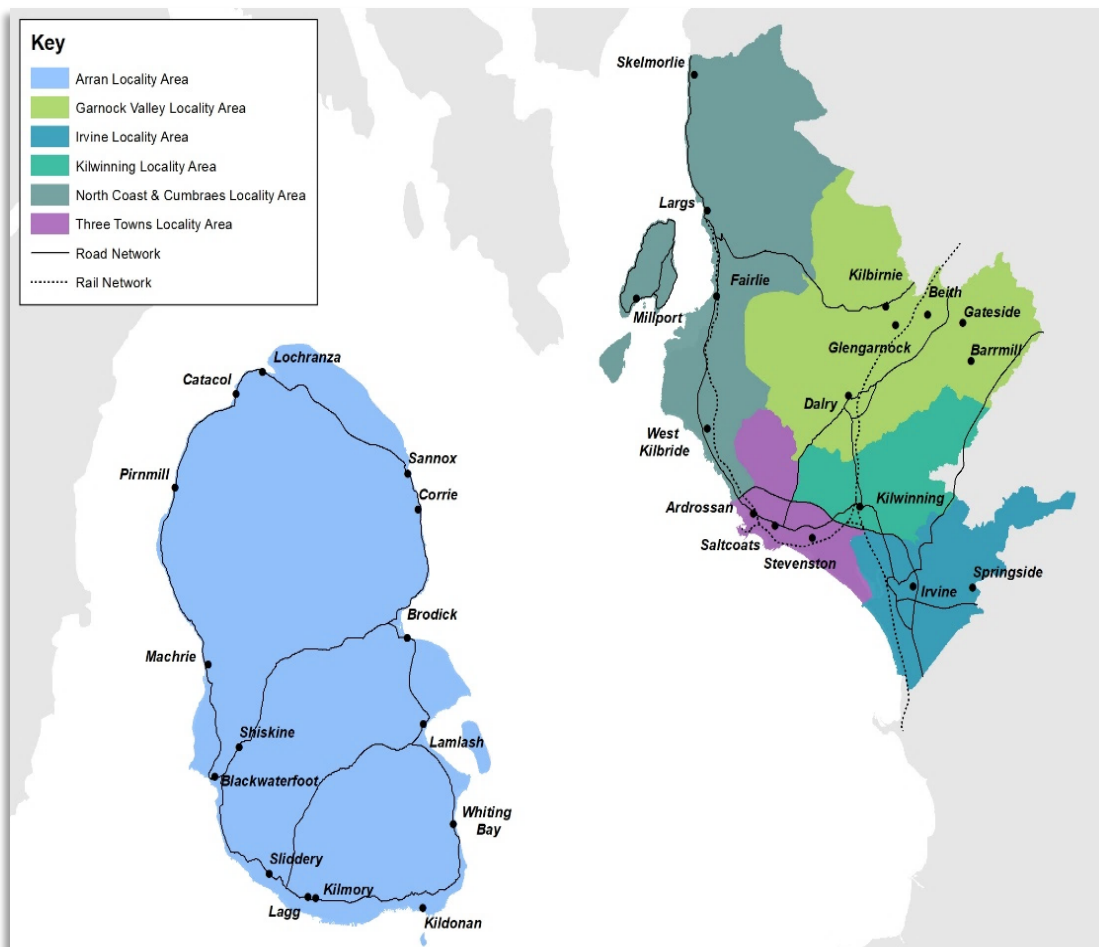
Our places support thriving and inclusive communities

DRAFT



Stronger & More Vibrant Places

Figure 1: North Ayrshire's Locality Areas



Located on the West Coast of Scotland and with a population of circa 135,000, North Ayrshire is a unique housing market area. It is a diverse mix of rural, urban, and island communities, split into six localities: Arran, Garnock Valley, Irvine, Kilwinning, North Coast & Three Towns. Whilst North Ayrshire is a 'contained' housing market (i.e., most people who buy a home here already live here), we realise there is significant migration across the localities. This is with the exception of our island communities where housing is mostly bought by people who do not currently live on that island, or even within North Ayrshire.

"We all want to live in a North Ayrshire we can be proud of – a place where no one lives in poverty...economy is growing, building wealth and prosperity for everyone and we support each other" (North Ayrshire Council Plan, 2019-2024)

The North Ayrshire economy faces significant challenges. Our employed people tend to work in lower paid jobs, and we also have high levels of unemployment and economic inactivity. Whilst the situation has improved over recent years, the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (2020) ranks our area as one of the most deprived in Scotland - particularly for

employment, income, and health – noting that four out of every 10 local households are living in deprivation. Housing is a social determinant of health, influencing both physical and mental health.

It is for these reasons that the Council is committed to a [Community Wealth Building](#) approach, building on the progress of the [Ayrshire Growth Deal](#), which is expected to generate up to 7,000 new jobs across Ayrshire in the next 15 years. We are also working with the Arran Economic Group and Arran Development Trust to find additional solutions to the economic sustainability of Arran - this work is supported by the £3.6 million 'Rural & Islands Housing Fund'.

Corporately, our [Regeneration Delivery Plan](#) outlines a place-based approach to regeneration. The plan's focus is on both the short-term recovery from COVID-19 and, in the longer-term making our area more successful for everyone, improving our places, establishing thriving town centres, supporting health and well-being, and providing more opportunities for a better quality of life. Housing can make a strong contribution to regeneration by contributing to positive health outcomes and supporting a sense of community. Health can be impacted by both the building and its location. Connections to services, amenities, employment, education, transport and nature are all beneficial to health and wellbeing.

The [North Ayrshire Child Poverty Action Plan 2022-2023](#) notes that North Ayrshire has the second highest level of child poverty after housing costs of any area in Scotland. The Local Housing Strategy supports the Council Plan priority that children and young people experience the best start in life. When delivering services, the impact upon child poverty is considered and support process are in place to mitigate any negative impacts. Access to good quality and affordable housing is a key asset in addressing child poverty, and poverty overall. There is evidence that children and young people can benefit from improved cognitive development and a reduction in behavioural issues when living in an attractive, warm, and well-ventilated environment.

Housing Renewal Areas

The Council's approach to Housing Renewal Areas is set out within our [Scheme of Assistance](#). A Housing Renewal Area is an area that requires property condition and quality improvements; it may comprise of a few properties or could cover a larger area.

In response to local concerns, the Council may consider designating a Housing Renewal Area, in areas where there are a significant number of substandard houses (minimum of 50%).

The decision to declare a Housing Renewal Area will be based on the relationship between the property and local neighbourhood, rather than a technical assessment of property condition. Public consultation with owners of affected properties and an 'Options Appraisal' exercise will be undertaken before designating a Housing Renewal Area.

Town Centres

Towns and town centres should be vibrant, creative, enterprising, and accessible, but as retail patterns evolve this is becoming more challenging. We are committed to supporting local town centres to re-purpose and diversify. Providing housing in town centres benefits

the area because the people who live there contribute to the overall safety and regeneration of that location.

The [Local Development Plan](#) sets out our approach for ensuring that town centres continue to be at the heart of people’s everyday activities. Large private developers often find town centre sites too small for their projects, however, this creates an opportunity for social housing or small developers to step in and build on small gap sites in our towns.

Council Estates

We have committed to investing £10 million in our Council housing estates between 2019-2029. The money will be used to address issues which cause residents to become dissatisfied with their areas, such as poor external appearance, insufficient parking, antisocial behaviour, lack of green space or little area-distinctiveness.

In consultation to inform our estate-based programme, the North Ayrshire Tenants Network advised as follows:

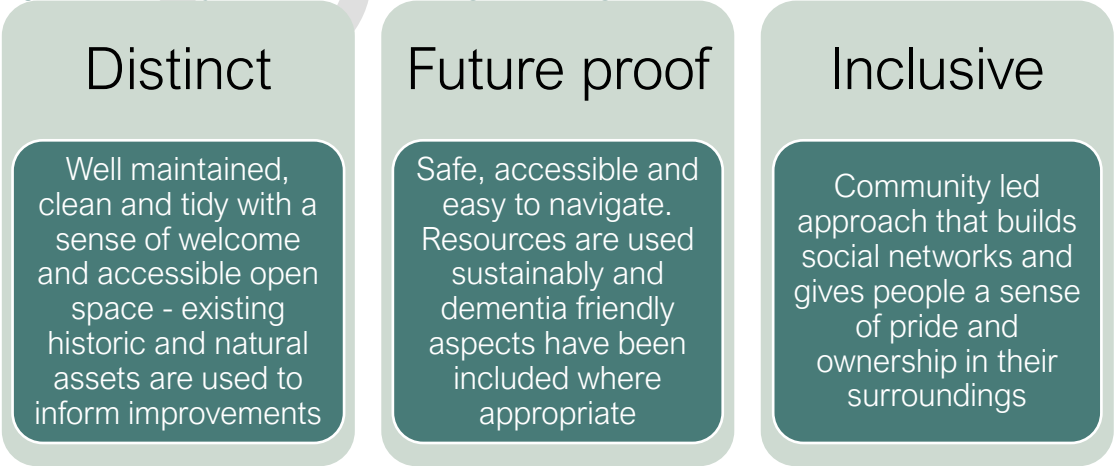
“Helps build communities so that people take pride in where they work and live, have a sense of belonging and paves the way for future generations”

Our improvement programme will look at options for house types that are no longer in demand as well as for solutions to disrepair in mixed-tenure blocks, which are often in poorer condition because some owners either cannot afford or will not contribute to common repairs.

All our regeneration work has been guided by ‘[Creating Places](#)’ and is based on the Place Standard, which has been embedded into all our estate based processes. Our aim is to deliver regeneration progress against three overarching goals – Distinct, Future Proof and Inclusive. The programme is subject to ongoing review for the purpose of continuous improvement.

We place our tenants firmly at the centre of our estate-based regeneration work, consulting them on proposals for their local area.

Figure 2: North Ayrshire Council Housing Estate Regeneration Principles



Attracting Investment

We recognise that house building is important to the area's economy and is a way of reversing population decline. As we start to see the benefits from both our 'Economic Recovery & Renewal' and '[Community Wealth Building](#)' approaches, North Ayrshire will become more attractive to people who wish to move here from out with the area. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that we will also see an increase in demand for housing.

Since 2018, the number of 'completions' of new build housing has been increasing (for both private and social housing). This demonstrates a strengthening of the private housing market in North Ayrshire alongside our ambitious programme of delivering new affordable social rented homes. The most recent Housing Land Audit shows that COVID-19 did have an impact on social housing build-rates during 2020/21, but that significant levels of delivery are expected over the next five years.

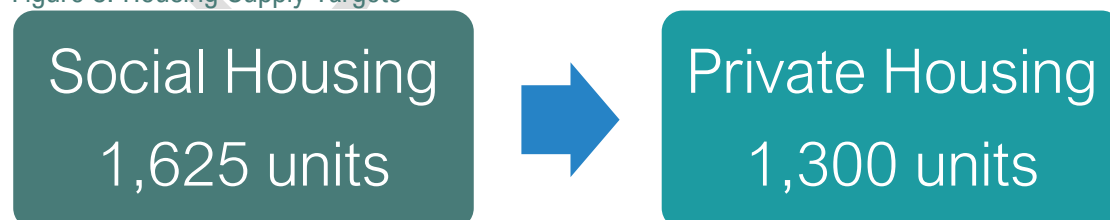
Our Strategic Housing Investment Plan is expected to deliver 1,625 new homes by 2028, and private developers are expected to deliver 1,300 new homes during the same period. These homes will be energy efficient and will focus on meeting housing need as well as tackling child poverty.

The Arran Development Trust have recently secured funding from the Rural and Island Housing Fund to deliver 18 new affordable homes in Lamlash. The Council has established the Arran Housing Task Force to quantify the demand for affordable housing on the island and identify issues that may be limiting economic growth. The task force membership includes Scottish Government, local community groups and Arran Registered Social Landlords. The group will develop an action plan to address any identified housing issues on Arran.

Housing Supply Targets

We have set our minimum supply targets for new build completions by considering factors including the Housing Need & Demand Assessment 2020, recent and anticipated build rates, and committed investment in affordable housing. A full explanation of how our targets were set is available on our website ([insert link here when LHS approved](#)).

Figure 3: Housing Supply Targets



Private Development

Our Local Development Plan outlines our general proposals for planning policies, designating land use, and identifying where development should and should not be carried out. The Local Development Plan takes a design-led, holistic approach towards all housing developments (public and private alike). It sets out planning policy that enhances areas by considering the balance between a successful and sustainable place, natural and resilient

place, connected place, and low carbon place. The development plan encourages private developers to build homes that meet people's specific needs as well as building affordable homes to buy. Our planning application process provides a further opportunity to ensure that developers respect placemaking principles.

It is more expensive to build new homes on our islands, than is the case on the mainland. There are several reasons for this, including higher general cost of living, expensive transport costs, higher fuel costs, infrastructure issues, limited on-island construction companies and poor digital connectivity. Since COVID-19, such issues have been accentuated and we are noting a reluctance from mainland construction companies to work on the islands. All this points to a need for local supply chains to be developed, alongside local business capacity. These issues are being explored as part of our [Community Wealth Building](#) ambitions and Island Recovery Plan.

Council House Building

The Council has made a commitment to develop 1,625 new homes by 2028. Good progress has been made towards achieving this target, with 831 new Council homes built as at 31 March 2023.

Place making principles form the foundation of project development, informing site selection (where appropriate) and the design process. Following the completion of each new site our design teams assess each project's success in delivering places our people can be proud of, as part of our 'lessons learned' review.

The Council has developed a range of standard house types which have been designed in partnership with Occupational Therapists from our Housing Service to ensure that they can make best use of our assets and adapt to tenants' changing needs.

All Council housing will meet the Scottish Government's 'Greener Standard' and obtain Police Scotland's '[Secured by Design](#)' accreditation. The Council also ensures that our sheltered housing is developed utilising dementia friendly design principles.

Local residents and the wider community are invited to comment on the draft and final proposals for each Council development. In addition, we seek tenant feedback on each new build project on completion, utilising best practice guidance for collating new build tenant satisfaction surveys.

The Council will ensure that all new build housing utilises Net Zero Direct Emissions heating systems in accordance with building standards. In advance of the new regulations the Council installed three biomass district heating schemes in Stevenston, Dalry and Largs. The Council also tested sustainable technology and heating systems at our two 'sustainable demonstrator' homes in Dickson Drive, Irvine. A bespoke energy strategy has been created for each emerging new housing development to ensure that the heating options for the sites are both energy efficient and affordable for tenants.

Build to Rent

'Housing to 2040' recognises build to rent as an attractive option for many investors. It is seen as a way of improving the private rented sector because investors are more likely to

develop long term strategic management approaches, whilst continuing to invest in their assets to retain future sale values. This type of housing, like all private investment decisions, is governed by market influences. The North Ayrshire market rent levels make this type of housing challenging to deliver at an affordable level. We will engage with stakeholders to determine whether this model of provision is viable.

Creating Places

The places we live, work and play have a significant impact on our wellbeing. High quality places are safe, easy to move around, provide people with access to services, employment, education, and other opportunities, as well as influencing people to live more healthily and sustainably. A good place has areas where communities can gather for mutual support and self-help. This reduces isolation and loneliness and creates vibrant sustainable neighbourhoods with a sense of community. Designing out crime and increasing perceptions of personal safety are important steps towards the long-term sustainability of a place - the [Safer North Ayrshire Strategy](#) sets out the framework for working together to make North Ayrshire safer.

The creation of good places is underpinned by the national [Place Principle](#), which is a way of bringing ideas about services, investments, and assets together, making everyone accountable for the decisions taken about these resources, and recognising that a “joined-up, collaborative... approach enables better outcomes for everyone.” The [Place Standard](#) has been developed to help communities explore and identify local issues and ways of addressing them. We have embedded this tool into the processes which govern our new Council House Development programme.

Through the assessment of planning applications, the preparation of North Ayrshire’s third Local Development Plan and the annual Housing Land Audit, the Council will continue to liaise with infrastructure providers to monitor the impact of new housing development on public services and infrastructure, including health care provision, schools and the transport network.

In preparing Local Development Plan 3, we will adopt an ‘infrastructure first’ approach whereby infrastructure considerations are integral to development planning and decision making and potential impacts are understood early in the development planning process as part of an evidenced based approach.

‘Housing to 2040’ introduces the 20-minute neighbourhood, which focuses on living well locally, giving people the ability to meet most of their daily needs nearby, and are complemented by reduced car reliance and safe walking, wheeling, and cycling routes. The goal is to support a better quality of life in our places, whilst making our towns and villages more resilient.

New social housing is generally developed in places with existing stock and amenities, meaning 20-minute neighbourhoods are an existing part of our social housing supply programme. The Scottish Government aim to publish new planning guidance to help guide the concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods in the private housing sector. Meanwhile, our existing planning policies have place-making principles, that promote 20-minute

neighbourhoods, embedded within them. We are well placed for taking on any further guidance from the Scottish Government.

Looking at our islands, Millport is already a 20-minute neighbourhood, given that there is only one town on the island. By directing island development towards existing communities, we can strengthen the long-term viability of those communities, support local business, increase the effectiveness of support services, reduce isolation, and protect the wider environment.

Green Spaces

Research shows that where people have access to good quality, outdoor green space, there is a corresponding positive and lasting impact on public health. The combined effects of fresh air, exercise, daylight, and social interaction, in a pleasant setting, means that people who use outdoor green spaces regularly are more likely to be physically active and have a reduced risk of mental and physical ill-health. However, it has been noted that access to green space is still imbalanced; this is especially true for people who live in deprived areas.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, people reported that access to good quality outdoor green space made restrictions more bearable. Homes for Scotland are reporting an increased demand for private housing with gardens and close access to rural areas.

The Council's [Open Space Strategy 2016-2026](#) sets out the Council's vision for excellent publicly accessible open spaces which promote economic prosperity, healthy lifestyles and biodiversity.

The [North Ayrshire Food Growing Strategy](#) sets out the Council's, and our partners, aims to support and increase the provision for community food growing across North Ayrshire. This recognises the benefits to the North Ayrshire Food system and helps provide food dignity for local communities. The strategy recognises food growing as a powerful tool to address food poverty, promote healthy lifestyles and to bring people together reducing social isolation.

The [North Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2019 – 2031](#) details the action that the North Ayrshire Biodiversity Partnership intends to achieve alongside North Ayrshire's residents, workers, visitors and other stakeholders. It recognises the importance of biodiversity for sustaining the ecosystems that provide us with food, fuel, health, wealth and other vital services.

Compulsory Purchase Order

Compulsory Purchase Orders, which are only implemented following Scottish Ministers approval, can be an important tool with which to support the regeneration of our places and communities. They are used to force a private land or property owner to sell their asset, where we have shown that sale is necessary to successfully complete a project that is in the public interest. However, our preference is always to purchase land or properties through negotiation and in agreement with the owner. Nonetheless, where mutual agreement cannot be reached, these orders will be considered if the situation dictates it.

Affordability & Choice

Our people have affordable homes in the place they choose to live

DRAFT

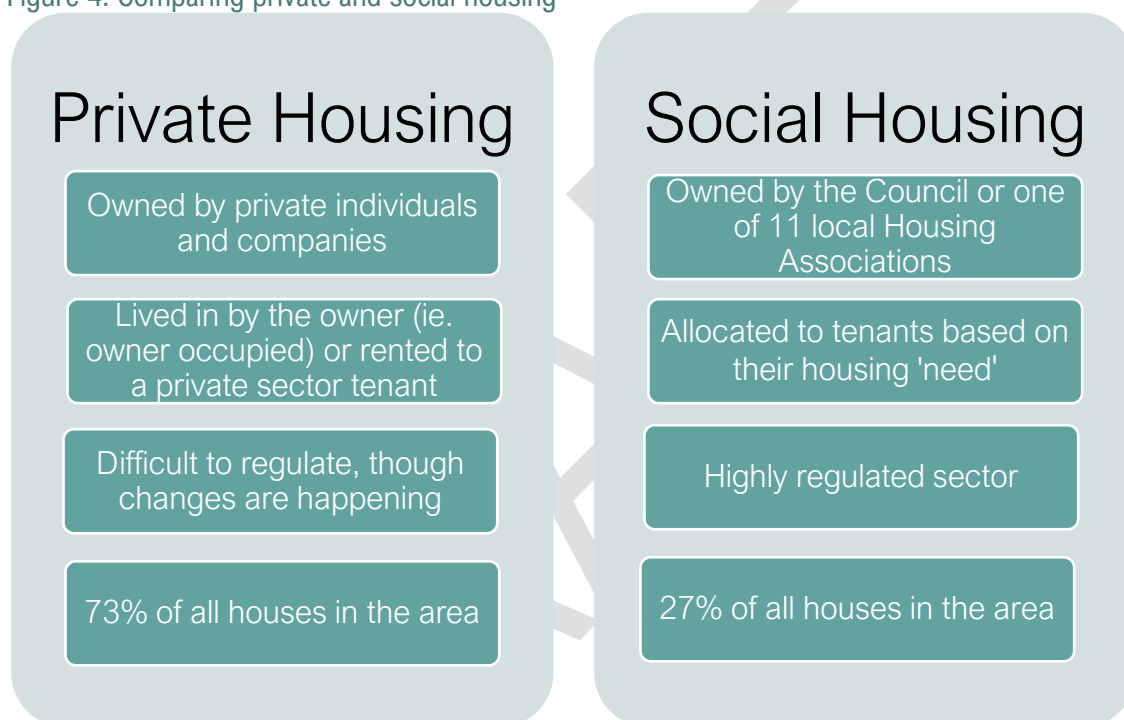


Affordable Housing Supply

Privately owned homes dominate the area, and the number has increased in all localities over the last eight years. The North Coast has seen the biggest increase in owner-occupation and on Arran almost four out of every five homes are privately owned. The private rented sector has also grown.

Improving affordability and choice across tenures will contribute to a well-functioning housing system where people can find, and afford, a home that meets their needs and is in a place that they want to live.

Figure 4: Comparing private and social housing



Our national strategy is committed to improving the affordability, standards and security of all Scotland's homes, an ambition we share and support. However, housing affordability is not a concern locally. Regardless of the tenure of house our people live in, it is likely to be affordable. This is because, for private housing, both the cost of buying a home and the cost of renting one is much lower than the national average. For social housing, rents are kept low by tenant scrutiny and regulation. Locally, the cost of buying an entry level home is much the same as renting one. The current cost of living crisis does however place a significant burden on household income by increasing the cost of food, transport and in particular, energy. The Council's actions to help address this are set out within the Fuel Poverty section of this document.

Table 4: North Ayrshire weekly housing costs as a percentage of lower quartile second hand homes, 2019 (Source: HNDA20)

Tenure	Lower Quartile Income (2019)	Lower Quartile Housing Costs	% of income required for rent / loan
Private Rent	£300 pw	£98	33%
Social Rent	£300 pw	£80	27%
Buying (80% Loan to Value / 3.5 income multiplier)	£300 pw	£83	28%
Buying (95% Loan to Value / 3.5 income multiplier)	£300 pw	£83	28%

Second Homes

There are 1,500 second homes in the area, almost all of which are located on our islands. On Arran, one in four privately owned houses are second homes; on Cumbrae this rises to 43%. This reduces the number of homes available for local people, and in turn pushes up both house prices and private rent charges.

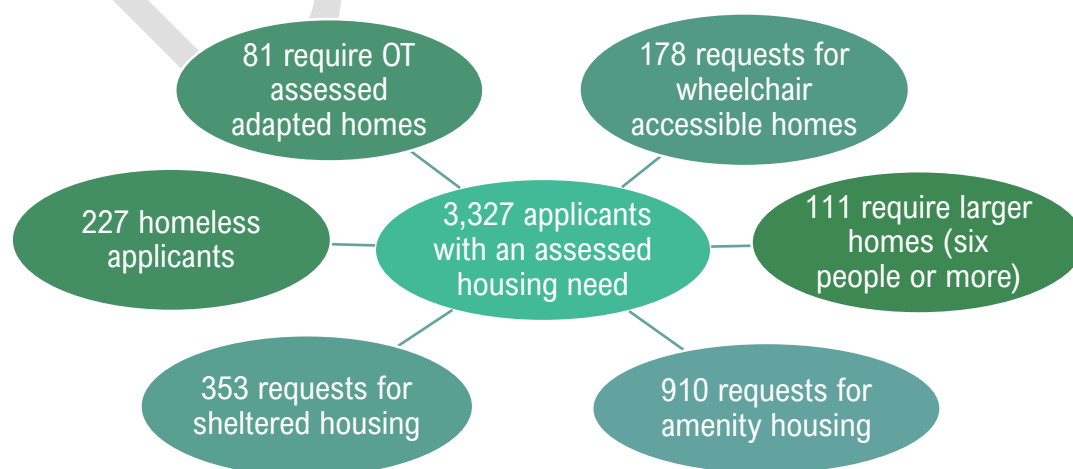
The Scottish Government has committed to introducing new powers for local authorities, allowing them to cap the number of second homes in a given area. The intention is to provide a tool that allows local authorities to find a viable balance between the number of second homes and the number of permanently occupied homes.

Social Housing Demand

The [Strategic Housing Investment Plan](#) is reviewed annually to establish affordable housing investment priorities for the Council and our Registered Social Landlord partners which seek to address the key priorities established within the Local Housing Strategy.

There were 6,467 applicants on the North Ayrshire Housing Register as at 31 March 2023, of whom 3,327 applicants had an assessed housing need. When transfer applicants are deducted 2,655 applicants remain (transfer applicants leave an existing social tenancy behind for reallocation when they are rehoused).

Figure 5: Applicant needs (Source: North Ayrshire Housing Register, March 2023) NB: Numbers are not mutually exclusive, for example, applicants can request both amenity and sheltered homes

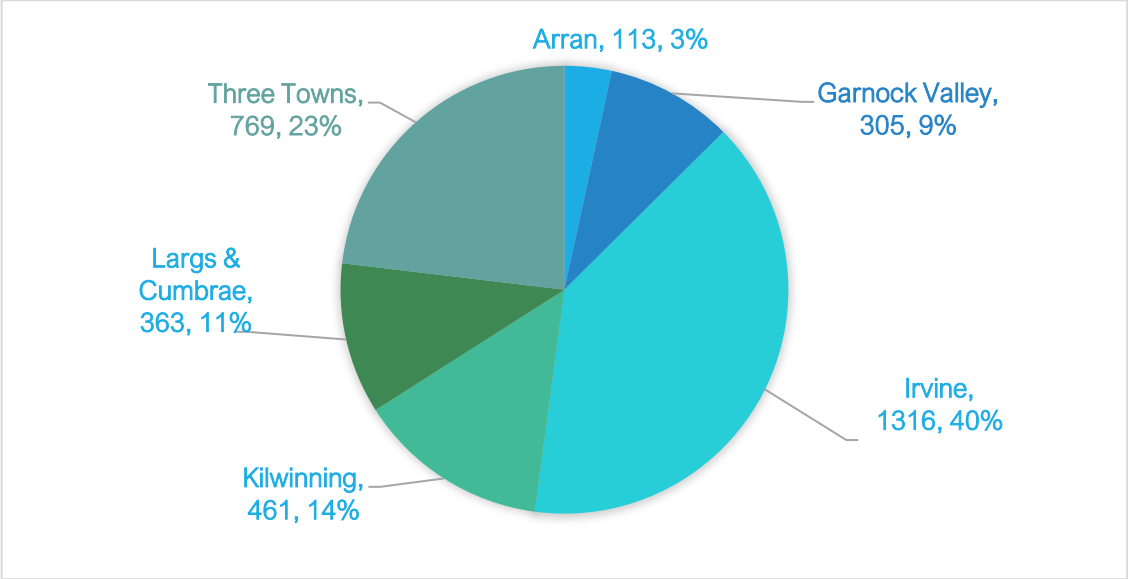


The site mixes set out within the Strategic Housing Investment Plan reflects demand for housing in North Ayrshire. The Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2023 – 2028 estimates the completion of:

- 1,652 affordable homes; including
- 356 amenity homes
- 202 homes suitable for wheelchair users
- 81 sheltered houses (delivered at Irvine Harbourside and St. Michael's Wynd)

There is no limit to the number of letting areas that applicants can select when making a housing application and demand has therefore been assessed proportionately in Figure 6 below to reduce double counting. It is important to note that individual housing allocations can impact upon demand within areas. For example, if an applicant housed in the Three Towns also had Arran as an area of preference this would reduce demand for housing in Arran.

Figure 6: Proportionate demand for social housing by locality (Source: North Ayrshire Housing Register, March 2023)



Largs, Irvine and Kilwinning are our most pressured localities. Further analysis is required to determine housing pressures within the Arran and Cumbrae localities as the proportionate analysis is not effective in determining pressure within smaller localities. This work is underway for Arran through the Arran Housing Task Force, previously referenced in the ‘Attracting Investment’ section of this document. Demand for housing in Cumbrae is assessed annually as part of the review of housing demand by locality undertaken in the preparation of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan.

Applicant house size requirements are determined by the strategic bedroom need which is the minimum number of bedrooms required based on household composition. The proportion of homes by bedroom size is noted by locality in the table below based on proportionate demand.

Table 5 Proportionate affordable housing demand by strategic bedroom size and locality (Source: North Ayrshire Housing Register, March 2023)

Locality	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4+ Bed
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Arran	51%	16%	22%	11%
Garnock Valley	55%	13%	19%	13%
Irvine	56%	15%	15%	14%
Kilwinning	55%	13%	18%	14%
Largs & Cumbrae	59%	16%	16%	9%
Three Towns	59%	14%	15%	12%
North Ayrshire	57%	14%	16%	13%

Delivering Equality

The right to housing is already a recognised human right. However, there are many who cannot access market housing, as well as those who have nowhere to live. The LHS offers an opportunity to ensure that the housing system supports the needs and aspirations of all our people regardless of background, financial position, or current situation.

The Collaboration section of this document details how North Ayrshire tenants and residents have been involved throughout the development of the Local Housing Strategy.

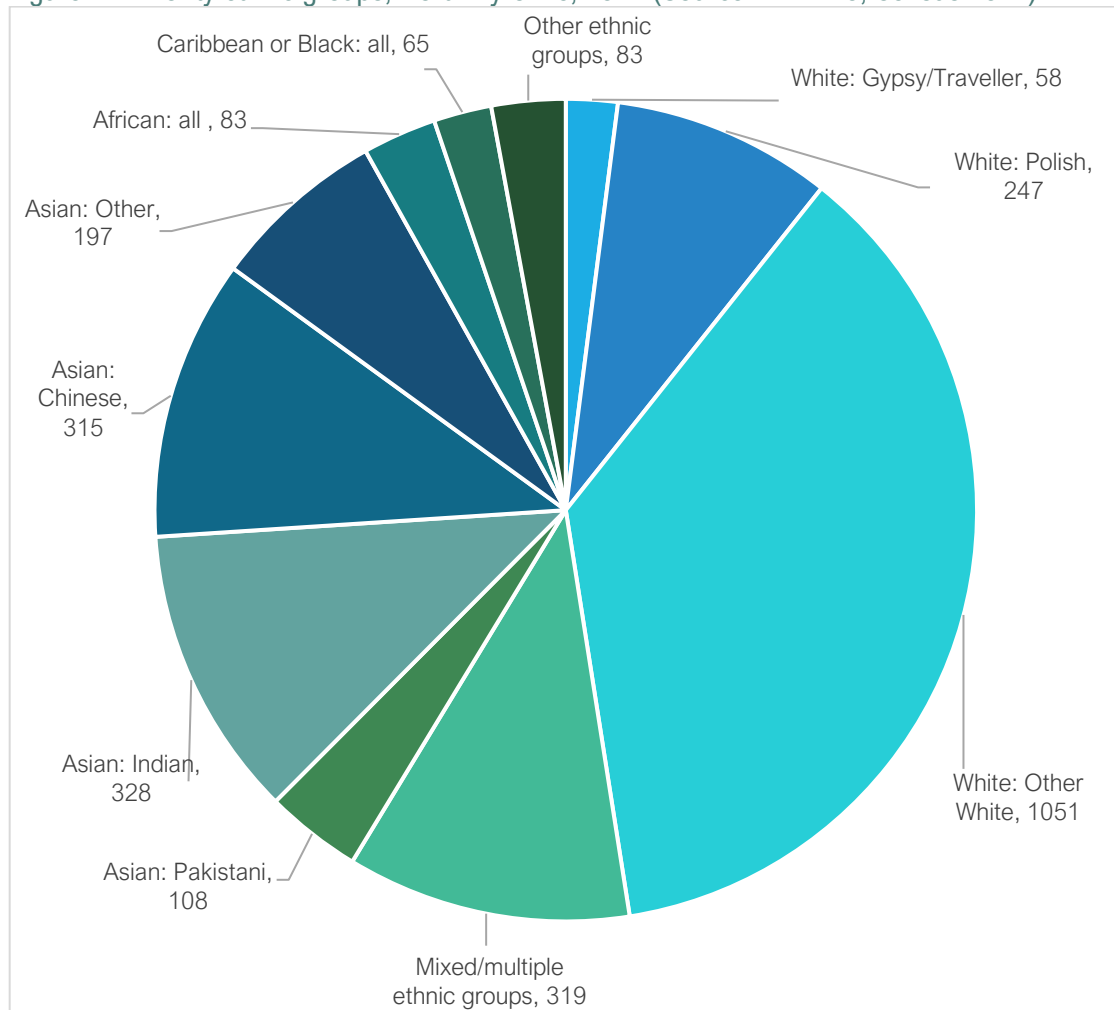
Ethnicity

Around 2,000 local people (2% of our population) classify their ethnicity as something other than 'White: Scottish/British/Irish'. Given this lack of local diversity, there is a risk that the housing needs of these communities could be overlooked.

Language difficulties, being unaware of the support available, or even a lack of cultural awareness from service providers are all recognised as barriers to housing and support services. People from different ethnic backgrounds can also face discrimination and harassment, not only within the community, but from landlords or agents. The fear and experience of racial harassment then influences, and frequently limits, the housing decisions they go on to make. For minority ethnic women, isolation, language difficulties and experiences of racism, may increase their risk of experiencing homelessness or prevent them from escaping domestic abuse.

Research shows that poverty is more prevalent for minority households. Ethnic minority groups are more likely to live in private rented properties, and because of higher levels of disrepair in this sector, are more likely to live in poor-quality housing. There can also be larger household sizes amongst ethnic minority groups, meaning an increased chance of living in an overcrowded home. Older people from ethnic minority groups can face challenges accessing and securing suitable housing.

Figure 7: Minority ethnic groups, North Ayrshire, 2011 (Source: HNDA20, Census 2011)



Refugees & Asylum Seekers

We do not work with asylum seekers on a day-by-day basis, however, we are occasionally contacted by people seeking asylum. While we do not have jurisdiction in these cases, we do provide accommodation and support, and refer each case to the appropriate authorities.

We do, however, have a proud record of supporting the UK Government's humanitarian efforts to resettle refugees who have been displaced from their own country. Since 2015, we have been working with the Home Office, and the Health & Social Care Partnership, to provide safe and secure housing for 201 people (41 families), who were displaced by the war in Syria. A further 10 people (2 households) were resettled under the UK resettlement scheme (UKRS). There are still families who need to be resettled, and we will continue our work over the lifetime of this strategy, supporting and helping integrate new and existing households from around the world who have settled in our area.

We have also provided support for families fleeing the conflict in Afghanistan, following the withdrawal of American and NATO forces in 2021. We will continue to support these resettlement programmes and add to the 36 Afghan nationals (8 families) who had already arrived by 30 April 2022.

More recently, the Council have responded to the humanitarian crisis created as a result of the conflict in Ukraine. Since May 2022, the Council and partners have supported more than 185 Ukrainian displaced households (UDPs) (395 people) to settle in North Ayrshire. We have utilised 110 social rented properties for people fleeing the conflict. We are also providing support, advice, and assistance to those who have settled within the homes of North Ayrshire residents.

We are working with the Scottish Government to identify and develop temporary accommodation for use of Ukrainian displaced households who are currently residing within the cruise ship docked in Edinburgh and for those living within hotel accommodation.

To prepare for the arrival of these vulnerable households we have established the multi-agency 'Refugee Task Force,' to provide strategic direction, target resources, help build cross-agency capacity, ensure coordinated communications and operational support and is the vehicle for sharing learning to enhance front line service delivery. The task force includes several Council services led by Housing and including Education, Community Learning & Development, Employability, as well as Health and Social Care Partnership, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire & Rescue, Department of Work & Pensions and the third sector.

The Council has experienced increased demand for temporary and permanent housing as a result of homelessness. The pressure on accommodation almost resulted in a breach of our statutory duties during the last quarter of 2022/23. This means that going forward, there is limited scope to provide further social rented housing out with the pledges already made across the various humanitarian programmes. Council officers will continue to work with the Scottish Government, COSLA and other local authorities to identify options to increase the supply of short, medium, and longer-term accommodation for the use of the Ukrainian displaced households.

Travelling Showpeople

There are no Travelling Showpeople communities based in North Ayrshire. The closest community of Showpeople is in Glasgow and given the better transport links from the city to the rest of the country, it is unlikely there would be an incentive to move to North Ayrshire. Nonetheless, we keep the situation under review to ensure we will be able to respond, should this situation change.

Gypsy/Travellers

We acknowledge and respect Gypsy/Travellers as a distinct ethnic group with history and traditions including the nomadic lifestyle that can form part of this identity.

Our research has indicated that there is sufficient accommodation for Gypsy/Travellers in our area. Our Gypsy/Traveller population has told us that their preferred housing solution is the Council owned site. Our site in Irvine has sixteen pitches (four are level access), each with its own amenity building where hot water, bathing and kitchen facilities are provided, and electricity is available at a reduced cost. On-site services include a site manager, regular GP surgery, visits from community link workers, and an educational tutor for secondary age pupils.

Whilst our site has met the quality standards described in the Scottish Government's 'Improving Gypsy/Traveller Sites' since 2018, we understand this to be a minimum standard, and we have continued to improve and upgrade the site. In response to requests from site tenants, we identified a £75,000 budget, which allowed us to install new kitchens and doors in our amenity units and improve safety and security on each pitch by installing gates, fencing, and resurfacing. Free Wi-Fi is available at the on-site community room, and through the Connected Scotland programme we have provided 15 families with free Wi-Fi devices – each with 2 years unlimited access to the internet. We have applied for more devices to support the remaining tenants and families living in mainstream housing.

Moving forward we remain committed to ensuring our site continues to meet the needs of our Gypsy/Traveller community and we will explore options to identify the most appropriate upgrades and changes that we can carry out on site, to best support our residents. We have a dedicated officer who acts as a sole point of contact for our Gypsy/Traveller community, and who can offer advice and support where needed and support the Redburn Grove Tenants Group, who represent the interests of our local Gypsy/Travellers community and influence local decision making.

Our proactive approach to working with the travelling community has minimised the level of roadside encampments within North Ayrshire therefore there is no identified need at this time to increase provision. On average, we have around 40 unauthorised encampments in annually, this number includes multiple counts of the same family who may stay at various locations during their time in our area. We have a dedicated encampment officer who engages with these families at the earliest opportunity undertaking a 'Needs and Welfare' Assessment. This helps us to understand the needs and aspirations of individuals enabling us to provide any necessary support.

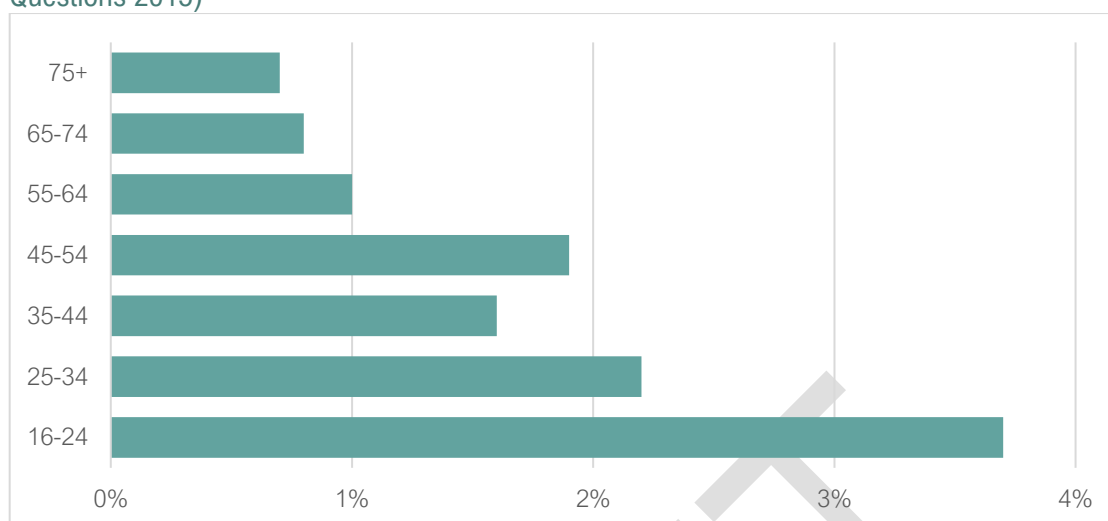
LGBTQ+

Around 4.6% of the overall population is thought to be LGBTQ+, which equates to 6,200 people in North Ayrshire. The proportion appears to decrease with age, though this could be because older people may be more reluctant to disclose sexual orientation or gender identity, or an overrepresentation of younger people in the survey sample.

Research has found that “[LGBTQ+] social housing residents do not believe they are being listened to, taken seriously, or treated equally.” These findings correlate with what our own LGBTQ+ community has shared with us. Whilst most said they felt part of their local community, almost 15% have experienced harassment because of their sexuality or gender identity, and the same number did not feel safe in their home. A quarter felt their landlords did not understand the housing issues they faced and less than 20% felt their landlords treated them equally.

We will continue to take a zero tolerance' approach to any form of harassment or bullying directed towards our tenants, investigating complaints timeously and taking legal action against perpetrators as appropriate.

Figure 8: Sexual orientation by percentage of population & age (Source: Scottish Surveys Core Questions 2015)



Homeless Prevention and Alleviation

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory duty on local authorities to carry out an assessment of homelessness and to prepare and submit to Ministers, a strategy (as part of the Local Housing Strategy) for the prevention and alleviation of homelessness.

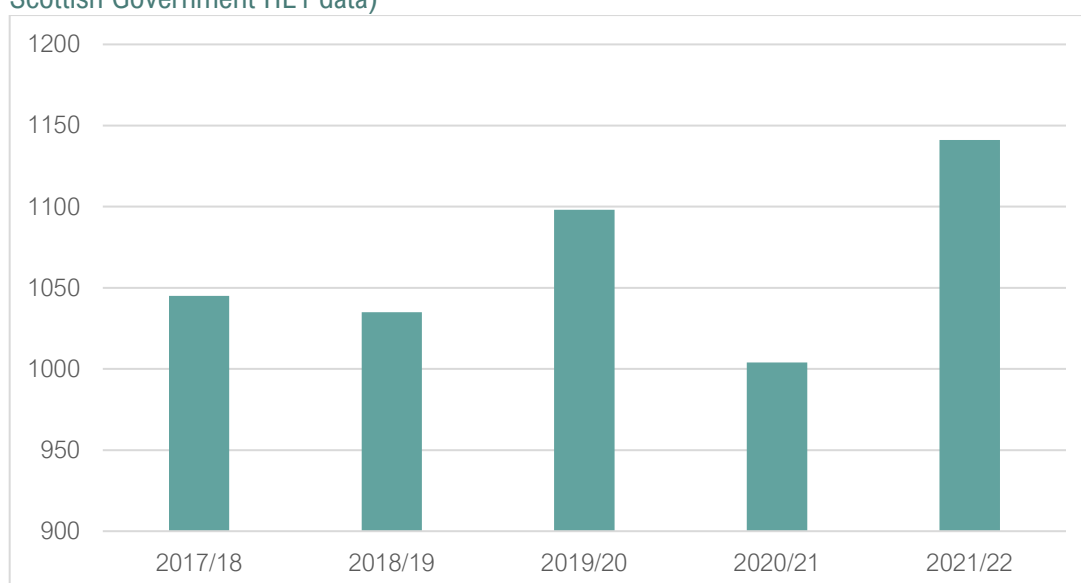
The Scottish Government established the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group in 2017 to identify solutions to eradicate homelessness in Scotland. Following consideration of the Action Group's recommendations, the Scottish Government required local authorities to develop and implement a Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan demonstrating how the local authority will consider current and future homeless demand and work in partnership to transform services to prevent homelessness and minimise the length of time people spend in temporary accommodation.

The Scottish Government are preparing new legislation to enhance the rights of people at risk of homelessness by placing statutory duties on public bodies including the Health and Social Care Partnership, Education, Police Scotland, and the Scottish Prison Service to identify people at risk of becoming homeless and to respond to prevent this from happening.

Homelessness in North Ayrshire

During 2021/22, 1,141 households made a homeless application in North Ayrshire, which was a 14% increase on the previous year. The increase is mainly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, in the previous year the Council had a decrease of 9%. During the first quarter of 2020/21 at the start of lockdown, there was a 32% reduction in approaches. The change from 2019/20 to 2021/22 was an increase of 4%. The Council experienced a 5% increase in homeless applications between 2017/18 and 2019/20.

Figure 9: Total applications for homeless assistance, North Ayrshire, 2017-2022 (Source: Scottish Government HL1 data)



Homelessness by Gender and Age

The majority (70%) of homeless people in North Ayrshire are aged between 26 and 59. Young people aged between 16 and 25 account for 25% of applications. There are a higher proportion of men (54%) than women represented, with men aged between 26 and 59 being the highest presenting group, making up 39% of all homeless applications.

Table 6: Homelessness by age & gender (Source: North Ayrshire Council Civica Database)

Gender	Age	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Female	16 to 17	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%
Female	18 to 25	12%	10%	11%	12%	11%
Female	26 to 59	29%	30%	29%	26%	31%
Female	60+	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%
Female	Total	44%	43%	44%	41%	46%
Male	16 to 17	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%
Male	18 to 25	13%	13%	11%	12%	11%
Male	26 to 59	39%	40%	41%	42%	39%
Male	60+	3%	2%	2%	4%	4%
Male	Total	56%	57%	56%	59%	54%

Household composition

72% of homeless applications are from single people and 22% are from households containing children.

Table 7: Homelessness by family composition (Source: Scottish Government HL1 Data)

Household Type	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Single Person	73%	71%	71%	75%	72%
Single Parent	15%	13%	16%	15%	16%
Couple	6%	7%	5%	5%	5%
Couple with Children	4%	7%	5%	4%	5%
Other	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Other with Children	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

Reasons for Homelessness

The main reason for homelessness in North Ayrshire during 2021/22 was people being asked to leave the family home, this accounted for 23% (259) of applicants. This has been the main reason for homelessness for four of the previous five years. Relationship breakdown was the main reason for homelessness, during 2020/2021 this accounted for 261 (20%) approaches, this was the second most common reason for homelessness during 2021/22 and 2019/20. This may be an impact of the COVID-19 lockdown which placed significant pressure on families. The third most significant reason for approach was due to domestic abuse 154 (13%).

Table 8: Reasons for homelessness approaches, for North Ayrshire 2017/18 to 2021/22
(Source: Scottish Government HL1 Data)

Reason for approach	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Asked to leave	24%	20%	21%	20%	23%
Dispute within household / relationship breakdown: non-violent	15%	15%	18%	26%	21%
Other action by landlord resulting in the termination of the tenancy	18%	19%	16%	6%	11%
Dispute within household: violent or abusive	10%	11%	12%	15%	13%
Discharge from prison / hospital / care / other institution	12%	10%	9%	8%	8%
Fleeing non-domestic violence	3%	7%	6%	9%	8%
Other reason for leaving accommodation / household	5%	5%	4%	4%	4%
Other reason for loss of accommodation	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%
Harassment	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%
Overcrowding	0%	1%	1%	2%	2%
Applicant terminated secure accommodation	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Termination of tenancy / mortgage due to rent arrears / default on payments	7%	6%	6%	0%	1%
Forced division and sale of matrimonial home	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Loss of service / tied accommodation	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%
Emergency (fire, flood, storm, closing order from Environmental Health etc.)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse accounted for 667 homeless applications between 2017 and 2022, 78% of which were from women. Police Scotland figures indicate domestic abuse in North Ayrshire has been higher than the Scottish average since 2009. It should however be recognised that we have driven a multi-agency media campaign over the last five years

promoting a zero-tolerance approach to domestic violence and detailing the availability of services.

The North Ayrshire Violence Against Women Partnership are committed to tackling violence against women and girls, working together to deliver services which respond to national and local priorities in line with the Equally Safe Strategy. The Partnership deliver an ambitious action plan aligned to the Safer North Ayrshire Strategy. Over the last three years they have focussed on delivering programmes within schools, tackling gender inequality and challenging stereotypical behaviour, a Safe Space initiative across various local businesses, an ending domestic abuse media campaign, a training framework across community planning partners and the annual 16 days of action campaign to end violence against women and girls across North Ayrshire.

In 2021, the Council, registered social landlords, Women's Aid and Police Scotland launched a Domestic Abuse Policy for North Ayrshire residents, setting out our joint commitments to tenants and residents affected by domestic abuse.

Our Home Security project supports residents of domestic abuse who choose to stay within their own home. On an annual basis an average of 260 households are provided with advice, support and where required the installation of security measures to a person's home to ensure they feel safe.

The provision of support services for people affected by domestic abuse is necessary to address inequality and ensure access to health care, education, advice, and information. The Council funds supported accommodation provision, and outreach services for women at risk of violence. The specialist provision is currently provided by Women's Aid.

We have a Multi-Agency Assessment Screening Hub based within Kilmarnock Police station set up to reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse in North Ayrshire. A Housing Support worker based within the service provides person-centred housing options, support and guidance to families impacted by domestic abuse. The officer works closely with the Housing Advice Team, Housing Support, and other agencies to ensure that the appropriate supports are in place to achieve safe sustainable outcomes for households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

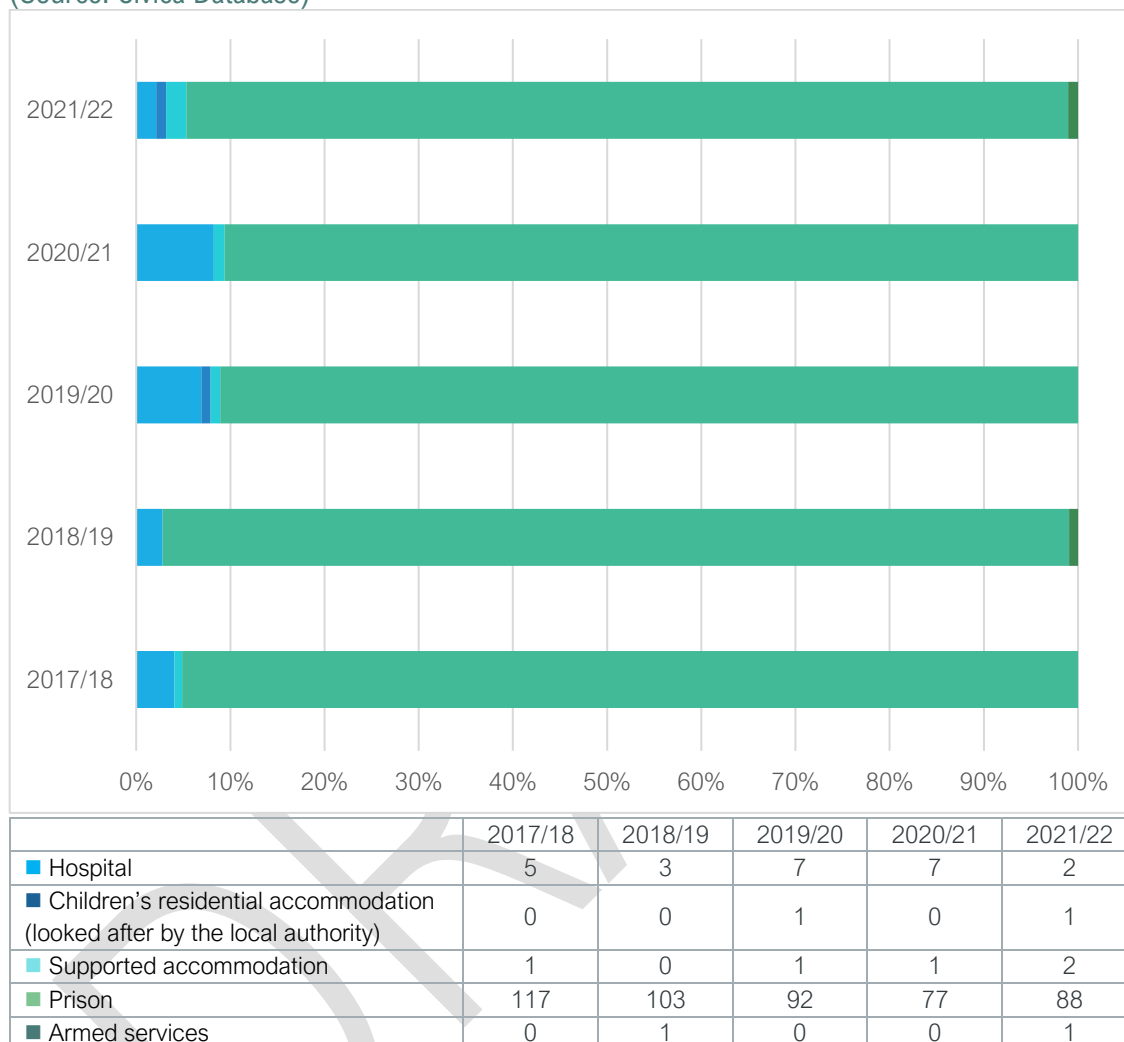
In partnership with NHS Ayrshire and Arran, East Ayrshire Council and South Ayrshire Council, we have set up a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference system. The risk assessment conferences are local meetings where representatives from statutory and non-statutory agencies meet to discuss individuals at high risk of serious harm or murder as a result of domestic abuse. The meeting provides a safe environment for agencies to share relevant and proportionate information about current risk, after which agencies agree actions to reduce risk and increase safety. The primary focus of the conferences is to safeguard the adult victim; however, they also link with other processes and agencies to safeguard children and manage the behaviour of the perpetrator.

We do not differentiate service delivery based on gender, and men who are victims of domestic violence have access to the same level of support that women do.

Leaving Institutions

During 2021/22, 94 households made a homeless presentation following discharge from an institution. This is an increase of 9 households (10%) on the previous year.

Figure 10: Discharge from Prison/Hospital/Care/Other Institution, North Ayrshire, 2017-2022
(Source: Civica Database)



Hospital Discharge

During 2021/22, there were two approaches for homeless assistance from households on discharge from hospital which is a reduction of 5 households from the previous year. The Health and Social Care Partnership are currently reviewing the hospital discharge processes, with a view to developing a revised protocol to ensure consistent pathway planning and processes for people being discharged from a residential healthcare setting.

Children & Young People

The 'Housing/Throughcare' protocol details our integrated service response so that no young person becomes homeless on leaving care and that care leavers are provided with appropriate levels of support to achieve independence. The protocol is based on the principle that care leavers should have access to secure accommodation and is supported by our Housing Allocations Policy, which recognises Young Care Leavers as a group given reasonable preference to housing.

The effectiveness of this approach is evidenced by the low level of young people leaving care represented within the Homelessness statistics, with only one approach in the last four years.

The adverse effect of welfare reforms, in particular the Local Housing Allowance and Shared Room Rate reduces the housing options available to young people. Given the proportion (25%) of young people represented within homelessness statistics we need to develop prevention activities and enhanced housing advice targeted at this group.

During 2021/22, 248 homeless applicants had children within the household, this amounted to 408 children being homeless within the year. We strive to ensure that our temporary accommodation meets the needs of children and is within an area that allows them continued access to their social networks. However, given the adverse effects of homelessness on children, prevention of its occurrence remains our primary focus.

Prison Discharge

Levels of homelessness following prison discharge remains high, with 88 approaches during 2021/22 amounting to 8% of homeless applications. (see Table 8).

The Council Housing Service has a dedicated Housing Advice Officer working within HMP Kilmarnock and provides a satellite service to other Scottish Prisons. The officer has access to the prison discharge lists three months in advance and contacts all prisoners from North Ayrshire who are willing to work with them, to ascertain their housing needs on discharge, with an aim to prevent homelessness where possible.

The North Ayrshire Homelessness Taskforce took the decision to focus on prevention and early intervention activities on this area to break the link between prison discharge and homelessness. This resulted in the development of an Integrated Prison Discharge Protocol aligned to the SHORE standards during 2019. The protocol details the strong collaborative working across partners to ensure the pathways into Housing, Health, Addiction, Mental Health, and Third Sector services are seamless for people leaving prison.

The protocol promotes barrier free access to services to ensure that people can access the services required to enable them to sustain their accommodation, reducing the risk of future homelessness and repeat offending. There has been a delay in implementing the protocol due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The North Ayrshire Housing First programme focusses on the needs of people with complex needs who have a history of offending behaviour with the aim of improving outcomes for this group.

Leaving the Armed Forces

We prioritise the needs of households leaving the armed forces within our allocation policy, giving enhanced priority to ensure that applicants receive an offer of housing and prevent the possibility of them becoming homeless.

In 2021/22, 34 veterans approached the Council for homeless assistance, with the main reason being relationship breakdown or being asked to leave the family home. 30 of the 34 applicants advised that they had served at least five or more years, with only four advising

that this was within the last five years. There was one approach for homeless assistance due to a veteran being discharge from the armed forces.

Veterans First Point launched in North Ayrshire in 2017, this generated an increase in the level of veterans accessing services including homelessness assistance. The service works closely with Housing Services and ensures that, where there is a housing need, the veteran is appropriately referred and supported.

In 2020, we renewed our pledge to uphold the 'Armed Forces Covenant' - "[All] Those who serve [or have served] in the Armed Forces...and their families, should face no disadvantage...in the provision of public...services".

We recognise that service personnel, who have lived in Ministry of Defence housing for many years, and may have had to move often, might not have strong links with any particular area. We will continue to give enhanced priority for service personnel and their families when their date of discharge is confirmed.

Therefore, we treat their housing applications sympathetically, and award 'enhanced priority' for social housing when their date of discharge is confirmed. This ensures our veterans are not disadvantaged when applying for social housing and that they receive a timely offer.

We hold a monthly 'Armed Forces Housing Surgery' where personnel can discuss their housing options, ensuring that service personnel leaving the forces because of injury or disability, are assessed by an Occupational Therapist, and receive housing suited to their needs.

Likewise, where a family is leaving armed forces accommodation in exceptional circumstances, for example where the service member has been killed in action, we award the same priority to the family as we would have, had the veteran still been part of the household.

Temporary Accommodation

We have a duty to provide all homeless households with temporary accommodation while their homeless application is being assessed. For those assessed as unintentionally homeless, this duty is extended until they are permanently housed. As at the end of March 2021, we had 270 households residing within temporary accommodation in North Ayrshire.

In line with our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, we have focussed on reducing the number of hostel units in North Ayrshire and reducing the length of time people spend in temporary accommodation. We have successfully closed two medium sized hostels reducing hostel bedspaces by 50 over the last three years. We have increased our supply of dispersed accommodation to ensure we meet the temporary housing needs of homeless people. In addition, we have worked alongside Women's Aid to close two units of refuge accommodation and increase the supply of dispersed accommodation available for women fleeing violence.

Table 9: North Ayrshire temporary accommodation profile (Source: NAC Homeless Service)

Type of Accommodation	Units	Description
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Dispersed	242	Self-contained furnished accommodation with floating support
Emergency Hostel Accommodation	20	Supported short stay hostel provision
Refuge Accommodation	1(8)	8 bed refuge unit with on-site support provided by Women's Aid
Dispersed for women fleeing violence	19	Dispersed furnished refuge accommodation with Women's Aid floating support
Total bedspaces	282	

Duration of stay in temporary accommodation

The homeless taskforce took the decision to pilot a policy of 100% allocations to homeless households for three months from January to March 2020 to clear the backlog of homeless households within temporary accommodation and to reduce the duration of homelessness. The pilot was extended for a period due to the impact of COVID-19 and had a significant impact on reducing the duration of homelessness for our longest case. The table below shows a snapshot of the percentage of homeless households waiting on an offer of housing on the 31 March each year.

Table 10: Duration of Homelessness Snapshot at 31st March 2022 (Source: North Ayrshire Council Civica Database)

Year	Homeless duration < 6 months	Homeless duration 6 – 12 months	Homeless duration >12 months
2019/20	24%	64%	12%
2020/21	53%	29%	18%
2021/22	78%	13%	9%

As the implementation of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan progresses, and homeless households are housed more quickly, the overall requirement for temporary accommodation will be reduced. This is because each property will turn over more frequently each year. In addition, the Housing First approach will improve the levels of tenancy sustainment for our customers with complex support needs, reducing the demand for temporary accommodation due to homelessness.

Housing Outcomes for Homeless People

78% of people assessed as either homeless or threatened with homelessness unintentionally, and whose case was closed during 2021/22, secured settled permanent accommodation, this is lower than the national average of 80%. North Ayrshire are above the national average on the allocation of local authority tenancies at 57%, however allocations by our registered social landlords are below the national average at 17%.

Table 11: Housing outcomes (Source: Scottish Government HL1 Data)

Settled outcomes	Scotland	North Ayrshire
local authority tenancy	44%	57%
registered social landlord tenancy	32%	17%
private let	4%	3%
Total	82%	76%

Table 12: Housing outcomes (Source: Scottish Government HL1 Data)

Scot Gov Outcomes Assess 1 & 4	Scotland	North Ayrshire
Returned to previous address or family/friends	10%	17%
Other - Known	8%	5%

We have a higher proportion of households returning home or moving in with relatives following a period of homelessness. This could be because of our recording practice as we record a homeless application for all households threatened with homelessness within 2 months, many of whom resolve their family situation and return home.

Throughout homelessness, officers will continue to provide advice and assistance to prevent the occurrence of homelessness, often resulting in a return to the family home and the closure of the homeless application.

Island Homelessness

The level of homeless applications from residents on our island communities is exceptionally low with less than 2% of homeless approaches in 2021/22 coming from island residents. The main reasons for an approach from island households is 'Other action by landlord resulting in the termination of the tenancy' (31%) and being 'asked to leave' which also accounted for 31%.

We have undertaken work to improve access to advice and information including holding 'surgeries' on the islands to allow people who are homeless or potentially homeless to seek advice and support without leaving the island, these were not well attended. We now work with island dwellers threatened with homeless to find the most suitable housing outcome relevant to their individual circumstances. We will build on the lessons learned during the COVID-19 lockdown, to increase access to homeless services for those living on our islands.

Partnership working

The multi-agency, North Ayrshire Homelessness Task Force, supported by a number of operational working groups, drives the strategic direction of homeless prevention and alleviation activities aligned to national and local priorities. The task force is also the governance group for the North Ayrshire Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan detailed below. Membership comprises of the Council, Justice Services, the third sector, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, the Health and Social Care Partnership, NHS Ayrshire and Arran, SERCO, Elected Members, and people with lived experience. The task force was set up during 2017 to develop an integrated, prevention focussed approach to households with complex needs to minimise the risk of homelessness and repeat homelessness, whilst delivering sustainable housing outcomes for vulnerable people.

Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019 - 2024

Our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan sets out how North Ayrshire Council and its partners will work together to implement a housing led approach to meeting the needs of homeless households. Where it is not possible for us to prevent homelessness, our priority is to secure a settled housing option for every homeless household as quickly as possible.

Prevention of Homelessness

Our priority over the next five years is to work with partners to develop a whole systems approach to the prevention of homelessness through early intervention, building on the excellent relationships and processes already in place.

Our Housing Advice team provide an enhanced housing options service to any resident in North Ayrshire at risk of homelessness. Officers assess risk, identify housing options and link in support and advice services as required to minimise the risk of homelessness.

We fund third sector Housing Advice Services in North Ayrshire to ensure households have access to independent advice and advocacy throughout periods of homelessness or where representation is required to challenge court action. This service also undertakes work in all local secondary schools providing advice to senior pupils to reduce the risk of homelessness.

The North Ayrshire Housing Support service works with households who are homeless or tenants who require additional help to sustain their accommodation. This experienced team works in partnership with specialist services including money and debt advice, addiction and mental health teams, wider health and social care partners, employability services and welfare benefits, to ensure households at risk get access to the most appropriate level and type of support to enable them to sustain their accommodation.

We have a duty to provide housing support services to people assessed as unintentionally homeless where they have a housing support need as defined under the Housing Support Duty 2013.

During 2021/22, 52% of all North Ayrshire homeless applicants were assessed as having at least one support need.

Every homeless person in North Ayrshire has a support needs assessment undertaken and a dedicated Housing Support officer will provide services throughout the period of homelessness to help them prepare for independent living. Where required, support provision will continue when a person moves into their own home to ensure they are able to sustain their accommodation, reducing the risk of repeat homelessness. Where there is a need for specialist support provision, the support officer will work in partnership with other services to ensure homeless people have access to the support required.

Homeless people with complex needs are supported through our Housing First programme delivered by a specialist multi-agency team comprising of officers from Housing Support, Housing Advice, Addiction Services and Mental Health Services. The support is enhanced by the work of a commissioned peer support service provided by Turning Point Scotland. Since 2019 we successfully resettled 83 homeless people with complex needs through this programme with a tenancy sustainment level of 70%.

Riverside homes have embarked on a Housing First Model for women with children at risk of homelessness. Following their successful application to the Homeless prevention fund (administered by the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations), Riverside homes secured funding to deliver the Housing First for family's project. At present, support is being

focussed on existing Riverside Homes tenants with families who have recently been re-housed following a homeless application, there is an intention to extend this to women experiencing violence in tandem with Women's Aid.

The above is a snapshot of some of the work being undertaken as part of our prevention focus. Over the next five years our priority will be to integrate the work of partners, ensuring housing issues are considered and risks identified and responded to at the earliest opportunity to minimise the risk of homelessness. This will be aligned to the new Prevention Duty currently being prepared by the Scottish Government.

The Rented Sector

Private Rented Sector

According to current Council Tax data, the Private Rented Sector accounts for 12% of North Ayrshire's total housing stock, ranging from 10% to 14% across the localities. Private rented homes are therefore an important component of our housing system.

The Private Rented Sector is a vital part of our housing supply. It provides a housing option for people who cannot afford to buy but who would have little chance of securing a social rented home. Private renting is also a way of supporting a responsive, dynamic workforce, offering mobile workers a place to live when they move to a new area. All private landlords must be registered with us before they rent out homes. [Registrations](#) can be made either on-line, or in writing, and a fee applies.

We will continue to do all we can through our [Scheme of Assistance](#), to support private landlords to provide rented homes that meet the highest tenancy and condition standards possible.

Rent Pressure Zones

We are part of the 'Ayrshires' [Broad Rental Market Area](#). This is important because the average private sector rents from across North, South and East Ayrshire are used to set the [Local Housing Allowance](#) – which in turn 'caps' how much housing benefit people get through their Universal Credit.

However, because the figure is calculated from across Ayrshire, which has some of the lowest private sector rents in the country, there is a risk that in more pressured housing markets - such as Arran – rents may be much higher than average. In these areas, private tenants may not benefit from the Local Housing Allowance in the same way as people in other parts of Ayrshire do. If someone's housing benefit element does not cover their rent costs, they must find the money themselves to make up the shortfall.

Rent pressure zones effectively limit how much private sector rents can increase by in each area. We can apply to the Scottish Government to have areas designated as a 'rent pressure zone' if the private sector rents in that area are rising too much, causing problems for the tenants and where we are under pressure to provide more housing. Over the lifetime of this strategy, it is anticipated that the Scottish Government will deliver on their

commitment to reform Rent Pressure Zones, allowing a more localised approach for areas experiencing the impacts of high rents.

Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme

Our Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme was set up to help people who want to rent a home from a private landlord but are unable to afford the cash deposit to do so. For a period of 6 months, we act as guarantor and provide the landlord with a written guarantee for the deposit during that time. Meanwhile, the tenant pays the actual deposit in instalments. The scheme is available to people with a connection to North Ayrshire and focuses on assisting people who are in receipt of benefits or have a low income and who are homeless, potentially homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless.

During the past two years landlord participation in the scheme has declined, despite every effort being made to advertise the scheme and encourage landlords to participate. The main reasons are as follows:

- Universal Credit has had a significant impact as landlords are apprehensive about accepting an application with no guarantee of rental payments. Landlords continue to struggle with housing element payments even though they can apply for Managed Payments.
- There are very few available properties and very few landlords/letting agents willing to work with the scheme.
- COVID-19 compounded this with the introduction of extended notice periods and as a result private sector rents have also increased in North Ayrshire by 6.8% (Scottish Government Private Sector Rent Statistics 2010-2021). This means a lot of properties in the private rented sector are above the Local Housing Allowance rate and are now out of reach to most applicants wishing to use the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme.

Houses in Multiple Occupation

There are eleven Houses in Multiple Occupation in North Ayrshire - most are managed by support organisations who provide care services. However, a few are the result of business owners choosing to provide shared accommodation for their staff. Nonetheless, there is no evidence to suggest that locally we need to focus on increasing this type of housing.

Tied Accommodation

Tied accommodation means you live in housing that comes with your job. While you are in employment you can continue to live in the house, but if your employment ends, so does your stay in that home.

There are two models of tied accommodation, firstly you could have a separate lease (tenancy) with the landlord for the duration of your employment, or secondly you may have a 'service occupancy' where the employer directly provides the home.

There are many good examples of tied accommodation, and it is an important tool for a mobile labour force, however, there are some challenges with it too. Living in tied accommodation means your employer is also your landlord, this puts them in a powerful position and their tenant in a more vulnerable one. The Scottish Government, on

introduction of the New Housing Standards, will hold tied accommodation to the same condition standards as all other tenures.

The '[Shelter Scotland](#)' website provides information for people considering tied accommodation. We would recommend anyone considering this type of housing to review the guidance on that site first.

Crofting

Crofting is a system of landholding that is unique to Scotland. The landholder or 'crofter' is usually a tenant who pays rent and is protected by specific legislation, though some land is owned by its crofter. A crofter can build a house on their croft or live elsewhere, so long as it is within 32km of that croft.

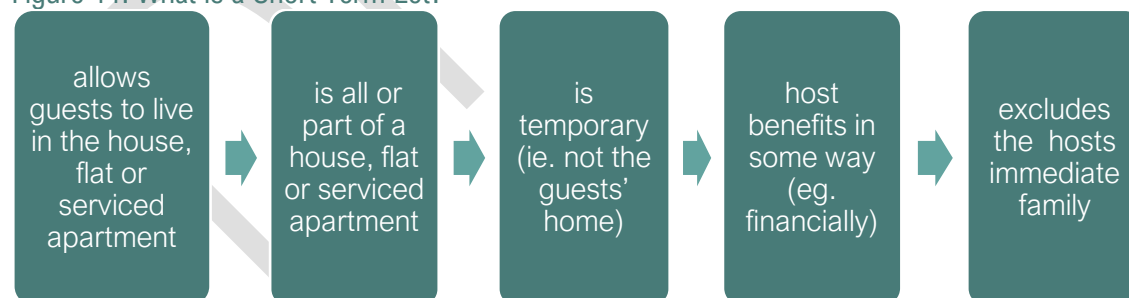
In 2010, Arran, Greater Cumbrae and Little Cumbrae were all designated as crofting areas. However, none of our islands has a history of crofting, and in 2019/20, there was only one privately owned croft in North Ayrshire (on Arran) – a situation which has remained unchanged since at least 2013.

The Scottish Government see crofting as having "a vital role in maintaining the population in rural...areas, including the retention of young people and families," as well as "helping to address individual's' housing needs in areas where housing development is limited and complex," and have committed to identifying how planning policies can help to sustain and grow crofting communities.

Short-Term Lets

Short term lets do not include 'unconventional' homes such as caravans, pods and canal boats, the term also excludes hotels. Short-term lets have a role to play in tourism driven economies, in our area this tends to be the islands.

Figure 11: What is a Short Term Let?



Platforms such as 'Airbnb' and 'booking.com' make it easier for homeowners to enter the tourism rental market, but these same owners may have previously opted to become a private landlord. Effectively, the tourism market is eroding the number of homes available for private rent, which results in a lack of supply and inflating private rental charges.

Arran has the second largest number of self-catering properties in Scotland after Edinburgh – and given the size of the housing markets in each area, Arran's situation is proportionately the severest in the country.

Planned legislation intends to direct how we can balance 1) island housing need, 2) the concerns of residents and 3) tourism industry requirements, all of which are crucial to support our island communities.

Intermediate Housing

Intermediate housing (sometimes called ‘mid-market’ housing) is a type of rented accommodation that costs more than social rented homes, but less than private rented homes. In our area however, the cost of housing is similar, regardless of whether it is social or private, and this means that there is no ‘middle’ in which to locate a mid-market model.

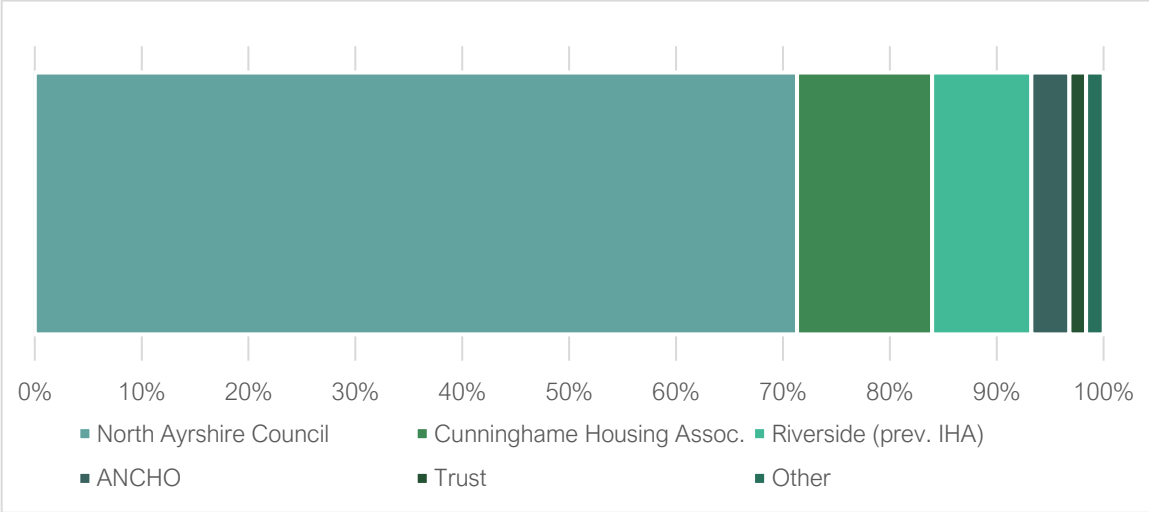
However, this type of housing does have other benefits. It supports the regeneration of an area by promoting mixed communities who have access to a range of good quality new housing. It can also offer a solution to under 35-year-olds, who form half of the private rented sector, and whom research suggests are excluded from both home ownership (due to difficulties securing a deposit) and social rented homes (due to a lack of assessed need).

Social Housing

There are over 18,400 homes in the North Ayrshire social rented sector, and while collectively managed by the Council and eleven social landlords, it is the Council along with Cunninghame Housing Association, Riverside Housing and ANCHO who own and let most of the housing in the area (97%).

The majority (80%) of social housing in our area is classified as ‘general needs,’ and the remaining 20% is designed for people with specialist needs.

Figure 12: Social Housing Stock by Landlord, 31 March 2022 (Source: Scottish Housing Regulator) NB: Other (Hanover, West of Scotland, Horizon, Bield, Blackwood, Key & Ayrshire Housing Associations)



The ‘Social Housing Charter’ sets out the standards and outcomes that all social landlords are responsible for meeting. It does not replace any of the legal duties that apply to social landlords but is intended “to improve the quality and value of the services that social landlords provide...[supporting] the long-term aim of...a safer and stronger Scotland” by:

- stating clearly what tenants and other customers can expect from social landlords, and helping them to hold landlords to account
- focusing the efforts of social landlords on achieving outcomes that matter to their customers

The [Scottish Housing Regulator](#) assesses and reports on how well social landlords are performing and publishes information on performance on their website.

Mutual Exchange

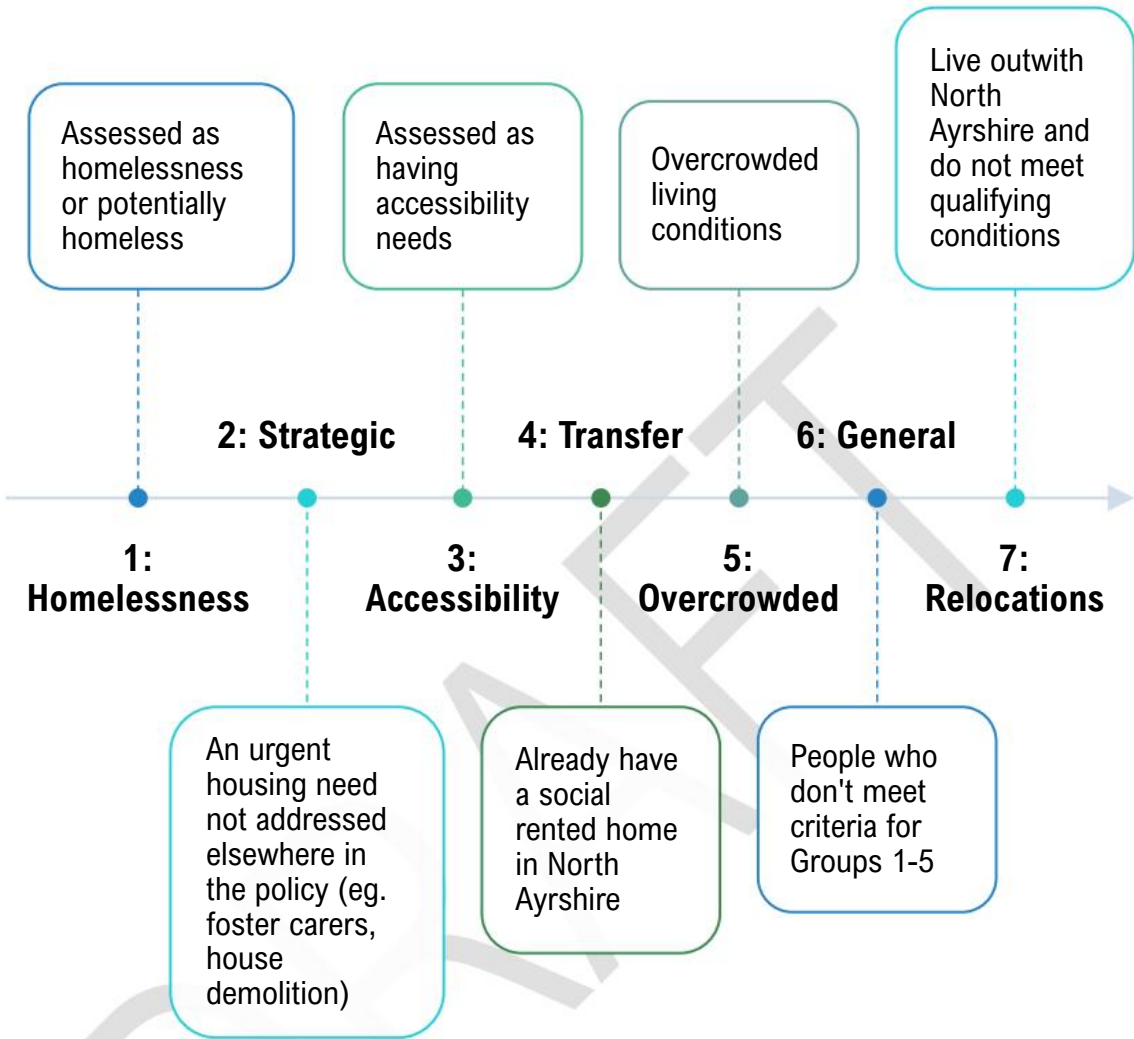
All social housing tenants in the area can apply to swap their home with another social housing tenant, or even a number of tenants, so long as their landlord agrees. This is known as 'mutual exchange' and is a useful tool both for maximising the effectiveness of available social housing stock and for empowering our people to find their own housing solution. Our mutual exchange procedures were reviewed by our Tenant Scrutiny Panel in 2021 and recommendations were agreed and implemented to improve the process for tenants.

Allocations

The '[North Ayrshire Housing Register](#)' is a partnership between the four main social landlords in North Ayrshire as noted above, and is based on a common allocation policy which gives our people access to 97% of all social housing in the area, just by completing a single form.

Households who apply to the register are assessed and allocated points and a 'group' based on their housing needs. The greater the need for a new or different home, the more points a household is given. Targets are set for the number of allocations to each group, and homes are allocated to those who have most points. The different groups are illustrated in Figure 13 below.

Figure 13: North Ayrshire Housing Register: Allocation Groups, 2020



We review our allocation policy every three years to ensure it remains as effective as possible. All allocations are now based on a comprehensive assessment of an applicant's need, as well as considering their housing preferences. This means that our applicants receive more suitable offers, which allows them to settle in an area, in turn supporting tenancy sustainment, lower turnover, and community stability.

Where a community has specific housing pressures, we can make localised adjustments to our allocation policy, to meet the needs of those communities. On Arran, people were telling us that it was difficult to get an affordable home. Young people were leaving the island to find affordable housing, and employers were telling us that they were struggling to attract employees, again due to the lack of affordable housing. For these reasons, we introduced a 'Local Lettings Initiative' on Arran. Island applicants are considered in line with the guidelines of our common allocation policy, then also awarded additional points if they live and/or work on the island.

Self-Provided

The Scottish Government define self-provided housing as either “self-build (where a person builds their own house or appoints their own builder), custom-build (where a person tasks a house builder to tailor a home to their preferences before it is built) and collective build (where a group of people design and build several homes together.”

The Government sees self-provided homes as a way of tailoring houses to people’s long-term needs, helping deliver affordable and energy efficient homes that support diversity and innovation, supporting young people in rural areas, and introducing more choice and flexibility into the private sector. Increasing the opportunities and number of self-provided homes is a national priority.

People in North Ayrshire, who are interested in self-provided housing can record their interest, by completing an [online form](#), noting their preferred area, plot size and budget etc. They will also be able to remove themselves from the register if their requirements change. As at 31 March 2023 there were 186 interested self-builders on our register.

As required under section 16E of the 1997 Planning Act (as amended), the Council as planning authority will prepare and maintain a list of people in North Ayrshire seeking land for self-build housing. We will have regard to this list in the preparation of the Local Development Plan and continue to explore opportunities for self-build projects.

Empty Homes

Empty homes can have a negative effect on our neighbourhoods. They are much more likely to fall into disrepair and are often the target of antisocial behaviour. At any given time, there will be a number of empty homes in the area. This is normal and there are often very good reasons why, such as the owner being in hospital and their family being reluctant to sell, or the owners have bought a new property and have not sold their old one yet. These empty homes tend not to cause major problems for communities. Generally, they are looked after by the owners or their families and sell when they are marketed.

However, there are 500 properties in our area which are classed as ‘long-term’ empty (empty for more than 1 year). It is these properties which we target our resources at. Bringing these empty properties back into use can help us with our regeneration and economic development ambitions.

Our ‘Private Sector Housing Team’ work with owners of these ‘long-term’ empty homes, trying to bring the properties back into use. On average, the team help owners bring 80% of these empty homes back into use. The team can also consider using Compulsory Purchase powers to buy empty properties that are in poor condition and where the owner is unable, or unwilling, to address the disrepair. Empty homes that we purchase are brought up to standard and allocated in the normal way.

We apply a Council Tax ‘levy’ to homes which are empty for an extended period (e.g., homes which are empty for 12+ months are charged double Council tax). The money raised, is then used to support the development projects which are set out in the [Strategic Housing Investment Plan](#).

Affordable Warmth & Zero Emissions

Our homes are energy efficient and release less emissions

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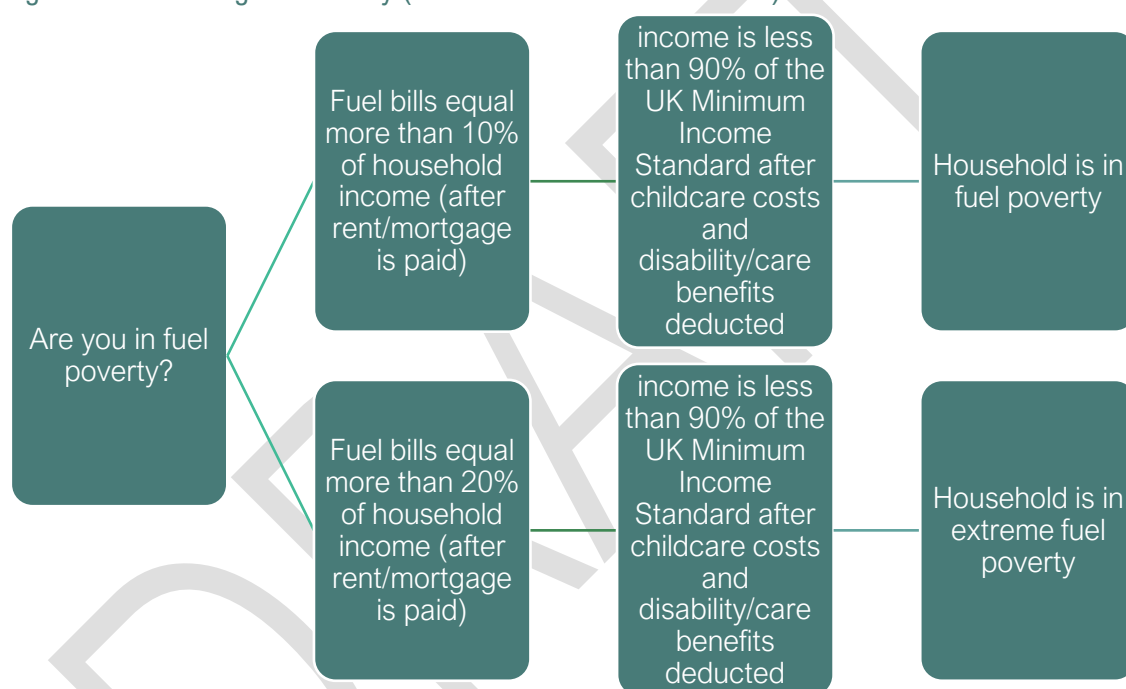


Fuel Poverty

The Scottish Government introduced the Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act in June 2019 to tackle fuel poverty. The Act set statutory targets for reducing fuel poverty, introduced a new definition which aligns fuel poverty more closely with relative income poverty, and required Scottish ministers to produce a comprehensive strategy. On 23rd December 2021, Scottish Government published the Fuel Poverty Strategy which includes actions to tackle each of the four drivers of fuel poverty, namely:

- poor energy efficiency of the home.
- high energy costs.
- low household income.
- how energy is used in the home.

Figure 14: Assessing Fuel Poverty (UK Minimum Income Standard)



Fuel poverty affects the most vulnerable people in our communities and has a detrimental impact on health and well-being. For example, older people and those with disabilities often have lower levels of income but require additional warmth in their home through the day, resulting in higher fuel bills. There is a growing body of evidence demonstrating the links between fuel poverty, cold homes and poor health outcomes.

There has been an increase in condensation issues within our properties due to tenants not being able to afford to heat their homes. This in turn can cause dampness and mould issues in all our properties and also within the private sector. Our approach to dealing with condensation, and subsequent dampness and mould issues is currently underway involving officers from all affected service areas.

The Scottish Government has set statutory targets - by 2040 no more than 5% of households should be in fuel poverty and no more than 1% of households should be in extreme fuel poverty.

Three elements contribute to fuel poverty: fuel prices, low household income and the energy efficiency of the home.

Figure 15: The 3 Factors which Contribute to Fuel Poverty



According to the Scottish Government's [Scottish House Condition Survey](#), between 2016-19, 28% of households in North Ayrshire were in fuel poverty (Scottish Government, 2019). Moreover, the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation data shows 74 of our 186 data zones in the top 20% most deprived in Scotland. Given that fuel poverty features as one of the determining factors in the SIMD it is likely that fuel poverty features highly across such areas. People without mains gas are also more at risk of fuel poverty. Census 2011 reported a lack of central heating in rural North Ayrshire (where there is no mains gas), with significant spikes on the islands. Unfortunately, Census 2021 was postponed due to the pandemic, therefore the 2022 findings will not be available until after this strategy is published.

The current cost of living crisis places a significant burden on household income by increasing the cost of food, transport and in particular, energy.

Our objective is to support residents of North Ayrshire through the cost of living crisis by reducing fuel poverty and increasing affordable warmth, whilst reducing carbon emissions. We continue to investigate all models of support for residents, including implementation of actions within our Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy 2021- 2023 (ESCCS 3), Affordable Warmth Workstream, supporting energy efficiency for hard to treat private sector properties through the Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Scheme, and utilise data from our recent Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy work to better target support.

Part of the Council's action on climate change involves consideration of buildings being more resilient and adapting to climate change. The first stage of Adaptation Scotland's Capability Framework has been completed, to identify a baseline of data and generate an action plan.

This includes partnership working to raise awareness and share understanding on climate change and adaptation projects.

The Council created a £2.176m package to support households with the cost-of-living crisis in August 2022. The scheme aims to support North Ayrshire residents through the cost-of-living crisis by reducing fuel poverty and increasing affordable warmth, whilst reducing carbon emissions and providing local employment opportunities as part of the programme. The Council's Energy Smart programmes three main elements are:



The launch of a partnership with the Energy Agency to signpost households to free and impartial advice through the Home Energy Scotland helpline



The creation of a £0.45million fund to offer one-off emergency payments towards energy bills for low-income families



The creation of a £1.7million fund to carry out home improvements to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy bills

Figure 16: Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Schemes – North Ayrshire Budget Allocations and Spend, 2019-2022 (Source: Scottish Government)

2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
£1.438 million	£1.613 million	£1.975 million

The Council participated in phase 3 of the Scottish Government's 'Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy' pilot scheme. The strategy will inform how we approach the challenges of climate change, better energy efficiency, and fuel poverty, while we work towards a net zero (carbon emission) North Ayrshire, by 2030. Subsequently we will publish a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy and Delivery Plan by 31st December 2023, to remove energy efficiency as a driver for fuel poverty and identify areas of high heat demand for potential heat networks.

Most social rented homes in North Ayrshire have now met the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (or 'ESSH') and we are preparing a delivery plan for 'ESSH2 to be delivered by 2032'. Our commitment to continue offering welfare reform advice and information services to social rented tenants will also help overcome one of the main factors involved in fuel poverty – low household income. Through our Financial Inclusion Strategy, we have referral pathways in place from advice services to specialist fuel poverty/energy advice services to ensure that people get help with, for example, debts to utility providers. Interventions include support to access discretionary grants to write off energy debts, or to set up repayment plans. They also provide advice and support in resolving disputes with suppliers and with the replacement of prepayment meters with credit meters.

Emissions

On 11th June 2019, we declared a 'Climate Emergency'.

Summers are forecast to become increasingly warmer, introducing the risk of higher air pollution, water shortages and even heat related deaths. Wetter winters could herald

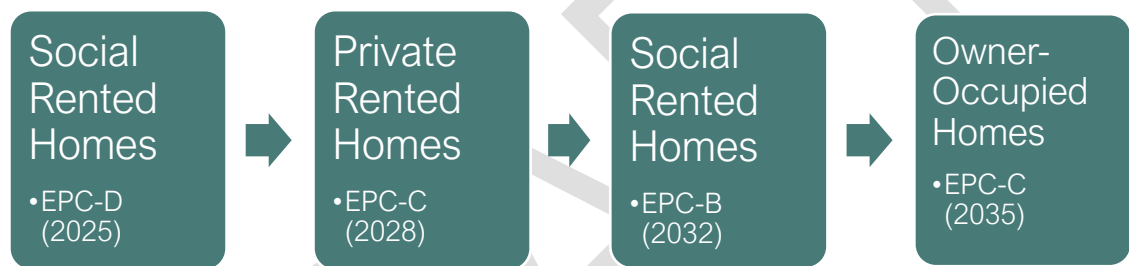
flooding, and rising sea levels will be of particular concern to our residents whose homes are at sea level.

Our [Climate Change Strategy](#) 2021-2023 sets out the range of measures we already have in place to reduce emissions, but our ambition is for North Ayrshire to be 'net zero' by 2030.

Nationally our homes account for 21.7% of greenhouse gas emission, contributing to the very climate change that poses significant challenges for our people, our properties, and our places. Within North Ayrshire 21% of emissions are domestic.

Reducing emissions from our homes and buildings, and making our communities more climate resilient, are the most important things we can do to help reduce Scotland's contribution to climate change. [HEEPS](#) is a national framework for improving the energy performance of Scotland's buildings, and is based around an ambition for warmer, greener and more energy efficient construction. Delivery of this vision is organised around regulating energy performance standards across Scotland's homes.

Figure 17: Energy Efficiency Standards for Scotland's Homes, Target & Deadline



Decarbonisation will present an additional challenge for low-income households, a challenge we recognise, and we will ensure we only take forward actions where they will have no negative impact on the rate of fuel poverty. We can reduce emissions from our homes by improving thermal efficiency and then reviewing heating system options. Firstly, we can reduce the amount of electricity that is needed to heat the home by insulating roof spaces and walls, and secondly, we can make the cost of electricity cheaper by fitting solar panels on our properties and allowing our tenants to benefit from this free source of electricity. Works have commenced to address this by installing solar panels and external wall insulation to our homes as part of our roofing and rendering capital investment programme, either by way of a new installation or retrofitting. The Council is also installing the infrastructure for future car charging points within Council tenancies as part of our electrical rewiring programme.

Other ways of reducing emissions and minimising the impact on our climate include using renewable sources of fuel - we are exploring opportunities for air and ground source heat pumps and community 'district' heating systems - increasing insulation in homes (to keep heat in during winter, and out during summer) or exploring opportunities for 'passive solar gain.' We should also consider embodied carbon, for example, the RIBA recommendation for housebuilders is to adopt their 2025 embodied carbon target of 800 KgCO₂ e/m², 'as a minimum' for new builds in design. Many of these solutions reduce the amount of fuel needed to heat or cool the home, and in turn, helps us alleviate fuel poverty.

We must also build 'climate' resilience into our housing. The wetter, warmer climate will have an impact on the fabric of our buildings, and how much maintenance they will require. More frequent extreme weather will also impact upon building fabric and new housing developments should be designed to cope with extreme weather. As a Council, we are taking action to prevent flooding, and have adopted an approach of tree planting to absorb water and promote biodiversity.

Scotland's fourth National Planning Framework ('NPF4') was adopted by Scottish Ministers on 13 February 2023. The Framework strengthens a number of key planning themes in support of meeting Scotland's climate change targets, including prioritising the use of 'brownfield' sites for new housing provision, supporting local and town centre living and considering transport in land-use planning. However, bringing brownfield land into use can be challenging because of contamination and remediation costs. Private developers often see brownfield developments as risky. The Council's Regeneration Delivery Plan has a focus on these issues and the role which the public sector has in resolving such challenges in a way that delivers public value.

The Scottish Government have also set out an agenda for modernising house building particularly through offsite construction - an important tool in achieving good quality homes that meet net zero targets. There is also a focus on economic benefits, digitisation, speedier development, community wins and improved health and safety.

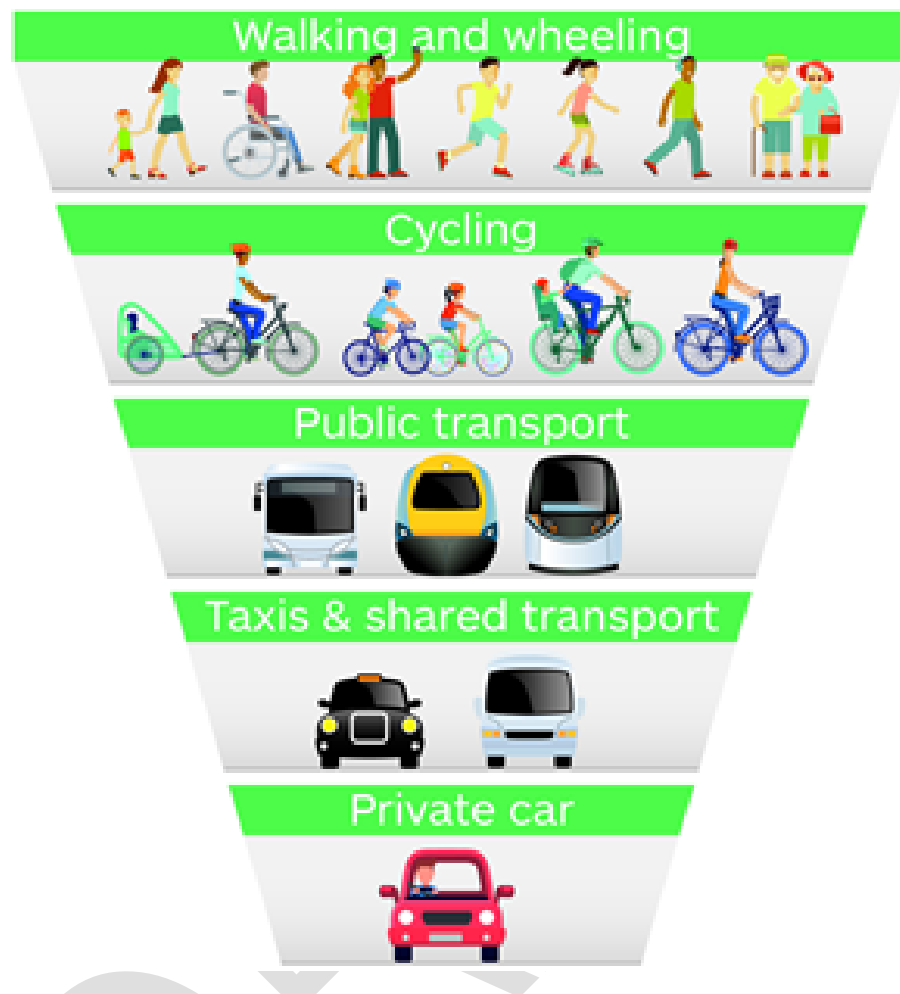
Active Travel

Access to safe walking networks, cycle pathways and public transport connect people and communities to local amenities, services, work, and education. In turn, these can result in direct health benefits, through increased physical activity and reduced air pollution. They can also lead to indirect health benefits by providing improved access to opportunities for employment, leisure, and healthcare services.

The sustainable travel hierarchy, illustrated in Figure 18 below, sets out the transport priorities for sustainable transport in developments.

Figure 18: Sustainable travel hierarchy

Prioritising Sustainable Transport



Improving the quality of our homes

Our homes are in good condition and people can access any support services they need

DRAFT



Statement of Assistance

Homeowners, whether they live in their home, or rent it to a tenant, have a duty to look after it. By doing so, they avoid disrepair, preserve the home as an asset and maintain its value, whilst ensuring it remains available to future generations.

We have a duty to make sure that all social housing in North Ayrshire meets the minimum standard. However, the responsibility for looking after privately owned homes – and for repair, maintenance, improvement, energy efficiency, or compliance with legislation - lies with the home's owner. It is also the responsibility of the owner to highlight the need for adaptations to their home.

We support and promote responsible homeownership, and our assistance will take the form of advice and information, and where appropriate by signposting people to other services. We will not supply funding to support the improvement of homes in the private housing sector. We also want to ensure that people who live in private housing can get any adaptations they may need to ensure their wellbeing and to allow them to live independently, and we provide financial assistance to cover some (or all) of eligible adaptations to private properties, subject to assessment.

Closing and Demolition Orders

The Council's approach to closing and demolition orders is set out within our [Scheme of Assistance](#). The Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 allows the Council to serve closing and demolition orders if a house's state of disrepair is likely to deteriorate rapidly or is a danger to the occupants; or if the building fails to meet the Tolerable Standard and the cost of bringing the property up to that standard would be greater than the cost of rebuilding the property.

- **Closing orders** prevent a property being inhabited. Such orders can also be made of flats, where other properties within a block are habitable.
- **Demolition orders** are typically served on single dwelling houses, which can be demolished without impacting on neighbouring properties. Normally, when a demolition order is served, the property owner must organise and pay for demolition themselves. However, we have the right to demolish a building served with a demolition order and to do so without purchasing it.

The Council also has the right to purchase a property issued with a demolition or closing order. We identify if this is necessary by considering the condition of the property and the demand for housing in its location.

New Housing Standard

The Scottish Government started consultation on the 'New Housing Standard' in 2021, with the aim to publish the draft standard in 2023, enact it in law and introduce it between 2025 to 2030.

The new standard will mean that all homes (private and social) will have a legal duty to meet the same minimum condition standard. There will be no margins of tolerance, no exemptions and no 'acceptable levels' of sub-standard homes. Our 'pre-tenancy support service' for landlords, provides property inspections and tenancy agreement advice, and helps act as a preventative approach to future property condition issues.

We know the condition of our owner-occupied homes tends to be the same as, or better than, Scottish norms. This puts us in a strong local position for the introduction of the 'New Housing Standard.' However, when it comes to the condition of private rented homes there is little information. We await guidance from the Scottish Government on how private sector property condition information will be gathered as part of the 'New Housing Standard' launch. Until the New Housing Standard is introduced, homes in the private sector must continue to meet the 'Tolerable Standard.' Properties that do not are referred to as 'Below Tolerable Standard'.

Our 'Private Sector Housing Team' ensures that owners of 'Below Tolerable Standard' properties are supported to bring their homes up to the required standard by providing advice, assistance, and signposting. If the homeowner is also a private landlord, and fails to take corrective action, we refer them to our Licencing team and ask that they are 'de-registered' (i.e., can no longer operate as a landlord).

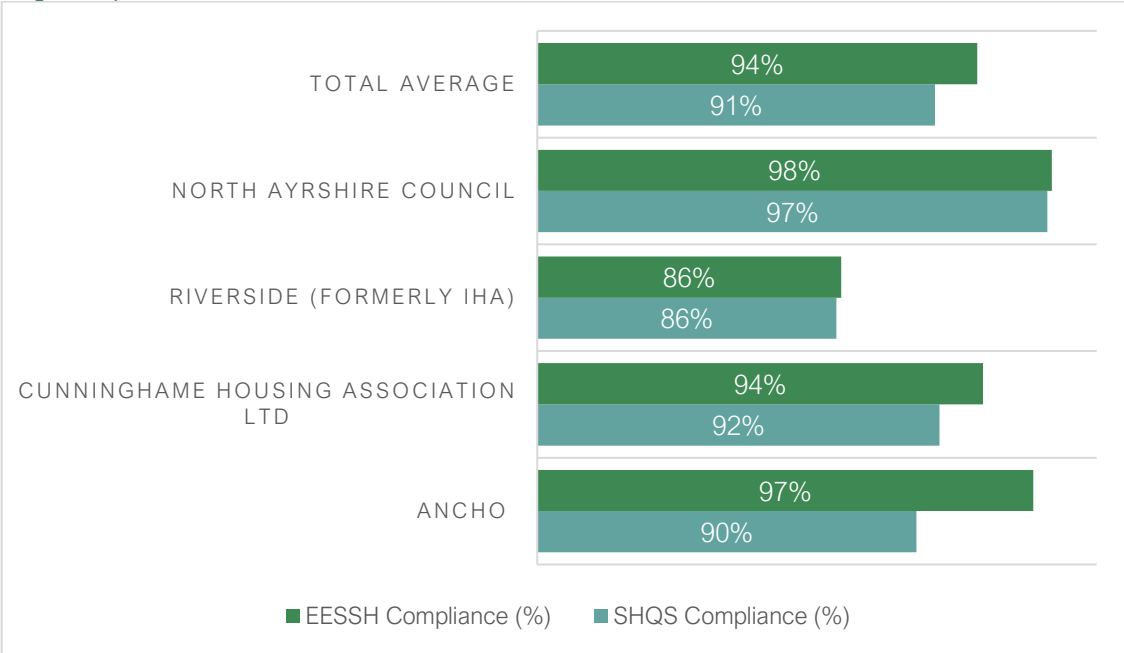
As at 31 March 2023, 153 homes have been declared 'Below Tolerable Standard' by the Council's 'Private Sector Housing Team' since April 2018. Information on the number of homes declared 'Below Tolerable Standard' per annum is provided in Table 13 below.

Table 13: Homes declared Below Tolerable Standard per annum

Year	Homes declared BTS
2018/19	49
2019/20	20
2020/21	12
2021/22	24
2022/23	48
Total	153

All social landlords have a strategic plan on how they will manage their assets, ours is called the 'Housing Asset Management Plan' and it has been agreed with our tenant representatives. It describes how we will invest in our stock, including any retrofitting that may be required to ensure continued compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and the latest Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing. The plan also sets out how we will identify any assets which are coming to the end of their life. The Asset Management Plan will be updated when the Scottish Government publish guidance on the 'New Housing Standard.'

Figure 19: Percentage of North Ayrshire Social Housing Meeting the SHQS & Energy Efficiency Stanrds for Social Housing by Social Housing Provider, 2020/21 (Source: Scottish Housing Regulator)



Digital Connectivity

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of having access to the internet. Digital connectivity allowed many of us to work from home; it also kept us in touch with our friends and loved ones during lockdown and allowed our children a way of accessing education.

Digital connectivity is also useful from an economic point of view, allowing people to access employment opportunities, access services, complete benefit forms and so on. It supports independent living, by allowing people to secure technology-enabled care.

The Scottish Government have rooted Digital Connectivity into their national housing strategy, and we will work with them to achieve their goal. Meanwhile, we have taken early action to bring digital connectivity to our new supply social housing, driving forward work to phase in the national requirement from 2021/22 that all new build social rented homes will be digitally enabled.

Supported Accommodation

Alongside the Health and Social Care Partnership, Housing have developed a new supported accommodation housing model for implementation at various sites across North Ayrshire.

The focus is on maximising independence for adults within a homely setting, who require a higher level of support, and who are living with learning disabilities, or mental ill-health issues (all ages), or who are under 65 years and have physical disabilities. The new supported accommodation model can:

- Prevent demand for additional services

- Support a more independent lifestyle for service users
- Integrate residents into community life
- Use technological advances to support care
- Provide care and support in a homely setting
- Provide a base for effective care provision
- Realise financial savings for the HSCP

The Strategic Housing Investment Plan will support the Health and Social Care Partnership to meet specialist housing need through dedicated supported accommodation projects, and as part of a wider site mix on other developments. The Strategic Housing Investment Plan has delivered 58 supported accommodation housing units at four different locations.

Housing Contribution Statement

The Housing Contribution Statement sets out our shared ambition with the Health and Social Care Partnership - that everyone living in our area can have healthy and thriving lives. We work with the Partnership, participating on their strategic groups and providing a strategic framework that supports the provision of safe and comfortable homes, to allow people to flourish and maintain a healthy life in good places and support regeneration. On an operational level we work together to support households with more complex needs, whether that be identifying bespoke housing or support solutions or prioritising repairs for vulnerable households.

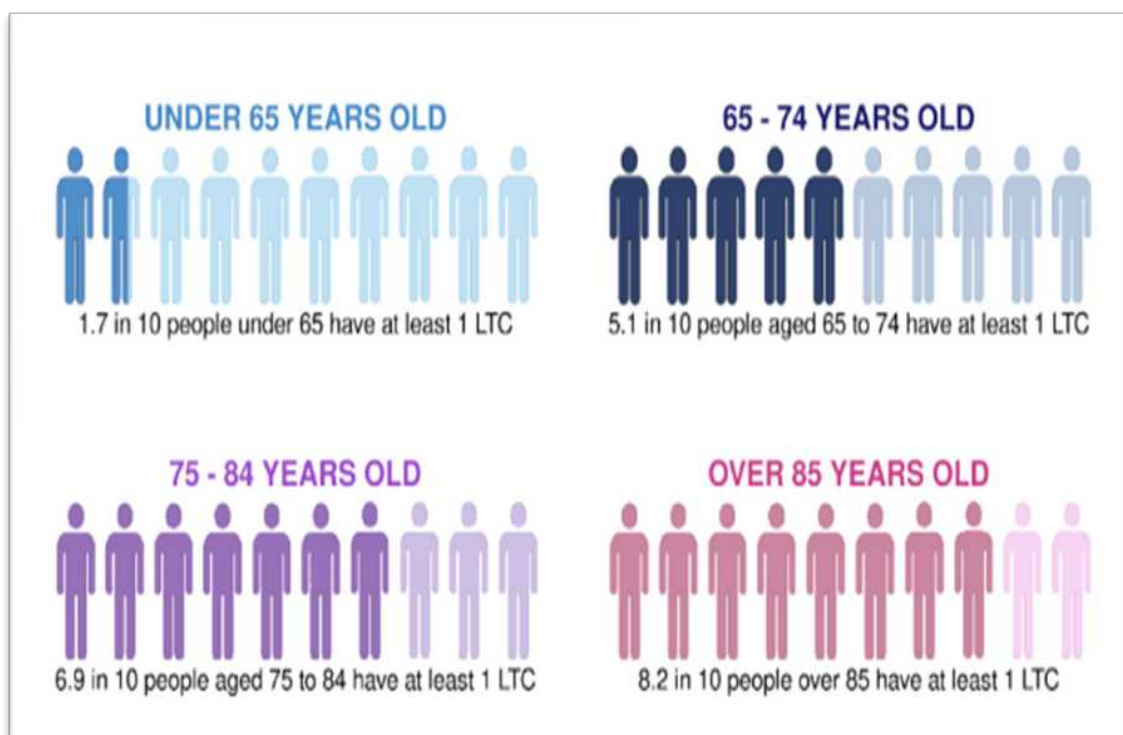
Figure 20: Shared Priorities Between the Local Housing Strategy (top row) & the Health & Social Care Partnership (remaining rows)

Priorities	Our places support thriving and inclusive communities	Our people have affordable homes in the place they choose to live	Our homes are energy efficient and release less emissions	Our homes are in good condition and people can access any support services they need
Tackle Inequalities	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enable Communities	✓	✓		✓
Improving Mental & Physical Health & Wellbeing	✓	✓		✓
Provide early & effect support			✓	✓
Develop & Support our Workforce	✓	✓	✓	

Independent Living

Life expectancy has been increasing in North Ayrshire over the last few decades. Our females are expected to live to around 80 years of age, our males to around 76 years. However, not all our people's lives will be lived in good health. Our males are expected to live for 17 years beyond their healthy life expectancy, and our females for 24 years.

Figure 21: Long Term Health Conditions (LTC) for North Ayrshire, by Age Group, 2018/19
(Source: North Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership)



Just over a quarter of people living in North Ayrshire have at least one physical long-term condition – the risk of which increases significantly with age. We also estimate that around 2,300 wheelchair users live in our area - 800 of whom will have an unmet housing need by 2024.

We want our housing to offer enough flexibility to our citizens, so that they will be able to remain living at home, independently, for as long as they wish, regardless of their stage in life. This means homes which are either built to be accessible to everyone, or which can be retrofitted with adaptations where needed allowing people to 'age in place'. Allowing individuals to remain within their communities can support health and wellbeing, help to maintain independent living, and reduce loneliness and isolation.

The Council will increase its target to 10% of all-tenure new build homes being suitable for wheelchair users. In preparing North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan we will further consider the housing needs of older people and disabled people in North Ayrshire and the establishment of an appropriate target for the delivery of accessible or adaptable homes, including wheelchair housing and intergenerational homes within the private sector, to support independent living particularly although not exclusively among older or disabled people.

Specialist Housing

Across North Ayrshire there are c.2,500 social rented homes which have been adapted to meet 'particular' housing needs. This includes housing for wheelchair users, those with limited mobility, sheltered and very sheltered housing, homes with community alarm systems and adapted homes. It is harder to quantify how many homes in the private sector are adapted, as many homeowners will carry out adaptations as and when they need them.

Recognising that the number of specialist homes is unlikely to match the number of people with specialist needs, the Government has committed to a new 'Scottish Accessible Homes Standard' which will be part of national building standards by 2025/26. The accessible standard will see accessibility designed and built into all new homes, increasing the housing choices for people with disabilities and reducing the need for expensive retrofitting as people age or their needs change. The alignment of housing support and social care services is also planned, to ensure a person-centred approach and achieve the best housing outcomes for people.

The Council has a dedicated Housing Officer who coordinates the reallocation of highly adapted houses, including specialist new build houses, as they become void to ensure they are utilised for applicants who need them most in accordance with the North Ayrshire Housing Allocation Policy.

Adaptations

Research tells us that most older and disabled people want to continue to live in their home for as long as possible. However, often their home is no longer suitable for their needs. Adaptations can be an effective way of altering the home to allow these households to continue to stay there.

Adaptations can be low cost and minor (e.g., handrails or banisters) or much more expensive and major (e.g., ramps, specialist toilets or wet rooms). There are grants available to help some homeowners and private sector tenants pay the cost of their adaptation; social housing tenants do not pay for this work.

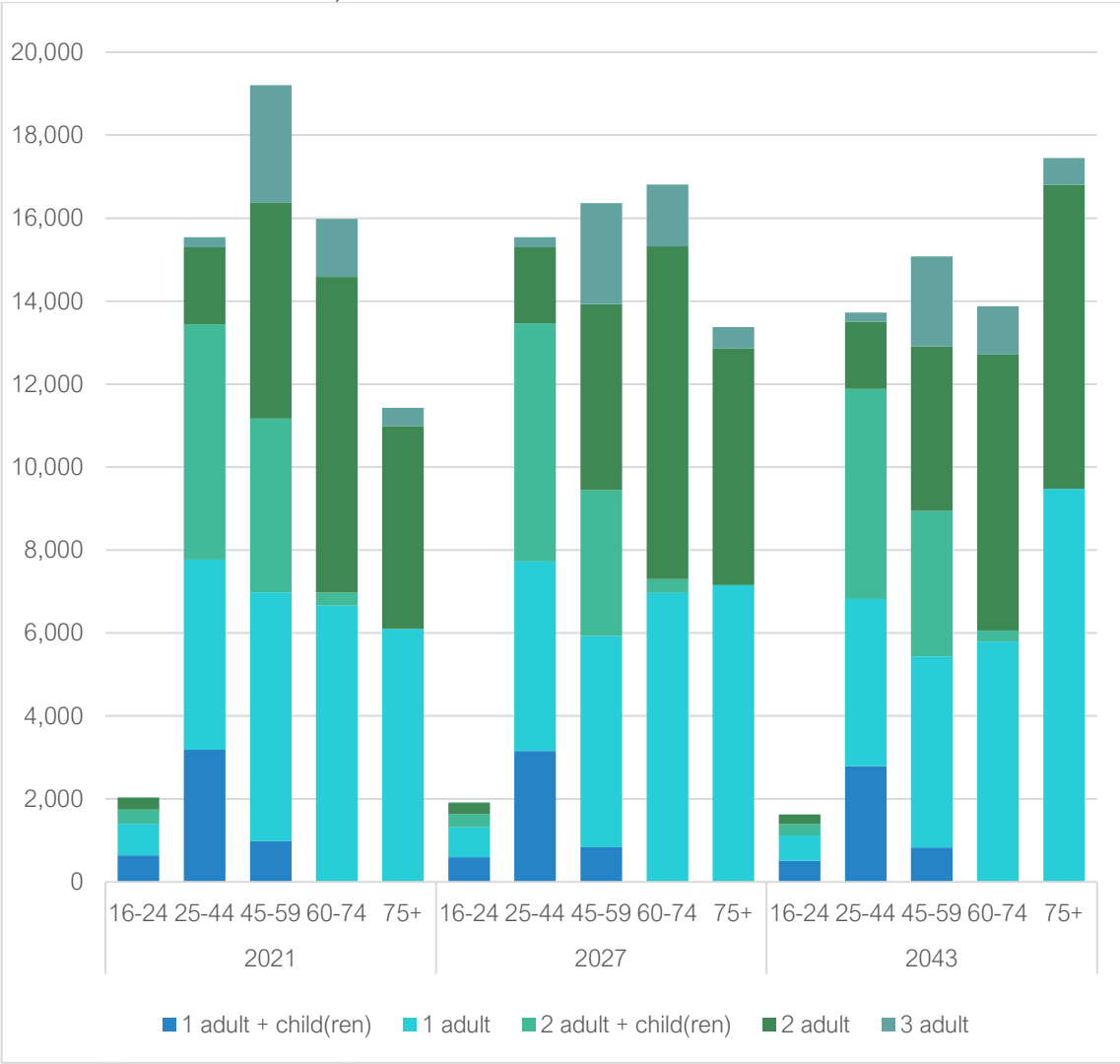
In 2021, we piloted an 'assisted living exemplar' housing model which promoted independent living through assistive technology. The model recognised that while an individual's care must be tailored to their specific needs, there are technologies which can offer benefits to most people who need extra support. Our pilot explored super-fast broadband and a range of smart technologies. These included smart heating, lighting, and door entry. The added benefit was that residents were also able to video call their family on the device. A particularly useful option during the COVID-19 pandemic, and a real step forward in minimising social isolation.

Older People

Already, the proportion of older people is higher in North Ayrshire than across Scotland, at 23% compared to 19%. However, by 2043, the age group '75 years+' will be the largest in the area and will account for 28% of local people - most of whom will live alone. This is a striking change to the population profile in 2021 (Figure 22). This challenge is even more

acute on our islands, where already a third of the Arran and Cumbrae populations are aged 65 years or above (33% and 35% respectively).

Figure 22: Small Area Population Estimates, Mid 2019, by Age & Household Type (Source: National Records of Scotland)



Not only does the likelihood of long-term health conditions increase with age increasing the need for accessible housing in turn, so does the risk of dementia. Scotland's [National Dementia Strategy](#) recognises that most people with dementia want to keep living at home, and 64% of sufferers can do so. However, to avoid crises, a familiar home environment and preventative support are vital to 'normalising' life for dementia sufferers.

Neurodiversity

People with learning disabilities and autistic people tell us that they want to be treated with dignity and respect by services that can identify and be responsive to their needs. Good-quality and timely housing advice and support services are as important as a suitable home in supporting them to live independently in their communities.

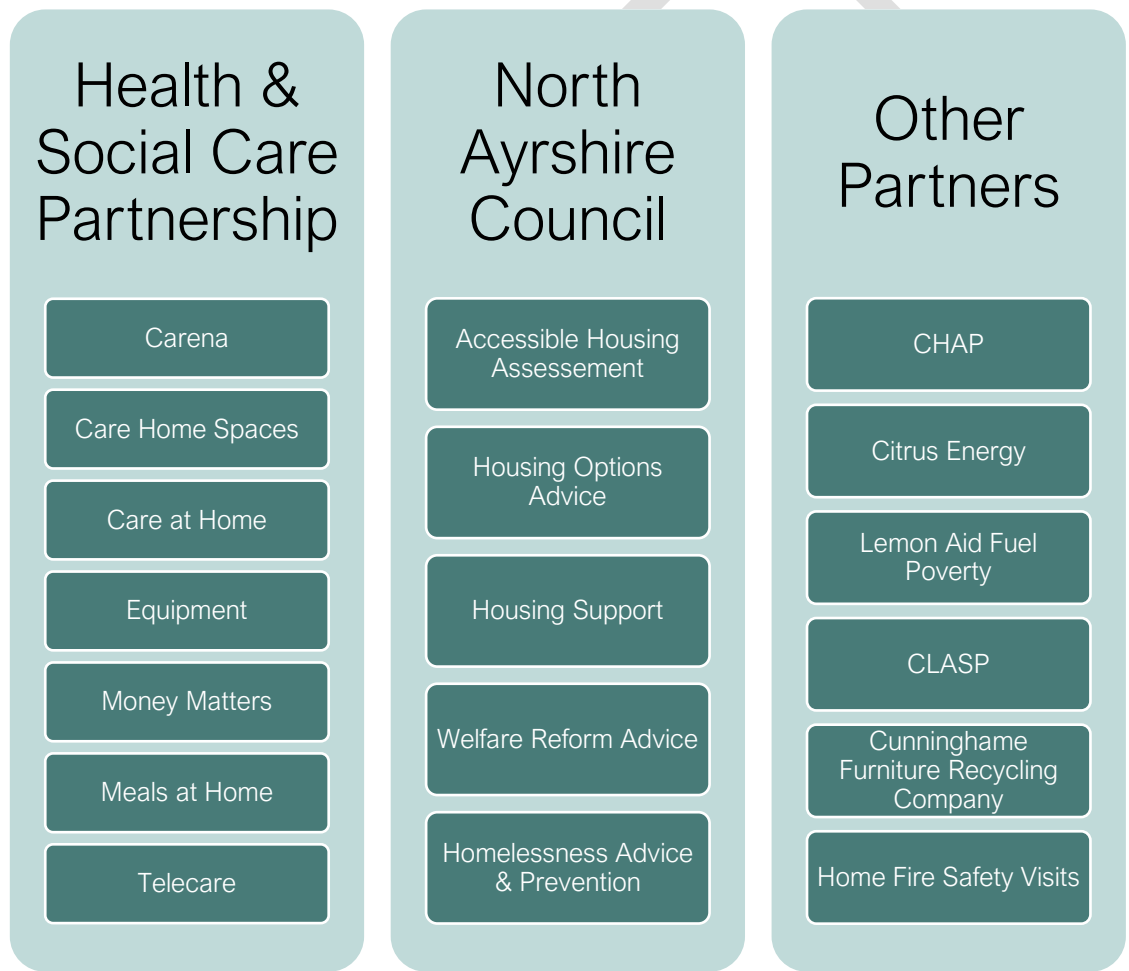
The Health & Social Care Partnership have told us that the number of neurodiverse people is rising, including an increasing number of children who have very complex needs now

surviving into adulthood. This in turn can result in an increase in the number of neurodiverse people who rely on an elderly carer, who may now also be experiencing a change in their own housing needs.

[The Scottish Strategy for Autism](#) sets out the joined-up approach needed to ensure housing and places can support wellbeing outcomes, and that moving forward, housing supply is able to accommodate an increase in neurodiverse people.

Care & Support

A number of organisations provide housing related care and support services across our area and given the forecast increase to the number of older people and the proportion of our lives we live in poor health, these services will become increasingly important if we want to deliver our outcome to support people to “live at home, independently, safely and with dignity, for as long as they wish.”



However, care and support services are not just about allowing older people to remain at home, they are also about empowering people to find their own solutions, providing the right type of assistance at the right time, supporting people through difficult times and ensuring that individual needs are recognised.

Accessible Housing Assessment

The Accessible Housing Assessment is available to people on the North Ayrshire Housing Register. It looks at how the health of the applicant affects how they manage at home and is carried out by an Occupational Therapist. Applicants who are assessed as having an accessible housing need receive additional points.

Care at Home

The Care at Home service is available every day of the year and can help with daily tasks such as getting up, dressed, and washed, taking medicine, as well as more intensive support (e.g. recovering from an accident or coming home from hospital).

Care Home Spaces

At the end of January 2023, there were around 950 care homes spaces in North Ayrshire, most are independently owned but the Council has a unit on Arran with capacity for 30 people. However, given the continuing decrease of public sector budgets, the current way of organising care home spaces is not viable, and therefore services which allow people to remain living at home will become more central to meeting care needs.

Carena

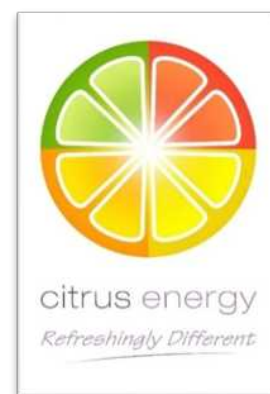
The Carena website connects people in North Ayrshire with service providers. The site lists information and contact details for services, activities, and support across our area. Carena also lists events and clubs in the area, helping people become more involved in their local community and in turn reducing social isolation.

CHAP

CHAP is a charity that offers free, confidential support to the people of North Ayrshire who may be struggling with a housing issue, homelessness, financial concern, or who need debt advice.

Citrus Energy

Citrus Energy is a subsidiary of Cunninghame Housing Association. Its goal is to help people “make genuine savings on gas and electricity costs.” Any profits made are re-distributed into the community to help reduce fuel poverty and create sustainable employment.



CLASP

CLASP (Community Led Action and Support Project) provides a range of services across North Ayrshire. As well as offering support on areas like people's rights, access to training, education, and IT. They also support older people through a range of services and activities to reduce isolation and loneliness and improve health and wellbeing.

Cunninghame Furniture Recycling Company (CFRC)

Part of Cunninghame Housing Association, CFRC is a charity which collects unwanted furniture and white goods free of charge, for resale from their Irvine showroom, allowing

people to furnish their home at an affordable price. CFRC's approach also reduces landfill and the associated ecological costs.

Equipment

The Partnership supplies equipment on a long-term loan, free of charge, and when it is no longer needed, it should be returned. Eligibility depends on the assessed level of need and suitability of the home, and includes things like raised toilet seats, chair or bed raisers, grab rails, and bath boards or seats

Home Fire Safety Visits

The Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, as part of their commitment to building a safer Scotland, offer free home fire safety visits to everyone (on hold during COVID-19 restrictions).

Home Security

The Home Security Project helps people who are suffering from domestic abuse or serious and persistent antisocial behaviour. The project aims to make people feel safer in their home by adding extra security measures, such as: locks, peep holes, panic alarms and/or arranging support from specialist agencies.

Housing Options Advice

Housing options advice is available from all social landlords in our area and provides people with the knowledge and confidence to resolve their own housing situation. Whilst not limited to homeless people, between 2016 and 2019, it helped 40% of all those who presented as homeless resolve their own situation. Advice covers a range of housing options (e.g., adaptations, property condition).

Housing Support

Our Housing Support service helps people develop the skills they need to manage their own home. It is available to people who are at risk of being homeless (or who have been homeless in the past), are in temporary accommodation or who just need help managing their tenancy. The service supports people with form filling, budgeting, planning a weekly shop, arranging for gas or electricity suppliers, or cooking and cleaning etc.

Lemon Aid Fuel Poverty Advisory Service

Cunninghame Housing Association's Lemon Aid project helps people apply for services to which they are entitled (e.g., white goods schemes, discounts on your energy bills, benefits etc). It also offers help with pre-payment meters, energy supplier switching, and bill checking, setting your heating thermostats, and will advocate on your behalf and write to your energy supplier if necessary.

Meals at Home

Meals at Home provides a service to people who have been assessed as being unable to prepare a hot cooked meal. On the mainland, meals are delivered frozen on a fortnightly basis and on Arran, hot meals are delivered by volunteers or Care at Home staff. There is a charge for this service.

Money Matters

The Health & Social Care Partnership's 'Money Matters' service provides advice to any resident of North Ayrshire on welfare rights, assistance, or representation in relation to benefits. The service is free, impartial, and confidential.

Telecare

Telecare provides full time monitoring and support technology that sends alerts for help if someone becomes ill or if something is wrong. Options available include community, domestic abuse, and safety alarms; fall, flood, smoke, and carbon monoxide detectors; and medicine reminders and dispensers. There is a weekly charge for this service.

Financial Inclusion Team

Our dedicated team provide a welfare rights and debt advice service to Council tenants as part of a commitment to tackling inequalities and improving health and wellbeing. In the year 2022/23 the team collectively helped people access £2.652m to which they were entitled to, helping to reduce rent arrears and the risk to some tenants that faced eviction.



Comments and views about any aspect of this document are welcomed. We also take the opportunity to encourage local people to become involved in the planning and delivery of housing solutions. To get in touch, please contact:

Local Housing Strategy
North Ayrshire Council
Housing & Public Protection
FREEPOST SCO2742
Irvine
KA12 8BRT:

lhs@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

This document is available in other formats such as audio tape, CD, Braille, large print and other languages on request.



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

Local Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028

Action Plan



Collaboration

Review and update our Tenant Participation Strategy to:

- Ensure inclusive engagement with hard to reach groups
- Ensure our literature is available in a format that is suitable for people with literacy and / or sensory / communication issues

Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	our award-winning tenant participation approach		2023+	Tenant Participation Manager
Desired outcome	A refreshed Tenant Participation Strategy is adopted by the Cabinet of North Ayrshire Council			

More homes at the heart of great places

Use our role as a major house builder to maximise local employment and training opportunities, and encourage our partners to do the same

Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	existing policy & procedure / systems & services		2023+	Team Manager (Affordable Housing & Regeneration)
Desired outcome	Training and employment opportunities are available for local people			

Deliver 1,625 new units of social housing

Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	our Strategic Housing Investment Plan		2028	Team Manager (Affordable Housing & Regeneration)
Desired outcome	1,625 new homes are developed			

Local Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028

Action Plan



Deliver 1,300 new units of private sector housing

Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	existing policy and procedure		2028	Senior Manager (Housing Strategy & Development)
Desired outcome	1,300 new homes are developed			

Consider opportunities to provide homes in and around our town centres

Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	our annual Strategic Housing Investment Plan		2023+	Senior Manager (Housing Strategy & Development)
Desired outcome	Housing is developed in or around town centres, where feasible			

Affordability & Choice

Enforce a zero tolerance approach to harassment and abuse against equalities groups

Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	our existing suite of estate management policy and process		2024	Housing SMT
Desired outcome	Every identified incidence of harassment is investigated and actioned			

Train our staff to understand cultural differences and challenges faced by different ethnic groups

Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Our Housing service	existing policy and procedure		2024	Housing SMT
Desired outcome	100% of our staff are trained			

Work with national agencies and local partners to ensure refugees, asylum seekers and other displaced people affected by conflict are supported to live in safety in our area

Local Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028

Action Plan



Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	existing policy & procedure / systems & services		2023+	Senior Manager (Homelessness & Community Safety)
Desired outcome	100% of refugees and people displaced by conflict who are housed in our area received support			

Engage with Gypsy / Travellers to ensure that housing solutions meet their needs				
Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	existing policy & procedure / systems & services		2023	Senior Manager (Housing Operations, Tenant & Youth Engagement)
Desired outcome	Gypsy / Travellers needs and aspirations are reflected in all service provision			

Listen to Gypsy/Travellers from unauthorised encampments so that we can better understand and respond to their needs				
Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	existing policy & procedure / systems & services		2023	Senior Manager (Housing Operations, Tenant & Youth Engagement)
Desired outcome	100% of Gypsy/Travellers living in unauthorised encampments are approached for their comments			

Carry out an options appraisal on potential Gypsy / Traveller site improvements				
Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Our travellers' site	improvements carried out at the site to date		2024	Senior Manager (Housing Operations, Tenant & Youth Engagement)
Desired outcome	The publication of our findings, and supporting action plan (if feasible)			

Develop and deliver an LGBTQ+ informed housing service, including:

- Establish LGBTQ+ champions

Local Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028

Action Plan



- Develop an LGBTQ+ staff training programme
- Increase private sector awareness of LGBTQ+ housing issues
- Encourage our LGBTQ+ tenants and residents to participate

Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	our commitment to delivering an inclusive housing service		2024	Housing SMT
Desired outcome	The delivery of an inclusive housing service is evidenced by involvement and participation in the delivery and development of housing services			

Work in partnership with statutory and third sector agencies to deliver planned national changes to homelessness prevention legislation				
Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	RRTP To proactively prevent homelessness wherever it is possible to do so		tbc	Senior Manager (Homelessness & Community Safety)
Desired outcome	Publication of our response			

Develop and deliver a North Ayrshire inter-agency strategy to prevent homelessness				
Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	RRTP To proactively prevent homelessness wherever it is possible to do so		2024	Senior Manager (Homelessness & Community Safety)
Desired outcome	Levels of homelessness will reduce			

Local Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028

Action Plan



Through the 'Violence Against Women Partnership 2021-2026, deliver the North Ayrshire violence against women and girls action plan aligned to the 'Equally Safe' strategy

Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	RRTP To proactively prevent homelessness wherever it is possible to do so		2026	Senior Manager (Homelessness & Community Safety)
Desired outcome	A reduction in domestic violence and achievement of the Violence Against Women National Standards accreditation			

Work with our partners to develop a hospital discharge pathway

Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	RRTP To proactively prevent homelessness wherever it is possible to do so		2023	Senior Manager (Homelessness & Community Safety)
Desired outcome	0% of those leaving a health care setting will be homeless			

Continue to work with the HSCP to support young people make the transition from care to a home of their own

Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	RRTP To proactively prevent homelessness wherever it is possible to do so		2024	Senior Manager (Homelessness & Community Safety)
Desired outcome	100% of young people are supported as they leave care and move into their own home			

Consider the pathways into housing for young people to maximise housing options specific to their needs and reduce the risk of homelessness

Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	RRTP To proactively prevent homelessness wherever it is possible to do so		2024	Senior Manager (Homelessness & Community Safety)
Desired outcome	Fewer young people become homeless			

Implement the integrated prison discharge protocol

Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
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Local Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028

Action Plan



Across our area	R RTP To proactively prevent homelessness wherever it is possible to do so		2023	Senior Manager (Homelessness & Community Safety)
Desired outcome	Homelessness as a result of prison discharge is reduced to below 5%			

Implement Housing First for our most disadvantaged service users				
Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan		2023	Senior Manager (Homelessness & Community Safety)
Desired outcome	100 Housing First Tenancies are delivered by 2024			

Undertake a review of tenancies which have failed in the previous 12 months following resettlement of homelessness to inform allocation processes				
Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	R RTP To proactively prevent homelessness wherever it is possible to do so		2024	Senior Manager (Homelessness & Community Safety)
Desired outcome	Homeless people are rehoused within 13 weeks			

Review the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme and recommend future approach				
Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
on our islands	existing policy & procedure / systems & services		2024	Senior Manager (Homelessness & Community Safety)
Desired outcome	Publication of the review and action plan (as appropriate)			

Local Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028

Action Plan



Align support delivery to prevention activities as identified within the Homeless Prevention Strategy

Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	RRTP To proactively prevent homelessness wherever it is possible to do so		2024	Senior Manager (Homelessness & Community Safety)
Desired outcome	Appropriate levels of support available to prevent and alleviate homelessness			

Review the proportion of social rented lets to homeless people to minimise the duration of homelessness

Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	RRTP To proactively prevent homelessness wherever it is possible to do so and our Charter commitments		2024	Senior Manager (Homelessness & Community Safety)
Desired outcome	Reduce the length of stay in temporary accommodation by 50% from 26 weeks to 13 weeks			

Consider introducing alternative housing models to meet local housing needs beyond social rented accommodation

Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area			2025	Senior Manager (Housing Strategy & Development)
Desired outcome	The publication of the review and any associated action plan			

Support the Scottish Government's target to deliver 110,000 new affordable homes by 2032 by delivering the projects set out within the Strategic Housing Investment Plan

Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	existing policy and procedure		2028	Team Manager (Affordable Housing & Regeneration)
Desired outcome	New affordable homes are built in North Ayrshire			

Research barriers to mutual exchange in order to increase its use as a rehousing solution

Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
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Local Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028

Action Plan



Across our area	allocation review of the NAHR		2024	Senior Manager (Housing Operations, Tenant & Youth Engagement)
Desired outcome	There is an increase in the number of mutual exchanges			

Work with partners to align the North Ayrshire Allocation Policy to emerging issues, incorporating national and local priorities				
Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	previous housing allocation policy		2023 & 2026	Senior Manager (Housing Operations, Tenant & Youth Engagement)
Desired outcome	The new policy is published			

Increase the social housing supply by buying back former social housing				
Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	our Strategic Housing Investment Plan		2023+	Team Manager (Private Sector Housing)
Desired outcome	Former social housing is brought back into the affordable housing supply			

Bring empty homes back into use through the buy back scheme				
Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	scheme of Assistance and Empty Homes Buy Back approach		2023+	Team Manager (Private Sector Housing)
Desired outcome	Empty homes are purchased and brought back into use as affordable housing			

Affordable Warmth & Zero Emissions

Support the Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy to reduce fuel poverty and increase affordable warmth
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Local Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028

Action Plan



Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	existing policy and procedure		2023+	Senior Manager (Housing Strategy & Development)
Desired outcome	Fuel poverty is reduced and affordable warmth is increased for North Ayrshire residents			

Implement a range of energy efficiency and decarbonisation measures across Council housing stock to meet ESSH2 requirements informed by an ESSH2 pathfinder focusing on a whole-house approach to retrofit

Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	existing policy and procedure		2023+	Head of Sustainability, Corporate Property & Transport
Desired outcome	A whole house approach to energy efficiency and decarbonisation is adopted for Council housing stock			

Review our approach to dealing with dampness and mould issues within properties

Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	existing policy and procedure		2023	Head of Sustainability, Corporate Property & Transport
Desired outcome	All our properties are free from dampness and mould and advice given to private sector to achieve same outcome			

Local Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028

Action Plan



Improving the quality of our homes

Review Census 2022 data to identify any emerging issues which may impact housing and related services				
Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area			2024	Senior Manager (Housing Strategy & Development)
Desired outcome	Develop an action plan to address any issues which may emerge following review			

Promote and provide a 'pre-tenancy support service' for landlords (on tenancy agreements and property standards)				
Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area			2023	Team Manager (Private Sector Housing)
Desired outcome	Landlords are supported to create and maintain tenancys in accordance with legaslitive requirements			

Continue to implement the Housing Asset Management Plan				
Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	work already carried out re: SHQS and EESSH		2027	Head of Sustainability, Corporate Property & Transport
Desired outcome	Implementation of the Housing Asset Management Plan action plan			

Prevent housing crisis through early intervention by ensuring housing staff can identify the long term needs of tenants to ensure housing is sustainable				
Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	existing policy and procedure		2024	Housing SMT
Desired outcome	All housing staff can identify the long term needs of tenants, including the challenges facing people with neurodiverse issues			

Complete our Sheltered Housing Reprovisioning Programme by investing in 11 sheltered housing complexes over the lifetime of this strategy

Local Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028

Action Plan



Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	existing policy and procedure		2028	Team Manager (Affordable Housing & Regeneration)
Desired outcome	Sheltered housing complexes are refurbished			

Ensure that the Strategic Housing Investment Plan addresses current and future demographic needs				
Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	existing policy and procedure		2023+	Team Manager (Affordable Housing & Regeneration)
Desired outcome	Housing investment priorities within the Strategic Housing Investment Plan align to future and current demographic needs			

Consider establishing a target for the delivery of accessible homes within the private sector				
Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	existing policy and procedure		2024	Strategic Planning Manager
Desired outcome	Local Development Plan 3 sets out the requirement for accessible private housing delivery			

Review and update our Scheme of Assistance to:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the promotion of positive outcomes for people living with autism in the private housing sector • Ensure inclusive engagement with hard to reach groups. • Ensure our literature is available in a format that 				
Where	Building on	Latest update	Due date	Assigned to
Across our area	existing policy and procedure		2025	Team Manager (Private Sector Housing)
Desired outcome	The publication of information, sign posting to advice services and the planned refresh of the Scheme of Assistance			

NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**13 June 2023****Cabinet**

Title:	North Ayrshire Visitor Management Plan 2023
Purpose:	This report proposes an update to the Visitor Management Plan, to support ongoing actions to manage domestic tourism in North Ayrshire during 2023
Recommendation:	It is recommended that Cabinet approves the draft North Ayrshire Visitor Management Plan for 2023 (attached as Appendix 1)

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval of the draft North Ayrshire Visitor Management Plan for 2023 (Appendix 1). The Plan continues a strategic approach to managing the impact of tourism within North Ayrshire, based on a review of issues previously identified in the 2022 Visitor Management Plan, taking into account changes in domestic tourism post-pandemic, ongoing key challenges in managing the impact of visitors to North Ayrshire and establishing priorities and actions for managing the impact of visitors during 2023.

2. Background

- 2.1 The visitor economy is an important sector of North Ayrshire's economy. In 2019, there were 3.2m visitor days with an economic impact of £211.8m, supporting 3,770 full time jobs. The impact of tourism is not only economic, however, and there are a range of impacts on our communities and our environment and place and infrastructure assets. Optimising North Ayrshire's visitor experience whilst minimising adverse impacts of increased visitor flows will assist to support the economic impact of tourism and maximises the environmental and social benefits visitors can bring.
- 2.2 The Covid-19 pandemic had a big impact on the numbers and types of visitors coming to North Ayrshire, and consequently on our communities and facilities. The short-term increase in domestic tourism arising from the pandemic remained throughout 2022 and continues in 2023. This presents an opportunity to continue to review the provision of visitor services to respond to these demands through the Visitor Management Plan in a way that will bring lasting economic benefits while managing the impact on communities.

- 2.3 Appendix 1 to this report presents the second Visitor Management Plan for North Ayrshire. The Plan outlines priorities and proposals to facilitate and support an increased level of tourism and visitors to North Ayrshire, as tourism continues to recover from the Pandemic.
- 2.4 The process of preparing the plan included a review of the actions identified in the 2022 Visitor Management Plan and identifying future actions and assessing those against known issues and priorities. The process has been overseen by a member/officer forum to guide development.
- 2.5 Key impacts identified relate to litter, parking, and public toilet provision. Some prominent issues continue relating to 'hotspots' – such as motorhome usage in certain locations.
- 2.6 The pan-Ayrshire Ayrshire and Arran Visitor Economy Leadership Group (AAVELG) has developed the Ayrshire and Our Islands Regional Visitor Economy Strategy and Draft Action Plan. This identifies a regional set of priorities and takes into account the national tourism strategy 'Scotland Outlook 2030: Responsible Tourism for a Sustainable Future' and the 'National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET)'. These strategies give a wider context to the economic climate and visitor priorities, and the Visitor Management Plan focuses on local issues and priorities, while being cognisant of the bigger picture.
- 2.7 Some of the key areas identified require longer-term solutions for a range of reasons. The first Visitor Management Plan was instrumental in helping the Council secure £65,000 funding from VisitScotland to produce Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plans for the mainland and islands, which are currently in development and will be vital to unlocking future rounds of Rural Tourism Infrastructure Funding (RTIF) and other funding streams over the next five years. The Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plans will be finalised through the Member/Officer Tourism Forum and brought back to Cabinet following the summer recess for consideration.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approves the draft North Ayrshire Visitor Management Plan for 2023 (attached as Appendix 1)

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

- 4.1 The financial impact of the Visitor Management Plan is met from a range of existing service budgets and external funding. No additional budget pressures have been created from the Visitor Management Plan. The 2022 Visitor Management Plan was fundamental to a successful application for external funding and the 2023 Visitor Management Plan will also be used in support of external funding applications.

Human Resources

4.2 None

Legal

4.3 None

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 It is predicted that the impact of the Plan will have generally positive equality and social impacts.

Climate Change and Carbon

4.5 The proposals will have a positive impact on environmental resources.

Key Priorities

4.6 The proposals support the delivery of Council Plan priorities – in particular, “North Ayrshire has an inclusive, growing and enterprising economy” and “North Ayrshire is a vibrant, welcoming and attractive environment”.

Community Wealth Building

4.7 The proposals in the Visitor Management Plan support the delivery of the Council’s Community Wealth Building strategy.

5. Consultation

5.1 The content of the report has been developed and informed by engagement with the member/officer Tourism Forum, officers and businesses. The Tourism Forum exists to oversee strategic tourism matters and there will be agreed regular updates on activity via communications channels.

RUSSELL MCCUTCHEON
Executive Director (Place)

For further information please contact **Neale McIlvanney, Interim Head of Service, (Growth, Investment and Employability)** on email - nealemcilvanney@north-ayrshire.gov.uk.

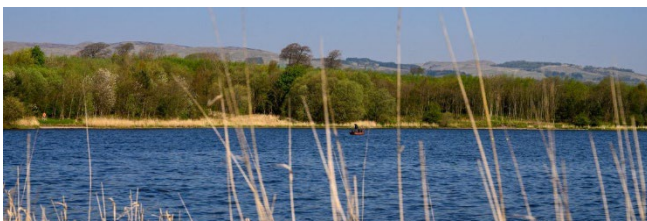
Background Papers

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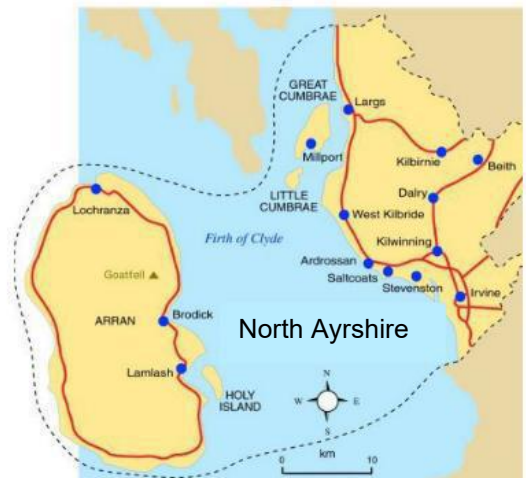
Visitor Management Plan 2023



1. Introduction

Visitors are an important part of North Ayrshire's economy. In 2019, there were 3.2m visitor days with an economic impact of £211.8m, supporting 3,770 full time jobs.

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the numbers and types of visitors coming to North Ayrshire, and consequently on our communities and facilities, and North Ayrshire Council's Visitor Management Plan 2022 was developed in response. As visitor numbers continue to grow, this 2023 Visitor Management Plan reviews progress made and captures ongoing activities.



This plan sets out our objectives, the challenges we are responding to, actions taken in 2022 and our ongoing actions for 2023. These actions are focused on what can be developed and/or delivered during 2023 with an immediate impact, whilst acknowledging our longer-term ambitions for the area which will require longer term planning, development and investment.

2. Purpose of the Visitor Management Plan

The purpose of the Visitor Management Plan is:

- to work across the Council to identify actions and interventions which enhance the experience of our visitors, which in turn support our tourism businesses and the jobs they sustain for the 2023 peak visitor economy season; and
- to develop plans which are respectful of our communities and the environment and deliver lasting economic benefits to North Ayrshire.

While this Visitor Management Plan addresses short-term issues, the Visitor Management Plan 2022 was key in helping us secure £65,000 of VisitScotland funding to produce Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plans for the mainland and islands, which are currently in development and will be key to unlocking future rounds of Rural Tourism Infrastructure Funding (RTIF) and other funding streams over the next five years.

The pan-Ayrshire Ayrshire and Arran Visitor Economy Leadership Group (AAVELG) has developed the Ayrshire and Our Islands Regional Visitor Economy Strategy and Draft Action Plan. This identifies a regional set of priorities and considers the national tourism strategy 'Scotland Outlook 2030: Responsible Tourism for a Sustainable Future' and the 'National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET)'. These strategies give a wider context to the economic climate and visitor priorities, and the Visitor Management Plan focuses on local issues and priorities, while being cognisant of the national and regional context.

3. Objectives

Our objectives are to optimise our infrastructure and service delivery to ensure these are managed as we work to:

- Promote North Ayrshire as a great place to live, work, visit and invest
- Promote our key assets
- Minimise any negative impacts visitors have on communities and the environment
- Encourage sustainable visitor patterns by promoting our tourism assets and potential across all of North Ayrshire, including our inland localities – Garnock Valley and Kilwinning
- Communicate with our visitors while they are in North Ayrshire
- Encourage responsible behaviour
- Identify interventions for seasonal and temporary challenges
- Create outdoor opportunities
- Support eco-tourism and sustainable tourism
- Disperse visitors throughout the area
- Encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more money in the area
- Use events to show off our assets

4. Challenges of 2020/21/22 and Impacts of Covid-19

There was an overall change in behaviour due to the pandemic which continues to impact in 2023. Outdoor activities and the spaces we have to offer have a renewed appeal to visitors and residents and popular destinations continue to experience strong demand for parking, motorhome accommodation, public conveniences, an increase in littering, waste and antisocial behaviour and queuing for ferries at peak times.

Visitors

In 2022 we continued to see an increase in the volume of visitors, as there was still some reduced confidence in foreign travel which led to the continuing popularity of day-trips and UK holidays. Some overseas visitors have returned but we're not yet at pre-pandemic levels. National and local visitors who discovered what North Ayrshire has to offer are continuing to make return visits.

Communities/Residents

Geographic pandemic restrictions which forced residents to remain in their local authority areas led to many North Ayrshire residents discovering the assets on their own doorsteps and taking to our outdoor spaces, parks, beaches, and attractions. This change in behaviour continued throughout 2022, which is a positive outcome for wellbeing and mental health, though this has also led to an ongoing demand on our visitor infrastructure and services and some impact on communities in 'honeyspot' locations.

Businesses

Staff recruitment and retention remains a challenge for visitor economy businesses, which makes it difficult to meet the demand posed by high volumes of visitors during peak times. Our island businesses continue to struggle with the availability of staff accommodation. Additionally, the dramatic rise in the cost of doing business (food, energy costs, staff, transport and building supplies, etc.) has put increased pressure on businesses and impacted growth and development. Ferry cancellations and a reduced fleet are also having an impact on island visits and income generation for island businesses.

The introduction of short-term lets legislation in 2022 has put a cost and administrative burden on landlords and local authorities, and although the application time-frame for existing short-term let businesses has been extended to 1st October 2023, new hosts need a licence before they can start operating. The extra costs and uncertainty have led to some landlords leaving the market, with a consequent reduction in available holiday accommodation.

North Ayrshire Council

The increase in use of our spaces by both residents and visitors since 2020 has put an additional burden on Council services and this looks set to continue in 2023.

5. Actions taken in 2022

A wide range of activities identified in our Visitor Management Plan 2022 were delivered, including:

- Streetscene training scheme to create additional squads
- Streetscene operatives working twilight shifts and flexible shift patterns
- Volunteer support via Streetscene Volunteering Strategy and Adopt a Spot
- New web site created to host North Ayrshire heritage trails, improve access and scope.
- New walking routes, benches, signage, BBQ disposal units and outdoor washroom created at Eglinton Park
- New interpretation panels at St Brides Chapel, Lamlash
- New interpretation and lighting installed at Kilwinning Abbey Tower
- Replacement and upgrades of playpark equipment across North Ayrshire
- Replacement of benches, wheelchair accessible picnic benches and bins at coastal locations
- Participation in My Beach, Your Beach and Safer Shores campaigns
- Ongoing bus corridor improvements
- Upgrade of car park at Mountain Rescue Centre in Brodick and series of lay-bys on Cumbrae
- Feasibility study on Islands Connectivity Project
- Ongoing delivery of the Ardrossan Low Carbon Hub

- Delivery of Making Waves Festival, support of Queen's Platinum Jubilee and Scotland's Year of Stories 2022 events and a range of community-based events.

6. Priorities for 2023

Our priorities for 2023 are to build on the achievements of the 2022 Visitor Management Plan and keep these under review to ensure we optimise the visitor experience and wider economic benefit of tourism, recognising the benefit it can bring to businesses and communities.

- Update of Visitor Management Plan to continue to coordinate visitor management activities across the Council and communicate these
- Use the priorities identified in the Visitor Management Plan to inform development of our Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development plan which will help to support future funding applications for tourism-related projects over a 5 year period
- Consider how our visitor management activities can reflect regional and national visitor economy strategies
- The Tourism Forum will meet quarterly to support visitor economy activity
- A project will be undertaken promoting responsible access to motorhome drivers and developing a proactive response to managing motorhomes
- Identify and promote events taking place in North Ayrshire
- Take advantage of partner support available to develop a digital visitor management project to increase our knowledge of our customer base/improve our services

7. 2022/2023 Actions summary

We have reviewed our Visitor Management Plan 2022 and updated each of the actions below. Some of these actions and activities are complete but many are ongoing as we return to more normal pre-pandemic operations. Additionally, there is some scoping of interventions that can be implemented in future years, recognising that these will assist the Council in taking advantage of external funding and capability of partners to deliver services to improve the visitor experience, to leverage a greater impact in future years and develop a longer-term strategy.

While not all interventions have been able to be broken down to a quantum of spend, this plan continues to deliver the £1.5m of action to visitor and place management actions started in 2022 – not including development of capital projects under the Ayrshire Growth Deal.

2022 Actions		2023 Update
Litter Management (Streetscene)		
Training and additional resources		
Streetscene Training Scheme	Training scheme to create three additional squads to undertake grounds maintenance work and provide additional operational flex during periods of high demand. Scottish Government Funding.	ILM Programme ran with two groups April to Sept 2022 then Oct 2022 to March 2023. This programme has been successful. Cohort 3 commenced on 11 th April 2023 with 12 new trainees providing additional capacity for Streetscene to deliver excellent outdoor experiences to attract visitors. Focus of the group during next six months is partnership work with the Ranger Service from Eglinton to enhance park as visitor destination.
Operational Flexibility		
Twilight Shifts	Extend operating times to meet demand.	Streetscene will continue to respond to seasonal demands and provide services to ensure our coastal locations are best presented to visitors.
Operational Flex	Adjust operations as in 2021.	Operating model has now moved closer to a pre – covid method of working.
Infrastructure		
New Bins	Installation of 51 upgraded, vermin-proof bins.	Complete
Other Activities		
Volunteer Support	Provide equipment and support to community litter picking groups.	Continued work with volunteer groups to build capacity. Recognition lunch taking place on 10 th June for Streetscene to thank volunteers, provide them with recognition and issue guidance and equipment.

Adopt a Spot initiative	Support volunteers to commit to litter picking in their adopted spots, under the new Streetscene Volunteering Strategy.	Strategy now in place and programme is developing
Public Transport, Roads and Parking		
Ferries	Work with partners to confirm programme for Cumbrae ferry slip improvements, produce detailed design and tenders and implement improvements to Largs queuing and marshalling. Funding outcome anticipated March 2022 – note funder has supported previous phases. Ongoing collaboration with service provider.	Largs marshalling works are on site currently. Funding secured to deliver Cumbrae marshalling area in 23/24
Buses	Liaison and engagement with partners and identification of external funding to improve bus stop infrastructure, bus route extension and bus lane congestion measures. Funding outcome anticipated March 2022 – note funder has supported previous phases.	Ongoing – funding received from SPT annually for bus corridor improvements
Largs Town Centre Ambassadors	Extended car park marshal role to more of a town centre ambassador - create 3 seasonal part time weekend posts partly funded by the car park and partly funded by sponsorship.	Following a trial in 2022 the recruitment of tourism assistants for Largs has not progressed for summer 2023. Concerns were raised around value for money and the funding pressure on the car park fund. Further funding options are being explored for a suitable funding model for 2024.
Improved Parking and Layby provision	Identifying priorities and implementation, including upgrade of car park at the Mountain Rescue Centre in Brodick; upgrade series of lay-bys at strategic locations on the Isle of Cumbrae, funded by Islands Infrastructure Fund.	Complete in 2022
Local Transport and Active Travel Strategy Review	Review strategy to identify opportunities for 2022-27.	Ongoing. Draft strategy was out for public consultation from 24 th February to 23 rd April 2023. The LTATS is currently being finalised and will be presented to Cabinet in summer 2023.

Active Travel	Submit funding applications, secure funding and implement identified active travel and outdoor access improvements and projects across North Ayrshire.	Ongoing
Transport Implementation	Submit funding applications, secure funding and implement identified public transport and transport improvements and projects across North Ayrshire.	Ongoing
Islands Connectivity Development	Develop the UK Government Community Renewal Fund funded Islands Connectivity Project to identify priorities for electric vehicle and bike infrastructure, a low carbon hub and Mobility as a Service (MaaS) feasibility.	Feasibility study complete. The Active Travel and Transport Team are seeking suitable funding opportunities to implement the Islands Connectivity Study Action Plan.
Islands Connectivity Implementation	Secure and align funding to implement the recommendations of the Islands Connectivity Project including: Cycling, Walking and Safer Routes, Islands Infrastructure Fund and Place Based Investment Programme allocations – quantum of funding to be confirmed.	Now seeking funding to deliver the action plans
Ayrshire Coastal Path development	Feasibility and design of improvements to the Largs Promenade and Coastal Path between Bowencraigs and Aubrey Park to support future applications for implementation. Work with Sustrans to implement further phases of the Fairlie Coastal Path.	Largs – Feasibility study complete. Fairlie Coastal Path – detailed designs complete. Aiming to start construction in Autumn 2023.
Ardrossan Low Carbon Hub implementation / Ayrshire Coastal Path Development	Delivery of the Ardrossan Low Carbon Hub funded by the ERDF Low Carbon Travel and Transport Challenge Fund including: North Shore Coastal Path; Ardrossan Harbour active travel link; and electric vehicle and e-bike charging hubs at both locations.	Ongoing
Promoting Responsible Motorhome visitations	Promote material developed to guide motorhomes within North Ayrshire and encourage responsible access. Undertake analysis of where additional infrastructure should be provided to support and direct motorhomes to the most appropriate locations, in conjunction with analysing the capacity and locations where motorhome	This will be led by the Tourism team and looked at in 2023 and included in the STID plans.

	services are provided by our businesses. In tandem with this we will explore funding opportunities to support delivery of infrastructure.	
Public Toilets		
Existing facilities and future funding		
Island Pit Stops	New for 2023	Re-purposing and improving existing public toilets (3 on Cumbrae, 9 on Arran) to provide better facilities, supporting increased dwell time and spend on the islands. Consultation currently underway with the associated communities ahead of drawing up scope for each site. Proposed finish date Spring 2024.
Reinstatement	Reinstatement/replacement of the Melbourne Park public toilets in Saltcoats which were fire-damaged in late 2021.	This building is in the scope of the below review of assets and will be considered as part of this review process.
Refurbishment	Refurbishment of the Promenade Toilets in Largs, financed by the Largs Car Park Fund.	A contractor has been appointed for the refurbishment of the Largs Promenade toilets and work began in April 2023.
Review of assets	Facilities Management are undertaking a review of North Ayrshire Public toilet facilities.	Review is ongoing with a report being prepared looking at options for public conveniences across North Ayrshire. A community asset transfer has now been agreed for the Ardrossan South Beach toilet block with ambitious plans from the Ardrossan Community Group.
Comfort Schemes	Engage with businesses to explore comfort scheme provision.	Ongoing
Playparks, and public areas		
Upgrade and renew playparks		
Playparks	Replacement and upgrade of playpark equipment across North Ayrshire. Procurement underway.	Phase 1 complete New play facilities now in place at Winton Circus in Saltcoats, Stevenston Shore and

		Brodict to provide free facilities for families to enjoy and enhance the experience of a day trip to these locations. New multi-purpose play unit planned for Corrie in 2023.
Renew benches and picnic tables and upgrade bins		
Benches	Installation of 115 benches.	Programme of replacement assets is almost complete with benches, wheelchair accessible picnic benches, new bins at coastal locations installed to provide facilities for visitors to enjoy North Ayrshire Council's promenade areas and beaches.
Picnic tables	Installation of 41 picnic tables.	
Bins	Installation of 51 upgraded, vermin-proof bins (ref above).	
Additional visitor and cultural interventions		
Heritage Trails	Further develop and enhance Heritage Trails.	Ongoing across North Ayrshire. New web site created to host the Trails, improve access and scope. Set to build on and develop.
STEM Trail	Create new STEM trail for Eglinton Park and Cumbræ.	Eglinton Trail is complete and work has started on the co-creation of the Cumbræ trail with the local school and the Field Studies Centre, Millport, taking in the learning from Eglinton.
Eglinton Park	Enhanced walking routes with additional benches, BBQ disposal units and outdoor classroom, upgraded all-ability play area.	New walking routes created, benches added, BBQ disposal units installed and information video created, enhanced directional signage installed, outdoor washroom area created. Classroom still to be completed and upgrade of all-ability play area is pending.
Arran Geopark	2021 and 2022 one seasonal Arran Access Ranger funded by NatureScot via Arran Access Trust.	Two seasonal Arran Access Rangers funded by NatureScot via Arran Access Trust. Rangers liaise with Streetscene Grounds Supervisor where appropriate.

Interpretation	Interpretation panels at Ardrossan Castle and St Bride's Chapel, Lamlash.	St Brides complete. Ardrossan still in development with local heritage group.
Lighting and interpretation	Upgrading at Kilwinning Abbey Tower.	New interpretation in place at entrance, further interpretation to follow as part of the Place Making engagement and funding. Lighting installed and in use for key dates (Go Purple, Remembrance Day etc)
Marine Tourism		
Moorings, transit marinas and step-ashore facilities		
Moorings	New payment system being developed for North Ayrshire Council's 67 visitor moorings around Arran and Cumbrae.	Business case for cost recovery in final stages of development.
Marinas	Programme of consultation and development work via AGD to add marina expansion at Ardrossan and step-ashore facilities at Arran, Cumbrae and Irvine.	Ongoing
Communication, Education and Engagement		
Communication, campaigns and enforcement activities		
Targeted Campaigns	Targeted info to visitors through print, PR and web using social media, Instagram campaigns (e.g., Keep North Ayrshire Tidy; @LoveNorth Ayrshire).	Ongoing
My Beach Your Beach	Participation in educational campaign.	Ongoing
Safer Shores	Participation in education and enforcement activities.	Ongoing
Multi-Agency co-operation	Multi-agency co-operation to gather intelligence on unofficial events (e.g., beach parties, car cruises), with interventions to mitigate effects from litter, noise and anti-social behaviour.	Ongoing
Ayrshire Smiles	Promotion of 'Ayrshire Smiles' customer-service training website in conjunction with South and East Ayrshire Councils.	Ongoing
Development of Motorhome Guidance	New for 2023	Develop guidance for visitors bringing motor homes to North Ayrshire

Digital Visitor Management Project	New for 2023	Identify data-driven digital visitor management project
Events and Festivals		
Events and Festivals, cultural activities		
Making Waves Festival	New family-friendly festival at Irvine's Beach Park and Harbourside in July 2022 promoting wellness and community.	Two day event delivered 23/24 th July 2022. The Scottish Maritime Museum is planning a smaller community event for 2023.
Community Event Support	Provision of event equipment for community events to reduce costs and improve event sustainability.	Partially completed, some resources have been purchased and there is ongoing engagement with community groups on what additional resources are needed in 2023.
Queen's Platinum Jubilee	Support a range of community-based commemorative / celebratory events and activities.	In 2022 a total of £25k of funding was distributed to groups across North Ayrshire to deliver local events to mark the occasion. In addition, 4 groups were supported to participate in the National Beacon Lighting, with Saltcoats being covered for BBC news.
Scotland's Year of Stories 2022	Development and delivery of local programme of events and activities.	Complete - events and activities delivered across North Ayrshire in 2022. Next themed year is 2024, EventScotland has not announced the theme yet.
Events and Activities	Delivery of new events and activities at Harbour Arts Centre, North Ayrshire Heritage Centre, Museum of the Cumbraes, Irvine Townhouse.	In 2022 new exhibition panels were installed in Garrison House and Irvine Townhouse to widen the scope for exhibitions in these 2 locations. Increased programming will continue across the venues in 2023.
Event Calendar	New for 2023	Develop an event calendar to ensure we are promoting events in the area to build our audience and increase attendance, economic impact and community participation.
Partner Engagement/Activities		

Marketing Campaigns	AADA, Visit Arran and Ayrshire Food and Drink marketing campaigns to promote the regional offer.	Campaigns delivered in 2022, collateral remains in use
Regional Partnership	Implementation of new Regional Visitor Economy Strategy developed in conjunction with Ayrshire and Arran Visitor Economy Leadership Group, including regional priority projects currently being established to support visitor management.	Ayrshire and our islands Visitor Economy Strategy and Draft Action Plan approved by Regional Economic Partnership Board in February 2023 and subsequently by the Ayrshire Economic Joint Committee. Partner resourcing and governance being explored for delivery.

8. Visitor Management Plan Ambitions

This plan focuses on identifying early interventions and highlighting developments which are underway. Larger investments and longer-term projects require appropriate planning, consultation, review and implementation and by necessity must form part of a longer-term strategy. The North Ayrshire Council Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plans currently in development will allow us to view developments over a five year period.

This Visitor Management Plan is a working document, reviewed periodically and revised annually.

There are several strategic themes that require ongoing review and action and to be informed by infrastructure capacity assessment. In addition to the delivery of the actions in the Plan, throughout 2023, and in developing a Plan for 2024, the following priority areas will be reflected on – both in terms of identifying issues, potential action and resourcing implications: -

- Reflecting on strategic priorities identified through the Ayrshire Regional Economic Strategy and the Ayrshire and our Islands Visitor Economy Strategy and Draft Action Plan
- Reflecting on local strategic priorities, including those informed by the Ayrshire Growth Deal and the Council's marine tourism programme
- Implementation of identified solutions to support motorhomes
- Reviewing arrangements for supporting stranded passengers on islands where ferry services are disrupted and continuing to work with partner organisations and communities to ensure our ferry services are resilient and supporting the needs of our communities
- Proactively identifying potential funding sources from external funders to support future activities.

13 June 2023**Cabinet**

Title: **Housing Services' Customer Participation Strategy
2023-2028**

Purpose: To provide Cabinet with details of the draft Customer Participation Strategy 2023-2028 for approval

Recommendation: That Cabinet approves the content of the draft Customer Participation Strategy 2023-2028.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Housing Services' draft Customer Participation Strategy for 2023-2028 sets out the strategic priorities for Housing Services over the next five years to actively develop and support tenant and customer participation. The Strategy has been developed in consultation with tenants, residents and other stakeholders. This has been done in line with Scottish Government guidance and good practice from specialist organisations and other social landlords.
- 1.2 The Cabinet is invited to approve the draft Housing Services Customer Participation Strategy at Appendix 1, as Housing Services' plan for developing customer involvement over the next five years.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced a legal requirement for landlords to actively develop and support tenant participation. As part of this, landlords must have a strategy, to enable continuous improvement in performance to support and empower tenants to participate. The current 2017-22 Customer Involvement and Empowerment Strategy was developed in partnership with tenants and approved by Cabinet in December 2017.
- 2.2 The Scottish Housing Regulator assesses and reports on how social landlords are performing through the Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC). Tenant scrutiny and landlord self-assessment are key priorities on the national agenda for customer engagement.
- 2.3 Over the last several years, Housing Services has made significant progress in engaging with and involving our tenants and customers. Some of our key achievements through the life of the current strategy include:
 - 'Excellence in Tenant Participation' - Gold level reaccreditation from Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS Scotland) in 2022
 - 'Excellence in scrutiny and charter performance' - Gold level reaccreditation from Tenant Information Service (TIS Scotland) in 2022

- Reconfiguration of our Tenant Participation service in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020
- Welfare calls to vulnerable tenants, including those living in sheltered housing, throughout the pandemic
- The introduction and development of digital participation throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, which transformed our approach to tenant participation and enabled us to offer multiple engagement opportunities
- Increasing tenant involvement at a strategic level through our Housing Services Business Plan Group
- Further embedding tenant consultation across Housing Services using a variety of online methods.
- Transformation of the Tenants' newsletter into a Tenants' Chat e- newsletter
- Hosting of three successful Annual Fun Days
- Increasing our social media platforms

2.4 Strategic Priorities

The Housing Services Customer Participation Strategy 2023-28 looks to shape and enhance our customer participation work around three priorities:

- **Engage and Inform** – ensuring two-way communication with our tenants and customers, and providing opportunities for customers to take part in ways that meet their needs;
- **Empower and Influence** – developing the skills and confidence of our tenants to shape the services we provide;
- **Evolve and Innovate** – continually improving our services to meet the needs of our customers.

2.5 This framework seeks to create a balanced approach to involvement, recognising the need to move away from the traditional method of solely consulting with formal tenant and resident associations.

2.6 The objectives within each priority are reflected in the actions detailed in the Strategy Action Plan. Progress towards this will be reviewed regularly and reported to tenants.

2.7 By listening to tenants and customers, several actions have been identified that aim to increase involvement. These are outlined in detail in the Strategy. The key features are:

- The Council will ensure that tenants and service users are able to influence the delivery of housing services at all levels. This will enable customers to have an input into issues at a local neighbourhood level. It is also important that tenants and customers can shape and influence strategic decisions about housing policies.
- The Council will provide a range of opportunities for people to be involved, work to identify and break down barriers to involvement and increase support to traditionally excluded groups who are often under-represented within communities. e.g., Redburn Grove Tenants group and working with care experienced younger tenants.
- The Council will promote the benefits of involvement through showing what difference the involvement of tenants has made and making it clear how tenants' and customers views shape the service.
- The Council will empower customer involvement in scrutinising and monitoring our performance and service standards.
- The Council will continue to develop a service that responds to the scrutiny role carried out by the North Ayrshire Inspection Panel.

- The Council will continue to provide good quality information in a format that suits the needs of our customers (online and hard copy on request)
- The Council will continue to improve service delivery and develop a range of options to ensure consultation is maximised. We will consult on a number of topics, for some of which we have a statutory duty to do so, online and in hard copy where requested.

2.8 The strategy was presented to the Policy Advisory Panel on 2 June 2023 for feedback. Discussions took place around joint work between Housing and Locality Partnerships, that could enhance support to customer/tenants within the local areas. This is included as part of the action plan for the strategy under “The service continually adapts to meet changing needs” and is due for completion during 2023/24.

3. Proposals

3.1 It is proposed that the Cabinet considers and approves the Housing Services Customer Participation Strategy 2023-2028 which is appended to the report.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

4.1 None.

Human Resources

4.2 None.

Legal

4.3 Development of the Housing Services Customer Participation Strategy 2023-2028 fulfils our legal responsibilities as a landlord under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 The Housing Services Customer Participation Strategy 2023-2028 has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment and a Children’s Rights Impact Assessment. The commitment to overcoming barriers to involvement and developing our approach to engaging with the under-represented will have a positive impact on those groups. The Council will continue to develop opportunities for engagement with under represented groups for example Redburn Grove Tenants Group.

Climate Change and Carbon

4.5 None.

Key Priorities

4.6 The Customer Participation Strategy 2023-2028 supports the Council Plan Priority “Aspiring Communities”

Community Wealth Building

4.7 None.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Consultation on the draft Strategy was undertaken with a range of stakeholders, in three stages.
- 5.2 Initially, a review of the current Strategy was undertaken with involvement from tenant representatives. This part of the process considered how objectives were developed, what was achieved, and what areas were relevant to take forward to the new Strategy.
- 5.3 The second phase of consultation aimed to develop the existing priorities and objectives of the Strategy. This was carried out with the North Ayrshire Network and various tenant representatives who take part in Service Improvement groups. Feedback from these discussions formed the basis of the Strategy Action Plan.
- 5.4 Lastly, the draft Housing Services Customer Participation Strategy 2023-28 was issued online for wider consultation throughout August and September 2022. A survey was issued alongside the draft to encourage feedback on specific areas of content. In total, 57 responses were received from a range of tenants and stakeholders. Overall, the consultation responses were positive, with 96% of respondents liking Engage and Inform, Empower and Influence and Evolve and Innovate as the key priorities. 88% of respondents agreed that the Strategy reads well and was easy to understand. All participants were contacted and thanked for their contribution to this consultation.
- 5.5 The following stakeholders were involved or consulted with during development of the strategy:
- North Ayrshire Network (constituted group which allows tenant representatives and other customers to discuss issues that affect them jointly, whilst also encouraging networking between tenant group representatives from different communities).
 - Tenants and residents.
 - Council Officers from Housing, Streetscene, Building Services, PM&I, Waste, Roads, Connected Communities and the Health and Social Care Partnership.
 - The Community Planning Partnership and Community Engagement Network

RUSSELL MCCUTCHEON
Executive Director (Place)

For further information please contact **Andrea Elliott, Senior Manager Operations and Youth Engagement** on **01294 310175**

Background Papers

Appendix 1 – Housing Services Customer Participation Strategy 2023-2028

North Ayrshire Housing Services'



Customer Participation Strategy 2023-2028



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

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Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to introduce our Housing Services’ Customer Participation Strategy 2023-2028.

Since the introduction of our first Strategy in 2003, we have continued to make great steps forward and have developed a Tenant Participation service that makes sure our customers are involved in decision making and are empowered to influence how we deliver our Housing service. We believe that by giving people a range of different ways of engaging with us, listening to what they say, setting up real partnerships and providing high quality information, we can continue to provide excellent housing services for our customers.

The Scottish Government published its strategic roadmap for housing – Housing to 2040 in March 2021. The strategy sets out a vision for housing in Scotland and aims to ensure that everyone has a safe, good quality and affordable home that meets their needs in the place they want to be. North Ayrshire Council will ensure delivery on the ambitions within the strategy and ensure all policy making decisions support the national housing approach and develop a structure to implement resultant actions.

We will work with our customers to ensure they continue to have a voice and are at the centre of the work we do.

Putting our customers at the heart of our service delivery resulted in our 2022 ‘Gold Reaccreditation’ for embracing the Social Housing Charter commitment. In addition, ‘Gold Reaccreditation’ was awarded for our approach to customer involvement and scrutiny in early 2022. Both external accreditations recognise our commitment to placing our customers at the heart of our organisation, ensuring customers are influencing decisions and scrutinising our service areas.



We are delighted that our commitment to our customers has been recognised, however we are not complacent; we will continue to challenge ourselves and encourage our customers to challenge us, so that we can continually strive to improve performance and service delivery.

We would like to formally recognise the contribution that our tenants’ and residents’ groups make, and to thank those who are part of the North Ayrshire Network, Inspection Panel and Service Improvement Groups.

Finally, thank you to all our customers for your feedback to our various consultation exercises. We hope you continue to take part, be heard and make a difference to our communities.

Councillor Tony Gurney
Cabinet Member for
Economy & Climate Change

Introduction

Working in partnership with tenants and customers is key to delivering excellent housing services to the people of North Ayrshire. We have worked closely with tenants and other customers to produce this Strategy, which sets out our commitments and how we will develop our approach to tenant participation over the next five years.

This is the sixth Customer Participation Strategy for North Ayrshire Housing Services, developed in consultation with a range of partners and stakeholders. We have made significant progress in engaging with and involving our customers through our previous strategies and have developed a range of tools and services to enable and empower participation in North Ayrshire.



Over the lifetime of our 2017-2022 strategy some of our key achievements include:



'Excellence in Tenant Participation' – Gold level reaccreditation from Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS Scotland) in 2022.



Welfare calls to vulnerable tenants, including those living in sheltered housing, throughout the pandemic.



Reconfiguration of our Tenant Participation service in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.



The introduction and development of digital participation throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, which transformed our approach to tenant participation and enabled us to offer multiple engagement opportunities.



Hosting of three successful Annual Fun Days.



Further embedding of tenant consultation across Housing Services.



An increase in our social media platforms.



An increase in tenant involvement at a strategic level through our Housing Business Plan Group.



'Excellence in scrutiny and charter performance' – Gold level reaccreditation from Tenant Information Service (TIS Scotland) in 2022.



Transformation of the Tenants' newsletter into a Tenants' Chat e-newsletter.



The 2017-22 Strategy was underpinned by a recognition and commitment to working with and listening to tenants, to continue to provide excellent services that met our customers' needs.

Background

National Context

Housing (Scotland) Act 2001

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced a legal requirement for landlords to actively develop and support tenant participation. As part of this we must have a strategy to enable continuous improvement in performance to support and empower tenants to participate.

Under this legislation, landlords are required to consult with registered tenant organisations and individual tenants on a range of housing and related issues which may affect them, including:

- Our Customer Participation Strategy
- Changes to rent and service charges
- Some changes to policy which are likely to have a significant impact on tenants, residents, and service users
- Our standards of service in housing management, repairs, and maintenance

Housing Services has well established methods of consultation and feedback. More information on this is provided in the Consultation and Feedback section.

Housing (Scotland) Act 2010

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 created two fundamental influences in the social housing sector in Scotland. These are:

The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) is an independent regulator, directly accountable to the Scottish Parliament. Its statutory objective is to safeguard and promote the interests of current and future tenants, homeless people and others who use the services provided by social landlords. The Regulator assesses and reports on how social landlords are performing their housing services through the **Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC)**. The Charter sets out the standards and outcomes that all social landlords should aim to achieve when performing their housing activities. The Charter was revised in 2017. Tenant scrutiny and landlord self-assessment are key priorities on the national agenda for customer engagement.

Together, they have created a new environment in which the Council and our customers must work in partnership to achieve positive outcomes for communities.



Annual Return on the Charter (ARC)

We are required to provide an annual return to the Scottish Housing Regulator on our progress in achieving the Scottish Social Housing Charter outcomes and standards. We report to tenants on performance against the Charter annually. Outcomes linked to this Strategy are those relating to the customer/landlord relationship:

Outcome 1

Equalities

Every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

Outcome 2

Communication

Tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions, and the services it provides.

Outcome 3

Participation

Tenants and other customers are offered a range of opportunities that make it easy for them to participate in, and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

Annual Assurance Statement

Since October 2019, all social housing landlords have had a requirement to prepare and deliver an Annual Assurance Statement ([Annual Assurance Statement north-ayrshire.gov.uk](http://north-ayrshire.gov.uk)) to tenants, in accordance with SHR guidance. The statement provides assurance and evidence that the Council is meeting all legal obligations associated with housing and homelessness services, equality and human rights, and tenant and resident safety.

In addition, the statement safeguards and promotes the interests of tenants and other customers.

The North Ayrshire Network, our strategic tenant group, considers the content of our statement and approves it prior to publication.



Background

Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 focuses on promoting real engagement and participation, to facilitate communities to achieve greater influence and control in decisions and circumstances that affect them. The National Standards for Community Engagement set out the values that provide the basis for successful community engagement. The standards act as a good

practice guideline, and a means to benchmark our performance. They were reviewed and re-launched in 2016 in response to the Community Empowerment Act, building upon established good practice.

Local Context

The North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership's (CPP) Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) describes how all partners will work together to provide better services with the aim of making sure the people and communities of North Ayrshire are working, healthier, safe, and secure. The CPP's Community Engagement Network facilitates partnership working to share good practice, experience, and opportunities in North Ayrshire, and contribute to the Partnership's Community Engagement Strategy.

The Council Plan sets out the ambitions and priorities in North Ayrshire over a five-year period. One of these priorities is 'working together to develop stronger communities.' The Council continues to help people and communities to get involved in local decisions and to reach their full potential.

The Locality Planning Approach is key to improving outcomes for local communities. It ensures public sector resources are targeted at those local areas most in need in North Ayrshire. The approach is based around

six locality planning areas: Arran; Irvine; Kilwinning; Three Towns; Garnock Valley and the North Coast.

Housing Services' approach to tenant participation supports these strategic priorities. This Strategy has been developed to ensure working with tenants and customers remains a core part of our business. It also underpins the approach to customer involvement in developing plans, such as the Local Housing Strategy (LHS), the Safer North Ayrshire Strategy and the Council's Digital Strategy.



Inclusive Involvement

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced responsibilities for landlords relating to equal opportunities and tenant participation/customer involvement. Specifically, landlords are required to:

- Consider the needs of equalities groups, proactively involving seldom heard groups and those who may feel digitally excluded
- Ensure any barriers to participation are taken into consideration
- Ensure Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) promote equal opportunities, and the criteria for registration makes it accessible to all tenants (see page 47 for information on RTOs and the current Register of Tenant Organisations in North Ayrshire)

There is also a requirement for RTOs to promote equal opportunities in local communities and pursue the involvement of excluded groups. This should be reflected in their constitution.

Housing Services is committed to treating people respectfully, fairly, and equally across all areas of our business, and tackling discrimination and harassment in all our activities. Inclusive involvement underpins the objectives within the strategy and engaging with hard-to-reach groups; including homeless people, continues to be a priority within the service. Housing Services embed the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics firmly in service delivery.

The Scottish Housing Regulator requires social landlords in Scotland to collect equality data as part of their commitment to mainstream equality objectives throughout organisational services. The data that we are required to collect relates to the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010 – age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

An equality impact assessment and equality and children's rights impact assessment have been completed for this Strategy in consultation with tenant representatives on North Ayrshire Network. No adverse impact or effect was identified on particular group(s) or people.



Involving all customers

Some groups of tenants and other customers are often under-represented in community involvement, including:

- Digitally excluded customers
- Young people
- New Scots & ethnic minority groups
- Gypsy/Travellers
- People with accessibility needs
- LGBTQ+ gender diversity and inclusion
- Homeless service users
- Care experienced young people
- Individuals with care responsibilities
- Private rented sector tenants



Inclusive Involvement

We already have great examples of how we are involving under-represented groups:

Redburn Grove Tenants Group

North Ayrshire Council has a dedicated Gypsy/Traveller Coordinator based at our Redburn Grove Traveller Site who provides support, advice and assistance for the tenants and site visitors.

In October 2022, a Tenants Group was established on site at Redburn Grove along with Housing Services staff, Minority Ethnic Carers of Older People Project (MECOPP) Gypsy & Traveller Support staff and the tenants of Redburn Grove. This group gives tenants the opportunity to have their say on the current and future development needs of the site and ensure they have a voice within their community.

“This is a great way for us to have a voice and for our community to be heard”

Redburn Grove Tenant Group member

Engaging New Scots

In 2015, North Ayrshire Council made a humanitarian commitment to support the resettlement and integration of refugees into local communities as part of the Syrian Resettlement Programme. This commitment was met early and further families fleeing conflict throughout the world were welcomed to North Ayrshire.

North Ayrshire Council is also committed to providing sanctuary and support to those displaced by the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Since the conflict commenced in April 2022, a significant number of individuals and families have been welcomed into North Ayrshire’s communities.

We provide support to our tenants’ and residents’ groups to embrace all New Scots, helping to integrate them into local communities and offering opportunities for involvement.

Engaging with Homeless People

Housing Services regularly seek the views of Homeless Service customers. The Hostel staff hosts regular events to gauge their views.

Removing barriers

Housing Services offer all tenants the opportunity to become involved. We are committed to removing barriers to involvement, and we will:

- ✓ Ensure all information is provided in accordance with our accessibility policy to ensure that complex statistical information does not lead to non-participation
- ✓ Provide documents in other languages and formats
- ✓ Print documents on request
- ✓ Provide interpreting facilities on request. Hearing loops are available in several local housing offices
- ✓ Provide Council contact numbers, either free or charged at local rates
- ✓ Offer the Scottish Government's Connecting Scotland initiative to assist with digital inclusion within communities who may be digitally excluded
- ✓ Offer a blended approach to participation and involvement (either online/virtual meetings or face to face)
- ✓ Provide a range of opportunities to take part virtually online as well as face to face meetings
- ✓ Dial out by telephone to tenants when holding virtual meetings, to prevent any charges
- ✓ Provide various training, including digital training, to give tenants, residents, and service users the appropriate knowledge, and provide specialist assistance as required. This training includes awareness of equality issues
- ✓ Provide free crèche facilities during face-to-face meetings or making child minding allowances available to enable people to attend participation meetings
- ✓ Provide transport for customers to attend events hosted by Housing Services, if required
- ✓ Hold meetings in venues that are accessible, convenient, and secure for everyone, including people with mobility issues
- ✓ Establish meeting times to take account of the needs and preferences of local communities

- ✓ Ensure adequate funds are provided to develop the key issues agreed with tenants, residents, and all service users
- ✓ Provide opportunities for all customers and age groups to get involved
- ✓ Develop and embed digital opportunities, whilst at the same time still providing exceptional customer service
- ✓ Continue the digital journey with the introduction and development of Housing Facebook and Twitter pages, access to rent accounts and payments via the internet, online surveys, and our North Ayrshire Housing Register online application system
- ✓ Offer ongoing digital support and training to ensure customers develop and increase their skills and confidence to take part effectively and embed a digital culture
- ✓ Host regular 'Teams' meetings of the North Ayrshire Network, North Ayrshire Inspection Panel and Service Improvement groups. This way of involvement proved popular for many and will continue to be offered alongside face-to-face meetings to ensure everyone can take part in a way that suits their needs



But we want to do more

We aim to build on our approach to involving under-represented groups to gain their views on services. An example of areas we will focus on during the life of this Strategy is:

Engaging Young People



Whilst we have a range of different methods and levels of participation available in North Ayrshire, the core group of tenants who actively participate regularly have an older age profile. Diversity in the age of our involved tenants will give us a better understanding of their needs and aspirations.

We know most of our young people are digitally skilled and active on social media. Continuing to develop our approach to this will widen the age range of our involved customers.

Care Experienced Young People



We want to design, develop, and implement engagement opportunities and partnership working with care experienced young people.

We want to listen to young people who have been care experienced and ensure they have a voice within the communities they live.

We will **#KeepThePromise** and involve children and young people in the work we do.

Private Rented Sector



The Scottish Government's vision for Housing to 2040 highlights the need for all tenants, whether in private rented or social rented sector housing to have a 'voice' in the services provided by landlords. Developing our tenant participation approach in the private rented sector will enhance partnership working and give private rented sector tenants a say in service delivery. We will establish our tenant participation approach in the private rented sector by developing a PRS Tenant Participation Panel to enhance partnership working.

Homeless People



We will ensure that the needs and aspirations of homeless and potentially homeless people are reflected in our strategic planning processes as we review and update our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. We will utilise the experience of our most vulnerable clients to continue to shape and develop our Housing First programme.



Developing the Strategy

This **2023-2028 Strategy** builds on previous tenant involvement strategies and has been developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders, including our tenants. Our strategic development process was as follows:



Customer Connections

Based on the information gathered during the research and consultation phases of developing this Strategy, our customer participation work will be shaped around three key priorities:

Engage and Inform

Ensuring two-way communication with our tenants and customers and providing opportunities for customers to take part in ways that meet their needs.

Empower and Influence

Developing the skills and confidence of our tenants to shape the services we provide.

Evolve and Innovate

Continually improving our services to meet our customers' needs.

This framework seeks to create a balanced approach to involvement, recognising the need to move away from the traditional method of solely consulting with formal tenant and resident associations.

Our **Customer Connections Circle** demonstrates how these priorities link with our established methods of involvement in North Ayrshire. Our Action Plan highlights the timescales for each priority.





Customer Connections



Priority 1 Engage and Inform

Our first priority, 'Engage and Inform,' focuses on communicating with, consulting and including our customers. Ensuring there is two-way communication with our tenants and customers and providing opportunities for customers to take part in ways that meet their needs.



Our objectives

We effectively engage with and inform our tenants in a way that suits them. To achieve this, we will ensure that:

- customers are well informed and can communicate with us easily
- involvement is accessible and inclusive; and
- there are a range of opportunities to take part

What we know

To participate effectively, communication is essential. Tenants need to have all the information necessary to consider issues properly, within the limits of confidentiality. This includes providing information online and in hard copy (on request) about our strategies, decision making processes, policies and procedures, tenants' rights, and proposals for change.

Offering different methods and levels of involvement allows tenants to choose how actively they participate to suit their lifestyle and commitments. For some, this may be attending meetings and events, whilst others may prefer to take part from their own home. Providing diversity and opportunity makes participation accessible to a wider range of customers.

Engage

Customer Connections

We already have great examples of how we engage with and inform our customers, as detailed below:

Newsletters

'Tenants Chat' is our quarterly newsletter sent via email to North Ayrshire Council tenants. It is developed by an editorial panel of staff, tenants, and customers.

Tenants are encouraged to contribute articles, and the panel oversees the writing of each newsletter to encourage a sense of ownership of the final product. Tenants Chat is used as a method of communicating service developments and changes to tenants, and as a method of consultation on topics such as annual rent increases. It is also used to provide information on wider issues that may interest or affect tenants. Popular information includes information on our new build council housing, updates from our Welfare Reform Advice Team, and advice from Trading Standards, Police Scotland and Scottish Fire and Rescue. Local communities also feature in the newsletter highlighting the work being done in communities and the facilities available in each locality. Hard copies can be made available on request.

An annual newsletter is also produced for applicants of the North Ayrshire Housing Register.



Tenants Panel (online)

We hold registers of interested tenants, applicants, and other customers to allow individuals the opportunity to have their voices heard on topics that are important to or affect them. People can select which subjects they would like to be informed or consulted on and choose to take part when it suits them. The registers are used regularly to consult on a variety of housing issues, policies, and strategies.



Social Media

We have made further advances in our approach to digital engagement, embedding an 'e-participation' strand to our methods for involvement. As part of this we have developed the North Ayrshire social media brand utilising Facebook and Twitter.

These platforms have helped us to engage with a wider audience within communities and can deliver and spread key messages and facilitate consultation and feedback faster and more efficiently than ever before. The Sheltered Connections Facebook has given sheltered housing tenants the additional opportunity to communicate with tenants in other complexes. Similarly, the Youth Matters Facebook has given a platform to engage with younger customers.



We regularly inform tenants through various methods including:

- Tenants Chat e-newsletter
- Information on website
- Tenant Handbook
- Sheltered Tenants' Handbook
- TV screens in public areas
- TV screens in sheltered housing
- Applicants' newsletter
- TP Matters newsletter
- Tenant Group Manual
- Tenancy Matters Performance Edition
- Redburn Record Newsletter
- Text messaging

Our popular methods of engagement include:

- Digital participation including online meetings via Teams
- Tenants Panel
- Social Media
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
- Face to face meetings
- Registered Tenant Organisations
- Sheltered Housing Local Groups
- Satisfaction surveys
- Tenant Satisfaction Survey
- Housing Forum
- Sheltered Connections Facebook
- Youth Matters Facebook
- Consultation Café
- Annual Fun Day

But we want to do more

To achieve the strategic objectives under this priority, our areas of development include:

Digital Participation

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have developed and reconfigured each service to include digital services and participation where possible.

Within Housing Services, we have made considerable progress in holding our Tenant Participation meetings virtually, hosting digital consultations and events and reconfiguring our Tenant Participation Service. We will continue to offer a range of involvement and consultation opportunities, whilst having a blended approach to engagement and involvement.

We will continue to embed our interactive online communications such as live chats, online polling, Facebook messenger sessions, online meetings, and online conferences. We will continue to promote communication via email and our online rent account.

“Using the Teams online kept us involved with the Council during the pandemic when we could not meet face to face. I was wary at start, but love it and is a terrific way to get involved from my living room.”

Interested Tenant

Understanding Our Customers And Their Needs

To fully inform tenants and exceed customers' expectations, first we need to understand what is important to them and gauge the best form of communicating with them. Our current processes include asking tenants to contribute to publications, such as Tenants Chat and gaining their approval on our strategies, leaflets, and publications.

We would like to develop our approach to this by gauging tenant interest in the various areas of our service and providing them with information that matters to them. This can be progressed through the current forums, digital participation and social media. This would provide a more interactive, two-way communication. We can also use this to ensure we have appropriate representation from tenants on the issues most pertinent to them.



Our actions...

under the 'Engage and Inform' priority are:

- Provide good quality information that meets the needs of our customers and is clear and easy to understand
- Increase information online to customers and issue hard copies on request
- Develop our range of communication methods including digital participation
- Provide opportunities for customers to tell us types of information they are interested in receiving and preferred methods of contact
- Develop new methods of engagement and support engagement with seldom heard groups
- Ensure involvement methods are promoted and barriers removed
- Provide varied involvement opportunities and support a blended approach to participation
- Align our work with the Council's Digital Strategy and the Tenant Information Service (TIS) digital service pledge

Timescales and how we will measure progress are detailed within our Action Plan.



Customer Connections



Priority 2 Empower and Influence

Our second priority, 'Empower and Influence,' focuses on building community capacity, encouraging and supporting customers to take part, and helping them to influence decision making.



Our objectives

We aim to empower and help our communities to influence and shape our services. To achieve this, we will ensure that:

- Customer involvement (including online involvement) impacts service delivery; and
- Customers are supported to build their capacity and confidence

What we know

Service improvement and change is most effective when influenced and driven by its customers. Engagement is essential, to identify and deal with problems, and deliver services that meet customers' needs.

Customers who are fully engaged with Housing services will contribute to identifying both problems and solutions. We will ensure communities have the capacity to take part in the engagement process, to enable them to deal more effectively with services in identifying solutions, opportunities, and improvements. To build this capacity, the provision of support to develop confidence, abilities and skills is fundamental. This includes digital participation.

Establishing that base will enable and empower people to take more ownership, and support and encourage each other to take part.

Empower

We already have great examples of how we work with tenants to ensure their voice is heard and can influence service delivery:

Tenant Scrutiny

The North Ayrshire Inspection Panel form an independent function of the participation structure in Housing Services. Members receive ongoing training, initially by an independent organisation, which has been continued and enhanced in-house. An Inspection Panel Toolkit and Scrutiny Framework has been established to identify the skills and techniques used in the scrutiny process.

This method of taking part has developed the knowledge base of the tenants involved and given them the opportunity and confidence to analyse performance and ask relevant questions. Following an inspection, the Panel produce a report providing a suite of recommendations for improvement, which are used to develop our areas of service.

“Being part of the North Ayrshire Inspection Panel has been an incredible journey for me over the last few years. We have learned so much, inspected a range of services areas and learned news skills and gained confidence to address audiences nationally and share our excellent work.”

Inspection Panel member

National Engagement

Regional Networks were developed across Scotland to build partnerships between the Scottish Government and Registered Tenant Organisations, and to give tenants and customers a voice at national level. North Ayrshire Council is part of the West Strathclyde Region.

We aim to have at least one tenant representing North Ayrshire at the regional network. Training is provided from the Scottish Government to help them effectively take part. Representatives are given the opportunity to provide feedback on national issues to their individual tenant groups, and the wider North Ayrshire Network.

Participation and engagement at this level has increased the knowledge and experience of those involved and raises the awareness and support for the communities within North Ayrshire.

“Being part of the Region 3 Network has given me the opportunity to become involved at a national level and have direct links with the Scottish Government.”

Region 3 Network member

Estate Based Regeneration

The Estate Based Regeneration Programme aims to invest in North Ayrshire Council’s existing housing estates to support the Council’s wider goal of regenerating North Ayrshire and improving the quality of life for local people.



But we want to do more

To achieve the strategic objectives under this priority, our areas of development include:

Peer Support – Tenant Talk

With our diverse and varied methods of participation, including online, we have a number of experienced tenants who understand our policies and procedures and are established members on a number of our groups.

Developing our ‘peer support’ programme continues to promote tenant-to-tenant communication and engagement. It also removes the formality of exclusively working with housing professionals, which may be a barrier for some people. Individuals may have similar experiences as tenants and are able to give and receive help and information based on shared responsibility and a mutual agreement of what is important and helpful. This can develop everyone’s confidence and help to build capacity within our communities to deal with local issues effectively.

An additional part of peer support will feature tenants having a more prominent role in the promotion of consultations.

Mystery Shopping

Mystery Shopping is already a well-established method of quality control within Housing Services, providing our customers with the opportunity to evaluate the service we provide. With specialist training and support from the Tenant Participation Team, participants also benefit from developing their organisational and interview skills.

The new continuous approach to mystery shopping will test services on an ongoing basis. Shoppers will record good or bad experiences when they contact any part of the Housing service. This method allows tenants to take part from their own home, at a time that suits their needs and record real-life events. Regular testing will give meaningful guidelines relating to customer satisfaction and service delivery.



Our actions...

under the ‘Empower and Influence’ priority are:

- Develop our approach to reporting feedback on customer views
- Improve, information on customer feedback and how this has impacted service delivery
- Provide support to tenants to build their capacity and develop peer support
- Develop our training programme for tenants and other customers
- Encourage and support our customers to make the most of digital opportunities
- Support our customers to develop and increase their digital skills and confidence

Timescales and how we will measure progress are detailed within our Action Plan.



Customer Connections



Priority 3 Evolve and Innovate

Our third priority, 'Evolve and Innovate' focuses on the continuous improvement and development of our service to best meet the needs of our customers.



Our objectives

We aim to continually improve on the services we provide, changing and evolving to meet customers' needs in the best way possible. To achieve this, we will ensure that:

- A culture of participation is embedded in Housing Services
- The Service continually adapts to meet changing needs

What we know

Real participation and involvement can only be achieved if it is embedded in the culture of an organisation. Key to this is the empowerment of our tenants, and individuals within our organisation, to identify areas for development. A focus on our customers is key to embedding these behaviours in our organisation.

Our aim is to continue to provide a high performing, value for money service to our customers. To do so, we must focus on making our services easier and faster to access and achieve the outcomes our customers want from us. We need to keep up to date on legislative and policy changes and emerging trends, to ensure our service continues to meet the needs of its users.

Evolve

Customer Connections

We already have great examples of how we are proactive in our approach to developing our service and are early adopters of good practice. We do this to facilitate continuous progression using innovative approaches in the development and delivery of our strategic objectives.



Service Improvement Groups

We have a number of working groups in operation throughout the Service, some of which include tenant representation, to promote a 'hands on' approach to service development for tenants. We have tenant membership on our:

- Housing Business Plan Group
- Repairs/Major Works Service Improvement Group
- Tenant Editorial Panel
- Tenant Event Working Group

Physical representation on these groups allows customers to impact on service delivery in real time and gain an understanding of our policies and procedures. It provides a strategic dimension to our methods of participation, and the groups we have focus on topics we know are important to our tenants.

Staff Working Groups

Our Rent Arrears, Void and Allocations, Estate Management, Learning and Development, Customer Care and Youth Connections staff Working Groups, which do not have tenant representation, link closely with these groups to ensure tenant involvement in all areas of service improvement.

The working groups aim to develop staff ideas, opinions and input within the Housing Sector on all areas of the service and ensure we provide the highest level of service that meets customer expectations. It is an opportunity for staff to review documents and the groups are often responsible for piloting new processes/ systems prior to them being rolled out across all offices.

Housing Business Plan Group

The group was formed in May 2010 to work alongside tenant representatives to develop our 30-year Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. The remit of the group has since been extended to monitor implementation of the Business Plan. The group provides an opportunity for tenants to discuss issues and provide input at a strategic level. To date, we have had five long standing tenant representatives participating in the group, alongside Council staff and Elected Members.

North Ayrshire Network

North Ayrshire Network (NAN) is a constituted group comprising of tenant representatives from different communities across North Ayrshire. The current role of the Network is to provide an independent examination of the work of Housing Services and to be responsible for ensuring Housing Services continually improves the way it delivers services to tenants and other customers. In respect of new regulatory requirements regarding equalities, the Network will ensure Housing Services undertake the collection of equality data.

There is an inherent understanding across the Service that any areas on which we intend to consult are taken to the Network for initial comments and approval, before consulting more widely with our tenants and residents. This promotes consistency and ensures the principles of participation are embedded in all sections of service.

"I enjoy being part of the North Ayrshire Network. It gives tenants, residents and all service users an excellent opportunity to be involved with strategic issues and decisions."

North Ayrshire Network member

We currently promote continuous improvement in tenant participation by:

- Developing our relationship with organisations who specialise in tenant and customer participation
- Applying for accreditations and awards, to develop our service through the assessment criteria
- Learning from other landlords and authorities on established good practice methods
- Sharing our good practice with other organisations



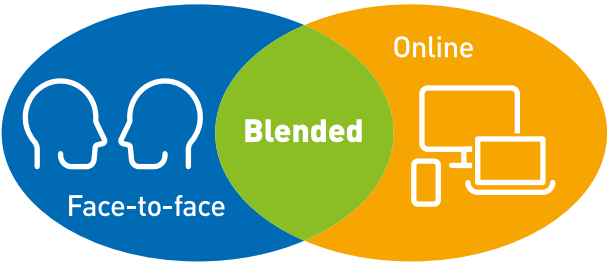
But we want to do more

To achieve the strategic objectives under this priority, our areas of development include:

Process Review

To ensure methods of participation remain relevant and fit for purpose, they need to be reviewed and evaluated regularly. This helps focus our efforts on the topics most important to our customers, and ensures opportunities are available for customers to be involved.

Reviewing our approach to tenant participation allows us to ensure services are appropriate, efficient, and effective. It provides benefits for the Council and our customers, such as higher quality service provision, a more systematic approach to understanding customer needs, and a more engaged community.



We want to continue to deliver our services to make them as accessible as possible. Tenant participation will be available using a 'blended' approach where both online and face-to-face opportunities will be offered to enhance engagement and ensure everyone is involved in a way that suits their needs and preferences.

Improved Joint Working

Our Connected Communities Service has developed a locality approach, including participation and empowerment, which is essential to ensuring that communities play a central role in shaping local priorities. The service plays a key role in the development of community networks to ensure full local participation.

Developing a stronger working relationship will allow both the Connected Communities and Tenant Participation services to learn from the other's good practice and will increase opportunities to engage with established groups in communities. This could help us reach harder to reach groups, such as young people.



Our actions...

under the 'Evolve and Innovate' priority are:

- Develop and embed a 'blended' approach to Tenant Participation
- Review consultation undertaken across the service to identify good practice and areas for improvement
- Keep abreast of any legislative or policy changes relating to tenant participation and customer involvement
- Deliver in-house training on Tenant Participation
- Research good practice examples and consider their development in North Ayrshire
- Ensure engagement and consultation with tenants and other customers reviews their needs from the service

Timescales and how we will measure progress are detailed within our Action Plan.

Consultation and Feedback

Consultation involves asking for peoples' views to consider them before reaching decisions, with time built in for tenants to make decisions, and landlords to consider them, and agree to the outcome together. Effective consultation helps to design and deliver services people want. It is also an effective way to measure service delivery and effectiveness.

Housing Services is committed to improving service delivery and increasing customer satisfaction by making sure that we meet our customers' needs. We have developed a range of options to ensure participation is maximised, supported by an annual calendar of consultation events. We will consult on a number of topics, for some of which we have a statutory duty to do so. We also carry out large scale surveys, such as our tenant satisfaction survey, to gain views on the services we provide.

To continually improve, we recognise that we need to regularly collect and use customer feedback to improve service delivery. It is also important that we feedback to those who have participated, so that they know that their views have been listened to and are being acted on. We have a number of methods of doing this, including producing an annual consultation report, and sending information to Registered Tenants' Organisations, and the North Ayrshire Network.

We know from our tenant satisfaction surveys that our quarterly newsletter 'Tenants Chat' is a popular way of providing feedback to tenants, residents, and all service users, and we will use this forum to highlight how tenant engagement has shaped or improved our service.

We will use a mix of digital and face-to-face consultation methods where possible, to ensure everyone gets the opportunity to have a say in a way that suits them.



Customer Comments, Compliments and Complaints

If customers have a comment, compliment or complaint about any part of the Housing Service, they can report it easily to any member of staff. North Ayrshire is committed to providing high-quality customer services. We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services. An easy-to-understand leaflet outlining the process on how to complain, comment or compliment a service or staff member is available at all local Council offices, customer contacts centres, online and in local libraries.



Resources and Support

Resources are required to effectively develop our tenant participation approach, and ensure it is embedded throughout the service. These can be financial, physical, or staff support. North Ayrshire Housing Services has the following resources dedicated to involving our tenants:

Financial

An annual budget of £60k (excluding staff salaries) from our Housing Revenue Account (our Council landlord account funded through rental income from our housing stock) is allocated to tenant participation. This is reviewed annually in consultation with the North Ayrshire Network. The budget funds activities such as:

- Consultation exercises, such as our tenant satisfaction survey
- Mystery shopping exercises
- Tenant events
- Independent advice and assistance from specialists
- Training and attendance at events, for both staff and tenants
- Administration
- Tenant expenses, such as transport to events
- Field trips and study visits

During each financial year, all eligible **Tenants and Residents Associations** can apply to the **Tenant Participation (TP) Team** for an annual grant of **£150** to support the development and running of their group.

They must provide information with the application, including current audited accounts, a constitution, contact details and minutes of their meetings. The TP Team will support all groups through the grant application process.

The grant can be used to pay for expenses such as postage, stationery, advertising, and travel. Additional funding can be requested and will be considered by the TP Team. External grant funding is also available for Tenant and Resident Associations. More information on this is available through the Tenant Participation Team.

Staffing

The Tenant Participation Team comprises of a manager and two officers. They support and develop tenant participation throughout North Ayrshire. Their functions include:

- Co-ordinating tenant consultation
- Working with other services to enhance involvement
- Providing specialist advice within the service and to tenants
- Training and developing staff and tenants
- Facilitating tenant and resident meetings
- Encouraging participation with underrepresented groups
- Facilitating North Ayrshire Network, North Ayrshire Inspection Panel and Service Improvement Groups

- Working with national organisation to identify and enhance best practice
- Benchmarking with other organisations and housing providers to identify emerging best practice

Aside from this dedicated resource, various parts of the service engage with our customers on a regular basis and consult on a number of topics in their specialist areas. The Tenant Participation Team support them in these activities.



Some quotes from our communities

Source: TIS and TPAS reaccreditation reports 2021 and 2022

“The team have given us confidence, support and assistance with our scrutiny work.”

“This team helped us cope and kept us focused throughout the pandemic.”

“The team have supported us through this digital transformation – their support has helped our confidence and skills to grow.”

“The planning and support provided by the Tenant Participation team is second to none.”

“It is a great team, who have stayed connected with us during lockdown and helped us to get online.”

“The team have given me the opportunity to feel alive again.”

“The team are great at making our meetings interesting and fun.”





Registered Tenant's Organisations

Tenants and Residents Associations (TARAs)

Tenants & Residents Associations are groups of people representing tenants and residents living in an area or street. Their aim is to put forward views and concerns about their housing, community, and local areas to the Council, so they can take part in the decision-making processes. We currently provide support to the five TARAs in North Ayrshire.

Registered Tenants' Organisations

Registered Tenants' Organisations (RTOs) are key to tenant involvement. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 (Registration of Tenant Organisations) Order 2002 sets out the criteria for registration as set by Scottish Ministers. As a landlord, we can provide information on the criteria for both registration and de-registration of groups, and how this is implemented in North Ayrshire.

All the TARAs we currently support are registered with us.

Our current Register of Tenant Organisation is as follows:

Registered Tenant Organisations



Broomlands & Bourtreehill Tenants & Residents Association, Irvine, **re-registered April 2022**



Castlepark & Eglinton Tenants & Residents Group, Irvine, **re-registered January 2023**



Hayocks Tenants & Residents Association, Stevenston, **re-registered March 2022**



Redburn Grove, Irvine, **registered March 2023**



Saltcoats High Flats Tenants & Residents Association, Saltcoats, **re-registered August 2022**

Monitoring and Review

Monitoring and review of this Strategy is as important as setting the strategic objectives. It ensures the service is following the direction established during the planning process. Our efforts do not stop with the publishing of this Strategy. We will look to continuously improve and find more imaginative and innovative ways of developing services.

We see this Strategy as being a living document, informing the work we plan to do over the next five years. It is flexible to allow us to adapt to any changes in policy, legislation, or external factors, such as technology changes.

Responsibility for the monitoring and review of this Strategy lies with the Housing Senior Manager (Housing Operations, Tenant and Youth Engagement), with the Action Plan being implemented by the Tenant Participation Team. We will review progress on the action plan quarterly, and ensure this information is communicated to our tenants and the North Ayrshire Network.

For more information on the resources and support available to deliver our Tenant Participation Strategy, see section 'Resources and Support'.

Useful Contacts

Tenant Participation Team
01294 324869 / 324871
tenantparticipation@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

Antisocial Behaviour Investigation Team
01294 314640
ASBIT@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

Benefits Service
01294 310000
benefits@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

Repairs Contact Line
01294 310000

MECOPP
Gypsy/Traveller Support Service –
MECOPP Carers Centre
mecopp.org.uk/gypsytraveller-carers-project

Tenants Information Service (TIS)
0141 248 1242
info@tis.org.uk

**Tenant Priorities Team,
Scottish Government**
0131 244 5568
tpadminsupport@gov.uk

**Tenant Participation Advisory Service
(TPAS) Scotland**
0141 552 3633
enquiries@tpasscotland.org.uk

Scottish Housing Regulator
0141 271 3810
shr@shr.gov.scot

Scottish Public Service Ombudsman
0800 377 7330

**Equal Opportunities Commission
(Scotland)**
0845 601 5901
scotland@equalityhumanrights.com



Local offices

Dalry / Beith Area Office
01294 836710
dalryhousing@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

Irvine Area Office
01294 310150
irvinehousing@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

Kilbirnie Area Office
01505 685177
kilbirniehousing@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

Kilwinning Area Office
01294 552261
kilwinninghousing@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

Largs Area Office
01475 687590
largshousing@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

Three Towns Area Office
01294 310005
3townshousing@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

Customer Participation Strategy Action Plan 2023-2028

Progress towards the objectives in this strategy will be reviewed regularly through this action plan and reported to tenants. The action plan will be reviewed quarterly to ensure work undertaken to achieve the objectives in this strategy continues to address changing national and local policies and priorities.



Priority 1 Engage and Inform



Our objectives

We aim to continually improve on the services we provide, changing and evolving to meet customers’ needs in the best way possible. To achieve this, we will ensure that:

Objective	What we will do	How we will measure it	Timescale	Lead responsibility
Customers are well informed and can communicate with us easily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide good quality information that meets the needs of our customers and is clear and easy to understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenants Chat to continue to be issued quarterly 	Annually	TP Manager
			2023/2024	TP Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase information online to customers and issue hard copies on request 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website and online information to be updated regularly and issue documents in hard copy on request 	2023/2024	TP Team

Objective	What we will do	How we will measure it	Timescale	Lead responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop our range of communication methods including digital participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenant and sheltered handbooks to be reviewed 	2023/2024	TP Manager
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce an Annual Performance Report in line with the SHR requirements and SSHC 	Annually	TP Manager
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interactive voting through social media to be developed for posts and Tenants Chat articles 	2023/2024	TP Team
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Facebook page developed to include interactive communication 	2023/2024	TP Team
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Twitter page developed to include interactive communication 	2023/2024	TP Team
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ‘YouTube’ video usage to be considered as an addition to Facebook and Twitter 	2023/2024	TP Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for customers to tell us types of information they are interested in receiving and preferred methods of contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out a communications survey to gauge tenants preferred method of contact and participation 	Annually	TP Team
			2023/2024	TP Manager

Objective	What we will do	How we will measure it	Timescale	Lead responsibility
Involvement is accessible and inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop new methods of engagement and support with seldom heard groupsEnsure involvement methods are promoted and barriers removed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Youth Connections, a forum to engage with young people, to be developed	2023/2024	TP Manager
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Participation forum for New Scots to be introduced	2023/2024	TP Manager / Refugee Support Manager
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Redburn Grove Tenants Group to be resourced and supported	2023/2024	TP Manager
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop approach to engagement with private rented sector tenantsDevelop a PRS Tenant Participation Panel	2023/2024	TP Manager
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop and support under-represented groups	2023/2024	TP Manager
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop our partnership approach with care experienced tenants	2023/2024	TP Manager
There are a range of opportunities to take part and get feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Align all our work with the Councils Digital Strategy and the Tenant Information Service (TIS) digital service pledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Align all our work with the Councils Digital Strategy and the Tenant Information Service (TIS) digital service pledge	2023/2024	TP Manager
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide varied involvement opportunities and support a blended approach to participation	2023/2024	TP Manager
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Tri-annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey to be undertaken	2024/2025	TP Manager



Priority 2 Empower and Influence



Our objectives

We aim to empower and help our communities to influence and shape our services. To achieve this, we will ensure that:

Objective	What we will do	How we will measure it	Timescale	Lead responsibility
Customer involvement (including online involvement) impacts service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop our approach to reporting feedback on customer viewsImprove information on customer feedback, and how this has impacted service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Tenant suggestions to be collated centrally and reported on quarterly to North Ayrshire Network	2023/2024	TP Manager
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">You said, we did to be re-introduced to Tenants Chat and social media	2023/2024	TP Manager
Customers are supported to build their capacity and confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide support to tenants to build their capacity and develop peer supportDevelop our training programme for tenants and other customersSupport our customers to develop and increase their digital skills and confidenceEncourage and support customers to make the most of digital opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Training and support to new people taking part to be provided	2023/2024	TP Team
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Peer support (buddy) programme to be developed	2023/2024	TP Team
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Recruitment programme for new participants to be undertaken	2023/2024	TP Team



Priority 3

Evolve and Innovate



Our objectives

We aim to continually improve on the services we provide, changing and evolving to meet customers’ needs in the best way possible. To achieve this, we will ensure that:

Objective	What we will do	How we will measure it	Timescale	Lead responsibility
A culture of participation is embedded in Housing Services	• Develop and embed the ‘blended’ approach to Tenant Participation	• Calendar of Housing Events collated centrally and disseminated to all staff	2023/2024	TP Team
	• Develop an in-house training programme on tenant participation	• Calendar of social media posts collated centrally and disseminated to all staff	2023/2024	TP Team
	• Review consultation undertaken across the service to identify good practice and areas for improvement	• Ongoing training via e-learning module to be offered to all Council staff	2024/2025	TP Team
		• TP Officers to attend all Estate Inspections	Annually	TP Team
		• ‘Good Neighbour’ programme to be introduced	Annually	TP Team

Objective	What we will do	How we will measure it	Timescale	Lead responsibility
The Service continually adapts to meet changing needs	• Keep abreast of any legislative or policy changes relating to tenant participation and customer involvement • Research good practice examples and consider their development in North Ayrshire • Ensure engagement and consultation with tenants and other customers meets the required needs	• Good practice in other areas to be a standing North Ayrshire Network agenda item	2023/2024	TP Team
		• Formal link between Housing and locality partnerships to be developed	2023/2024	TP Manager
		• Tenant participation involving other services within Place Directorate to be reviewed	2024/2025	TP Manager
		• TPAS re-accreditation to be sought	2025/2026	TP Manager
		• TIS re-accreditation to be sought	2025/2026	TP Manager





North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

