



INTEGRATED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN PROGRESS REPORT 2024/25



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Introduction

We are pleased to present the 2024-2025 Progress Report for our Children & Young People's Services Plan in the Scottish Borders. This document outlines the progress made in fulfilling the shared partnership priorities detailed in the [2023-2026 plan](#). It is the second annual report prepared by the Children and Young People's Partnership (CYPPP).

The CYPPP serves as a multi-agency strategic decision-making forum for services related to children and young people in the Scottish Borders. This work is conducted on behalf of the Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership (CPP). The CYPPP comprises partners from Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders, Police Scotland, the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA), and the Third Sector.

The Children & Young People's (Scotland) Act 2014 (Part 3 - Children's Services Planning) mandates the preparation and publication of an Annual Report. The report should outline progress made on:

- Children's services within a one-year period (April to March) provided in accordance with the Integrated Plan,
- The achievements of that provision,
- The objectives of Children's Services planning,
- Outcomes focused on the wellbeing of children and young people in the area.

The Partnership oversees the development, implementation, monitoring, and reporting of the Children's Services Plan. It takes into consideration the Promise, the national 'Getting it right for every child' (GIRFEC) wellbeing framework, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and corporate parenting responsibilities as key policy drivers in their work within the Scottish Borders. Additionally, the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework vision for children and young people is also considered: "we grow up loved, safe, and respected so that we realise our full potential."

The priorities of the 2023-26 Children and Young People's Services Plan are outlined within four identified networks. The networks represent the priority areas of the Promise, and the following pages of this Annual Report detail the progress made in each of these areas:

- * A good childhood
- * Whole family support
- * Planning and building capacity
- * Supporting the workforce

Appended to this report is an evaluation of work relating to the local delivery of Whole Family Wellbeing Funding (WFWF) and demonstrates accountability for use of local resources by Community Planning Partners.

The CYPPP acknowledges the efforts of all partners in working together to improve outcomes for children, young people, and their families in the Scottish Borders.

Keeping The Promise in Scottish Borders

In the Scottish Borders, our multi-agency strategic planning partnership work is underpinned by the Promise, Getting it Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) and children's rights. The Promise is considered the umbrella policy driver for multi-agency strategic planning for children's services in the Scottish Borders, as we see its relevance and application extending to *all* children and young people, not just those who are care experienced.

This commitment has been a fundamental shift which places the Promise at the heart of our plans, and this progress report focuses on strengthening the foundations to deliver the Promise in the Scottish Borders. A dedicated Promise Team has been created to support the work of the CYPPP and implementation of the Promise locally.

Some high-level examples of the Promise partnership work are outlined below.

- Progress in planning and implementing activities using the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund is ongoing and this is reported in Appendix G. The CYPPP has highlighted the need to improve and better coordinate the delivery of early intervention support services to children, young people and their families who are in need of additional support.
- The development of a range of Scottish Borders Champions Board projects, including: the Champions Board Participation Group, The New Roots Project, Champions Board Connect and the School Hubs. These projects focus on bringing care experienced young people together to build genuine and trusting relationships with the Promise team and their corporates to help to change and develop services and practice in relation to their care, and to the care of future young people.
- The development and launch of the Youth Engagement Listen to Learn engagement strategy, which emphasises the need to remove barriers to participation and ensure that professionals listen to and understand children and young people with quieter voices.
- The Bright Spots Programme, which aims to understand what is important to children in care and care leavers and identify areas of good practice and act on opportunities for improvement.
- Development of a multi-agency working group to respond to the requirements of the new UNCRC (Incorporation)(Scotland) Act 2024.
- A 2-year Brothers and Sisters Project delivered by Children 1st and funded by the Corra Foundation. This Project worked with 17 families including 62 children and 35 adults (parents, foster carers, and kinship carers) to offer therapeutic support and family group decision-making to consider sibling relationships as part of the support for the family. Children 1st also supported social work colleagues with sibling tracing – approaching siblings or family members as part of permanency or exploring Kinship options.
- The development of partnership approaches to working with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking young people living in the Scottish Borders, including the development of the New Roots project.

A plethora of work has been undertaken to keep the Promise in the Scottish Borders; however, promoting awareness of the Plan 24-30 and the work and role of the CYPPP to members of the workforce at all levels across the multi-agency partnership continues to be a priority and a focus for 2025-26.

Resourcing

The 2023-2026 Children's Services Plan committed to developing a resourcing strategy which takes into account the needs of children, young people, carers and families who require additional support and the right to access advocacy. This work is still developing and a new approach will be agreed in the Summer of 2025. This will ensure that priority areas based on national funding and assessed need are addressed.

In the meantime, throughout 2024/25, we have worked with statutory, independent and third sector provision, and appropriate commissioned services to deliver:

- Positive emotional & mental health wellbeing of children and young people
- Availability, access, and support for young carers
- Consistency of access to quality youth work services
- Supporting choices
- Equality & inclusion
- Positive life choices
- Availability and access of advocacy services
- Support to children and families who are affected by parental substance use

Examples of 2024/25 commissions and the work that they do is outlined below:

Organisation	Description	Example
Police Scotland	Provision of School Link Officers – these officers complement the school curriculum of personal and social development	Participation in P5 Countryside Day
TD1 Youth Hub	A young person-led service that respects, values and engages with young people to address their needs by offering support, guidance and opportunities to help improve their lives.	'Young People Broaden Perspectives through new thinking and experiences' – a residential trip to London for a group of 6 young men aged 15-17
Children First	Provision of an Abuse and Trauma Recovery Service	Life story work with a number of care experienced children and young people Support for young people who are victims of trafficking and/or are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
Community Children's Nursing (CCN)	A service for children and young people who have complex health needs to enable them to be cared for as close to home or at home if possible.	The CCN team supports children and their families in a homely setting with a variety of complex, life threatening and terminal care needs. This includes children with a tracheostomy, home ventilation with the supervision of a home care package, home oxygen, tube feeding and palliative care as well as other chronic health conditions.

Our priorities



A Good Childhood

An independent Advocacy Service

Work has continued to develop a Children and Young People's Independent Advocacy Service, and it is hoped that the service will be in place from Autumn 2025. The service procured will comply with the provisions of the UNCRC and promote these rights to ensure that children are actively included in decisions affecting their lives and that their voices are heard and respected.

School attendance

Data from 2023/24 (latest data for Scottish Borders Council)

- Attendance of primary school aged care experienced children increased by 1.7% (89.7%).
- Attendance of secondary school aged care experienced children decreased by 0.8% (83.3%).
- 7 out of 16 school leavers who have CE left with 5 qualifications (43%) – previous figure was 64.7%.
- 80% of care experienced school leavers in a positive post-school destination.

Develop multi-agency early and effective intervention approaches for children and young people in conflict with the law

- Referrals to Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) for youth offending reduced from 126 in 2023 to 99 in 2024.
- Diversions to Early and Effective Intervention (EEI) decreased from 337 to 255.
- Work is taking place with Children's Reporters and Police Scotland to establish a more effective process for referring those to SCRA involved in offending, reducing unnecessary referrals, system contact and minimising delays in responding to need.

Corporate Parenting

In the Scottish Borders, the Corporate Parenting agenda is managed operationally through this network. The primary area of recent activity has been the development of the Scottish Borders Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025-28. Recent Corporate Parenting Strategies have been formulaic documents written with only limited consultation with children and young people. The approach to the new Strategy is led by the participation of children and young people and will be based on a series of 'Promises' made by corporate parents in the Scottish Borders to children and young people. Work is ongoing with both the Scottish Borders Champions' Board and the Bright Spots Implementation Group to properly represent the views and direction of care experienced children and young people. It is hoped to have the Strategy concluded by summer 2025.

Wheatlands House Galashiels (Wheatlands)

The Loving Relationships Based Residential Care for Young People Report was completed during 2024. The report explains the evolution of Wheatlands, the reasons behind its relative stability and success, and details transferable learning for other residential and childcare settings. It is based on quantitative data relating to outcomes and direct testimony from residents, ex-residents, staff and other stakeholders.



Bright Spots

In early 2024, Scottish Borders Council participated in the Bright Spots Programme, which aims to understand what is important to children in care and care leavers and identify areas of good practice as well as opportunities for improvement. Two surveys were conducted:

1. Your Life, Your Care (YLYC) - Completed by 82 children and young people in care aged 4-17
2. Your Life Beyond Care (YLBC) - Completed by 21 care leavers aged 16-25

These surveys measure subjective wellbeing across key domains that children and young people have identified as important to them. A summary of the key strengths and areas for development highlighted by the survey results are shown in Appendix E.

Mental health

Ensure that Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) improvement plan reflects the needs of children and young people

CAMHS continues to enhance service accessibility, refine referral pathways, and strengthen inter-agency collaboration to ensure effective support for children and young people across NHS Borders. Key initiatives have been implemented to improve service delivery, capacity, and patient outcomes.

Key Achievements & Ongoing Initiatives

1. Health Improvement, Efficiency, Access and Treatment (HEAT) Standard Compliance & Service Capacity

- CAMHS successfully met the 90% HEAT Standard in February and March 2025, ensuring patients are seen within 18 weeks of referral. The HEAT Standard sets performance expectations for NHS Boards to ensure that resources are focused on priority areas.
- Weekly service provision includes 12 new patient appointments, alongside urgent/emergency slots.
- A structured approach is in place to prioritise Category 1 referrals, ensuring equitable access while managing the rising number of children and young people being referred for a neurodevelopmental assessment. A category 1 referral is for urgent situations requiring immediate attention. These typically involve children or young people experiencing significant suicidal ideation, suspected psychotic illness, suspected severe eating disorders, or being an immediate risk to themselves or others.

2. Refinement of School-Based Referrals

- Schools remain the primary source of neurodevelopmental referrals, providing higher-quality submissions following refinements to the referral process in Spring 2024.
- Ongoing efforts in 2025 aim to further improve referral quality and efficiency.

3. Inpatient Service Options Appraisal

- CAMHS is part of an East Region network evaluating options for an improved specialist inpatient service in Lothian, accessible to NHS Borders patients.
- Current pressure on adult acute inpatient services highlights the need for expanded specialist beds for young people.

4. Regional ID-CAMHS Pathway Development

- Collaboration with East of Scotland regional partners to develop an Intellectual Disabilities CAMHS pathway within the Whole System of care.
- This initiative will support children with moderate to profound intellectual disabilities and complex behavioural presentations.
- Key partners include specialist residential care providers, education professionals, healthcare teams, Social Work, and Third Sector organisations.
- The Hub and Spoke model aligns with Scottish Government policy (CAMHS & Neurodevelopmental Specifications).

5. Whole-System Approach Review

- A multi-agency review is underway to improve alignment between health, social care, and education services, ensuring more effective support for children and young people with neurodevelopmental needs.
- The focus is on targeted, specialist, and universal services, enhancing patient pathways.

6. Stakeholder Engagement & Multiagency Collaboration

- CAMHS hosts quarterly stakeholder meetings, fostering engagement from key partners, including BANG, Children 1st, Educational Psychology, School Nursing, and others.
- Strong stakeholder collaboration underpins the continuous improvement of service delivery.

Whole Family Support

Child Poverty Accelerator Fund (CPAF)

In partnership with the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CABx), Scottish Borders Council were successful in securing funding from the Scottish Government Child Poverty Accelerator Fund to provide budgeting advice across the Borders.

The project provides holistic support, including specific budgeting advice, through a variety of different channels such as face to face, online and telephone.

CAB Outreach and drop-in services are provided in Hawick, Eyemouth, Lilliesleaf, Langlee Early Years Centre, Newtown St Boswells, Selkirk, Lauder, Philiphaugh, Ettrickbridge Walkerburn and West Linton. Effective partnership working has resulted in efficient referral processes and a smoother client journey, with advice being targeted to those most in need.

Since the project started in January 2025, 171 client advice contacts have been made resulting in client financial gains of over £50k in the first quarter. Of these referrals, approximately 30% were housing association tenants, 18% had children in their household, 50% had health conditions or a disability, and 12% had caring responsibilities.

Whole Family Wellbeing Fund

2024-25 saw considerable development and consolidation of services funded through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund. The Whole Family Support Service became operational in December 2024, offering early intervention services to families and children in need of support across the Scottish Borders. Development of the service has increased the capacity of early intervention services significantly and, although still relatively recently operational, shows positive outcomes.

In addition to funding the Whole Family Support Service, the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund has also been used to fund and contribute to a number of other services. The monies funded the Children1st Family Group Decision Making Service (FGDM), a strengths-based approach that seeks to involve children in a way that is appropriate to them but that seeks to ensure the child's views are listened to and inform the plan's made by families. Over 2024-25, the service worked with 81 families and provided direct support to 36 in creating family support plans. Of the challenges and issues presented to the service over this period, the 5 most prevalent were:

1. Family relationships
2. Domestic abuse and coercion
3. Parental health and wellbeing
4. Poverty / money worries
5. Child emotional wellbeing

Additionally, the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund supports the Promise team which works to raise awareness and implement change to deliver The Promise across Children's Services in the Scottish Borders. The team consists of a Lead Officer, Participation and Engagement Officer, Quality and Improvement Officer, Project Worker and an administrative assistant post. The team has been involved in much of the work reported in this update report and has worked across the multi-agency partnership to facilitate and lead change. Areas of particular note are development of the Independent Advocacy Service, UNCRC implementation and monitoring, participation and engagement work with care experienced children and young people and unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people, and the development of trauma informed practice approaches across the partnership.

A Child's Journey

A Child's Journey is a Child Poverty Group project with the aim of developing an intensive understanding of the milestones and transitions of a child's life. Services and interventions at the various stages of a child's life from pre-birth to 18+ have been captured and will be brought to life through a series of infographics.



Once the project is complete, the information will be used by practitioners delivering children's services as well as being published and made available as a resource for families.

Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC)

GIRFEC has been an area of focus for this network. A short life working group was created with the aim of updating and adapting the Child's Planning Manual for the Scottish Borders.

This has led to the development of a new and more accessible website presence, highlighting the importance of GIRFEC for practitioners and in a format that is easily understood and accessible for everyone in our community.

Planned summer roadshows are also in development to take GIRFEC and the Child Planning Manual into our schools and communities, allowing interaction and conversation on the topics that are covered within it.

An important element of the further development and understanding of GIRFEC in the Scottish Borders is the involvement of young people in its design.

A multi-agency audit is currently (May 2025) being undertaken on practitioners' awareness and use of the Keeping Children Safe and Well Tool, which is a key component of the Child Planning Manual. This audit will help us to understand how practitioners across children and families' services use the Keeping Children Safe and Well Tool to aid their decision making.

Planning and Building Capacity

Develop and launch a multi-agency youth participation and engagement strategy which has been co-produced with young people

The YELL Strategy has been co-produced with young people and was launched in September 2024. This achievement is set out in a case study at Appendix B.

Develop a multi-agency performance/outcomes framework for children and young people

A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) has been developed by colleagues from NHS Borders with support from all partners. The main themes for focus and improvement include:

- 1) A focus on child poverty, with particular emphasis on income maximisation and support for priority families
- 2) Consistent delivery of early years parental training programmes across all areas
- 3) Promoting mental health resources and anti-bullying policies
- 4) Reducing waiting times for CAMHS
- 5) Reducing school exclusion rates and improving attendance, especially in deprived areas.
- 6) Developing sustainable and flexible family support services, available beyond traditional 9-5 service hours
- 7) Expanding local care resources and kinship support to reduce reliance on external placements

The JSNA is being used to develop a multi-agency performance/outcomes framework for children and young people, to include Key Performance Indicators for the CYPPP to help monitor how effectively we are improving outcomes for children, young people and families, as well as a programme of audit and self-evaluation.

Reframing our Language

In February 2023 we published our Scottish Borders 'Reframing Our Language' guide.

Since the Promise was published, Champions Boards around Scotland, colleagues in the Children's Reviewing Team at Edinburgh City Council and Includem have been capturing the voice of children and young people around language that they would like to stop, as well as the language they would like this replaced with. Using North Lanarkshire's Language guide, the Includem 'Getting Our Language Right' guide, Edinburgh City Council's 'Reframing Our Language' list and discussions with Scottish Borders Council's Service Development Group for foster carers, a suggested list of terms was pulled together. Members of the workforce across the Borders are encouraged to consider the guidance and the words and phrases in the list.

Each and Every Child gave a presentation to the corporate parenting group in January 2022 and to the wider workforce in Summer 2023 and Care Experienced Week 2024. The Each and Every Child initiative aims to support people at all levels in the community to shift how they communicate when speaking about care experience, and to change how they think, feel and act. The session provided an introduction to framing and how it can improve the lives of people with lived experience of care now and in the future. It outlines the framing recommendations from the Each and Every Child toolkit with examples of how they can be used in practice.

Who Cares? Scotland were early adopters of the Each and Every Child Framing Recommendations. In 2022-23, a group of Corporate Parents in the Scottish Borders worked on a collaborative project with Who Cares? Scotland to create multi-agency online live and e-learning corporate parenting training. The content provided by Who Cares? Scotland speaks to the national picture in respect of The Promise, UNCRC and Corporate Parenting, whilst also tailoring this in a way which captures the unique story of Corporate Parenting in the Borders. The language in the training materials carefully incorporates the Each and Every Child framing recommendations. The e-learning training is due to be updated in 2025/26.

Responding to the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024

A multi-agency working group (a subgroup of this network) has met over the last 12 months to prepare for, and respond to, the requirements of the new UNCRC (Incorporation)(Scotland) Act 2024. This group involves representatives from NHS Borders, Scottish Borders Council and local third sector organisations.

An initial self-assessment exercise helped to identify the good practice already happening, and key areas that need developed. A draft multi-agency UNCRC Incorporation action plan was reviewed and signed off by the Planning and Building Capacity Network in August 2024.

To support delivery of children's right in the Scottish Borders, key areas of focus include:

- making sure the voice and lived experience of children and young people informs planning and delivery of public services and how services help realise children's rights.
- developing Impact assessments so that children's rights are considered when a new strategy, policy is being developed, or when there is a change in public services planned,
- publishing a Children's Rights Report every 3 years to communicate how services and organisations in Scottish Borders are complying with the new act.
- ensuring that all children and young people know about their rights,
- developing a child-friendly complaints procedure
- commissioning an independent advocacy service for children and young people in the Scottish Borders.
- raising awareness of the new legislation and requirements under the new Act.

Borders Youth Local Action Group (YLAG)

The Borders Youth Local Action Group (YLAG), which originally began in 2021, was relaunched in January 2025. This relaunch has been made possible with support from Youth Borders, the Local Action Group, and the Economic Development Fund. Since then, we've successfully recruited eight young people from across the Borders who now attend regular bi-weekly sessions at the Focus Centre in Galashiels. Each session focuses on a different theme or area of development.

The YLAG is designed to be youth-led, giving young people a platform to have their voices heard. Its initial goal was to design, promote, and make decisions about a YLAG Action Fund—set for its next release in October 2025. This fund will support both young individuals with training and enterprise needs, as well as youth organizations working on various projects. However, with input from its members, the group's activities have since grown.

They've participated in a variety of workshops covering topics like budgeting and finance, social media, and leadership. This work has already led to the creation of a new YLAG social media presence, a refreshed logo, and involvement in the Youth Borders Awards, where members will give a speech about YLAG and present the Organization of the Year award.

YLAG members have also taken on a significant role in shaping part of the Levelling Up Fund allocated to Scottish Borders Council. They are the final decision-makers for the £625,000 Youth Facilities Fund, having developed their own funding criteria in alignment with the council's priorities. They'll participate in a dedicated decision weekend to determine which youth organisations receive funding.

In addition, YLAG has become actively involved in the wider Rural Youth Action Network (RYAN), which connects youth-led groups across Scotland. In February, members attended the first RYAN residential in Inverness, where they engaged in issue-based discussions and spoke with MSPs. Since then, some members have joined action and steering groups to help plan future residencies and contribute to the upcoming European Parliament activities.

Supporting the Workforce

The key focus of this network is to produce a Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy and Plan

The Promise, UNCRC and GIRFEC are the key policy drivers, the 'golden threads' to how the workforce plan will be shaped.

The Network is working to deliver five broad outcomes and is making progress as follows:

1. Defining the children and young people's workforce and creating a shared vision and values
 - Creation of a children and young people's workforce mapping document using the Promise principles of relationships around the child
 - Development of a vision statement for the workforce
 - Mapping out who the workforce includes
2. Learning and development
 - Creation of a multi-agency workforce learning and development mapping tool to establish what training is currently available
 - Work in partnership with colleagues in Public Protection to map out existing workforce frameworks
 - Plans to share the learning and development expectations for the children and young people's workforce with senior leaders
 - Development of UNCRC training for the multi-agency workforce
3. Participation and engagement
 - There is a commitment from the network to include the voice of young people
 - The Network will work with young people around what is important to them in relation to the people that work with them
4. Trauma informed practice
 - The Integrated Psychological Trauma Steering Group works with this network
 - Significant progress has been made to roll out multi-agency training
 - A self-assessment Roadmap toolkit has been developed for organisations to use to examine their internal culture and approaches to trauma informed practice
 - Monthly trauma-skilled Transforming connections training will continue to be rolled out to the multi-agency workforce
5. Supporting young people as part of the workforce
 - Connections are being made with the Local Employability Partnership (LEP) and YPAC (Scottish Borders Young Person & Adult's Co-ordination Strategy Group) to support their work with young people

Conclusion

The Children and Young People's Planning Partnership is proud of the work done in 2024/2025 under the Children and Young People's Services Plan for 2023-2026.

Over the last year, the four networks have continued to develop and are now well established groups focused on meeting their priorities as outlined above.

The CYPPP will continue to work in partnership to deliver the Children's Services Plan 2023-26, and the focus for year three will be to strengthen further the work that has been achieved to date. We look forward to working with partners to continue to deliver the priorities contained in the Plan.

The CYPPP will also start work to prepare a new Children's Services Plan for 2026-29 and this plan will build on the strong foundations already created in its predecessor.

The partnership will continue to work towards enhancing the lives of our children, young people and their families and contribute to the priorities and outcomes of the CPP.

We will ensure that listening to and making sense of what is heard is embedded into all practices and processes that engage with children and families. We will strive to avoid duplication and continue to work together to make a difference to the lives of children, young people, and their families in the Scottish Borders.

Appendix A Case Study: The New Roots Group

This case study outlines the development of the New Roots group for unaccompanied asylum-seeking (UAS) young people within the Scottish Borders. This Scottish Borders Champions Board project seeks to provide UAS young people with the support to build new links within the community and a platform to ensure that their voices are heard in matters that affect them.

Currently, the Scottish Borders Transitions team support 29 UAS young people (January 2025).

The local Promise Team recognises the need to ensure UAS young people living in the Scottish Borders can access the same participation opportunities as other care experienced young people (linking to Article 12 of the UNCRC). However, many of the needs of UAS young people differ from the needs of other care experienced young people in the Scottish Borders. Therefore, New Roots - a bespoke group for UAS young people, was established in 2023.

The New Roots Group aims to:

- Offer a safe space for peer support and a welcome to new arrivals to the Scottish Borders.
- Provide a platform for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people living in the Scottish Borders to have a voice and influence change.
- Support the creation of new links within the community, ensuring young people know who their corporate parents are and the range of support services and opportunities available to them in Scottish Borders.
- Learn and share information about other cultures (including the cultures of the young people and Scottish culture).

The New Roots Group comprises young people from different countries, who speak a range of languages. The staff working with the group have had to develop an awareness of different cultures and an understanding of working with individuals who are learning English as an additional language. Staff work closely with the UAS Children Support Worker, who supports communication with the young people and helps new arrivals to come along and meet the group initially.

During school term times, the group meets for approximately 1 ½ hours every fortnight. During these sessions, the young people take part in a range of activities based on their interests, such as cooking meals together, learning about each other's cultures and engaging in participation projects.

Many young people who are seeking asylum have experienced significant trauma pre-migration, on their journeys or upon their arrival in the UK. The impact of this trauma is unique to each individual, and it is important that the New Roots team take a trauma-informed approach to supporting this group of young people. The team follow the key principles of trauma-informed practice: safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration and empowerment.

Participation

Staff have prioritised building relationships to cultivate a safe space, where the young people feel comfortable sharing their views and working together to influence change for UAS young people in the Scottish Borders. The staff team plan and facilitate participation activities carefully to ensure that the individual needs of each unique young person are met.

Participation activities are always carefully tailored to ensure all participants feel supported, included and heard. This involves using different communication methods, such as visuals and talking mats, interpreter services and peer support to ensure that everyone can access the information and contribute fully.

Summer Programme

The team worked with the young people and in partnership with organisations across the Borders to plan and facilitate a programme of activities during the summer holidays in 2024. The young people were supported and encouraged to participate fully in each stage, including planning, engaging in activities, providing feedback on the programme and forming next steps for the group. This process involved:

- Collaborative planning sessions with the young people, allowing them to decide what they would like their summer to look like.
- A programme of activities that responded to the interests of the young people, such as a trip to St Abbs to explore their interest in nature.
- Gathering feedback from staff and young people on their experience of the programme.
- Working with the young people to form next steps for the group, based on feedback.
- A scrapbook project, where the young people received their own scrapbooks and filled these with photographs of their Scottish summer memories.
- Use of various supports, such as visuals, written translations and interpreters to ensure that all young people could fully participate and have their voices heard at each stage.

What the young people think about New Roots

Recently, we engaged in an activity with the young people where they told us how they think New Roots links to their rights. They told us:

- *'I like coming to New Roots to learn more information (Article 17), and eating and cooking together with my friends and everyone here (Article 24)'*
- *'I have made new friends (Article 15), and football (Article 31)– it's exciting'*
- *'I like learning and speaking many languages (Article 30) and try a lot of food (Article 24), meet new friends (Article 15) and playing (Article 31)'*

The group continues to meet every fortnight. As trusting relationships continue to strengthen between the young people and staff members, staff are planning to support the group to engage in further participation projects. This includes developing a welcome pack for new arrivals into the Borders and a guide for working with UAS young people, both based on what the young people think is most important.

Recently, the New Roots group has been successful in achieving funding with St. Abb's Head through the National Trust Audience Development Fund, which will support the group to engage in a programme of activities from May to December 2025 that focus on developing a range of outdoor skills (such as habitat management, seal and seabird monitoring, etc.) that align to the young people's interests and preferences. The young people previously visited St. Abb's Head and enjoyed the wildlife, the landscape, and have been eager to visit again. During the evaluation of our summer programme, some young people noted that this

coastal trip was their favourite activity, and 100% of participants stated that 'going to different places' is within their top 3 priorities for New Roots. During the programme, written resources will be provided in each of the young people's first languages to support their understanding and their skill development. The group are looking forward to working with the team at St. Abb's Head over the coming months.



Appendix B Case Study: Development of Scottish Borders Youth Participation and Engagement Strategy 2024

This case study outlines the development of a youth engagement strategy within the Scottish Borders, aligned with the UNCRC article 12 (right to be heard). The initiative sought to embed a child-rights approach to participation and engagement, ensuring young people's voices influence decision-making in a meaningful and sustainable way.



Recognising the importance of upholding Article 12 of the UNCRC, and the overarching principle of participation, a small group of officers from NHS Borders, Education, Community Learning and Development and The Promise Team embarked on developing a comprehensive youth engagement strategy. The initiative was designed to overcome barriers posed by rurality, transport challenges, and diverse needs by establishing two groups—an East and West Group. These groups comprised 12 young people aged 11 to 23, including those with care experience, additional needs/disabilities, school attendees, young people who experience emotional barriers to attending school, and home-schooled individuals.

The strategy was developed using a phased approach structured around five key engagement steps: Inform, Consult, Discuss, Partner, and Empower. Youth participation workers from multi-agency teams facilitated the process, ensuring an inclusive and supportive environment.

Key topics covered included:

- The UNCRC and its incorporation into Scottish law
- The Promise and its impact
- Defining meaningful participation and engagement
- Identifying challenges and barriers, along with strategies to overcome them
- Consultation and discussion, including gathering and integrating feedback

Over a period of nine months, the groups bonded, developed skills, completed team building tasks and co-designed an approach to gathering young people's views.




A critical focus was placed on reaching quieter voices, including young people with additional support needs, Gypsy/Traveller communities, LGBTQ+ youth, and home-schooled individuals.

Consultation Process and Findings

The youth groups collaboratively designed and implemented a digital consultation, reaching over 1,000 young people—the largest response to any consultation with young people in the authority to date. *Key steps included:*

- Identifying preferred methods of consultation and participation
- Creating an action plan to engage with key groups and individuals
- Developing event ideas and facilitation tips
- Establishing checklists linking engagement to the UNCRC and skills development
- Designing a logo and branding the project under the name **YELL (Youth Engagement Listen to Learn)**
- Creating videos to reinforce the importance of the UNCRC and emphasising the message that young people deserve to be involved in the decisions that will affect them, in their words

“It’s important to keep children and young people at the heart of all decision making as it affects the world we are going to inherit.”

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| ➤ Consultation Video | - | YELL Consultation |
| ➤ Logo | |  |
| ➤ Your Rights Promotional Video | - | You Have Rights |

Strategy Development and Launch

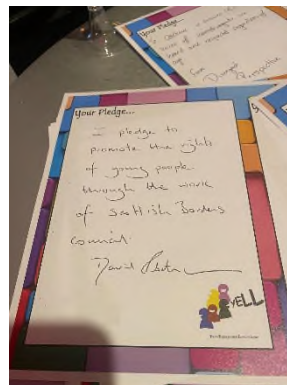
Findings from the consultation informed the creation of a youth engagement strategy detailing the, **what, when, where, and how** of engaging young people in the authority. The strategy was underpinned by the Lundy Model of Participation and serves as a practical guide for decision-makers and services on embedding youth participation effectively.

The strategy was formally launched at an event on **30th September 2024**, with attendance from:



- The YELL team and groups
- Multi-agency directors
- Councillors and elected members
- Senior leadership teams and pupils from all nine high schools
- Third sector partners

At the launch, stakeholders were encouraged to pledge their support to ensure Article 12 was not merely acknowledged but actively embedded in practice. The importance of continuous feedback and involving young people from the outset of projects was emphasised.



Ambition for the Strategy

Our ambition for the YELL Strategy is to ensure that youth participation and engagement in our local authority is not just a policy but a lived reality. We are committed to embedding young people's voices into decision-making at every level, ensuring their insights shape services, policies, and initiatives that affect them. This strategy is about action, not just words—creating meaningful opportunities for young people to lead, influence, and be heard, so their rights and lived experiences drive real change.

Next Steps

Building on the success of the youth engagement strategy, the initiative is now being further developed through:

- A **child-friendly version** for wider accessibility
- A **touring programme** to promote the strategy across services and communities
- A **training programme** around UNCRC and article 12, based on the Scottish Youth Parliament 'The right way' programme.
- A **co-created engagement framework for children aged 0-12**, ensuring a comprehensive approach to participation across all age groups

This case study highlights the power of youth-led participation in shaping an inclusive and effective engagement strategy. By prioritising meaningful participation, the local authority has taken significant strides in ensuring young people's voices influence decisions, reinforcing a commitment to children's rights as a lived experience rather than a tokenistic gesture.

Appendix C Case Study: The Scottish Borders Champions Board School Hubs for Care Experienced Young People

This case study outlines the development of the Champs School Hubs for care experienced young people within the Scottish Borders. The school hubs is a Scottish Borders Champions Board project that aims to provide a platform for care experienced young people to come together and have their voices heard. The Board creates a safe space for young people to share their views, influence change within the care system and help make sure Corporate Parents are getting it right.

Following feedback from young people who were attending a Champions Board group in Galashiels in 2021 it was identified that some young people were having to travel up to 2 hours to access the Champions Board. We explored options to reduce travel time and combat barriers to participation within the Borders and decided to develop Champions Board Hubs within schools – we would go to the young people rather than them having to come to us.

The Group aims to:

- Minimise the number of young people having to travel to access the Champions Board.
- Create a safe space within schools for care experienced young people.
- Offer a mixture of social activities, peer support and participation opportunities.
- Establish positive relationships and promote the work of The Scottish Borders Champions Board.

As of May 2025, three Champs School Hubs have been established, Jedburgh Grammar Campus, Berwickshire High School and Peebles High School. We run monthly sessions in each school where we focus on different topics and projects that are important to the young people.

Each session is structured around our wider Champions Board approach. This means that attendance at all our Hubs is voluntary and young people can opt not to join us at any point. We focus on relationship-based practice and ensure the young people feel comfortable before asking them to share any of their views, which is also optional.

We start every session with a check in to see how the young people are feeling and what has been happening since last time we met. We offer a range of snacks for young people to help themselves and often find this helps them feel more at ease.

Following a quick check in we get stuck into whatever project we are currently working on. Recently some projects have been carried out over several sessions. This has been good as we have seen young people getting more invested in the work we are doing. On completion of that sessions tasks, we move on to social activities, such as games and crafts.

Project Example

The most recent project we have been working on at all three Hubs has been our 'Sharing information with Care Experienced Young People' Project that has involved the development of a proposal for a Champions Board Website. The Champs Hub members in each school have been involved in all aspects of the development from the original concept, gathering important information that they would like to see featured on the website, to the overall design. After each session the Promise Team collate all the young people's views to identify any key reoccurring themes from each school and then feedback the findings at the next session.

Feedback

We asked staff from each school who support us to deliver the hubs if they felt like the young people had developed any skills as a result of coming along to the hubs and here is what they said:

Confidence	Working as a team	Meeting new people
Wellbeing	Communication	Responsibility
Asking for help	Leadership	Problem solving
Decision Making	Listening Skills	

When asked, all staff said they were **extremely likely** to recommend a Champs School Hub to other Schools.

We asked young people to complete this sentence, 'The Champs Hubs...' Here what some of them said:

- *"The Champs Hub helped me with communicating with others"*
- *"The Champs Hub helped me make friends"*
- *"The Champs Hub helped me meet new people"*
- *"The Champs Hub has helped me find more people with similar experiences/life to me"*
- *"The Champs Hub is amazing"*
- *"The Champs Hub was interesting and has taught me life skills"*

Next steps

The Hubs will continue to meet monthly and work on projects shaped by the young people. Over the summer holidays, the Promise Team will begin to identify how we can expand the Hubs into additional schools to further provide opportunities for more care experienced young people to get involved in the Scottish Borders Champions Board.

This will involve developing a primary school approach and reviewing our work in Berwickshire, Peebles and Jedburgh.

We will continue to get feedback from young people accessing the Hubs to ensure we are meeting the needs of individuals as well as the group as a whole. We will explore how we work with our partners in education as well as other corporate parents to ensure we are providing the best opportunities for our care experienced young people in the Borders.

Appendix D Case Study: Care Experienced Week 2024

Care Experienced Week is a week to celebrate the Care Experienced community and takes place at the end of October every year. In October 2024 we ran a programme of events for children, young people, families and members of the workforce.

Our themes for Care Experienced Week 2024 in the Borders were:

- Awareness- to raise awareness of care experience and reduce stigma around what it is to be care experienced
- Belonging- to promote a sense of belonging and inclusion within the care community.
- Celebration- to celebrate every child, young person and adult with experience of care and their supporters by coming together through a range of fun and informative sessions.

Some of the week's highlights included drop-in sessions for members of the workforce to find out about the local and national work being undertaken to #KeepThePromise, lego and pizza nights, Corporate Parenting training for leaders delivered by Who Cares? Scotland, messy play sessions and an Introduction to Framing and Framing Care Experience session delivered by Each and Every Child.

The week concluded with a Banner Making Party and a trip to the Love Rally in Glasgow. The Love Rally is a powerful demonstration through the streets of Central Glasgow to raise awareness of the care-experienced community and advocate for their rights and wellbeing. We took a coach of children, young people and their supporters to the rally.

This year a young person from the Scottish Borders, Robert Punton, was one of the key-note speakers at the Love Rally, articulately and passionately sharing his story and experiences and highlighting the importance of love, support and belonging in the lives of care-experienced individuals.

Excerpt from Robert's speech:

'I have been to the last two Love Rallies to march and listen to some amazing Care Experienced people speak. They are the people who have inspired me to stand up here and speak to you all. Listening to other Care Experienced people talk has helped me feel proud of my care identity and given me the courage to speak openly about my life. If I can help any of you feel like that, that would be amazing!'

Over the last two years I have been involved with the Edinburgh and Scottish Borders Champions Boards. Both times I have got involved with my local Champions Board because I wanted to meet other young people who have experienced being in care and Champs has provided a safe place for us to chat and ask questions or share concerns about our care experience. I have made so many new friends and I think it's so important that Care Experienced people have spaces like this to talk about things that matter most to us...

I think it's so important that all children and young people understand their rights. We all have the right to be loved and to feel like we belong but unfortunately being Care Experienced means we often don't feel these things. That is why days like today are important, because here, all together, is a space we do belong in and together we will keep demanding better for Care Experienced people. Thank you for all being here today!'

- When asked '**How much did you enjoy The Love Rally**' 91% of attendees from Borders who completed feedback said 5 out of 5, with 9% scoring 4 out of 5.
- When asked '**Would you come again?**' 91% of attendees from Borders who completed feedback 91% said Yes, with 9% saying Maybe.



Appendix E Bright Spots

The survey results indicate several areas of strength in the Scottish Borders' care system, including:

- High levels of trust in social workers and carers
- Good access to nature and outdoor activities
- Strong participation in education, employment and training for care leavers

However, the results also highlight some challenges, particularly around:

- Feelings of safety and belonging for some children and care leavers
- Financial difficulties for care leavers
- Mental health and wellbeing, especially for care leavers

Addressing these areas of concern while building on existing strengths has the potential to significantly improve outcomes and experiences for children in care and care leavers in the Scottish Borders. Regular monitoring and follow-up surveys will be crucial to track progress and ensure continuous improvement in these key areas.

Key Strengths

Your Life, Your Care (Ages 4-17)

1. **Trusting relationships with carers and social workers**

- 92% of 4-7 year olds and 93% of 8-11 year olds trusted the adults they lived with
- 100% of 8-11 year olds knew who their social worker was
- 90% of 11-17 year olds found it easy to get in touch with their social worker

2. **Access to nature and outdoor activities**

- 89% of 8-17 year olds had spent time outdoors in nature more than once in the last week, higher than the general Scottish population (67%)
- All 4-7 year olds felt they got to spend time on their own hobbies

3. **Strong relationships with birth families**

- 54% of 11-17 year olds felt the amount of time spent with their mother was "just right", significantly higher than the comparison group

4. **Pet ownership**

- 69% of 8-17 year olds lived in a household with a pet, higher than the general population (53%)

Your Life Beyond Care (Ages 16-25)

1. **Education, employment and training**

- 86% of care leavers were in education, employment or training, similar to the general population figure of 87%

2. **Throughcare and aftercare support**

- 62% had only one worker in the past year, better than both the in-care group (57%) and comparison group (56%)
- 100% found it easy to contact their worker
- 94% trusted their throughcare/aftercare worker

3. **Involvement in pathway planning**

- 86% felt involved in their pathway planning

4. Access to technology

- 100% of care leavers had a smartphone, higher than the general population of 16-34 year olds in Scotland (98%)

Areas for Development

Your Life, Your Care (Ages 4-17)

1. Understanding reasons for being in care

- 66% of 4-7 year olds and over half of 8-11 year olds did not feel an adult had explained why they were in care or wanted to know more

2. Feeling safe

- 18% of 4-7 year olds did not "always" feel safe where they lived, significantly higher than the comparison group (3%)

3. Bullying concerns

- 44% of 8-11 year olds and 36% of 11-17 year olds were afraid to go to school because of bullying, higher than comparison groups

4. School experiences

- 65% of 11-17 year olds liked school "a lot" or "a bit", significantly lower than the comparison group (78%)

5. Stigma of being in care

- 25% of 11-17 year olds felt adults did things that made them feel embarrassed about being in care, significantly higher than the comparison group (12%)

Your Life Beyond Care (Ages 16-25)

1. Financial difficulties

- 43% found it "quite" or "very" difficult to cope financially, significantly higher than both the comparison group (20%) and general population (9%)

2. Feeling safe

- 34% only sometimes, hardly ever, or never felt safe in their homes
- 53% only sometimes, hardly ever, or never felt safe in their neighbourhoods

3. Mental health and wellbeing

- 48% reported high anxiety, compared to 22% in the general population
- 24% reported low happiness, compared to 8% in the general population
- 19% expressed low life satisfaction, compared to 3% in the general population

4. Trusted relationships

- 33% did not have a trusted person in their lives, significantly higher than the comparison group (14%)

5. Body image

- 52% had low happiness with their appearance, significantly higher than the comparison group (28%)

The report provides valuable insights into the experiences and wellbeing of children in care and care leavers in the Scottish Borders. To ensure these findings lead to meaningful improvements, the following steps will be taken:

1. Dissemination of Findings

- The report will be shared with key stakeholders, including:
 - Children and young people in care
 - Care leavers
 - Social work teams
 - Foster carers and residential care staff
 - Education professionals
 - Health services
 - Elected members
 - Third sector partners
- Age-appropriate versions of the report will be created to ensure children and young people can engage with the findings.

2. Collaborative Action Planning

- A series of engagement sessions are being with stakeholders, including children and young people, to present and discuss the high-level findings.
- An engagement session will be held for Practitioners in Autumn 2025. This will focus on detailed analysis of the survey findings and developing concrete actions to address areas for improvement while building on existing strengths.
- A comprehensive action plan will be drawn up, and the findings are also being used to help develop the Scottish Borders Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025-28.

3. Implementation and Monitoring

- The action plan will be integrated into the broader CYPPP and A Good Childhood Network.
- Regular progress reviews will be scheduled, involving both professionals and young people.
- Key performance indicators may be established to track improvements in identified areas.

4. Ongoing Engagement

- Mechanisms will be put in place to ensure continuous feedback from care experienced young people. Young people are already involved in shaping priorities from the findings.

Appendix F Case Study: The Whole Family Support Service

We helped a mother by talking through and giving advice on her daughter's behaviours at home. This reinforced her belief that her concerns about her daughter were valid. Her daughter was referred to Stable Life to help regulate her emotions and we supported the mother with her decision to move her daughter to a different school.

1:1 support was also provided by Resolution Mediation Scotland, to the mother, to help her mental health and to enhance her resilience. They provide person-centred support focusing on trauma and the impacts of this on an individual's daily life. They aim to provide support when someone feels stuck in difficult circumstances and is struggling to make plans for the future.

The mother was also referred to Children 1st to help them identify their strengths and where they feel they are doing well, to understand what they are struggling with and where they feel they need support. An action plan was then agreed with the family. In addition, it was identified that the family house is overcrowded and the service is working closely with their housing association to help support the family move to a different property.

Through regular meetings with the mother, the service has watched her grow in confidence, especially regarding her strengthening resilience. She attended the Drive to Success classes and passed her theory test and is due to sit her driving test soon. These were both funded through IFSS and PES funding applications to the Local Employability Partnership (LEP).

Appendix G - Glossary

BANG	Borders Additional Needs Group
CABX	Citizens Advice Bureaux
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CCN	Community Children's Nurse
CE	Care Experienced
CPP	Community Planning Partnership
CYPPP	Children & Young People's Planning Partnership
EEI	Early and Effective Intervention
FGDM	Family Group Decision Making
GIRFEC	Getting it right for every child
HEAT	Health improvement, efficiency, access and treatment
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
LEP	Local Employability Partnership
RYAN	Rural Youth Action Network
SCRA	Scottish Children's Reporter Administration
UASC	Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the rights of the child
WFWF	Whole Family Wellbeing Fund
YELL	Youth Engagement, Listen to Learn
YLAG	Youth Local Action Group
YLBC	Your Life Beyond Care
YLYC	Your Life, Your Care
YPAC	Young Person & Adult's Co-ordination Strategy Group