

# NHS Shetland

<b>Meeting:</b>	Shetland NHS Board
<b>Meeting date:</b>	16 December 2025
<b>Agenda reference:</b>	Board Paper 2025/26/49
<b>Title:</b>	Shetland Integrated Children's Services Plan: 2024-25
<b>Responsible Executive/Non-Executive:</b>	Prof Kathleen Carolan, Director of Nursing & Acute and Specialist Services (Outgoing Chair of Partnership) & Dr Susan Laidlaw, Director of Public Health (New Chair of Partnership)
<b>Report Author:</b>	Lucy Flaws, Head of Planning, NHS Shetland

## 1 Purpose

### **This is presented to the Board for:**

- Approval

### **This report relates to:**

- Government policy/directive
- Legal requirement
- Local policy
- Strategic Delivery Plan

### **This aligns to the following NHSScotland quality ambitions:**

- The Shetland's Integrated Children's Services Plan is most closely aligned to our corporate objectives to provide excellent services, and to support the building blocks of health.

## 2 Report summary

### 2.1 Situation

This is the eighth Annual Report on the Children's Services Partnership Plan (the Plan) and is presented to fulfil the requirements of Section 13 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The purpose of the Annual Report is to provide an overview of activity and performance for the year to demonstrate how Shetland Children's Services Partnership (formerly the Integrated Children and Young People's Strategic Planning Group) has, collectively, worked to improve outcomes for children and young people and to target resources effectively whilst doing so.

The reporting period for this report runs from April 2024 to March 2025, and this is the second report against the 2023-26 Plan. The 2023-26 Plan was developed throughout 2023-24 and approved in November (SIC) and December (NHS) 2023.

### 2.2 Background

The Annual Report sets out some of the progress towards the Plan's longer term ambition to improve children and young people's life chances by achieving the following outcomes, the Annual Report is structured around these:

1. All our children have the best start in life in a nurturing, safe and stable home environment
2. We improve attainment and achievement for all children and young people
3. We reduce the impact of poverty on children and families
4. Children and young people's mental health and wellbeing is improved
5. We Keep the Promise for our Care Experienced children and young people (Corporate Parenting)
6. We place the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of our work
7. Our most vulnerable children and young people are protected
8. Our workforce are nurtured and have opportunities to develop

Services provided to children and young people are many and varied, these change and adapt to ensure best fit, and best use of resources. The services cover universal, targeted and specialist services, delivered by statutory and voluntary sector providers. The annual report does not seek to describe all services to children and young people but instead focuses on those issues requiring a collective response, where working in partnership in new and innovative ways will deliver identified positive outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Shetland provides a safe and nurturing environment where our children and young people can grow and flourish. We have high standards of service, and high expectations of these but, for some of our children and young people there are barriers that prevent them from getting the best start in life and from reaching their full potential such as poverty and deprivation, isolation, domestic abuse, alcohol and drug misuse, and mental health and emotional wellbeing.

The Annual Report continues the approach of previous years in ensuring alignment with the annual reports on Child Protection and Child Poverty by including relevant summaries of those work programmes – for a full picture these reports should be read in detail. Planning and reporting processes in place are complex. It is not possible to consider services to children and young people in isolation of their families or carers. It is not possible to consider services to people without acknowledging the wider social, economic, financial and environmental aspects of how we live. All our plans are concerned with the whole Shetland population and acknowledge that the wider community is key to the influence and support of our plans and the people of Shetland.

## 2.3 Assessment

Key points to note across this reporting period include:

- **Improving ways of working:** Work to review Children's Services Partnership priorities and ways of working to maximise impact – this will inform the next iteration of the Children's Services Partnership Plan.
- **Supporting Families:** The Anchor for Families Team continues to walk alongside families under pressure, now working more collaboratively within the Shetland Family Centre. Our successful bid to become a Fairer Futures Partnership site marks a major step forward in system-wide support for children and families.
- **Reducing Poverty:** Initiatives such as the Outdoor Clothing Swapshop and Kit for All programme have removed barriers to participation and wellbeing, while targeted employment programmes for parents have helped families overcome childcare and transport challenges, leading to improved financial stability and confidence.
- **Improving Mental Health:** Our partnership with third sector organisations and the implementation of trauma-informed training have strengthened support for children and young people's mental health. Peer research and youth engagement projects have informed new approaches to stigma and substance use.
- **Keeping the Promise:** We remain dedicated to care-experienced children and young people, with ongoing efforts to close attainment and participation gaps, minimise placement moves, and ensure advocacy and family decision-making are at the heart of our work.

- **Listening to Young People:** The Shetland Youth Voice Transport Summit and other youth-led initiatives have empowered young people to shape local services, demonstrating the value of direct engagement and co-design with decision-makers.
- **Nurturing Our Teams:** Trauma-informed practice and staff wellbeing have been prioritised, with new training programmes and a dedicated Workforce Wellbeing Officer supporting our teams to deliver compassionate, effective services.

### **2.3.1. Quality / patient care**

Shetland's Integrated Children's Services Plan: Annual Report provides examples of activity and planned activity undertaken by the organisations involved working together with children, young people and their families to meet and achieve specific outcomes identified in the plan.

### **2.3.2. Workforce**

The work described in the report includes a number of pieces of collaborative work supporting development of staff and teams and building supportive networks between teams to add resilience and improve outcomes. The Partnership recognises the importance of our teams in achieving real, meaningful change and accordingly there is a priority dedicated to workforce.

### **2.3.3. Financial**

The Plan is implemented where possible within existing budgets using existing resources / reprioritising resources. External funding will however be accessed where appropriate and possible to supplement local resources. More detail on respective spend by SIC, NHS and partner agencies is included in the 2023-26 Plan – link provided at end of report.

### **2.3.4. Risk assessment/management**

The priorities and work plans of the Shetland Children's Partnership are well aligned to those of other strategic plans of the members of the partnership including Shetland Islands Council, NHS Shetland and the Third Sector.

### **2.3.5. Equality and Diversity, including health inequalities**

EQIA is not required for Annual Reporting.

### **2.3.6. Other impacts**

Legal

Section 13 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places a statutory duty on local authorities and health boards to publish an annual report in relation to their children's services plan. Section 2 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places a statutory duty on relevant authorities to publish a report every three years in relation to areas of responsibility under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 requires public authorities, including the NHS, to take proactive steps to protect children's rights. This includes ensuring that the views of children are taken into account, and that children's rights are considered in all decision-making processes.

### **2.3.7. Communication, involvement, engagement and consultation**

The Shetland Children's Partnership and its constituent organisations have been involved in the development of the annual report, including children and young people through the various case study examples included in the annual report content.

### **2.3.8. Route to the meeting**

The Shetland Children's Partnership and its constituent organisations have been involved in the development of the annual report, including children and young people through the various case study examples included in the annual report content.

## **2.4 Recommendation**

NHS Shetland Board is asked to:

- 1) The Board APPROVES the Shetland Children's Services Partnership Plan: Annual Report 2023-24 for publication (Appendix A).

## **3 List of appendices**

The following appendix is included with this report:

- Appendix A, Shetland Children's Services Partnership Plan Annual Report 2024-25

Supporting documents:

[Shetland Children's Service Partnership Plan 2023-26](#)

# Shetland Children's Services Partnership Plan

## Annual Report 2024/25



**Building a brighter future together for  
Shetland's children and young people**



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## Executive Summary

Welcome to the eighth Annual Report for Shetland's Integrated Children's Services Partnership Plan, covering the period from April 2024 to March 2025. This year's report reflects a renewed commitment to collaboration, learning, and continuous improvement as we work together to build a brighter future for Shetland's children and young people.

Throughout 2024/25, our Partnership has focused on eight core priorities - ranging from giving every child the best start in life, improving attainment, and reducing poverty, to protecting our most vulnerable and upholding children's rights. This year, we have made significant progress across several key areas:

- **Supporting Families:** The Anchor for Families Team continues to walk alongside families under pressure, now working more collaboratively within the Shetland Family Centre. Our successful bid to become a Fairer Futures Partnership site marks a major step forward in system-wide support for children and families.
- **Reducing Poverty:** Initiatives such as the Outdoor Clothing Swapshop and Kit for All programme have removed barriers to participation and wellbeing, while targeted employment programmes for parents have helped families overcome childcare and transport challenges, leading to improved financial stability and confidence.
- **Improving Mental Health:** Our partnership with third sector organisations and the implementation of trauma-informed training have strengthened support for children and young people's mental health. Peer-led research and youth engagement projects have informed new approaches to stigma and substance use.
- **Keeping the Promise:** We remain dedicated to care-experienced children and young people, with ongoing efforts to close attainment and participation gaps, minimise placement moves, and ensure advocacy and family decision-making are at the heart of our work.
- **Listening to Young People:** The Shetland Youth Voice Transport Summit and other youth-led initiatives have empowered young people to shape local services, demonstrating the value of direct engagement and co-design with decision-makers.
- **Nurturing Our Teams:** Trauma-informed practice and staff wellbeing have been prioritised, with new training programmes and a dedicated Workforce Wellbeing Officer supporting our teams to deliver compassionate, effective services.

At the heart of all our work is a commitment to inclusion, equity, and listening—ensuring that every child and young person in Shetland is safe, respected, and able to thrive. We have adapted our reporting to provide a balanced narrative, integrating data and stories to illustrate the impact of our partnership in a small, close-knit community.

As we look ahead, we recognise there are improvements to be made to strengthen our partnership working and impact – this is outlined in our partnership review section. We are grateful to all teams and services who have input to ongoing work, and shared their views and experiences to support improvement.

We hope you enjoy reading about our work – and we look forward to developing the next iteration of our plan to improve collaboration and impact.

**Previous Chair, Prof. Kathleen Carolan, and new Joint Chairs Jordan Sutherland and Dr Susan Laidlaw, and continuing vice-chair Lynn Tulloch.**

## Introduction

The Shetland Children's Services Partnership Plan 2023-2026 was developed to minimise duplication and bring more clarity to what we are trying to achieve as a partnership. Having considered the data and the current needs of young people in Shetland, we built our planning priorities around the following 8 themes. This annual report tells the story of work towards these priorities this year:

1. All our children have the best start in life in a nurturing, safe and stable home environment
2. We improve attainment and achievement for all children and young people
3. We reduce the impact of poverty on children and families
4. Children and young people's mental health and wellbeing is improved
5. We Keep the Promise for our Care Experienced children and young people (Corporate Parenting)
6. We place the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of our work
7. Our most vulnerable children and young people are protected
8. Our workforce are nurtured and have opportunities to develop

Being healthy

Being safe

Being listened to

Being treated fairly

Reaching your potential

We have retained all intended activity for the 3 years of the plan for context, though this will not all have been actioned or taken forward by this second year of the plan. The work within the Partnership is contingent on action on child poverty, and on educational achievement and attainment, which are reported separately in the Annual Child Poverty Action Report and the National Improvement Framework. We are also very closely involved in the work of the Shetland Partnership. We will not try to replicate the reporting of these areas but will refer to them throughout the plan, in the hope that this set of local reporting can be considered an inter-related collection of work.

We have changed the structure of our annual report to include relevant data within sections rather than a dedicated data section as previously – this is in the hope that we can provide a balanced narrative and support understanding of data which can be challenging to interpret without appropriate context, and must always be used with consideration in our smaller population. We will still include stories and case studies wherever possible to illustrate the hard work of our teams working in collaboration.

We aim to always keep in mind what is important to our children and young people, and keep them at the centre of the work that we do, and in reflecting on this we are aware our work as a Partnership could be more impactful, and there are times that opportunities to have an impact are sometimes lost in the proliferation of priorities across our various sectors. While continuing work towards our plan, we have also been considering our role and impact as a partnership, and this development work is described in the first section of this report.

## Vision

‘Every child and young person in Shetland has what they need to live a happy and healthy life. Every child and young person thrives and reaches their full potential’

## Priorities

- ➔ All our children have the best start in life in a nurturing, safe and stable home environment
- ➔ We improve attainment and achievement for all children and young people
- ➔ We reduce the impact of poverty on children and families
- ➔ Improvement in children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing
- ➔ We Keep the Promise for our Care Experienced children and young people
- ➔ Our most vulnerable children and young people are protected
- ➔ We place the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of our work
- ➔ Our teams are nurtured and have opportunities to develop



## Approach

- ...Act early
- ...Be trauma-informed
- ...Work together
- ...Listen to understand
- ...Focus and build on strengths



NPF

We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential

We are healthy and active

We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination

We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe

We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society

## Partnership Development

### Reviewing the Children’s Services Planning Partnership priorities

In February 2025, the Shetland Children’s Services Planning Partnership (CSPP) held a half-day workshop to begin reviewing the vision, priorities, and performance indicators that guide its work – with a view to becoming more impactful.

A survey exploring members’ perspectives on the Partnership’s current role and effectiveness supported workshop planning. The responses highlighted the value of collaborative working and information sharing, while suggesting that discussions could more often lead to meaningful shared action. Clearer priorities, clearer governance, and more consistent engagement with children and young people were also suggested.

The workshop then brought together CSPP members with a wider group of participants, including a peer research development worker from OPEN, and representatives from Shetland Youth Voice. The session was structured to review the current vision and priorities, reflect on the survey findings, and begin identifying areas for improvement.

Recommendations for next steps generated from workshop:

- Strengthen the Partnership’s focus on action and impact.
- Clarify roles and improve engagement, especially with children and young people.
- Improve coordination with other strategic partnerships.
- Address key challenges such as transitions and clearer pathways for support.

This workshop was a good opportunity for collaborative reflection and renewed commitment to continuous improvement. It laid the groundwork for a refreshed approach to planning that is more responsive, inclusive, and focused on what matters most to Shetland’s children and young people.

### Key Themes from the Workshop

**Connection and information:** Participants valued the opportunity the CSPP provides to connect across sectors and hear about work happening in other areas. The diversity of inputs was seen as a strength, helping to build shared understanding of challenges and opportunities.

**Need for shared action:** There was some concern that discussions didn’t always translate into tangible partnership action. Participants wanted to see a shift from information sharing to collaborative problem-solving, with clearer impacts on children and young people.

**Engagement:** A strong theme was the need to improve how the Partnership engages with children and young people. The current vision was seen as potentially distant from the reality of people’s lives. Participants agreed that children and young people’s voices should be more central to how success is defined.

**Vision and priorities:** While the existing vision and priorities were still broadly supported, participants questioned whether they are specific enough to drive meaningful action. Suggestions included increased emphasis on ways of working – such as trauma-informed practice and relationship-based support – as well as key topics like transitions, neurodevelopmental support, in-work poverty, and substance use.

## 1. All our children have the best start in life in a nurturing, safe and stable home environment

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-24	Update 2024-25
<p>Universal services – clarity of messaging and access, prevention early intervention approach</p>	<p>Measured via Staff access of training and development as per workforce section, examples of work shared here</p>	<p>There continue to be a number of training options available, and we are still working towards a shared approach to prevention and early intervention. This formed part of the learning from the Anchor project review, and clarity of messaging and approach across people facing services has been identified as a priority within the Shetland Partnership, and key delivery partners within the Children’s Partnership are involved in this work.</p> <p>UNICEF baby friendly award is a good example of feedback showing clear and consistent messaging and support from staff, in this case relating to baby feeding.</p>	<p>Ability Shetland delivered fortnightly Peerie Stars sessions, in partnership with Shetland Recreational Trust. These parent and pre-school child sessions were held at Clickimin and provided an opportunity for peer support, sharing lived experience and early access to support.</p> <p>In partnership with the SIC Education Outreach team, specifically the pre-school home visiting service, Ability Shetland delivered Early Positive Approach to Support (EPATs), a parenting programme for parents/carers of pre-school children with additional support needs. The programme is facilitated by a parent and professional, with childcare provided by Ability Shetland Family Support Worker.</p> <p>Ability Shetland facilitated five training sessions for parents and carers of neurodivergent children throughout the year – 1 per school term. These were delivered online outwith the working day. These sessions then developed into informal peer support for parents</p>

<p>Decreasing stigma and increasing understanding of domestic violence, alcohol and other drugs, and poverty to mitigate their impact on people’s outcomes.</p>	<p>Availability and uptake of: Money Worries training, Scottish Drugs Forum stigma training, Safe and Together model implementation.</p>	<p>Some work has been progressed to increase access to Money Worries training by making a locally recorded training session, progress has been impacted by extended leave and critical staff moving posts – provision is to be reviewed in 2024-25.</p> <p>NHS Shetland have engaged with Public Health Scotland to take part in a deep dive learning project around income maximization pathways in NHS services – this will take place in 2024-25.</p> <p>Compassionate Shetland is a new focused workstream within the Shetland Partnership Plan focused on decreasing stigma and will support progress in 2024-25 and beyond.</p> <p>Local Shetland Women’s Aid team continue to meet with national leaders on bringing Safe and Together modalities to our local authorities and feed that back to our SDAP/VAWG, SPPC, and our newly set up local Governance Group to implement Safe and Together.</p>	<p>NHS Shetland and SIC Community Planning Partnership developed bids to be considered as a “Marmot Place” in the collaboration for Health Equity in Scotland (CHES) programme. While this was not successful, the team were very positive about our understanding of our local situation around child poverty, and we remain engaged with learning from the programme.</p> <p>The learning was used to support a bid to be a “Fairer Futures Partnership” which was successful – this work will be taken forward in 2025-26. A summary of the supported bid is included as a case study.</p> <p>NHS children’s services took the opportunity to take part in exploratory work with Public Health Scotland looking at income maximization support through NHS services. This helped to build local connections between teams, as well as informing national policy work.</p>
<p>We will raise awareness of the pre-conception service to maximize understanding of the benefits of seeking support when considering a pregnancy</p>	<p>% uptake of women using pre-conception service from the total number of women who deliver each year (where NHS Shetland is the Board of residence)</p>	<p>The pre-conception service is now well established, with positive feedback from families supported by the service.</p> <p>The service has not been embedded for long enough in its current form to give this data – update will be provided in future reports.</p>	<p>The pre-conception service has stalled due to staffing changes in a small team, the team are currently reviewing how care is provided and whether this should be part of the midwifery pathway.</p>

<p>We will develop a service that aligns to the HENRY approach so that wider parenting skills advice can be provided via the pre-conception service</p>	<p>The Maternity Care Assistant supporting the pre-conception service will undertake the HENRY training and we will record how many times the whole family is supported due to a parent accessing the pre-conception service</p>	<p>The Maternity Care Assistant has undertaken relevant HENRY training and uses this as the core approach within her work. There is a regular meeting between Maternity, Health Visiting and HENRY leads to support improved connections between health, parenting and universal services across the pre-conception, ante-natal and post-natal periods.</p> <p>A small amount of funding for diabetes prevention is to be used in the maternity team from 2024-25 which will support work in this area.</p>	<p>Health Improvement, Health visiting and Family Centre teams continue to work closely together to deliver on the HENRY approach.</p> <p>The pre-conception service and involvement in the HENRY work has stalled due to staffing changes in a small team, the team are currently reviewing how care is provided and whether this should be part of the midwifery pathway.</p>
<p>We will offer women who have previously had gestational diabetes additional support prenatally and through her pregnancy to reduce likelihood of gestational diabetes developing</p>	<p>% uptake of women who have previously had gestational diabetes who do not develop it again in subsequent pregnancies (and who engage with preconception services)</p>	<p>This support is being offered routinely, and supported by the pre-conception service. Numbers locally are relatively small so there are some challenges to publishing data, however local teams are engaged in work related to adult healthy weight data and the best way to report this in a meaningful way.</p>	<p>The maternity team are currently reviewing the midwifery pathway, including the 6 week post-natal check for high risk women, to ensure best outcomes.</p>
<p>We will develop a Child Health Service Priorities Plan for the next 3 years which sets out how we will develop models of care that support the principles of values-based care e.g., reducing duplication, inefficiencies</p>	<p>A plan is developed, and clear models are described that set out improvements to pathways that reduce duplication/improve access for children and families that require support</p>	<p>This work is to be progressed in 2024-25 and beyond.</p>	<p>This work has not yet been progressed, due to capacity challenges.</p>
<p>Delivery of Incredible Years and Triple Parenting programme to parents/cares</p>	<p>Number of parents/carers attending Impact of programme on family relationships</p>	<p>Delivery continues. Case study in 2023/24 report.</p>	<p>This delivery continues, collaboratively, as business as usual.</p>

## Supporting Early Communication in Shetland through Collaborative Practice

In Shetland, the Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) team is working in close partnership with families, early years professionals, and wider services to support the development of speech, language, and communication skills in young children. Recognising that early communication lays the foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing, the team has developed an Early Years Toolkit—a comprehensive, accessible resource designed to empower adults in children’s lives.

The toolkit provides practical guidance across key areas such as listening and attention, understanding and using language, speech development, bilingualism, and stammering. It is designed not only for children with identified needs but also for those developing typically, ensuring that all families and professionals can access support tailored to their context.

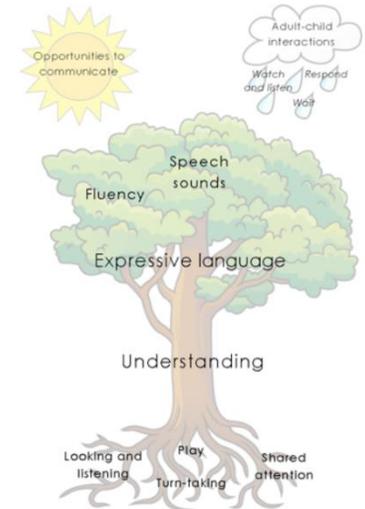
Collaboration is central to this approach. The SLT team works across a range of settings—including homes, nurseries, schools, and community hubs—to promote communication-friendly environments. They provide universal support through public resources, targeted advice for children at risk of communication difficulties, and individualised interventions for those with specific needs. This tiered model ensures that support is both inclusive and responsive.

Families are encouraged to engage with the toolkit directly, using everyday interactions—such as play, storytelling, and shared routines—to build communication skills. The toolkit also links to trusted external resources like Bookbug, Tiny Happy People, and Talking Point, helping families access wider networks of support and information. Professionals in early learning and childcare settings are supported to use the toolkit to enhance their practice. Development overviews for three- and four-year-olds help practitioners identify typical milestones and spot areas where additional support may be needed. This shared understanding between SLT and early years staff strengthens the consistency of care and enables earlier intervention.

The SLT team also works with health visitors, education staff, and voluntary sector partners to ensure that children with emerging needs are identified and supported promptly. This collaborative model reflects a whole-system approach, where speech and language development is seen as a shared responsibility across services.

Importantly, the toolkit promotes a strengths-based, family-centred ethos. It acknowledges that children develop at different rates and that adults play a vital role in nurturing communication. By equipping families and professionals with the tools and confidence to support children’s development, NHS Shetland is fostering a culture of early intervention, inclusion, and empowerment.

This initiative demonstrates how locally tailored resources, backed by collaborative working, can improve outcomes for children and families—especially in remote and rural contexts like Shetland. The Early Years Toolkit is available for anyone to look at and use, and includes lots of handy advice and resources – search “Shetland Early Years Toolkit” or click the following link <https://www.nhsshotland.scot/speech-language-therapy>



## Making Screening Fair for Everyone: How Shetland Is Working to Close the Gaps

Health screening plays a vital role in detecting serious conditions—such as cancer, diabetes complications, and pregnancy-related risks—early, often before symptoms appear. In Shetland, while most residents participate in national screening programmes, access isn't equal for everyone. NHS Shetland, alongside local partners, is working to make screening more equitable and accessible.

Barriers to screening vary. Some individuals face challenges with travel, language, or understanding health information. Others may have had negative healthcare experiences, live with disabilities or mental health conditions, or juggle caring responsibilities that make attending appointments difficult. Shetland's geography adds complexity when trying to attend appointments.

To address these issues, one GP practice is analysing cervical screening data to identify who isn't attending and why. By examining factors such as age, health conditions, and past experiences, they're reaching out directly to women, offering tailored support and listening to their concerns. Teams are also working with Local media, hubs, and link workers are helping raise awareness and prepare residents—especially those in remote areas—for upcoming visits, including the mobile breast screening unit expected in 2025.

Collaboration across health services, public health teams, and community groups is central to Shetland's approach. For example, a nurse at the Shetland Recovery Hub supports women affected by trauma or addiction, helping them understand screening and feel safe making health choices. This work goes beyond information—it's about building trust and offering compassionate care.

Another initiative focuses on people with learning disabilities. Health professionals are partnering with support services to make screening more accessible by providing easy-read materials, alternative venues, and additional assistance for appointments.

Language and literacy are also being tackled. The Adult Learning Service is helping those who speak English as a second language or have low literacy levels to understand the importance of screening. Translated materials and simplified explanations are making a meaningful impact.

Together, these efforts show how Shetland is leading the way in creating inclusive, compassionate, and effective screening services—ensuring no one is left behind.

## Starting Solids Workshops – A Universal Offer for Families in Shetland

In Shetland, Starting Solids workshops are now offered as a **standard part of early years support**—ensuring every family receives trusted advice on introducing solid foods to their baby. Delivered through the HENRY programme by NHS Shetland's Health Improvement Team, the workshops aim to normalise the need for support and reduce stigma around seeking help.

Rather than relying on referrals or self-identification, the workshops are proactively offered to all families. They cover key topics such as recognising readiness for solids, choosing first foods, and making mealtimes enjoyable. Sessions are practical, inclusive, and designed to build confidence and peer support.

This universal approach helps prevent misinformation and anxiety, while promoting informed, confident parenting. It also reflects a wider commitment to early intervention and whole-family wellbeing.

By embedding Starting Solids workshops into routine care, Shetland is leading the way in making support accessible, timely, and empowering for all families.



## Fairer Futures Shetland – Supporting system change for children and families

In the spring of 2025 Shetland became part of the Scottish Government's Fairer Futures Partnerships programme, which aims to reduce child poverty and improve family wellbeing through public service reform. Locally, we have adapted this to take a system-wide, person-centred approach that complements the vision and priorities of our Children's Services Partnership Plan.

### **Progress in 2024/25:**

- Established a Fairer Futures System Change Board, bringing together leaders from NHS Shetland, Shetland Islands Council, Police Scotland, and Voluntary Action Shetland.
- Began exploring how to develop a Learning Network for practitioners to share knowledge, reflect on real cases, and problem-solve collaboratively.
- Built on learning from the Anchor Project, which showed the value of early intervention and relationship-based support, while seeking to understand and address the systemic barriers that limited sustainability.

### **Fairer Futures can strengthen delivery of the Children's Services Partnership priorities by:**

- Considering ways of reducing the impact of poverty through early and more coordinated support.
- Giving children the best start in life by improving how services work together around families.
- Nurturing our teams by creating spaces for shared learning, problem-solving and confidence-building.

### **In 2025/26, we will:**

- Further develop the System Change Board and ensure it is linked effectively with other local Partnerships.
- Establish the Learning Network and involve practitioners in prioritising thematic areas and ways of working.
- Better understand the current system to identify barriers and address gaps or duplication.

*Giving children the best start in life – data update*

	Source, next update expected	Pre-pandemic	Previous	Current	
1. Maternal health: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smoking in pregnancy</li> <li>• BMI (Obese)</li> </ul>	Births in Scotland Public Health Scotland (Next updates – March 2026 & November 2025)	2019/20 – 9.6% 2019/20 - 27.85%	2022/23 – 5.7% 2022/23 - 22.8%	2024 – 6.4% 2023/24 – 27.6%	↑ ↑
2. Low birthweight (Small birthweight for gestation age)	Births in Scotland, Public Health Scotland (Next update – November 2025)	2019/20 - 3.2%	2022/23 - 1.5%	2023/24 - 3.2%	↑
3. Breastfeeding rates (Exclusively breastfed at 6-8 week review)	Infant feeding statistics, Public Health Scotland (Next update – November 2025)	2019/20 - 51.8%	2022/23 – 46.8%	2023/24 – 49.1%	↑
4. No obvious tooth decay (P1 and P7)	National dental inspection programme, Public Health Scotland (Next update – October 2026)	2019/20 P1 - 84.4% P7 - 88.1%	2023/24 P1 – 80.4% P7 – 82.9%	2024/25 P1 – 88.1% P7 – 89.4%	↑ ↑
5. Healthy weight in P1	Primary 1 Body Mass Index (BMI) statistics Scotland, Public Health Scotland (Next update – December 2025)	2019/20 – 76.1%	2022/23 – 79.4%	2023/24 – 72.3%	↓

## 2. Improvement in attainment and achievement for all children and young people

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-24	Update 2024-25
<p>All partners ensure that parents and carers of two to four year olds have the correct information regarding Early Learning and Childcare services available and how to access these.</p>	<p>Number of eligible two year olds who are receiving Early Learning and Childcare.</p> <p>Number of three and four year olds who are taking up their Early Learning and Childcare places.</p>	<p>The Early Learning and Childcare central team, in response to feedback, have been testing the option of paying for additional hours to support parents with flexibility required for work – this has been introduced in 5 settings in the 2023-24 school year and will be reviewed.</p> <p>Data published December 2023 for:</p> <p>Eligible 2 year-olds receiving ELC: 52%</p> <p>% 3 and 4 year-olds taking up ELC: 91%</p>	<p>VAS distributed £28,325 of Funding following the winding up of Shetland Pre-school Play charity to 19 pre-school groups to support their activities in their local communities.</p> <p>ELC funded places available for families with children with ASN / disabilities at Ability Shetland ASN Holiday Clubs in Easter, Summer and October.</p>
<p>Literacy programmes including Vocabulary Improvement Project and Emerging Literacy are delivered.</p> <p>Guidance for Total Communication is developed and implemented.</p> <p>Professional learning for SEAL (Stages of Early Arithmetical Learning) is delivered.</p> <p><b>Develop quality improvement tools to enhance learning, teaching and assessment in numeracy</b></p>	<p>Overall Literacy and Numeracy – P1, P4, P7 combined, CORE measure in The Ambition: Excellence and Equity Plan.</p> <p>Primary – overall literacy and numeracy attainment gap, CORE+ measure in The Ambition: Excellence and Equity Plan.</p> <p>1 or more, Level 5, All SCQF – Additional Support Needs gap percentage points, CORE+ measure in The Ambition: Excellence and Equity Plan.</p>	<p>This improvement work is reported in detail in the local National Improvement Framework plan and report – progress against targets is included here for an overview:</p> <p>Overall Literacy and Numeracy (P1/P4/P7 combined): achieved 2024 target for both Literacy and Numeracy</p> <p>Primary attainment gap: achieved 2024 targets for overall literacy and numeracy gap (PRIMARY)</p>	<p>Improvement work in this area is reported to <a href="#">Education and Families Committee</a> on an annual basis.</p> <p>The Education and Learning Service are entering the fourth and final year of The Ambition: Excellence and Equity for Shetland’s Learners. This data refers to year 3.</p> <p>Despite overall progress towards the 2026 stretch aim, the service did not meet the 2024/25 targets for overall literacy and numeracy for primary and secondary.</p>

			<p>Similarly, the primary and secondary literacy and numeracy attainment gaps have widened, or the narrowing has plateaued, for 2024/25.</p> <p>Attainment in the senior phase is particularly strong at National 5 and Advanced Higher whilst Higher attainment remains stable. Attainment gaps between all pupils and those with ASN and FSM characteristics continues to be monitored.</p>
<p>Deliver local and national volunteering awards:</p> <p>Saltire Awards –national initiative for young people aged 12 to 25.</p> <p>VAS Volunteering Awards - The aim of the local awards is to recognise all kinds of volunteering, both formal and informal, and celebrate individuals of all ages who volunteer in Shetland.</p> <p>‘Willin Haands Award’ for adults aged 26 and over</p> <p>‘Peerie Trows Award’ for children 11 and under</p>	<p>Number of young people receiving Saltire Award certificates for volunteering.</p> <p>2022 – 67 young people received certificates</p> <p>2023 – 118 young people received certificates</p> <p>Number of children receiving Peerie Trow Awards</p> <p>2023 – 14 Awards made to children</p>	<p>We continue to have high levels of volunteering, with many different opportunities available for children and young people – these will be reported in full in the Voluntary Action Shetland 2023/24 Annual Report: <a href="#">Resources &amp; publications   Voluntary Action Shetland</a></p> <p>Saltire Event June 2023 - The 118 young people received a total of 256 certificates between them recognising the over 11,000 hours of volunteering they had collectively taken part in throughout the past year with 43 different local groups, schools and organisations.</p> <p><a href="#">Saltire Awards celebrate hard work of young volunteers   Shetland News (shetnews.co.uk)</a></p> <p>VAS Volunteering Awards 2023 - 14 Peerie Trows Awards, 13 children and 1 school community.</p>	<p>Saltire Awards Certificates 2024 - 164 young people were recognised for their volunteering. The young people, aged between 12 and 25, received a total of 337 certificates between them. They had collectively undertaken more than 17,000 hours of volunteering throughout the past year with 45 different local groups, schools and organisations.</p> <p><a href="#">Youngsters recognised for volunteering efforts   Shetland News</a></p> <p>VAS Volunteering Awards 2024 - 24 children aged 11 or under received a Peerie Trows award for their volunteering efforts.</p> <p><a href="#">Volunteering award winners announced   Shetland News</a></p> <p>102 Third Sector Organisations/groups received 1:1 Support on a range of issues</p>

		<p><a href="#">Volunteering spirit recognised in new awards   Shetland News (shetnews.co.uk)</a></p> <p>An example of a volunteer’s experience with the OPEN project is shared in 2023/24 report.</p>	<p>See VAS Annual Report 24/25 for further information: <a href="#">Resources &amp; publications   Voluntary Action Shetland</a></p> <p>Ability Shetland provide supported volunteering opportunities for young people with ASN at their clubs and activities across Shetland.</p>
<p>All partners fulfil role as exemplar employers locally, for example by offering work experience, participating in careers fairs, and exploring alternative routes into employment to tackle inequalities</p>	<p>Participation in local careers fairs</p> <p>Evidence of inclusion of alternative and innovative ways of increasing employment opportunities for young people within organisational workforce planning/annual reports</p>	<p>All partners have been engaging in local careers fairs and opportunities events, and also looking to create more bespoke engagement with schools to increase awareness of potential opportunities.</p> <p>Work between partners and local employability services to better understand practical steps for employers to take to decrease barriers has been discussed and will continue in 2024-25.</p> <p>Voluntary Action Shetland are involved in all above noted and are key lead in supporting Youth Philanthropy Initiative (YPI) in 7 high/junior High schools in Shetland, increasing young people’s awareness of charities in local community and volunteering opportunities – academic year project</p> <p><a href="#">Home   YPI (ypiscotland.org.uk)</a></p>	<p>VAS – attendance at Careers Fair/Country Shows/student freshers’ week/gee it a go community events/school events</p> <p>VAS continuing to support Youth Philanthropy Initiative (YPI) in 7 high/junior high schools to raise awareness of charities work in their local community. Each participating school is responsible for directing a grant of £3000 to a local charity championed by its young people through teamwork, research, and competition.</p> <p><a href="#">Home   YPI (ypiscotland.org.uk)</a></p> <p>VAS partner in DYW – Developing the Young Workforce</p> <p>Ability Shetland attend events coordinated by the DYW as well as meeting with children and young people working with the YPI. They ensure that children and young people with ASN are included in these events and that all children, young people, families and employers are aware of the services they</p>

			<p>can provide to support those with ASN into employment opportunities.</p> <p>NHS and partners also attending Careers Fairs, and renewed engagement with Local Employability Partnership.</p>
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## Shetland Careers and Opportunities Fair 2025

The fair was coordinated by Developing Young Workforce (DYW) and brought together partners including Skills Development Scotland (SDS), University of Highlands & Islands (UHI), Shetland Islands Council's Schools, and the Youth & Employability Service. The annual event aims to showcase employment, training, and volunteering opportunities across Shetland, targeting S4–S6 pupils, their families, and the wider public, with contributions from local and national organisations.

This year's fair responded to feedback from the Pupil Voice 2024: Senior Phase Research, which highlighted high attendance but low perceived impact. Employers also requested earlier engagement with younger pupils. As a result, S2 pupils were invited for the first time, with tailored activities to support their participation. Schools received preparatory materials, and pupils used worksheets during the event to guide interactions with employers—featuring logo hunts and suggested questions.

To improve engagement, exhibitors were given guidance informed by Shetland Youth Voice members. Tips included reducing table barriers, actively engaging with pupils, and incorporating interactive elements like puzzles or tools to demonstrate job roles. DYW supported exhibitors in developing hands-on activities to showcase industry skills.

The event saw increased attendance and improved engagement. Youth Development Workers supported pupils and schools throughout the day. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive:

- 78% of S2 pupils found the worksheet helpful.
- 98% of younger attendees reported increased awareness of career pathways.
- 89% could now link subject choices to careers.
- 91% of senior pupils felt more confident speaking to employers.
- 73% of exhibitors valued the presence of younger pupils.
- 82% felt pupils were well prepared.

Exhibitor testimonials praised the event's organisation, the quality of engagement, and the opportunity to connect with the community. Many expressed interest in deeper future collaboration and noted the event's role in identifying potential apprentices.

Looking ahead, organisers plan to expand exhibitor space and include underrepresented sectors like tourism and hospitality. They aim to refine school preparation strategies, enhance public and parental engagement, and improve post-event follow-up to maximise impact. Coordination with the Shetland Local Employability Partnership (SLEP) will also be strengthened to ensure resource alignment and broader employer benefit.

The 2025 fair demonstrated how thoughtful planning and collaboration can significantly enhance career awareness and engagement for Shetland's young people.

Attainment and achievement – data update

	Source, next update expected	Pre-pandemic	Previous	Current	
1. Numeracy and literacy achievement (P1, P4 and P7 pupils achieving expected CfE Levels)	Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels, Scottish Government (Next update – December 2025)	2018/19 Literacy - 64% Numeracy - 70%	2022/23 Literacy – 68% Numeracy – 72%	2024/25 Literacy – 71% Numeracy – 78%	↑ ↑
2. Positive destinations of school leavers, YAs in education, training or employment	Summary statistics for Follow- Up Leaver Destinations, Scottish Government (Next update – June 2026)	2018/19 - 95.6% 2019/20 - 93.8%	2022/23 - 97.5%	2023/24 - 97.6%	↑
3. The number of children and young people with less than 80% attendance, (Percentage of persistent absentees - 10% or more sessions missed)	School attendance and absence statistics, Scottish Government (Next update – March 2026)	101	2023/24 – 23%	209	↓
4. Attainment gap (Free School Meals, Additional Support Needs, Looked After Children)	National Improvement Framework Core+ Primary Literacy/Numeracy Secondary 3 Literacy/Numeracy	2018/19 Lit 16 Num 24 Lit 8 Num 2		2025 Lit 14 Num 20 Lit 17 Num 14	↓ ↑
5. Number of three and four year olds who are taking up their Early Learning and Childcare places.	Summary statistics for schools in Scotland, Scottish Government (Next update – December 2025)	2019 – 105%	2023 - 91%	2024 – 86%	↓
6. Volunteering awards (Saltire - individuals)	VAS local reporting		2023 - 118	2024 - 164	↑

### 3. We reduce the impact of poverty on children and families

This section is a reflection of what is reported in our Annual Child Poverty Action Report which is required to be published separately – this will not be duplicated here.

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023/24	Update 2024-25
<p>Support our Anchor for Families Team to walk alongside families who are feeling under pressure, to build their strengths and capacity to achieve the goals they want to achieve, develop a more positive pathway and halt further deterioration in their situation.</p> <p>This is funded through the Scottish Government Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.</p> <p>NB: this work links strategically with <a href="#">Shetland's CLD Strategy</a>, and operationally with CLD staff across Shetland.</p>	<p>Number of families supported / year</p> <p>Evaluation as per Anchor for Families Logic Model</p>	<p>Anchor for Families Team continued to operate across Shetland, supporting families under pressure.</p>	<p>Anchor for Families delivery continues – this has been brought together to work more collaboratively under the Shetland Family Centre to ensure joined-up support.</p> <p>We have been accepted as a Fairer Futures Partnership site, to progress the System Change work originally intended alongside the Anchor project development. All partners actively engaged.</p>
<p>Develop an innovative test of change project to find financially vulnerable households, supporting them holistically, to improve their finances and employment, as a collaboration between Anchor for Families, Employability Pathway and Third Sector.</p> <p>This funded through the Scottish Government Child Poverty Fund, formally known as Parental Employment Support Fund.</p>	<p>Monitoring for this Project will be put in place.</p>	<p>Due to funding restrictions/conditions, the focus of the project is geared to parental employability through Employment Recruitment Schemes and traineeships within Shetland Islands Council's Catering &amp; Cleaning Team. Project taking place in 24/25.</p>	<p>VAS – partner in Shetland Local Employability Partnership – supporting on decisions of grants to external groups engaging in No-one left behind Agenda</p>

<p>Increase the capacity of frontline staff to recognise signs of poverty and ensure they are on an income maximisation pathway. This capacity will be built by, for example, our Anchor for Families Team, implementation of GIRFEC, Money Worries Training and Cost of the School Day.</p> <p>NB: this work links strategically with <a href="#">Shetland's CLD Strategy</a>, and operationally with CLD staff across Shetland.</p> <p>This is Shetland's approach to reduce levels of Food Insecurity and the <a href="#">Scottish Government's Cash First Approach</a> / <a href="#">Good Food Nation</a> approach.</p>	<p>Attendance at Money Worries Training (number / services represented)</p> <p>Number of Cost of the School Day Events / Sessions</p> <p>Evaluation of System Change, as per Anchor for Families Logic Model</p> <p>Uptake of income maximisation services (SICAB, SIC Children's Finance, Social Security Scotland, Fuel Bank Vouchers, SIC Finance, Free Period Products, free ELC for eligible two year olds)</p> <p>Uptake of Access to Leisure (SRT, SADA, Summer Activities)</p> <p>Uptake of CLD Skills Development to complete benefit forms</p>	<p>Resources for frontline staff now available online. Now uptake from local partners in training.</p>	<p>Partners continue to engage with local income maximization support provided through CAB.</p> <p>NHS Shetland and PHS worked to consider local income maximization pathways and potential for improvement – this work is informing national resources and support, as well as building local connections.</p> <p>Access to Leisure members - it fluctuates as people drop off or join based on eligibility, but we have roughly 1200 customers enrolled on our system as access to leisure customers.</p> <p>In 2024/25 it shows there was 21,050 usages attributed to access to leisure customers which is 421 per week or 60 usages per day across our 8 sites</p>
<p>Support the implementation of Shetland's response to the Cost of Living Crisis Plan, 2023/24, including an easy to use <a href="#">website</a>, and dedicated phone line.</p>	<p>As per Cost of Living Crisis Plan (SRT / Summer Activities)</p>	<p>2023/24 work went to plan – learning has been taken forward into implementation of supports for the 2024/25 Winter period.</p>	<p>2024-25 delivery continued as planned, including winter support.</p>
<p>Continue to support key Third Sector organisations: SICAB, Shetland Food Bank and Food for the Way.</p>	<p>Funding and staff time from partner organisations</p>	<p>CP&amp;D as a point of contact for these organisations, through</p>	<p>Partners remain engaged with third sector organisations who are a key partner in local</p>

	<p>Number of clients CAB supported</p> <p>Number of food parcels distributed</p> <p>Attendance at activities – Food for the way</p>	<p>funding agreements and partnership working.</p>	<p>partnerships, with strong representation from TSI.</p>
<p>Support Shetland’s CLD Strategy to close the digital poverty gap.</p>	<p>As per CLD Strategy</p>	<p>Range of support to digitally isolated individuals including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- weekly Digital drop-in sessions at Shetland Library, supporting individuals to resolve a range of issues and develop their digital skills;</li> <li>- monthly digital drop in sessions at Job Centre+, supporting clients referred and by JC+ to develop their digital job seeking skills;</li> <li>- tailored one to one digital skills support by Adult Learning to 174 individuals across Shetland I homes and community venues;</li> <li>- provision of free hire access to digital devices through Shetland Library; and digital support to</li> </ul>	<p>Range of support to digitally isolated individuals including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- weekly Digital drop-in sessions at Shetland Library, supporting individuals to resolve a range of issues and develop their digital skills;</li> <li>- monthly digital drop in sessions at Job Centre+, supporting clients referred and by JC+ to develop their digital job seeking skills;</li> <li>- tailored one to one digital skills support by Adult Learning to 174 individuals across Shetland in homes and community venues;</li> </ul> <p>provision of free hire access to digital devices through Shetland Library; and digital support to attendees of the Winter pop-ins.</p>

		attendees of the Winter pop-ins.	
Use opportunities such as Anchor for Families, Employability Services and Cost of Living supports to enable children and their families to be involved in shaping local policies and measures to reduce the social and economic impact of poverty.	Number of examples of changes to local policies and services as a result of involving children and families under pressure	Embedded in organizational and cultural landscape.	Shetland Youth Voice are supported by Ability Shetland to be inclusive of young people with ASN / disabilities in their work ensuring young people are involved in local policies and influencing change for in local issues that affect them.
Public Health and Maternity teams work to improve local use of data from national systems around financial support in pregnancy – particularly Badgernet recorded data and Best Start support uptake – to inform improvement	National data informs local improvement and targeted support.	Regular meetings between Health Improvement and Maternity in place, teams are reviewing the reportable data for quality and this will support future work.	This continues as business as usual.
Maternity team have awareness, confidence and skills to recognise signs of poverty, discuss money worries and support effectively (targeted individual support)	Uptake of Money Worries training Local uptake of Best Start support	Money Worries training has been paused locally due to staffing issues, but should be picked up in 2024/25 as capacity allows.	Review of delivery, reach and impact, and planning for refreshed approach took place in 2024-25, with hopes to restart delivery locally in 2025-26. Capacity within team is a risk to delivery.
Continue routine enquiry about money worries or financial concerns regularly throughout pregnancy and in postnatal period, with signposting/referral to appropriate income maximisation support (opportunistic individual support)	As above	As above – this forms part of the data set being made available to Health Improvement and Maternity teams.	Teams were involved with Income Maximisation work with PHS to better connect local pathways.

HENRY programme workshops including Eat Well for Less are available to parents and prospective parents

No of workshops run, attendance, inclusion of antenatal families on these

Workshops continue to run – attendance and activity will be reported in Health Improvement team activity report.

These continue as business as usual, detail in [Health Improvement Activity Report](#).

### Outdoor Clothing Swapshop – removing barriers to nature in winter

In November 2024, Shetland Islands Council and RSPB Shetland hosted an Outdoor Clothing Swap Shop to help residents access suitable winter clothing and encourage outdoor engagement. The initiative responded to observations that many nature event attendees lacked appropriate gear. Partnering with the Council’s Sport and Leisure Services ‘Kit for All’ programme, Community Learning and Development, and Active Schools teams, the organisers launched a donation appeal for coats, waterproofs, boots, and accessories for all ages.

Held at Gilbertson Park Games Hall in Lerwick, the free event considered daylight and transport schedules. One half of the hall hosted the clothing swap, while the other featured stalls from support organisations including NHS Health Improvement, Mind Your Head, and Ability Shetland. Amenities included refreshments and a soft play area. Shetland Aid and Tesco supported the event with hangers and rails.

Over 400 people attended, with feedback highlighting the event’s dignity, inclusivity, and financial relief. Attendees expressed gratitude, noting how the swap helped families manage winter costs. Remaining clothing was redistributed at community events across Shetland.

The event’s success demonstrated how stigma-free, eco-conscious initiatives can attract broad participation. Plans are underway to repeat the event with expanded services and sponsorship. The Swap Shop supports poverty reduction and enhances wellbeing, particularly for children and young people. The Kit for All scheme also contributes to Keeping the Promise by providing preloved clothing at Care Experienced Fun afternoons.



## Employment Opportunities for Parents

The Shetland Employer Recruitment Incentive (SERI) was a six-month paid traineeship program designed to help parents and carers overcome barriers to employment caused by childcare and transport issues. It focused on placements in Shetland Islands Council's Catering & Cleaning team, offering flexible hours aligned with school and nursery schedules.

- **Local economic challenges:** Shetland faces higher levels of young people in low-income families and a high cost of living, with significant barriers to employment including limited childcare and transport options.
- **Program design and referrals:** Participants were referred via the council's Employability Pathway, with placements tailored to individual needs and supported by Employability Support Workers to ensure appropriate location and hours.
- **Compensation and training:** Trainees were paid at Living Wage rates, received training for their roles, and were guaranteed an interview for relevant vacancies upon completion.
- **Support and preparation:** Participants underwent a light induction and online training through the Digital College, with ongoing guidance before, during, and after placements to facilitate career progression.
- **Funding and collaboration:** The project was funded by the Scottish Government's No One Left Behind Tackling Child Poverty initiative and the council's Catering & Cleaning budget, with additional support from Youth and Employability services.
- **Outcomes for participants:** Six parents started the project in October 2024; four completed it by March 2025, all securing places on the council's Relief Bank, with one obtaining regular work. Participants reported increased confidence, improved social skills, and better mental health.
- **Impact on family life:** Earning income helped families financially and mentally, allowing for better nutrition, debt reduction, and enhanced family experiences such as holidays. Participants also reported increased pride and healthier lifestyle choices.
- **Employer feedback and future plans:** The council's Catering & Cleaning team valued the program for addressing recruitment challenges and expressed willingness to continue and expand the scheme, with identified areas for improvement including longer lead-in times and enhanced induction processes. Discussions are underway to potentially broaden the program to other sectors like child and social care.

### Back to School Event *Services coming together to ease the cost of the school day*

Shetland Islands Council's Community Learning and Development, Sport and Leisure, Youth and Employability, and Anchor for Families Teams organised a 'Back to School Event' at the Staney Hill Hall in Lerwick in August. The event aimed to address the cost of the school day, drawing inspiration from a similar initiative in another local authority and training provided by the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG), which was attended by a local Community Involvement and Development Officer.

Various support services were available to help families prepare for the new school year. Workers from the Adult Learning team demonstrated healthy snack and packed lunch ideas, and assisted parents on how to use a new Parent Pay system for school lunches. Anchor for Families promoted their support services, while every person who attended received a SIC Children's Services Support for Pupils leaflet detailing benefits available to families. The Youth and Employability team promoted the Young Scot card explaining how it can be used to access discounts or free services and introduced their new employability scheme for parents. Sport & Leisure Services' Kit for All, which facilitates donation and collection of sports and outdoor wear to those who feel they need it was present, along with books from Shetland Library and clothes from Shetland Aid. Tesco donated school socks, t-shirts, packed lunches and bottles and NHS Oral Health team donated resources on oral health and free toothbrushes and toothpaste.

The Back to School event followed on from Community Planning and Development's summer pop-in events. Around 30 people attended, and everyone left with something, whether it was a t-shirt, school bag, or inspiration for making healthy lunches. The team felt that attendees were engaged, with questions about how to get involved in clubs and the activities promoted by Active Schools. There was positive feedback on the healthy snack and packed lunch ideas. One attendee commented that they were unsure if such events were 'for them', indicating a stigma or uncertainty around free events. Overall, the team felt that the event was successful and plan to promote it more widely next time.

Helping to ensure families can meet basic needs with free clothes and supplies can help with reducing the costs of living.



### Vocational Trips – Opportunities

The Shetland Islands Council implemented a targeted summer vocational program for young people aged 13-16 facing social, economic, and rural isolation barriers. The program aimed to connect participants with local employers, develop employability skills, and provide meaningful engagement beyond their immediate communities.

**Targeted youth engagement:** The program focused on 10 pupils from diverse backgrounds experiencing socioeconomic and rural inequalities, including some with additional support needs, to enhance their social and learning activities during school holidays.

**Employer visits and skill development:** Over six weeks, participants engaged with various Shetland employers across industries such as tourism, aviation, animal care, and creative arts, gaining insights into careers, business operations, and pathways while building networking and meta skills.

**Social and life skills enhancement:** Youth workers accompanied the pupils, facilitating overnight stays focused on team working, cooking, and social skills development, providing a safe environment for relationship building and respite from home challenges.

**Positive outcomes and future planning:** The program increased participants' confidence, social skills, and employability knowledge, awarded them a Hi 5 Award accreditation, and informed the design of future skill-focused summer activities with continued partnership collaboration.

## We reduce the impact of poverty on children and families

	Source, next update expected	Pre-pandemic?	Previous	Current	
1. Free School Meals uptake (Primary and Secondary)	School Healthy Living Survey: school meal uptake and PE provision statistics, Scottish Government (Next update –2025)	2019 Primary – 80.4% Secondary – 52.7%	2023 Primary - 89.1% Secondary – 57.0%	2024 Primary - 87.2% Secondary - 69.9%	↓ ↑
2. Children living in low income families	Children in low income families: local area statistics, UK Government (Next update – September 2025?)	2019/20 – 510 (relative) 371 (absolute)	2022/23 – 485 (relative) 413 (absolute)	2023/24 – 472 (relative) 386 (absolute)	↓
3. P7-S6 going to bed or school hungry (Always or often)	Health and Wellbeing Census Scotland, Scottish government (Next update - ?)	Not available	2021/22 - 8.6%	No update	
4. Number of eligible two year olds who are receiving Early Learning and Childcare.	Summary statistics for schools in Scotland, Scottish Government (Next update – December 2025)	Not available	2023 – 52%	2024 - 75%	↑

#### 4. Improvement in children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-24	Update 2024-25
<p>Identifying those in need of support and improving attendance through a test of change improvement model.</p>	<p>Report on the test of change.</p>	<p>The Anderson High School began the development of a project to support improved attendance - see extract below.</p>	<p>With the use of Local Authority Strategic Equity Funding to deploy a temporary clerical assistant in the Pupil Support Department in the Anderson High School, we have continued to support the Pupil Support Department with their period-by-period duty role, tracking and responding to the few young people, in the school, who are finding it challenging to attend classes.</p> <p>Moreover, with this temporary additional clerical provision in the Pupil Support Department, SEEMIS class attendance registers are now regularly updated during the school day when pupils sign out from school, thus reducing discrepancies on the attendance registers and the number of phone calls staff are having to make to the Pupil Support Department to follow-up on missing pupils</p> <p>Qualitative evidence from Pupil Support staff, in respect of this additional clerical support, has been universally positive with staff able to focus on pastoral tasks and not get caught up with as many clerical issues.</p>

			Staff, across the school, have also commented on the considerably reduced number of attendance discrepancies that they are having to report as they are being addressed during the day.
Reducing the number of children with below 80% attendance.	The number of children and young people with less than 80% attendance, core + measure in the National Improvement Plan.	The number of children with less than 80% attendance has increased this year from 153 to 193 (missing the 2024 target of 145)  The publication of Attendance guidance and further, sustained work in schools to support children attend school is expected to have an impact on this indicator in 2024/25. The Anderson High School began the development of a project to support improved attendance - see extract below.	This is reported on in the National Improvement Framework Annual Report and Plan: The Ambition - Excellence and Equity for Shetland's Learners Report; CS-35-25, Appendix 1.
Understanding use of alcohol and other drugs, including vaping, to inform action.	Reduction in the number of pupils smoking and vaping.  The Warwickshire-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing survey annual results, core + measure in the National Improvement Plan.  Widespread sharing of local peer research outputs, evidence this has informed decision making.	The Open Project worked with the local Alcohol and Drug Partnership to develop and deliver the Alcohol and other drugs peer research project – an extract of findings is included below.  Healthy Shetland team developed a Vaping workshop to share health evidence with young people in local schools – this was developed in response to concerns from young people and school staff and was well received.	OPEN Alcohol and other Drugs report brought about the creation of the Live Working Group bringing together strategic change-makers and young people from Shetland to create actions to reduce stigma around alcohol and drug use. The actions created by the group are guided by the Ideas for Change which are the recommendations from the Alcohol and Other Drugs Peer Research project  All members of the live working group are viewed as colleagues, not as young people and professionals.  This is to emphasize the equity that the group aims to model. The group are collectively passionate about creating positive change

			within Shetland, working together to share information, opportunities and challenging stigma both as a group and as individuals.
To implement the Active Shetland strategy.	Increase number of children who are a healthy weight in P1.  Availability of and attendance at FAST sessions.	Healthy Weight in P1 data is included at Priority 1 (this has improved from pre-pandemic levels).  To support young people who may not be in schools or have access to usual Active Schools sessions there are weekly 'FAST' (Fitness, Attitude, Skills and Teamwork) sessions throughout the year. An average of 8-10 people attend each session across 2023-24. The Sport and Physical Activity Officer who runs the sessions works with other local organisations, including the Bridges project, to support participation.  Improving Accessibility and Reducing Inequality in Play Parks – case study included below.	Sports Development Coordinator and Support Worker at Ability Shetland delivering inclusive activities in schools and at youth groups to encourage sport and physical activity for all abilities. Providing equipment to ensure all young people have access to health initiatives such as Bikeability, as well as 1:1 support for children where there are barriers to participation in sport and physical activity.
Continue to support and work in partnership with key Third Sector Organisations supporting children and young people: Mind Your Head, OPEN, relationship Scotland, Ability Shetland, Shetland Women's Aid, Shetland Bereavement Support Service, Autism Understanding, VAS Shetland Befriending Scheme,	Funding and staff time from partners.  Number of children and young people accessing support within the Third Sector Organisations  Outcomes for children and young people having accessed support  Number of peer education workshops delivered in schools.	We continue to have strong, positive relationships with our local third sector partners, this includes working together to understand and respond to need, commissioning where funding is available, and developing to delivery to meet local need. Some examples of work, and outcomes both measureable and feedback, are shared below from Mind Your Head - Well Youth and Shetland Women's Aid. See relevant organisations' annual reports.	15 Third Sector Organisations Commissioned in 24/25 and other grant funded to support a range of activity supporting Third Sector Groups  <a href="#">Previous grant awards – Shetland Islands Council</a>  Supported in publication of Shetland in Statistics 2024 – Third Sector / volunteering rates / grant funding secured

Shetland Compass Centre and VAS Shetland Carers		Full details about peer education workshops are available in the <a href="#">OPEN annual report</a> – 80 workshops were delivered in school across Shetland, on the topics of: mental health, change, grooming, positive relationships, sexual health, the sexual health clinic, alcohol, drugs, online safety.	<a href="#">Shetland in Statistics – Shetland Islands Council</a>  OPEN: Full details about OPEN’s peer education workshops are available in the <a href="#">OPEN Annual Report and Accounts 2025</a>  102 workshops with 1,728 S1-S4 pupils in all 7 junior/high schools in Shetland.
Partnership approach to emotional wellbeing and mental health.	Reduce inappropriate referrals to tier four services, informed by referral/service activity audit  CYP experience of services (case studies, stories and service outcome measures)	A referral review group is established and continues to work well. Some feedback and outcomes from the MYH - Well Youth service are shared below, this will be expanded to other elements of services in future annual reports.	A referral review group is established and continues to work well.
Neurodevelopmental pathway, change implementation and identification of resource	CYP and family experience of services, waiting times for assessment and support.	Significantly hampered by lack of resource to meet increasing demand – presentation of local and national evidence and situation to various groups this year to support understanding of local challenges. We will continue to work on this over the remaining years of this plan.  See EMBRACE film project below to show success when teams have the time and connections to approach support differently.	There is a particular risk around capacity for management of assessment and support for people with Neurodevelopmental conditions.  Work to improve support for people on waiting lists is underway, and options for how best to create a sustainable Neurodevelopmental pathway is ongoing, but capacity challenges continue.

Improvement in children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing

	Source, next update expected	Pre-pandemic?	Previous	Current	
1. CAMHS Rate of Referrals, and waiting times	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) waiting times, Public Health Scotland (Next update – December 2025)	Oct – Dec 2019 Referrals – 7.7 per 1,000 people  Wait (0-18 weeks) – Only available for ‘Islands’	Apr – Jun 2024 Referrals - 6.1 per 1,000 people  Wait (0-18 weeks) – 84.1%	Apr-Jun 2025 Referrals - 7.7 per 1,000 people  Wait (0-18 weeks) - 100%	↑  ↑
2. Strengths and difficulties questionnaire within normal range (S2-S6)	Health and Wellbeing Census Scotland, Scottish government (Next update - ?)	Not available	2021/22 - 64.3%	No update	
3. Drinking alcohol once a week or more (S2 and S4)	Health and Wellbeing Census Scotland, Scottish government (Next update - ?)	Not available	2021/22 – 14.4%	No update	
4. Do you have an adult in your life who you can trust and talk to about any personal problems? (P5-S6)  (Yes, always/sometimes)	Health and Wellbeing Census Scotland, Scottish government (Next update - ?)	Not available	2021/22 - 91.4%	No update	
5. Even if I’m having a difficult time I feel like I will be ok (P5-S6)  (Strongly agree/agree)	Health and Wellbeing Census Scotland, Scottish government (Next update - ?)	Not available	2021/22 - 58.9%	No update	
6. I am happy with my body and the way I look (P7-S6)  (Strongly agree/agree)	Health and Wellbeing Census Scotland, Scottish government (Next update - ?)	Not available	2021/22 - 44.5%	No update	

## 5. We Keep the Promise for our Care Experienced children and young people

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-24	Update 2024-25
Closing the gap between the educational outcomes of care-experienced young people and their peers.	% of young people who left school with one or more qualifications at SCQF level 5. % of young people who left school with one or more qualifications at SCQF level 6.	2024 school leaver data will be available in Spring 2025	2024 school leaver data included below, 2025 leaver data will be updated spring 2026.
Close the attendance gap for care experienced children and young people.	CORE+ measure in The Ambition: Excellence and Equity Plan.	We have not met our target for looked after children. We will continue to monitor and support attendance for this small group of pupils. (2024 target was a gap of 2.6 percentage points, 2024 actual result was a gap of 3 percentage points – note these are very small numbers of individuals in Shetland and percentage data should be interpreted accordingly)	This is reported on in the National Improvement Framework Annual Report and Plan: The Ambition - Excellence and Equity for Shetland's Learners Report; CS-35-25, Appendix 1.
Develop the revised work placement offer.  Supporting young people with barriers to onward positive destinations.	Number of care-experienced and Care Experienced Young People who are not in Education, Employment, Training. Number and % of care leavers aged 17-21 in further education, training or employment.	Data below – work to prioritise opportunities appropriately is underway and will be taken forward in 2024/25 session.	Implementation of work placements is ongoing. Work placement co-ordinator has now met with all Junior High and High schools.  Work placements remain available for all senior phase pupils.  Work placement opportunities are currently sitting at 159 live placements across Shetland. There have been 99 placements during 2024/25.  Developing Young Workforce has implement partnership meetings in all Junior High and High

schools. Working with our key partners to align opportunities and plan more effective delivery. Through these we have started the process of monitoring the delivery of Career Education Outcomes.

Data extracted from SDS Participation Portal...

Number of care-experienced and Care Experienced Young People who are not in Education, Employment, Training.

Care Experienced 7  
For period 2024/25  
2 FTE  
1 PTE  
3 Other training  
1 Unemployed

Number and % of care leavers aged 17-21 in further education, training or employment.

Care Experienced total 29 (86.20%).  
For period 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24 & 2024/25

1 School Pupil – in transition  
3 Higher Education  
1 Further Education  
8 Full Time Employment  
4 Part Time Employment  
1 Employed  
3 Other Formal Training  
4 PSD (Social & Health)  
2 Unemployed

			2 Economically Inactive
Throughcare and aftercare team supported by relevant partners ensure that all care leavers have a positive transition into adulthood.  Shetland Children's Partnership will work together to meet the needs of all children and young people here in Shetland.	Number of care leavers supported by After Care service. % of Eligible for after care with up-to-date pathway plan. Reduce the number of out of authority placements.	We currently have no out of authority placements, other than one young person in secure care which we could not provide in Shetland	Shetland does not currently have any looked after children placed out of the authority. A policy is being developed to support post-school transitions for young people with additional support needs to improve transition experiences.
Ensure children's voices are at the centre of decision making.	% of children and young people who take up Who Cares Scotland advocacy service.	Advocacy is offered to all – local member of staff leaving post early 2024/25 and planning for this gap in provision is underway.	Advocacy is offered to all
Reduce placement moves for children and young people.	Percentage of care experienced children with more than 1 placement in the past year. Percentage of care experienced children with 3 or more placements in the past year.	This is minimised as far as possible and circumstances allow. More than 1 placement in last year: 2022/23 15.8%, 2020/21 23.1% (LGBF)	This is minimised as far as possible and circumstances allow.
Ensure families have choice and control when services are involved in their lives.	Number of families who are referred to Family Group Decision Making.	No data available yet	9 Families referred for Family Group Decision Making. 5 progressed to family meeting(s) or a significant piece of work undertaken
Ensure the workforce across all partners are supported to have the correct skills and knowledge for their role.	Number of staff trained in using a trauma informed approach.	Work is ongoing to collate meaningful data across organisations – Trauma Informed Practice Strategic Group are reviewing attendees of STILT. Work also underway to share and promote trauma informed training options across Shetland to support appropriate access.	See workforce section – work to provide and offer variety of training opportunities and support for trauma-lens approach has progressed this year, and uptake continues to improve.

## Family Group Decision Making - feedback from Families

### Post family meeting feedback:

*"The family meeting was good for helping other people in the family with communication and knowing what's happening. There's less chance of people not knowing what people are doing. Everyone knows what their jobs are and it means they are not stepping on each other's toes. I also know what people are capable of and everyone knows what people are capable of so we don't think someone can help with something that they can't"*

One participant fed back at the end of their FGDM process that they would recommend FGDM to anyone considering it, and said that although people might think they're communicating well, bringing everyone together at one time can improve communication.

**Feedback from a "significant piece of work"** (work which does not culminate in a full family meeting but involves gathering and sharing family views in a way which supports some form of family decision making/planning, and in the below feedback case facilitating a 1:1 discussion between two family members):

The young person fed back that they would definitely recommend FGDM to others when decisions or plans need to be made and that the significant piece of work had helped with bonding with other family members and arranging meetings to plan this.

	Source, next update expected	Pre-pandemic?	Previous	Current	
1. Number and % of care leavers aged 17-21 in further education, training or employment.  <i>(Number and percentage of young people eligible for aftercare services that are in employment, education or training)</i>	Children's Social Work Statistics, Scottish Government (Next update – April 2026)	2019/20 – 17 (57%)	2022/23 - 17 (55%)	2023/24 – 19 (58%)	↑
2. Attendance, attainment and participation gap for LAC  (Attainment - 1 or more qualification at SCQF level 4 )	Education Outcomes for Looked After Children, Scottish Government (Next update – August 2026)	2018/19 Attendance – 90% Attainment – 100%	2022/23 Attendance- 89.3% Attainment - 100%	2023/24 Attendance-88.2% Attainment – 66.7%	↓ ↓
3. Number of care leavers supported by After Care service.	Children's Social Work Statistics, Scottish Government (Next update – March 2026)	2019/20 – 26 (30 eligible)	2022/23 – 21 (31 eligible)	2023/24 – 25 (33 eligible)	↑
4. % of Eligible for after care with up-to-date pathway plan.	Children's Social Work Statistics, Scottish Government (Next update – March 2026)	2019/20 – 17%	2022/23 – 85%	2023/24 – 100%	↑

## 6. We protect our most vulnerable children and young people

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-24	Update 2024-25
<p>Explore ways to improve participation of care experienced young people in the work of Shetland Public Protection Committee (SPPC).</p>	<p>Feedback from Meids Group workshops</p>	<p>The Meids board, working together with the #ShetlandCrew and local professionals, have supported work on transitioning into a first home and delivering awareness training sessions to schools staff about care experience.</p> <p>Care Day 2024 was used as an opportunity to sign the “Meids pledge” to be a good corporate parent – image shared below – and to showcase some of the excellent work Care Experience people have done to change experiences of Care in Shetland.</p>	<p>The OPEN Project participated in the SPPC development day to present their findings from a peer youth project regarding the impact of drug and alcohol use locally. Open continue to deliver Child Protection Training to all Secondary 1 pupils across Shetland annually.</p> <p>The Lead Officer - SPPC attends OPEN working group exploring how we bridge the gap between youth voice being heard by professionals who can act on their concerns and views.</p>
<p>Review the Shetland Public Protection Committee Training Strategy to ensure we are supporting staff across the Partnership to keep our children safe.</p>	<p>Revised Strategy in place which aligns and makes best use of available national resources. Training requirements for staff agreed and implemented across the Partnership.</p>	<p>To be taken forward 2024-25</p>	<p>The Shetland Inter Agency Training Sub Committee has been revived with a focus on all protection issues. Easier access to a training calendar is available on the Safer Shetland website.</p> <p>Additional level 3 CP sessions have been delivered to support an identified need. A refresh of CP training is planned for 25-26 across all 3 levels.</p>
<p>Complete the revision of our Partnership Child Protection Procedures, and all agreed supplementary Protocols, to ensure they fully comply with the 2021</p>	<p>Revised Child Protection Procedures in place. Impact understood via qualitative feedback</p>	<p>Revised <a href="#">Shetland Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures</a> were completed and published in 2023-24.</p>	<p>Visits to school cluster meetings have been carried out to ensure the updated procedures have been embedded and</p>

National Guidance on Child Protection in Scotland, including the 2023 revisions.	through the Integrated Children's Services Quality Assurance Group.	Feedback on and impact of these will be shared in subsequent reports.	allow for positive conversations to support Child Protection and Early Intervention.
Support Shetland Domestic Abuse Partnership to deliver on the six Equally Safe Outcomes locally through training and publicity and awareness raising.	Shetland Domestic Abuse Partnership is required to report to the Scottish Government on Delivering Equally Safe. We will use this information to measure progress with this priority.	Shetland Domestic Abuse Partnership renamed Shetland Violence Against Women Partnership (SVAWP) – there is significant crossover in membership between SVAWP and CSP, so information sharing works well. Equally Safe information and related training hosted on Safer Shetland website.	New Gender Based Violence level 2 training has been created and launched at the SPPC development day, now being rolled out across partnerships.
To develop our use of local and national data on child protection to better support the work of the Public Protection Partnership in Shetland.	We will monitor local trends in child protection data against nationally published data, and use this information to inform strategic plans.	Ongoing – challenges in using this due to small numbers locally, however working relationships built through sharing and use of data is supportive of positive practice and improved planning.	Nationally some Local Authorities are piloting more detailed data gathering processes including capturing if a child has additional support needs, it is likely this will become Scotland wide in 25-26.
Work with HSCP colleagues to improve future planning for people with complex care needs (individual transition, and system planning)	User experience of transition between children's and adult services  Evidence of service planning informed by Children's services (e.g. adult social care/housing)	See 'Dynamic Support Register' example below	Dynamic Support Register remains in place. Work with carers and families has helped to inform HSCP Accommodation work which is underway.  Work on transitions to be progressed.
We work together to understand need and develop sustainable solutions to offer clarity and continuity – current focus Neurodevelopmental Pathway	Implementation of recommendations from ND project (note this is funding dependent, and identifying resource will be a considerable challenge)	Significantly hampered by lack of resource to meet increasing demand – SLT CAMHS and national rep presented to various groups to help understand challenges this year. We will continue to build on this in the coming years of this plan.	Significantly hampered by lack of resource to meet increasing demand – work ongoing in NHS to explore suitable and sustainable options for improving ability to meet demand.

*We protect our most vulnerable children and young people – data update*

	Source, next update expected	Pre-pandemic?	Previous	Current	
1. Rate on CP register	Children’s Social Work Statistics, Scottish Government (Next update – March 2026)	2019 - 2.9 per 1,000 children	2023 – 4.9 per 1,000 children	2024 – 3.6 per 1,000 children	↓
2. Rate of LAC (as a % of the 0-17 population)	Children’s Social Work Statistics, Scottish Government (Next update – March 2026)	2020 – 28 (0.6%)	2023 – 38 (0.8%)	2024 – 31 (1.4%)	↓ (↑)
3. No of CP registrations, de-registrations and case conference	Children’s Social Work Statistics, Scottish Government (Next update – March 2026)	2019/20 Registrations - 11 Deregistration - 14 Initial and pre-birth case conference - 15	2022/23 Registrations - 23 Deregistration - 17 Initial and pre-birth case conference - 25	2023/24 Registrations - 20 Deregistration - 23 Initial and pre-birth case conference - 28	↓ ↑ ↑
4. Young people transitioning between services have (a plan? A positive experience?)	Children’s Social Work Statistics, Scottish Government (Next update – March 2026)	2019/20 Pathway plan – 17% Pathway coordinator – 17%	2022/23 Pathway plan – 85% Pathway coordinator – 85% No care leavers in time period	2023/24 Pathway plan – 100% Pathway coordinator – 100% 4 new care leavers in time period	

## 7. Placing the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of our work

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-24	Update 2024-25
<p>Develop a framework to ensure that the views of children and young people have influenced and shaped service delivery and future planning.</p>	<p>Evidence that children and young people are engaging in activities that allow them to have a say in the development of services that they access (or may access in the future).</p> <p>Case studies of how services have changed because of the contributions of children and young people.</p>	<p>Continue to develop – examples of use of engagement activities include sharing of alcohol peer research, continued development of Mind Your Head Well Youth service. Shetland Youth Voice collaborated with Shetland Arts for a Mareel Takeover event. Two new Shetland MSYPs elected in March 2024 – first election since 2018.</p>	<p>Charities develop/evolve from need identified in the community, collate identified need to help with funding application processes.</p> <p>OPEN Aspirations, Interests and Creative Pursuits project aimed to identify what young people enjoy doing, their pastimes and which leisure activities they take part in to explore the impact of participation identifying barriers and recommendations.</p> <p>118 young people were involved in the Aspirations, Interests and Creative Pursuits project. The report was sent to organisations within the community identified by the team and with the wider community through social media. <a href="#">Link to the report.</a></p> <p>Young people taking an increased role in decision making and evidence gathering in issues including Mobile Phone use in schools, SIC's Corporate Plan, NHS Recruitment and Shetland Pride event. Shetland Youth Voice (who won a Young Scot Award for Participation) hosted Transport Forum with</p>

			Scottish Government and senior elected members present.
Development of performance indicators to monitor progress of UNCRC across all partners.	Self-evaluation activities completed by all partners and a set of performance indicators developed.	To be progressed – engagement and involvement in readiness phase is essential groundwork	Promoting use of UNCRC Framework and Improvement Service supporting materials to Shetland Public bodies. Engagement must be across whole organisations.
Undertake strategic planning ahead of national advice on UNCRC implementation.	Working group across partners to establish plan for the implementation of UNCRC.	See narrative on readiness and preparation.  Engagement sessions taken place involving Elected members, young people and relevant staff members. Input from Improvement Service, Scottish Youth Parliament, My Rights My Say, Together Scotland and Children’s Parliament (See Case Study on UNCRC Rights Ready focus days.)	Workshops on UNCRC shared with Central Officers group and NHS Executive on self reflection tools and next year’s reporting expectations to Scottish Government. Work being developed on ‘joining dots’ between The Promise, Trauma, Family Wellbeing and Child Poverty with UNCRC.
Schools engagement with Rights Respecting Schools Award, and UNCRC Professional Development	Number of schools engaged in RRSA, and/or having completed UNCRC self-evaluation  % Shetland school staff having had an introduction to UNCRC	In November 2023 45% of Shetland Schools were engaged with the award, as reported UNICEF RRSA – an increase of 2 schools from the year before (38% of all schools were engaged at November 2022).  In Scotland 75% of schools are engaged with the programme.  CPD offer on UNCRC and Childrens Rights offered with increasing focus on Early Learning & Childcare and ASN.	In July 2025, 16 schools status as registered with award although 9 classed as ‘actively engaging’. Changes to national funding means it is no longer free.  UNCRC CPD sessions offered universally and with specialist offer to ELC settings again. School visits by Education Scotland and Childrens Parliament as part of August 2024 Inservice.
Implement and embed CIRCLE across all schools and settings. All partners to have an	% of schools and settings staff trained.  % of schools and settings staff implementing CIRCLE.	See test of change summary above – to be reported in full in NIF report. % of staff	

understanding of CIRCLE as a universal approach to inclusion.		trained data not yet available but will be reported in future reports.	
Schools and settings are implementing our supported interventions to ensure inclusion for all.	<p>Feedback from audits and other self-evaluation activities.</p> <p>All partners have an understanding of these approaches when engaging with children, young people and their families and school and setting staff.</p>	To be progressed.	
We communicate effectively about UNCRC and the role of the Shetland community in upholding children's rights, and advocate for a focus on UNCRC among colleagues in adult and universal services	Evidence from implementation of Shetland Partnership Plan (particularly Tackling Inequalities through Kindness strand)	"Tackling Inequalities through Kindness" strand has developed into "Compassionate Shetland" through initial engagement work, and will be reported as it progresses.	Compassionate Shetland has seen Staff CPD work engaging with Human Library and concept of 'unjudging'. Resources for community and staff teams been created around people's role in tackling stigma and its impact on people we work with and live alongside.

## Shetland Youth Voice – Transport Summit - *Young people leading change in Shetland's transport system*

On 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025, the Shetland Youth Voice Transport Summit brought together 38 young people and 14 key partners aboard the MV Hjatland to tackle the top youth-voted priority: Transport. The event was designed to give young people a direct voice on bus, ferry, and air travel issues — and to ensure decision-makers heard them first-hand.

### Background and purpose

Transport was voted as the Shetland Youth Voice's number one priority in October 2024. Members identified it as essential to education, employment, and social life, as well as influencing whether young people stay in Shetland long-term. The Summit aimed to explore the challenges and co-design solutions with transport leaders, from local councillors to the Chief Executive of Transport Scotland.

### Activities and delivery

The event featured four themed workshops:

- Transport Connectivity in Shetland – mapping journeys, identifying gaps in timetables, and discussing integration of bus and ferry services.
- Transport Issues With Cllr. Moraig Lyall – exploring accessibility, affordability, reliability, and safety.
- School Bus Transport with Brenda Leask (Executive Manager, Schools) – sharing positives and tackling negatives such as overcrowding, behaviour, and vehicle condition.
- Air Travel with Loganair – discussing costs, reliability, and proposals for better youth discounts.

Partners included senior SIC staff, national transport officials, and operators such as Loganair and NorthLink Ferries.

### Impact

- Clear priorities: Three headline recommendations emerged — extend bus schedules (especially Sundays), improve young person discounts for off-island travel, and enhance safety on late-night buses.
- Council engagement: SYV members presented their findings to SIC's Environment & Transport Committee, as well as to Scottish Government Minister for Transport and Connectivity, Jim Fairlie MSP. This secured praise from councillors and a commitment to explore potential changes.
- Media coverage: The event and findings featured in Shetland News, raising public awareness of young people's transport concerns.
- Youth empowerment: Feedback scores showed high enjoyment (8.1/10) and strong perceived learning (7.9/10), with participants reporting greater confidence to speak up (8.0/10).

“Well done to Shetland Youth Voice and supporting partners for such an innovative event. It was great to see young people, decision makers and transport providers onboard MV Hjatland whilst berthed in Lerwick Harbour coming together to share thoughts and discuss ideas for the future. I look forward to seeing the reports from the transport & connectivity summit and ensuring these are fed through to existing structures to shape services and future developments” - Martin Summers Team Leader of SIC Youth & Employability Service

### Learning and next steps

The Summit demonstrated the value of holding youth-led, topic-specific events in partnership with decision-makers. Next steps include following up with SIC and transport providers on agreed actions, continuing to monitor progress, and feeding recommendations into ongoing studies such as the Inter-Island Transport Connectivity programme.

	Source, next update expected	Pre-pandemic?	Previous	Current	
1. Adults are good at listening to what I have to say (P5-S6) (Agree)	Health and Wellbeing Census Scotland, Scottish government (Next update - unknown)	Not available	2021/22 - 68.3%	No update	
2. Adults are good at taking what I say into account (P5-S6) (Agree)	Health and Wellbeing Census Scotland, Scottish government (Next update - unknown)	Not available	2021/22 - 56.8%	No update	
3. Schools participating in RRSA	UNICEF RRSA		November 2022 38%	November 2023 45%	↑
4. School staff undertaking UNCRC professional development	Reliable data not currently available				

## 8. Our teams are nurtured and have opportunities to develop

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-24	Update 2024-25
<p>Input into development of Trauma-Informed working as a Shetland approach – including via steering group, and sharing learning through services and teams.</p>	<p>Uptake of Scottish Trauma Informed Leaders training</p> <p>Uptake of trauma-informed practice training – principally National Trauma Transformation Programme and Policy Hub Scotland resources</p> <p>Number of services undertaking trauma-lens service self-assessment and implementing changes</p> <p>Shetland Islands Councils will monitor how many new/updated policies are viewed with a trauma lens</p> <p>Children, Young-people, family and carer experience of services is improved (service satisfaction/experience measures to be agreed)</p>	<p>Trauma informed Shetland strategy group established and meeting regularly.</p> <p>Connecting in with national work led by the improvement service, including the recently published national learning report.</p> <p>Local statement of intent has been developed and will be finalised soon, this includes reference to the Trauma Informed principles.</p> <p>Trauma training pathway developed and shared widely across the partnership.</p> <p>Training has been made available on the Safer Shetland website and is being promoted by partners locally.</p> <p>Shetland Islands Council now have 6 trainers who can deliver Trauma Skilled training package. Training implementation plan will be developed and an initial pilot will take place during January 2025.</p> <p>Local strategic group has been considering how best to utilise skills and leadership of those taking part in Scottish Trauma Informed Leaders Training, Shetland have had 60+ people access this in past 4 years.</p>	<p>VAS staff undertaken Trauma Training relevant to their role and responsibility</p> <p>Market House refurbished taking a trauma informed approach to colours and meeting room spaces</p> <p>VAS supporting trial of Trauma Training to be delivered in the community in 2025.</p> <p>Trauma Informed strategic group continues to meet and have progressed local partnership approach to improving awareness and trauma-informed practice. This includes sharing and providing training opportunities, and supporting services taking a trauma-lens approach to physical environment, practice and communications.</p>

		Areas are currently being identified to undertake trauma-lens self-assessment in 2024-25, including identifying any barriers there might be to undertaking the trauma lens	
<p>Sharing key learning to spread existing work and good practice, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anchor evaluation</li> <li>• HENRY approach</li> <li>• Speech and Language Therapy universal input</li> <li>• LIAM (Let's Introduce Anxiety Management)</li> </ul>	<p>Our workforce are confident in our shared approach to support – strengths focused, early action, relationship based.</p> <p>Review Whole Family Support self-assessment to understand development/change.</p> <p>Uptake of locally delivered training (HENRY, SLT, LIAM)</p>	<p>Continuing work on clarity of messaging and approach. Anchor evaluation shared and reviewed with Children's Partnership and 'Early Action' groups, supporting this learning and linking the work to Shetland Partnership approach.</p> <p>Local training delivery continues, with better understanding across organisations of what is available. Example of implementation of LIAM training shared above.</p>	A learning workstream will be developed as part of Shetland's Fairer Futures Partnership (see case study above).
<p>We have a culture of learning and support that enables development in our services, recognises the impact of work on our staff, and promotes the wellbeing of everyone in our teams, including using supervision and access to CPD/development opportunities.</p>	<p>Support and promotion of staff wellbeing agenda across partner organisations</p> <p>Case study reporting of good practice within annual report</p>	<p>To gather case studies throughout 2024/25 to include in next annual report.</p> <p>Vicarious Trauma and Pro-Active Self-Care workshop was again made available in 2023-24, with good participation and positive feedback. This workshop will be made available again in 2024-25 and where appropriate managers will be supported with embedding the outputs from this workshop.</p> <p>Shetland Islands Council are recruiting a Workforce Wellbeing Officer.</p> <p>Feedback from staff through existing surveys will be explored for current trends and identification of support required for staff.</p>	<p>Workforce Wellbeing Officer in post and progressing work in this area.</p> <p>See case-study below re: Trauma-Informed workforce.</p>



## Trauma-informed Workforce

Shetland Islands Council and NHS Shetland have prioritised building a trauma-informed and responsive workforce, recognising that trauma—especially in childhood—can have lasting effects on health, education, and social outcomes. With 1 in 7 Scottish adults reporting four or more adverse events before age 18, the initiative aims to ensure staff can recognise trauma and respond in ways that minimise distress and build trust, particularly for children and families.

Central to the approach is the understanding that trauma can create invisible barriers to accessing services. Children and families may struggle to feel safe, manage emotions, or engage with support systems. The programme emphasises the importance of positive relationships in recovery, whether with family, friends, or professionals. Staff wellbeing is also prioritised, with efforts to prevent vicarious trauma and burnout.

In June 2024, six Council staff completed the NHS Education for Scotland (NES) Trauma Skilled – Transforming Connections Train the Trainer course. These trainers delivered their first sessions in February 2025 to 39 staff from services that regularly interact with children and families, including Maternity, Pupil Support Teachers, Family Support Workers, Youth Workers, and Social Workers. The training focused on building and repairing relationships, supporting reactions to trauma, self-care, and listening to trauma experiences.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. After training, 97% of participants agreed it would change how they work with people affected by trauma, and confidence in helping people understand trauma's impact rose from 24% to 94%. Participants commented:

- “Excellent and delivered by knowledgeable and approachable trainers.”
- “Everyone should attend this!”

The pilot's success has led to plans for further embedding trauma-informed principles and expanding training to more services, ensuring staff are equipped to support children and families affected by trauma.

Additionally, staff attended “Help for the Helpers – Vicarious Trauma and Self Care” workshops in March 2025, with 49 participants. These workshops covered empathy, signs of vicarious trauma, personal resources, and practical self-care strategies. Feedback included:

- “The delivery was excellent and very clear. It's an important reminder that we need to look after ourselves and make time to practice self-care.”
- “I enjoyed the tools – but really enjoyed learning more about what Vicarious Trauma is and how it displays physically.”
- “The activities were excellent and allowed me an opportunity to reflect.”

The next phase will see trainers supporting the Trauma Lens approach, involving people with lived experience—including children and families—to improve access, relationships, and recovery support. The programme continues to evolve, with ongoing opportunities for staff development and wellbeing.