

**VOLUNTARY**

**ACTION**

*North*

*Lanarkshire*

North Lanarkshire Community and Voluntary Sector

# Children, Young People and Families Strategy

**2022-2025**



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to:

- set out how north Lanarkshire's community and voluntary sector will work together and with the public and business sectors to improve the lives of children, young people and families in North Lanarkshire
- support achievement of the ambitions and outcomes in key partnership strategies, including:
  - Plan for North Lanarkshire and linked strategies including:
  - Tackling Poverty Strategy
  - ACT Now Plan – Action Together on Climate
  - North Lanarkshire's Children's Services Commissioning Plan
  - North Lanarkshire's Health and Social Care Community Solutions Strategy and Commissioning Plan
  - Lanarkshire Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy
  - Lanarkshire Children's Health Plan

## 1.2 Development Process

This strategy has been developed by members of North Lanarkshire's Community and Voluntary Sector thematic network for children, young people and families supported by VANL including:

- discussions with other key stakeholders, including Community Solutions Programme and Improving Children's Services Group of North Lanarkshire's Children's Services Partnership.
- discussions with network members including a review and development workshop in August 2019 and discussions at network meetings in October and November 2019, with final agreement scheduled for February 2020. Publication was paused, however, due to the COVID 19 pandemic. The Strategy was refreshed in spring 2021 to include reference to COVID-19 challenges and other key issues and published in May 2021 as three year strategic for 2021-24



## 2. Children, Young People and Families in North Lanarkshire

### 2.1 Population

The North Lanarkshire local authority area has the fourth largest population in Scotland with around 340,000 people (2017 figures), of which

- 18,600 (5.5%) are children under five
- 40,600 (12%) are children aged five – fourteen
- 49,490(11.9%) are children and young people aged 15 – 24 years

There are also 850 care experienced children and young people in North Lanarkshire.

(Source: North Lanarkshire Partnership Children's Services Plan 2017 – 2020 and North Lanarkshire Council)

### 2.2. Strengths

We have many strengths in North Lanarkshire in terms of our children, young people and families as illustrated below.

- The findings from the ScotCen Realigning Children's Services Wellbeing Survey in North Lanarkshire 2017, shows that most of our children and young people have a positive view about their lives and most primary school age children say they have good health and enjoy school.
- Educational attainment and positive destinations for young people are improving in North Lanarkshire. For example:
  - the literacy attainment gap in Scottish Attainment Challenge schools has reduced by 1.7% from 2016/17 to 2017/18.
  - 97.4% of all pupils achieved 1 or more qualification at SCQF level 3 or above in 2017 compared to a Scotland average of 98.7%.
  - 91.8% of North Lanarkshire's pupils enter a positive destination upon leaving school (2016/17) compared to a Scotland average of 93.7%. (Source: North Lanarkshire Council)
- We have a positive youth volunteering culture in North Lanarkshire with 1150 children and young people (11-25) participating in the Saltire Awards and many parents and other adults volunteer to support children and young people through community-based activities including play, sport and youth groups and parent councils at schools. (The Scottish Household Survey indicates that around 75,000 adults volunteer in North Lanarkshire.)  
(Source Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire and Scottish Household Survey)
- Many community and voluntary organisations provide vital and valued support to vulnerable children, young people and families in North Lanarkshire, including services funded through the Community Solutions Programme. Children, young people and families benefit from many excellent public services, including education, housing, health and social care. are independently assessed by social care and social housing regulators, with many receiving high scores on quality measures



## 2.3 Challenges and Support Needs and Priorities

Despite the above and other strengths, children, young people and families in North Lanarkshire experience considerable challenges, which provide us with the focus for improvement priorities.

- The future life and health of all our children and young people are at risk from the climate emergency which the 2018 NHS Lanarkshire Director of Public Health Report stated was the biggest risk to people's future health and wellbeing.
- Child Poverty is a major risk factor for poor health, social and educational outcomes for children and young people. Unfortunately, within NL:
  - 24.9% of children live in poverty
  - 32% of children live in low-income households
  - 41% live in a household of material deprivation.
  - Almost 30% of children identified to some extent that money was a worry for their parents (How are you doing survey – members of children's parliament MCP)
  - This is due to a mix of factors including low pay and reducing social security relative to the cost of living. (Source: North Lanarkshire Council)

NL has significantly high levels of child poverty, it is a major risk factor for poor health, social and educational outcomes for children and young people. The COVID 19 pandemic has created new financial challenges for families whose income has reduced and added to pressures for those already living in poverty. A variety of NLC CVS have been providing support to low-income families, including CABs, credit unions and family support organisations.

- NL has one of the lowest breastfeeding rates in Scotland, with only 23.1% of babies exclusively breastfed compared to the Scottish average of 41%.7. (2017/18) and with a large drop off rate by the time babies are 6 – 8 weeks old. Breastfeeding supports good health and development for babies and maternal-child attachment. Low breastfeeding rates are associated with younger mothers and maternal deprivation.  
(Source: Plan for North Lanarkshire 2019 and NHS Lanarkshire)
- An increasing number of our children and young people are reporting mental health problems. 50% of mental health problems are established by age 14 and 75% by age 24. 10% of children and young people (5-16yrs) have a clinically diagnosable mental health problem, yet 70% of children and young people who experience mental health problems have not had appropriate interventions.  
(Source: Mental Health Foundation, UK)

### [The impact of Covid-19 has increased anxiety levels among younger children and babies born during the pandemic](#)

- The Health Needs Assessment of children experiencing homelessness in Lanarkshire in Jan 2019 shows that of applications for homelessness, 40% were from households with children, with 71% headed by a single parent and 1415 children living within the households making an application for homelessness. 46% of these children had potentially experienced what would be considered an Adverse Childhood Experience (e.g. family breakdown, a parent who had been in prison, exposure to domestic abuse) and 25% had potentially experienced something specifically violent.



(Source: NHS Lanarkshire)

- Too many of our children, young people and parents are overweight with a poor diet and inadequate physical activity, which has serious implications for health throughout life. Just over a fifth of children in Lanarkshire are at risk of being overweight with 1 in 10 at risk of obesity. The proportion of those at risk of overweight and obesity has slightly increased over time. Children from more deprived areas are less likely to be a healthy weight.
- One in ten children and young people in Scotland (over 100,000, aged 0 – 18) have a long-term limiting health condition or impairment and 1 in every 5 children (20%) have long-term disability (which includes learning disability). Children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) are six times (12%) as likely to leave school with no qualifications as children with no ASN (2%).  
(Source: Disabled Children & Young People Transitions (Scotland) Bill Oct 2019); (Growing up in Scotland Longitudinal Study, 2013)
- The impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the support families raising disabled or seriously ill children and young people receive has been substantial. In some cases it has exacerbated an already difficult situation that families were facing before the start of the pandemic. Many of the families rely on formal and informal support, and it is often absolutely essential to their daily lives.
- Looked after children and young people in North Lanarkshire (as across the whole of Scotland) continue to experience poorer outcomes than other children and young people:
  - 80% of looked after young people in NL achieved one or more qualification at SCQF level 4 or better, compared with 96.9% of other pupils.
  - 93% of young people in NL were in a positive destination compared with 86% of North Lanarkshire's looked after children.
  - School attendance of all children in NL was at 92.8%, compared with 87% in the looked after population.
  - Only 4% of NL's looked after young people left school for university compared with 37% of North Lanarkshire's school leavers.  
(Source: North Lanarkshire Council)
- Children, young people and families in North Lanarkshire are also affected by crime:
  - Families Outside, a charity which works directly with family members affected by a relative in prison, supported 45 families in NL in 2019.
  - Further information on children and young people involved in crime or victims of crime to follow.
- Since 2008, funding pressures on public services and the community and voluntary sector and have been severe, with significant reductions in funding and more expected in the years ahead. These funding pressures exacerbate and make it even more difficult to address the challenges outlined above.



## 3. Policy and Practice Context for Children, Young People and Families

### 3.1 North Lanarkshire

Despite the above challenges, North Lanarkshire has a positive long-term vision and commitment to improving quality of life and wellbeing and equality for everyone in North Lanarkshire, supported by a wide range of need assessments, statutory and partnership strategies and plans including:

- Plan for North Lanarkshire (North Lanarkshire Partnership Community Plan)
- ACT Now – Action Together on Climate Plan
- Children Services Partnership’s Children’s Services Plan
- Health Needs Assessment of children experiencing homelessness in Lanarkshire
- Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire’s Commissioning Plan
- NHS Lanarkshire’s Children’s Health Plan
- Lanarkshire Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Community Justice Partnership’s Strategy
- Community and Voluntary Sector Strategy
- this strategy

### 3.2 Scotland

The Scottish Government also has a wide range of supportive policies and plans which aim to improve wellbeing for all children, young people and families in Scotland, and which inform the North Lanarkshire Plans listed above and the work of the community and voluntary sector, including legislation and guidance to support:

- the safety and wellbeing of all children – “Getting it Right for Every Child” – along with:
  - specialist support for specific groups such as care experienced young people, young carers and children with additional support needs
  - specific strategies for key issues such as children’s rights and youth work
- affordable housing and rapid rehousing for people who are homeless
- crime prevention, victim support and community justice
- community empowerment
- education and learning - including early years, schools, further education, community learning and development
- improved health and social care
- inclusive economic development including employment support and “fair work” policies such as the real living wage
- measures to tackle climate emergency and protect the environment



### 4.1 Scale and Scope of Support

The community and voluntary sector in North Lanarkshire is large:

- with an estimated 1,800 groups of all sizes with diverse roles
- involving thousands of people in trustee, volunteer and paid roles
- supporting thousands of local people every year.

The community and voluntary organisations supporting children, young people and families in North Lanarkshire include:

- charities and social enterprises (local, regional, national)
- community groups (e.g. play groups; sports clubs; food banks)
- church and faith groups
- children's and youth groups (including brownies and scouts)
- parent councils.

These groups provide support to a wide range of people across North Lanarkshire at different life stages and transitions and with different needs, including:

- parents and other carers
- children and young people of all ages and stages - babies and toddlers; children teenagers; young adults
- care experienced young people
- LGBT plus
- young carers
- those with additional support needs related to challenges such as:
  - abuse or neglect
  - addictions
  - homelessness
  - involvement in the criminal justice system
  - learning difficulties
  - physical and mental health problems, including trauma
  - poverty

The type of support provided to the above groups by North Lanarkshire's community and voluntary sector is wide-ranging and includes one or more of the following:

- advice and information (money, legal, health)
- befriending, mentoring and peer support
- breastfeeding support
- crisis support (e.g. domestic violence, mental health emergency, food emergency)
- community transport



- counselling and other mental health therapies
- crime prevention, rehabilitation of offenders and support for victims of crime
- healthy living – diet, weight, physical activity, tobacco and substance misuse
- housing
- learning, training and employability support
- parenting support
- play, leisure and sport
- social care

This support is also provided in a wide range of locations including:

- churches and places of worship
- community centres and other venues, including premises provided by local businesses
- health, social care and justice settings
- in people's homes
- libraries
- online
- outdoors
- schools
- sporting and leisure venues

## 4.2 Strengths and Assets

The community and voluntary sector in North Lanarkshire (as more widely) has many recognised strengths and assets.

- It is value-led with a focus
  - on being person and community centred
  - promoting equality, human rights and social justice
  - being not for profit and asset locked, with any surplus re-invested to assist beneficiaries
- The sector is responsive to beneficiary needs and has strong community connections and reach.
- As indicated above in section 4.1, the sector provides a wide range of support for all ages and on diverse issues and needs - including prevention and early intervention and longer- term and crisis support.
- The sector supports community and user engagement.
- The sector's trustees paid and voluntary workforce demonstrate passion and commitment to achieving their purpose and goals.
- The sector is committed to being effective and achieving positive outcomes for service users and wider communities. For example, many community and voluntary organisations:



- use evidence and learning to support good practice and improvements, whilst also supporting innovation
- work collaboratively with other organisations within their sector and with other sectors – for example through the Community Solutions Programme
- assess and report on the reach and benefits of their services
- are independently assessed by social care and social housing regulators such as the Scottish Care Inspectorate and Housing Regulator, with many receiving high scores
- achieve or are committed to achieving accreditation through the Volunteer Friendly scheme

Also, all registered charities in Scotland must pursue good governance in line with legal requirements and the code of good practice and provide annual reports and financial information to the Office of the Charity Regulator (OSCR).

### 4.3 Challenges and improvement opportunities

Despite the community and voluntary sector's strengths and assets, the sector also experiences considerable challenges and has a range of improvement opportunities.

In the 2019 assessment of sector support needs and priorities undertaken by VANL, the main challenge identified was the increasing need for support combined with insecure and inadequate funding. Given the strengths, significant contribution and value for money of the community and voluntary sector, a more strategic approach to investment in the community and voluntary sector by the public sector would deliver many benefits.

Organisations income has been affected by the pandemic with an overall reduction of around £6m for the last financial year (April 2020 – March 2021). Many have indicated that their projected income for 21- 22 will be insufficient to support core costs and service provision. This reduction in income is a result of grant and/or contract funding ending; a reduction in public donations and trading income from not being able to operate. Almost half of the organisations (48%) which completed the survey are reliant on funding from North Lanarkshire Council (NLC),

Other key challenges included:

- the recruitment, retention and development of the sector's paid and volunteer workforce - largely linked to the funding challenge
- inadequate understanding and respect for community and voluntary sector by statutory sector

Identified improvement opportunities for the sector included governance and organisational development, communication and influencing and evaluation.

## 5. Vision and Mission

### 5.1 Vision

The sector's vision is for:

“A North Lanarkshire in which children, young people and families thrive and achieve their potential.”

### 5.2 Mission

The sector's mission is to help children, young people and families thrive and achieve their potential by:

- providing effective community-based support and services
- working with the statutory sector to guide improvements to other services and support.

## 6. Values and Approach

The sector's values and approach to support achievement of this vision and mission is:

- strengths and empowerment focused
- community-based and community-led
- committed to protecting and promoting, inclusiveness, equality and human rights
- caring, nurturing and respectful to all service users, community residents, paid and volunteer workforce and partners
- support and services which respond to needs and are evidence-informed, spanning:
  - preventative and early interventions to promote protective factors and reduce risk factors
  - crisis assistance
  - longer term support
- committed to excellence, improvement and innovation
- committed to achieving added value through collaboration with other organisations and sectors



## 7. Strategic Objectives

Delivery of the following objectives will collectively support achievement of the ambitions and outcomes in key North Lanarkshire's partnership strategies, including the following.

- The ambitions of the Plan for North Lanarkshire, with a focus on tackling child poverty, improving children and young people's educational attainment and adaptation and mitigation of climate change.
- The NL Children's Services Plan objectives and outcomes, which focus on:
  - parenting and family support
  - preventing and supporting children and young people affected by neglect and abuse
  - supporting children's and young people's mental health, wellbeing and resilience
  - supporting looked after/care experienced children and young people
- Lanarkshire's Child Health Strategy, with a focus on health improvement and care for children and young people with health problems and disability.

This strategy and a linked rolling annual work programme work has been developed and will be delivered and evaluated in accordance with the "Getting it Right for Every Child" framework and linked "SHANARRI" goals of – "Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included".

Delivery of the strategy and work programme will facilitate improved support and services for children, young people and families including:-

- promotion of supportive and caring relationships, including parenting support;
- support for healthy development and learning through play, children's and youth groups, arts activities, sport;
- promotion of healthy living – including diet, physical activity, social connections, preventing substance misuse;
- action to prevent child poverty and to support those affected by poverty through employability support and welfare advice;
- support for those experiencing difficulties or in crisis through food banks, refuges, therapeutic support, social care;
- action to support families and communities to take action to reduce the impact of climate change.



## 7.1 Supporting the community and voluntary sector to improve the effectiveness of its services and support for the children, young people and families in North Lanarkshire.

This will be done to support the sector's contribution to Plan for North Lanarkshire and linked plans such as the Children's Services Plan, Health and Social Care Commissioning plans and Community Justice Plan.

Key activities to support delivery of this objective would include the following.

- Strengthening the design and delivery of community and voluntary sector support and services through meaningful involvement of children, young people and families, sharing of information and evidence and provision of training.
- Providing governance and organisational development support to community and voluntary sector organisations.
- Supporting paid and voluntary workforce development.
- Facilitating innovation and piloting of new developments, including consortia and partnership approaches.
- Providing trading, procurement and funding advice and assistance, including greater leverage of complementary funding.

## 7.2 Support the community and voluntary sector to inform and positively influence wider policies and services for children, young people and families through effective engagement with the following North Lanarkshire partnerships and cross sector programmes:

- Community Planning – North Lanarkshire Partnership
- Children's Services Partnership
- Community Justice Partnership
- Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire and Community Solutions Programme

This work would be based on the legal and good practice requirements under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act and national community engagement standards.

## 7.3 Strengthen and develop the representational and delivery role of the community and voluntary sector, and support greater understanding and appreciation of the community and voluntary sector contribution across the public and statutory partners.

Nationally GIRFEC policy has been the main driver for children's services for a number of years, the changing landscape around children's services has required changes to keep up with developments. Within North Lanarkshire a GIRFEC Steering group has been set up to co-



ordinate and communicate GIRFEC developments. This involves representation from the community and voluntary sector along with other partners. This group will provide an essential role in the developing picture around GIRFEC and Children's Services and has been developed and launched to translate the high-level policy to improved planning to meet the wellbeing needs of children and their families.

The new integrated Empowering Cluster Model is built around the GIRFEC pathway and has been used to identify children and families in need of additional support, this is an important model going forward and allows CVS partners the opportunity to link at local levels with the Education and Families Service and deliver on the ambitions within the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework by developing preventative emotional and mental health support in an integrated way within their community.

Community & voluntary sector providers will develop the support in partnership with the school cluster based around the identified needs combined with specific needs of children, as identified in their individual plan in accordance with the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators.

## 8. Delivery

Delivery of this strategy will be supported by:

- a rolling annual work plan;
- staff employed by Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire;
- dedicated project staff where funding is secured;
- members of the North Lanarkshire Community and Voluntary Sector Children, Young People and Families Network and other linked networks.

## 9. Evaluation and Reporting

The community and voluntary sector will be supported to evaluate and communicate its contribution to improving children, young people and families' lives.

The effectiveness and impact of delivering this strategy will be evaluated against agreed performance measures linked to relevant outcomes in key partnership strategies above. For example, the Community Solutions children young, people and families outcomes have been updated in consultation with network members, wider community and voluntary sector and partners. Standardised measures, eg Outcomes Star, will be explored together with sector and partners.

Evaluation will be supported by staff employed by Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire (subject to resources) and members of the North Lanarkshire Community and Voluntary Sector Children, Young People and Families Network.

An annual progress and impact report will be published.



This strategy and linked work plan will be delivered through a mix of resources including the following.

- Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire generic support staff, with core funding from the Scottish Government and North Lanarkshire Council.
- A dedicated Children, Young People and Families Development Officer employed by VANL with a grant from the Community Solutions programme, which is funded through Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire.
- Project funding secured from different sources, including Scottish Government, independent grant-giving trusts and North Lanarkshire sources.
- Voluntary contributions from members of the Children, Young People and Families Network.

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