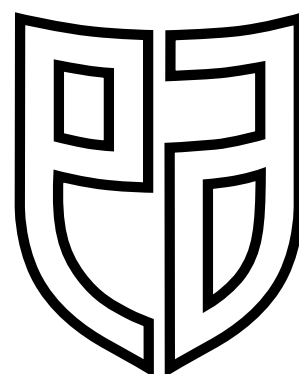


OUR COMMITMENT TO CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: **EAST AYRSHIRE** **UNCRC REPORT** 2026



FOREWORD



Eddie Fraser, *Chief Executive, EAC*

Colleagues, partners, and friends,

The commencement of the UNCRC Incorporation Act in Scotland on 16 July 2024, marked a profound moment for every public body, including East Ayrshire Council. This is not simply a new statutory duty—it is a commitment to ensuring that every child and young person in our communities has their rights respected, protected, and fulfilled in everything we do.

As Chief Executive, I hold the overarching responsibility for leading this organisation through that commitment. Embedding children's rights is not an additional task or a standalone programme—it must shape our strategic direction, our policies, our decision-making, and ultimately our culture.

At the strategic level, my role is to ensure that UNCRC principles influence our corporate priorities and service planning across the Council. That includes championing our UNCRC implementation model, supporting our leaders, and ensuring that children's rights visibly guide the way we work.

Strong governance is central to this. Every policy we develop, every strategy we approve, and every decision we make must undergo rigorous rights-based scrutiny. We are

strengthening our tools, such as Children's Rights Impact Assessments, and ensuring our elected members receive the high-quality, impartial advice they need to fulfil their duties. Clear reporting mechanisms will allow us to monitor progress and ensure accountability.

But rights are not realised in documents, but in practice. That is why I hold each service accountable for delivering rights-respecting work—whether in education, housing, planning, social work, transport, or any other area. Senior leaders must embed children's rights in their services, support staff training, and ensure that resources are aligned to sustain this work over the long term.

Partnership is also essential. We work closely with NHS Ayrshire & Arran, Police Scotland, third-sector partners, and the Community Planning Partnership. My responsibility is to provide strong regional leadership so that our approach to children's rights is consistent and united. Central to this is ensuring that the voices of children and young people—reflecting Article 12 of the UNCRC—genuinely influence local decisions.

Ultimately, delivering children's rights is about culture. As Chief Executive, I help shape the values and behaviours of our organisation. A rights-respecting workforce is one that communicates clearly with children and families, listens carefully, and understands the impact of its decisions. We will continue to build capacity and confidence across all teams as we strengthen this culture.

Our responsibility is very clear here in East Ayrshire: to lead strategically, govern robustly, deliver consistently, partner effectively, and build a culture where children's rights are truly lived across East Ayrshire. The UNCRC sets the standard—and together, we will ensure we meet it.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E Fraser'.

Eddie Fraser

PROVOST'S MESSAGE



Claire Leitch, *Provost, EAC*

Our children and young people in East Ayrshire bring life, vibrancy and joy to our communities. I have the privilege of being East Ayrshire Council's Children's Champion, which means that on a regular basis, I get to see the achievements of our children and young people and, for some of them, the challenges they face. Most of all I get to listen to the views and aspirations of our children and young people and use my influence to embed their voices in the work of the Council.

As we take forward the implementation of the new legislation around the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), we are committed to embedding children and young people's rights into everything we do. Over the past year, a particular focus has been on ensuring that the voices of children and young people are heard and valued. We want every child and young person – from the earliest years through to young adulthood – to have the opportunity to influence decisions, shape services, and see their views reflected in the way support is designed and delivered. It has been inspirational to hear from our children and young people

about the small practical things that can make a difference not only in their lives, but in the lives of our communities.

Many of our children and young people thrive with the support of families, schools and communities. Due to reasons such as poverty, disability or broken relationships, the needs of some of our children and families continue to be complex and need more targeted help. By working together across services, and by some of the actions outlined in this report, we are increasingly able to provide early help and support with the clear aim of improving outcomes. At the heart of this work is our commitment to supporting children and young people to be the best they can be and, wherever possible, to achieve their dreams.















Through the Council's Early Intervention and Prevention Fund, and in response to the voices we hear, several important projects and initiatives have been supported, further enhancing the opportunities available to children and families. None of this progress would have been possible without the commitment, skill and dedication of the employees and partners who work tirelessly to make a difference.

Looking ahead, we will continue to celebrate the successes of our children and young people, recognising the strengths they bring, and ensuring they remain at the centre of all that we do.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Provost Claire Leitch
East Ayrshire Children's Champion

CONTENTS

	Introduction	5
	About East Ayrshire	6
	What do children and young people in EA think about their rights?	9
	Cluster 1: Definition of the child	10
	Cluster 2: General measures of implementation	12
	Cluster 3: General principles of the UNCRC	17
	Cluster 4: Civil rights and freedoms	21
	Cluster 5: Violence against children	24
	Cluster 6: Family environment and alternative care	29
	Cluster 7: Basic health and welfare	33
	Cluster 8: Education, leisure and culture	40
	Cluster 9: Special protection measures	48
	Appendix 1: Next Steps	51
	Appendix 2: Examples of Good Practice	53

INTRODUCTION



East Ayrshire Council and its partners are committed to upholding, promoting, and protecting the rights of all children and young people, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Convention incorporated 42 articles together with articles from the first and second optional protocols. Articles set out the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights that every child is entitled to, and these principles continue to shape our policies, practice and decision making. The core principles of non discrimination (Article 2), the best interests of the child (Article 3), life, survival and development (Article 6), expression of views and participation (Article 12) guide how we design and deliver services across all areas of the Council.

This report fulfils our statutory duty under Section 18 of the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 to outline the actions taken — and those we intend to take — to ensure compatibility with the UNCRC requirements and to secure better or further effect of children’s rights across East Ayrshire. It provides a transparent account of our progress, challenges and future priorities in embedding children’s rights in everything we do.

Scotland’s national frameworks play an essential role in shaping our children’s rights approach. GIRFEC underpins how we identify needs early, coordinate support and work collaboratively to promote positive wellbeing across East Ayrshire. Guided by The Promise, we continue to strengthen a culture where children and young people feel safe, heard and supported through strong, nurturing relationships. Together, these frameworks help keep children and young people at the heart of what we do and ensure that our practice is firmly aligned with the principles of the UNCRC.

Following commencement of the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act in July 2024, East Ayrshire has strengthened its governance, leadership, and service level responsibilities to ensure that rights are consistently upheld. East Ayrshire Council has established a UNCRC Champions Model to support the effective implementation of the UNCRC across all services. The Champions Model represents a proactive and inclusive approach to embedding children’s rights by empowering individuals to champion the UNCRC across East Ayrshire to support the development of a cultural shift towards the realisation of children’s rights. Champions are positioned within each service area and play a key role in promoting rights awareness, strengthening participation with children and young people, and supporting colleagues to consider children’s rights within policy development, service planning and decision making. Through this model, East Ayrshire is strengthening its organisational capacity to uphold and promote children’s rights consistently across the Council and wider partnerships.

East Ayrshire’s vision for children and young people is to ensure they grow up loved, safe and respected, so they can realise their full potential. We are committed to giving every child the best possible start in life, with the right supports in place to help them thrive throughout childhood and beyond. Guided by the insights of our children and young people, we continue to strengthen a culture where their rights are understood, valued and acted upon across all services in East Ayrshire.

ABOUT EAST AYRSHIRE



East Ayrshire is a local government area in the West of Scotland, sharing a border with Dumfries and Galloway, East Renfrewshire, North Ayrshire, South Ayrshire and South Lanarkshire council areas.

The Northern Locality includes the settlements of Stewarton, Kilmaurs, Fenwick, Galston, Newmilns and Darvel. The Kilmarnock area includes Kilmarnock and Crosshouse, and the Southern Locality includes Mauchline, Catrine, Auchinleck, Cumnock, New Cumnock, Ochiltree, Muirkirk, Bellsbank, Dalmellington, Patna and Dalrymple.



Kilmarnock Locality	54,875
Northern Locality	26,660
Southern Locality	38,793



POPULATION

2011- 122,767 • 2022- 120,324 • 2050- 108,227

In East Ayrshire, between 2022 and 2032, the 0 to 15 age group is projected to see the largest percentage decrease (-3.4%) and the 75 and over age group is projected to see the largest percentage increase (+21.8%).

East Ayrshire has a marginally higher rate of children and young people, a lower rate of working age residents and a higher rate of elderly residents compared to Scotland.



Aged 0-15
16.9%



Aged 16-64
61.8%



Aged 65+
22.3%

The number of our children and young people will fall over the next 25 years, and the number of our elderly residents will rise.

Children and Young people in East Ayrshire



Between 2001 and 2024, East Ayrshire has had the 25th highest percentage change of the 32 council areas. In the same period, the population of children and young people aged 0-18 **decreased** by around 4000 (-14.4%).



In 2024, there were **24,291** children and young people in East Ayrshire.



Data from the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) 2023-24 shows that **23.6%** of children aged 0-15yrs live in poverty.



At the time of the 2022 Census, there were 13,580 households with dependent children in East Ayrshire. This is just **under a quarter** of all households (24.5%), between the 2011 and 2022 Census the number of households with dependent children decreased by 6%.



Data from East Ayrshire by Numbers (EABN) 2023-24 shows that **18.5%** of children live in low-income families.



SEEMiS data as of March 2026 shows that **23.82%** of children are registered for free school meals.



Current SEEMiS data also shows that **30.15%** of children in East Ayrshire receive school clothing grants.

Educational establishments in East Ayrshire



Our pupil roll for 2024 is **15,939**

Secondary	Primary	Specialist	ASL Centres
6887	8737	367	184



Total number of establishments

36 ECC (13 Standalone
23 Primary with ECCs)

7 Funded Providers

38 Childminders

2765 Total number of 0-5yr old children allocated a place in an ECC, Funded Provider, childminder.

Our school estate 2024/25

7 Secondary schools

40 Primary schools
(including one GME school)

3 Additional Support Needs
(ASN)schools

7 Additional Support for Learning
(ASL) Centres

1 Deaf Education Centre

What do our children and young people in East Ayrshire say about their rights?

Children and young people from P1 to S6 across East Ayrshire were engaged through a range of participation activities, including a school based junior youth conference involving 116 children and young people, and consultations with local youth groups such as our young carers group and care experienced cabinet. Their views were gathered to understand their awareness of children's rights and how they experience those rights in their daily lives. The following section summarises what they told us:

"We think all rights are important because every child deserves to be safe, cared for, respected and happy. But the ones that matter most to us are being protected (Article 34), being kept safe from harm (Article 19), having a family or carers who look after us (Article 7), having what we need to live well (Article 27), getting time to play and rest (Article 31), and having a voice in decisions (Article 12). These rights help us feel safe, healthy, and listened to every day."

"When adults really listen to us, it makes us feel happy, respected, included, and important. It feels like our voices matter and that we are being taken seriously, just like our rights say we should be." Article 3, 4 and 12

"We chose Article 28 because every child needs an education. Learning helps us grow, feel confident and have a better future."

"Policies, plans, and reports should be accessible for everyone. Children should be able to read them, understand the language, and know what they mean — especially when they affect us." Article 2, 3 and 4

*"We have parks and outdoor spaces where we can play and enjoy spending time with our friends."
Article 31*

*"Having time to rest is important because school and life can be busy. Rest helps my brain calm down so I can do better the next day."
Article 24, 27 and 31*

*"We can go to youth groups and clubs after school, where we can take part in activities and have fun."
Article 15 and 31*

*"Going to the young carers group gives me time to switch off, spend time with friends and enjoy being young."
Article 15 and 31*

Cluster 1: Definition of the Child

Article 1



UNCRC Definition (Under 18) in the Local Context

The UNCRC defines a child as anyone under the age of 18. This principle is now embedded in Scot's law following the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, which Scotland formally incorporated into law on 16 July 2024. This includes all children and young people in East Ayrshire. East Ayrshire Council recognises the UNCRC as the base standard for all children's rights, meaning every individual under 18 has the full protection, participation, and provision rights guaranteed by the Convention.

Embedding UNCRC across local services

East Ayrshire is actively implementing a UNCRC Champions Model to ensure that children's rights are embedded across all services. This model supports the incorporation of the UNCRC into local decision making and governance, using a network of champions across a number of services including education, social work, health, and community services. This ensures that the rights of all children under 18 are consistently respected and upheld.

Children's voices at the centre of decisions

Article 12 of the UNCRC states that children have the right to be heard in all matters affecting them. East Ayrshire explicitly aligns with this principle by:

- Involving young people in shaping services
- Ensuring their views influence policy
- Embedding participation structures across council work

This is reflected in both the UNCRC Champions approach and East Ayrshire's Children and Young People's Service Plan.

East Ayrshire Council's policy commitments aligned to UNCRC

East Ayrshire Council's Five Year Strategic Plan highlights strong commitments directly linked to the UNCRC definition of a child and the protection of those under 18, including:

- **Respecting and promoting rights of all children and young people**
East Ayrshire Council is committed to embedding the UNCRC across all policies, services and practices. This ensures every child under 18 receives equal protection, participation and support, regardless of their background or circumstances.
- **Ensuring children's voices shape decisions**
The Council commits to developing innovative ways to ensure children and young people influence decisions that affect them—directly reflecting Article 12.
- **Providing early help and reducing inequalities**
The Children and Young People's Service Plan outlines priorities such as reducing the impact of poverty, improving mental health, and enhancing early years support—central to ensuring the rights of children under 18 to health, development, and protection

What this means for children and families in East Ayrshire

East Ayrshire must ensure the rights of all under 18s are:



Respected

Decisions, policies and everyday practice must consistently uphold children's rights.



Protected

Children must be safeguarded from harm, exploitation, bullying and discrimination. (This includes work aligned with the East Ayrshire Anti Bullying Strategy.)



Fulfilled

Children have the right to education, health, play, participation, and support. This is reflected in the Council's investment in early learning, wellbeing models like HEART, and targeted support for vulnerable groups.

Our local commitment

The UNCRC definition of a child—anyone under 18—is not only recognised but now becoming more embedded within the Council's local policy, planning, and service delivery. Through UNCRC incorporation, the Champions Model, strategic planning, and children's participation structures, East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership is working to ensure every child under 18 grows up:



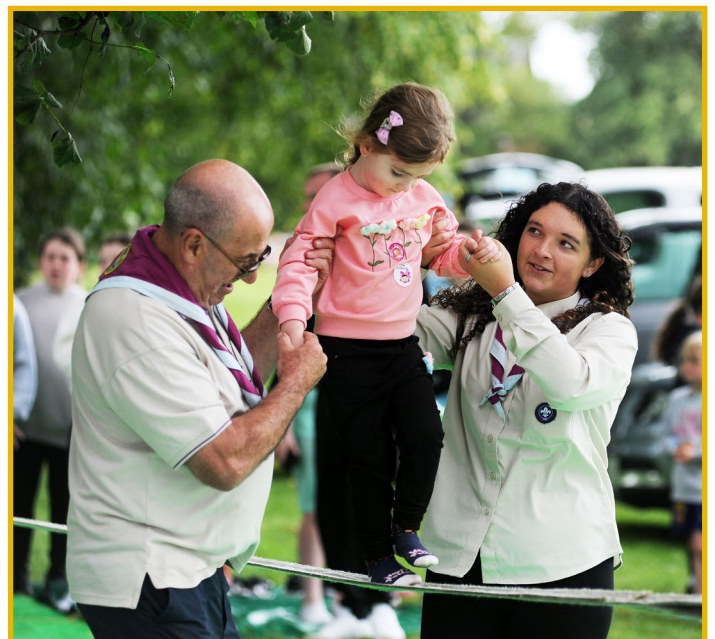
loved, safe, and respected



heard and able to influence decisions



supported to reach their full potential



Cluster 2: General measures of implementation

Articles 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 17, 19, 24, 27, 28, 41, 42



Embedding UNCRC across services

Following the UNCRC Local Government Conference in early 2025, East Ayrshire Council sought support from the Improvement Service to strengthen and expand its approach to embedding children's rights. This work focuses on developing a UNCRC Champions model, introducing the FAIR approach and creation of an aligned reporting template to ensure consistency of reporting, and delivering wider UNCRC training and improvement activity. FAIR is a practice framework used to support rights based working with children and families. FAIR stands for Fairness, Accountability, Inclusion and Respect. It emphasises treating children justly and without discrimination, making accountable decisions in their best interests, actively involving children in decisions that affect them, and respecting their dignity, identity and rights. Using the FAIR framework helps translate UNCRC principles into everyday practice, ensuring services remain child centred and rights respecting. This method of reporting is

supported by staff across multiple service areas, including elected members and senior leaders.

UNCRC Champions have been identified across services and have taken part in workshops to build knowledge, confidence and understanding of rights based practice. Although children are not yet directly involved, the aim is to ensure their rights and voices increasingly shape everyday practice and decision making. Early progress is evident across all Council business, with Champions now established, FAIR templates in use for the UNCRC return, growing staff confidence, and emerging case studies demonstrating stronger recognition of children's voices.

This work reflects several UNCRC Articles:

- **Article 2** through training that highlights inequalities and promotes equitable practice
- **Article 3** through the FAIR template's focus on best interests
- **Article 4** by building systems and workforce capability to embed rights
- **Article 5** through building staff capacity to support children's exercise their convention rights.
- **Article 12** through the requirement to consider and evidence children's views
- **Article 42** through increased organisational awareness of children's rights

Responsibility for embedding children's rights is shared across Champions, managers, senior leaders and wider service teams. Together they support staff training, reflection, use of FAIR and inclusion of rights based practice within planning and improvement activity. As the work develops, these shared responsibilities remain essential to sustaining progress.

Reflection currently takes place through Champions meetings and Improvement Service workshops, informing the development of an action plan with clear priorities, actions and measures for monitoring progress.

Children's Rights-Based budgeting

The incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law places clear duties on East Ayrshire Council to respect, protect, and fulfil children's rights in all areas of decision making. Budget setting is a key to the way these duties are delivered. East Ayrshire is beginning to embed UNCRC principles within its budgeting processes to strengthen compliance, improve transparency, and ensure that resources support prevention, early intervention, and equity for children and families.

Budget decisions have a direct impact on several rights, including the best interests of the child (Article 3), the use of maximum available resources (Article 4), the right to be heard (Article 12), health (Article 24), education (Article 28), and an adequate standard of living (Article 27).

Applying a children's rights based approach to budget setting ensures that our financial choices actively support these rights and avoid unintended negative consequences.

East Ayrshire Council is integrating children's rights into its budget cycle by assessing how priorities align with rights outcomes, identifying opportunities for early intervention, and ensuring that children's services do not experience disproportionate reductions. Children's Rights Impact Assessments (CRIAs) are completed for significant proposals, with impacts on specific groups of children clearly documented. Future reporting to elected members will set out rights implications, consider alternatives where rights may be affected, and explain how children's views and rights inform final decisions.

Meaningful participation of children and young people is central to this approach. Engagement through the Children and Young People's Cabinet, the Care Experienced Cabinet, school based decision making (including PEF processes), and third sector partnerships within the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund provides insight into lived experience and strengthens compliance with Article 12.

The Council is taking reasonable steps to use maximum available resources, ensure savings are proportionate, and maintain transparency. We believe by embedding a rights based approach we will strengthen legal compliance, improve outcomes, and support early intervention and prevention. By consistently applying UNCRC principles to budget decisions,

East Ayrshire Council can enhance strategic coherence and deliver better outcomes for children, families, and future generations. Planning and Regeneration

In East Ayrshire, where child poverty rates remain above the national average and are closely linked to patterns of housing, transport connectivity, access to services and employment, the planning system represents a critical lever for prevention and the realisation of children's rights. Decisions taken through the planning system, regeneration programmes and town centre strategies directly shape whether our children can enjoy their rights to an adequate standard of living, safe and suitable housing, play and recreation, education, and access to services within their communities. Aligning the next Child Poverty Delivery Plan more explicitly with National Planning Framework 4, the forthcoming Local Development Plan and East Ayrshire's place based priorities will strengthen the Council's ability to address the structural drivers of child poverty through long term, preventative action, particularly in communities experiencing multiple and persistent disadvantage.

This rights based approach is reinforced by Scotland's incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which places a statutory duty on public authorities, including local authorities in their capacity as planning authorities, to act compatibly with children's rights in all decision making. Planning choices in East Ayrshire will be recognised as practical decisions about children's rights in action – influencing children's health, safety, wellbeing, opportunities to play, and their ability to grow up in inclusive, sustainable and connected communities. Systematically considering children's best interests, ensuring meaningful participation of children, young people and priority families, and assessing the potential impacts of planning decisions on different groups of children will support both UNCRC compliance and more effective child poverty reduction. Embedding children's rights within place based planning ensures that local development actively contributes to improving outcomes for children and young people, in line with national commitments to prevent poverty and reduce inequality.

See Example 1 for further detail.

Work Experience Policy

The Work Experience Policy supports the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) particularly Article 28, which establishes every child's right to access education and Article 29 which emphasises that education must develop each child's personality, talents and abilities to their fullest potential. This policy supports access to good quality work experience as part of the fuller educational experience.

These rights form the foundation for creating meaningful employability opportunities, as quality education, skills development, and supportive environments equip young people with the confidence, resilience and capabilities needed for the world of work. The UNCRC also upholds children's right to be heard in decisions affecting them (Article 12), reinforcing the importance of involving young people in shaping pathways that reflect their aspirations.

The Work Experience Policy supports East Ayrshire Council's commitment to "The Promise" which commits to improving the lives and outcomes of care experienced young people in East Ayrshire. The commitment includes pledges to ensure young people are given equity in terms of support and resources in education and opportunities for employment, while recognising that they may lack parental or other caregiver support.

It is also recognised that Young Carers, who have developed valuable skills through their caring responsibilities, require support and flexibility to move into work and the provision of work experience opportunities will assist them to make future career decisions.

Together, our approaches aim to reduce inequalities, strengthen pathways into meaningful employment, and ensure that care experienced young people and young carers are supported to realise their full potential.

Elected members and the UNCRC

The UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 places a legal duty on East Ayrshire Council to act compatibly with children's rights across all our functions. For East Ayrshire, this strengthens a commitment to putting children and young people at the centre of local decision making. Elected members therefore hold a vital leadership and scrutiny role in ensuring



that governance across East Ayrshire is lawful, ethical and firmly grounded in the rights and wellbeing of our children, in line with Article 3.

Elected members are responsible for ensuring that every Council decision is viewed through a children's rights lens. This includes making sure that East Ayrshire's policies, strategies and budgets fully reflect children's rights; that all Council services—not only those directly supporting families—demonstrate compliance with the UNCRC; and that local decision making reflects the wellbeing, development and lived experience of children and young people across our towns, rural communities and villages. Applying this rights based approach is becoming part of committee business, including assessing how proposals may impact children locally, confirming that a meaningful Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) has been undertaken, and ensuring that the voices of East Ayrshire's young people—consistent with Article 12—are actively considered.

The Council appoints a Children's Champion to advocate for the rights and wellbeing of children across East Ayrshire. The position is currently filled by Provost Claire Leitch with Councillor Elaine Cowan being the spokesperson for Education, and Children and Young People.

Meaningful participation is essential to effective implementation of the UNCRC within East Ayrshire. Elected members take responsibility to ensure that children and young people—especially seldom heard groups such as care

experienced children, young carers and those living in more rural parts of the authority— have genuine opportunities to influence local decisions. This reflects Article 12 and aligns with our local approaches to participation, including engagement through schools, East Ayrshire Youth Voice, and community based youth work.

Children’s rights apply across all East Ayrshire Council services. Through their scrutiny role, elected members ensure that housing, planning, transport, environment, community safety and wider community based services can evidence rights based thinking and practice

Elected members are also beginning to align their responsibilities with key national and local frameworks that guide work in East Ayrshire, including GIRFEC, The Promise, and the East Ayrshire Community Plan. These frameworks together reinforce the UNCRC’s general principles and support our local ambitions around prevention, early intervention, reducing inequalities and ensuring decisions are informed by lived experience.

Corporate management team and UNCRC

The Corporate Management Team (CMT) within the Council includes the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, the Director of the Health and Social Care partnership and Chief Governance officer. The CMT is aware at a Council strategic level of issues or emerging issues relating to the Council’s implementation of the UNCRC and is able to take appropriate decisions in response. The Chief Governance Officer (in their capacity or solicitor to the Council) also ensures that in any discussions with heads of service, and more generally, with solicitors within their service that the requirements of the UNCRC are factored into, and considered, when those solicitors are providing relevant legal advice to Council services.

Multi-Agency training

The Protection and Learning Team in East Ayrshire has responsibility for the design and delivery of single agency and multi agency learning and development relating to children’s services across the local workforce. Working in partnership with colleagues from health, education, third sector organisations, social work and community services, the team

delivers a wide range of learning opportunities for practitioners and managers that support effective, rights based child protection practice in line with East Ayrshire priorities.

Learning and development delivered to the multi agency workforce covers key areas of practice including neglect, child exploitation, therapeutic play, child protection processes, online harm, and responding effectively when services struggle to engage with families. A strong and consistent focus on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) runs as a golden thread throughout all learning activity. There is an emphasis on Article 12 – the child’s right to be heard, ensuring that children’s views, experiences and wishes are meaningfully included in assessment, recording and decision making processes across child protection and children’s services.

Therapeutic play learning and development sessions further support practitioners to understand and use developmentally appropriate approaches to capture and represent the child’s voice. These sessions emphasise how children can be supported and empowered to express their feelings and experiences, particularly where verbal communication may be difficult. The use of button mice and sand trays are two basic tools that support our practitioners hear the voice of young children through play. Practitioners are encouraged to move beyond awareness of children’s rights and to actively reflect on how these rights are embedded within everyday practice, recognising the impact of professional intervention on the child’s lived experience. Placing the child at the centre of practice is reinforced not only as best practice for improving outcomes, but as a fundamental right of every child.

As East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership moves towards implementation of the Signs of Safety and Healing approach, the UNCRC remains a central and essential component of child protection practice. Meaningful involvement of children in the development of assessments and plans is a core expectation of this approach and aligns with both GIRFEC principles and children’s rights

legislation. The participation of children must be purposeful, respectful and influential; tokenistic engagement is not acceptable. Practitioners are supported through learning and development to ensure that children's views genuinely inform analysis, planning and decision making, and that children understand how their voices have been heard and acted upon.

Learning and development

Learning and development for the social work workforce directly supports the implementation of the UNCRC by ensuring practitioners are knowledgeable, skilled, and rights respecting across all areas of practice. Ongoing Continuing Professional Learning strengthens social workers' ability to act in the best interests of children, listen to and involve them in decisions, safeguard them from harm, and provide inclusive, developmentally appropriate support. Training in areas such as assessment, child development, communication, cultural competence, family support, and safeguarding enables practitioners, managers, and partner agencies to fulfil their responsibilities under the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024. Regular review of learning opportunities and embedding rights based principles across all services ensures high quality, lawful, and consistent practice that protects children's wellbeing and upholds their rights.



Cluster 3: General principals of the UNCRC

Articles 2, 3, 6, 12, 13, 15, 29, 42



VOiCE toolkit



East Ayrshire Council's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for children and families (JSNA) will be completed in 2026 and will allow children's services to be more focused about the services they should deliver collaboratively in the communities' children and families live to address the needs identified. The information and data will also inform East Ayrshire's priorities for the development of our next Children and Young People's Services Plan 2026–29. Hearing the voice of our children and families is central to ensuring our data reflects the needs of our families. Codesign and co-production with our children and families is imperative as we begin to move towards a new model of locality working across East Ayrshire. This supports Article 3, as the JSNA ensures planning is centred on the needs and wellbeing of children and young people.

Identifying best practice across Scotland on how the voice of our children is captured has led us to agree as a leadership group to utilise the national VOiCE platform for all communication and engagement with children and families. This will ensure consistency of approach in capturing the information provided by our children, young people and families. Our children and young people have told us we consult with

them consistently, but we don't feed back or close the loop and help them understand how their voice has influenced service design and policy development. This is an area that we will continue to develop across all Council business. This directly promotes Article 12, ensuring children and young people can express their views in decision making processes.

We are currently working alongside children and young people to identify and develop a range of engagement methods which will help to reduce barriers relating to participation and ensure a wide range of children, young people and families' voices are heard. This promotes Article 13, as different methods give space for varied types of communication. It also supports Article 2, by actively reducing participation barriers. Where accessibility considerations are included, this further supports Article 23.

East Ayrshire's Children and Young People's Cabinet (CYPC)

The Children and Young People's Cabinet (CYPC) enables young people to use their energy and passion to influence positive change in East Ayrshire. Grounded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the CYPC ensures that young people's views are actively sought, listened to and taken seriously in decisions that affect their lives, in line with Article 12 and Article 13.

Since 2018, during the Scottish Government's Year of Young People, East Ayrshire has demonstrated its commitment to children's rights by embedding youth participation within decision making processes. The establishment of the CYPC reflects Article 15 by supporting young people to come together, organise collectively and influence services and programmes that impact them. This approach aligns with a rights based model of participation, ensuring that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in strategic and operational decisions.

The CYPC promotes meaningful participation and advises on policies and procedures affecting children and young people. Members have co chaired the Joint East Ayrshire Council

Cabinet and contributed directly to Community Planning Partnership discussions, ensuring that children's and young people's views inform corporate priorities and public service reform. These opportunities provide practical mechanisms through which duty bearers can demonstrate accountability to children, supporting Article 4, which places responsibility on public bodies to realise children's rights.

The CYPC is a representative committee for young people aged 10–25 and is designed to reflect a broad range of lived experiences. Membership opportunities extend across primary and secondary schools, including young people with Additional Support Needs, care experienced young people, those in further education, and young people engaged through third sector and community groups. A range of engagement methods—including questionnaires, informal discussions and formal Cabinet meetings with elected members and Heads of Service—support inclusive participation and ensure that different communication preferences and abilities are respected.

Participation in the CYPC contributes to positive personal and developmental outcomes for members, supporting Article 29, which sets out the role of education in developing confidence, skills, and respect for democratic values. Young people report increased confidence, enhanced employability, progression into further education and employment, and involvement in local, regional and national forums. Many members progress from initial engagement into leadership roles, demonstrating the sustained impact of meaningful participation.

East Ayrshire's wider youth voice approach—including the CYPC, Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYP), young carers' forums and sports groups—was recognised as excellent practice in the 2023 HMIE inspection. This recognition led to an invitation to share learning and impact at the 2024 CLD National Conference, reinforcing East Ayrshire's commitment to embedding children's rights across systems and services.

Despite this positive development, the CYPC does not yet fully reflect the diversity of all young people's experiences. Current school based selection processes tend to favour those who are already highly engaged or academically

confident, limiting opportunities for some groups to participate. To fully realise Articles 2 and 12, there is a need to strengthen representation from young people who are under represented, marginalised or harder to engage.

East Ayrshire Council is therefore strengthening its layered approach to youth voice by improving the connectivity between services, schools and community organisations. Ongoing developments within the Children's Services model will support more joined up, rights based working, ensuring that participation is inclusive, sustainable and meaningful—particularly as financial and capacity pressures increase. This approach helps ensure that children's rights are not an added extra, but a core element of how decisions are shaped and delivered.

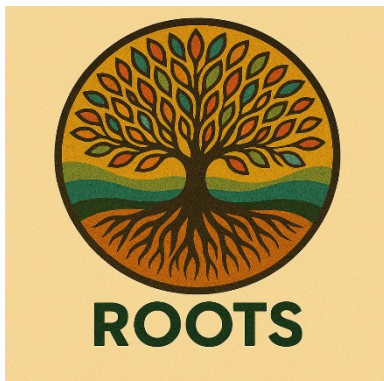
See Example 2 for further detail.



Speech, Language and Communication

East Ayrshire Council and partners across children's services have worked collaboratively to strengthen early support for children's Speech, Language and Communication (SLC). Local data shows that over 30% of children and young people currently require Speech and Language Therapy input, with increasing concerns identified at the 13–15 month and 27–30 month child health reviews. Early SLC difficulties often co occur with challenges in other developmental domains, highlighting the importance of timely, preventative support.

In line with the Council and Community Planning Partnership's commitment to prevention, investment has been directed towards early intervention to support children to thrive and reach their full potential. Funding of £200,000 per year for three years has been secured through the Early Intervention and Prevention Fund to enable this work.



The Speech and Language Therapy Roots Project support children from pre birth to 30 months, a critical period for development. The project promotes children's right to survival

and development by strengthening early communication skills and supports children to express their views and be heard through responsive interaction and language rich environments, in line with Article 12 and Article 13.

Through early identification, advice, training and practical support for families and professionals, the project ensures children with additional needs receive timely and appropriate support, promoting inclusion and participation (Article 23). By embedding communication as a foundation for learning, emotional wellbeing and relationships, the project also supports children's right to education and development of their abilities (Articles 24, 28 and 29), helping children to gain their voice and fully realise their rights within their families, communities and early learning settings.

Child friendly complaints

East Ayrshire Council's current approach to child friendly complaints is grounded in its wider commitment to children's rights and rights respecting practice across children's services. The incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots law through the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 provides a strengthened statutory framework that aligns with existing local practice under GIRFEC, The Promise, and trauma informed service delivery. This reinforces children's entitlement to be listened to, to participate in decisions that affect them, and to seek remedy when things go wrong.

In practice, the Council is embedding these principles through the developing UNCRC Champions Model, which supports services to take a consistent, rights based approach to decision making, communication, and accountability. Champions play a key role in supporting staff to recognise children's rights in day to day interactions, including how concerns

and complaints are identified, responded to, and resolved. This model complements established partnership working across education, health, social work, and commissioned services, helping to ensure children experience coherent and equitable responses regardless of where they raise an issue.

Article 12 of the UNCRC, which requires that children's views are given due weight in all matters affecting them, is reflected in current practice through an emphasis on accessible and inclusive communication. Services are expected to recognise complaints in any form, including verbal comments, behaviour, and informal expressions of dissatisfaction, in line with Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) child friendly complaints handling guidance. This mirrors the protections afforded to adults while ensuring that processes remain proportionate, supportive, and appropriate to a child's age, stage, and circumstances.

Access to advocacy is a key feature of current practice. Children and young people are supported to understand their rights, the complaints process, and the options available to them, including independent advocacy where appropriate. This is particularly important for children who may be care experienced, disabled, or otherwise less confident in speaking up. Advocacy is seen not only as a safeguard but as a practical mechanism to help children feel safe, believed, and supported when raising concerns.

Ongoing improvement work in East Ayrshire focuses on strengthening staff confidence and consistency through training, reflective practice, and learning from complaints. Feedback from children and young people is increasingly used to inform service redesign, ensuring that complaint pathways are understandable, visible, and genuinely child centred. This includes co design activity and regular review of how effectively children's rights are being upheld in practice.

To sustain and further strengthen current practice, East Ayrshire Council will continue to embed the UNCRC Champions Model across all service areas, maintain alignment with SPSO child friendly complaints guidance, and reinforce the role of advocacy and accessible communication. Continued investment in workforce development, partnership working, and monitoring of rights respecting practice will support children and young people to raise

concerns confidently and help ensure their rights are consistently protected across services.

Children's participation in hearings

Across Ayrshire, significant progress has been made to strengthen children's participation, safety and wellbeing within the Children's Hearings System. Child Friendly Scheduling is now embedded as standard practice, ensuring that all children and young people are supported to express how they wish to take part in their hearing, where they feel most comfortable participating, and any dates they wish to avoid. This approach directly supports Article 12 of the UNCRC by ensuring children's views are heard and meaningfully influence how their hearing is arranged. The expansion of this approach through Phase 2 now includes Hearing Scrapbooks, enabling children to prepare in a more creative and accessible way. This strengthens Article 13 by providing different, child friendly ways for children to communicate their views. Feedback indicates that children value being listened to, with over 97% of scheduling preferences accommodated.

Complementing this, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) Ayrshire has introduced Keeping the Promise Commitment Standards to remove barriers to family participation. Staff now engage with families ahead of hearings to identify support needs, offer pre hearing visits, and signpost to advocacy, contributing to reduced referrals and easing anxiety for children and carers. This work aligns with Article 3 of the UNCRC, as these supports help ensure the child's best interests, safety and wellbeing are central to the hearing process. In January 2025, Ayrshire also established its first Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership (CHIP), bringing together partners to share learning, coordinate improvements and strengthen a rights based, trauma informed approach across the system. This partnership approach further supports Article 19 by helping protect children from harm through safer, more coordinated multi agency practice. Collectively, these developments are helping ensure that the Children's Hearings System across Ayrshire is more accessible, responsive and grounded in the rights, views and needs of children and families.



Cluster 4: Civil rights and freedoms

Articles 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 16, 17, 19, 23, 28, 29



Integrated Impact Assessments (IIA)

Our IIA, integrates the Equality Act 2010, Fairer Scotland Duty, UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, and Human Rights. New or adapted policies and procedures must be impact assessed across each of these areas, using sufficient evidence, to explain the positive or negative impacts the proposed policy may have. Completed assessments are then made available online for public viewing through the Council's website.

Conducting an IIA ensures that when developing policies, planning services, or taking financial decisions, we are not adversely affecting or discriminating against any of the diverse groups within our communities. This ensures that we are actively promoting equality and, with the inclusion of our UNCRRC section of the IIA, considering the needs of our children in detail.

Within our IIA we have a Children's rights section for translating the UNCRRC and

specifically Article 2 (non-discrimination), Article 3 (best interests), Article 6 (life, survival and development) and Article 12 (views of child) into practice in a concrete and structured manner.

To support the development of our new IIA toolkit, the Council has developed verifiers in each service, including Ayrshire Roads Alliance, Ayrshire 360 and East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership. Specific training has been developed to support verifiers to sign off IIAs within their service areas, they are the main point of contact to support the completion of IIAs and ensure that each IIA is completed to a high standard prior to publication.

Shared legal duties

Police Scotland and East Ayrshire Council are both listed authorities under the UNCRRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, meaning they share legal duties to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights in everyday practice. This shared statutory foundation underpins their joint work across local services, including policing, education, social work and health. Through the East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership and GIRFEC, both organisations collaborate to identify risks early, involve children in decisions, ensure child centred planning, and maintain a consistent rights based approach. Police Scotland contributes directly to East Ayrshire's wider UNCRRC commitments by prioritising safety, participation and protection from harm in all interactions with children.

This partnership is further strengthened through East Ayrshire's UNCRRC Champions Model, and the Children and Young People Plan, which emphasise respect, safety and meaningful participation. As a core children's services partner, Police Scotland supports multi agency safeguarding, adopts trauma informed practice, and ensures policing decisions reflect children's rights. Together, these joint structures and priorities create a coherent local system where children's rights are embedded in everyday decision making and service delivery across East Ayrshire.

See Example 3.

Digital Access

Through the Capital Investment Programme, we provide a digital service that procures, deploys, and maintains devices across all schools, ensuring fair access to modern technology. Classrooms are equipped with Promethean Interactive Panels to support high quality learning and teaching. Children and young people directly influence this service through surveys, pupil councils, device pilots, and ongoing classroom feedback. Their views shape decisions on device selection, accessibility features, and future procurement.

Rising device costs and restricted budgets continue to challenge our ability to maintain equitable device ratios and refresh cycles. In response, the IT team maximises device lifespan through careful maintenance and phased refresh planning, ensuring sustainability while upholding reliability and digital equity.

Our approach aligns strongly with key UNCRC rights, ensuring that decisions are made in the best interests of the child (Article 3), that children's views meaningfully influence digital and operational decision making, and that they have access to information (Article 17) and opportunities for expression (Article 13). We also uphold children's rights to privacy (Article 16) and ensure appropriate adaptations are in place for children with disabilities so they can participate fully (Article 23).

All devices are configured with proportionate safeguarding and security measures—including filtering, monitoring, and data protection—to maintain a safe digital environment while minimising restrictions on privacy. We continuously review accessibility features and OS updates to ensure learners, including those using assistive technologies such as switch controls, eye gaze systems or AAC tools, can participate fully. Working with Education Scotland, GLOW and specialist teams, we provide language specific keyboards, speech generating tools, and other enabling technologies to support communication and information access.

Professional learning for teachers, classroom assistants and digital leads strengthens inclusive practice and promotes the interdependence of rights, participation, education, and wellbeing.

Digital safety in schools



Digital safety in East Ayrshire schools is underpinned by a children's rights based approach in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Schools are committed to enabling children and young people to use digital technologies safely, responsibly and confidently, while ensuring they are protected from harm. This supports children's rights to protection, access to information and education that develops their skills and abilities (Articles 3, 17, 19, 28 and 29).

Schools adopt a whole community approach to digital safeguarding, recognising that online experiences span both school and home environments. This shared responsibility ensures that children's wellbeing and best interests remain central, and that adults are informed and responsive to emerging digital risks.

The Safer Schools Scotland app plays a central role in supporting digital safety across East Ayrshire. It provides accessible, age appropriate guidance for pupils, parents/carers and employees, including advice on privacy and safety settings, alerts on emerging risks such as online challenges and artificial intelligence misuse, and clear routes for sharing safeguarding messages. This supports children's right to reliable information and protection from online harm, in line with Article 17 and Article 19.

Digital safety education is embedded within the curriculum through a structured Internet Safety and Digital Citizenship framework. Learning focuses on online privacy, recognising harmful

content, cyberbullying and exploitation, and managing digital footprints, supporting children to develop resilience, critical thinking and informed decision making.

Schools promote the safe use of digital systems such as Glow and Microsoft Teams, supported by clear guidance, appropriate supervision and filtering and monitoring on school managed devices. Staff receive ongoing training to ensure digital safeguarding remains embedded in everyday practice, supporting children's right to protection from harm.

East Ayrshire schools work in partnership with safeguarding agencies and align digital safety practice with current legislation, including the UK Online Safety Act. Parents and carers are supported through guidance and resources that respect children's evolving capacities and promote open communication, listening to children's views and experiences (Article 12).

All online safety concerns are treated as safeguarding matters, with clear and accessible reporting pathways, including national services such as CEOP where appropriate. Responses are timely and child centred, ensuring that the best interests of the child remain the primary consideration (Article 3).

Information sharing

Sharing information appropriately is essential to promoting, supporting and safeguarding the wellbeing of children and young people in East Ayrshire. All decisions about information sharing are guided by the best interests of the

child, in line with our Ayrshire wide GIRFEC policies, local child protection procedures and professional responsibilities. While Article 8 of the Human Rights Act 1998 gives individuals the right to respect for private and family life, information sharing may be lawful where it is in accordance with the law, necessary and proportionate, and pursued for a legitimate aim such as safeguarding or protecting health and wellbeing. Following this ensures that Article 16 of UNCRC is complied with.

At all times our practitioners consider whether sharing information is required to protect a child or young person from harm, complies with data protection and confidentiality requirements, and is proportionate to the concern. Practitioners share on a 'need to know' basis and only the minimum relevant information is shared, with the appropriate services, and only where it is necessary to achieve the intended outcome to support the wellbeing and safety of our children and young people. Where information is shared without consent, practitioners are asked to clearly justify and record the decision and rationale, demonstrating how the child's rights were considered and how the action supports their safety or wellbeing, in line with East Ayrshire expectations and accountability standards.

Practitioners follow information sharing guidance within the [Ayrshire GIREC Practitioner Guide](#) and the [national Information Sharing Charters for Children and Young People and Parents and Carers](#).



Cluster 5: Violence against children

Articles 2, 3, 12, 19, 24, 28, 29, 34



Protecting children through the Violence Against Women Partnership



The East Ayrshire Violence Against Women Partnership (EAVAWP) continues to play a critical role in upholding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), particularly in relation to protecting children and young people from violence, abuse and exploitation. Central to this work is Article 19, which places a duty on public bodies to safeguard children from all forms of physical or mental harm. Where violence against children is established we must use available legislative processes involving the Children's hearing, Court or both to protect children and young people. Through collaborative partnership arrangements, strategic needs assessment, the Safe and Together model, MARAC processes and specialist support services, EAVAWP works to reduce risk, enhance safety and ensure that children affected by domestic abuse, sexual

violence and coercive control are identified and supported at the earliest opportunity.

National evidence shows that around 1 in 5 children experience domestic abuse, and 1 in 6 experience sexual abuse, during childhood. EAVAWP recognises that many more children experience gender based violence than are currently known to services, and closing this gap remains a key priority. Identifying these children early and ensuring they receive appropriate protection, safety planning and support is a central focus of local improvement activity.

The partnership also acknowledges the clear link between poverty and increased risk of harm. Children living in poverty face heightened vulnerability to gender based violence due to the stresses and structural inequalities associated with deprivation. In East Ayrshire, where child poverty rates remain a significant challenge, it is essential that efforts to reduce inequality are aligned with efforts to prevent and respond to domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women and girls.

EAVAWP's approach reflects Article 3 by placing children's safety, wellbeing and developmental needs at the centre of decision making. The Safe and Together model ensures that responsibility for harm remains with perpetrators, while recognising and strengthening the protective actions of non abusing parents. This supports children to remain safely within their families wherever appropriate, promoting emotional security, stable relationships and recovery from trauma. Ongoing multi agency training continues to build practitioner confidence and capability in responding in ways that are child centred, trauma informed and rights based.

The partnership's strong focus on prevention, education and cultural change supports Articles 28 and 29. School based programmes such as Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP), Equally Safe at School (ESAS) and sexual violence prevention inputs help challenge harmful gender norms, build equality, and empower children and young people to understand their rights and seek help. These initiatives

also support Article 12 by ensuring that young people's views inform learning, practice and service development.

Targeted support for children affected by sexual violence and exploitation is delivered through services such as East Ayrshire Women's Aid and The STAR Centre: Ayrshire Rape Crisis. This provision aligns with Article 34, ensuring protection from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse, and with Article 24 through trauma informed emotional and psychological support that promotes recovery and wellbeing. By recognising the significant impact of poverty and inequality, EAVAWP also upholds Article 2, ensuring that children facing multiple adversities are supported to realise their rights on an equal basis with others.

See Example 4 for further detail.



Signs of Safety and Healing

Signs of Safety and Healing supports our GIRFEC practice framework for working with children, young people and families. It provides a consistent, strengths based and safety organised approach to assessment, planning and review that supports proportionate decision making while ensuring that children's best interests are a primary consideration in all actions concerning them (Article 3). The framework promotes early intervention and timely support, enabling children to grow up safe, supported and able to thrive within their families and communities.

This approach, that we are currently implementing, brings together professional expertise with the lived experience, strengths and resources of children, families and their wider networks. Practitioners work in partnership with families to explore harm, risk and complicating factors alongside existing strengths and safety, while creating opportunities for children to share their views, feelings and wishes in ways that are meaningful to them. Children's perspectives are actively listened to and taken seriously in assessment, planning and review, reflecting their right to be heard in all matters affecting their lives (Article 12).

Signs of Healing strengthens the Signs of Safety framework by focusing on how children experience safety and care in their everyday lives and how recovery is supported over time. It is grounded in the understanding that safety alone is not sufficient and that children have the right to heal from trauma through secure, nurturing and trusting relationships (Article 39). The approach enhances the quality of direct work with children, parents, foster carers, kinship carers and corporate parenting staff, supporting network building, repair and connection so that children experience consistency, care and a sense of belonging.

Across East Ayrshire, Signs of Safety and Healing supports children's right to be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation, both within and beyond the home (Article 19). Where risks are identified, children are supported to access timely child protection responses and specialist services, including support for those affected by sexual exploitation or harmful substance use. Practice

is trauma informed and relationship based, safeguarding children's dignity and ensuring that no child is subject to inhuman or degrading treatment, with advocacy and legal support available where required.

The framework aligns with GIRFEC, The Promise, Trauma Informed Practice, Relationship Based Practice, Contextual Safeguarding, Domestic Abuse Informed Practice, the commitment to keeping siblings connected, and the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021). Through this alignment, East Ayrshire HSCP strengthens its commitment to delivering rights respecting, evidence based practice that improves outcomes and reduces adversity for children and young people.

Implementation of Signs of Safety and Healing in East Ayrshire is led in partnership with the Integrated Children's Partnership and overseen by a multi agency Signs of Safety Steering Group chaired by the Public Protection Lead. Listening to the experiences of children and parents or carers is central to implementation, workforce development and evaluation, ensuring continuous learning and improvement. Ongoing training, a Champions model and regular engagement support a shared culture in which children's rights, safety and recovery remain at the heart of practice across East Ayrshire.

Bairns Hoose

Ayrshire has made strong progress towards implementing the Bairns Hoose Standards through a hub and spoke model, recognising that a single building is not practical for an area covering approximately 1,300 square miles, including two island communities. This model increases accessibility and choice, directly supporting children's right to be heard and have their views respected (Article 12) and their right to information and expression (Article 13).

Two established spokes are in place in North and South Ayrshire. While these are multi purpose buildings, North Ayrshire includes exclusive rooms for Joint Investigative Interviews (JIIs). A pan Ayrshire Joint Interview Team, based in Kilmarnock, operates across all three local authority areas using mobile interview kits. All team members are trained in the Scottish Child Interview Model, supporting children's rights to protection from abuse and exploitation (Article

34) and to give their best evidence in a trauma informed way.

All children referred for interview are offered recovery support, including those who choose not to proceed with an interview. This reflects a commitment to Article 39, which requires children who have experienced abuse or trauma to receive support to recover their health, dignity and self respect. Children and young people are also supported to share feedback, participate in service design and influence change through a change makers group, embedding co production and children's rights in practice.

Partnership working has been central to this progress. Children First provides independent advocacy, participation expertise and trauma informed architectural advice, strengthening assurance that children's rights, voices and best interests are upheld. Break the Silence supports staff wellbeing, supervision and responses to vicarious trauma, sustaining a skilled and resilient workforce that can uphold children's rights effectively.

Investment has also been made in a sensory garden and trauma responsive spaces, informed directly by what children and young people tell us they need—choice, privacy, flexibility and, at times, distance from their own communities. This reflects a rights based, child centred approach based on children's lived experience.

Our vision for Ayrshire

Our vision is to deliver a child centred, rights based and flexible Bairns Hoose model where every child and young person feels safe, listened to and supported across their justice, recovery and health journeys, fully aligned with the principles of the UNCRC.

Over the coming year, we aim to:

- develop a fixed interview site in Ayrshire to improve children's experience and the quality of evidence, supporting their right to protection and participation (Articles 12 and 34)
- improve children and young people's experience of medical and forensic health assessments, including advocacy, sensory supports and meaningful feedback mechanisms, aligned with Article 39

- strengthen support through the court journey, including exploring remote court links to reduce re-traumatisation and uphold children's dignity
- increase awareness of children's rights, including rights to expression, participation and recovery (Articles 12, 13, 34 and 39)
- continue to expand co-production and participation, recognising and celebrating children and young people's contributions through events such as Children's Rights Day.

Through sustained partnership working, participation and trauma responsive practice, Ayrshire remains committed to delivering a Bairns Hoose approach that realises children's rights in practice and improves outcomes and experiences for all children and young people.

Protecting children - statutory interventions

There are some instances where children cannot safely stay with their families or require additional support through statutory interventions to do so. These interventions always take place within the GIRFEC and child protection frameworks. When children are made subject to Child Protection Orders (CPO), Compulsory Supervision Orders (CSO) and permanence arrangements they are supported to recover from experiences of violence, abuse, neglect, harm and exploitation (UNCRC Article 39). When undertaking investigations that may lead to such decisions, the systems and processes are well understood and followed by all professionals involved. (Article 37(a)) In practice in East Ayrshire the Team Around the child and family work together to place the child at the centre and seek to ensure that there is early and ongoing assessment of trauma and developmental need at all stages of intervention. The locality social work request for assistance team is one of the key entry points into the social work service for support. The service has been developing its practice through the implementation of signs of Safety and Health, which places Children's Rights to the core. As part of this work, the assessments undertaken integrate the child's right to recovery into Child's Plans, Compulsory Supervision Measures and permanence plans. This may include supporting children access therapeutic support from specialist health

services, such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), accessing the speech and language therapy that has been working in collaboration with social work intensive services or the specific Occupational Therapy support available that have supported the development of a trauma sensitive environment in local Children's Houses and individual children based on an assessment of their needs.

When children can no longer be cared for by their parents it is important in terms of long-term outcomes to maintain and promote a continuity of care, that children are cared for as close to their family and home community as is safely possible. This approach promotes lifelong connections with family and community and supports better long-term outcomes for children as they recover from harm. In East Ayrshire the balance of care has shifted with more children being cared for in kinship arrangements within their extended family and with friends. This has supported us to promote stability and continuity of care, recognising recovery is dependent on consistent, loving and nurturing relationships. When this option is not available the first option is to place children with East Ayrshire foster carers or one of the three children's houses. When permanently cared for away from family life story work is undertaken to support children make sense of their living arrangements as they currently are but also looking to the future as experience profiles that children often struggle to make sense of why they did not live with their parents.

Children's Participation in Decisions

It is a long held expectation that children should be actively involved and supported to meaningfully participate in decisions that affect them, such as and including child protection proceedings, Children's Hearings and permanence decision making (UNCRC Article 12). When significant life decisions are being made such as children being removed from parents, not being returned and placed for adoption it is critical that they are able to participate. Participation may take many different forms from attending meetings, completing form, drawing pictures, and speaking to a trusted and independent person. All assessments undertaken take account of children's voice and views. East Ayrshire Advocacy Service supports Children express

their views when going through a children's hearing process and Who Care's Scotland supports children who are both in the Care of the Local Authority but also those children who are subject to child protection investigations and registration. In those meetings that do take place in respect of children, local chairs have been supported to ensure that the voice of the children is at the centre of decision making.

The recent Care Inspectorate report set out that children and young people in East Ayrshire are meaningfully and appropriately involved in decisions about their lives, including child protection processes, Children's Hearings and permanence planning. Children are respected and supported to give their views, and that staff take time to build trusting relationships that enable participation, even in complex or distressing circumstances.

Kinship Care

Kinship care is where children are cared for by either their extended family or very close friends. This can be both a short term and long term arrangement. Kinship care is acknowledged as being the best alternative care when children can no longer live with their parents. Kinship carers are often grandparents, aunts and uncles and require support in their own right in order to best support the children who are living with them to be safe and recover. In East Ayrshire the approach to kinship care continues to be developed. Kinship carers have access to training and development support from a dedicated kinship care team. Kinship carers have access to some bespoke training and development to support them to understand the challenges that children may have experienced, how this may have impacted on them and how recovery may be supported.



Cluster 6: Family environment and alternative care

Articles 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 13, 15, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 27, 31



universal, targeted and specialist services to ensure that infants and families receive the right support at the right time, with a strong emphasis on early intervention, prevention and partnership working.

The Mini Minds Matter pathway is fundamentally child centred and reflects the UNCRC requirement that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in all actions concerning children, as set out in Article 3. The service prioritises the infant's mental health, emotional development and relational safety, recognising the infant as an individual with rights, needs and experiences of their own. Assessment, formulation and care planning are consistently guided by what will best support the infant's security, development and long term wellbeing.

By providing timely access to specialist infant mental health expertise and evidence based interventions, Mini Minds Matter supports children's right to the highest attainable standard of health under Article 24. Addressing emotional and relational difficulties during the earliest years helps prevent escalation of need and reduces the likelihood of longer term mental health, social or developmental challenges. The pathway integrates psychological assessment, outcome measures and therapeutic approaches, ensuring that care is proportionate, responsive and grounded in best practice.

Infant Mental Health

Within East Ayrshire Health Visiting services, a range of tools are used to support the developmental assessment of infants and children to identify infants who may benefit from wider input, including referrals to the NHS Infant Mental Health team where appropriate. This coordinated approach strengthens early identification and ensures that emerging emotional or relational concerns are addressed promptly.

Mini Minds Matter (MMM) is a specialist Infant Mental Health service within NHS Ayrshire & Arran that supports infants from the antenatal period up to their third birthday, alongside their parents and caregivers. The service provides a structured, evidence based pathway including professional consultation, assessment, formulation and both direct and indirect interventions, all aimed at promoting infants' emotional wellbeing and healthy early relationships. MMM works collaboratively with

Although infants are unable to express their views verbally, the service upholds the spirit of Article 12 by actively seeking to understand each infant's experiences through careful observation, relational assessment tools and the insights of parents and caregivers. Families are informed, supported and involved throughout the pathway, including through consent processes, written feedback and collaborative care planning. This approach promotes dignity, transparency and meaningful participation, while recognising the critical role of caregivers in supporting infant wellbeing.

Mini Minds Matter also reflects the UNCRC commitment to non discrimination under Article 2. Referrals are accepted from health, social care and third sector services, with careful consideration given to the wider social and environmental factors affecting infant wellbeing, including poverty, trauma, isolation and disability. The pathway's strong focus on early identification, consultation and system wide support helps reduce inequality by enabling professionals to respond early and effectively to emerging need, particularly for infants experiencing cumulative adversity.

Family Group Decision Making

Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) in East Ayrshire is a strengths based, rights respecting approach that supports families to make safe and sustainable decisions for their children. FGDM creates a balanced partnership between families and professionals, providing a safe and respectful space where individuals are valued as people rather than service users. Children and families are placed at the centre of decision making, with professionals acting as supporters rather than decision makers. This approach directly aligns with the UNCRC, particularly Article 12 (the child's right to be heard), Article 5 (supporting families in their child rearing role), and Article 18 (the shared responsibility of parents and the state). By empowering families to identify solutions and supports within their own networks, FGDM promotes dignity, participation and early intervention in line with East Ayrshire's commitment to Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC).

In East Ayrshire, families are offered FGDM at key points to help prevent escalation of need and reduce the need for statutory intervention. This includes early involvement during GIRFEC

assessments and Team with the family meetings during diversion from child protection processes such as Request for Assistance assessments and Initial Referral Discussions, throughout pre birth assessments, and when families are at risk of accommodation due to crisis. FGDM supports the UNCRC principles of prevention, protection and participation by enabling families to plan together, keep children safe within their families wherever possible, and ensure that decisions affecting children's lives are made transparently and with their views considered. Where accommodation cannot be avoided, FGDM remains a vital tool in supporting timely, family led planning and maintaining children's relationships and identity.

Corporate Parenting

The Moving On, Continuing Care and Aftercare (MOCCA) Service provides targeted social work support for care experienced young people transitioning to adulthood. The service is firmly grounded in young people's rights under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), now fully incorporated into Scots law. In particular, MOCCA promotes the best interests of the child as a primary consideration (Article 3), aligns with The Promise, the Corporate Parenting Action Plan 2024–2027, and responds to national developments including the 2025 Bill on Care Experience and Service Planning.

MOCCA support is young person led and can begin from age 15, reflecting young people's entitlement to be actively involved in decisions that affect their lives (Article 12 – right to be heard). Through looked after reviews, engagement with the service is carefully paced according to individual strengths, needs and readiness for transition. A holistic Welfare Assessment informs a Pathway Plan, developed in partnership with housing, education, DWP, health and third sector services, supporting young people's rights to development, education and preparation for adult life (Articles 6 and 28).

Young people aged 15–26 are supported, with a strong focus on voice, choice and participation, including opportunities to influence service design and delivery through youth voice structures such as the Care Experience Cabinet. This approach reflects the UNCRC's emphasis on respecting young

people's evolving capacities and ensuring their views are given due weight (Article 12). Levels of support are flexible and can be intensified or reduced depending on the young person's stage of transition, ensuring proportionate and responsive care in line with individual need.

East Ayrshire Council has a long standing partnership with Blue Triangle Housing Association (BTHA) to provide supported independent living for care experienced young people. This includes three supported flats at Whatriggs Road, Kilmarnock and an additional five tenancies purchased by BTHA, with HSCP funded support. At any one time, eleven young people can be supported to develop the skills, confidence and stability required for their own tenancy, progressing towards independence while having their right to an adequate standard of living upheld (Article 27).

MOCCA prioritises continuity of trusted relationships, recognising the importance of stable, caring connections for care experienced young people. This reflects Article 20, which requires that children and young people who cannot live with their families receive special protection and support, and that continuity in their care arrangements and relationships is promoted wherever possible. Most young people remain in Continuing Care beyond age 18, with Aftercare offered up to age 26 and proactively re offered on an annual basis, supporting long term emotional wellbeing and recovery from earlier adversity (Article 39 – recovery and reintegration).

Housing Services and the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) work collaboratively to ensure young people have access to safe, suitable and secure accommodation, alongside wraparound support and financial assistance where required. This partnership approach supports young people's rights to protection, development and wellbeing (Articles 3 and 27).

Future priorities for MOCCA include expanding supported tenancies, planning transitions earlier and more gradually, strengthening aspirations, education and employment opportunities, and ensuring that financial pressures never outweigh young people's rights or best interests, in keeping with the principles of the UNCRC and Scotland's commitment to keeping the Promise to care experienced young people.

Young Carers



East Ayrshire Carers Centre supports more than 1,500 Young Carers aged 5–25, recognising the significant impact that caring responsibilities can have on their wellbeing, development and opportunities. The service is firmly grounded in the principles of the UNCRC, ensuring that children's rights are protected, upheld and central to every decision made, in line with Article 3 and Article 6.

In line with the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, all Young Carers are offered a Young Carer Statement, which helps identify their needs, understand their caring role and set personal goals. These statements are reviewed regularly so that support reflects each young person's experiences, views and choices, supporting Article 12 (the right to be heard) and ensuring that children and young people can influence decisions that affect their lives.

To promote rest, play and social connection, East Ayrshire Carers Centre provides weekly group sessions that offer protected time for Young Carers to relax, spend time with peers and enjoy activities. During school holidays, the service delivers local outings and residential respite opportunities, ensuring young people have dedicated time for leisure and for supporting their physical, emotional and social wellbeing, supporting Article 31.

Creative expression is supported through the Music Wellbeing Group, which offers a safe space for Young Carers to build confidence, explore their creativity and participate in the arts. This work is showcased through events

such as the Carers Week performance, giving young people the opportunity to be heard, celebrated and recognised for their talents, in line with Article 12 and Article 13.

Young Carers with additional support needs can access tailored provision designed to meet their sensory, communication and emotional needs. This ensures that all children—regardless of disability—are included, supported and able to participate fully in Carers Centre activities, upholding Article 2 and Article 23.

Support is also extended to the wider family. Through holistic, whole family approaches, the Carers Centre offers advice, advocacy and support with benefits, helping to reduce the pressures that caring may place on a young person and strengthening their right to grow up in a safe, supportive environment (Articles 18 and 27).

To promote financial wellbeing and access to opportunities, the service helps Young Carers apply for Time to Live grants, the Young Scot Young Carers Package and the Young Carer Grant. These supports ensure that children and young people receive both practical and financial recognition of their caring role.

Across all areas of its work, East Ayrshire Carers Centre upholds the values of The Promise by ensuring that Young Carers are listened to, valued and safe. Through inclusive environments, family engagement and strong partnership working with schools, social work, health services and community organisations, the service provides coordinated, rights based support that places children's best interests at the centre (Article 3).



Cluster 7: Basic health and welfare

Articles 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 13, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 39



A rights based approach that focusses on universal and targeted prevention opportunities, in the design and delivery, and culture and practice of services creates conditions that support infants, children and young people to grow well and empowers the adults so that all live well through the experience of safe relationships, secure housing, access to education and healthcare and fair employment or adequate income (Articles 3, 18, 24, 27 and 28). Adult health and wellbeing is shaped by experiences across childhood. Strengthening early foundations improves health across all ages and reduce inequalities (Articles 4 and 6).

Within NHS Ayrshire & Arran we want to improve population health, reducing inequalities, and ensure public services are sustainable, effective and person-centred. The desire to ensure that infants, children and young people in Ayrshire and Arran reach their potential is at the heart of the services delivered in NHS Ayrshire and Arran. Change is possible, and within our grasp, if we act together. Professionals, communities, and systems all have a role to play in creating conditions where health can flourish. Together, we have the opportunity to turn adversity into progress and create a future where every infant, child and young person in Ayrshire and Arran can live well (Articles 3, 4 and 24).

Partnership working with NHS

Working alongside NHS in delivering our Local Outcome Improvement Plan from a Community Planning perspective is imperative. A public health perspective on children's rights in Ayrshire and Arran is strongly shaped by NHS Ayrshire & Arran's commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Public health data across Ayrshire and Arran highlights several rights relevant concerns, which diminishes children's right to equitable health and wellbeing (Article 24). Children's experience of health as a resource for life is shaped by poverty and distress in family and community life that shapes the way they grow and develop and navigate life's challenges (Articles 6 and 27). Life expectancy is no longer improving for the most disadvantaged communities, and more people are living longer but in poorer health. The overall burden of disease is projected to rise by 21%, with the most disadvantaged groups affected the most (Article 2).

School nursing

School nurses in East Ayrshire play a vital role in realising children's rights by ensuring care is delivered fairly, safely and with each child's voice firmly at the centre. Our work is grounded in the UNCRC, recognising children and young people across East Ayrshire as rights holders with unique strengths, views and experiences. Within our communities—from Kilmarnock and Stewarton to Cumnock, Auchinleck, Dalmellington and our more rural villages—our school nursing teams strive to provide accessible, compassionate and equitable care.

Non discrimination is reflected in the support we offer to looked after children, young carers, children living in areas of persistent deprivation, and those affected by the cost of living pressures that particularly impact some East Ayrshire communities. Flexible access routes such as drop ins, targeted outreach and partnership working with schools ensure that no child is excluded from support (Article 2).

Acting in the child's best interests underpins how we coordinate care for children experiencing anxiety, trauma, domestic abuse or safeguarding concerns. Our close links with local partners—including schools, Educational Psychology, Social Work, CAMHS, Ayrshire 360 and third sector organisations—help ensure that decision making remains centred on wellbeing and safety (Article 3).

Children's rights to life, survival and development are supported through our work in communities experiencing disadvantage, early identification of unmet health needs and active contribution to multi agency planning for children at risk of harm or neglect (Article 6).

Ensuring children are heard is embedded across East Ayrshire school nursing practice. Many of our children benefit from visual communication tools, emotion check ins, one to one wellbeing conversations and our school nurses' training in Talking Mats—an approach that has proven especially valuable for children with communication differences or additional support needs (Article 12).

Protection from harm is strengthened through timely child protection responses, strong participation in multi agency case conferences and consistent partnership working across local schools and services (Article 19).

Children's right to health is promoted through sexual health education tailored for East Ayrshire's young people, substance misuse prevention delivered alongside local partners, and coordinated support for long term conditions to help pupils fully engage in school life (Article 24).

Advocacy for an adequate standard of living includes signposting to the local school meal programmes, uniform bank initiatives, family support hubs and resources for families experiencing housing instability or temporary accommodation (Article 27).

School nurses also uphold children's right to education by supporting attendance, transitions (including P7–S1 and young people returning after illness), and health plans that enable learning. Trauma informed practice is integral to supporting children who have experienced adversity, bereavement or involvement in the justice system, reflecting the local context of East Ayrshire's recovery focused, compassionate policy approach.

This rights based approach aligns with the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, the national UNCRC Implementation Framework, NHS Education for Scotland's UNCRC work, and the Scottish Government's School Nursing Priority Pathways, ensuring that school nursing practice in East Ayrshire is legally grounded, consistent and always child centred.



Health visiting

Health visitors in East Ayrshire play a vital role in upholding and protecting the rights of children and families every single day. The principles of the UNCRC are already woven into the way our health visiting teams work, shaping the compassion, fairness, and respect shown to every family we support.

In East Ayrshire, the principle of non discrimination (Article 2) is lived out through our commitment to caring for every family with the same care and attention, no matter their background, circumstances, or community. The best interests of the child (Article 3) remain at the heart of every clinical and professional decision, ensuring that each child's needs, safety, and wellbeing come first.

Our health visitors know that the right to life, survival, and development (Article 6) begins in the earliest days of a child's life. Through home visits, early years support, and tailored health guidance our team help to ensure that babies and young children across East Ayrshire have the strongest possible start. And at every stage, the right of the child to be heard (Article 12) is prioritised — whether through listening directly to older children or amplifying the voice of our infants through sensitive, relationship based practice.

While our teams have upheld these values for many years, the UNCRC now provides a strengthened legal and rights based foundation for this work.

In everyday practice, East Ayrshire health visitors bring UNCRC principles to life in practical, meaningful ways. Helping families access services reflects our commitment to fairness. Developmental reviews and early interventions support each child's right to grow, learn, and thrive. Supporting parents with birth registration protects a child's right to identity (Article 7).

Safeguarding work ensures children are protected from harm (Article 19), and linking families with financial supports, housing teams, food resources, and community services helps uphold every child's right to an adequate standard of living (Article 27).

Our health visitors turn children's rights into everyday reality through warm, consistent, and relationship based care. They tailor support to each family's needs and place the child's

wellbeing at the centre of every conversation and decision.

From breastfeeding support to play and attachment guidance, from early identification of concerns to reassurance during uncertain moments, they empower parents with information and choices that help them feel confident in their child's journey. This work is strengthened by close partnership with local midwives, GPs, social work, early years teams, infant mental health team and community organisations throughout East Ayrshire.

Every visit — whether at home, in a clinic, or during multi agency planning — is an opportunity to promote, protect, and uphold the rights of the children and families we are privileged to support.



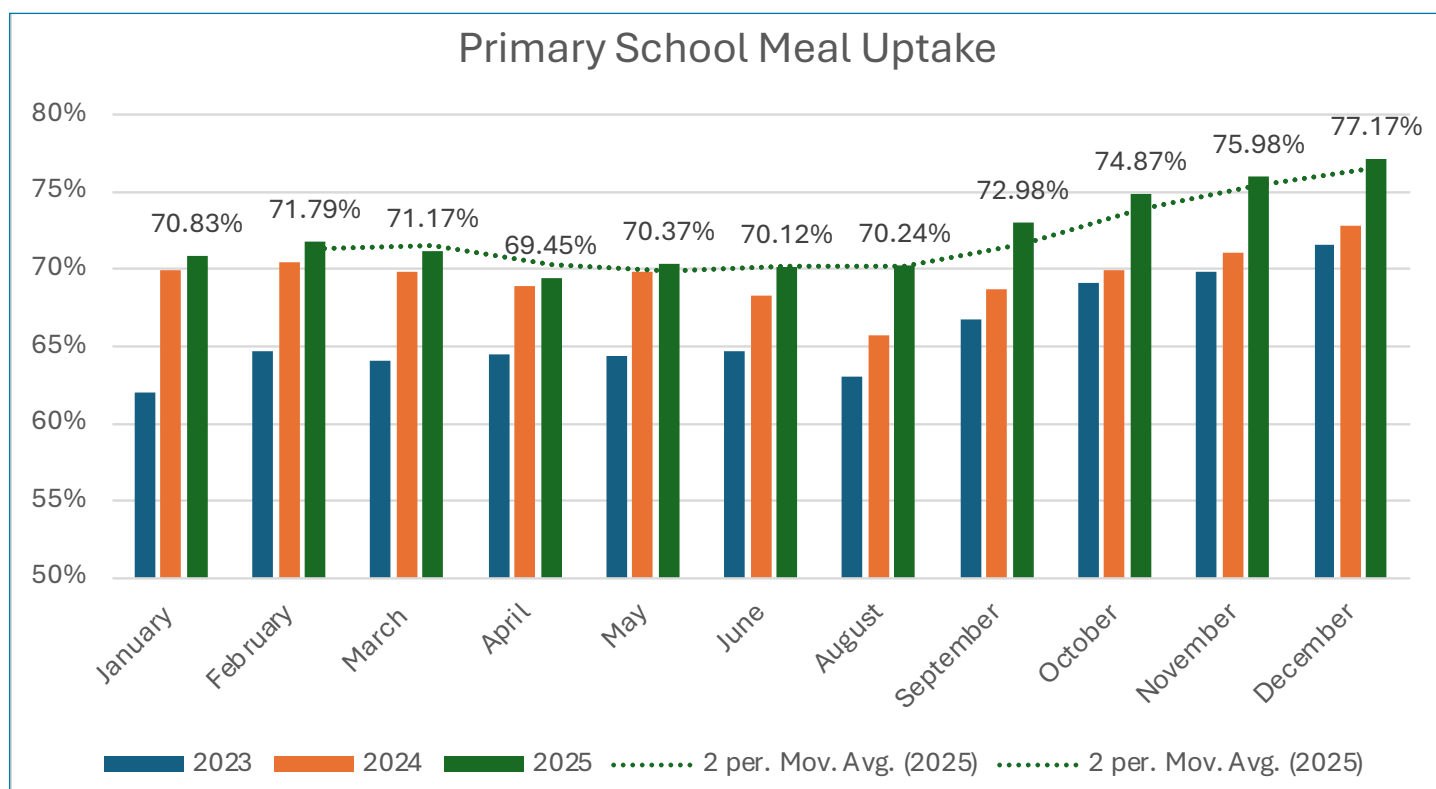
School meal provision

East Ayrshire Council currently provides around 12,500 meals per day across Early Years, Primary, Additional Support Needs (ASN) and Secondary schools. This year, the Council approved the extension of Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) to P6–P7, meaning all primary pupils are now entitled to a free meal. As a result, primary school uptake has increased, with pupils receiving a nutritionally balanced two course meal.

Upgrades to the cashless catering system now let parents pre order lunches up to three weeks in advance, view menus with pictures, nutritional details and allergen information, and discuss choices with their child. Pre ordering is also available in classrooms, with information going directly to Catering Managers, improving efficiency, reducing food waste and ensuring pupils receive their chosen meal. This supports families with an average annual saving of £475.

East Ayrshire Council has also extended subsidised Secondary School meals for a further two years, allowing a nutritionally balanced meal to be offered at £1.25, saving families around £237.50 per year.

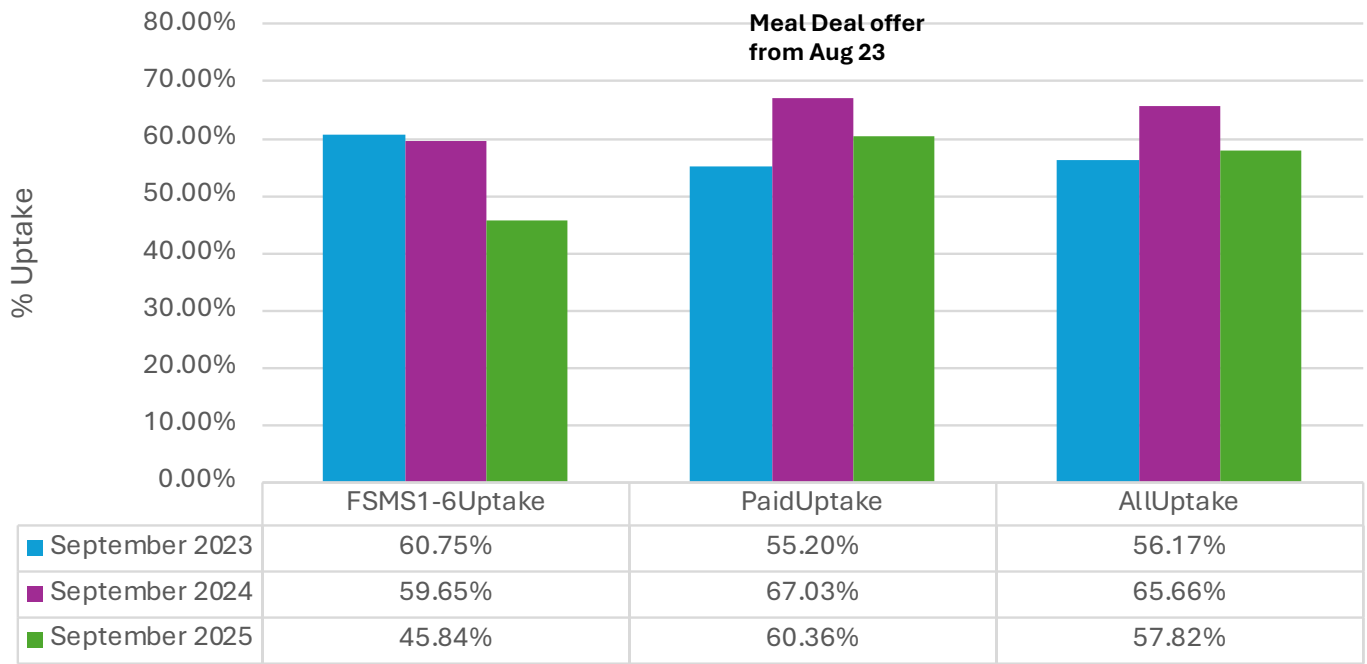
Over the past three years, Primary School meal uptake has shown a consistent upward trend, reflecting the impact of subsidised meals and the Council’s extension of UFSM to P6–P7 from August 2025.



Secondary School has shown a similar picture with a positive outcome of paid school meal uptake due to the introduction and support by Council funding for half price school meals.

Poverty and Equality funding provides free toast and fruit in all primary schools to ensure that children have access to food before the school day begins, particularly those who may not attend breakfast clubs. This supports children’s right to the highest attainable standard of health and their right to an adequate standard of living by helping to ensure that no child starts the school day hungry. The funding also subsidises school breakfasts by £0.20 per meal, supporting an average of 133 children each day across 11 breakfast clubs.

Secondary School Meals September Uptake



East Ayrshire Council also provides school meal holiday payments, funded by the Scottish Government, at a rate of £2.50 per day for all pupils entitled to income based Free School Meals. This year, 3,474 children received holiday payments, equating to £165 per pupil. This financial support further protects children’s rights under Article 27, ensuring families can meet basic living needs throughout school holiday periods. It also reflects Article 26 by ensuring that children in lower income households receive targeted support to promote their wellbeing and reduce the impact of poverty.

This year, two funded Food Education courses were delivered—one at Hurlford Primary School and one at Logan Primary School—supporting children’s rights under the UNCRC. Each four week course provided pupils and parents/ cares with opportunities to learn essential skills in cooking, nutrition and food safety, aligning with article 24 by helping children understand healthy eating and how to prepare nutritious food. Thirty four pupils and parents/ carers took part in the Hurlford programme, with the Logan course following in March. In addition, two practical food demonstrations were delivered to primary pupils, giving them hands on experience in preparing fresh vegetables and fish.

These activities also support article 29 by helping children develop life skills, confidence and knowledge to make informed choices, and article 12 by encouraging discussion, participation and active engagement throughout the sessions. Together, these programmes promote health, wellbeing and empowerment for children and families.

Welfare Rights Service

The Welfare Rights Service focuses on income maximisation to improve outcomes for low income families by increasing income from social security, benefits, cost of living supports and administration of the Tenant Support Fund and employment. This work aligns with the Local Child Poverty Action Plan and the Children and Young People's Strategic Plan, which place a statutory duty on the service to provide advice to pregnant individuals and families with children. It also contributes to the Anti Poverty and Inequality Strategy. Children and young people were engaged through Child Poverty Action Group workshops exploring social security as a right under the UNCRC, including discussions on Cost of the School Day. Schools, ECCs and academies were supported to develop local plans and involve children, young people and families in shaping support within their settings.

The Welfare Rights Service plays a vital role in realising a wide range of UNCRC rights for children, young people and their families. Central to this work are Articles 3, 18, 26 and 27, which emphasise acting in the child's best interests and ensuring families have the financial security needed to provide safe, stable and nurturing homes. Through income maximisation support, the service helps prevent the challenges associated with poverty, inadequate housing and financial stress, contributing to family stability in line with Article 9.

The service also safeguards the rights of children with disabilities by ensuring the correct benefits and supports are in place, while helping families navigate entitlements across DWP, Social Security Scotland and local authority systems. This strengthens access to clear, reliable information in line with Article 17. Protection duties under Articles 32–36 are embedded throughout practice, with concerns routinely shared with HSCP partners and contributions made to child protection processes where needed.

More broadly, the Welfare Rights Service enhances children's rights to education, health, nutrition, development and parental support, and provides targeted assistance to care experienced young people and their families. Through this holistic rights based approach, the service helps make children's rights tangible and meaningful for families across East Ayrshire.

The service has incorporated UNCRC into team meetings, strengthening staff understanding and ensuring that children's rights will inform our planning and delivery. The service has also initiated a procurement process for a Case Management System, which will enhance the ability to identify and support Scottish Government Priority Family Groups and better respond to wider risks and vulnerabilities within our service delivery.

Housing Services

East Ayrshire Council's continued progress in improving outcomes for children, young people and families experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness reflects a child centred, rights based approach consistent with Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) 2019–2026 places the best interests of the child (Article 3) at the heart of strategic and operational decision making, with a strong focus on early intervention, prevention and promoting children's wellbeing.

Through its housing led and prevention focused approach, the RRTP supports children's right to an adequate standard of living (Article 27) and to life, survival and development (Article 6) by prioritising stable, safe and secure accommodation. Key actions, including the expanded acquisitions programme, prevent homelessness by purchasing properties with sitting tenants, enabling children and families to remain settled in their own homes. In doing so, the programme supported 33 households, including 22 children across 13 families, to avoid homelessness, protecting family stability, attachments and community connections and promoting the GIRFEC wellbeing indicators Safe, Nurtured and Healthy.

Keeping children within their family environment wherever possible also supports their right not to be separated from their parents unless it is in their best interests (Article 9). By avoiding displacement into temporary accommodation, children experience greater emotional security and continuity of care, supporting positive developmental outcomes and resilience.

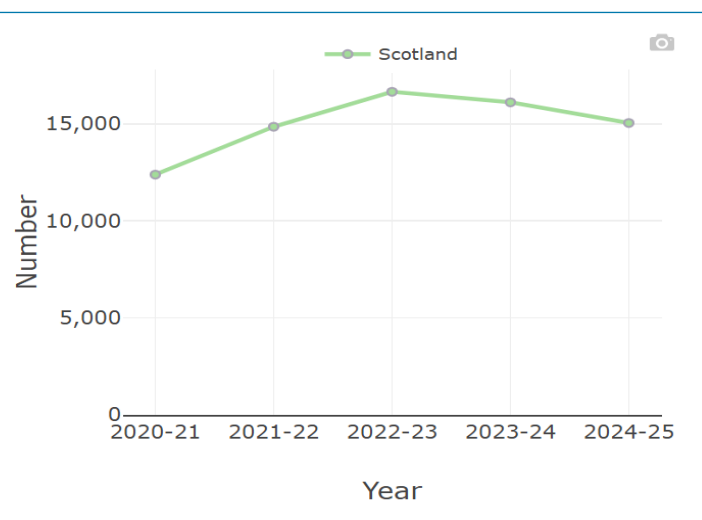
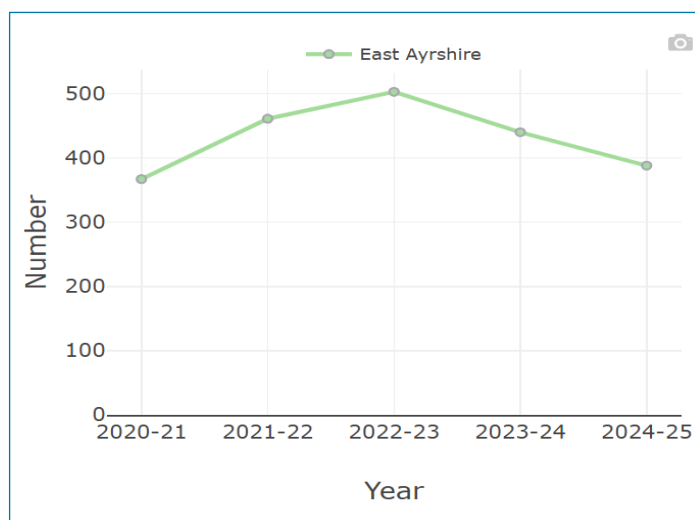
This prevention focused, multi agency approach has led to demonstrable improvements in outcomes for children. The number of children associated with homelessness applications reduced to 388 in 2024/25, a 12% reduction from 440 in 2023/24. The number of children living in temporary accommodation fell by 30% to 25 as of 31 March 2025, while households with children or a pregnant woman in temporary accommodation reduced by 25% down from 20 in 2024 to 15 in 2025. These outcomes evidence effective action to reduce the impact of adversity on children and to promote early help, in line with GIRFEC principles.

Where temporary accommodation is required, the RRTP prioritises swift rehousing to ensure stays are for the shortest appropriate time, supporting children’s wellbeing and minimising disruption to their lives. Average lengths of stay of 120 days for single parent households and 123 days for couples with children are significantly below national averages. This approach supports children’s right to education

(Article 28) by reducing disruption to schooling, attendance and learning, and contributes positively to the wellbeing indicators Achieving and Included.

By reducing prolonged stays in temporary accommodation, the RRTP also mitigates risks to children’s emotional wellbeing and supports their right to protection from harm (Article 19). Stable housing enables children to remain connected to universal and targeted services, ensuring their needs are identified and responded to appropriately.

Overall, East Ayrshire’s RRTP demonstrates a coherent, coordinated approach that aligns GIRFEC wellbeing outcomes with children’s rights under the UNCRC. Through preventative action, early intervention and a focus on stability and family life, the programme actively realises children’s rights and supports them to grow up safe, nurtured, healthy, achieving and included, in line with Scotland’s commitment to incorporate the UNCRC into law.



Cluster 8: Education, leisure and culture

Articles 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32



Participation in Early Learning

Across our Early Childhood Centres (ECCs), we have focused on involving children directly in the design of their own play environments, embedding a strong rights based approach grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In line with Articles 12 and 31 of the UNCRC, children are actively supported to express their views, influence decisions that affect them, and engage in play environments that respect their right to play, learn, and develop. As we work alongside children, they take an active role in planning their playrooms, sharing their ideas, emotions, interests, and preferences. Their voices guide the revamp of each space so that all children can access the full curriculum and

have their learning needs met by our team.

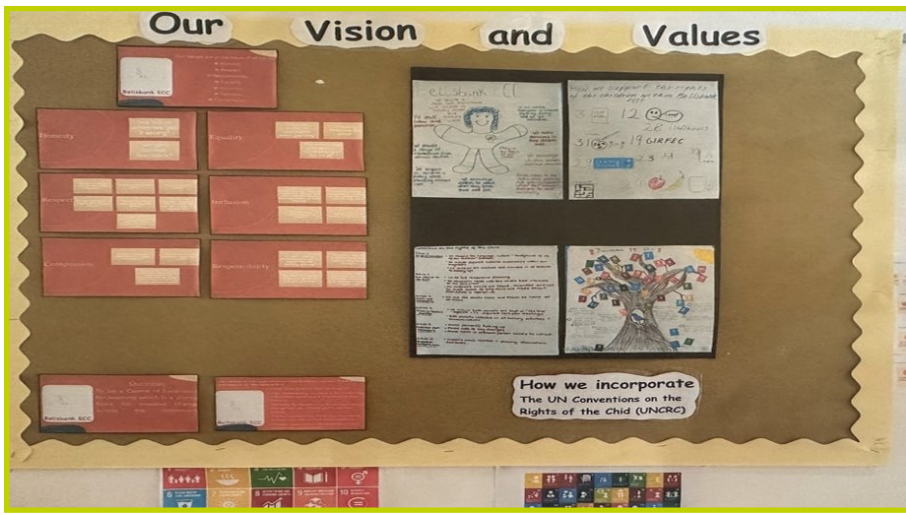
This approach reflects East Ayrshire Council's commitment to putting children's rights into practice, ensuring children are seen, heard, and valued within services. Practitioners use an environment reflection tool to consider children's stages of development and individual needs, supporting equitable access to high quality learning experiences. This aligns with our focus on inclusion, participation, and early intervention, particularly for children who may require additional support or appropriate challenge.

The impact of these changes has been evidenced through a range of qualitative sources, including case studies, planning sheets, and extracts from HMiE reports. The inspections have highlighted strong commitment to children's rights and praised the respectful, nurturing relationships between practitioners, children, and families. The highly effective balance of responsive, child led learning and focused, adult initiated experiences have also been recognised. Practitioners' deep understanding of child development was reflected in creative and curiosity driven play invitations, as well as in tailored support that upheld children's right to thrive, be safe, and achieve positive outcomes.

One report stated that almost all children were making very good progress in health and wellbeing, confidently expressing their emotions, making choices, and demonstrating empathy, kindness, and teamwork—further evidencing an environment where children's rights are embedded in everyday practice. The inclusive ethos across the centre supports the East Ayrshire's strategic priorities by using information and data effectively to promote continuous improvement and positive outcomes for all children and families.

As this work continues, the environment reflection tool is further developed to strengthen rights respecting practice. Ongoing feedback from children ensures environments continue to reflect what matters most to them, supporting sustained improvement, shared learning across settings, and a consistent UNCRC informed approach across East Ayrshire.

See Example 5 for further detail.



Rights Respecting School Awards

UNICEF UK's Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) supports schools to embed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) within their culture, policy and daily practice. A Rights Respecting School places children's rights at the centre of its ethos, curriculum and relationships, ensuring that every child is treated with dignity, respect and fairness in line with the principles of non discrimination, the best interests of the child, survival and development and respect for the views of the child.

The RRSA framework is structured across three progressive levels — Bronze: Rights Committed, Silver: Rights Aware, and Gold: Rights Respecting — supporting schools to develop rights based leadership, increase children's and adults' knowledge of the UNCRC, and create inclusive environments where children feel safe, valued and empowered to participate meaningfully in decisions that affect them. This approach directly supports the commitment to children's wellbeing, equity, empowerment and participation, and aligns with the GIRFEC wellbeing indicators by strengthening children's sense of inclusion, respect and voice.

In East Ayrshire, all schools have a designated Rights Lead, ensuring that responsibility for children's rights is embedded within leadership, improvement planning and daily practice. Currently, 15 schools have achieved Gold, 21 have achieved Silver, and 22 have achieved Bronze, demonstrating steady and sustained progress across the authority. The journey to Gold typically takes three to four years, with re accreditation every three years to ensure that rights based practice remains embedded, reflective and responsive to the evolving needs of children and young people.

Through the RRSA, schools are supported to develop rights respecting relationships, promote children's participation and voice, and uphold the values of respect, equality and fairness, contributing to improved experiences and outcomes for all learners and reinforcing East Ayrshire's commitment to keeping the promise to its children and young people.

See Example 6.



Skills, Learning and Employability

The Skills and Learning (SL) service sits within East Ayrshire Council's Education Service and supports young people, parents and adults to progress towards positive and sustained destinations. Established in 2020, SL33 operates as a one stop service that simplifies referral pathways, reduces duplication and ensures timely, coordinated support in the best interests of the child, in line with Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The service is designed around a person centred, rights based approach, recognising every child and young person's right to develop their abilities to their fullest potential.

As an SQA accredited centre, Skills and Learning delivers a range of qualifications including Employability Award, Barista Skills, Customer Service and Health and Wellbeing, supporting young people's right to education and access to skills for life and work. Delivery is strengthened through close partnership working with Jobcentre Plus, Health and Social Care Partnership, Skills Development Scotland, Housing, Enable Scotland, NHS SALUS and Street League. This collaborative approach ensures a holistic and joined up model of support that promotes wellbeing and safeguards young people's health and development, reflecting Articles 24 and 27.

Young people aged fifteen and a half and over who are at risk of disengaging from mainstream education, or who have left school without a positive destination, are supported through a blended model of vocational learning, wellbeing support and trusted, consistent relationships. This approach supports young people's right to receive appropriate guidance and assistance to prepare for adult life and employment. The service actively ensures that young people's voices, views and aspirations are listened to and taken seriously when planning their support, in line with Article 12.

Consideration is given to care experienced young people, learners with additional support needs, and those requiring targeted or specialist provision. This reflects the services commitment to non discrimination and equality of access and to providing additional protection and support for children who need it most. A safe and nurturing environment is prioritised to support emotional wellbeing, confidence



and resilience, aligning with the child's right to protection from harm and to environments that support healthy development.

Reducing child poverty is a key priority for the service. Through the Parental Employability Support Fund, the Skills and Learning team delivers parent centred employability programmes that help families improve financial security, directly contributing to children's right to an adequate standard of living. Programmes provide accredited training linked to growth employment sectors including Health and Social Care, Hospitality and Outdoor Services, delivered flexibly within school hours to remove barriers to participation. Parents are also supported through job search activity, funded training opportunities and access to Careers Collective Job Clubs, supporting family stability and wellbeing.

Integrated sensory play sessions from pre birth to age five, delivered in partnership with Health Visiting teams, support early development, attachment and parental confidence. This early intervention approach aligns with children's rights to early development, health and wellbeing and supports parents in their role as primary caregivers.

The service operates a place based delivery model through Skills and Learning Centres and employability hubs in Kilmarnock, Cumnock and Dalmellington, with a new centre planned for Galston in 2026. These purpose built environments provide industry standard vocational facilities, supporting fair and equitable access to high quality learning opportunities for young people across East Ayrshire, consistent with Articles 2 and 28.

Progress and outcomes are monitored through

the national Shared Measurement Framework at key milestones, with ongoing follow up and aftercare to support sustained destinations. This reflects the service's commitment to children and young people not only achieving qualifications, but also developing the skills, confidence, wellbeing and resilience needed to thrive and participate meaningfully in society, in line with the overall aims of the UNCRC.

See Example 7.

Workforce and Future Skills

The Workforce and Future Skills (W&FS) Team within East Ayrshire's People and Culture Service leads the delivery of Modern Apprenticeships, Graduate Internships and Graduate Apprenticeships, offering supported work based learning opportunities for young people aged 16–25. The programme includes regular progress reviews, mentoring and an end of programme survey, and has seen strong outcomes, with 87 Modern Apprentices sustaining employment with the Council since 2022. The programme is rooted in safe and supportive working environments, reflecting the UNCRC's requirement that decisions and arrangements are made in the best interests of the child or young person. There is an increasing emphasis on early guidance to ensure that apprenticeships are the most suitable pathway for each young person.

Youth voice is embedded through ongoing dialogue, progress reviews and end of programme feedback, supporting young people to share their views and influence their experience. While feedback remains consistently positive, there is scope to strengthen how this insight directly shapes programme design—particularly decisions about which Modern Apprenticeship frameworks the Council seeks to offer. Apprentices frequently report increased confidence, improved workplace skills and a stronger understanding of employment expectations, all of which contribute to meaningful participation and increased independence in line with Articles 28 and 29 of the UNCRC.

The W&FS Team is also taking steps to reduce inequalities by developing more inclusive pathways into employment. A recent pre apprenticeship programme in Dalmellington engaged six young people from Doon Academy, all of whom progressed to interviews

or placements across Council services. This targeted work supports young people who may not otherwise access traditional apprenticeship routes and demonstrates how accessible, supported entry points can broaden participation. Apprenticeships continue to play an important role in providing high quality vocational pathways that support personal development, confidence and long term employability for young people.

Barriers remain for some groups, including inconsistent promotion of apprenticeships within schools, challenges with digital application processes and limited access to information for families. These barriers can limit young people's ability to access their right to education, information and guidance, as set out in Articles 17 and 28 of the UNCRC. Strengthening communication with parents and carers, and ensuring information is accessible and inclusive, will support more informed decision making and help ensure that opportunities reach young people who may be less engaged in traditional careers activity.

Overall, apprenticeships offer meaningful employment, transferable skills and sustainable career pathways when engagement is strong, supporting young people's development of skills, confidence and independence in line with Articles 28 and 29 of the UNCRC. The introduction of the Pre Apprenticeship Programme has further improved accessibility and inclusion, helping to address inequality of opportunity and promote children's rights in practice. Continued focus on early guidance, youth voice and inclusive communication will strengthen alignment with the UNCRC and ensure the programme remains equitable, rights based and responsive to the diverse needs of young people across East Ayrshire.

See Example 8.

Summer programme for children and young people with additional support needs

The ASN Summer Programme in East Ayrshire is underpinned by the principles and duties of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ensuring that children and young people with additional support needs experience their rights in practice throughout the summer holiday period. Central to the programme is recognition of children's

rights to rest, leisure, play and participation in cultural and recreational activities (Article 31), with children's wellbeing, enjoyment and best interests placed at the heart of all planning and delivery (Article 3).

For many children with additional support needs, unstructured holiday periods can significantly reduce opportunities for social interaction, routine, emotional security and positive experiences. In response, the programme provides safe, nurturing and inclusive environments that uphold children's right to protection, care and safety (Articles 19 and 23). Environments are designed so children feel secure, valued and able to be themselves, free from discrimination (Article 2). Activities are child centred, inclusive and strengths based, ensuring that no child is excluded or disadvantaged because of disability or support needs (Articles 2 and 23).

Children are supported to engage in creative, active and play based experiences that reflect their individual interests, preferences and abilities. Activities are delivered in small, caring groups with trusted adults, supporting children's right to build positive relationships, develop confidence and experience a sense of belonging. This approach promotes children's right to develop to their fullest potential (Article 6) while supporting emotional wellbeing and reducing anxiety associated with changes in routine.

In line with children's right's to express their views freely and have them taken seriously (Article 12), the programme remains flexible and responsive to children's voices, choices and emotional needs. Children are encouraged to participate at their own pace, make meaningful choices about how they engage, and experience success in ways that are personally meaningful. This rights respecting approach supports emotional regulation, autonomy and self esteem, while recognising children as active participants rather than passive recipients of support.

Strong partnership working with families reflects the UNCRC's recognition of the vital role of parents and carers in supporting children's development and wellbeing (Articles 5 and 18). Family knowledge and contributions inform planning, strengthen continuity between home and programme environments, and ensure staff have a clear understanding of each child's strengths, communication

styles and support needs. Ongoing feedback consistently highlights the importance of children feeling happy, safe, listened to and included, reinforcing the programme's commitment to rights based practice.

By embedding the UNCRC throughout its design and delivery, the ASN Summer Programme actively promotes children's rights to safety, inclusion, participation, play, dignity and wellbeing. This rights based approach ensures that children with additional support needs are supported not only to enjoy their summer experiences, but to return to school feeling more confident, settled and ready to learn, with their rights realised in meaningful and practical ways.



Inclusive parks and greenspaces

East Ayrshire is committed to promoting and protecting children's rights by ensuring that parks and greenspaces are inclusive, accessible and welcoming for all children and families. This work is guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), particularly children's rights to play and leisure, to be included without discrimination, to participate and communicate, and to have their best interests treated as a primary consideration.

Play is essential to children's health, wellbeing and development, and parks and greenspaces across East Ayrshire provide free, safe and stimulating opportunities for play that are accessible to all. The annual Playday event at Kay Park demonstrates this commitment in practice, offering a wide range of inclusive activities designed so that children of all abilities can play together. By actively removing financial, physical and social barriers, Playday reinforces the principle that play is a right rather than a privilege. Grounds 4 Play events run seasonally across local communities further support this approach by enabling children and families to reclaim open spaces through outdoor play. Activities such as mud kitchens, water play, den building, obstacle courses and outdoor crafts promote physical health, emotional resilience and an understanding of managed risk, supporting children's development in line with Article 31.

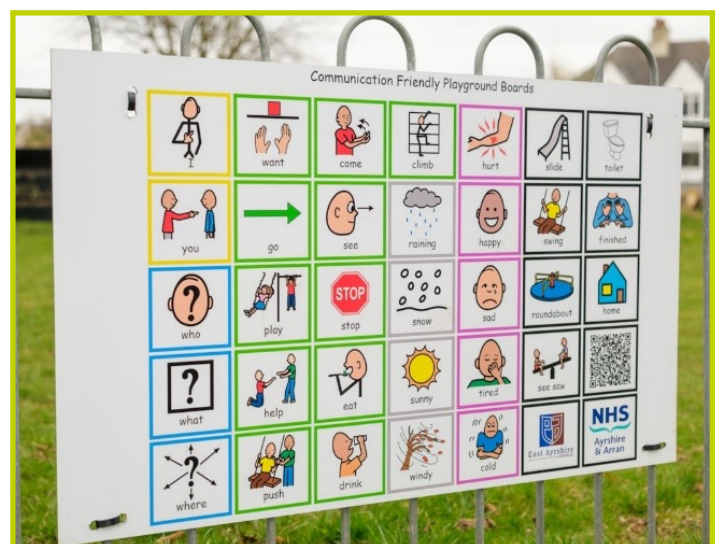
Inclusive play provision also supports children's right to non discrimination. Many local parks include inclusive equipment such as wheelchair accessible roundabouts, enabling children with disabilities and additional support needs to play alongside their peers and family members. These shared play experiences help reduce stigma, promote equality and strengthen inclusive community spaces, ensuring that no child is excluded from play opportunities on the basis of disability or need, in line with Article 2.

Accessibility and health considerations are further supported through the provision of Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) located within communities and designed for year round use. These fully accessible spaces provide free opportunities for sport, informal play and social interaction, supporting children's physical and mental wellbeing. Floodlighting extends safe access into the evening, allowing children and young people to gather, remain active and build social connections within their local areas, while

also supporting their right to associate and participate in community life.

Participation and communication are central to inclusive access. Communication boards installed in some parks support children and young people with speech, language and communication needs, including non verbal children and those who use alternative and augmentative communication. These supports enable children to express preferences, interact with others and actively participate in play and outdoor learning, ensuring that their views are heard, respected and acted upon in line with Articles 12, 13 and 23.

Throughout the planning, design, improvement and management of parks and greenspaces, the best interests of the child remain a primary consideration. By prioritising inclusive design, free community play events and practical communication supports, East Ayrshire actively embeds children's rights into everyday environments, ensuring that all children can play, communicate, participate and feel a strong sense of belonging within their communities.



Greener Communities

Children and young people across East Ayrshire continue to express a strong desire for more opportunities to play and for better-quality play spaces. This was reinforced by the national Play Scotland consultation in 2021, supported by Scottish Government funding, which highlighted play as a key priority. In response, East Ayrshire Council has secured £1.3 million of investment (until the end of 2026) to enhance play provision across the authority. Local community action plans and playpark surveys have identified two consistent issues: poor ground conditions that limit usability and a lack of inclusive features to ensure all children can access and enjoy local play spaces. Children have also highlighted the range of activities they value, including social play, outdoor and nature-based experiences, physical activity, structured play environments, and cultural and leisure opportunities. East Ayrshire already benefits from extensive assets that support these needs, including 33 Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) alongside numerous play parks, grassed areas, and natural open spaces.

The development, maintenance and improvement of local play spaces is closely tied to several UNCRC rights. Ensuring that play areas are designed around children's needs and wellbeing reflects the obligations set out in Article 3, while providing inclusive environments that all children can access upholds Article 2 and Article 23. The Council's ongoing investment and responsibility to implement improvements meet the expectations of Article 4, and the use of community engagement ensures that children's voices are embedded within the design process. Promoting outdoor activity, physical movement and contact with nature supports Article 24, which recognises children's right to the highest attainable standard of health. Together, these rights reinforce that high-quality, inclusive and child centred play provision is not simply desirable, but a core component of fulfilling Scotland's duties under the UNCRC.

Delivering play spaces that fully uphold children's rights involves clear and shared responsibilities. East Ayrshire Council is responsible for maintaining parks and open spaces to acceptable standards, ensuring environments that meet the requirements of supporting safety, wellbeing and play. Internal

departments and Ayrshire 360 collaborate to provide diverse recreational opportunities aligned with children's developmental needs. Community groups and families contribute valuable insight through consultations, strengthening compliance with Article 12 by ensuring children's views shape local decisions. The Greener Communities team leads on monitoring, assessment and investment planning to support ongoing improvement.

To continue meeting these rights based responsibilities, a programme of actions is underway. This includes carrying out site audits across parks, natural greenspaces and informal open areas to ensure environments remain safe, welcoming and accessible. Ongoing assessment of existing play equipment helps ensure spaces are inclusive, offering equal opportunities for all children. Accessibility monitoring focuses on inclusive and sensory play features, interactive elements and appropriate surfacing, further supporting children's health and wellbeing. Incorporating natural materials, biodiversity and nature rich features promotes high quality outdoor experiences that reflect the child centred principles of Article 3. Together, these actions ensure that investment and improvements continue to deliver safe, inclusive and meaningful play opportunities across East Ayrshire.

Cleaner Communities

The Cleaner Communities team consists of six Community Waste Officers (CWOs) who work with schools, Early Childhood Centres (ECCs) and local communities to deliver education on waste, recycling and the wider climate change strategy. Because this work directly involves children and young people, it must uphold their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The nature of the engagement—covering topics such as reuse, recycling, the natural environment, energy and transport—supports children to receive clear, age appropriate environmental information in line with Article 13 and Article 17 CWOs also play a key role in respecting children's evolving capacities, reflecting Article 5, by supporting their understanding of environmental responsibility in a developmentally appropriate way.

During school and community sessions, CWOs are expected to actively encourage participation and ensure that children's views

on environmental issues are listened to and taken seriously, upholding Article 12. Children are often supported to take part in group discussion and collaborative eco initiatives, which aligns with Article 15, recognising their right to meet and participate with others. Much of this work also contributes to children's safety and wellbeing within their local environment, linking to Article 24, which highlights their right to a healthy environment, and Article 27, which recognises the importance of safe, clean surroundings as part of an adequate standard of living. As environmental education forms part of the curriculum, these engagement opportunities also support Article 28 and Article 29, which emphasises developing children's skills, talents and understanding of responsible citizenship.

To uphold these rights in practice, CWOs are required to complete UNCRC training to ensure they understand how children's rights apply in their work. They must also know how to identify, and report concerns where a child's rights may be at risk. All educational resources used during sessions must be rights based and accessible. CWOs also support participation by consulting children and young people during Waste Review Actions and when planning future service improvements, ensuring their lived experience shapes local environmental initiatives in line with Articles 12 and 13.

Several review actions are planned to strengthen this approach. Presentations in schools and communities will be updated to include more interactive activities that promote participation and support children to express their views confidently. Feedback methods such as surveys and structured discussions will gather richer insight into children's experiences of waste and recycling. Children and young people will be involved in research and design work prior to major service changes, ensuring decisions reflect their needs and perspectives. These developments will be monitored and evaluated regularly, with all Waste Review Actions due for completion by March 2027.

See Example 9 for further detail.



Cluster 9: Special protection measures

Articles 12, 13, 22, 33, 34, 36, 37, 40



Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

East Ayrshire Council works closely with COSLA to support the National Transfer Scheme, ensuring that the Council meets its statutory and corporate parenting responsibilities to secure the very best outcomes for children and young people seeking asylum. Our Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) Team works alongside our MOCCA Team (as referenced in the Corporate Parenting section above), reflecting a whole system, partnership approach consistent with East Ayrshire's commitment to early intervention, inclusion and Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC).

Our model is child centred and needs led, promoting stability, safety and belonging. Children and young people are supported to live with foster carers or within children's houses, depending on assessed need, ensuring their right to care and protection (Articles 3, 20 and 22). As young people progress, we support planned transitions into their own accommodation through our integrated Housing Support model, where housing and social work colleagues work collaboratively to promote independence, wellbeing and sustained positive outcomes.

We have strong relationships with our public health team and school nurses. This means all our young people are health screened shortly after arriving to ensure all health needs are met, and appropriate referrals can be made. Young people are supported to engage with the Scottish guardianship project to enable



them to safely make their asylum claim and receive the correct legal support. Recognising the significant impact of trauma, loneliness, isolation and fear, we actively promote opportunities for asylum seeking children and young people to be welcomed to East Ayrshire. In practice, this has included supporting young people to arrive and live in East Ayrshire at the same time as a peer to reduce the risk of separation and disconnection. This enables them to maintain established relationships and connections, supporting their emotional wellbeing and right to important relationships (Articles 9 and 12).

Education is central to our approach. Our UASC team promotes access to ESOL provision and supports engagement with schools, colleges and universities as appropriate, upholding children's right to education and development (Articles 28 and 29). We also ensure that children and young people are supported to have a strong voice, actively participate in decisions that affect them, and have their rights, views and cultural identity respected (Articles 12, 14 and 30).

Our UASC community is supported to feel welcomed, valued and included within East Ayrshire. We recognise and celebrate important religious observances, festivals and cultural events, reinforcing our commitment to equality, diversity and respect. This approach reflects

East Ayrshire Council's ambition to be a caring, inclusive place where children and young people are safe, listened to, and supported to achieve their full potential.

Young People in conflict with the law

There is a very well established and supported Whole System Approach model within East Ayrshire and there have been some key progressions to ensure the needs and rights of our young people are both understood, upheld and supported through best practice and research. We work closely with Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ) to promote best practice and collaborate.

A START AV easy read template has been jointly developed by the East Ayrshire Whole System (WS) Coordinator and the Speech, Language and Communication (SLCT) therapist working within the Intensive Support team. In response to concerns being highlighted by professionals and young people that the full assessment was complex and difficult for professionals and children to understand. The template was designed not only to simplify the information, but to uphold children's rights by ensuring they are informed about the assessment in a clear, accessible way (supporting UNCRC Article 12 and Article 13). It provides children with understandable feedback about what the assessment highlighted and enables them to share their views, ensuring their voice meaningfully shapes and enhances the assessment process.

Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ) were made aware of the template and subsequently invited the WS Coordinator and SLCT to present it at a team meeting. They have expressed interest in adopting it as a national tool to strengthen participation within START AV practice and support a rights based, child centred approach within training. To take this forward, the team will collaborate to develop guidance on using the template and create either a webinar or blog to further profile and promote this rights focused resource.

Whole Systems Approach

There is a well established and strongly embedded Whole System Approach (WSA) within East Ayrshire, which is firmly grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights

of the Child (UNCRC). This approach ensures that the needs, rights and wellbeing of children and young people are understood, upheld and actively promoted, particularly their rights to protection, support, participation and fair treatment (Articles 12, 37 and 40). Practice is informed by evidence, research and continuous improvement, and we work closely with the Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ) to promote best practice and support a consistent, rights based response for children in conflict with the law.

Our Whole System Approach is underpinned by strong multi agency commitment and positive working relationships with Police Scotland, the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA), the Procurator Fiscal, Health Services, Education, Ayrshire 360 and the Fire Service. This joined up approach enables early, proportionate and supportive responses that prioritise children's rights to liberty, development and rehabilitation, and seeks to avoid unnecessary criminalisation (Articles 37 and 40). We are proactive in engaging with Police, SCRA and the Procurator Fiscal to promote alternatives to court and to support early and effective intervention, which is reflected in our local data and has resulted in very few children requiring to appear in court or enter formal justice systems.

East Ayrshire provides an effective diversion from prosecution service, supported by the Intensive Support Team, offering bespoke, individualised interventions that address underlying needs and vulnerabilities. This approach supports children's right to recovery and reintegration and enables them to receive appropriate support while avoiding court processes (Article 40). High diversion completion rates further demonstrate the effectiveness of this rights respecting approach.

Our Early and Effective Intervention (EEI) processes support the early identification of children who come to the attention of Police Scotland, including recognising patterns of concern within communities or specific places and spaces. EEI referrals receive a welfare based, individual assessment, ensuring the child's wider circumstances, needs and strengths are fully considered. This approach aligns with children's rights to protection and proportionate intervention and promotes age appropriate responses (Articles 37 and

40). Police no longer record these concerns as charges, addressing risks of unnecessary criminalisation and supporting diversion away from formal justice processes.

We work proactively with Police Scotland to avoid children being held in police custody, particularly overnight, and there have been no children held overnight in police custody in recent years, in line with children's right to liberty and protection from unnecessary detention (Article 37). Where a child is required to attend court, this is generally through an Undertaking, allowing time to engage with the Procurator Fiscal and SCRA to seek diversion. As a result, court appearances for children under 18 are rare.

On the rare occasions that court attendance is unavoidable, a Court Action Note is provided to the Sheriff outlining the child's circumstances, strengths, vulnerabilities and existing or proposed supports. This promotes informed decision making and supports the child's right to fair treatment and consideration of alternatives to remand (Articles 37 and 40). Children are supported to attend court by a trusted social work representative who remains with them throughout the process. Following court, a wrap around multi agency plan is implemented to reduce future risk and support positive outcomes.

The number of children in secure care in East Ayrshire remains low. Where secure care has been required, placements have been for the shortest appropriate duration, in line with Secure Care Standards and Pathways, ensuring that deprivation of liberty is used only as a last resort and for the shortest possible time, in accordance with Article 37 of the UNCRC.



Appendix 1: Next steps

Embedding Children's Rights across East Ayrshire (2026–2029)

Purpose

This Next Steps section sets out East Ayrshire Council's priorities for continuing to embed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) across all areas of policy, planning and service delivery. Building on the progress described in this report, these actions focus on strengthening leadership, accountability, participation, workforce capability and measurable impact for children and young people.

1. Strengthening Leadership, Governance and Accountability

What we will do

- further embed UNCRC duties within corporate governance, committee reporting and decision making processes
- ensure Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments (CRWIAs) and Integrated Impact Assessments (IIAs) are consistently completed to a high standard and scrutinised by elected members
- develop clearer reporting lines so progress on children's rights can be monitored at service, partnership and corporate levels.

How this supports children's rights

- strengthens accountability and transparency (Articles 3, 4 and 42).
- ensures children's rights are considered consistently in decisions that affect them.

Measures of progress

- improved quality assurance of CRWIAs/IIAs
- regular reporting to senior leadership and elected members on UNCRC compliance and outcomes.

2. Expanding and Sustaining the UNCRC Champions Model

What we will do

- consolidate and expand the UNCRC Champions Model across all services, including non children's services whose decisions impact children and families

- continue to develop the Champion role, including supporting colleagues, sharing learning and evidencing rights based practice
- strengthen links between Champions, senior leaders and partnership forums.

How this supports children's rights

- builds organisational capacity and consistency (Articles 4 and 42)
- embeds rights based thinking into everyday practice.

Measures of progress

- increased confidence and capability among staff
- growing evidence of rights based practice in service planning and delivery.

3. Deepening Children and Young People's Participation

What we will do

- improve how children and young people's views are gathered, recorded and fed back, ensuring they understand how their input has influenced decisions
- use the VOiCE platform consistently to support inclusive, accessible participation
- strengthen representation of under represented groups, including care experienced children, disabled children, young carers and those in rural communities.

How this supports children's rights

- promotes meaningful participation and influence (Articles 2, 12 and 13)
- reduces barriers to engagement and tackles inequality.

Measures of progress

- increased diversity of voices informing policy and service design
- clear "you said – we did" feedback mechanisms.

4. Embedding Children's Rights in planning and budgeting

What we will do

- continue to integrate children's rights based budgeting principles into financial planning and decision making
- strengthen links between strategic priorities, budget decisions and children's rights outcomes
- ensure financial decisions consider prevention, early intervention and the impact on the most vulnerable children.

How this supports children's rights

- supports the use of maximum available resources (Article 4)
- ensures best interests and equity are central to spending decisions (Articles 3 and 27).

Measures of progress

- clearer articulation of rights impacts in budget papers
- improved transparency for elected members and the public.

5. Workforce Learning and Culture Change

What we will do

- continue to roll out multi agency UNCRC training aligned to local practice, GIRFEC and The Promise
- support staff to move beyond awareness toward confident, reflective rights based practice
- embed children's rights within induction, supervision and professional learning frameworks.

How this supports children's rights

- strengthens everyday realisation of rights through practice (Articles 3, 12 and 42)
- supports consistency and quality across services.

Measures of progress

- increased staff confidence and confidence evidenced through practice examples and case studies
- positive feedback from children and families on how services listen and respond.

6. Improving Data, Evidence and Impact

What we will do

- use the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to strengthen understanding of children's needs and inequalities
- improve how data and lived experience are used together to inform planning, commissioning and improvement
- develop clearer outcomes and indicators linked to children's rights.

How this supports children's rights

- supports informed, proportionate and equitable decision making (Articles 2, 3 and 6).

Measures of progress

- better alignment between data, priorities and outcomes
- stronger evidence of impact on children's wellbeing and rights.

7. Partnership and Community Working

What we will do

- continue to strengthen collaboration with NHS Ayrshire & Arran, Police Scotland, the third sector and the Community Planning Partnership
- promote a shared understanding of UNCRC duties across all partners
- ensure children experience joined up, rights respecting support regardless of which service they access.

How this supports children's rights

- promotes consistency, protection and participation across systems (Articles 3, 19 and 24).

Measures of progress

- more coherent multi agency planning and delivery
- improved experiences for children and families navigating services.

Moving Forward

East Ayrshire Council recognises that incorporating the UNCRC is not a one off task, but an ongoing commitment to cultural change, accountability and continuous improvement. These next steps will guide our collective efforts from 2026 onwards, ensuring that children's rights are not only recognised in policy, but lived daily in the experiences of children and young people across East Ayrshire.

Appendix 2: Examples of good practice

Example 1 : Shaping Places Together: Children and Young People Influencing East Ayrshire's Future

Under the guidance of Scotland-wide policy in National Planning Framework 4, the Council has a duty to ensure that the views and requirements of children and young people are reflected in the next Local Development Plan (LDP3). It is essential that the policies in the Local Development Plan, which will shape all development planning decisions over the next decade, are designed to meet the needs of people of all ages across our local communities. The forward-thinking nature of the planning process makes the voices of children and young people vital, as they have the right to influence how the towns, villages and other spaces within East Ayrshire will change over time and where they might live and work in the future. As the Local Development Plan covers all forms of land use, it is of great importance to delivering several of the UNCRC Articles around access to essential amenities, including Article 24 (health, water, food, environment) and Article 27 (food, clothing, a safe home).

In summer-autumn 2025 the Council's planning team began early public engagement for LDP3, which included classroom-based engagement sessions to gather the views of primary and secondary school pupils from 11 schools across the local authority area. In addition to visiting schools, the team attended numerous family-focused community events (including gala days and the Play Day at Kay Park) and consulted directly with members of the public across all age ranges. This work supports the principles of Article 12 (respect for children's views) and Article 13 (sharing thoughts freely) as the children and young people who were involved in the engagement activities were encouraged to share their own opinions without judgement, and all feedback gathered (regardless of the age group the participant belonged to) will be given equal consideration in the evidence-gathering process for LDP3, with an Evidence Report due to be submitted before the end of 2026. The survey methodology was largely designed around the Place Standard Tool, which includes a child-friendly version, and the information

provided by participants of all ages can be combined to show how communities feel about a specific place in East Ayrshire where they live, work or play.

Play Sufficiency Assessment for Local Development Plan 3

Per the Town and Country Planning (Play Sufficiency Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2023, the Council has a duty to assess the sufficiency of play opportunities across the local authority area in tandem with compiling the Evidence Report that will support the next Local Development Plan (LDP3).

East Ayrshire's Play Sufficiency Assessment will provide information about the quality and age of existing play equipment; accessibility and inclusivity, and the range of opportunities for different types of play (including physical, social and imaginative play). Producing the assessment will help the Council to uphold UNCRC Article 31 (the right to play).

Throughout 2025, council officers visited every play park in East Ayrshire and recorded an assessment of each park. Public engagement was also carried out in the form of an online survey – "Outdoor Play in East Ayrshire" – in which both adults and children were invited to participate. This survey was highly effective and received 997 responses. Pupils involved in the classroom-based engagement sessions for LDP3 were also asked about how they feel about opportunities for play and recreation in their local area and children at community events attended by the LDP3 team were asked to draw their ideal play park. The direct engagement with children and young people to hear their views gives a wider perspective on what 'play' means, that goes beyond the play park surveys and upholds UNCRC Article 12.

The Play Sufficiency Assessment will be published alongside the Council's Evidence Report for LDP3, which is scheduled for later this year.

East Ayrshire Woodlands and Landscape Apprenticeships

East Ayrshire Woodlands (EAW), which was formed in 1997, sits within the Economic Growth Service, as part of the Development Planning and Regeneration section alongside the Development Planning, Ayrshire Growth Deal and Regeneration teams.

EAW is an initiative which has been developed as an effective approach to addressing some of the environmental, social and economic problems facing East Ayrshire. The project has two main objectives: it can deliver vocational National Proficiency Tests Council (NPTC) vocational training courses through external instructors and provide work experience in forestry tasks and ground maintenance to Modern Apprentices (MAs) aged 16-24 years. It also contributes to the expansion of native tree resources with woodland and hedgerow creation within the boundaries of East Ayrshire and assists in the management of community woodland and open green spaces on behalf of residents, local people and day visitors. This work-stream upholds UNCRC Article 29 (aims of education), as in addition to supporting young people in their personal development it instils respect for the natural environment.

The work of the team varies year on year based on opportunities that are sought and present. There are currently, and have in the past, been longer term projects forming part of the workplan, but due to reduced grant funding opportunities there are no medium to long term projects in the pipeline.

There are a range of landscape apprentices working with the Coalfield Communities Landscape Partnership and a programme of Trees and Timber Modern Apprenticeships has been established, which is targeted at those aged 16-21 years. Previously four apprentices were employed for 12 months and pursued the SVQ Level 2/SCQF Level 5 qualification. This has recently increased to a 24-month apprenticeship. The current cohort will complete in August 2026.

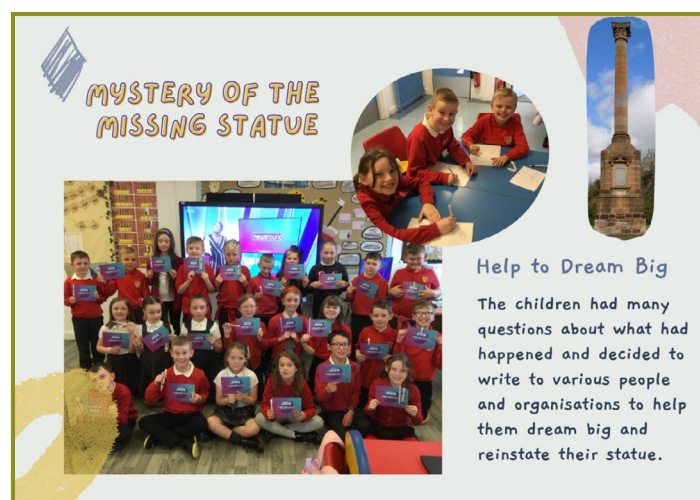
All the apprenticeship's projects with East Ayrshire Woodlands and the Coalfields Communities Landscape Partnership contribute to the principles of UNCRC Article 32 by providing fair work opportunities for young people that will contribute positively to their health, education and personal development.

Reformers' Monument

Children of Primary 4 at Onthank Primary School were learning about America. They learned that Kilmarnock once had a statue of liberty (the Reformers' Monument, formerly located in the Kay Park until it was damaged by a storm in 1936) and contacted local stakeholders to ask if we could make a new one.

The feasibility of this project was investigated, following a motion at full council by Councillor Elaine Cowan, Cabinet Spokesperson for Education, and Children and Young People. There is now a budget attached to bringing this project to reality with two young people from a local art club on the steering group and more young people will be involved as part of the engagement required.

This case study exemplifies Articles 12 and 13, as the children had their views heard and taken seriously by the Council, and were empowered to make a change to the built environment in their town.



Example 2 : Embedding Participation in Practice: The Children and Young People’s Cabinet

Background

The Children and Young People’s Cabinet in East Ayrshire is a structured forum that was created by East Ayrshire Council in 2018 to ensure that the voices, experiences, and ideas of young people directly influence local decision making. The Cabinet provides an established route for children and young people to contribute towards shaping council policies, contribute to discussions on services that affect them, and work in partnership with elected members and senior officers. It operates with formal agendas, reports, and a written constitution that guides how meetings are run and how young people participate in them.

The development of the CYP Cabinet aligns with East Ayrshire’s wider commitment to embedding children’s rights, particularly through the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Council and Leisure Trust leadership have repeatedly emphasised the importance of ensuring that young people are listened to, respected, and empowered to influence change across local services—from early years through to young adulthood.

The CYP Cabinet have been instrumental in the development of a number of high-profile events that has both raised the profile of the group and more importantly showcased and highlighted the many amazing achievements of young people throughout East Ayrshire. All of these events have been co-designed and co-delivered by members of the CYP Cabinet, demonstrating that the contributions of young people are not seen as tokenistic, but vital for meaningful engagement.

Some of these key highlights are listed below with photographs included.

Aims

- To embed young people’s voices in local democratic processes and decision making.
- To promote and protect children’s rights, following UNCRC principles.
- To influence council policies and services, ensuring they meet the real needs and aspirations of young people.
- To provide structured, supported participation, enabling young people to contribute meaningfully and consistently.

- To ensure diverse representation, including those with care experience or additional needs, shaping fair and inclusive local policy.

Overview of the programme

As previously mentioned, the CYP Cabinet have been key to the delivery of high-profile events, contribution to Council meetings and they have been engaged in a number of Council and wider stakeholder consultations. Below are some of the highlights that they CYP Cabinet have been involved in to promote youth voice and participation.

Children and Young People Participation and Engagement Strategy

The CYP Cabinet played a key role in co designing East Ayrshire’s Participation and Engagement Strategy, ensuring that the voices of young people directly shaped how services listen, consult, and involve them in local decision making. This three year strategy was designed to help inform services and partners of how to effectively engage and consult young people, ensuring that their views are not only just heard but valued and acted upon.

Joint Cabinet

Each year, the CYP Cabinet co-chair and facilitate the Council’s Joint Cabinet meeting in Council HQ Chambers. The agenda is created following consultation with the CYP Cabinet members and is co-chaired with the Chair of the CYP Cabinet and the Leader of the Council. The meeting is a fantastic opportunity for members of the CYP Cabinet to share the experiences of the previous year, both positive and negative, with Council Officers and elected members. It is also the arena in which they provide updates on the key achievements of the identified themes of the CYP Cabinet.

East Ayrshire Youth Awards

In 2025, the CYP Cabinet co-designed and co-hosted the biennial East Ayrshire Youth Awards. The Youth Awards was an event that was suggested by original members of the CYP Cabinet in 2018 as a legacy for the Year of the Young People campaign and this is a wonderful occasion to highlight and showcase the amazing personal achievements, dedication and commitment of young people throughout East Ayrshire. The CYP Cabinet, selected

the categories, shortlisted nominees from all award nominations, designed the event layout, selected the menu and most importantly co-hosted the evening on stage with the Provost of East Ayrshire. The CYP Cabinet have been instrumental to ensuring that the recognition of young people does not go unnoticed and is rightly celebrated.

Early Intervention and Prevention Roundtable Event

The Chair of the CYP Cabinet, along with one of the Council's MSYP's, were invited by the Council's Chief Executive to attend an Early Intervention and Prevention Roundtable event and provide their views, and the views of young people, about the issues that are affecting them in their communities, to share their opinion of the regeneration of East Ayrshire towns and create opportunities for young people to thrive, develop and become successful in. The event, hosted by the Council's Chief Executive was attended by elected members, Heads of Service and wider key stakeholders and was an amazing platform for young people to share their views amongst many key decision makers.

By-Election Invitation

Members of the CYP Cabinet were invited to attend the results of a local by-election in February 2025. This invite was extended to Cabinet members to provide them with an opportunity for them to attend and see at first hand, what happens during the process of election results. Many of the CYP Cabinet members are very interested in politics at a local and national level and to gain a better understanding of what is involved, an invite was extended to members.

Colour Run

To raise the profile of the CYP Cabinet and in a bid to dispel myths and community perceptions of young people, the group were successful in gaining funding from a Participatory Budgeting event to host a 'Colour Run' event in the Howard Park in Kilmarnock. This event was open to members of the community and there was a number of activities and attractions delivered on the day alongside the colour run and was an opportunity for families and young people to attend a colourful and vibrant event. This is a particularly significant event as the group successfully applied for and were awarded funding to run and host their own event, that also included key tasks such as applying

for Public Entertainment Licence, catering requirement and procurement of items. This gave them the opportunity to experience what is involved in running a large-scale event.

Outcomes and achievements

There is no one intended outcome for the CYP Cabinet or the members who are part of the group and we recognise that each members achievements and outcomes will vary from that of others. Members of the CYP Cabinet come from a variety of backgrounds therefore their experiences differ and positive destinations are suited to that of the individual.

A number of key achievements have been listed above and the impact statements speak for themselves in terms of what participation in the Cabinet has done for individuals. We know that active participation in the CYP Cabinet has resulted in not only groups success, but real tangible personal success and growth and the impact statements reflect this. Previous and current members of the CYPO Cabinet often reflect on what participation in the group has meant for them, whether it has been increasing confidence or communication skills, representing their school at Council meetings or forums or simply meeting new friends, the Cabinet has been the vehicle to allow this to happen for them.

Their participation in the development of localised strategy, regular budget meetings with the Council's Head of Finance, meetings with the Chief Officer of Ayrshire 360 and involvement in Council and wider stakeholder consultations demonstrates that we value the input of young people as effective contributors and not as a 'tick box', which is often seen as the case in the children's services arena.

In a recent documentary that had been commissioned for East Ayrshire Council, members of the Cabinet were invited along to provide their own perspective of the support received by Council Officers, what it means to be a member of the CYP Cabinet, its achievements and what it has done for them and the feedback was extremely positive with all members stating the East Ayrshire Council and partners have demonstrated that young people are seen as effective contributors and can help influence change to improve outcomes for more young people from many communities.

Next steps

Whilst there has been significant success, as well as evidence of direct impact to young people who have been members of the CYP Cabinet, and have placed on record that their membership on the group has been a contributing factor to their own personal development, we recognise that there is an opportunity to reshape and improve the CYP Cabinet to be more impactful for children and young people throughout the authority.

We have recently reviewed the constitution of the group, updating it to allow for further development and changes to membership criteria and numbers. When the CYP Cabinet was established, core members were instrumental in creating the original constitution and the current review was undertaken with existing members to make it more up to date and inclusive of our current position.

We are also looking to improve and develop our relationship with the Care Experienced Cabinet, a group of young people who meet regularly to discuss issues affecting them and CEYP, along with Council officers. They have more specific needs and issues however there are many issues

that overlap and we believe that a collective group could have an even greater impact with both learning from, and supporting, each other.

The CYP Cabinet have identified themes that they wish to focus on and develop with the support of the Leisure Trust, Council and Community Planning colleagues. These themes will improve opportunities for young people and importantly they aim to change the negative perceptions of young people in our communities with a number of campaigns being discussed for roll out throughout the year.

A key area that we intend to develop is having young people recruited as part of interview panels for positions and posts whereby young people is at the heart of the role. Traditionally this is a role that is often made up of management and HR colleagues, however we recognise that young people can effectively contribute towards the recruitment process and provide feedback from a young person's perspective.

"My time as a member of the CYP Cabinet was so important to me in terms of really increasing my confidence to be able to understand that I was capable to many things that I did not think that I could do. I would not have been able to have become a Member of Scottish Youth Parliament if it had not been for my time on the CYP Cabinet".

When I first joined the Cabinet, I didn't say too much and would tend to sit and listen to what people were saying but over time it really helped bring out another side to me. As a singer I was used to performing on stage to audiences, but I was quite shy and quiet at the beginning of my time at the Cabinet but that soon changed. In my second year I nominated myself at the AGM Elections for the role as Chair and was so happy to have been chosen and it boosted my confidence so much. It was an amazing time that gave me amazing opportunities".

"The CYP Cabinet really gave me the platform to showcase my passion and skills within the group, my school and then in further education and into my career. I gained so much experiences that I now attend both National and UK working groups that are central to supporting our communities health and wellbeing. When I was in the Cabinet I was given the opportunity to Co-Chair the Councils Licensing Forum which was an amazing experience and set me on the path I am on just now".

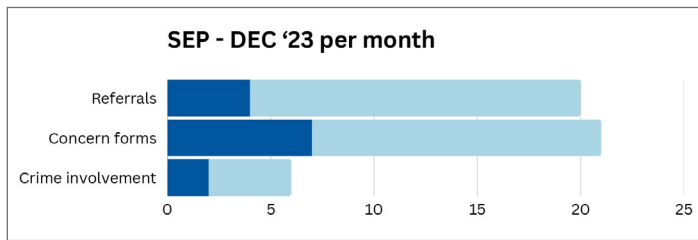
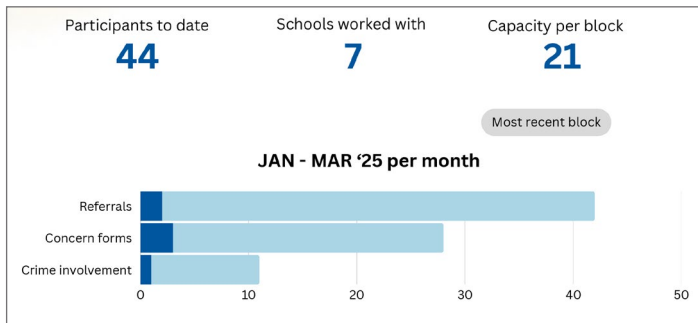
"At a Council meeting I spoke to Councillors and managers about how I wanted to be a chef when I was older but we didn't have any cooking classes in school. After saying this, the Council arranged for a block of cooking classes in my school and it was so good to see a chef showing us how to do things and watch them cook really nice meals".

Example 3 : Pitchin' In: Building confidence, voice and engagement through sport

Overview

The 'Pitchin In' programme is designed to engage students with low school attendance and behavioral challenges by using the power of football as a tool for personal development and re-engagement with education.

Pupils will co-design the programme, setting their own ground rules in their own shared, safe space, before taking in an hour of educational input, and following positive engagement and behaviour, an hour of exercise.



Case Study R '25

One participant in particular stood out due to their remarkable transformation during and after the 8-week programme.

The participant's family situation was unsettled; she had been living with her grandmother, but sadly, after her grandmother passed away, this had a significant emotional impact on her. Following this loss, she was placed back in the care of her father and stepmother—a transition she found difficult and was unhappy about. This change negatively affected both her school attendance and her social interactions.

Before joining the programme, the participant had a very low school attendance rate of just 67.5%. They demonstrated little interest in school, and their overall attitude and behavior were causing concern. The incentive structure of the programme—attending school in order to earn a place at the weekly sessions—was introduced to encourage responsibility and foster a positive relationship with education.

Engagement and Progress

Over the 8-week period, the participant's school

attendance rose dramatically to 87.9%, with no absences recorded during the duration of the programme. Each week, they attended school consistently to ensure they could participate in 'Pitchin In'. As the weeks progressed, staff observed significant changes in the participant's demeanor. They began to engage more openly, displaying greater confidence and a noticeable shift in attitude and perspective. The programme not only gave them a reason to come to school but also created a safe and enjoyable space where they could express themselves and feel part of a team.

Staff Feedback

"She has really improved with her attendance at school and has stated she has only been coming to school so she can come to the programme." - PC O'Donnell, Campus Police Officer

"I've seen a big change in her since she started the programme. At first, she was really shy, kept to herself, and didn't have the most positive outlook on her future. As the weeks went on and she got involved in different topics, her confidence started to grow." - Mairi, Inclusion & Engagement Lead

Participant Reflection

"I wouldn't go to school before. I only now go to school so I can come to 'Pitchin In' each week. I enjoy the different topics and getting to play football. Girls have many barriers within football, especially when mixed with boys, but this group is fun."



Example 4 : Working Together to Keep Children Safe: East Ayrshire's Violence Against Women Partnership



East Ayrshire Violence against Women Partnership (EAVAWP) is committed in its work to prevent and end gender-based violence to women, girls and children, upholding, promoting and protecting children's rights to be free from violence.

There is a website with resources and information which can be accessed here:



[East Ayrshire Violence Against Women Partnership Strategic Plan 2024 to 2027](#), has four key priorities. The first priority is a strategic needs assessment which helps us understand the number of women, girls and children in East Ayrshire who experience violence against women (VAW).

The population of children in East Ayrshire is 21,668 and we know from national figures¹ that 1 in 5 children experience domestic abuse in their childhoods which means 4333 children in East Ayrshire could be currently living with domestic abuse. National figures² also tell us that 1 in 6 children experience sexual abuse which is 3833 children or young people in East Ayrshire. We know that more children will experience gender-based violence than are known to services for this reason, so we are working hard to find ways to close that gap.

¹ Child abuse and neglect in the UK today | NSPCC Learning

² Office National Statistics (2021) Sexual offences prevalence and victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics

We know when children live in poverty, they are at greater risk of harm through gender-based violence, due to the vulnerabilities which poverty brings. In East Ayrshire 23.6% of children live in poverty. In 2024, 34% of births were to women in the most deprived areas. It's important that when we work to improve things for children living in poverty, we understand they may also be at risk from domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women.

To support the workforce to understand what violence against women is and the impact on children and their families, East Ayrshire Violence against Women Partnership (EAVAWP) offers a comprehensive training programme for practitioners working across the multi-agency arena which includes input on coercive control, domestic abuse, the impact of domestic abuse on children, sexual violence, commercial sexual exploitation, stalking, MARAC and routine enquiry, as well as other courses. This supports practitioners to deliver better services to children and their families. Throughout 2025-26 more than 430 practitioners were trained in a variety of courses, and the training programme is reviewed and updated regularly as new issues emerge.

There are also three qualified Safe and Together trainers who provide regular Safe and Together courses which results in better safety planning for children and young people at risk of harm, who may be on the edges of care or at risk of becoming care experienced. This supports children to stay with their non-abusing parent and recognises the actions that many women who experience domestic abuse or coercive control take to keep their children safe. Women who have been supported through this approach tell us how important it is to them, one woman wrote:

*[the social worker was]...
"my biggest supporter through one of the most vulnerable times...keeping my son safe.... genuinely caring about me ...someone I can confide in without judgment..."*

East Ayrshire also hosts the Ayrshire Safe and Together Lead Officer who is responsible for leading on Safe and Together implementation and improving things for women and children affected by coercive control and domestic abuse.

East Ayrshire holds a monthly Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and all high-risk victims and children have action plans in place which reduce risks through multi-agency support. 160 children were involved in referrals to MARAC in East Ayrshire 2024-25. Both Safe and Together and MARAC are nationally recognised as best practice.

Providing service to support children and young people affected by violence against women is a key priority in the strategic plan. East Ayrshire Violence against Women partnership delivers a broad spectrum of direct services to children and young people through the specialist VAW services in East Ayrshire. There are two children's workers based at East Ayrshire Women's Aid who support children affected by coercive control and domestic abuse.



The STAR Centre: Ayrshire Rape Crisis offers support to young people aged 13+ who have experienced sexual violence. Both services provide emotional support and a range of interventions to support children and young people.

Another key priority is to promote culture change across key settings. Throughout 2025-26 the STAR Centre: Ayrshire Rape Crisis have facilitated 70 workshops across schools, college and youth groups and have spoken to 853 young people through their prevention programme in East Ayrshire. Due to some of the questions being asked by young people in these sessions, the STAR Centre: Ayrshire Rape Crisis has developed a Sexual Violence: FAQ for Practitioners which has been shared across all schools and will be officially launched on 13 May 2026.



The Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme is a peer mentoring programme that gives young people the chance to explore and challenge the attitudes, beliefs and cultural norms that underpin gender-based violence, bullying and other forms of violence. All secondary schools in East Ayrshire have delivered MVP this year, supported by the Campus Police Officers.



Equally Safe at School (ESAS) is a public health approach to preventing gender-based violence through working with school communities. Throughout 2025-26, six secondary schools in East Ayrshire have engaged with this programme and four primary schools are committed to embedding [Everyone's Included](#) and / or [Gender 10 teaching resources](#) in their settings.

Between February and March 2026, East Ayrshire violence against women partnership engaged with the Scottish Government misogyny campaign for young people and parents and shared these materials across social media and within schools, the video for young people can be looked at here: [Sexist content hurts girls IRL](#)



Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls in Scotland
25th November - 10th December

EVAWP hosts a comprehensive 16 Days of Activism programme each year between 25 November and 10 December, with a wide range of activities on offer.

In 2025 there was a design a badge competition for young people for Reclaim the Night, this competition was circulated widely across schools and youth groups, and the winning design is below.

Work also took place in schools, supported by the Campus Cops to work with young men to never to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women in all its forms.



Lucie, 12

What does Reclaim the Night Mean to you?

'Everything'

What inspired your design?

'Women being scared to walk in the dark'

Children and young people affected by violence against women and gender-based violence can access a range of support through East Ayrshire Women's Aid, the STAR Centre: Ayrshire Rape Crisis, Barnardo's Safe and Together service, Break the Silence (18+), school counselling and social work children and families team.

There was also a conference to Engage Boys and Men to end violence against women and girls which was well attended and highly evaluated focussing on pornography, intimate image abuse and the manosphere. Staff and MVP Mentors from Stewarton Academy delivered a highly rated workshop at the conference.



Each year the [White Ribbon Scotland](#) pledge [White Ribbon Scotland - Men tackling violence against women](#) is promoted across schools by the MVP co-ordinators and Campus Cops, and

there is also a community wide campaign. In 2025 a young person designed the East Ayrshire White Ribbon logo which has been placed on banners, badges and coasters to support local campaigns.

Example 5 – Listening from the Start: Embedding Children’s Voice in Early Learning

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fW2ib9K1BU>

Example 6 – Rights Respecting Schools: Embedding the UNCRC in Education

Dunlop Primary School and Early Childhood Centre

Dunlop Primary School and Early Childhood Centre has achieved the Gold: Rights Respecting Schools Award from UNICEF, recognising the school’s sustained commitment to embedding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) across its ethos, curriculum and everyday practice. The school is one of just nine primary schools in East Ayrshire to achieve this prestigious award and was required to demonstrate that children’s rights are fully embedded, understood and actively lived by children, staff and the wider school community. As part of the assessment process, a UNICEF assessor visited the school and met with the Head Teacher, Rights Respecting Coordinator, children, and parents and carers. The assessment confirmed that children and adults across the school community had a strong understanding of the UNCRC and could clearly articulate both how children’s rights influence daily school life and how those rights apply to children locally and globally.

The assessor’s report highlighted several key strengths, including “confident pupils who clearly know they have rights and are committed to helping to realise these for other children locally and globally”, “a strong commitment to children’s rights and to the Rights Respecting Schools Award from leaders at all levels, clearly linked to the vision and values of the school”, and “the extent to which pupils are listened to and involved in decision making at all levels.” These findings demonstrated that children’s participation is meaningful and embedded rather than tokenistic, and that children are trusted as active contributors to school culture.

Achievement of the Gold Award was celebrated at a special assembly, where children who played a central role in the Rights Respecting Schools journey unveiled the school’s Gold banner. This was attended by pupils, staff, parents and carers, local elected members and representatives from the Early Childhood Centre, reinforcing the shared responsibility for realising children’s rights across the school community. Reflecting on the award, Councillor Elaine Cowan,



Spokesperson for Education and Children and Young People, noted the positive impact of Rights Respecting Schools on children’s wellbeing, participation, relationships and self esteem, emphasising that “the aim of the journey to the Gold Award is to ensure that children and young people are healthier and happier, that they feel safe, have better relationships, and are active and involved in school life and the wider world.” She also highlighted how Article 29 of the UNCRC was central to the school’s approach, promoting education that develops children’s talents and abilities, supports understanding of rights and responsibilities, and encourages respect for others, peaceful relationships and care for the environment.

Head Teacher Laura Kelly reflected on the significance of the award, stating, “It is a matter of great pride that our school has earned the Gold: Rights Respecting Award. This award demonstrates that children’s rights are embedded across the school and underpin every facet of school life.” She highlighted that the assessor recognised how children confidently lead discussions on rights even when this is not part of a planned lesson, alongside practice such as monthly Dignity Spotlights and pupil led assemblies on Fairness and Equity, which demonstrate how respect and dignity are lived through everyday interactions. Mrs Kelly concluded, “Rights Respecting Schools is lived and breathed through staff and children; we are all invested in it, and it is our duty to make sure it is embedded.”

Muirkirk Primary School

Muirkirk Primary School recently held a special celebration to mark achieving the Silver: Rights Respecting Schools Award from UNICEF, recognising the school's commitment to embedding the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) within its ethos, curriculum and daily practice. To achieve the silver award, the school demonstrated that children's rights are not only taught but actively lived, with respect embedded within school culture and positive relationships recognised as central to creating a safe, inclusive and empowering learning environment.

As part of celebrating this achievement, Head Teacher Anne McLean invited the children to decide how they wished to mark their success, reinforcing their right to participation and influence. The children chose to hold a "Rights Respecting Rave", a decision that was fully supported by staff and brought to life through a school celebration that placed children's voices at its centre. Reflecting on the achievement, Mrs McLean said, "Everyone has worked so hard throughout the school to earn the UNCRC Rights Respecting Schools Silver Award and we thought it was important to celebrate that success and for the children to choose how they want to celebrate. And they chose a Rights Respecting Rave! It was a wonderful celebration, and everyone had a ball."

Mrs McLean further highlighted the values underpinning the school's approach, noting, "As a school we are determined to ensure that the children feel safe, build good relationships, are active and involved in school life and the wider world. The Rights Respecting Schools programme ensures that these principles are embedded and underpin all the work carried out within the school." She concluded, "I am very proud of the children and all the staff within the school; earning a Silver award reflects our commitment to creating a positive and kind learning environment."

The achievement was also recognised at local level. Councillor Elaine Cowan, Spokesperson for Education and Children and Young People, congratulated the school, stating, "*There are four key areas of impact for children and young people at a Rights Respecting School – wellbeing, participation, relationships and self esteem. The aim of the journey is to ensure that children and young people are healthier and happier, that they feel safe, and that they have better relationships.*" She also reflected positively on the child led celebration, adding that the Rights Respecting Rave was "*a great way to celebrate and that the children chose this makes it even better.*" This case study demonstrates how Muirkirk Primary is embedding children's rights in meaningful and practical ways, contributing to East Ayrshire's wider commitment to ensuring that every Early Childhood Centre and school promotes children's rights as a core feature of improvement planning.



Example 7 : From Barriers to Belonging: Supporting a Young Person into a Positive Destination

Profile:

IT, aged 18 from Stewarton, East Ayrshire.

From the age of 11 to 17 and/she was part of the SLC.

Describe life for the young person when they first came to the attention of staff.

At the age of 8 IT was diagnosed with Epilepsy, and in S2 at the age of 12 she was then diagnosed with Autism and later diagnosed with OCD in S4. The barriers these imposed to IT emitted feelings of shame, and inequal.

IT favourite thing about school was– a Science Teacher who believed in her.

This teacher made a significant impact on IT's self-belief and gave her the room to shine both creatively and introspectively. Naturally, IT is a supportive individual and a champion for her peers and even helping younger students in extracurricular activities. However, she struggled to see the potential in herself.

IT felt her peers at school would see her differently, treat her differently, interact with her differently. To protect her wellbeing, IT would purposefully miss lessons because she was struggling with feeling as if she fitted in with the whole class or even being seen as able to keep up with the pace of learning.

When IT initially came to SL33 she didn't have a positive pathway. She had low confidence, high anxiety and would have trouble when trying to speak. Mum would speak on her behalf when discussing potential further education options and the family as a whole were worried about what IT next steps could be and how this could impact her mental health.

Mum and Dad knew the potential that IT had to excel in anything she puts her mind to but didn't know if this would be in admin, reception duties, event planning or the creative industries. A decision was made to join SL33's Summer Programme, gaining SCQF Level 4 Employability award, delivered in partnership with Enable. This then led to her registration to NOLB SES Skills Sector programme, where IT was able to gain invaluable vocational skills such as Barista, Digital Skills, Beauty and Creative Art/Writing. Within this environment IT was able to thrive and build social skills and confidence.

What specific part of the approach was used, and why?

Valuing IT learning differences, treating her fairly, seeing her talents and knowing her aspirations - helped us to identify a positive pathway and ascertain that a modern apprenticeship would be the ideal next step for IT.

During this we identified that she had all the essential and desirable qualities to apply for the Customer Service Modern Apprenticeship at East Ayrshire Council and her natural and thoughtful disposition would make her a wonderful candidate for this. She was supported through the application process and guided through interview skills.

Key Milestones:

Key milestones include attending NOLB summer programme, this decision to attend allowed IT to gain invaluable skills, build confidence and enable her to take the next step on her journey within the Skills Sector programme. Throughout her time within this programme IT strengths and interests were identified, creating a pathway to sustainable employment.

When applying for the MA Customer Service role IT felt apprehensive saying *'I don't have enough experience' and also, 'I don't think I would be able to do it well'.*

Giving IT responsibilities during work experience within SL33 and being valued and respected within the team allowed IT to feel a sense of belonging which has been invaluable and greatly increased IT self-esteem. Ultimately giving her the confidence to apply for the Moder Apprenticeship position.

With support but also using her own initiative - done her due diligence, researched the role, took pages of notes and went through mock interviews. This newfound confidence was an integral component of being able to apply for the MA Customer Service Role.

When IT received the phone call to say she was successful she explains that *'no words could describe how happy I was'*

Where is the young person today?

The overall impact of the support IT has received can't be underestimated. There are many aspects that have improved throughout this IT journey. However, the most important improvement has been on IT overall wellbeing. She has now found her passion and is able to use her experiences to now have a profound impact on other young people's journeys and ensure that they come into SL33 and feel welcomed and positive.

IT is consistently dependable and reliable; she never misses a day even when asked to help with events that may be out of her comfort zone and is for once hopeful about her future endeavours. IT has developed an indomitable spirit. Her unwavering self-efficacy and self-esteem has realised her potential and is excited for the next 2 years as an MA Customer Service Assistant at SL33 and for the very first time in a very long time she can see a bright future ahead.



Example 8 : Learning by Doing: A Young Person's Journey Through Apprenticeship

LP

"Before my apprenticeship I left school at 15 to go to college to study childcare. However, I found it hard to settle in. I never really enjoyed school and I realized that sitting in a classroom wasn't for me because I prefer hands on learning.

After I left college, I started looking for jobs, a family member showed me an advertisement for an apprenticeship in health and social care and pushed me to apply as they thought this type of career is what suited me as a person and that I could really make a change. The idea of learning, getting qualifications whilst also making an income was very appealing to me.

Working within the care sector has always been something I've been drawn to do as a career, I want to be able to help and care for the people who need it most, as my whole life I have always cared for loved ones and helped people in need, and I hope to make a positive change that makes the care sector better for everyone.

Starting my apprenticeship, I was 16 years old and going into something new brought up many different feelings for me including, excitement, doubt, nervousness however I was ready to learn and make a difference. Stepping into the world of working with older adults was like entering a maze of human experiences. Each day brought new challenges, new stories and new opportunities to learn and grow. I quickly realised that working with older adults isn't just a job; it's a calling. It requires empathy, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to the wellbeing of our community.

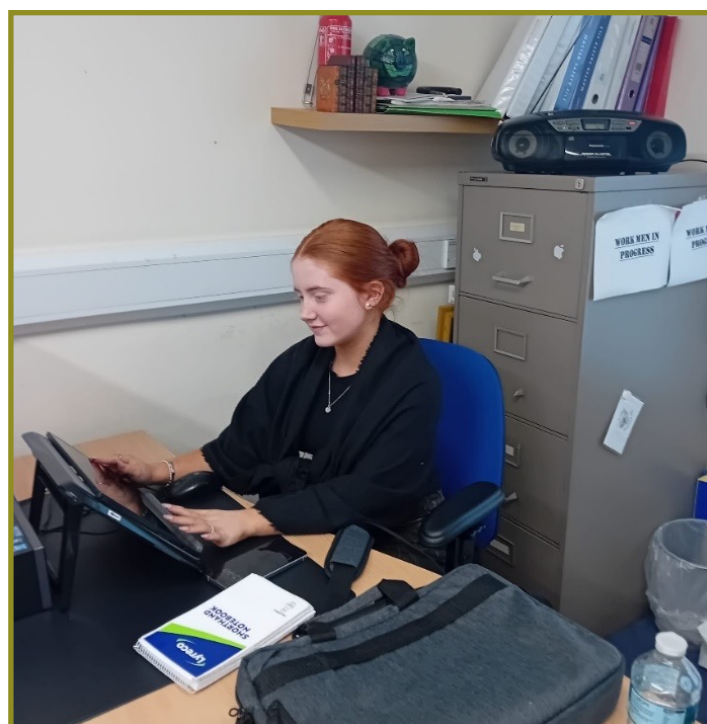
Throughout my apprenticeship it was not without its challenges. There were moments of doubt, moments of frustration and moments I questioned wither I was truly making a difference, but it was during these times I learned most about myself- I discovered the value of seeking support from colleagues, reflecting on my experiences and maintaining a healthy work life balance. The apprenticeship didn't just help me in work life but also helped in my social and personal life making me more independent.

Working through my apprenticeship whilst completing my SVQ 2 has come with its challenges but for me this was the best way to gain qualifications. The reason this path works so well is that you are doing the work you are learning about every single day.

I am now 18 years old and starting my SVQ 3 on my last year of my apprenticeship. What a journey it has been.

Instead of learning about care in a book, I am out in a field putting those new skills into practice, every day brings something new to learn and I can immediately use that knowledge to improve my skills and help the people I care for.

For anyone who prefers "learning by doing" I believe this is the most effective way to build a career and get the qualifications you need."



Example 9 : “Dinnae Forget Your Caddy”: How Pupils at Darvel Primary Helped Shape Recycling in Their Community

Darvel Primary School is taking part in the “Dinnae Forget Your Caddy” campaign, an initiative delivered in partnership with East Ayrshire Council’s Cleaner Communities Team and Education’s Climate Change and Active Travel Team to encourage the recycling of household food waste and reduce waste in general refuse. School staff introduced the campaign through presentations encouraging pupils and families to register for and name their household food caddy. Pupils received weekly tokens when their family presented a caddy for collection, with each school running a monthly prize draw offering a local community voucher. When staff identified that relatively few families were using food caddies, additional support was requested from Community Waste Officers (CWOs), who worked closely with teachers to ensure the sessions were age and stage appropriate. CWOs delivered interactive presentations on the reasons for recycling food waste and explained how East Ayrshire’s food waste is transformed into electricity, gas and fertiliser, which pupils found surprising and engaging.

Children were actively consulted on how residents could be better supported to recycle food waste and were encouraged to share honest opinions about incentives and consequences. Pupils suggested practical measures such as clearer signage on bins and education within the home, alongside rewards for households that recycle well. Children also shared ideas on how any savings made through increased recycling could be reinvested locally, including repairing potholes, building play parks and supporting children’s clubs. Pupils agreed they could act as ambassadors for the campaign by sharing what they had learned with their families and encouraging recycling at home. As a Rights Respecting School, Darvel Primary pupils were confident in expressing their views, and CWOs listened carefully, encouraged participation, and reassured pupils that further ideas could be shared through their teachers after the visit, reinforcing children’s right to be heard under Article 12 of the UNCRC.

































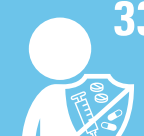









Staff reflected positively on how children’s rights were respected throughout the engagement.

Mrs Macleod commented, “*The Dinnae Forget Your Caddy session supported children’s right to a clean and safe environment by helping them understand how their everyday actions, like separating food waste, can protect the world around them. It encouraged pupils to take responsibility and see themselves as active citizens who can make a positive difference in their community.*”


Mrs Wilson added, “*This visit promoted respect and participation, as pupils were given a voice through initiatives such as Name the Bin Lorry. It linked strongly to children’s rights by showing that their ideas matter and that they can influence local services, reinforcing their right to be heard and involved in decisions that affect them.*”

Pupils further demonstrated meaningful participation by researching questions for the CWOs about the campaign’s aims, how households are supported, how success is measured and how information reaches families who do not engage through social media. CWOs responded by explaining data collection methods, available educational resources, community outreach activities and future changes to waste services, and again invited pupils to share their views on proposed developments, further reinforcing children’s participation in decisions that affect them.



 <p>1</p> <p>DEFINITION OF A CHILD</p>	 <p>2</p> <p>NO DISCRIMINATION</p>	 <p>3</p> <p>BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD</p>	 <p>4</p> <p>MAKING RIGHTS REAL</p>	 <p>5</p> <p>FAMILY GUIDANCE AS CHILDREN DEVELOP</p>	 <p>6</p> <p>LIFE, SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT</p>	 <p>7</p> <p>NAME AND NATIONALITY</p>
 <p>8</p> <p>IDENTITY</p>	 <p>9</p> <p>KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER</p>	 <p>10</p> <p>CONTACT WITH PARENTS ACROSS COUNTRIES</p>	 <p>11</p> <p>PROTECTION FROM KIDNAPPING</p>	 <p>12</p> <p>RESPECT FOR CHILDREN'S VIEWS</p>	 <p>13</p> <p>SHARING THOUGHTS FREELY</p>	 <p>14</p> <p>FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND RELIGION</p>
 <p>15</p> <p>SETTING UP OR JOINING GROUPS</p>	 <p>16</p> <p>PROTECTION OF PRIVACY</p>	 <p>17</p> <p>ACCESS TO INFORMATION</p>	 <p>18</p> <p>RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS</p>	 <p>19</p> <p>PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE</p>	 <p>20</p> <p>CHILDREN WITHOUT FAMILIES</p>	 <p>21</p> <p>CHILDREN WHO ARE ADOPTED</p>
 <p>22</p> <p>REFUGEE CHILDREN</p>	 <p>23</p> <p>CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES</p>	 <p>24</p> <p>HEALTH, WATER, FOOD, ENVIRONMENT</p>	 <p>25</p> <p>REVIEW OF A CHILD'S PLACEMENT</p>	 <p>26</p> <p>SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HELP</p>	 <p>27</p> <p>FOOD, CLOTHING, A SAFE HOME</p>	 <p>28</p> <p>ACCESS TO EDUCATION</p>
 <p>29</p> <p>AIMS OF EDUCATION</p>	 <p>30</p> <p>MINORITY CULTURE, LANGUAGE AND RELIGION</p>	 <p>31</p> <p>REST, PLAY, CULTURE, ARTS</p>	 <p>32</p> <p>PROTECTION FROM HARMFUL WORK</p>	 <p>33</p> <p>PROTECTION FROM HARMFUL DRUGS</p>	 <p>34</p> <p>PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL ABUSE</p>	 <p>35</p> <p>PREVENTION OF SALE AND TRAFFICKING</p>
 <p>36</p> <p>PROTECTION FROM EXPLOITATION</p>	 <p>37</p> <p>CHILDREN IN DETENTION</p>	 <p>38</p> <p>PROTECTION IN WAR</p>	 <p>39</p> <p>RECOVERY AND REINTEGRATION</p>	 <p>40</p> <p>CHILDREN WHO BREAK THE LAW</p>	 <p>41</p> <p>BEST LAW FOR CHILDREN APPLIES</p>	 <p>42</p> <p>EVERYONE MUST KNOW CHILDREN'S RIGHTS</p>

43-54



HOW THE CONVENTION WORKS

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD