**Midlothian Council’s**

**Progress on The Promise** **National policy developments outlined in the Change Programme ONE**

**INTRODUCTON**

The following report outlines some of the work Midlothian Council has undertaken to progress its commitments to The Promise. We have used the five priority areas and key milestones outlined which are:

1. A Good Childhood
2. Whole Family Support
3. Supporting the Workforce
4. Planning
5. Building Capacity

While we continue to progress the priority areas it is important to note that the work streams stemming from each are interrelated and do not standalone, which is why we are undertaking a wider, whole-system review of Midlothian Council’s, Children, Young People & Partnership Directorate which Equally important to note is that each work stream takes cognisance of the five fundamentals which, are what matters to children, listening, poverty, children’s rights and language.

1. **A Good Childhood**

**Family Group Decision Making**

Midlothian have developed a rights-based Family Group Decision Making service to ensure that where children are on the cusp of being accommodated, we pull together supports and resources from within the extended family, so that the children remain in the care of their kin. We have aligned the service alongside kinship care services to remove the stigma of statutory services. We were successful in achieving monies to develop a Life Long Links service which will dovetail with the existing services.

**Youth Justice**

For the year 21/22 we know there were 202 referrals to youth justice. Out of these, 54 were referred to children’s services for an assessment of need, seven were referred directly to SCRA with only one proceeding to a Hearing. Our repeat offender data is more interesting in that it illustrates that while our referrals have remained fairly constant (due to the diversionary work already in place), our repeat offenders’ data has significantly reduced. This is mainly due to building on our previous successes and having a robust focus on children and young people where attendance and attainment is a presenting feature. The partnership has also deployed a Community Reach and Inclusion Bus (CRIB), which is situated near one of our larger high schools on a Friday between 11am – 3pm. This partnership venture provides support to young people who were not engaging in school and who have, or are at risk of, offending or taking part in anti-social behaviour. We also developed a project known as “The Bounce Project” which is a group of workshops to engage young people who have been, or are at risk of, becoming involved in anti-social behaviour. The workshop provides young people with an opportunity to talk through their offending behaviour whilst receiving work related opportunities.

**Hawthorn Family Learning Centre**

2021 saw the emergence of a new service which significantly increased its capacity within the community. As Hawthorn continues to change, we have seen an increase of referrals for both universal and targeted support. During 2021, we received 63 referrals with over a third coming directly from families. The service also established a 3-5 provision to enable children to remain until ready to transition into primary school. The shift of referral from professionals to directly from families shows the ongoing progress in reducing the stigma associated with children’s services. During Covid, in addition to providing local families with food and vouchers, our cook actively supported families in the wider community by providing them with the recipes to make meals and provided over 250 servings of pre-made meals to local families.

Hawthorn were pleased to be nominated as a finalist for the Innovation in Children’s Services category of the MJ Awards. The nomination acknowledged and celebrated the creative work that has been done before and during COVID to provide universal and targeted support to children and families in our community.

**Systemic Family Intervention Project**

The project is unique in the sense that we are working from practitioner level exploring ways of embedding a systemic approach that fits our context, whereas elsewhere the systemic approach is embedded within managerial level and flows down to frontline practitioner. There have been 27 referrals to date and key to the success of the project is that the systemic worker focusses on the relationship between the parents and the young person, while the social worker is managing the process that relates to the young person’s offence or care planning.

The project is underpinned by The Promise and its 10 family support principles which are:

1. Community Based
2. Responsive and Timely
3. Work with Family Assets
4. Empowerment and Agency
5. Flexible
6. Holistic and Relational
7. Therapeutic
8. Non-Stigmatising
9. Patient and Persistent
10. 10 Underpinned by Children’s Rights
11. **Whole Family Support**

Midlothian’s Children’s Services directorate are currently in the process of undergoing a review across Education and Children’s Services with our commitment to The Promise being one of the key drivers. The review includes future-proofing our learning estate with a particular emphasis on how best to shape our additional support for learning, by making sure we address the needs of our most vulnerable children and families. The children and families future structure and services will also be underpinned by The Promise and work is already underway to develop this further. In addition to the service mentioned already, we are currently in the process of developing a Whole Family Support service which involves other stakeholders such as the Third Sector and Health.

1. **Planning**

As a small Council we have managed to develop some of these changes through reinvesting resources from other areas, such as frontline social work services being used to finance the Family Group Decision Making and Systemic Family Therapy. Our successful applications to particular funding streams has meant we have been able to in implement and develop our Lifelong Link service and National Housing Project. The wider review will use a similar approach which means we will continue to monitor, review and reinvest our existing services to progress our commitment.

We are in the process of reviewing our existing data sets and working with other partners to ensure we can collate the appropriate information to evidence impact, success and predict future patterns and trends. Midlothian Council’s commitment to the use of digital technology and ambitious 20 minute neighbourhoods support the underlying principles of the Promise.

We are aware that data itself does not tell the ‘whole story’. So, Children Services have commissioned an organisation to support us develop data set that supports us evidence and measure change in a way that is more meaningful that solely using logic modelling.

We currently employ a care-experienced young person who is also a kinship carer in the Council and our strong relationships with housing colleagues has led to success in housing young people moving out of our local young people’s care homes.

Over the last five years Children Services have worked tirelessly to reduce our out-of-authority care using youth workers; family support; support workers and residential practitioners. As a result we have gone from 26 external placements in 2014 to five today and other council have shown interest in how this was achieved

**4 Supporting the Workforce**

The work streams outlined demonstrate that through redesigning or increasing capacity within the workface we can offer more flexible and responsive services to children, families and communities at an earlier stage. Hawthorn is an excellent example of such a service. Furthermore, the drive to change culture and reduce the stigma associated with some targeted services, means we now provide more meaningful services to an increased number of children, families and the wider community. This usage and number of families associated with the services demonstrates a greater impact than when previously viewed as a targeted children and family’s service.

Midlothian have adopted a trauma informed approach for everyone who works for the Council. We also deliver our own training and development as well as partnering with other Councils or partners, including University of Edinburgh, CELCIS and other training bodies,

The video clip below is highlights some of the children and young people supported by our services.



1. **Building Capacity**

**Midlothian House Project (MHP)**

In consultation with our Champions Group, poor housing outcomes for Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) were consistently raised as an area they would like to see improved. In response, Children’s Services successfully applied for Life Changes Trust funding to set up a National House Project (NHP) framework within Midlothian. Midlothian House Project is guided by a multi-disciplinary steering group consisting of representatives from Police Scotland, Health, Housing including Registered Social Landlords, Community groups, Skills Development Scotland, Residential Care and Education. Since November 2020, MHP has supported 20 CEYP in their transition into adulthood. The Midlothian House Project promotes interdependent rather than independent living using a community support model. To date, 20 young people are engaged with Midlothian House Project with 13 successfully living in their own permanent tenancies with no tenancy breakdowns occurring. The remaining seven are engaging well with the project and are on track to move into their own tenancies in due course. Multiagency working and exercising organisational corporate parent responsibilities is ensuring the Midlothian House Project is providing long standing successful outcomes for our most vulnerable young people.

The two video links below demonstrate the positive impact MHP is having on our young people.