

Children's Services

Service Improvement Plan 2026 – 29



Renfrewshire
Council



Welcome to our Service Improvement Plan

I am delighted to introduce the 2026-2029 Service Improvement Plan (SIP) for Children's Services.

The plan sets out our vision for the three years ahead, and how we as a team will help ensure the organisation delivers on the strategic outcomes set out in the Council Plan.

Councils everywhere are facing a very challenging financial context over the years ahead, while the cost-of-living crisis and poverty-related inequalities will continue to affect our communities. So that makes it even more important we have a clear sense of direction on how to focus our resources to deliver on what's most important – helping deliver the best start to life for Renfrewshire's children and young people.

Our service has delivered some major successes in recent years – having been recognised for sector-leading good practice, while achieving improved outcomes for our children, young people and families. The plan sets out where we can continue and build on that over the next three years.

Our areas of focus will include putting children and young people at the heart of our services, tackling the impact of poverty, protecting the most vulnerable, raising attainment for all, and creating the best possible environment for our children and young people to thrive.

That will mean a team effort across the service, the wider council and our partners. I look forward to working with all of you to do that.

Janie O'Neill
Director of Children's Services

Children's Services - about us

Children's Services are responsible for the delivery of early learning and childcare, primary and secondary education, social work services to children and families, and justice social work services. The services provides universal services such as education, and targeted and specialist services for specific identified needs. Our specialist provision includes child protection services, provision of education to children and young people with additional support needs, mental health and addictions services for children and young people, and management and rehabilitation services for people who have committed offences.

The Director of Children's Services is the Council's Chief Education Officer and is supported by three Heads of Service: two Heads of Education and the Head of Children and Justice Social Work who is also the Chief Social Work Officer for the Council and the Health and Social Care Partnership.



Our Children's Services



Primary

Primary education in **50** schools, **23** of which have an early learning and childcare (ELC) class.



ASN

Commitment to children and young people with additional support needs through our **2** ASN schools, mainstream and flexible learning resources.



ELC

Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) is provided across **15** standalone centres.



Secondary

Secondary education in **11** schools.



Children's Houses and Throughcare

4 children's houses. Throughcare support including supported accommodation for young people leaving care and a dedicated UASC team.



Frontline social work services to children and their families

From Front Door services to longer term support.



Justice Social Work Services

Provides a range of services to people involved in justice processes.



Central Education Team

Literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, data literacy and research.



Fostering, Adoption and Kinship Carers

Providing dedicated assessment of and support to foster carers, kinship carers and adopters.

Our Resources and Risks

BUDGET

The Children's Services revenue budget for 2026/27 is approximately £284m, equating to almost half of the Council's General Services budget.

As part of the capital budget, over £51m will be invested in 2026/27 in Schools and Early Years establishments, with £271m to be invested over the period 2026/27 to 2035/36.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The Council's risk management arrangements are well established with all strategic, corporate and service risks being reported to the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board. Children's Services risks are detailed in the following table:

Strategic risks

- Reducing Inequalities - very high
- Migration and Asylum Impact – high

Corporate Risks

- Financial Sustainability – very high
- Cyber Security – very high
- Learning Estate Strategy – very high

Service Risks

- Temporary funding streams ending – high
- Managing Violence and Aggression – high
- Additional Support for Learning – high
- Availability of foster care placements- high
- Multi-agency resource to meet the needs of children and young people with complex needs - high
- Pupil Attendance and Exclusions – moderate
- 21 hours non-class contact time – moderate
- Home to School Transport – moderate
- Secondary school curriculum choice - moderate
- Recruitment of social workers (nationally) - moderate

Data Strategy

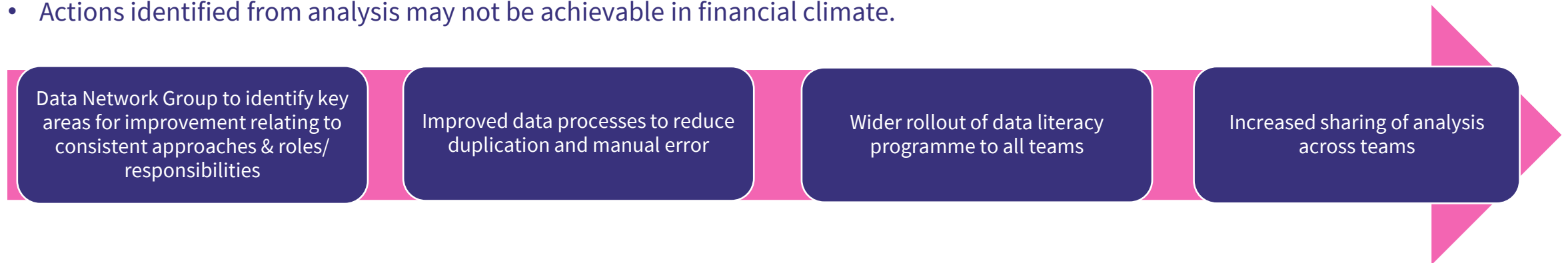
The Council's Digital Strategy includes Smart Data Workstream tasked with improving the management and exploitation of data in a consistent way across our services, leading to the improvement of the Council's capabilities around data. As part of the Smart Data Workstream an organisation-wide data governance group has been created which includes data specialist representatives from all services. Service data strategies have been developed since 2024 to address gaps and improve the management and exploitation of business-critical data. In 2026/27, the service will:

Through evidence-based data driven decision making we will improve outcomes for children, families and communities.

- Increase cross-sector working to create consistent data approaches and share best practice.
- Expand data literacy training offer across Children's Services.
- Increase awareness of data analysis across all teams within Children's Services.

Barriers

- Service re-designs have impacted resources available for analysis & reporting.
- Limitations within management information systems.
- Actions identified from analysis may not be achievable in financial climate.



National Context



Cost-of-Living-Crisis



Humanitarian Support and Resettlement



UN Convention on the Rights of the Child



The Promise



National Improvement Framework



Education Reform



Climate Change



Included, Engaged and Involved



Tackling the poverty-related attainment gap



Identification and protection of vulnerable children and young people



Vision for Justice in Scotland



Whole Family Wellbeing



National Social Work Agency

Local Context



Our Values

Our Values describe our promise to our communities, staff, and partners. They guide how we deliver services and make decisions.



Council and Community Plans

Our Council Plan and Community Plan set the strategic framework for our organisation and describe what we want to achieve for Renfrewshire



Fairer Renfrewshire Programme

Brings together existing programmes of work focused on achieving fairness and equity, and tackling the inequalities that exist across Renfrewshire's communities.



Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

Every area of work within the Council has a role to play in promoting equality and diversity. The Equality Act 2010 protects people from unfair treatment and asks public bodies to show how they make a positive difference to equality groups.



Best Value

Aims to ensure good governance; manage resources effectively; focus on improvement; and, most important of all, deliver the best possible outcomes for local people.



Mental Health & Wellbeing

Deliver supports that are accessible, early-intervention-focused, and rooted in need.



Gaelic Language Plan

Renfrewshire Council is committed to providing Gaelic education opportunities for our residents and those who wish to undertake this in future through our Gaelic Language Plan 2024 – 2029.



Learning Estate Strategy

Our most ambitious and high-value investment programme to achieve our long-term strategy to “create the best possible learning estate to allow children and young people to thrive”.



Public Protection

Creating a safe, fair community by identifying and responding to risk of harm to children and young people and managing people who have high risk offending behaviour.

Key Priorities

Reduce child poverty in Renfrewshire and improve outcomes for children and families currently living in poverty

Place children and young people's human rights at the heart of the planning and delivery of services that affect them

Protect the most vulnerable members of our communities, including children and young people who are at risk

Create the best possible learning estate to allow children and young people to thrive

Support and nurture our children, families and communities

Raise attainment, achievement and enhance learning and teaching in an inclusive environment

Support the shift of the balance between the use of custody and justice in the community, safely

Invest in and develop our workforce, in partnership with our people

Our Focus 2026/27

- Continue to embed **The Promise** across services to ensure lasting, meaningful change.
- Enhance our early intervention and preventative approach to the **whole family wellbeing**
- In accordance with UNCRC, develop our approach strengthen the **voices of children and young people**
- Implement recommendations from **Learning Reviews** promoting learning and development across the partnership.
- Achieve **permanence** for children who need it
- Improve the planning and process for **transition to adult services** and greater independence
- Review the use of **compulsory supervision** where it is in the children's interests and reflects national policy
- Refresh the **Equally Safe Action Plan** in line with national developments and in partnership with those with lived experience of gender-based violence
- Implement the Caledonian system, working with men convicted of **gender-based violence** offences



Our Focus 2026/27

- Work collaboratively with our key partners to ensure our children and young people enjoy good **physical and mental health**
- Play a critical part in our **local response to poverty**, sharing data and insight to direct resources to areas of greatest impact
- Reduce the **poverty related attainment gap** and improving attainment of our lowest 20% of learners
- Implement and align the work of the **Curricular Improvement Cycle**
- Deliver our strengthened approach to planning and future proofing our **learning estate**
- Multi-agency resource to meet the needs of children and young people with **complex needs**
- Embed **effective attendance and inclusion strategies** that proactively support learners, leading to sustained improvements in attendance and reductions in exclusions
- Build on the success of our school leavers entering **positive destinations**, undertake a deep-dive into the data to ensure that additional support is provided for those who need it
- Effective delivery of our **key workforce priorities** to support the health, safety, and wellbeing of our staff



Delivering the Council Plan

Children's Services Action Plan and
Performance Indicators

Delivering the Council Plan – Place

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?
Progress development work in relation to the priority schools identified in the Learning Estate Management Plan – a) Paisley Grammar School Community Campus b) Extension and Adaptations to Park Mains High School c) A New Dargavel Primary School	Pupils and staff enjoy a modern, fit for purpose, learning estate which supports learning and achievement.	Head of Education (Strategy & Improvement) Learning Estate Strategy and Delivery Manager	a) 31 August 2026 b) 31 August 2027 c) 31 August 2027
A digital strategy will be developed, implemented and evaluated for children, young people and families which will focus on Transformation, Capacity Building and Innovation	In line with the corporate digital strategy, our children, young people and families will have a successful digital experience that supports learning and is seamless, integrated, consistent and personalised.	Digital Learning and Link Manager	31 March 2027

Delivering the Council Plan – Place

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?
Implement the priority actions from the National Strategy for Community Justice with our Community Justice partners	Enhance intervention at the earliest opportunity by ensuring greater consistency, confidence in and awareness of services which support the use of direct measures and diversion from prosecution. Enhance community integration and support by increasing and promoting greater use of voluntary throughcare and third sector services.	Community Justice Lead Officer	31 March 2027
Continue to implement 'Equally Safe at School' policy	A whole school approach to preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls, with staff and students working together with a shared understanding and commitment to equality and safety for all.	Education Manager (Quality Improvement and Health & Wellbeing)	31 March 2027
Implement Renfrewshire's Equally Safe Strategy	Preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls.	Children's Services Manager (Front-Door Services)	31 March 2028

Delivering the Council Plan – Economy

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?
Contribute to the Council's Workforce Plan and Strategic Recruitment and Talent Management Plan to enable us to meet workforce demands particularly in relation to Teaching and Social Work	Creating a high performing and sustainable workforce capable of meeting the Council's future challenges.	Education Manager (Leadership & Professional Development) Strategic Manager (Children and Justice Social Work)	31 March 2027
Working in partnership with Skills Development Scotland, West College Scotland, Invest in Renfrewshire and Developing the Young Workforce West, we will ensure planned robust approaches to supporting our most vulnerable learners into positive, sustained destinations	This will provide a coordinated approach to ensuring that all young people, particularly the most vulnerable, are given the best opportunities and supports to move into positive future pathways.	Education Manager (Developing the Young Workforce)	31 March 2028

Delivering the Council Plan – Fair

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?
Implementation of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy that clearly articulates the vision for planning and delivering high quality learning, teaching and assessment	All staff will be aware of the Renfrewshire Vision for learning, teaching and assessment and features of highly effective practice and will begin to use them in their practice. All practitioners are provided with the opportunity to learn from and share highly effective practice. All staff will be empowered and supported to strengthen their practice through collaboration and professional learning. Learners' experiences will improve as the vision for highly effective practice is realised in each establishment.	Education Manager (Assessment & Moderation)	31 March 2027
Raise attainment and skills for learning, life, and work to enhance opportunities and choices for all our children and young people	Close the educational attainment gap for our care experienced children and young people. Ensuring equality through targeted improvement activity in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing Improve attendance and monitor exclusions and provide help to parents and carers to support their children and young people to meet their educational needs.	Heads of Education	31 March 2027

Delivering the Council Plan – Fair

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?
The Promise Strategic Oversight Board and workstreams will progress and ensure Renfrewshire 'Keeps the Promise' and delivers improved outcomes for individuals who are care experienced, wherever possible keeping children within their families (CF)	Continue to progress Renfrewshire's response to Keeping The Promise	The Promise Manager	31 March 2027 (CP) 31 March 2028 (SIP) (overall programme until 2030)
We will embed the whole family wellbeing service and request for assistance process to ensure that families get the right support at the right time, based on need	The request for assistance process will enable families to reach in for support themselves and is a one door approach for professionals to seek stage 1 support for families which will include access to our funded third sector partners. This will result in improved family wellbeing outcomes, reduced number of crisis and social work interventions and improved access to early intervention and prevention services.	Children's Services Manager (Protection and Commissioning)	31 March 2028
Work collaboratively with our key partners to ensure our children and young people enjoy good physical and mental health	We will have improved physical and mental health for our children, young people, families and communities	Service Improvement Manager Education Manager (Quality Improvement and Health & Wellbeing)	31 March 2028

Delivering the Council Plan – Fair

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?
Focus on securing permanency arrangements for children where this is the best outcome	Ensure that children who cannot safely remain in the care of their birth parents have a permanence decision six months after becoming accommodated and have a permanence plan agreed within 12 months of becoming accommodated.	Social Work Strategic Manager (Depute Chief Social Work Officer)	30 June 2026
Implement the recommendations from the children at risk of harm inspection	Ensure that robust child protection responses are in place and implement the recommendations from the children at risk of harm inspection.	Head of Children and Justice Social Work (Chief Social Work Officer)	31 March 2027
Review the impact of the social work re-design	Clarity about the impact of the service re-design upon delivery of key objectives leading to improvement and adaptation where required.	Social Work Strategic Manager (Depute Chief Social Work Officer)	30 November 2026

Delivering the Council Plan – Fair

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?
Ensure robust action plans are in place to develop and align with the work of the Curricular Improvement Cycle	This systematic review of the Scottish curriculum will ensure it remains up to date and relevant for all children and young people.	Head of Education (Attainment, Inclusion & Wellbeing) Education Manager (Assessment & Moderation)	31 March 2028
Continue to work with establishment leaders to support our children and young people with Additional Support Needs	Ensure that resource is allocated effectively and equitably in line with the staged intervention framework, supporting Renfrewshire's children and young people to access an appropriate education.	Head of Education (Attainment, Inclusion & Wellbeing) Education Manager (ASN & Inclusion)	31 March 2028
Managing and Reporting Violence and Aggression Incidents in Establishments Policy will continue to be embedded, ensuring that local processes are followed to track and monitor incidents resulting in appropriate interventions and supports being actioned	Continue to support establishments to embed new policy and signpost to the related training opportunities to support this both universally and targeted.	Head of Education (Attainment, Inclusion & Wellbeing) Education Manager (ASN & Inclusion)	31 March 2028

Delivering the Council Plan – Fair

Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators – Financial Year	Last Updated	Value	Target
Proportion of children being looked after in the community	Q4 2025/26	92.7%	89.9%
Percentage of accommodated Looked After Children placed with families	Q4 2025/26	90.3%	83%
Percentage of care leavers participating in employment, training or education	Q4 2025/26	46.7%	55%
Percentage of care leavers who have had a period of homelessness in the last 6 months	Q4 2025/26	7.7%	0%
Number of diversion from prosecution cases successfully completed by 31 March	New Indicator		83%
Number of bail supervision cases successfully completed by 31 march	New Indicator		68%
% of NEW unpaid work orders/requirement complete within required timescale	Q4 2025/26	80%	85%

Delivering the Council Plan – Fair

Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator – Academic Year	Last Updated	Value	Target
% of Leavers attaining literacy SCQF Level 4	2024/25	96%	98%
% of Leavers attaining numeracy SCQF Level 4	2024/25	93%	94%
% of Leavers attaining literacy SCQF Level 5	2024/25	86%	88%
% of Leavers attaining numeracy SCQF Level 5	2024/25	77%	77%
Overall average total tariff	2024/25	937.78	*LGBF Data
Average total tariff SIMD quintile 1	2024/25	647	*LGBF Data
Average total tariff SIMD quintile 2	2024/25	786	*LGBF Data
Average total tariff SIMD quintile 3	2024/25	993	*LGBF Data
Average total tariff SIMD quintile 4	2024/25	1,165	*LGBF Data
Average total tariff SIMD quintile 5	2024/25	1,258	*LGBF Data
No of foundation apprenticeships accessed by Renfrewshire school pupils	2025/26	30	455
Percentage of adults satisfied with local schools	2024/25	64%	*LGBF Data

* LGBF data will be compared to national and family group statistics

Delivering the Council Plan – Fair

Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator – Academic Year	Last Updated	Value	Target
Average Total Tariff Score of Looked After Children (school leavers)	2024/25	353	340
Gap between the Average Total Tariff Score of Looked After Children (school leavers)	2024/25	64%	62%
% of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE Level in Literacy	2024/25	77.4%	*LGBF Data
% of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE Level in Numeracy	2024/24	84.9%	*LGBF Data
Literacy Attainment Gap (P1, P4, P7 Combined)	2024/24	18.9	*LGBF Data
Numeracy Attainment Gap (P1, P4, P7 Combined)	2024/24	14.9	*LGBF Data
Proportion of Children meeting developmental milestones	2023/24	80.6%	*LGBF Data
Proportion of funded early years provision which is graded good/better	2024/25	84%	*LGBF Data
School attendance rates (per 100 pupils)	2024/25	91%	*LGBF Data
School attendance rates (per 100 'looked after pupils')	2024/25	83%	*LGBF Data
School exclusions rates (per 1,000 pupils)	2024/25	25.14	*LGBF Data

* LGBF data will be compared to national and family group statistics

Delivering the Council Plan – Fair

Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator – Academic Year	Last Updated	Value	Target
School exclusions rates (per 1,000 'looked after pupils')	2022/23	164.49	*LGBF Data
Participation rate for 16-19 year olds (%)	2024/25	93.4%	*LGBF Data
% of pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 5	2024/25	72%	*LGBF Data
% of pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 6	2024/25	44%	*LGBF Data
% of pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas gaining 5+ awards at level 5	2024/25	54%	*LGBF Data
% of pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas gaining 5+ awards at level 6	2024/25	25%	*LGBF Data
% of School leavers in a positive destination	2024/25	97.9%	98%
% of children attending school (Primary)	2024/25	93.8%	95.5%
% of children attending school (Secondary)	2024/25	87.6%	91%
% of young people choosing to stay onto S6 (as % of S4 roll at September two years before)	2025/26	65.8%	71%
Percentage of children registered in this period who have previously been on the Child Protection Register	Q4 2025/26	14%	Data Only
Number of children on the Child Protection Register at quarter end date	Q4 2025/26	94	Data Only

* LGBF data will be compared to national and family group statistics

Delivering the Council Plan – Living Our Values

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?
Contribute to the refresh of the Trauma Informed Responsive Renfrewshire Roadmap and colleagues will take part in trauma informed Community of Practice to support ongoing learning and improvement.	We understand what trauma is, and how it affects people, so we will now work differently: Learning and working together to co-create fair and helpful collaborations to support healing and recovery with people affected by trauma. Progress towards, and achievement of, improvement outcomes for people, systems and services as detailed of five strategic themes and outcomes in Trauma Informed and Responsive Renfrewshire programme	All Heads of Service	31 March 2027
Actively promote health and wellbeing support for staff	Our staff feel supported and are aware of the health and wellbeing support available to them.	All Heads of Service	31 March 2027

Delivering the Council Plan – Living Our Values

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?
Place the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the heart of service planning and delivery (UNCRC)	Promote awareness of children's rights, not just amongst children and young people but also adults.	Strategic Manager (Children and Justice Social Work) Head of Education (Inclusion and Quality Improvement)	31 March 2027
Through engagement and participation, we will ensure the collective views, needs and aspirations of children, young people and families are met	We take steps to ensure seldom heard voices are heard e.g., care experienced children and young people and those children involved in child protection. The participation and influence of care experienced children, young people and their families is recorded and evidenced.	Head of Education (Inclusion and Quality Improvement) Child Protection Adviser Children's Services Manager (Children & Families Teams)	31 March 2027
In partnership with the HSCP, closely collaborate with young people and their families to ensure a smooth transition to adult services	Empower young people with disabilities and their families to make informed choices.	Children's Services Manager (Renfrewshire-Wide Services)	31 March 2027

Delivering the Council Plan – Living Our Values

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?
Take forward findings from Employee Survey and develop actions across the following three priority areas	Addressing mental and physical well being Addressing workload issues Receiving praise and recognition	Service Improvement Manager	31 March 2028
Play a key role in the Reshaping Renfrewshire – Transformation Programme and associated workstreams	Transformative learning estate strategy and provide regular updates to CMT and Education and Children's Services Policy Board	All Heads of Service	31 March 2028
Undertake the duty under the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 to promote and support, as appropriate, the potential for Gaelic medium and Gaelic learner education to Renfrewshire Council residents	Children and young people will have access to high quality GME provision at all levels, where required.	Head of Education (Strategy & Improvement) Education Manager (Assessment & Moderation)	Early years – 31 August 2026 Primary expansion – 31 August 2027 Secondary – 31 August 2029

Delivering the Council Plan – Living Our Values

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	Who is leading this?	When will we do this by?
Actively support the Council's 'Living Well, Leading Well' programme, including driving service level improvements to manage absence'	Staff and managers are aware of the supports available to support good health and wellbeing and benefit from a fair and consistent approach to absence. Improving our absence levels is a shared goal.	Director of Children's Services	31 March 2027
Support Year 1 of the AI Transformation Programme	Ensure Children's Services requirements are represented on the AI Transformation Programme. Children's Services subject matter expertise will optimise the alignment of relevant AI solutions with Children's Services strategic and operational outcomes.	Director of Children's Services	31 March 2027
We will increase our understanding of racism and how to respond to racist incidents.	All schools will have anti-racism on school improvement plan. We will implement the self-evaluation toolkit designed by The West Partnership to engage staff in bespoke anti-racist activity. We will share feedback with Renfrewshire Council Education employees from the anti-racist training programme developed in partnership with West of Scotland Development Education Centre.	Head of Education (Inclusion and Quality Improvement)	1 March 2029

Delivering the Council Plan – Living Our Values

Performance Indicators – Financial Year	Last Updated	Value	Target
% of Stage 1 complaints responded to within timescales agreed with customers	Q4 2025/26	100%	95%
% of Stage 2 complaints responded to within timescales agreed with customers	Q4 2025/26	95%	95%
% of FOI requests completed within timescale by Children's Services	Q4 2025/26	83%	100%
Completion rate of corporate induction within 30 days of starting employment with the Council	Q4 2025/26	5%	100%
Completion rates of mandatory training courses	Q4 2025/26	74%	100%

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