Renfrewshire Children's Services Partnership

Annual Evaluation 2025-26

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Renfrewshire Council

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1. Executive Summary

This evaluation brings together data from performance indicators, survey responses, and case studies to highlight key strengths and areas for further development within the Renfrewshire Children's Services Partnership (RCSP).

Performance indicator data from 2024-25 has highlighted a number of areas of improvement when compared to the previous year. This includes:

- A reduction in the percentage of infants with an identified developmental concern during their 27–30-month review.
- Significant improvements in leavers destinations, particularly for those with care experience.
- A reduction in the total number of looked after children and young people across Renfrewshire.

However, there are several indicators that require further monitoring moving forward:

- Primary literacy and numeracy attainment among looked after children – these figures have decreased after increasing previously in 2024-25.
- Percentage of pupils with less than 50% attendance – this figure has been increasing long-term when compared with baseline levels in 2021-22.

Five case studies were identified for this evaluation, including:

Growing up in Renfrewshire

Focus groups with children and young people provided an insight into their experiences living within the authority, what they value, and what they would like to see improved. While participants discussed their appreciation of youth services, green spaces, and local leisure facilities, there was a demand for improvements to street lighting and monitoring within the areas they travel to and between, to ensure they feel safe. There was also a hope for increased access to youth services and opportunities in their local communities, to reduce boredom and potential for anti-social behaviour.

CAMHS Education Officer

Data was gathered to investigate the impact of the CAMHS Education Officer. Since 2023, this role has been responsible for improving communication between mental health and education services, and children, young people and their families. The number of pupils referred to the Officer has continued to increase year on year, while referrals and acceptance rates at CAMHS

have decreased – suggesting more children and young people are being referred to the most appropriate service. Qualitative data from children and young people also highlighted the benefits of partnership working between these services, to ensure it is easier to navigate services while also avoiding retelling their story.

Youth Engagement Officer (YEO)

Focus group data from St Andrew's Academy and Gleniffer High School have highlighted the benefits of the YEO deployed in August 2025. As well as strengthening relationships with pupils and teachers, the YEO has allowed for an efficient exchange of information between schools and the police, helping services to address incidents before they escalate and increase safety within both communities.

Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP)

The MVP programme is delivered across secondary schools in Renfrewshire to support young people with identifying and addressing Gender-Based Violence. Data from Park Mains High School revealed the impact of this programme for pupils across the school, as senior phase pupils were trained to deliver sessions with younger peers. Partnering with Women and Children First also enabled young people to receive in-depth information from officers with professional experience, ensuring they feel comfortable and empowered to address GBV safely.

Home Start Renfrewshire and Inverclyde

Home Start provided three examples of work delivered across the authority as a third sector partner within the Whole Family Wellbeing service. These cases demonstrate how the service has continued to deliver timely, early intervention to infants and their families, to ensure they can develop secure attachments, and support them with their mental wellbeing and development.

Reflections

Through investigating data from each of these sources, three strengths were identified:

- Strengthened partnership across the authority
- Increased access to support
- Early intervention for children, young people, and their families

However, the data also revealed several opportunities that the RCSP should focus on in 2026-27:

- Reducing the gap between Q1 and Q5 and those with/without care experience
- Sustainability of community-based programmes
- Representation across the partnership

2. Introduction

Renfrewshire Children's Services Partnership (RCSP) have operated on a plan from 2023 to 2026. Approved by the Education and Children's Services Policy Board on 9 March 2023 and the Integration Joint Board on 31 March 2023, the plan outlines key collaborative activities for services within Renfrewshire Council, statutory partners, and various third sector organisations over this three-year period to ensure children and young people across the authority are happy, healthy, safe, and have opportunities to reach their full potential. The RCSP identified four outcomes that all services and organisations within the partnership wanted to achieve for children and young people in Renfrewshire:

- Our children and young people will enjoy good physical and mental health
- Our children and young people will be safe and loved
- Our children and young people will have their rights protected and their voices heard
- Our children and young people will achieve and make positive contributions to their community

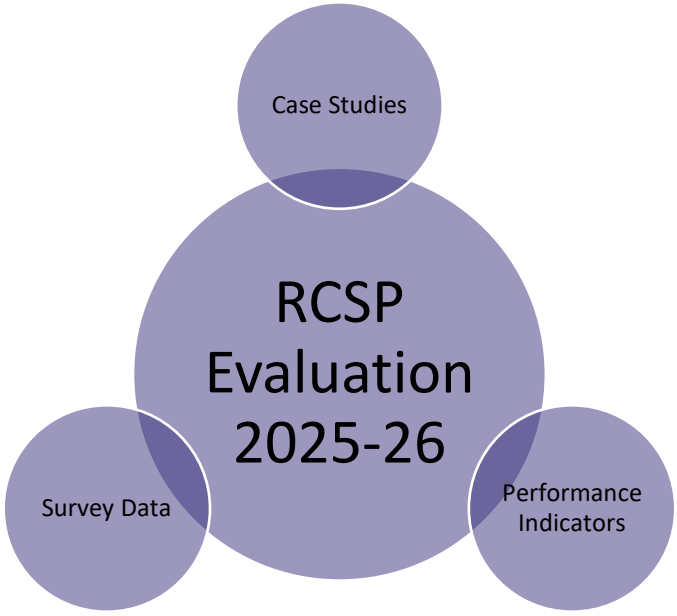
These outcomes were drawn from needs assessments, reviews, and the voices of children and young people across the authority. This evaluation explores the impact of the RCSP's activities during the final year of this plan (2025-26). It aims to demonstrate the added value of collaboration between services, as well as support with identifying strengths and opportunities for further development, through triangulating data from performance indicators and case studies that showcase examples of partnership working across the authority.

An interim one-year plan has been developed for 2026-27, alongside a refreshed set of outcomes that were developed collaboratively by representatives from across the partnership. During 2027, a new plan will be produced to align with the new Council Plan and Community Plan, which are currently being developed.

3. Methodology

This evaluation brings together data from a range of sources. This data has been triangulated, through providing a description of each data source, and a combined outline of strengths and opportunities that have arisen from each of these.

Graph 1: Data Sources



3.1. Performance Indicator Data

Our performance indicators were identified as part of the 2024-25 evaluation and offered a 3-year trend. The most recent figures for each of these indicators have now been identified, allowing us to monitor these over time. These figures come from a range of sources, including public databases, Scottish Government returns, and data gathered internally by Renfrewshire Council.

3.2. Case Studies

Five case studies have been included within this evaluation, showcasing examples of projects delivered by partners across the authority. This also includes data from children and young people, to ensure their voices influence the key themes and recommendations. This data is qualitative, through providing more in-depth detail of the impact of these projects for key groups, and personal experiences from families.

3.3. Survey

A survey was distributed to all partners to gather reflections on achievements and areas for development during 2026-27. The findings have been integrated with performance indicator data and partner reflections to provide a comprehensive and robust assessment of progress and future priorities.

4. Performance Indicators

Children and young people will be achieving physically, actively and have the best physical health	All agencies will work together to provide support to children and families at the earliest possible stage, as part of our commitment to The Promise	Children, young people, and their families can access all support in one place

As part of the 2024-25 RCSP evaluation, a list of performance indicators were identified to quantitatively measure the impact of the partnership's work across the authority. These indicators were categorised into three key areas depending on the target group and outcome: indicators relating to children's physical and mental wellbeing, outcomes for care experienced children and young people, and indicators surrounding access to timely and appropriate support for families. Data from 2024-25 and 2025-26 has been collated for this evaluation, to continue to monitor the impact of these indicators and identity key areas of strength and further development.

Indicator	Baseline (2021/22)	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
PHS Early Years Development – 27–30-month review – Percentage of children with at least one developmental concern recorded	22.2%	21%	19.4%	16.1%	
PHS – Primary 1 BMI (Epidemiological Thresholds used for population modelling) – Percentage of children at a healthy weight	78.8%	79%	77.1%	75.1%	
Active Schools Health Survey – Percentage of pupils completing over 3hrs of exercise per week	60%	63%	68%	70%	69%
Primary Achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence Level – Percentage of P1, P4, P7 Care Experienced pupils combined meeting the expected level in Literacy	39.9%	32.3%	43.9%	55.3%	43.5%
Primary Achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence Level – Percentage of P1, P4, P7 Care Experienced pupils combined meeting the expected level in Numeracy	54%	55.4%	60.8%	64%	59.1%
Renfrewshire Wellbeing Census – Average Wellbeing Score (14-70)	45.7	47.6	48.3	48.6	49.9
Renfrewshire Wellbeing Census – Percentage of pupils with low wellbeing	31%	24%	23%	24%	20%
Initial Leavers Destinations – Percentage of all looked after leavers entering a positive initial destination	83.3%	91.1%	86%	97.2%	
Leavers Attainment – Percentage of all looked after children leaving with 1+ award at SCQF level 6	29.2%	24.4%	26%	27.8%	
Attendance – Percentage of pupils with less than 50% attendance in Renfrewshire	2.1%	2.3%	2.5%	2.3%	2.6%

Positive Destinations – Percentage of school leavers in Renfrewshire in a positive destination	96.6%	96.4%	97.1%	97.9%	
Child Poverty – Number of children living in relative poverty				4,237	
Looked After Children – Total looked after population in Renfrewshire	592	640	610	552	
Free School Meals – Percentage of children in Renfrewshire eligible for free school meal	20.6%	21.2%	19.8%	19.5%	19.8%
Clothing Grant – Percentage of children in Renfrewshire eligible for clothing grant	22.4%	24.6%	23.1%	20.8%	19.6%

NB: Historical data may have been updated following quality assurance checks.

Indicator 'PHS Early Years Development' demonstrates that further progress has been made to support infant development for the third consecutive year. From 2021-22 to 2024-25, the proportion of infants with an identified developmental concern at their 27–30-month review has now decreased from 22.2% to 16.1%.

In 2025-26, there have been further developments across the partnership to support with early learning and development, including the Early Language and Communication Project in Renfrewshire. Developed by Renfrewshire's Educational Psychology Service and Early Years Team, this project will focus on delivering consistent training modules for staff around the importance of language rich environments for young children and partnering with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. Not only will this ensure that practice is consistent across the authority, but it will also raise awareness across settings and families of the variety of supports available across partners.

Data from survey respondents highlighted the benefits of the Whole Family Wellbeing Service for supporting infants. Established in 2024, the service has integrated services across the authority together to make navigating support easier for families. Creating a 'no wrong door' approach and strengthening connections between services – particularly between the third sector and local authority services – has allowed partners to intervene early and provide appropriate support when required:

Over the past year, we have seen continued progress towards a more joined-up approach to supporting babies, children and families across Renfrewshire. Through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund in particular, there has been a strong commitment from partners to work together and think differently about how we support families, recognising that families lives do not fit neatly into one service.

For us, this has meant closer working relationships across services and more opportunities to work together around families. Alongside other early help funding, it has also allowed us to broaden the support available to babies, children and families and work more closely with partners to connect different types of support around them.

Data for children in P1 is a potential area of challenge, as the proportion of these pupils at a healthy weight has now decreased to 75.1%. This figure has decreased for the second consecutive year, and as such requires further monitoring. Data from the most recent Active Schools survey demonstrates that the proportion of children completing over 3 hours of exercise per week has decreased slightly, but this remains 9 percentage points above baseline levels.

Performance indicators for care experienced children and young people has varied. Between 2023-24 and 2024-25, the proportion of care experienced pupils achieving their expected levels in literacy increased significantly, from 44% in 2023-24 to 55% in 2024-25. In 2025-26, this reduced once again to 43.5%, although this remains above baseline levels reported in 2021-22. However, the gap between looked after leavers and all leavers obtaining a positive destination has reduced. In 2023-24, there was an 11-percentage point difference between these groups. In 2024-25, this reduced to less than 1 percent point. This suggests partnerships across the RCSP are ensuring care experienced learners can receive the right support to achieve and identify suitable pathways post-education. This is in line with responses from the partner survey:

The LEP Youth subgroup uses data and networks available to ensure that all young people are provided with support for growth and development moving into a positive destination that's right for them and continuing to support them on their journey. The figures reflect the success of this network.

The total number of children and young people who were being looked after by the authority has reduced, from 610 to 552 in July 2025. This may suggest that more families are accessing universal support earlier on, to ensure fewer reach a crisis point and can stay together. Renfrewshire's commitment to Keeping the Promise also appears to be making an impact, as Promise Keepers continue to support those currently looked after and with previous care experience to ensure barriers to their education are removed. It is important to note that these

figures often vary year-on-year, due to the small number of children and young people this represents.

The remaining indicators highlight to what extent children, young people and their families can access appropriate support in one place. In 2024-25, Renfrewshire had their highest positive destination figure to date at 97.9%, placing them 2nd out of all local authorities in Scotland.

Data for the number of children living in relative poverty is currently only available for 2024-25. The methodology for gathering this information has now changed, meaning this figure cannot be compared against previous years. However, eligibility for free school meals and clothing grants can also be used as poverty indicators. While the figure for children eligible for free school meals has remained steady since 2023-24, the proportion of children eligible for clothing grants has decreased, which suggests further increases in the number of children experiencing poverty across the authority are unlikely. However, there continue to be areas across the authority with particularly high levels of poverty – including Renfrew South and Gallowhill and Paisley Northwest wards. Partners should continue to offer targeted support to ensure more families are lifted out of poverty and income-related barriers to learning are removed.

While the majority of these figures have been positive, there are a few areas that should be monitored more closely. The proportion of pupils with less than 50% attendance has been steadily increasing long-term, from 2.1% in 2021-22 to 2.6% in 2025-26. Attendance has been a key area of concern since the COVID-19 pandemic across Scotland and is not an issue that is isolated to Renfrewshire alone. Further intervention and collaboration must take place however to ensure children and young people feel safe, happy, and included in their learning environments.

5. Case Studies

Five case studies have been developed to explore the impact of services, partners, and projects taking place across the RCSP. These demonstrate how partners have continued to work towards the original outcomes outlined for the RCSP in 2024-25, and complement the progress detailed within the performance indicator data. This includes a case study exploring children and young people's experiences with growing up in Renfrewshire, the impact of the CAMHS Education Officer and Youth Engagement Officer, work conducted by Home Start Renfrewshire and Inverclyde, and the Mentors in Violence Prevention programme. To view each of these case studies in more detail, please see the appendix.

5.1. Growing up in Renfrewshire

In February 2026, six focus groups were conducted with young people from a range of ages and backgrounds. One focus group also took place with parents and carers. In partnership with Connected Communities, the aim of these sessions was to understand what it is like to grow up in Renfrewshire, from the perspective of children and young people across the authority. The questions were designed to explore everyday experiences and challenges, and what they would do to improve these.

Throughout the focus groups, young people's experiences were localised to Renfrewshire, suggesting a strong sense of identity to the area. While weekdays revolved around school and spending time at home, many young people spent their weekends at local parks, towns, and shopping centres. Some of the key positives identified within the data were proximity to green spaces and local leisure centres. However, the localised focus also highlighted challenges with cost and availability of local transport to reach wider areas in Renfrewshire and beyond.

Young people discussed their experiences interacting with adults, which appeared to be largely positive. For example, youth services and youth workers were valued by many participants. Those who had accessed these services described feeling listened to and valued, enabling them to build trusting relationships over time.

When discussing safety, many young people described adapting their behaviour in different environments, depending on perceived risk. This included staying in well-lit areas and avoiding town centres or buses at night. Several participants highlighted the need for improved lighting and supervision in public areas, particularly on weekends, to ensure young people can continue to access these. Furthermore, anti-social behaviour was discussed, as participants suggested

that increased spaces designed for young people could help reduce boredom, anti-social behaviour, and crime within their local communities.

These findings highlight that projects and services within the RCSP have continued to ensure young people feel safe, listened to, and respected. Access to green spaces and leisure spaces may also support young people's physical and mental health. However, the data highlights that more work is required to ensure all young people feel safe when travelling to and from these areas, and that there are increased opportunities for youth services.

5.2. CAMHS Education Officer

Since 2023, a CAMHS Education Officer has been in post to streamline pathways for children and young people in need of mental health or neurodevelopmental support. The Education Officer is responsible for helping children, young people and their families navigate access and improve the gap in communication between schools and specialist services through strengthening relationships and ensuring young people receive the right support at the right time.

A case study conducted in May 2026 highlighted that the CAMHS Education Officer has been particularly beneficial for supporting schools and ensuring they understand the new system. The separation of CAMHS and neurodevelopmental assessment services can now be communicated effectively by schools to families, ensuring they can access the most appropriate support. Additionally, the role delivers bespoke training around understanding neurodivergent learners in mainstream settings, empowering all staff with the knowledge required to support these learners. Young people are frequently placed at the centre of decision-making, through organising the introduction of discharge planning processes as they leave specialist services. This enables children and young people to identify supports that work best for them and allows for a smoother transition.

Data has shown that since the inception of this role, almost 2000 pupil referrals have been made, and these have continued to increase year on year. Additionally, there has been a reduction in the number of accepted referrals to CAMHS, due to improved communication between services, more appropriate challenge and support at the point at which a referral is made. Qualitative data from children and young people highlighted that the Education Officer has helped them feel listened to, and ensures they no longer require retelling their story to multiple service providers. This demonstrates that through the work of the Education Officer, children and young people can access services more easily, with improved communication and a shared vision between each of these.

5.3. Youth Engagement Officer

In 2025-26, a Youth Engagement Officer (YEO) was introduced to St Andrew's Academy and Gleniffer High School. The YEO spends two days per week in each school Tuesday to Friday, and alternates between these settings on Mondays. Focus groups were conducted with pupils, school staff, and the YEO to understand the impact of this role since its inception.

The YEO role emerged through a combination of police and children's services intelligence, partnership working, and concerns about issues affecting children and young people – including anti-social behaviour, and criminal activity. It was predicted that the creation of this role would support schools with responding to community issues and strengthen connections between schools and the police.

Data from focus groups with pupils and staff revealed that the YEO's remit evolved throughout the academic year, as it shifted from one based on observational / intelligence-based activity, to eventually becoming more integrated into the life of the school. The role created a non-judgemental, open and trusting space for young people to engage with the YEO informally, and all pupils and staff who participated in focus groups responded positively when asked about their presence. Quantitative data revealed that there has also been a reduction in anti-social behaviour and exclusions. This is partly due to the YEO allowing for earlier intervention responses to emerging concerns within each setting, as staff can more efficiently anticipate and manage incidents with support from the YEO before they escalate.

As well as supporting with sharing information and navigating support, the YEO has now assisted with curriculum delivery through becoming increasingly involved in classroom activities, assemblies, and targeted inputs. Through providing primary data and offering direct professional experience, the YEO has been able to provide pupils with high quality, experiential learning opportunities across a range of subjects, providing further depth and credibility. This demonstrates the wider cultural impact of the YEO, as they have become deeply embedded within both settings.

The overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants highlights another example of efficient partnership working within the RCSP. Through improved communication, and building trusting relationships, the implementation of the YEO has created learning environments that are safer for all, ensured that young people feel listened to and respected, and provided learners with valuable information to support them with making informed decisions.

5.4. Mentors in Violence Prevention

The Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Programme is a peer education programme that supports young people with developing the skills and knowledge required to tackle Gender-based Violence (GBV). Throughout this programme, pupils explore and discuss various scenarios, and how they might respond to these.

A case study was conducted in May 2026 to explore the impact of this work at Park Mains High School. Interviews with staff revealed that the programme has empowered senior phase pupils, who then go on to empower their younger peers. Park Mains High School also collaborated with Women and Children First (WCF) while delivering this programme - a charity based in Renfrewshire who support women and families affected by GBV. This partnership enabled learners to engage with professionals holding specialist experience and knowledge about GBV and how to respond to this in a way that keeps everyone safe. Consequently, pupils who have completed the programme were invited to the Equally Safe Conference, enabling them to meet with other young people and discuss what they have learned. Pupils have also continued to deliver sessions with other classes and schools, including younger peers in Dargavel Primary School. Engaging with and delivering this programme has ensured an issue that is often stigmatised can now be discussed more openly – helping pupils feel safe and empowered to contribute towards preventing GBV.

5.5. Home Start

Home Start Renfrewshire and Inverclyde provided three examples of projects delivered in the last year that have led to positive outcomes for infants and their families. These programmes included support for families throughout pregnancy, post-birth, and specialist ASN support.

Home Start's Mellow Bumps course for expectant parents allows families to access evidence-based and supportive contact from accredited staff. The programme supports parental emotional wellbeing including families at risk of mental health concerns, early bonding and preparation for the arrival of their baby to receive group and one-to-one support as required, depending on their unique circumstances. This has proven to be an effective form of early intervention, ensuring infants can develop secure attachments from birth.

Home Start also detailed the support delivered to infants and their families. Within their family groups, infants receive tailored support from staff who can tune into their cues and modify their interactions accordingly. This has supported children's emotion regulation, social interaction,

and parental confidence. Specialist support has also been delivered for children with additional support needs. Not only does this ensure that the child receives care that is catered to their needs, but it also offers necessary respite for families and other siblings, thereby improving mental wellbeing and strengthening relationships.

Since 2023, Home Start have been collaborating with Renfrewshire Council as a third sector partner as part of the Whole Family Wellbeing Service. In addition to this, they have been commissioned by the Council for a number of years. These case studies demonstrate the added value of this collaboration, through supporting third sector organisations to grow their networks and ensure timely referrals can be made for families.

6. Reflections: Strengths and Opportunities

Reflecting upon data from the performance indicators, case studies, and survey responses, there are several key strengths and opportunities that the RCSP should recognise and work towards as they enter 2026-27.

6.1. Strengths

6.1.1. Partnership Working Across the Authority

From all data sources, it is clear that relationships between partners have continued to strengthen across Renfrewshire in 2025-26. The CAMHS Education Officer and Youth Engagement Officer case studies are two strong examples of this, as partners from different services have collaborated together to share intelligence and improve communication. For the CAMHS Education Officer, this has ensured that children, young people, and their families can navigate mental health services and access support that is appropriate to their needs. The Youth Engagement Officer role has allowed for the merging of information across schools and the police service to strengthen intelligence available within the authority. The relationship that has since formed between the Officer, staff and pupils demonstrates how these services have now become entwined, with the YEO now embedded within the life of each school.

Data from the performance indicators also provides evidence of strengthened partnership. The most recent positive destination figure is a result of partners working together effectively for the benefit of young people, ensuring they can access information on opportunities that align with their interests and aspirations. Additionally, improvements in outcomes for infants and children's mental wellbeing indicate that services have continued to collaborate efficiently to provide timely support:

One of the greatest strengths in Renfrewshire is the relationships between organisations and the willingness to work together. We have strong relationships across Health Visiting, Social Work, HSCP services, education and the wider third sector, which makes a difference for babies, children and their families and even more so when they need support.

We have also welcomed the way the third sector is included in wider partnership discussions, allowing us to bring what we are hearing directly from families into those conversations.

6.1.2. Increased Access to Support

As a result of improved relationships between partners, access to support has widened. The Whole Family Wellbeing Service has been in operation since 2024, and consequently, families can be more efficiently signposted to the most appropriate service. This could be linked to the number of looked after children and young people reducing between 2023-24 and 2024-25. Through focusing on universal support and early intervention, it may be that the integration of these services has ensured families can receive help before they reach a crisis point and ultimately, stay together. Indeed, this aligns with the survey data:

Another example is through our partnership with Whole Family Wellbeing, we also work closely with the Wellbeing Teams and other third sector partners as part of a more joined-up approach to supporting families. One example is families already supported by Home-Start being able to access EPEC within Home-Start Family Hub, where they already know and trust staff and feel safe. For some families, existing relationships and a familiar environment makes it easier to open up about the challenges they are facing and feel comfortable being vulnerable.

For us, this is a positive example of a joined-up approach in practice, bringing different support around the family while building on the relationships and trust that are already there.

This suggests partners with established relationships between families can more effectively navigate them to other services who can provide support for other issues they may be experiencing. It also ensures they can receive this within a known environment, thereby increasing accessibility and reducing possible anxieties.

6.1.3. Early Intervention for Infants, Children, Young People, and Families

Strong examples of early intervention can be found not only within the Whole Family Wellbeing service, but also across the partnership. The Youth Engagement Officer is one example of this – through sharing intelligence, building trusting relationships, and creating a non-judgemental space for young people to engage, both the police and schools can more efficiently act upon incidents before they potentially escalate. Another example is through the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme, as young people are now equipped with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to actively challenge examples of everyday sexism and misogyny. This will ensure all young people can resist against these safely and early, before they potentially escalate into cases of violence. This too can be supported by a survey respondent, who discussed recent changes to the support available for young people across Renfrewshire:

Partners at the Forum have highlighted ongoing work to address emerging issues affecting young people, including vaping awareness and prevention activity. The delivery of information sessions and the continued availability of support demonstrates the commitment to preventative approaches.

6.2. Opportunities

While the data reflects a number of areas of strength across the partnership, it also highlights potential areas of focus, as detailed below.

6.2.1. Attainment gaps between the most/least deprived and care experienced children and young people

A range of projects have taken place across the partnership to target children and young people from the most deprived areas, and those with care experience. Significant progress has been made in recent years following the COVID-19 pandemic, where learners from the most deprived backgrounds were most affected. These gaps have narrowed in recent years, due to attainment improving for these pupils at a faster rate than those from the least deprived backgrounds or those without care experience. However, when comparing data from 2025-26 with figures from the previous year, there have been decreases in attainment among these groups – particularly for the proportion of care experienced primary pupils achieving their expected levels in literacy and numeracy.

While decreases were reported at primary level, improvements can be seen in the senior phase, as the proportion of care experienced leavers achieving at least one award at SCQF Level 6 has increased in the last year. As such, a continued focus on early intervention for each of these groups should be considered as the RCSP moves into 2026-27, to ensure the current gaps at primary do not continue to widen as young people progress through their education:

We know, early support can help break generational cycles of poverty, trauma and adversity. Supporting babies, children and young people as early as possible gives them stronger foundations as they grow and in time, become the next generation of parents. With increasing complexity and pressure across the system, prevention feels more important than ever.

6.2.2. Sustainability of Community-Based Programmes

While there have been many cases of strengthened partnerships and improved outcomes for infants, children, and young people across Renfrewshire, the RCSP should consider the sustainability of community-based programmes long-term. For example, the Whole Family Wellbeing service has now entered its final year of funding from the Scottish Government. From 2027, the service must become self-sufficient. As such, funding for third sector partners should be an area of focus, to ensure programmes can continue to be delivered. Indeed, a number of survey respondents discussed the impact of short-term funding, and how this can limit the delivery of their programmes long-term:

One of the most difficult things has been being able to consistently provide support early enough, before families reach crisis. Increasing levels and complexity of need, alongside capacity and funding pressures across the system, can make this challenging.

Short-term funding and uncertainty around longer-term investment can also make it difficult to plan ahead and build the sustainable, preventative support we know makes a difference for families.

6.2.3. Representation Across the Partnership

A final recommendation for the partnership is to consider representation across all partners. Survey responses indicated that while this has improved in recent years, this could be strengthened further through ensuring the voices of all partners are considered, and that services such as Whole Family Wellbeing are further integrated across the authority.

7. Conclusion

Throughout 2025-26, the RCSP has continued to produce positive outcomes for children and young people and their families. Data from the performance indicators have highlighted improvements across attainment, wellbeing, care experience and destinations, while case studies have provided more in-depth examples of effective partnerships in practice. Qualitative data from our partner survey has complemented this further, through providing perceptions, views, and experiences of members across the partnership.

Moving into 2026-27, the RCSP will be operating on a new plan and with this, refreshed outcomes. While these may differ from the outcomes for 2025-26, the recommendations within this report remain applicable, and offer further opportunities for partners to continue supporting children and young people to ensure they reach their full potential.

8. Appendices

8.1. Appendix A: Growing Up in Renfrewshire

About this Report

This report draws on a series of focus groups with children and young people across Renfrewshire, undertaken to inform the development of the Children's Services Partnership Plan. The core purpose of the focus groups was to understand what it is like to grow up in Renfrewshire from the perspective of children and young people themselves, and their families. They were designed to explore everyday experiences, what young people value about their lives and communities, the challenges they face, how they experience being listened to, and what they would change to make things better. The intention was not to evaluate individual services or projects, but to centre young people's lived experience in local planning and decision-making.

The discussions were guided by a shared set of broad questions covering daily life, positive experiences, barriers and pressures, voice and participation, priorities for change, and messages for adults. At the same time, facilitators were encouraged to follow participants' interests and allow conversations to develop naturally, prioritising depth and authenticity over rigid coverage.

The focus groups were facilitated by Connected Communities, whose support, relationships, and knowledge were central to enabling young people to participate openly and meaningfully. The Partnership is grateful for their role in organising and delivering the sessions.

In total, six focus groups were undertaken, involving young people from a range of ages, settings, and backgrounds. One group was conducted with Parents/Carers. Participants took part through different services, community spaces, and local contexts, and reflected a mix of experiences, interests, and circumstances. The data for this report is drawn from facilitator notes, flipchart records, and written responses captured during the sessions.

This approach allows clear patterns and shared concerns to be identified across groups. However, it also means that caution is required in interpreting strength of feeling, emphasis, and how widely particular views were shared within individual sessions. Some groups covered certain topics in more depth than others, and some questions received more detailed responses than others. The findings in this report should therefore be understood as reflecting the views and experiences of the young people who took part, rather than being treated as statistically representative of all children and young people in Renfrewshire. They provide insight into lived experience and priorities, rather than definitive measures.

Analysis was carried out by systematically mapping responses against the core areas of discussion, identifying recurring themes, and examining areas of consistency and difference

across groups. Interpretation has been grounded in the recorded data, with care taken not to extend conclusions beyond what the material supports.

Taken together, the focus groups provide a rich picture of how young people experience growing up in Renfrewshire, the opportunities they value, the barriers they face, and the changes they believe would make the greatest difference. These insights are intended to inform partnership planning towards the formation of the next RCSP three-year plan.

Everyday Life in Renfrewshire

Across the focus groups, young people described everyday life as largely centred on school, home, and a number of familiar local spaces. Weekdays were dominated by attending school and spending time at home, with some young people also describing everyday responsibilities such as cooking or helping family members. After school and at weekends, time was commonly spent meeting friends, staying at home, using online spaces, or taking part in structured activities such as football, dance, drama, cadets, and youth groups.

Social and leisure activity tended to concentrate in a limited number of places, particularly Paisley, Braehead, and, for some, travelling into Glasgow. These locations were repeatedly referenced as places to meet friends, get food, or spend time when there were few alternatives locally. For some young people, this reflected convenience and accessibility. For others, it reflected a lack of local options. It is important to note that place-based discussion is of course dependent on the geography of the young people who attended the groups where the focus groups took place.

Where young people lived shaped what they were able to do. Some described their area as isolated or poorly connected, while others highlighted unreliable bus services and limited evening transport. Concerns about travelling at night also influenced movement and routines. As a result, everyday life was often structured around what was realistically accessible rather than what young people might prefer to do.

The parental focus group reinforced the structured and localised nature of everyday life, but framed it through the lens of responsibility and coordination. Parents described significant mental load associated with school engagement, appointments, support services, and transport, highlighting how children's daily routines are embedded within broader family pressures.

Overall, the data suggests that young people's daily lives are relatively localised, shaped by transport availability, cost, and safety, and characterised by a mix of informal socialising and structured provision where it is accessed.

What Is Good About Growing Up in Renfrewshire

When asked about what is positive about growing up in Renfrewshire, young people identified a range of community and environmental assets. These included parks and green spaces, access to

swimming facilities and leisure centres, and a variety of food outlets and cafés. Several groups highlighted the importance of being able to spend time in these spaces with friends and family.

Local events were also valued. Young people referred positively to activities such as Halloween in Paisley Town and the town shows at Christmas. These events were seen as adding excitement to local areas and creating opportunities for social connection and shared experience. Family, friends, and schools were important sources of positive experience. Some young people spoke about liking their friends at school, having family nearby, and valuing close relationships with peers. For many, these relationships formed the foundation of their sense of belonging.

Youth services and youth workers were consistently valued. Where young people had access to supportive youth provision, they described feeling welcomed, listened to, and supported. These spaces were seen not only as places for activities, but as environments where trust and positive relationships had developed. Parents echoed many of these positives, particularly access to parks, green space, community events, and a sense of local identity.

At the same time, some groups initially struggled to identify positive features, with responses such as “nothing” or “nothing really”. This suggests that positive assets are not experienced equally by all young people, and that for some, opportunities may feel limited or distant.

What Makes Things Harder

Across groups, young people identified a set of interconnected barriers that made life more difficult.

Transport and Connectivity

Transport emerged as a major constraint. Young people referred to unreliable buses, limited routes, and difficulty travelling out of certain areas. These issues affected access to activities, social opportunities, and services. Concerns about travelling at night further restricted mobility.

Transport problems were not presented as minor inconveniences. They shaped where young people could go, how independent they could be, and whether opportunities were realistically accessible.

Parents reinforced concerns about transport reliability but also emphasised cost as a significant barrier. They described travelling into Paisley for activities due to limited local provision and highlighted that transport affordability directly shaped what children could access.

Safety in Public Space

Safety concerns were expressed in multiple ways. Some young people referred to gang activity, knife crime, bullying, and peer conflict. Others described avoiding town centres, buses at night, or certain areas because they felt unsafe.

There was evidence that young people actively adapted their behaviour in response to perceived risk, for example by staying in well-lit areas and limiting movement at night. Requests for better

lighting, visible reassurance at weekends, and improved supervision reflect a desire for greater reassurance in public spaces.

Parents also raised safety concerns, though often framed in more structural and environmental terms. These included neighbour issues, substance misuse, antisocial behaviour, environmental neglect, and concerns about the placement of high-risk individuals near schools and parks. This suggests that while young people experience safety through peer interaction and public space navigation, parents additionally interpret safety through housing management, policing, and environmental standards.

Cost

Financial barriers appeared repeatedly across groups and operated at several levels. Young people referred to the general cost of activities, transport, and leisure, with some describing everything as expensive and highlighting the difficulty of going places without money.

Requests for more free or low-cost options were common, particularly from younger participants. Limited finances restricted the ability to travel, take part in activities, and socialise outside the home. In some cases, financial constraints interacted with parental boundaries, with young people describing being unable to go out alone or participate in activities even when they were interested.

These pressures meant that opportunities available in principle were not always accessible in practice. As a result, some young people's lives were shaped less by choice and more by affordability.

Education

School featured in the data both as a routine part of life and as a source of pressure. Some young people described school as challenging and linked this to reduced motivation and reluctance to attend. Others referred to academic expectations being too demanding.

Several groups also reported feeling less listened to in school than in youth settings. In this context, school was sometimes experienced as a place where young people's views carried less weight, which may compound feelings of pressure and disengagement.

While many young people spoke positively about aspects of school life, the data indicates that for some, education is closely linked to stress and limited opportunities to influence decisions that affect them.

Limited Opportunities

A recurring theme was the lack of things for young people to do. Participants spoke about having nowhere to go, nothing to do, and few spaces to spend time informally.

In some cases, this was linked to hanging about in town centres simply because there were no alternatives. This sense of limited opportunity underpinned many other concerns, including safety, boredom, and antisocial behaviour. Parents also called for more activities, particularly for

those aged 12 and over and in the evenings. Some linked limited provision to boredom and antisocial behaviour, suggesting a belief that expanded youth services would have preventative benefits.

Being a Young Person in Renfrewshire

Young people's experiences of being listened to and taken seriously were mixed and highly dependent on setting and relationships.

Youth clubs and youth services stood out as places where young people felt heard, respected, and able to express themselves. In these environments, relationships with trusted adults supported open communication and meaningful participation.

In contrast, many young people reported feeling judged, dismissed, or misunderstood in other contexts. Adults in public spaces and institutional settings were sometimes described as making assumptions about young people based on how they speak, their age, or their appearance. This contributed to feelings of being stereotyped and undervalued.

Teachers were also named in some groups as not listening to young people's views, reinforcing perceptions that young people have limited influence within school environments.

There was evidence of frustration with consultation processes, particularly where young people felt that they were repeatedly asked similar questions without seeing visible change. At the same time, some young people described being listened to in formal settings and when engaging with services.

Overall, the data indicates that young people's sense of being heard is relational and context-dependent. Where trust and respect exist, voice is enabled. Where judgement and low expectations dominate, voice is constrained.

What Needs to Change

When asked what would make the biggest difference, young people's responses clustered around a small number of practical priorities.

More Youth Spaces and Activities

The most consistent request was for more things to do and more places to go. This included more youth clubs, more groups, more informal spaces, and more venues where young people could meet friends safely and comfortably. Some young people also highlighted the need for indoor spaces and shelters, particularly in bad weather.

Participants linked improved provision to potential reductions in boredom, antisocial behaviour, and crime, suggesting that they saw youth spaces as protective as well as recreational.

Better and More Reliable Transport

Improved bus routes, reliability, and connectivity were repeatedly identified as priorities. Young people recognised that better transport would expand access to education, employment, leisure, and social opportunities.

Safer Public Spaces

Requests for better lighting, visible reassurance at weekends, and reduced alcohol-related disorder reflected a desire for public environments where young people feel secure and welcome.

Affordable and Free Opportunities

Young people asked for more activities that did not depend on having money. This included free clubs, low-cost events, and accessible facilities for those from lower-income households.

More Meaningful Engagement

Alongside practical changes, there were calls for adults and institutions to take young people's views seriously and to ensure that participation leads to visible outcomes.

What Young People Want Adults to Understand

In closing reflections, young people emphasised the importance of being seen as individuals rather than stereotypes.

They asked adults not to judge them on appearance, or how they speak, and to recognise that behaviour often has underlying reasons. Several participants highlighted that young people live in a different era, face different pressures, and should not be assessed using outdated assumptions.

Respect was described as mutual and earned. Young people wanted their positive contributions to be recognised, and their maturity and responsibility to be acknowledged. They emphasised that most are not out to cause trouble and that many care about their communities.

This reflects a broader desire for understanding, fairness, and relational respect across systems and everyday interactions.

8.2. Appendix B: CAMHS Education Officer

In 2023, Renfrewshire introduced an Education Officer role within Children's Services to streamline the pathways for young people who may be in need of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) support or Neurodevelopmental pathway support. This role would also assist schools and families with navigating access for their children and young people. The role was created in response to a recognised gap in communication between schools and specialist health services, particularly for some of the authority's most vulnerable children and young people.

Historically, schools, families and clinicians often worked towards the same goals but with limited opportunities for direct communication. Schools could experience frustration when referrals were submitted without clear feedback or understanding of the process. The Education Officer role was developed to act as a single point of contact between education and health services, helping to improve communication, strengthen relationships, and ultimately ensure young people receive the right support at the right time.

Initially focused on CAMHS, the role has evolved in response to need and now supports wider Specialist Children's Services, including neurodevelopmental pathways, speech and language services, school nursing, social work, and broader health and education collaboration.

What Has Been Done

The flexibility built into the role has allowed it to develop organically around the needs of children, families, schools, and clinicians. A key focus has been improving understanding between education and health services and creating more effective pathways for communication.

The Education Officer provides direct advice and support to schools and families, helping staff and parents/carers understand referral pathways, service thresholds, and the range of supports available to young people. This includes supporting schools to make more informed referrals, providing advice on strategies and interventions that can be implemented within educational settings, and helping staff understand how best to support children awaiting assessment or treatment.

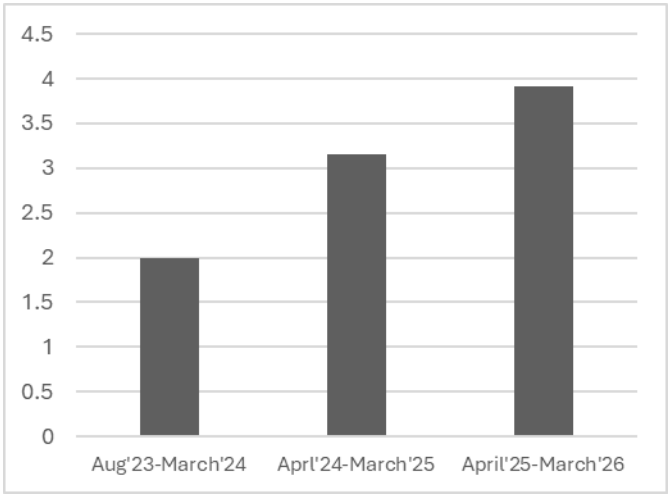
The role has also played a significant part in supporting the implementation of Renfrewshire's Specialist Children's Services revised neurodevelopmental pathways following the separation of CAMHS and neurodevelopmental assessment services. Schools have been supported to understand the new system and communicate these changes effectively to families. Alongside this work, the Education Officer provides direct support to families, helping them navigate what can often seem complex systems, understand what services can and cannot provide, and help ensure access to most appropriate support. This often includes acting as an advocate between schools, families and clinicians, helping maintain positive relationships and ensuring that communication remains focused on the needs of the young person. Additionally, the role delivers bespoke and universal training around understanding and supporting neurodivergent learners in mainstream education.

One particularly innovative development has been the introduction of discharge planning processes for young people leaving specialist services. These plans place the young person at the centre of decision-making, identifying what support works best for them and ensuring schools are better equipped to support successful transitions back into education, ensuring a smoother transition for the young people and a level of ongoing support. Further to this, has been the development of 'in school' Neurodevelopmental assessments, where families and school meet together as part of the assessment and diagnosis process. This has led to greater school and clinician contact, wider family understanding and increased attendance for assessment.

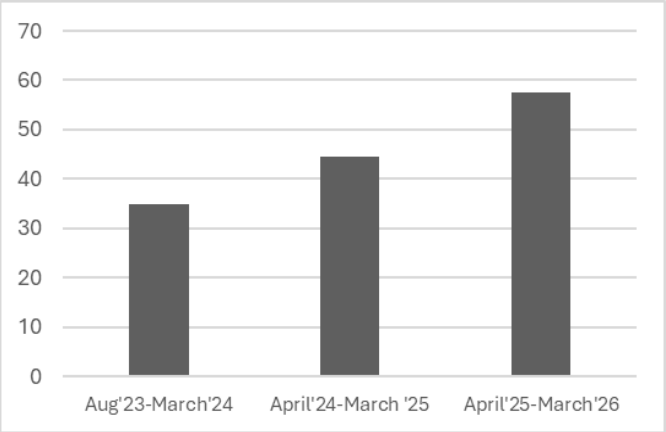
Impact

The role has had a significant impact on communication, collaboration and understanding across education and health services. The Officer has supported almost 2000 pupil referrals since the role's inception. Schools now have direct access to specialist advice and guidance that previously did not exist. Rather than relying on informal contacts or navigating complex systems independently, staff can access timely support, helping them make informed decisions and respond more effectively to emerging concerns.

Graph 1: Average Daily New Referrals, from August 2023 to March 2026



Graph 2: Average Percentage of Authority Schools Supported per Month, from August 2023 to March 2026



Graph 1 shows the average daily referrals to the Education Officer since the inception of the role in 2023. This demonstrates an increasing trend, as the average almost doubled from 2 young people between August 2023 and March 2024 to 3.9 between April 2025 and March 2026. This links with data demonstrated in graph 2, showing the percentage of schools supported by this role across each period – which has increased from 35% to 57.5%. This suggests that not only has the number of pupils supported continued to increase, but the Education Officer has also continued to extend their reach across the authority.

Table 1: Number of Referrals Made by Schools to CAMHS, Between August 2022 and May 2026

School Session	Referrals Accepted	Referrals Declined	Total
Aug '22 – July '23- Pre-Advisor	148- 80%	39 – 20%	187
Aug'23-July'24	52 – 65%	27 – 35%	79
Aug'24 – July '25	60- 60%	36 -40%	99
Aug '25 – May '26	19 – 61%	12- 39%	31

This improved understanding has contributed to more appropriate referrals into specialist services. Schools have greater confidence in identifying when a referral is appropriate and when alternative forms of support may be more beneficial. This helps ensure young people access the right service sooner while reducing unnecessary delays and uncertainty for families. For example, as shown in table 1, there were a total of 187 referrals made by education to CAMHS between August 2022 and July 2023, compared with 79 referrals between August 2023 and July 2024. This demonstrates that since the implementation of the Education Officer role, the number of referrals has reduced due to improved communication. There have also been significantly lower

acceptance rates into CAMHS due to more appropriate challenge and support at the point a referral is made.

The benefits extend beyond education. Clinicians report improved understanding of educational contexts and greater confidence in supporting schools. The role has created opportunities for professionals from different sectors to work together more effectively, reducing misunderstandings and strengthening relationships. This includes accessing staff training around neurodivergence, with over 50 support staff, 3 schools, Specialist Early Years Team and Invest Renfrewshire accessing this.

Feedback from schools and clinicians has been overwhelmingly positive, with many describing the role as transformational. For school staff, the role has provided practical advice to ensure they can best support pupils timely and efficiently:

'The Educational CAMHS Adviser was an invaluable source of professional support when I was managing complex behaviours from young people within my caseload.' - Principal Teacher, Support for Learning, High School

Children and young people also highlighted their experiences meeting with the Education Officer, both in and out of school:

'I talked a lot about school with [CAMHS Clinician] she thought it would be good for me to talk to [Advisor] he came to my appointment for a bit and listen to the school things. My pastoral care teacher talked to me, and we've started to make a plan, it definitely feels better.'- S3 Pupil

'I didn't want to keep telling everybody the same things and I don't know who could help, but CAMHS talk to school about it, and it makes it easier than it used to be.' - S5 Pupil

This demonstrates that as well as ensuring schools staff are better equipped to support children and young people who may be referred to CAMHS, the Education Officer also improves communication across all parties. This allows prevents young people from repeating experiences that may be difficult or traumatic to various services and ensures they can access the right support at the right time from practitioners and specialists who have a shared vision and understanding.

Conclusion

Since August 2023, the role of Education Officer has continued to grow across Renfrewshire, through developing their reach across schools and working with increasing numbers of children and young people. This has led to improved communication between services, their understanding of mental wellbeing and neurodivergence among staff, and alignment between referrer and service thresholds within the authority. Feedback from both staff and pupils also highlights the benefits of this role for all, as support continues to be adapted to the needs of each child and young person and staff receive advice on how best to deliver and request this.

8.3. Appendix C: Youth Engagement Officer Case Study

Introduction

The purpose of this evaluation report is to assess the impact and added value of the Youth Engagement Officer (YEO) role in St Andrew's Academy and Gleniffer High School. The evaluation was undertaken by the Children's Services Data and Evaluation Officer.

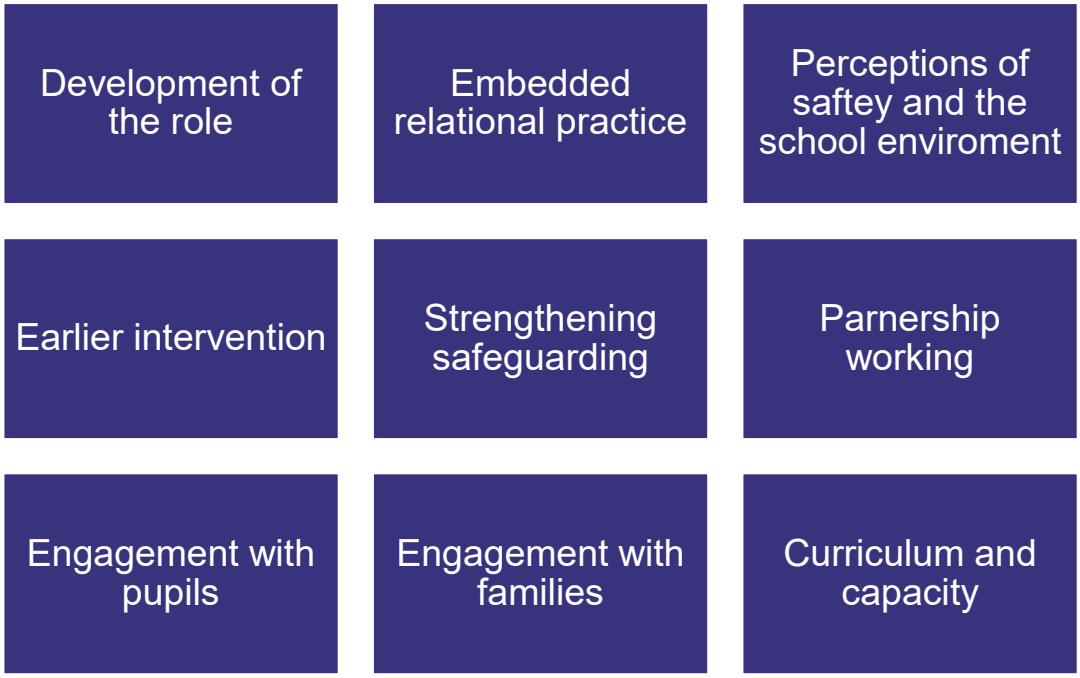
The YEO role was introduced to these two schools this academic year (25/26). The YEO splits time across both schools, spending two days per week in each school and then alternate Mondays.

It is important to note that while the evaluation is focused on the role itself, and not necessarily the individual, it became impossible throughout the process of the research to disaggregate the two. Staff and pupils alike were glowing and positive about PC Muir and the impact that he has had on the two schools' communities, and that the overwhelmingly positive evaluation is down to his work, his approach, and how he has made the role his own. As well as of course the enthusiasm and willingness of senior leaders in Renfrewshire Council, and the schools, to introduce the model and be flexible throughout its development. Therefore, to make this point clear, throughout the evaluation "YEO/ Youth Engagement Officer/PC Muir" are used interchangeably, which highlights that if there were to be extension or expansion of this model going forward the person within the role is as important as the existence of the role itself.

This evaluation is based upon triangulated research. Firstly, a survey which went to both schools' senior leadership which covered issues such as engagement, impact, and partnership working. The survey received 13 responses. Two staff focus groups were conducted (one in each school) which focused on various aspects such as curriculum engagement, information sharing, behaviour, and the school environment. Lastly, a focus group was held with pupils in one school, as well as a discussion with PC Muir about his perspectives and experience.

The sections that follow set out the key areas through which the Youth Engagement Officer role has developed and where its impact is most evident. The analysis begins by examining how the role has evolved over time, including the importance of flexibility and the influence of the individual in shaping its delivery. It then explores the relational nature of the role, focusing on how trust and visibility underpin its effectiveness within the school community. This is followed by consideration of changes in perceptions of safety and the wider school environment, before examining the role's contribution to earlier intervention and more informed responses to emerging concerns. The analysis then turns to safeguarding and child protection, highlighting improvements in communication and coordination across agencies, alongside a wider discussion of strengthened partnership working and system connectivity. Subsequent sections focus on engagement with pupils, particularly in relation to preventative work, and engagement with families, including the role in supporting proportionate responses and reducing escalation. The final section considers the role's contribution to curriculum delivery and wider school life, alongside reflections on capacity and sustainability. Together, these sections provide a comprehensive account of how the role operates in practice and the value it adds across many aspects of school life.

Figure 1: Themes from the evaluation



Development of the role

The evidence suggests that the Youth Engagement Officer (YEO) role did not emerge within the local authority or the two schools as a fully defined or fixed model, but instead developed over time in response to local context, need, and practice. Staff accounts indicate that the role emerged from a combination of police and children's services intelligence, partnership working, and concerns about issues affecting young people within the community, including anti-social behaviour and potential criminal exploitation. As such, the initial purpose of the role was relatively broad, with an emphasis on supporting schools to respond to community-linked issues and strengthening connections between school and police.

Headteachers specifically, but many staff across focus groups and surveys also, discussed how the intention was it never to feel like there was a police station in school, but to have an integrated member of school staff. Though it was not known at the outset how the role would be perceived, be used, and ultimately develop.

However, what is particularly notable is that the role was not implemented as a rigid or predetermined function. Instead, staff described a period in which the role "found its feet", evolving as the YEO became embedded within the school environment. There was much discussion about how PC Muir made an instant impact (as will be detailed in the sections below) but that the role has rightly taken time to develop to the point where there is clarity in the role and processes which have developed throughout the course of the school year. This included a

shift from an initially more observational or intelligence-led function towards a much more integrated and relational role within the life of the school.

Over time, the role expanded to include work across curriculum delivery, pupil support, safeguarding, and informal engagement, reflecting both the needs of the school and the benefits to colleagues in Police Scotland who have benefited from increased intelligence that can be actioned within the wider community.

It can not be expressed strongly enough, that within this process of development, the role of the individual officer appears to have been central. Staff in both schools emphasised that the effectiveness of the role is closely tied to personal qualities of PC Muir such as approachability, communication skills, and a willingness to engage fully with the school community, including taking to the pitch in St Andrew's Staff V pupils football match. In St Andrew's, this was expressed clearly in the view that "the role is good because it's the right person", highlighting that the success of the role cannot be separated from the way it is enacted in practice. Similarly, in Gleniffer, staff reflected that "we've been really lucky [with the recruitment]", suggesting that the impact observed is linked closely to the individual delivering the role rather than guaranteed by the model itself. Indeed, some staff reflected upon experiences of YEOs, or "Campus Police", that they had had in previous schools in other authorities that were not effective and often put this down to the person who was in the role.

Despite it being noted at the start of the focus groups that the evaluation was of the role itself and not necessarily PC Muir (so that colleagues could be open with any barriers or ideas for changes that they had), this relationship between role and individual is particularly important given the way in which the role developed. The flexibility of the initial model appears to have allowed the YEO to shape how the role operated within the school, building relationships, identifying areas of need, and gradually expanding their contribution. This process of adaptation was not immediate, but took place over time as trust was established with both staff and pupils. The two schools' have also worked together in a flexible manner to allow the YEO to be in attendance at the other school if needed even if he was not scheduled to be there. It was noted that this sometimes created challenges, but that the approach worked well and was necessary.

Taken together, this suggests that the YEO role should be understood not as a static intervention, but as an evolving model that is shaped by context, relationships, and the individual delivering it. The piolet has perhaps created a clearer view of what the role is and the type of person needed to be effective in it.

Embedded relational practice

A central finding across both schools is that the value of the YEO role lies not simply in the presence of a police officer within the school (as noted above it has not been about their being a "police station in the school"), but in the way the role is enacted as part of the school community. Staff consistently described the YEO as visible, approachable, and embedded within the day-to-day life of the school, rather than operating as an external or enforcement-focused presence. PC Muir was described by staff in one school directly as "one of us", and this was clearly felt by the YEO also.

In St Andrew's, staff reflected that young people had come to see the YEO as a "trusted adult", and in some cases this had been "transformational for some of the young people who could have gravitated really closely towards criminal activity." This quote captures both the relational depth of the role and its perceived impact on those most at risk. This positioning was not incidental. It was actively developed through informal engagement, time spent in social spaces, and a communication style that was described as non-judgemental and accessible. As one member of staff put it, the YEO "comes in and is able to talk to them and not talk down to them."

This relational approach was particularly significant given the context described by staff, where many young people and their families have had negative experiences with police in the past. The presence of a consistent, known individual within the school appeared to shift these perceptions as pupils got to know PC Muir and engage with him. Rather than being seen primarily as an authority figure, the YEO was described as someone, including by pupils, who was part of the school community first, and a police officer second, with one colleague reflecting that "he's Graham first, and almost, oh, you're the policeman as well, secondary."

Survey findings reinforce this strongly. All respondents indicated that pupils had responded positively to the presence of the YEO. This unanimity suggests that the relational dimension of the role is not limited to isolated examples, but is widely recognised across staff. Taken together, the evidence suggests that the effectiveness of the role is closely tied to its ability to operate within the relational culture of the school. The role does not function primarily through authority, but through trust, familiarity, and consistent presence.

Perceptions of safety and the school environment

Perhaps the most valuable aspect of the role that surfaced was the way that PC Muir, and his work within the schools, had made staff and pupils feel while at school. Across both schools, staff described a clear improvement in the overall sense of safety following the introduction of the YEO role, with senior leadership commenting on the impact on staff retention due to this. This was expressed both in terms of how staff and pupils feel within the school environment and in terms of observable changes in behaviour.

At Gleniffer, staff stated directly that the school "definitely does feel safer", a concise but powerful reflection of staff experience. This perception was linked not just to the presence of the YEO, but to their active role in the school environment. Staff described how their presence in social areas helps "bring about a bit of calm", suggesting a tangible shift in the day-to-day atmosphere of the school. Importantly, the feeling of feeling safer was not simply due to presence, but much more focused within the relational practice already discussed. There were practical examples, such as one pupil who has had issues with criminal justice in relation to carrying weapons being searched by PC Muir at the start of the school day. This both allowed that pupil to attend school and for reassurance and feelings of safety within the school.

Similarly, in St Andrew's, staff linked the role to increased "safety and belonging and security" among pupils, particularly those who are more vulnerable or who spend time within pupil support areas. The emphasis here is not only on safety as the absence of risk, but on a broader sense of security and belonging. This feeling was shared by pupils too. In practical terms, this could range

from the calmer sense of the school generally but also intervention in incidents, talking to young people, engaging with families, and bringing in intelligence from the community to intervene early on any issues which could potentially become wider problems.

Survey responses strongly support these accounts. The majority of respondents reported improvements in both staff and pupil feelings of safety, with many indicating that these had "much improved". Alongside this, reductions in anti-social behaviour were also widely reported. Across the two schools, there is data which highlights this. There has been a reduction in exclusion openings in the school year from the school year beginning through to the Easter break of 49% across both schools. It is important to note however that this is the case across the entire secondary sector where there has been a year-on-year reduction of 42% across all 11 secondary schools, so it is not just evident within these two schools. It was fairly noted also that these demonstrable improvements will take time, but that the feeling: of reduced stress, of increased perceptions of safety, and of a greater culture of information sharing are already contributing to the school environment for staff and pupils alike,

The evidence therefore suggests that the YEO role contributes to both the perception and the reality of a safer school environment, with these two elements reinforcing one another.

Earlier Intervention

A further consistent theme is the extent to which the YEO role supports earlier intervention and more effective responses to emerging concerns and supporting responses to actual incidents. Staff described a shift from a position in which they were often reliant on incomplete information, delayed communication, or informal accounts from young people to one in which they are able to access timely, accurate information and act more quickly.

In St Andrew's, staff highlighted that the presence of the YEO allowed them to respond immediately to serious incidents, with one participant stating simply that "we were able to act really, really quickly." While brief, this reflects a broader pattern in the discussion, where speed of response was seen as a critical shift. In Gleniffer, this was framed in terms of improved clarity and anticipation. Staff described how the YEO could "find out what was reported, what actually happened", particularly within the community at evenings and at weekends, reducing reliance on partial or conflicting accounts. This enabled staff to move beyond reacting to incidents and instead begin to anticipate and manage them, with one participant noting that "you're almost getting ahead of it." Survey findings align with this, with most respondents indicating improvements in early intervention, although with some variation. This suggests that while the role is clearly strengthening early response, its impact may depend on the nature of incidents and the availability of the YEO.

Overall, the evidence indicates that the role reduces uncertainty and delay, enabling schools to move from reactive to more proactive approaches in responding to risk. staff repeatedly contrasted this with previous practice, where information might take days to reach the school, or not be shared at all. The presence of the YEO enabled access to "fresh" and actionable information, allowing staff to respond in real time rather than retrospectively.

Strengthening safeguarding and child protection processes

The value of described the role as improving both the quality and the timeliness of responses in complex cases, as well as strengthening communication between agencies.

At Gleniffer, the YEO role was particularly evident in safeguarding and child protection contexts. Staff Child Protection Coordinator highlighted that the presence of the YEO created **"a direct channel of communication with [the police]".** This reflects a significant shift from more fragmented communication pathways, where information might previously have been delayed or lost between agencies.

In St Andrew's, staff described how this improved communication translated into practical impact, enabling support for families and young people in ways that had not previously been possible. The ability to respond quickly to "really challenging, really difficult home circumstances" was seen as particularly important in safeguarding contexts.

These findings suggest that the YEO role is not only supporting individual cases, but is also strengthening the functioning of safeguarding systems. By improving communication and coordination, the role helps to ensure that information is shared more effectively and that responses are better aligned across services.

Partnership working

One of the most consistent and strongly evidenced themes across both data sources is the impact of the YEO role on partnership working. Staff described a marked improvement in communication and collaboration between the school and police, as well as with wider services.

Survey responses were particularly clear in this area, with almost all respondents indicating that partnership working between school and police had improved. This reflects a broader shift in how schools interact with external services, moving from formal, process-driven engagement towards more immediate and collaborative relationships.

Focus group evidence supports this, with staff highlighting the importance of access to networks and information. As one participant noted, "he has his contacts… he can then get more information", pointing to the practical value of embedded connections. Another reflected that communication "has kind of worked both ways as well", indicating that information flows not only into the school, but outwards to support wider responses. Indeed, PC Muir himself discussed how the flow of information worked both ways, with his ability to take information from the police and action it within the school, but also to take information from the school and action it in the community. There were also examples of times where discussions with families and formal warnings could be carried out by PC Muir within school. This meant that young people and their families could be better informed of process, and it took some workload off of local police units needing to action such instances, and reducing the timescales of these happening.

The role therefore appears to function as a connector within the system, improving the coherence and responsiveness of multi-agency working across education, policing, and social work.

Engagement with pupils

Staff consistently described positive engagement between the YEO and pupils, with particular emphasis on the role's preventative impact. Young people were reported to be more willing to speak to the YEO about personal or sensitive issues, including situations that they may not have disclosed to school staff.

This is reflected in staff accounts that pupils are "able to ask probing questions and be themselves around them", suggesting a level of comfort and openness that supports early disclosure. This was confirmed by both pupils and PC Muir. Staff also noted that interactions with the YEO can shift perceptions over time, with young people beginning to reconsider their understanding of police, and more broadly, authority figures more generally.

In addition to informal engagement, the YEO contributes to structured preventative work through involvement in lessons and assemblies. Staff emphasised the added impact of this, noting a "definite credibility factor" when messages about legal consequences and risk are delivered by a police officer rather than school staff This suggests that the YEO role enhances the school's capacity to deliver preventative education, particularly in areas linked to risk, harm, and decision-making.

8.5. Appendix D: Mentors in Violence Prevention

Introduction

The Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme (MVP) is a peer education programme that aims to provide young people with the skills and knowledge to explore and challenge the attitudes, beliefs, and social norms that underpin gender-based violence (GBV). Led by Fiona Hewitt, the programme is now delivered across all secondary schools in Renfrewshire. This has allowed schools to adopt a whole school approach to this issue, through ensuring all staff and pupils are empowered to tackle this issue early in a way that is safe and supportive for all.

Programme Overview

The MVP programme is typically delivered across 2 full days, which allows staff and young people to explore these issues in depth. Together, they review various scenarios they may encounter day to day, and take a bystander approach. This ensures members are neither a victim or a perpetrator, and instead consider how they might apply what they have learned within the session about gender norms, violence against women and girls, and the impact of these to the situation.

MVP at Park Mains High School

The MVP programme has now been delivered in Park Mains High School since 2022/23. One member of staff had previous experience of this programme from another local authority, and hoped to deliver this within the school. There were particular concerns around boys' attitudes and behaviour, and staff were unsure as to how to respond to these. They hoped that through the delivering the programme, effective strategies to address these could be embedded across the whole school.

During the early stages of the programme, staff were aware that the pupils most likely to attend the programme were not necessarily the pupils they had wanted to attend, or who would have benefitted the most from the programme. Consequently, the MVP became a requirement for any pupil who wished to join the school's football team. This led to a significant number of S5 and S6 boys attending the programme, who could then deliver this to their younger peers. Staff highlighted that these pupils engaged with the programme effectively, and were quick to adopt these strategies when interacting with others. Younger pupils were also found to be highly engaged with the programme, because they were led by older pupils who they viewed as role models.

Staff at Park Mains High School discussed how these sessions enabled them to push pupils outside their comfort zones, through encouraging them to deliver sessions independently. For example, as part of Health Week, mentors in S5 and S6 delivered a bespoke session at Dargavel Primary School, allowing them to share this knowledge with younger pupils. After engaging with the programme, 8 pupils were also selected to attend the Equally Safe Conference, to meet with other pupils across the authority, discuss their experiences, and enact wider change upon the Scottish strategy to prevent GBV.

The MVP programme had a significantly positive impact for girls at Park Mains High School. Within the programme, the issue of intersectionality – a framework that argues personal identities such as gender, race, class, or disability can overlap and result in different experiences with discrimination – was raised. This empowered pupils to speak up about their own experiences within these sessions, providing new insights for the whole cohort. Staff also raised that pupils in S5 and S6 were now more likely to approach them and discuss issues or concerns regarding relationships or misogyny, which may be a result of pupils having the language, understanding, and confidence to raise these with trusted adults.

Conclusion

The Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme has had a significantly positive impact for staff and pupils across Renfrewshire. Within Park Mains High School, the programme has been effectively embedded across the whole school to ensure harmful attitudes and behaviours can be addressed in a way that is supportive and safe for all. Understanding the impact and issues related to gender-based violence has also empowered pupils to ensure they can tackle these issues with confidence and identify how best to respond to a situation before it escalates.

8.6. Appendix E: Home Start Renfrewshire and Inverclyde Case Studies

Perinatal Infant Mental Health (PIMH) Outcomes in Practice: Early Intervention from Pregnancy to Infancy

Overview

Emma was referred to Home-Start Renfrewshire at 29 weeks pregnant by a Specialist Midwife in Perinatal Mental Health and benefitted from several Scottish Government PIMH funded activities.

Outcome 1: Parents and carers with perinatal mental health concerns have improved wellbeing, feel less isolated and better able to seek support

Emma joined our Mellow Bumps course, delivered over eight weekly sessions in a small group of three mums by two accredited Home-Start staff. The combination of evidence-based content, consistent weekly contact and a supportive peer environment helped reduce stress and improve wellbeing during a high-anxiety pregnancy. The small-group approach with two facilitators meant Emma could access one-to-one support when needed.

Outcome 2: Parents and carers with perinatal mental health concerns feel better able to meet the needs of their infants and children (physical, social, emotional and cognitive)

After the birth of her baby, Jake, Emma continued to engage with Home-Start Renfrewshire, which supported her to feel more confident and capable in meeting Jake's needs. Regular attendance at the Perinatal Group provided routine and ongoing social connection during maternity leave. Our Perinatal Family Support Coordinator, who runs the Group, had also led Mellow Bumps so Emma felt comfortable with the transition to the group. Baby Massage supported responsive day-to-day care by helping Emma tune into her Jake's cues. Through the Blank Canvas course Emma also had protected time for reflection and meeting other Mums with the benefit of an on-site Creche provided to give infants socialisation opportunities away from Mum.

Outcome 3: Parents and carers, whose infants are at a higher risk of mental health problems, are better able to support their babies through warm, secure and interactive relationships

Emma's pregnancy history meant she approached the final trimester with understandable fear and uncertainty. Mellow Bumps supported her to focus on her relationship with her baby before birth and begin building confidence in her role as a parent. Postnatally, Baby Massage and ongoing group support reinforced warm, attuned interaction and helped Emma feel emotionally connected to baby Jake. Having consistent, trusted support across pregnancy and the early months helped create the conditions for a secure, nurturing start.

Emma said:

"I wanted to let you how helpful I found the Mellow Bumps class that I completed recently at Home Start Renfrewshire and Inverclyde, in Paisley. I struggled a lot during my pregnancy and the support I received was really invaluable - I don't know what I would have done without it."

Tuning Into His World: Building Wellbeing Through Child-Led Support

This case study focuses on a pre-verbal child, Liam, who has attended one of Home-Start Renfrewshire's Family Groups for over a year. He lives with his mum, Jane, and his older sibling, Lyla who has additional support needs. Jane is attentive and committed despite multiple pressures.

When Liam first attended, he was easily overwhelmed, stayed only briefly and did not engage with others or toys. Jane found the peer support invaluable so continued to attend with her Liam. By tuning into his interests and creating a safe, flexible environment, the group has supported improvements in emotional wellbeing, confidence, and physical development.

Child-Centred Approach

Staff and volunteers placed strong emphasis on careful observation and tuning into the Liam's cues, allowing his interests and behaviours to guide support. Key observations included:

- A preference for grouping and carrying objects, such as lining up pens and holding multiple items
- Limited interest in structured play, but strong engagement with sensory experiences
- Signs of overwhelm in busy environments, requiring space and reassurance

In response, staff:

- Followed Liam's lead, adapting activities to match his interests, sensory play (painting, water, outdoor play), and allowing him to explore in his own way
- Accepted non-traditional play (e.g. carrying paint pots rather than using them conventionally)
- Maintained a consistent, predictable environment
- Supported Jane to recognise and respond to his cues, helping Liam regulate and return to play

Outcomes: Physical Health and Emotional Wellbeing Improved

- Improved ability to regulate emotions and re-engage after distress
- Growing trust in familiar adults and surroundings, lengthening the time of attending
- Early social interaction (e.g. offering items, beginning to share)
- Participation in group activities on Liam's own terms (e.g. observing Bookbug)
- Increased confidence exploring his environment
- Progress in eating, from using a quiet space to occasionally joining others

- Development of motor and sensory skills through varied play opportunities

Consistent attendance and a nurturing, responsive approach have supported both Liam and Jane, building confidence and routine. Liam will begin nursery after the summer while continuing to attend the group which has provided a valuable transition to coping with nursery.

How ASN Support Transformed One Family's Journey

When Sophie, Mark, and their daughter Olivia were referred to us, the family was at breaking point. Olivia lives with complex disabilities and caring for her alongside her sibling Rachel had left Sophie and Mark physically exhausted and mentally overwhelmed. Both parents worried about each other's ability to cope long-term, while working hard to provide for Olivia's additional needs and make major adaptations to their home. Despite their strength and determination, they were struggling to see a way forward.

Introducing the Additional Support Need Group

At our first visit, we encouraged the family to join our Additional Need Support Group, Little Steps. Initially hesitant and concerned about labelling Olivia, they eventually agreed. The change was remarkable. Olivia quickly settled into the group, which became a positive part of her routine. For Sophie and Mark, the group was a lifeline, a safe space to connect with other parents and speak openly. Sophie began bringing Olivia on her day off, turning what had been a difficult day into one filled with structure and support.

"It gives our day a bit of structure and routine and helps with behaviour. I also feel like I get a little bit of a break as staff and volunteers want to spend time with Olivia when so often other adults shy away."

"She enjoys spending time with the staff and volunteers and is happy in the room. She has also made friends with some of the other children. She likes having a special club to go to that isn't therapy."

Extending Support

Home-Start support usually ends when a child turns five, but in this exceptional case, we continued to help during Olivia's transition from nursery to school and to support her sibling, Rachel. As Olivia's time at the group came to an end, we suggested a home-visiting volunteer. The family was matched with Elizabeth who truly understood their challenges due to personal experiences with supporting their own son, who had similar complex needs.

At first, Sophie found it hard to accept help at home, but over time, a strong bond formed. Elizabeth visits once a week after school, helping with dinner and bedtime. This extra pair of hands has been invaluable by easing the daily routine, giving each parent a chance for a break, and creating precious one-to-one time for Olivia and Rachel.

The family has embraced every opportunity from summer trips and park days to the Christmas party and the difference is profound. They are no longer just coping but seeing a future and are setting goals again.

A Family Transformed

Before support, this family faced exhaustion, isolation and uncertainty about their ability to cope. Through the Additional Need Support Group, they gained structure, social connection, and emotional relief. The home-visiting volunteer provided practical help and reassurance, reducing stress and strengthening family bonds. Today, they are engaged and more optimistic about the future. A transformation made possible by compassionate, tailored support.

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