



the promise
Learning
Collaboratives

Care



Aberdeen
Thursday 24th April 2025

Programme	
10:00 – 10:20	Welcome, and registration / World Café conversations
10:20 – 10:30	House Keeping & introduction
10:30 – 12:00	<p>Session 1</p> <p>Presentations (10.30-11:15)</p> <p>Discussions (11.15-12:00)</p>
12:00 – 12:30	World Café conversations – using the feedback from registration around the challenges
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch / Break / Networking
13:30 – 13:45	World Café conversations – reflections
13:45 – 15:15	<p>Session 2</p> <p>Presentations (13.45-14:30)</p> <p>Discussions (14:30-15:15)</p>
15:15 – 15:30	Final questions and finish





Home to Highland Programme

Malina MacDonald-Dawson: Programme Manager

Tracey Taylor: Special Projects Officer

Jim Elder: Placements & UASC Manager



Background & Rationale



- Reviewed outcomes Out of Area (OOA) provisions,
- Reliant on OOA, particularly specialist support, distress response behaviour, ASD diagnosis.
- Tendency for young people to stay OOA for a considerable time
- Rationale to assess which services currently out of Highland were financially viable to be replicated in-area, whilst meeting children's needs.
- Data analysis to determine cohorts of young people with similar needs and assessing the financial implications of developing supports in Highland.
- Multi-disciplinary front-line professionals to identify children whose needs could be met in Highland.

Vision and Drivers



Children wished to remain in the communities they have grown up in

Council wanted to ensure funding was being used more equitably for as many children as possible rather than a very large budget being spent on a small cohort of children.

Programme vision is to return care experienced young people to the Highlands from out of authority residential placements, whilst also developing services in Highland to prevent young people requiring to move out of authority.

H2H is a fundamental component of the Council's Children's Services Families 1st Strategy.

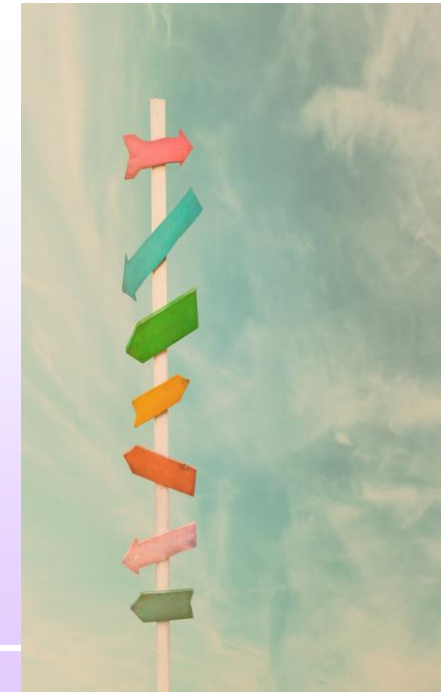
This is the Human Economic Cost model as per 'Follow the Money' and 'The Money' in action from The Promise.



Our Key Aims:



1. Reduce spot purchased Out of Area (OOA) residential care placements.
2. Shift the balance of spend from OOA to in-area.
3. Improve educational achievement & attainment for Care Experienced Young People (CEYP).
4. Retain more young people in the Highland area.



Key Aim 1: Reduce OOA Placements



Number of children: June 2018 to March 2025	Cost per Year outwith Highland (in £millions)	Cost of Return Option in Highland per Year	Costs Avoided per Year (in £millions)
101	£21,133,170	£5,863,118	£15,270,052 M

Shift in Balance of Spend - Key aim 2



Highland Council permitted H2H to continue to spend the full CEYP budget (£13 million), but to shift the spend from OOA placements to new services in Highland, which would benefit local children.

Currently **72% of the £13M** budget is currently spent on in-area services for Care Experienced Young People.

This has enabled the development of the over **£8 million per year of in-area services**, which help stop children going OOA and serve as places for children to return to.

Currently 25 new services have been developed in Highland. These equate to over 50 beds for children in Highland that did not exist before the Home to Highland Programme.

Services Developed by H2H - Key aim 4



- 6 small, specialist residential houses
- 2 contracts providing 15 beds in 3 residential houses
- 4 supported core and cluster flats for 17-26 year olds
- 8 supported move-through flats for 17-26 year olds
- 6 modular one-bed flats for youngsters leaving care
- Crisis care centre with 6 beds based on No Wrong Door Model
- Additional CAMHS Service from the NHS to work with CEYP
- 3 bespoke education bases for children with complex needs

Residential for 2 young children for childhood



“Homely, nurturing settings”



Residential for 3 young people in country setting



Residential for 3 young children for childhood



Bespoke Education Base for CEYP



Residential in Highland	21	22%
Flat with Support in Highland	17	18%
Home	15	16%
Adult services care	9	10%
Flat with support OOA	8	9%
Core n cluster	8	9%
Family	5	5%
Foster care	3	3%
Further ed	4	4%
Left care	1	1%
Prison	1	1%
Transferred place of residence	2	2%
total	94	

Return Destination Table

This table shows the destination of the 94 children returned to Highland.

residential units in Highland at 22% of returns.

flat with support in Highland at 18%.

return was to home at 16%.

10% have moved on to care with adult services in NHS Highland

9% have moved on to semi-independence with support out with Highland.

A further 9% have returned to Highland to a supported core and cluster model of accommodation in Inverness.

Wide spread of destinations have been required for young people. The Programme works hard with Lead Professionals to determine the optimum return package for young people.



Improved Lives



Evaluation of Programme found:

Children, their families, their Social Workers, teachers, residential staff, and Placement Officer say they are happier and are enjoying and achieving in their education, hobbies, and lives.

Violence and aggression forms are greatly reduced for a number of returned children.

They are receiving bespoke education packages tailored to their needs, likes and abilities.

Several have been found to be achieving more educationally than over several years OOA.

These are the achievements that most motivate the H2H team and encourage them to go the extra mile for Highland's CEYP.

Ultimately, they feel they are cared for and belong here.



Ensuring the Promise



- Children & families have repeatedly told us they wish to remain closer to home, communities, friends and schools they know,
- Children are only moved in agreement with their Lead Professional,
- If it's in the child's best interests, they remain OOA,
- A small percentage are moved OOA for safety (CSE)
- H2H scrutinises claims of OOA providers offering high quality care & education,
- In line with the Children's Act (and now the Promise), Highland Council has strived to retain the positive relationships young people have in their lives, including with their care staff.

Risks



- Costs of residential placements
- Placements ending suddenly
- Lack of placement availability
- Costs of bespoke placements in-area
- Change in Senior Management-understanding of programme, decision-making, spend to save ideology,
- Community infrastructure which keeps children in their families, slow to implement
- Continuing care placements and under-16 year olds from UASC
- Council Property Services not developing buildings we need

Critical Success Factors



- Buy-in from all levels of Management of Highland Council
- Confidence that it's the right thing to do for children's lives
- Trust that we know what we're doing with huge sums of money
- Spend to save – spend £100k to stop something happening or £500k when it happens!
- Risks are like whack-a-mole, helicopter view of the whole of Children's Services is required.
- Neverending drive & tenacity, belief it will work, passion
- Convince stakeholders: for some that's improved outcomes, for others it's cost avoidance.
- Family First community services **MUST** be developed to keep children at home with families whenever possible and safe to do so:

Kinship team, Fostering, FGDM, Short breaks for children with disabilities,





Achievements



- 101 children returned to Highland or moved-on to semi-independence,
- Majority of young people healthier, happier, achieving more
- £15 million in avoided costs,
- Shift in spend from 100% OOA, to 72% in Highland,
- £8M of bespoke services developed in-area,
- Human cost always balanced with financial cost of care,
- Bronze Cosla Award for Achieving better outcomes in 2016.
- Highland Council Quality Awards for Improving Services in 2019
- Quality Award for Tackling inequalities' and improving health and well being in 2024.
- Google search **Home to Highland** for 5-year Evaluation which received a standing ovation at committee from our Councillors



Testimonials



“For years, my life was full of trouble, drugs, and alcohol. I didn’t care about much just getting by and numbing the pain. I was stuck in a cycle that felt impossible to break. But something in me knew I couldn’t live like that forever.

I started to realise how much I was hurting myself and the people around me. Moving into supported accommodation gave me the space to reflect and reset but I had to put in the work to really change.

Now I’m sober, present, and learning who I am without all the chaos. It’s not always easy, but it’s real and I’m proud of how far I’ve come. If you’re feeling lost, know that it’s never too late to turn things around. One step at a time really can change your whole life.”



Testimonials



Lead Professional for Child with Complex Disabilities Returned to Highland

"Wow, what a journey it has been with 'Oliver', I have not come across a young person like him-unprecedented numbers of VIR's (Violent Incident Reports), heart-breaking self- injury, sobering child plan meetings, and some tricky moments for us all along the way in the process of bringing him back to Highland. It is hard to find the words to express how pleased I am for him, the team working with him and his family that he is making such good progress. The change we have seen will pave the way hopefully for Adult Services to find provision for him in Highland, which is what his mother wanted. Thanks for everyone's support with this."

Some months after returning from OOA to the new residential house in Highland, one of the young people moved to secondary school. They were explaining to their new teacher that they lived in a children's residential house. The teacher responded in a manner that sounded like sympathy to the child who replied to her, *"Don't be sorry for me, it is the best care home in the world."*

Clarifying questions?



Changing childhoods.
Changing lives.

Mockingbird



The
Fostering
Network

11 June 2025

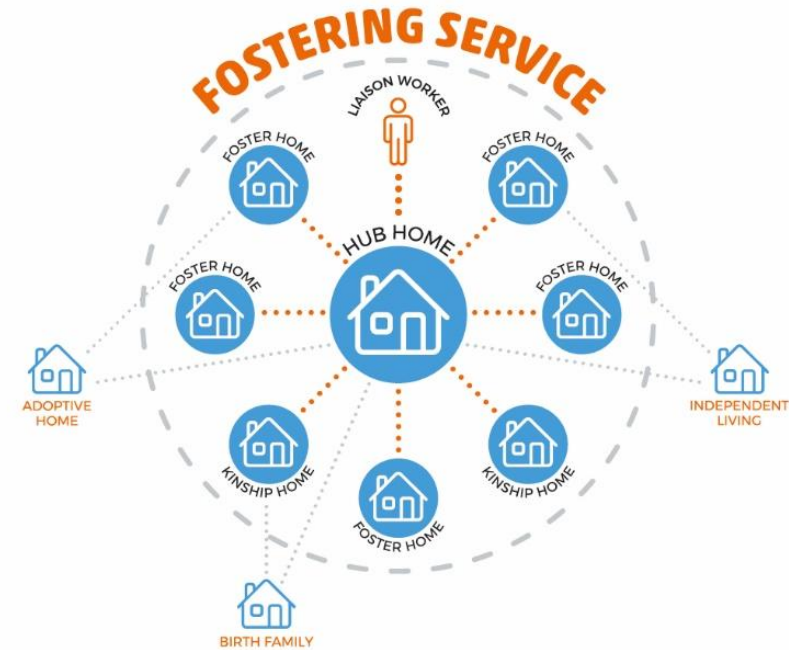
Private & Confidential





Aims of Mockingbird

- Stability for our young people
- Support, recruitment and retention of foster carers



The Fostering Network's Mockingbird programme

How is Mockingbird keeping in line with The Promise?

Voice

Children must be listened to and meaningfully and appropriately involved in decision-making about their care, with all those involved properly listening and responding to what they want and need. In Mockingbird children for example help to plan their group activities.

Family

Mockingbird celebrates and supports the power and importance of family – fostering families, birth families and future families.

People

Children who can no longer live with their family of origin may have complex or distressing aspects to their life story. They need people around them that can support them understand the narrative of their lives in ways that are appropriate and have meaning for them. Mockingbird gives children the opportunity for extended support networks offering sleepovers, informal get togethers and support when its needed.

The foundation of Mockingbird is relationships. We aim to build relationships where we share love, friendship, consistency and mutual respect.

Care

Acknowledging that we can only care for others when we have taken good care of ourselves. Mockingbird supports foster carers so they can support children to thrive.

Scaffolding



The
Fostering
Network

BARNARD'S



#keepthepromise



Care



- The foundation of Mockingbird is relationships.
- The constellation aims to build strong relationships where there is care and support offered from a range of role models.
- Mockingbird promotes permanence and promotes continued connections.
- Mockingbird carers tell us that they feel supported by being a part of Mockingbird.

All children must be supported to continue relationships that are important to them, where it is safe to do so. Page 63

Scotland must better support its foster carers to be the best parents. Foster carers must feel valued, cared for and supported to care page 77

Young people's views



Changing childhoods.
Changing lives.



Mentimeter

What do you like about being part of the Mockingbird?
15 responses



u get to meet new people
getting to do stuff
encouragement
friendship
sleepovers
activities
having friends
having pals
fun
nice people
support
everything
friends
amazing
new friends





Changing childhoods.
Changing lives.



Mockingbird Barnardo's Scotland and Fostering Network





Contact us:

Email:

thepromise@barnardos.org.uk

Website:

www.barnardos.org.uk/foster

The Fostering Network:

www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/mockingbird

Sarah.Watson@Fostering.net





Changing childhoods.
Changing lives.

Clarifying questions?

Asylum and Refugee Care (AARC)

24 April 2025

Jayne Smith (Founder)



About AARC

Who We Are

Asylum & Refugee Care (AARC) SCIO is a dedicated charity focused on supporting the growing number of refugees and people seeking asylum in North-East Scotland.

Our Journey

What began as a small group of passionate volunteers in 2022 became a fully registered charity in 2023—driven by the need to provide meaningful support to those arriving with little to nothing.

Our Mission

We lend a helping hand to those forced to flee their home countries, offering practical and emotional support as they rebuild their lives in a new and unfamiliar place.

What We Do

Essential Support – Providing food, clothing, and other necessities.

Community & Wellbeing – Creating spaces for connection and belonging.

Advocacy & Advice – Helping navigate complex systems and access services.

Empowerment – Equipping people with skills and opportunities for a fresh start.



What makes AARC unique?

🙌 100% Volunteer-Led

AARC is entirely run by dedicated volunteers - driven by passion, not profit. This ensures every resource goes directly towards supporting people seeking asylum.

🏠 A Community-Led Approach

We foster a welcoming environment where people seeking asylum are not just service users but active participants in shaping our work.

📣 Advocacy with Impact

We go beyond support - we challenge injustice, raise awareness, and push for systemic change to improve the asylum system.

🤝 Holistic & Person-Centred Support

From practical help to emotional wellbeing, we tailor our support to the individual needs of those we serve.

💡 Innovative & Responsive

We adapt quickly to changing needs, ensuring our services remain relevant, effective, and accessible.



Our Services

Meet & Greet: A Warm Welcome

We strive to meet new arrivals as soon as possible after they arrive in Aberdeen. Our support includes:

- ✓ Providing essentials – Clothing, toiletries, and other necessities
- ✓ Signposting to services – Helping individuals access healthcare, housing, and legal support
- ✓ Building connections – Introducing them to community networks for ongoing support

Volunteering: Creating Opportunities & Community

We offer a range of volunteering opportunities to help people seeking asylum:

- ✓ Regain a sense of purpose
- ✓ Form meaningful friendships & connections
- ✓ Develop skills and contribute to the community
- ✓ Support integration and future citizenship as New Scots

AARC's services are designed to empower, support, and advocate for those seeking safety and a fresh start



Our Services

Unaccompanied Minors: Ensuring Protection

We work to identify and support young people wrongly assessed as adults, ensuring they receive the protection they are entitled to. Our work includes:

- ✓ Raising Age Disputes – Challenging incorrect assessments
- ✓ Guiding them through Local Authority assessments
- ✓ Supporting at Local Authority assessments
- ✓ Securing support – The vast majority of our referrals result in the Local Authority recognising them as minors and providing the vital care they need

**AASC/AIRE Provider Age Assessment Standard Operating Procedure
(February 2024)**

Barriers for Age Disputed People Seeking Asylum

Accommodation is offered on a “No Choice Basis”

This means that someone has no choice over where they are housed in the UK. Often, they can be split up from other family members who have had their ages accepted upon entry.

Room Maximisation

The Home Office policy of room sharing, means that individuals are being forced to share a room with someone who could be a different religion, be a different nationality, or speak a different language. This is a safeguarding risk for someone who is potentially a minor.

Trauma

Someone who has had to flee for their life, is going to have experienced trauma. Many of those we support have been trafficked on their journey to safety.

Language

English is not their first language. Many of the potential young people we support, speak very little English.

Legal Support

They are entitled to legal aid, but securing the services of a solicitor is challenging. Vast majority of immigration solicitors are based in the Central Belt.



Contributing to Research

We are proud to have contributed to "[Unlocking Support: Age Disputed Young People in Scotland](#)," a powerful report produced by [JustRight Scotland](#). This crucial document brings to light the complex and often overlooked challenges faced by young people seeking asylum whose ages are disputed upon arrival in the UK.

The "[Unlocking Support](#)" report highlights several key findings and challenges:

- 1. Inaccurate Age Assessments**
- 2. Delays in Age Dispute Resolutions**
- 3. Inconsistent Safeguarding Measures**
- 4. Barriers to Support**
- 5. Lack of Trauma-Informed Care**

Contact Details:

Jayne Smith: Jayne.smith@aaarc.charity

Website: [Asylum and Refugee Care](#)



Useful Organisations

- **Scotland's Legal Centre for Justice and Human Rights**
www.justrightscotland.org.uk
- **Migrant Help** <https://www.migranthelpuk.org/>
- **Scottish Refugee Council** <https://scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/>
- **Red Cross** <https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-help/get-help-as-a-refugee>
- **Barnardo's** <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/services/asylum-seeker-mental-health-and-wellbeing-project>



Further Information

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables#irregular-migration>

<https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics>

<https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/migration-to-the-uk-asylum/>

'Go Back to Where You Came From'? Watch it here on Channel 4:
https://www.channel4.com/programmes/go-back-to-where-you-came-from?cntsrc=social_share_android_go_back_to_where_you_came_from





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DISCUSSIONS





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WORLD CAFÉ - CHALLENGES



LUNCH & NETWORKING





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WORLD CAFÉ - REFLECTIONS

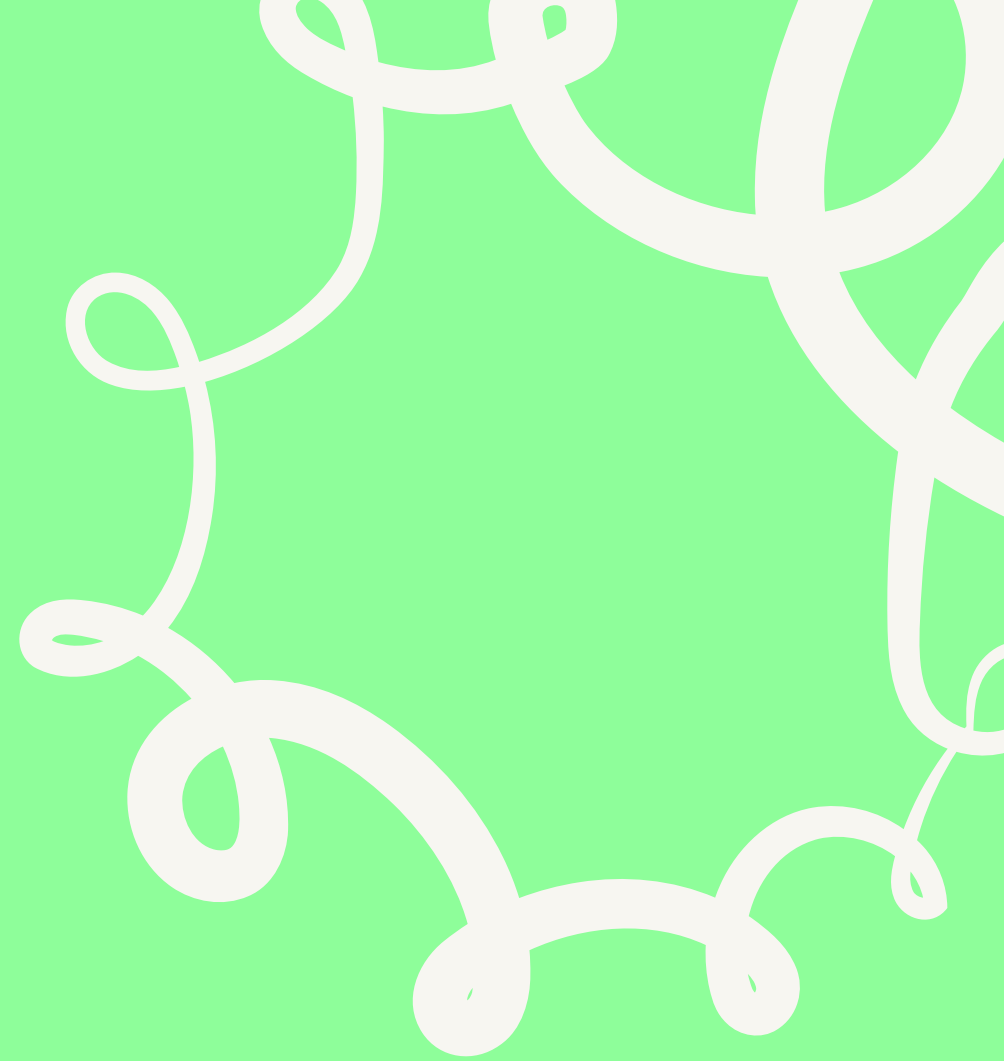
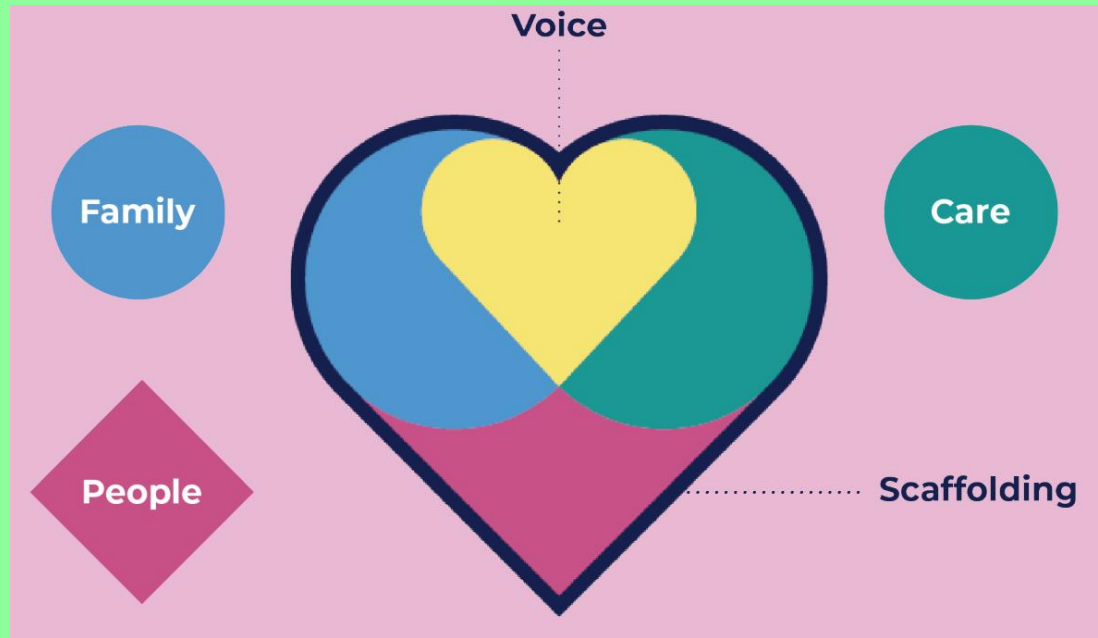


A word cloud visualization representing various themes related to children's services. The most prominent words include:

- Relationships**: A central theme, appearing in large blue letters.
- Advice**: Large orange letters at the top center.
- Listening**: Large yellow letters on the left side.
- Voice**: Large blue letters below listening.
- Lifestory**: Large blue letters in the middle.
- Clubs**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Home**: Large blue letters at the bottom.
- Trust**: Large red letters on the right side.
- Time**: Large yellow letters on the right side.
- Support**: Large yellow letters on the right side.
- Play**: Large red letters on the right side.
- Outdoor Learning**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Fundraising**: Large orange letters on the right side.
- Participation**: Large orange letters on the right side.
- Advocacy**: Large yellow letters on the right side.
- Friendships**: Large orange letters on the right side.
- Consistency**: Large orange letters on the left side.
- Food**: Large black letters on the left side.
- Family Time**: Large blue letters on the left side.
- Community Resources**: Large blue letters on the left side.
- FGDM**: Large red letters on the left side.
- Home Child**: Large blue letters on the left side.
- Working with Hope**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Secure Connections**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Safespace**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Reviews**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Decision Making**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Availability**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Partnerships**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Centres**: Large blue letters on the left side.
- Befriending**: Large blue letters on the left side.
- Activity Days**: Large blue letters on the left side.
- Understanding**: Large blue letters on the left side.
- Identifying**: Large blue letters on the left side.
- Multidisciplinary**: Large blue letters on the left side.
- Multiagency**: Large blue letters on the left side.
- Environments**: Large blue letters on the left side.
- Training**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Listening**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Voice**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Safespace**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Activities**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Source**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Video**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Club**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Child**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Support**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Working with Hope**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Safespace**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Lifestory Trust**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Finance**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Home**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Environments**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Workings with Hope**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Support**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Decision Making**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Community**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Reviews**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Identity**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Time**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Family Time**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Availability**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Partnerships**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Friendships**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Decision Making**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Support**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Working with Hope**: Large blue letters on the right side.
- Environments**: Large blue letters on the right side.

Fostering North

How we support our young people to identify who is important to them



North Fostering Team

Example of practice - spidergram

Maintaining significant relationships

Who is important to me now

Fill in the diagram to tell us about anyone that is important to you at the moment. This could be friends, family, teachers, workers, anyone you choose! Please use their first and last name if possible and note if you or your carer has their contact details.

Name

Relationship

My carer has the contact details of this person

YES

NO

Name

Relationship

My carer has the contact details of this person

YES

NO

Name

Relationship

My carer has the contact details of this person

YES

NO

Name

Relationship

My carer has the contact details of this person

YES

NO

Name

Relationship

My carer has the contact details of this person

YES

NO

Name

Relationship

My carer has the contact details of this person

YES

NO

Your name

BARNARDOS

A word cloud featuring various terms related to relationships and community support. The most prominent words include: Mum, online, Barnardos, community, coaches, dinner, lady, therapist, uncle, friends, family, sisters, youthworker, police, nurse, Jannie, pets, career, church, friends, lollypopperson, grandmothers, grandfathers, parents, carers, teachers, doctors, counsellors, social workers, volunteers, employers, foster carers, neighbours, and many others. The words are arranged in a circular pattern with varying font sizes and colors.

BARNARDOS



Our Vision

Aberdeenshire Council & Barnardo's Scotland

To provide a flexible resource which can transform venues in the heart of our local communities in to places where brothers and sisters / siblings, separated by family circumstances and by the care system, can regularly come together to share experiences and have fun.

To provide venues which also provide a space for the Carers of siblings to meet separately while family time is taking place and thereby promote the development of their relationships with each other.

Linksfeld House

How we support our young people to maintain connections after they've moved on



Examples of practice



Supporting wellbeing through exercise



Nurturing relationships, identifying what is important to young people



Creating safe spaces after young people have moved on

Key Themes for implementation of Plan 24-30

CARE

Supporting ongoing relationships, incorporate the guidance issued from our continued connections pilot





Changing childhoods.
Changing lives.

Clarifying questions?

Promise Learning Collaborative Aberdeen 24th April 2025

Plan 24-30 Foundation - CARE



5 Key Themes

Relationship Building

Shared Data

Removing rigid
thresholds

Voice

Supporting the
Workforce

Key Guiding Principles



Multi-disciplinary
teams established

Focus on children,
young people and
families

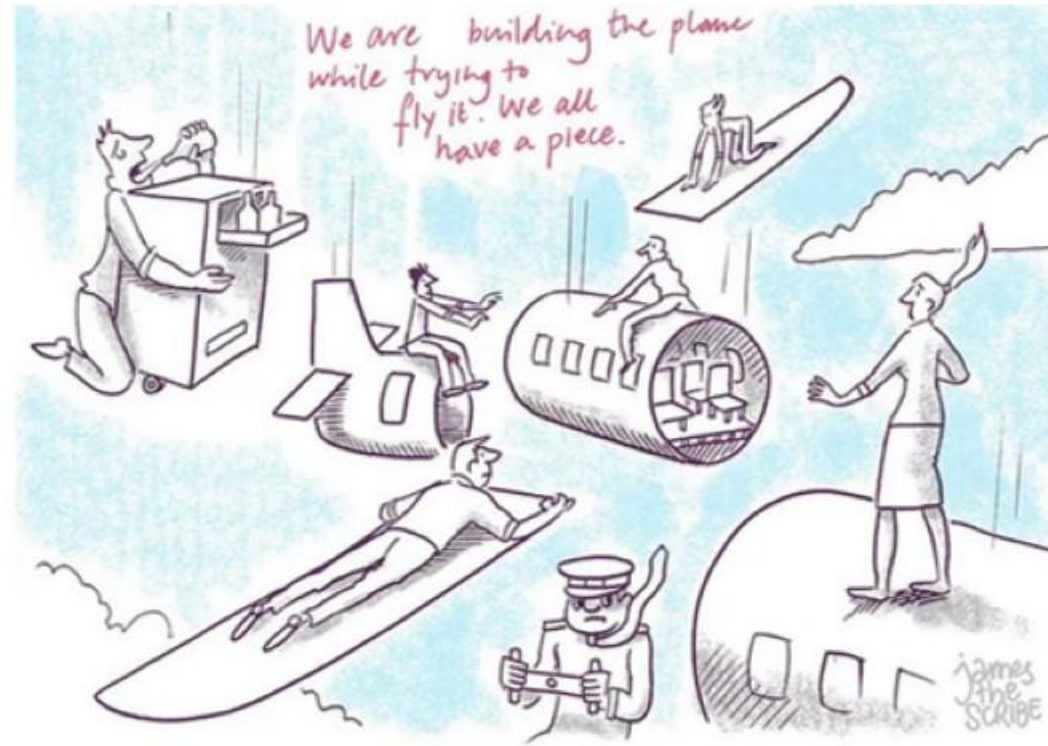
Empowering
families

Equal Partners –
no single lead

Direct support
where needed

Needs of the
community

Have you ever felt like this?



“We are building the plane while trying to fly it”

What did we do and what was different?



shutterstock.com · 145264144

What were the barriers as we progressed and what were the Enabling Factors?



BARRIER	Enabling factors
Staff recruitment / Fixed term contracts	Evidencing impact
Timely support for operational team	Supervision / on-site support- Virtual School
Funding streams – True cost	Care experienced Fund / Whole Family wellbeing Fund
Quantitative v Qualitative data	Skill sets/ collective leadership

What have we learned?

- Staff need to be flexible and adaptable within their roles – no hard boundaries
- Threshold of need has indicated that additional capacity at a more intensive level was required
- High level of need for nurture
- Time to develop relationships in school
- Networked / joined up with other services along the continuum of support
- Support required for each operational team within the school – Virtual School have been well placed to do this

What has the impact been?

- Streamlined way of working for multi-agency leads
- More collegiate approach to system change
- A more flexible, responsive staff team at all levels
- Increased Service flexibility
- Reduction in risk level for children and families as well as a prevention of risk escalation
- Improved attainment

What our children/ young people/families /professionals have told us



Young person "The sessions help me regulate and split up my school day"

Relationships

Young person "I feel people are now trying to understand me"

Decision Making

Professional "The Pilot team have been supportive in making decisions around the necessary supports for our young people"

Stability

"They provide a great support with the communication between home and school, particularly around practical plans for a young person's bespoke pathway" Professional

Moving on and Lifelong support

Parent "The fact that they are going (out) with you is a big step for both of them as they can take a while to trust people. The fact they have attached themselves to you is a big step".



SUMMER 2024

Promise Pilot Team



Operational Team

Rachel Roberts / Gillian Symon – Family Resource workers

Nikki Mayers / Euan Rae – family Learning Development Worker

Robyn Walker/ Symone Duff / Caitlin Goddard/ Lindsay Gavine – Youth Work

Leadership team

Larissa Gordon – Virtual School Head Teacher

Elaine Law – Virtual School Education support officer

Anna Christie – Social Work Team Manager

Ally McGee – Social Work Team Leader

Grainne Casey –Community Development Manager

Craig Singer – Youth Work and Wider Achievement Manager

Clarifying questions?



THE HUB
FOR SUCCESS



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DISCUSSIONS





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FINAL QUESTIONS